

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

**AN INVESTIGATION ON USING
ENGLISH LANGUAGE AS A
MEDIUM
OF INSTRUCTION ON
EDUCATORS'
SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL
LEARNING
(SEL) COMPETENCIES IN
SELECTED
UNIVERSITIES IN MALAYSIA**

ABDUL KARIM GAZI

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April 2026

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ABDUL KARIM GAZI

Thesis submitted in fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of
Masters in Applied Language Studies

Academy of Language Studies

April 2026

CONFIRMATION BY PANEL OF EXAMINERS

I certify that a Panel of Examiners has met on 21 November 2025 to conduct the final examination of Abdul Karim Gazi on his Masters of Arts thesis entitled “An Investigation on Using English Language as a Medium of Instruction on Educators’ Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Competencies in Selected Universities in Malaysia” in accordance with Universiti Teknologi MARA Act 1976 (Akta 173). The Panel of Examiner recommends that the student be awarded the relevant degree. The Panel of Examiners was as follows:

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I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of Universiti Teknologi MARA. It is original and is the results of my own work, unless otherwise indicated or acknowledged as referenced work. This thesis has not been submitted to any other academic institution or non-academic institution for any degree or qualification.

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ABSTRACT

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) is a globally recognized educational approach that fosters essential skills such as emotional awareness, communication, and interpersonal relationships. These competencies are particularly important in English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) contexts, where emotion, identity, and relationships are maintained through English. In this regard, this study aimed to investigate the integration of SEL within EMI to better equip educators for effective teaching. Specifically, this study investigates the extent to which educators in Malaysian tertiary institutions practicing SEL, examines the influence of SEL practices on their instructional approaches, and explores the challenges they encounter. A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining questionnaires for quantitative data and semi-structured interviews for qualitative insights. Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS 26 and NVivo 12, examining the six key variables based on AFH, SEL, and EI theories: Understanding Emotions, Managing Emotions, Relationship Skills, Decision-Making Skills, Incorporating Functional Emotional Strategies, and Promoting Social Emotional Support. Findings revealed that lecturers actively practice SEL skills ($M = 4.51 - 4.63$) by observing and responding to students' emotions (using questions and body language cues), fostering positive relationships, and adjusting their teaching methods according to students' emotional needs in EMI classrooms. Educators with strong SEL competencies, especially in relationship skills and decision-making skills, are more likely to incorporate functional emotional strategies and promote social-emotional support. Gender and teaching experience had no significant impact, though mid-career lecturers showed slightly higher engagement in SEL practices. Qualitative insights complemented the survey findings by highlighting practical challenges, including student-related issues such as reluctance and misbehavior, educator-related constraints such as limited time and heavy workload, and institutional barriers such as insufficient support and limited resources. Overall, the study highlights the importance of SEL competencies among lecturers in enhancing teaching effectiveness and creating emotionally supportive EMI learning environments. The findings have important implications for policymakers, curriculum designers, and educators, suggesting the need to systematically embed SEL competencies into EMI policies, teacher training programs, and higher education curricula to support emotionally responsive teaching and enhance learning outcomes in tertiary EMI contexts.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations

AFH	Affective Filter Hypothesis
CASEL	Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning
CLD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
CRI	Culturally Responsive Instruction
CZ	Central Zone of Malaysia
DSK	Decision-making Skills
EI	Emotional Intelligence
FES	Incorporating Functional Emotional Strategies
ME	Managing Emotions
MySECI	Malaysian Social-Emotional Competency Inventory
NZ	North Zone of Malaysia
R	Response
RS	Relationship Skills

RULER	Recognising, Understanding, Labelling, Expressing and Regulating
SEL	Social and Emotional Learning/ Social-emotional Learning
SES	Promoting Social Emotional Support Techniques
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
TASSEL	Teacher Autonomy Support Social-Emotional Learning
ToA	Theory of Action
UE	Understanding Emotions
WEIRD	Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) is a vital educational approach that plays a pivotal role in shaping individuals' personal, academic, and professional development. It empowers educators to foster effective, empathetic, and emotionally supportive learning environments. In the context of higher education, particularly within Malaysian public universities, the integration of SEL into EMI teaching practices has become increasingly relevant as institutions prioritize the holistic development of their students. This chapter offers an overview of SEL, examines its global and national significance, and outlines the fundamental components of the study, including the problem statement, research objectives and questions, hypotheses, operational definitions, significance, and limitations.

1.2 Background of Study

1.2.1 Overview of EMI and Higher Education in Malaysia

Higher education in Malaysia plays a crucial role in developing skilled human capital by offering a diverse range of academic and professional programs. Malaysian higher education institutions have adapted to the demands of globalization and nation-building, with public universities demonstrating greater efficiency in meeting the public demand for quality higher education (Wan & Sirat, 2018; Wilkinson & Yussof, 2005). According to the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE, 2023), Malaysia has 20 public universities, which play a central role in ensuring equitable nationwide access to high-quality tertiary education.

The use of English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) in Malaysian higher education has emerged primarily in response to globalization, internationalization, and demands for employability. While Bahasa Malaysia remains the national language and a central medium of instruction for nation-building purposes, English has been increasingly adopted to enhance graduates' global competitiveness (Puteh, 2013).

However, the implementation of EMI presents distinct challenges, particularly concerning lecturers' readiness. Many lecturers, despite having strong subject knowledge, experience limited confidence due to the increased cognitive and emotional workload associated with teaching in English (Lo & Othman, 2023). These challenges are compounded by the need to manage students' diverse English proficiency levels, which can negatively affect teaching effectiveness and classroom interaction in EMI contexts where English is a second language (Macaro et al., 2018).

EMI classrooms in Malaysia are closely linked to affective factors such as anxiety, motivation, and self-confidence. Students with lower English proficiency may experience higher anxiety and reduced participation, a dynamic that aligns with Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (Lo & Othman, 2023). These emotional and socio-linguistic complexities highlight the need for educators to possess not only linguistic and pedagogical competence but also strong Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) competencies to foster inclusive, supportive, and effective learning environments.

Social-emotional learning (SEL) is grounded in psychological research, emphasizing the development of emotional and interpersonal skills crucial for students' academic success, mental well-being, and overall personal growth (Durlak et al., 2011; Reed & Madden-Dent, 2021). This approach emphasizes the importance of supportive and nurturing relationships in promoting academic engagement and enriching personal life experiences (Jones et al., 2019). Through the cultivation of emotional awareness, self-management, and social connectedness, a strong SEL foundation fosters resilience and adaptability, enabling students to navigate future challenges with confidence (LaBelle, 2023).

According to the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), SEL is the process through which individuals acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to understand and manage emotions, develop healthy identities, achieve personal and collective goals, show empathy, establish positive relationships, and make responsible decisions in diverse settings (CASEL, 2020c). SEL also involves intentional efforts by educators to cultivate these competencies in their students, embedding them into daily instructional practices and classroom interactions (Olson et al., 2021).

In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the indispensable role that educators play in implementing social-emotional learning to foster holistic student development, particularly in higher education. As the demands of the 21st century continue to evolve, focusing solely on academic achievement is insufficient, as students also need the skills to navigate emotional, social, and practical challenges in both their personal and professional lives. SEL skills, such as collaboration, emotional resilience, emotional intelligence, adaptability, and teamwork, have been shown to predict educational success, workforce readiness, and lifelong career success (Kuo et al., 2019; Madden-Dent, 2022). Within this context, the role of higher education educators in fostering SEL has become increasingly vital, as they support students' development beyond traditional academic outcomes.

Given this growing importance, educators should become “self-creators”, reflective professionals who sense the world around them and empower students to engage meaningfully in their learning environments (Nithyanantham et al., 2019). The successful implementation of SEL programs by such educators leads to measurable improvements in students' social-emotional skills, attitudes, behavior, and academic outcomes (Durlak et al., 2011; Taha et al., 2025). Crucially, the effectiveness of these initiatives is closely tied to educators' own social-emotional competence and well-being, which significantly influence their ability to foster positive educator-student relationships, manage classrooms effectively, and create emotionally supportive learning spaces (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Xu et al., 2024).

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) enhances a range of core competencies, including self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making, which collectively help individuals navigate emotions, manage stress, and build meaningful relationships (CASEL, 2020a; Olson et al., 2021). These competencies are associated with increased engagement in positive social behaviors, reduced behavioral issues, lower stress levels, and improved academic outcomes, such as higher grades and test scores (Brackett et al., 2012).

1.2.2 The Educators' Contribution to Social-emotional Learning

At the tertiary level, educators play a pivotal role in cultivating SEL, not only through explicit instruction but also by modeling emotionally intelligent behavior. Their

psychological well-being is deeply intertwined with that of their students; lecturers' mental health significantly affects students' motivation, emotional regulation, satisfaction, and academic performance. As Mok (2019) emphasizes, prioritizing educator well-being enhances teaching quality and fosters a positive, supportive learning environment that promotes holistic student development.

The significance of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) extends beyond student outcomes; it also shapes the experiences, performance, and professional growth of educators themselves. In higher education, the successful implementation of SEL hinges on educators' ability to build trusting, supportive relationships with students, which are key to achieving meaningful learning outcomes (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Zieher et al., 2021). Their own social-emotional competence and well-being directly influence students' emotional development, classroom engagement, and academic success (Schonert-Reichl, 2017a). Notably, educators with high emotional intelligence (EI) are better equipped to create positive learning climates, respond to student needs, and manage behavioral challenges effectively (Poulou, 2017). Therefore, empowering educators with strong SEL competencies is vital for creating supportive, effective learning environments and advancing EMI educators' professional growth (Ooi & Othman, 2025).

As a result, SEL has gained global recognition as a comprehensive framework for promoting not only student well-being but also educator resilience and instructional effectiveness. However, its successful implementation, especially in higher education, requires more than surface-level adoption. It demands targeted teacher training, integration into curricula, supportive policies, and sufficient institutional resources (L. Chen, 2024). To ensure long-term impact, SEL must be embedded in teacher preparation programs, equipping educators with the skills necessary to nurture their students' emotional and social competencies (Katz et al., 2020). Ultimately, empowering educators through SEL is key to creating emotionally responsive EMI classrooms that support holistic student success.

1.2.3 Social-emotional Learning in the Global Context

In today's era of rapid globalization and technological advancement, Social-Emotional Learning has emerged as a crucial educational approach (Mori, 2023).

Educational institutions globally are embracing SEL, inspired by successful frameworks implemented in countries like the Netherlands, the United States, Canada, and Switzerland (Huynh et al., 2021). In particular, nations such as Finland, Singapore, South Korea, China, New Zealand, and Australia have made consistent investments in teacher development and educational reform, highlighting SEL as a key element in promoting academic and emotional growth (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). This global trend underscores the growing recognition of SEL and effective teaching methodologies as essential components for improving educational outcomes in higher education.

A significant milestone in SEL's global expansion occurred in 1994 with the formation of the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). This initiative, born from the efforts of researchers, educators, and child advocates, introduced the term "social-emotional learning" and promoted a shared vision for supporting students' emotional and interpersonal development (CASEL, 2020). Since then, the influence of social-emotional learning has expanded globally, with at least five European countries, including Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia, and Spain, incorporating SEL into their educational systems (Berg et al., 2021). Moreover, the United States has been a key proponent of SEL, emphasizing its connection to academic achievement and promoting ideals of caring, community, and diversity (Hoffman, 2009). To implement SEL effectively, the USA has adopted a systemic approach guided by a Theory of Action (ToA) developed by CASEL. This approach emphasizes building educators' capacity and integrating SEL into both the curriculum and daily classroom practices to ensure sustainable and impactful implementation (Oberle et al., 2016).

In Canada, Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) is a foundational component of progressive education, particularly emphasized in provinces like British Columbia. Educational initiatives such as learning progressions, curriculum enhancements, Indigenous cultural integration, and collaborative inquiry networks reflect a nationwide commitment to holistic student development (Halbert & Kaser, 2015). A prominent example of this commitment is the Three-Block Model of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), which includes a specific block dedicated to SEL. This block prioritizes the development of students' emotional well-being, self-awareness, identity, and sense of belonging, in parallel with academic growth. Educators are guided to create inclusive, respectful, and emotionally supportive classroom environments that respond

to the diverse needs of all learners. Through this comprehensive and culturally responsive framework, Canadian educators aim to promote the overall development and long-term success of every student (Bradford et al., 2023).

Similarly, the United Kingdom (UK) actively promotes Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) through initiatives such as the SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning) program. Research demonstrates that SEAL contributes to improved academic performance, enhanced student engagement, and a significant reduction in behavioral issues. For example, schools adopting SEAL have reported increased levels of student empathy, cooperation, and classroom focus, along with a decline in bullying and disruptive behavior. The rollout of SEAL in 25 local authorities highlights the UK's systemic commitment to prioritizing emotional well-being and equipping students with essential emotional regulation and interpersonal skills (Hallam, 2009). This approach underscores educators' dedication to fostering inclusive, emotionally supportive learning environments that address the holistic development of every student.

Conversely, in India, there are growing concerns among educators about the insufficient emphasis on social-emotional learning within the education system. However, efforts such as the National Educational Policy and initiatives like the Sitare Foundation program are actively addressing this issue by striving to integrate SEL into educational practices, with the goal of enhancing student development and academic outcomes (Singla & Prashar, 2022). The Sitare Foundation program offers social-emotional learning support tailored for economically disadvantaged students in India, with a focus on preparing them for college or higher study admission (Jensen & Leet, 2022). These initiatives highlight the potential for SEL to bridge gaps and improve educational equity, ultimately fostering a more inclusive and supportive learning environment.

In Singapore's education system, educators play a vital role in emphasizing the holistic development of youth through the integration of social-emotional learning. The SEL Framework, initially introduced in 2005 and further refined into the Framework for Twenty-First Century Competencies and Student Outcomes in 2014, reflects Singapore's commitment to nurturing well-rounded individuals (Liem et al., 2017). Educators are instrumental in implementing this framework, ensuring that students acquire essential social-emotional skills alongside academic knowledge. By prioritizing SEL, educators in Singapore contribute to the cultivation of emotionally intelligent and

resilient individuals prepared for success in an increasingly diverse and interconnected world.

From the above discussion, globally, Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) is increasingly recognized as essential to holistic education, with countries like the United States, Canada, the UK, Singapore, and India integrating it through various models tailored to their contexts. Central to these efforts are educators, whose emotional competence and well-being significantly influence student development and learning outcomes.

1.2.4 Social-emotional Learning in Malaysia

Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) in Malaysia presents both unique challenges and promising opportunities, shaped by the country's diverse socio-cultural and economic context. As SEL frameworks were originally developed in Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic (WEIRD) societies, their application in non-WEIRD contexts like Malaysia requires careful adaptation (Abd Hadi et al., 2023). For SEL to be effectively implemented, it is essential that educators are actively involved in both the design and execution of SEL curricula (Hayashi et al., 2022).

Malaysia's status as a developing, middle-income nation, characterized by a multicultural population and a collectivist mindset, presents specific considerations for implementing Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) in university settings. Educators must navigate cultural norms, socio-economic disparities, and institutional challenges to tailor SEL approaches that reflect local values and student needs (Abd Hadi et al., 2023). Their role is essential in adapting broad SEL frameworks into culturally relevant practices that effectively support the emotional and social development of Malaysian university students.

The integration of SEL into Malaysia's education system reflects a strategic response to evolving national educational goals. The Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013–2025 emphasizes the development of strong ethics, emotional intelligence, and spirituality to equip students with resilience and life skills (Sathasivam & Abdul Rahim, 2021). This aligns with the global recognition of SEL as a core component of holistic education.

Malaysia has also taken practical steps to localize SEL implementation. The development of the Malaysian Social-Emotional Competency Inventory (MySECI) is one such initiative. MySECI, designed to assess students' social-emotional competencies, has proven effective in predicting mental health status, classroom engagement, and academic performance (Im et al., 2015). These findings highlight the relevance and value of SEL within the Malaysian educational context.

Despite these advances, challenges persist, particularly in the area of educator readiness. Studies show that many Malaysian educators possess limited knowledge about the key factors influencing social-emotional development and often lack the skills to teach SEL effectively (Mohammad et al., 2021). This underscores the need for targeted professional development and systemic support to enhance SEL integration at the tertiary level.

In summary, the implementation of Social-Emotional Learning in Malaysia is gaining traction as part of a broader educational reform aimed at fostering holistic student development. While efforts such as the Malaysia Education Blueprint and tools like MySECI signify progress, the success of SEL largely depends on the ability of educators to adapt frameworks to local socio-cultural realities. Addressing challenges such as educator preparedness, cultural alignment, and institutional support remains crucial to ensuring that SEL becomes an effective and sustainable component of higher education in Malaysia.

1.3 Statement of Problem

Malaysian higher education is evolving in response to globalisation and policy reforms; however, several persistent issues continue to hinder academic success and student well-being. Within Malaysia's evolving higher education landscape, several challenges continue to hinder academic success and student well-being, particularly in English-medium instruction (EMI) contexts. Emotions play a significant role in EMI, influencing lecturers' instructional effectiveness, classroom interaction, and overall teaching experiences (Yuan et al., 2023). Consequently, an increased emotional focus in EMI is essential to address the complex affective experiences of educators in university settings, as it promotes emotional awareness and emotional intelligence that support effective classroom practice and sustained professional development (Yuan,

2023). Empirical studies in Malaysia further indicate that many lecturers report limited English proficiency and heightened anxiety when required to teach fully in English, which may negatively affect their pedagogical confidence and classroom engagement (Faiz & Mohamed, 2022). Consistent with these findings, a national EMI-readiness survey involving 227 university lecturers revealed only moderate levels of EMI-related skills and abilities, often accompanied by discomfort in teaching through English (Lo & Othman, 2023).

Despite ongoing educational reforms, traditional, textbook-based pedagogical approaches continue to dominate instructional practices in many Malaysian public universities, particularly within English academic writing courses (Azmar & Razali, 2024). Such approaches tend to prioritise cognitive and linguistic outcomes while offering limited pedagogical space to address students' emotional and social needs, which are critical for holistic learning and personal development (Mohamad et al., 2023). Consequently, the systematic integration of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) into higher education teaching practices remains fragmented, inconsistent, and underdeveloped.

Although educators are increasingly aware of the value of SEL, many lack a deep understanding of its core components and practical implementation strategies. Research shows that Malaysian lecturers often demonstrate only moderate levels of SEL knowledge and face difficulties embedding these practices into their pedagogy (Mohamed et al., 2020). Time constraints due to heavy teaching and administrative responsibilities further reduce the opportunity for innovative and student-centered instruction (Awang Ali et al., 2024). Moreover, institutional support, including professional development programs on SEL, is limited, making it difficult for educators to build confidence and capacity in this area.

The emotional competencies of educators themselves, such as stress regulation, conflict resolution, and self-awareness, directly influence the quality of instruction and classroom climate. Yet many lecturers report experiencing high stress levels, emotional exhaustion, and burnout, primarily due to pressure from institutional performance indicators like research output and community engagement (Hassan et al., 2019; Ishak et al., 2010; Mukundan & Khandehroo, 2010). These factors restrict their ability to provide emotionally supportive instruction and to fully engage with students on a social-emotional level.

At the same time, the mental health of students in Malaysian universities is a growing concern. Recent studies have reported high rates of depression (34.8%), anxiety (42.2%), and stress (33.5%) among university students, which significantly affect academic achievement and personal well-being (Maung et al., 2023). SEL programs have been shown to enhance emotional resilience, self-regulation, and decision-making skills, offering a proactive framework to support students' mental and emotional health (Ganasan et al., 2022). However, without consistent and practical integration of SEL into teaching, these potential benefits remain largely unrealized in Malaysian higher education.

Therefore, despite growing awareness of its importance, the practical integration of Social-Emotional Learning into Malaysian university teaching remains insufficient, highlighting a critical need to examine how lecturers currently practice SEL, its impact, and challenges within EMI classrooms at Malaysian public universities.

1.4 Research Objectives

The main objective of this research is to generate knowledge on educators' participation in incorporating social-emotional learning in higher educational institutions in Malaysia. The specific objectives of this study are as stated below:

- a) To investigate the influence of educators' SEL practices in the English-medium instruction (EMI) environment.
- b) To investigate the incorporation of educators' SEL competencies in an English-medium instruction (EMI) environment.
- c) To discover the challenges encountered by educators when integrating SEL practices into an English-medium instruction (EMI) environment.

1.5 Research Questions

- i) How do educators' SEL practices influence the English-medium instruction (EMI) environment?
- ii) How do educators incorporate SEL competencies in an English-medium instruction (EMI) teaching environment?
- iii) What are the challenges encountered by educators when integrating SEL practices into an English-medium instruction (EMI) environment?

1.6 Research Hypothesis

The hypotheses below aim to investigate the relationships between lecturers' SEL competencies, namely understanding emotions (UE), managing emotions (ME), relationship skills (RS), and decision-making skills (DMS), and their ability to implement functional emotional strategies (FES) and promote social emotional support (SES) in instructional practices. Furthermore, the study seeks to identify whether demographic variables such as gender and teaching experience have a significant influence on these SEL competencies. The hypotheses are to answer the research question one:

Table 1:1
Hypotheses for Research Question 1

a	H o: There is no significant relationship between understanding emotions (UE), managing emotions (ME), relationship skills (RS), decision-making skills (DMS), Incorporating Functional Emotional Strategies (FES), and Promoting Social Emotional Support (SES)
b	H o: There is no significant influence of understanding emotions (UE), managing emotions (ME), relationship skills (RS), and decision-making skills (DMS) IV* on Incorporating Functional Emotional Strategies (FES), and Promoting Social Emotional Support (SES) DV**
c	H o: There is no significant influence of gender on UE, ME, RS, DMS, FES, SES
d	H o: There is no significant influence of teaching experience on UE, ME, RS, DMS, FES, SES
*Independent Variables	
** Dependent Variables	

1.7 Significance of the Study

This study is significant as it offers valuable insights into the integration of social-emotional learning (SEL) among lecturers within EMI classrooms in Malaysian higher education institutions. The support and active involvement of educators are crucial for the effective incorporation of SEL in EMI classrooms (J. Lee & Zuilkowski,

2022). Lecturers' SEL practices not only shape their teaching approaches but also directly influence students' socio-emotional development and academic outcomes (Blazar & Kraft, 2017; Low et al., 2016).

The significance of this study also lies in its investigation of how educators integrate SEL within EMI teaching practices. By examining the specific ways lecturers embed SEL through classroom interactions and student support strategies, this study provides a deeper understanding of how SEL is operationalized in higher education contexts. Understanding educators' integration of SEL, therefore, offers evidence to strengthen pedagogical practices and guide institutions in developing more supportive and emotionally engaging learning environments (Reyes et al., 2012; Tyng et al., 2017).

In addition, the study highlights challenges that hinder effective SEL implementation in EMI, such as limited institutional support, time constraints, and gaps in educators' SEL understanding. Identifying these barriers is essential for informing targeted professional development and evidence-based policy improvements (Pearson et al., 2017).

Beyond its pedagogical value, this study also makes theoretical and methodological contributions. Theoretically, it extends the application of the CASEL (SEL) framework and the Emotional Intelligence (EI) model to EMI classrooms in the Malaysian higher education context, offering a more holistic understanding of lecturers' emotional competencies. Methodologically, the mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative analysis with qualitative thematic insights, provides a robust model for examining complex SEL constructs in tertiary settings.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

Every research has limitations, and presenting them clearly and effectively can enrich readers' understanding and support future investigation (Ross & Bibler, 2019). Like any scholarly endeavour, this research is not exempt from encountering inherent constraints.

Research involving self-reported data by the participants has limitations (Janssens & Kraft, 2012). This study, which mostly aims to gather educators' practices, strategies, and challenges regarding the integration of social-emotional learning in EMI

classrooms, may introduce biases and limitations related to participant subjectivity, recall accuracy, and representativeness of the broader educator population.

The main limitation is that only the pre-selected 13 universities of the 20 public universities. Next, the selection of a limited number of educators from Malaysian higher education institutes as the sample for this research could introduce bias, given the vast number of educators within these institutions. In this case, the researcher will select universities from different locations in Peninsular Malaysia.

1.9 Delimitations of the Study

This study was delimited to lecturers in Malaysian higher education institutions who use English as the medium of instruction. This decision was made because the investigator is not familiar with the Malaysian language or other local languages, and focusing on English-medium instruction ensured both clarity in communication and accuracy in data collection.

Secondly, while the study concentrated on lecturers as the primary participants, the focus indirectly extends to student well-being. The rationale for this delimitation is that lecturers' practices, strategies, and challenges in integrating SEL have a direct impact on students' social-emotional development, academic engagement, and overall classroom experience.

Thirdly, the scope was restricted to higher education lecturers. Although this level of education was the main focus, insights gained from university instructors may also serve as a representative reference for educators in other levels of education, since many SEL practices and challenges overlap across educational settings.

1.10 Operational Definitions

1. Decision-making skills

Decision-making skills involve the ability to assess situations and consider the most appropriate options. These skills encompass various aspects such as critical thinking, problem-solving, analytical reasoning, evaluating risks, gathering relevant information, and considering ethical implications (CASEL, 2020c).

2. English as a medium of instruction

English medium refers to teaching academic subjects in English in a country or context where English is not the first language for most educators or students (Knagg, 2020).

3. Incorporating functional emotional strategies

Incorporating functional emotional strategies refers to the use of purposeful techniques by educators to help students manage and transform their emotions in healthy ways. This includes practices such as mindfulness to promote emotional awareness and calmness, and positive affirmations to reframe negative emotions into positive emotions (Naragon-Gainey et al., 2017).

4. Managing emotions

Managing emotions involves educators effectively regulating their own emotional responses in the classroom to create a positive learning environment, while students develop strategies to navigate and regulate their emotions to support academic performance and well-being (Olderbak et al., 2019).

5. Promoting social-emotional support

Promoting social-emotional support refers to the inclusion of instrumental support (e.g., offering practical help like extended time on tasks), informational support (e.g., giving advice or explaining coping strategies), and assistance with goal setting (e.g., helping students set and monitor personal or academic goals) (Langford et al., 1997).

6. Relationship skills

Relationship skills refer to the abilities and competencies necessary to establish, nurture, and maintain healthy and meaningful connections with others. These skills encompass effective communication, empathy, active listening, conflict resolution, cooperation, and trust-building (CASEL, 2020c).

7. Social-emotional learning (SEL) competencies

Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) competencies are the essential skills, attitudes, and abilities that enable individuals to develop healthy self-identities, regulate

and manage emotions, demonstrate empathy toward others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and ethical decisions (CASEL, 2020a).

8. Social-emotional learning practices

Social-emotional learning (SEL) practices refer to structured, intentional, and consistent teaching strategies that are deliberately planned and integrated into daily classroom instruction. These practices aim to develop students' self-awareness, emotional regulation, social skills, and responsible decision-making by aligning cognitive, emotional, and behavioral learning in an organized manner (Brackett et al., 2019).

9. Teaching instruction

Teaching instructions refer to the deliberate methods and approaches educators use to facilitate effective student learning (Trigwell, 2001).

10. Understanding emotions

Understanding emotions in education involves educators being aware of both their own emotional states and those of their students, facilitating effective communication, learning, and well-being in the educational environment (Olderbak et al., 2019).

1.11 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has critically examined the importance of Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) in shaping individuals' overall development, extending beyond academic performance to include essential emotional and social competencies. While the global relevance of SEL is widely recognized, its effective implementation requires context-specific adaptation. In Malaysia, the integration of SEL in higher education remains underexplored and often inconsistently applied. This highlights a pressing need for more deliberate efforts by higher education educators to embed SEL meaningfully into their instructional practices. Therefore, higher education lecturers must play a proactive role in embedding SEL into their instructional practices to ensure meaningful, culturally relevant, and sustainable outcomes.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The literature review is a crucial component of this research, encompassing a comprehensive analysis of theoretical frameworks and relevant studies related to EMI and lecturers' social-emotional learning competencies. It provides an overview of established theories and empirical research that shed light on the implementation of Social-emotional Learning, instructional strategies, and challenges within educational settings. It provides a critical lens on various approaches related to a socially and emotionally supportive learning environment. This section also outlines the conceptual framework underpinning EMI and SEL, focusing on its core competencies. In addition, it draws on previous studies from both global and Malaysian perspectives, the implementation processes of SEL, and various approaches to SEL.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework serves as the basis for this study, providing a conceptual structure that guides the research process. It draws on established theories, models, and concepts pertinent to the research problem, aiding in the formulation of research questions, hypotheses, and research methodologies.

This study integrates three interrelated theories: Affective Filter Hypothesis, Social-Emotional Learning (SEL), and Emotional Intelligence (EI). These frameworks underscore the significance of emotional and social competencies in fostering effective teaching and enhancing student engagement (K. M. Ross & Tolan, 2018; Schonert-Reichl, 2017a; Todmal et al., 2023). Grounded in contemporary literature, this theoretical framework situates AFH, SEL, and EI within the context of tertiary education, particularly Malaysian higher education institutions. By combining these perspectives, the framework positions educators' SEL practices as the central focus of inquiry, examining how lecturers apply SEL principles in their teaching and how these practices influence instructional effectiveness. At the same time, it recognizes the challenges lecturers face in embedding SEL within EMI in higher education contexts,

thereby providing a comprehensive basis for understanding both the potential and the obstacles of SEL integration in university teaching.

2.2.1 Affective Filter Hypothesis Theory

The Affective Filter Hypothesis is a component of Krashen’s Theory of Second Language Acquisition, which explains how emotional factors influence language learning (Krashen, 1985). The hypothesis posits that affective variables function as a mental “filter” that regulates the extent to which learners internalize comprehensible input. While exposure to input is essential for language acquisition, the affective filter determines how much of that input reaches the learner’s acquisition system. When the affective filter is low, learners are more receptive and open to input; conversely, a high affective filter obstructs input processing and reduces language acquisition (Jawed et al., 2025; Krashen, 1985).

According to Krashen (1982), the Affective Filter Hypothesis highlights three key affective factors that influence second language acquisition: motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety.

Table 2:1
Affective Filter Hypothesis

Affective Factor	Low Filter (Facilitates Learning)	High Filter (Impedes Learning)
Motivation	Increased input uptake	Reduced input uptake
Self-confidence	Active participation	Withdrawal and avoidance
Anxiety	Willingness to take risks	Fear and performance decline

Source: (Pauzan, 2024)

Learners with high levels of motivation generally achieve greater success in second language acquisition, particularly when their motivation is integrative in nature. Similarly, learners who possess strong self-confidence and a positive self-image tend to demonstrate better language learning outcomes. In contrast, low levels of anxiety, whether personal or classroom-related, are more conducive to effective second language acquisition, as anxiety raises the affective filter and limits learners’ ability to process input.

Input remains a fundamental requirement for language acquisition; however, affective conditions determine the effectiveness of that input. Positive attitudes, such as high motivation, strong confidence, and low anxiety, lower the affective filter and facilitate acquisition, whereas negative attitudes, including low motivation, low self-esteem, and high anxiety, raise the filter and hinder learning (Pauzan, 2024). As such, emotional and psychological factors play a crucial role in determining learners' success in second language contexts.

Integrating the Affective Filter Hypothesis into the present study establishes a clear theoretical link between lecturers' Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) and Emotional Intelligence (EI) competencies and their instructional effectiveness in EMI contexts. Educators who demonstrate strong SEL skills such as empathy, relationship-building, and emotional regulation are better positioned to create psychologically safe classrooms that reduce students' anxiety and lower their affective filters (Wicaksono & Saraswati, 2024). Similarly, emotionally intelligent educators are more capable of recognising students' emotional states, responding with appropriate supportive strategies, and adjusting their teaching practices to meet learners' emotional and academic needs.

Thus, the Affective Filter Hypothesis strengthens the theoretical foundation of this research by illustrating how lecturers' emotional and social competencies directly influence students' capacity to learn through English. Particularly in emotionally demanding EMI settings, the hypothesis reinforces the view that effective EMI teaching extends beyond linguistic and pedagogical competence to include emotional awareness, sensitivity, and support.

2.2.2 Social-emotional Learning (SEL) Theory

The theoretical foundation of this study is grounded in the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) framework, which provides a comprehensive, evidence-based model for promoting SEL in educational contexts. By employing this framework, the study systematically examines the interplay between cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions that shape teaching practices and affect student outcomes. Empirical research has demonstrated that SEL programs aligned with

the CASEL model yield measurable benefits, such as enhanced academic performance, improved social behavior, and greater emotional resilience (K. M. Ross & Tolan, 2018).

Moreover, SEL is increasingly viewed as a pivotal component of 21st-century education, equipping students with essential interpersonal and intrapersonal skills required for success in today's complex and interconnected world (J. Newman & Dusenbury, 2015). The CASEL framework thus serves not only as a theoretical guide but also as a practical tool for integrating SEL into pedagogical practices in higher education.



Figure 2:1 Social-emotional Learning Framework

Source: (CASEL, 2020c)

This framework is founded on five core SEL competencies that form the foundation of social-emotional learning: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. Self-awareness involves the ability to recognize one's emotions, values, strengths, and limitations, while self-management emphasizes regulating emotions, managing stress, and achieving personal goals. Social awareness refers to understanding and empathizing with others, particularly those from diverse backgrounds, whereas relationship skills focus on building and maintaining healthy, supportive interactions through communication, cooperation, and conflict resolution. Finally, responsible decision-making entails making ethical, constructive choices about personal and social behavior.

Together, these competencies provide a comprehensive structure for understanding how emotional and social skills shape learning experiences. Within higher education, they are particularly valuable for guiding lecturers in fostering inclusive, supportive, and engaging classroom environments that enhance both teaching effectiveness and student well-being (CASEL, 2020c; K. M. Ross & Tolan, 2018).

Although Social-emotional Learning was originally developed for and implemented in primary and secondary educational settings, its relevance and application are increasingly being recognized within higher education contexts (Dahleb et al., 2024; Vetrivel et al., 2024). In tertiary education, SEL strategies have the potential to enhance student motivation, academic performance, and overall success. By fostering respect for others, valuing diverse perspectives, and encouraging prosocial behaviour, SEL contributes to a more inclusive and supportive learning environment (Simion, 2023).

Together, these competencies form a comprehensive structure for understanding the emotional and social dimensions of student development. This study adopts the CASEL framework as its guiding theoretical model to investigate the extent to which Social-emotional Learning strategies are integrated into the teaching practices of university lecturers in Malaysia. By employing this framework, the research aims to critically examine what educators think about cultivating an emotionally and socially connected teaching-learning environment. The study further seeks to understand how educators foster the development of SEL competencies within higher education settings.

2.2.3 Emotional Intelligence (EI) Theory

While the CASEL framework provides a structured model for cultivating social-emotional competencies, the theory of Emotional Intelligence (EI) offers a complementary psychological foundation that deepens the understanding of emotional functioning in educational settings. Over the past two decades, Emotional Intelligence (EI) has gained prominence as a key psychological construct, highlighting the integration of emotional and cognitive processes in shaping human behaviour (Dolev & Leshem, 2017). Defined by Salovey & Mayer (1990), EI refers to the ability to perceive, understand, manage, and regulate one's own emotions and the emotions of others. In

educational contexts, particularly within Malaysian higher education, characterized by its cultural diversity and complex interpersonal dynamics, EI is increasingly recognized as a vital competency for educators.

Developing EI skills enables educators to cultivate greater self-awareness and emotion regulation, both of which are critical for maintaining a positive, productive teaching environment. By being self-aware, educators can identify their emotional triggers and recognize how their moods may influence classroom interactions. Emotion regulation then allows them to manage stress, frustration, or fatigue in constructive ways, preventing negative emotions from being projected onto students or disrupting the flow of teaching. This capacity to remain calm and composed helps create a stable learning environment where students feel supported and engaged. Furthermore, the ability to accurately recognize and empathize with students' emotional states enables educators to adjust their communication and teaching strategies, such as offering reassurance, showing patience, or providing individualized guidance, thereby fostering stronger educator-student relationships and more effective pedagogical practices (Dolev & Leshem, 2017; Salovey & Mayer, 1990).

Research has consistently shown that EI is associated with enhanced personal well-being, stronger social relationships, and increased professional effectiveness (Dolev & Leshem, 2017). Within the Malaysian higher education setting, fostering EI among educators holds significant potential to improve student engagement, promote prosocial behaviour, and support academic achievement. Educators who possess EI competencies are better able to manage classroom challenges, resolve conflicts, provide constructive feedback, and encourage collaboration among diverse student groups (Kaur et al., 2019).

This study adopts Emotional Intelligence (EI) theory as a complementary theoretical framework to deepen the understanding of emotional competencies among educators in higher education. Emphasizing the development of EI yields dual benefits: it enhances students' learning experiences and contributes to educators' professional satisfaction and psychological well-being. In the context of Malaysian universities, where diverse student backgrounds and complex emotional dynamics are common, EI provides a crucial lens for examining how educators perceive, manage, and respond to emotions in teaching. Integrating EI-focused competencies into professional

development enables institutions to create emotionally responsive and inclusive learning environments.

2.2.3.1 Understanding Emotional Intelligence (EQ) and Intelligence Quotient (IQ)

Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Intelligence Quotient (IQ) represent distinct yet complementary aspects of human intelligence, each contributing uniquely to personal and professional success. In the context of higher education, both constructs are essential for educators. IQ is generally associated with cognitive abilities such as logical reasoning, problem-solving, and analytical thinking, whereas EI refers to the capacity to perceive, understand, manage, and regulate lecturers' own and their students' emotions (Jagtap & Dhopeshwarkar, 2023; Maillefer et al., 2018).

While IQ plays a significant role in intellectual performance, EI is crucial for managing interpersonal relationships and emotional dynamics within educational environments. Educators with high EI are better positioned to empathize with students, resolve conflicts constructively, and foster supportive classroom environments (Ciarrochi et al., 2000; Khassawneh et al., 2022). Unlike the relatively static nature of IQ, EI is considered more malleable and can be developed over time through training and reflective practices.

Research also indicates that EI correlates with personality traits relevant to teaching, such as empathy, emotional resilience, and adaptability, which contribute to greater job satisfaction and well-being (Checa & Fernández-Berrocal, 2015). These attributes are particularly vital in higher education settings, where educators encounter diverse student populations and complex pedagogical demands. Therefore, this study adopts Emotional Intelligence as a theoretical foundation to better understand how lecturers' emotional competencies influence their teaching practices and support the holistic development of students.

2.2.3.2 The Four-Branch Ability EI Model

The Four-Branch Model of Emotional Intelligence (EI) is a foundational framework that underpins many subsequent EI theories. It conceptualizes EI as a set of interrelated cognitive abilities essential for recognizing, expressing, understanding, and

regulating emotional experiences. This model highlights the intrinsic relationship between emotion and cognition, emphasizing the role of emotional processing in supporting both personal development and performance (Maillefer et al., 2018).

This model was developed by John D. Meyer, a distinguished Professor of Psychology at the University of New Hampshire, and Peter Salovey, a prominent Professor of Psychology and former President of Yale University (Marwaha, 2018). This model is characterized by an “ability approach” to emotional intelligence, which conceptualizes EI as a distinct form of intelligence. This perspective underscores the significance of cognitive processes in the realm of emotions and elucidates the interconnection between emotional intelligence and general intelligence (Maillefer et al., 2018).

The model categorizes EI into four cognitive branches, commonly referred to as branches: perceiving emotions, using emotions to facilitate thinking, understanding emotions, and managing emotions (Caruso et al., 2015). Each of these branches contributes significantly to the model, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of emotional intelligence and its practical applications in personal and professional contexts.

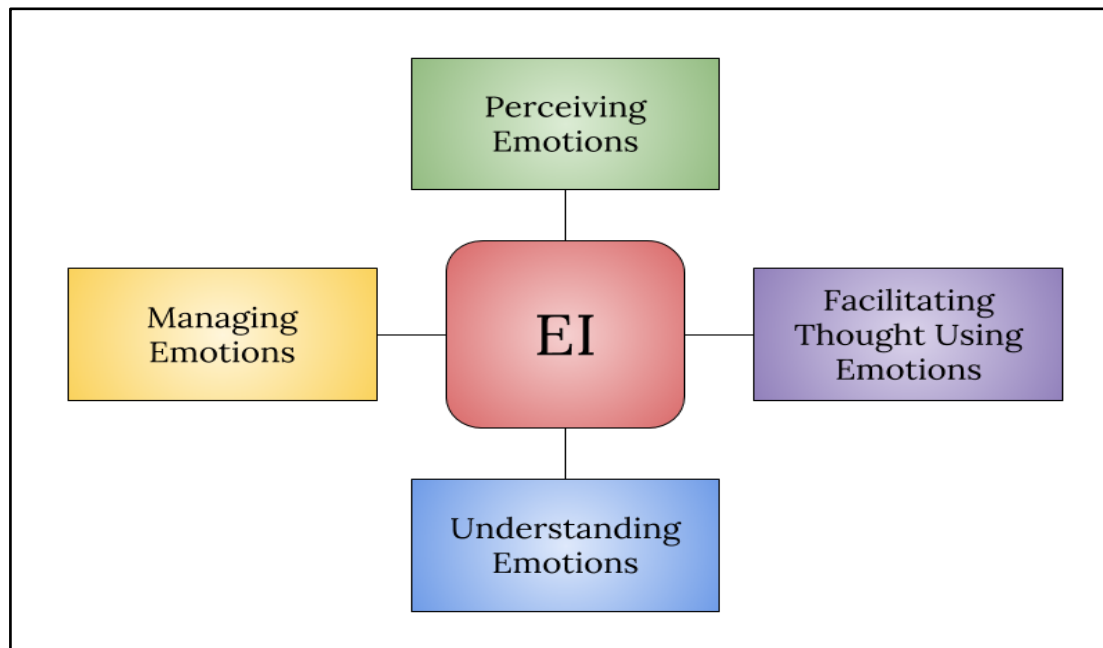


Figure 2:2 Emotional Intelligence (EI) Theory

Source: (Salovey & Mayer, 1990)

Perceiving emotions is the accurate recognition and understanding of emotional expressions, both in oneself and others. This skill relies on cognitive processes such as

visual and auditory perception, as well as emotional knowledge and verbal communication skills. Essentially, individuals proficient in perceiving emotions can decipher facial expressions, tone of voice, and body language to grasp underlying emotional states (Olderbak et al., 2019). In educational settings, developing emotional perception is particularly valuable, as it can enhance students' social awareness and interpersonal skills. To support this, university educators can incorporate activities that encourage students to analyse emotions portrayed in literature, media, or real-life scenarios (Aldrup et al., 2024). Through such exercises, students can develop a deeper understanding of human emotions and empathy, which are crucial for effective communication and collaboration.

Using emotions refers to the strategic utilization of emotions to aid cognitive tasks and navigate social interactions effectively. Individuals with high emotional intelligence can adaptively manage their emotions, prioritizing tasks and responding appropriately to others' emotions (Turnipseed & VandeWaa, 2012). In this regard, university educators play a pivotal role in cultivating this skill by creating a supportive classroom environment where students feel comfortable expressing their emotions (Sele & Mukundi, 2023). Encouraging collaborative activities and discussions allows students to practice regulating emotions in various contexts, fostering resilience and interpersonal skills essential for academic and personal success.

Understanding emotions involves comprehending the nature, origins, consequences, and interrelationships of emotional experiences (Caruso et al., 2015). In educational settings, developing this skill is essential for fostering both personal growth and effective interpersonal interactions (Parker et al., 2021). Faculty members can play a vital role by incorporating reflective activities and guided discussions that help students explore their own emotional experiences and appreciate diverse emotional perspectives. Additionally, the use of literature, real-life case studies, or emotionally complex scenarios in teaching can deepen students' emotional insight (You, 2022). Such practices promote empathy and emotional literacy, which are fundamental to building strong interpersonal relationships and enhancing students' self-awareness.

Managing emotions involves the effective regulation of one's own and others' emotional responses in diverse situations. This encompasses maintaining, shifting, and tailoring emotional responses to meet situational demands (Maillefer et al., 2018). In this context, educators can support students in developing emotional self-regulation

skills through mindfulness practices, stress management techniques, and positive coping strategies (Rough et al., 2025). By modelling healthy emotional management behaviours and providing a supportive environment, educators empower students to navigate challenges with resilience and adaptability, ultimately enhancing their overall well-being and academic performance.

Applying the Four-Branch Model within Malaysian universities provides a critical lens for examining lecturers' SEL practices, which are central to this study. By developing skills in perceiving, using, understanding, and managing emotions, educators are better equipped to implement SEL strategies that positively influence their teaching practices and classroom interactions. At the same time, this perspective acknowledges the challenges lecturers face in embedding SEL, such as cultural diversity, large class sizes, and differing student emotional needs. Understanding these challenges is essential for identifying barriers to effective SEL integration and for supporting strategies that enhance both teaching effectiveness and students' social-emotional development.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

This study adopts an integrated conceptual framework to examine the role of emotional and social competencies in English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) classrooms in higher education, grounded in three interrelated theories: Social-Emotional Learning (SEL), Emotional Intelligence (EI), and the Affective Filter Hypothesis (AFH). The SEL framework, based on the CASEL model (2020), serves as the primary theoretical lens, providing the core constructs of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. These competencies were adapted to focus specifically on lecturers' competencies within Malaysian universities, emphasizing how educators model and implement SEL practices to enhance teaching effectiveness. Emotional Intelligence theory complements SEL by explaining lecturers' capacity to perceive, understand, regulate, and manage emotions in themselves and others, which supports the enactment of SEL competencies in emotionally demanding EMI contexts. The Affective Filter Hypothesis further extends this framework by elucidating how lecturers' emotional and social competencies influence students' learning by shaping affective conditions such as

anxiety, motivation, and self-confidence. In EMI classrooms, lecturers with strong SEL and EI competencies are better positioned to create supportive and low-stress learning environments that lower students' affective filters, thereby facilitating greater engagement, participation, and uptake of instructional input.

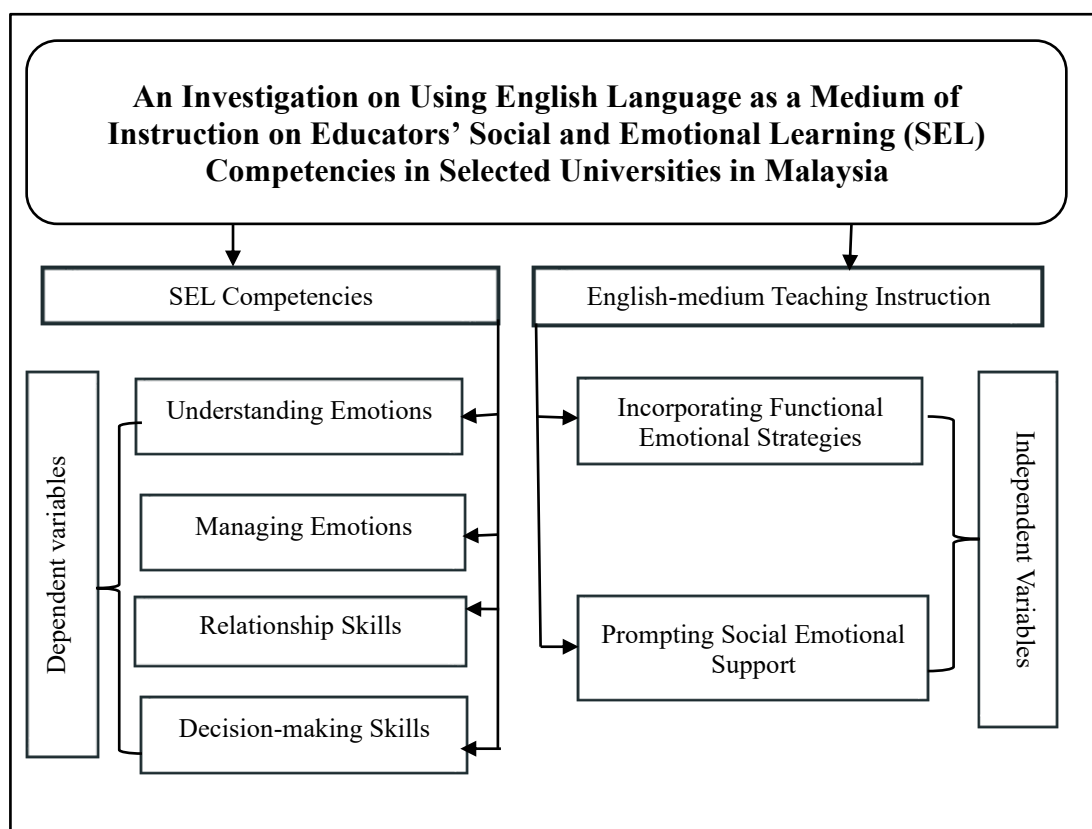


Figure 2:3 Conceptual Framework

Within this conceptual framework, key variables such as understanding emotions and managing emotions are adapted from the Emotional Intelligence (EI) model (Salovey & Mayer, 1990), while relationship skills and responsible decision-making are adopted from the SEL framework (CASEL, 2020a). Together, these variables represent the competencies of educators in higher education in Malaysia. These elements enable lecturers to create socially and emotionally supportive classrooms, thereby fostering students' holistic well-being, academic engagement, and positive interpersonal relationships.

Building upon these core variables, two dependent variables were constructed based on the Affective Filter Hypothesis, namely, incorporating functional emotional strategies and promoting social-emotional supports in EMI classes. These elements

reflect educators' practical application of SEL and EI in their EMI classes. They encompass strategies for emotional rumination, fostering inclusive classroom climates, and providing support systems that promote resilience and connectedness among students.

By integrating SEL and EI within this conceptual framework, the study aims to examine how university educators in Malaysia practice SEL, its impact on teaching, and the challenges they face in EMI classes. Ultimately, this framework promotes a holistic approach to education that supports both the intellectual and emotional development of students, thereby enriching the overall educational experiences.

2.3.1 Understanding Emotions

Understanding emotions is a core variable adapted from the Emotional Intelligence (EI) model (Salovey & Mayer, 1990) and closely aligned with the self-awareness competency in the SEL framework (CASEL, 2020c). Within higher education, this competency extends beyond personal disposition to a pedagogical responsibility. Educators who are aware of their own emotional states and those of their students are better positioned to model constructive emotional expression and establish a classroom climate that is supportive, inclusive, and conducive to learning (Timošćuk & Ugaste, 2012).

Fostering students' ability to recognize and reflect on emotions contributes to the development of essential social-emotional competencies such as empathy, perspective-taking, and emotional regulation. These skills, in turn, strengthen students' interpersonal relationships and enhance their academic engagement (Oberle et al., 2016). Evidence further suggests that when emotional understanding is embedded in teaching practices, it not only promotes students' psychological well-being but also improves collaboration, communication, and problem-solving abilities that are increasingly vital in higher education contexts (Zhoc et al., 2020).

2.3.2 Managing Emotions

Building upon understanding emotions, the ability to manage emotions constitutes a central dimension of social and emotional competence. Managing

emotions refers to the regulation of affective states in ways that are constructive, contextually appropriate, and aligned with situational demands (Gross, 2015). In higher education, this competency is particularly significant, as educators are not only required to regulate their own emotional responses but also to guide students in developing adaptive emotional regulation strategies (Lindqvist, 2019).

Through the integration of practices such as stress management, impulse control, and adaptive coping techniques, educators can model and promote healthy emotional regulation (Sele & Mukundi, 2023). These practices enable students to manage performance pressures, interpersonal conflicts, and the broader emotional demands of academic life. Research demonstrates that effective emotion regulation enhances resilience, supports problem-solving, and contributes to sustained academic engagement (Oberle et al., 2016).

Importantly, the ability to manage emotions extends beyond individual coping; it also fosters a classroom climate characterized by mutual respect, psychological safety, and collaboration. By cultivating this competency, educators strengthen both their own teaching effectiveness and students' holistic development, reinforcing the role of social and emotional learning (SEL) as an integral component of higher education pedagogy.

2.3.3 Relationship Skills

Building upon emotional awareness and regulation, relationship skills involve the ability to form and sustain positive, respectful, and supportive interpersonal relationships. In higher education, these skills are essential for promoting a collaborative, inclusive, and emotionally safe learning environment. Educators model and foster relationship-building behaviours, including effective communication, teamwork, and the ability to engage with others respectfully and empathetically (Reynolds et al., 2013).

Core competencies within this domain include active listening, empathy, constructive conflict resolution, and assertiveness, each contributing to healthy and productive social interactions. By incorporating peer collaboration, group-based learning, and structured classroom discussions, educators create meaningful opportunities for skill development and application (CASEL, 2020c).

Fostering relationship skills not only enhances students' interpersonal effectiveness but also supports a sense of belonging and community. These competencies are foundational for academic success, student engagement, and sustained personal and professional growth.

2.3.4 Decision-Making Skills

Complementing emotional regulation and interpersonal competencies, decision-making skills are fundamental to play a central role in students' academic, personal, and social development. These skills involve the capacity to analyse situations critically, evaluate possible options, foresee consequences, and make decisions that align with one's values, responsibilities, and long-term objectives (Y. Lee, 2007). Within higher education, fostering these abilities is essential for preparing students to navigate complex academic and professional environments.

Educators play a pivotal role in cultivating responsible decision-making by promoting critical thinking, ethical reflection, and problem-solving through intentional pedagogical practices (CASEL, 2020b). Learning activities such as case-based discussions, simulations, real-world scenario analyses, and debates provide meaningful opportunities to apply these skills in realistic contexts (Firdaus & Malik, 2024).

By developing strong decision-making competencies, students become more adept at managing academic tasks, navigating interpersonal challenges, and making informed life choices. Ultimately, higher education institutions that emphasize this domain support the growth of confident, ethical, and resilient individuals capable of making thoughtful contributions to society (Brewer et al., 2019).

2.3.5 Incorporating Functional Emotional Strategies

Building upon core SEL competencies, incorporating functional emotional strategies means deliberately applying emotional strategies to facilitate academic engagement and social development. These strategies are designed to transform emotional experiences, both positive and negative, into productive outcomes that support learning, motivation, and interpersonal dynamics.

Educators who demonstrate emotional intelligence can recognize and respond constructively to students' emotional states, helping to reframe emotions such as anxiety, frustration, or disappointment into opportunities for growth and resilience (Naragon-Gainey et al., 2017). For instance, teaching students how to use calming techniques during stressful assessments or encouraging reflection after emotionally charged group activities can lead to improved self-regulation and adaptive coping mechanisms (Newman et al., 2024).

Integrating functional emotional strategies within EMI practices not only enhances students' academic performance but also promotes empathy, prosocial behaviour, and emotional resilience (Bavarian et al., 2013). As a result, the learning environment becomes more inclusive and supportive, fostering emotional security and overall well-being for both students and educators.

2.3.6 Promoting Social-emotional Support

Promoting social-emotional support is a fundamental aspect of the Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) framework, aimed at fostering a psychologically safe and empathetic learning environment. Central to this approach is the creation of inclusive EMI classroom cultures where students feel secure in expressing their emotions, seeking help, and engaging meaningfully with both peers and educators. Such environments are essential for nurturing students' emotional well-being and enhancing their overall learning experience.

Educators play a critical role in establishing and maintaining these supportive spaces by providing both individualized and group-based support, guiding students in setting and achieving personal and academic goals, and building relationships rooted in empathy, trust, and mutual respect (Nordengren, 2019). These intentional efforts affirm the importance of emotional experiences as integral to the learning process, reinforcing the value of emotional well-being alongside academic achievement.

Embedding social-emotional support into daily instructional practices enhances students' emotional resilience, sense of belonging, and overall academic engagement (Sointu et al., 2017). Through these supportive practices, educators contribute significantly to students' holistic development, fostering both emotional well-being and sustained educational success.

2.4 Previous Studies

Social-emotional learning has garnered significant global recognition for its important role in fostering students' academic success, emotional development, and social well-being across various educational levels and cultural contexts. Internationally, educators' perspectives and instructional practices have been central to assessing the effectiveness of SEL initiatives, with research highlighting both the benefits and challenges of implementation in diverse educational settings. In the Malaysian context, however, existing studies have focused on early childhood and primary education, revealing a notable gap in research on SEL implementation in higher education.

2.4.1 SEL Across Educational Stages and Cultural Contexts

Social-emotional learning is beneficial not only in early education but also throughout a student's academic journey and across cultural settings. It has been widely recognized for its positive impact on academic performance, emotional well-being, and social behaviour (Durlak et al., 2011). Implementing SEL during early childhood significantly enhances later success in school, college, and university (Denham et al., 2014). Furthermore, teachers who are attuned to students' emotional states are more effective in managing academic and behavioural challenges (Khazanchi et al., 2021).

Importantly, SEL is not limited to primary-level learners. It applies across diverse educational environments and cultural contexts, supporting students' holistic development (Biswas-Diener et al., 2011). Students in higher education who participate in SEL activities often experience greater acceptance by teachers and peers, along with constructive feedback (Denham & Brown, 2010). To ensure its effectiveness across various backgrounds, a culturally inclusive approach to SEL is essential, as it promotes relevance and adaptability within global educational contexts.

2.4.2 Educators' Role in Social-emotional Learning

Social-emotional learning has gained recognition as a vital component of holistic education. Educators play a central role in SEL implementation, whose attitudes, competencies, and classroom practices significantly influence students'

emotional and academic development. Understanding how educators contribute to SEL provides critical insight into creating emotionally supportive and academically enriching learning environments. Educators play a vital role in fostering social-emotional learning, as their positive emotions and interpersonal engagement contribute to a supportive classroom environment.

Research indicates that such an environment leads to improved educators' satisfaction, increased student motivation, and better academic outcomes (Pi et al., 2023). Research further highlights direct influence on students' social-emotional well-being, emphasizing the importance of proficiency in social-emotional competencies (Denston et al., 2022). Given the pivotal nature of educators in the educational process, their ability to incorporate social and emotional dynamics within the classroom emerges as a critical factor in promoting students' comprehensive well-being and academic success.

Barnes & McCallops (2019) found that educators emerged as central figures in the effective implementation of SEL programs. The findings indicated that teachers who held positive attitudes toward SEL were better equipped to promote students' existing skills and knowledge.

The study also emphasized that SEL interventions were found to support emotional regulation and were strongly linked to enhanced student engagement. Additionally, educators in the study stressed the importance of institution-wide support and the need for culturally responsive training before implementing SEL. These points highlight that successful integration of SEL requires not only teacher enthusiasm and commitment but also an institutional culture that promotes continuous professional development and collaborative implementation.

Ee & Cheng (2013) reported that teachers viewed themselves as facilitators and role models in the SEL process, emphasizing the importance of a student-centred learning environment. While many teachers expressed confidence in incorporating SEL, they also acknowledged that such practices were more easily integrated into subjects like English and Character Education than into more structured disciplines like Mathematics and Science. Among various competencies, self-awareness was seen as the most accessible, while self-management proved more challenging to teach. Key barriers included time constraints and challenges in integrating SEL with core academic subjects. These findings underscore the critical influence of educators' perceptions,

confidence, and subject-specific challenges in shaping the effectiveness of SEL practices in real-world classroom settings.

2.4.3 English-Medium Instruction in the Malaysian Higher Education

Malaysia's higher education system has expanded rapidly since independence, driven by strong state planning and a strategic ambition to become a regional education hub by 2025. While access to higher education has increased substantially, concerns regarding quality, equity, and graduate employability remain central to national policy agendas. The system encompasses a wide range of institutions, including public universities, private higher education institutions (HEIs), polytechnics, and community colleges, offering programmes from certificate to doctoral levels (Jinn et al., 2022). Currently, Malaysia has approximately 20 public universities and over 400 private HEIs, in addition to several international branch campuses (Ab-Rahman et al., 2022). The massification of higher education since the 1990s has been supported by key legislative frameworks, such as the Education Act 1996, the Private Higher Educational Institutions Act, and the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) Act, with the aim of widening participation and reducing outbound student migration (Béda & Kaosar, 2024). National policy blueprints, including the National Higher Education Action Plan (2007–2010), the National Higher Education Strategic Plan, and the Malaysia Education Blueprint (Higher Education) 2015–2025, emphasise access, quality, equity, internationalisation, and financial sustainability (Suo, 2023). In parallel, recent policy debates highlight the need for evidence-based policymaking and clearer alignment among competing higher education policy perspectives, including traditional, transformative, market-oriented, and socially responsible approaches (Sirat, 2023).

Within this broader context, English-Medium Instruction (EMI) has become an important feature of Malaysian higher education, particularly in public universities. Malaysia positions itself as an international education hub, hosting more than 170,000 international students from over 135 countries and actively promoting international branch campuses and cross-border academic programmes (Grapragasem et al., 2014). To support internationalisation and enhance graduate employability, English is used selectively as a medium of instruction alongside Bahasa Malaysia. Although Bahasa Malaysia is constitutionally designated as the national language and primary medium

of instruction, EMI has been reintroduced at the tertiary level as part of national language-planning and economic development strategies aimed at strengthening graduates' English proficiency (Ali, 2013). A significant policy milestone occurred in 1993, when Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad announced the reintroduction of English as the medium of instruction for science and technology courses in public higher education institutions (PHEIs), marking a shift toward greater use of EMI in strategically important disciplines (Zaaba et al., 2010).

Within this policy-driven and increasingly internationalised higher education landscape, English-medium instruction (EMI) aligns closely with Malaysia's ambition to become a world-class education and research hub and to enhance student and staff mobility (Lo & Othman, 2023). From the students' perspective, EMI is commonly associated with improved career prospects and a stronger capacity to engage with academic reading and research literature in English (Saeed et al., 2018).

Nevertheless, the successful implementation of EMI depends on well-designed policies, comprehensive teacher training, sustained language support, and the social and emotional learning (SEL) and emotional intelligence (EI) competencies of university lecturers. These competencies are essential for managing linguistic anxiety, fostering inclusive learning environments, and supporting equitable participation among students with diverse linguistic backgrounds. At the same time, universities must continue to navigate tensions between the expanding role of EMI and the constitutional status of Bahasa Malaysia, ensuring that internationalisation goals do not compromise linguistic equity and access within the national higher education system.

2.4.4 Previous Studies on Social-emotional Learning in Malaysia

Social-emotional learning has gained increasing attention worldwide as an essential part of student development, yet research on its implementation in Malaysia remains relatively limited. Most existing studies focus on early childhood and primary education, with relatively little attention paid to tertiary-level settings. Malaysian research has explored three major themes: cultural adaptation of SEL frameworks, educator perspectives and practices, and the development of assessment tools. Together, these studies provide valuable insights but also highlight significant gaps in higher education contexts.

A key focus of Malaysian research has been the cultural responsiveness of SEL approaches. Abd Hadi et al. (2023) argued that SEL interventions in Malaysia must be grounded in the CASEL framework but adapted to align with local cultural norms and values. Their qualitative study demonstrated that effective implementation requires sensitivity to communication styles, social expectations, and parental involvement, underscoring the need for culturally tailored models of SEL.

Another line of research emphasizes the role of educators as central facilitators of SEL. For instance, Sunar & Abd Rahman (2022) examined preschool teachers' practices and highlighted two themes: educators' awareness of children's social-emotional needs and the positive developmental outcomes linked to SEL. Similarly, Mohamed et al. (2020) surveyed early childhood educators and found that while teachers possessed a basic understanding of SEL concepts, they struggled with practical application and lacked sufficient training. These findings collectively stress the importance of professional development in strengthening educators' capacity to implement SEL effectively.

In addition, efforts have been made to develop and validate assessment tools for SEL in the Malaysian context. Im et al. (2015) introduced the Malaysia Social Emotional Competency Inventory (MySECI), which demonstrated strong reliability in capturing preschoolers' SEL skills across eight domains. While the tool provided an important foundation for evaluating children's competencies, the study also noted discrepancies between teacher and parent assessments, pointing to the influence of contextual perceptions on SEL evaluation.

Despite these valuable contributions, the overwhelming focus remains on preschool and early childhood settings, leaving a major research gap in higher education. There is limited evidence on how Malaysian university educators integrate SEL into teaching, or how these practices shape students' social-emotional growth, resilience, and academic engagement. Addressing this gap is crucial given the role of higher education in preparing students for adulthood and the workforce. Thus, the current study builds upon prior research by extending the discussion of SEL into the tertiary education context, particularly from the perspective of university educators.

Table 2:2
Summary of Key Studies on SEL in Malaysia

Author(s) & Year	Context/Population	Variables/Focus	Key Findings
Abd Hadi et al. (2023)	Various Malaysian schools	Cultural adaptation, CASEL framework	SEL must be culturally sensitive, tailored to local norms and values.
Sunar & Rahman (2022)	Preschool teachers (Selangor)	Educator awareness, children's SEL outcomes	Teachers recognized SEL importance; supportive environments enhanced growth.
Mohamed et al. (2020/2021)	Early childhood educators	Knowledge, understanding, and implementation of SEL	Moderate understanding; limited application; training needed.
Im et al. (2015)	Preschoolers (Johor Bahru)	MySECI assessment tool, SEL competencies	High reliability of MySECI; discrepancies between teacher and parent ratings.

2.4.5 Previous Studies on SEL Practices in Other Countries

Globally, social-emotional learning (SEL) has been widely studied across diverse educational systems, with an emphasis on its role in improving both student and teacher outcomes. Much of this research has concentrated on primary and secondary education, exploring themes such as educator readiness, cultural adaptation, implementation barriers, and intervention outcomes. Yet, despite increasing recognition of SEL's importance, studies at the tertiary level remain scarce. This review highlights international SEL practices from the most recent to earlier studies, thematically grouping their contributions and underscoring the distinctiveness of the current study.

Recent studies highlight the importance of teachers' own social-emotional competence in shaping their comfort and commitment to SEL. In the United Kingdom, Hamer et al. (2024) showed that relationship skills and self-compassion predicted teachers' confidence in delivering SEL, with primary teachers reporting greater comfort than secondary teachers. Similarly, Todd et al. (2022) found that American educators valued SEL but often lacked adequate training, raising concerns about implementation quality. (Oliveira et al., 2021), synthesizing 43 studies across North America and Europe, revealed mixed evidence on the effectiveness of teacher-focused SEL interventions, though improvements in well-being and professional functioning were noted. Together, these findings indicate that teacher readiness and identity critically shape SEL integration but remain underdeveloped in many contexts.

In Canada, Kilborn et al. (2024) emphasized that while teachers supported SEL, limited resources, training, and planning time constrained effective practice. Similarly, Burgin et al. (2023) highlighted the need to integrate culturally responsive instruction with SEL in Uruguay, particularly for linguistically diverse classrooms. In Singapore, (Liem et al., 2017) and Yang et al. (2021) showed that teachers not only implemented structured SEL frameworks but also modelled moral values and adapted practices to contextual constraints such as hierarchical school systems and resource limitations. These studies illustrate how cultural contexts mediate the effectiveness and adaptability of SEL programs.

Huynh et al. (2021) found that Vietnamese teachers faced a mismatch between national SEL policies and classroom practices due to inadequate guidelines and limited training. Similarly, Deli et al. (2021) in China reported that intervention effectiveness

varied depending on the instructor (psychology teachers vs. regular teachers) and delivery approach (TASSEL vs. standard SEL). Both studies underscore systemic and practical barriers that complicate SEL integration in rapidly evolving educational systems.

Beyond systemic challenges, several studies examined SEL's direct impacts on students. Yang et al. (2021) demonstrated that teacher-led inquiry in Singapore improved toddlers' self-regulation and conflict resolution. Deli et al. (2021) showed that SEL interventions reduced dropout intentions and learning anxiety, with differentiated effects based on facilitator type. Collectively, these findings highlight the potential of SEL to positively influence student outcomes, provided that interventions are well-designed and context-sensitive.

International evidence demonstrates that while SEL is globally valued, its implementation often faces challenges related to teacher training, resource limitations, and cultural adaptation. Importantly, most of these studies concentrate on primary and secondary education, with limited attention to higher education contexts. Given that university lecturers play a crucial role in shaping students' social-emotional growth during the transition to adulthood, investigating SEL practices in Malaysian universities addresses a critical gap. Unlike prior studies, this research focuses on how lecturers understand, implement, and navigate challenges in applying SEL within tertiary classrooms, offering insights that extend beyond school-level interventions to higher education.

Table 2:3
SEL Practices in Other Countries

Year	Country	Population / Context	Variables	Key Findings
2024	Canada	Educators in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta (Prairie Schools)	Attitudes toward SEL, SEL knowledge, job stress, resources, and current SEL practices	Positive attitudes linked to perceived feasibility of SEL; limited training, time, and resources constrained implementation (Kilborn et al., 2024).
2024	UK	Primary & Secondary Teachers	Emotional traits, relationship skills, self-compassion, comfort, and commitment to SEL	Relationship skills predicted comfort; self-compassion predicted commitment; primary teachers were more comfortable than secondary; teacher professional identity influenced SEL practices (Hamer et al., 2024).
2023	Uruguay	EFL Teachers	Cultural awareness, SEL integration, culturally responsive instruction	Teachers are aware of cultural factors; integrating CRI with SEL is important for diverse classrooms; professional development is key for inclusive SEL (Burgin et al., 2023).
2022	USA	K–12 Practitioners	SEL knowledge, curriculum components, implementation challenges	Teachers felt insufficiently trained; they emphasized the need for understanding SEL components for effective integration (Todd et al., 2022).
2021	Vietnam	Secondary School Teachers & Students	SEL curriculum alignment, teacher skills, and student social-emotional competencies	Gap between national curriculum and teacher skills; lack of guidelines and attention to student psychological needs hindered SEL effectiveness (Huynh et al., 2021).

2021	China	Grade 8 Students	Instructor type, intervention type, learning anxiety, dropout intention	TASSEL intervention by psychology teachers reduced dropout; standard SEL was better for learning anxiety; instructor type and delivery approach matter (Deli et al., 2021).
2021	North America & Europe	3,004 in-service preK–12 teachers	Teacher SEL competence, well-being, and psychological distress	SEL interventions had mixed outcomes; modest improvements in well-being and professional performance were observed (Oliveira et al., 2021).
2021	Singapore	Early Childhood Education	Teacher-led inquiry, conflict resolution, and self-regulation	Teacher-led approaches improved toddlers' self-regulation and conflict resolution; contextual factors (time, resources) influenced SEL implementation (Yang, 2021).
2017	Singapore	School Teachers	SEL framework implementation, teacher modelling, and moral values	Effectiveness depends on teachers' understanding and application; teachers model core moral values such as respect and responsibility (Liem et al., 2017).

2.4.6 Previous Studies on Emotional Intelligence among Educators

Emotional Intelligence (EI) has emerged as a vital construct in educational research due to its profound influence on teachers' professional behavior, classroom interactions, and overall well-being. Educators with high EI are better equipped to regulate their emotions, empathize with students, and navigate complex interpersonal situations, which enhances teaching effectiveness and supports a positive learning environment. Research has consistently linked higher EI to improved student-teacher relationships, reduced occupational stress, and greater educator resilience. This section critically examines previous studies on EI among teachers, highlighting thematic patterns, key variables, and gaps for future research.

Several studies emphasize the role of EI in reducing burnout and managing work-related stress. Mérida-López & Extremera (2017), through a systematic review of 13 empirical studies, found a consistent positive association between higher EI levels and lower burnout, stress, and negative affect. Their findings underscore the mediating role of workplace social support and positive affect, highlighting the importance of fostering emotional competencies in teachers through professional development initiatives.

Targeted EI training programs have also demonstrated effectiveness in enhancing teachers' emotional and professional competencies. Dolev & Leshem (2017) examined a two-year professional development program in Israel, showing that structured EI interventions can improve teachers' emotional competence, professional identity, and classroom interactions. Similarly, Safina et al. (2020) highlighted that enhancing EI skills enables teachers to manage emotions, empathize with students, resolve conflicts, and foster supportive learning environments. These studies collectively illustrate that EI is both teachable and instrumental in shaping positive educational outcomes.

Research also identifies demographic and contextual factors influencing EI levels. Cakirpaloglu et al. (2023) surveyed 997 primary and secondary school teachers, revealing that age and length of work experience were negatively correlated with trait EI. The study further identified perceived stress, subjective happiness, social support, and burnout as significant variables affecting EI, suggesting that older, more experienced teachers may require additional support to maintain high emotional

competence. Anna (2015) similarly found that while many teachers demonstrated average EI, significant variations existed, highlighting the need to integrate EI training alongside other professional competencies to enhance instructional effectiveness.

Despite robust evidence linking EI to teacher well-being and classroom effectiveness, research gaps remain. Most studies have been conducted in primary and secondary education contexts, with limited exploration of EI among university educators, particularly within Malaysia. Additionally, while interventions demonstrate that EI can be developed through training, less is known about the long-term impact of these programs on teaching practices, student outcomes, and institutional culture.

In conclusion, the literature consistently indicates that higher EI among educators supports better stress management, interpersonal relationships, and teaching effectiveness. Variables such as age, experience, social support, and emotional regulation skills influence EI, and targeted interventions can enhance these competencies. The current study addresses a critical gap by investigating the role of EI among Malaysian university lecturers, examining how their emotional and social competencies influence teaching practices, engagement strategies, and student well-being in higher education settings.

Table 2:4
Emotional Intelligence among Educators

Study	Year	Country	Participants	Variables	Key Findings
Cakirpaloglu et al.	2023	Turkey	997 primary & secondary teachers	Age, work experience, perceived stress, subjective happiness, social support, burnout	Negative correlation between EI and age/work experience; higher EI linked to lower burnout and stress. EI management helps prevent burnout.
Kilborn et al.	2024	Canada	Educators in Prairie Schools	Attitudes toward SEL, SEL knowledge, job stress, resources, and SEL practices	Positive attitudes toward SEL are associated with higher feasibility of implementation; lack of training, planning time, and resources are barriers.
Safina et al.	2020	Not specified	Teachers	Emotional intelligence, emotional stability, empathy, professional effectiveness	Teachers with higher EI better manage emotions, empathize, resolve conflicts, and create supportive learning environments.
Anna	2015	Not specified	120 primary school teachers	EI levels, teaching competencies	Most teachers had average EI; practical teaching skills were more challenging than theoretical knowledge; emphasizes need for EI development in professional training.
Mérida-López & Extremera	2017	Various (Systematic Review)	13 studies on teachers	EI, burnout, occupational stress, workplace support, positive affect	High EI consistently linked to lower burnout and stress; workplace social support mediates the EI-burnout relationship.

Dolev Leshem	&	2016	Israel	26	school educators	EI, professional classroom interactions	identity, and	Two-year EI training improved teachers' emotional competence, professional identity, and classroom behaviors.
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2.4.7 Previous Studies on the Affective Filter Hypothesis

Previous studies have consistently demonstrated the importance of affective conditions in facilitating second language learning. Research indicates that a supportive and low-stress learning environment plays a critical role in lowering learners' affective filters. Jawed et al. (2025) found that educators can effectively reduce learners' anxiety by providing positive and constructive feedback, encouraging risk-taking without fear of negative evaluation, and fostering emotionally safe and engaging classroom environments. Such practices contribute to increased learner participation and improved language outcomes.

Motivation has also been widely identified as a key affective factor influencing language learning success. Fortuna (2025) reported that learners with positive attitudes toward language learning are more likely to engage deeply with linguistic input and persist in overcoming learning challenges. Similarly, Chen (2022) emphasized that teaching approaches that are pleasant, situational, and motivating significantly enhance learners' language achievement, highlighting motivation as a central determinant of learning effectiveness.

Although Krashen's Theory of Second Language Acquisition has been criticized for limited empirical validation and challenges in measuring affective variables, empirical research continues to support the pedagogical value of the Affective Filter Hypothesis. Pauzan (2024) noted that despite theoretical criticisms, the hypothesis provides meaningful insights for language teaching practices. Empirical studies have shown that instructional approaches grounded in affective filter principles promote positive emotional experiences and reduce learners' anxiety, thereby supporting language acquisition (Chen, 2020). Additionally, Wang (2020) found that applying affective-supportive strategies enhances educators' teaching effectiveness and improves students' learning outcomes.

In English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) contexts, affective factors appear to be particularly influential due to increased linguistic demands and academic pressure. Yaoqing (2021) reported that raising educators' awareness of affective variables improves instructional effectiveness and classroom interaction in EMI settings. Furthermore, Lin et al. (2015) demonstrated that affective-supportive instructional

systems that acknowledge students' emotional states significantly enhance learners' motivation and interest in EMI learning environments.

The relevance of the Affective Filter Hypothesis has also been documented in higher education contexts in Malaysia, where EMI is widely implemented. Nath et al. (2017) highlighted that the use of English as the instructional medium often intensifies learners' anxiety and stress. Empirical evidence suggests that students who experience fear, stress, or low self-confidence in EMI classrooms face difficulties in comprehending instructional input and participating actively in learning (Al Zumor, 2019; Fadillah et al., 2025). These emotional challenges elevate learners' affective filters, limiting engagement and language development, and underscore the crucial role of educators in creating emotionally supportive and psychologically safe learning environments.

2.5 The Implementation of Social-emotional Learning Strategies

The successful implementation of Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) strategies is essential for bridging the gap between theoretical understanding and effective classroom practice. Effective implementation involves the active participation of educators, contextual adaptability, and multi-stakeholder collaboration. In educational settings, educators are central to this process, serving as facilitators who embed SEL into everyday classroom interactions. Drawing from international practices, such as those in the United States and India, this section explores practical strategies used by educators to foster emotional awareness, self-regulation, relationship skills, social awareness, and decision-making. The insights from these contexts offer valuable guidance for integrating SEL into Malaysian university classrooms, highlighting the transformative potential of SEL in promoting students' holistic growth and academic success.

Implementation, in the educational context, refers to a process that requires early stakeholder engagement, contextual flexibility, and awareness of internal dynamics such as educators' beliefs and knowledge (Gallagher et al., 2023). While teachers and school staff often serve as the primary implementers, a broader network of stakeholders, including policymakers, funders, program developers, trainers, consultants, students,

and their families, also play important roles in supporting SEL initiatives (Durlak, 2020).

In the United States, Khazanchi et al. (2021) describe how SEL is embedded within the academic curriculum through various evidence-based classroom practices. One such strategy involves the use of color-coded cards to assess students' emotional states. Each colour represents a specific emotional condition: yellow signals caution or mild distress, red indicates intense negative emotions such as anger or frustration, blue reflects sadness or fatigue, and green symbolizes calmness or contentment. Teachers respond to students displaying red or yellow cards by engaging them in reflective dialogue to uncover the underlying causes. This simple, visual approach supports early emotional intervention and fosters a supportive classroom climate. Furthermore, enhances students' wellbeing and supports positive developmental outcomes (Kutcher et al., 2016).

Self-regulation is another critical focus of SEL, as students who lack these skills often struggle academically (Cleary et al., 2008). In promoting self-management, educators encourage students to replace negative behaviours with constructive alternatives. For instance, teachers initiate discussions to help students identify and articulate negative behaviours such as excessive talking, bullying, or dishonesty, and collaboratively generate corresponding positive behaviours like appropriate participation, kindness, and honesty (Khazanchi et al., 2021). This reflective practice not only builds emotional control but also enhances classroom harmony.

Social awareness is cultivated through interactive group activities that require students to examine real-life social issues, such as experiencing betrayal by a friend. By discussing and presenting these themes, students develop empathy and learn to appreciate diverse perspectives, thereby enhancing their interpersonal awareness and empathy (Khazanchi et al., 2021; Yu et al., 2012). This heightened awareness enables teachers to foster a more inclusive and engaging learning environment.

Relationship skills are essential for academic and personal development. McGrath & Van Bergen (2015) noted that students' relationships with teachers significantly influence their social, emotional, and behavioural outcomes. To strengthen these skills, teachers implement creative strategies such as offline "paper tweets" that simulate social media exchanges to help students identify peers needing communication support. Additionally, exposure to diverse individuals fosters inclusivity, while

SMART goal-setting activities support students in planning their futures. Teachers play an active role in refining these goals, providing constructive feedback and encouragement (Khazanchi et al., 2021).

Decision-making skills are developed through experiential learning tasks. In Indian classrooms, for example, students are assigned vocational projects such as designing musical instruments from unconventional materials or managing small food stalls. These collaborative tasks help students apply their strengths and develop problem-solving and decision-making abilities. Teachers serve as mentors, guiding students to reflect on their choices and reinforcing positive social norms, self-awareness, and responsible behaviour (Khazanchi et al., 2021). These activities reinforce the integration of cultural, familial, and community values into students' decision-making processes.

While international studies highlight the implementation of SEL in education, its applicability in Malaysia requires contextual exploration. In Malaysian higher education, the integration of SEL is still at a developmental stage, with limited research on how lecturers actively embed these competencies into their teaching practices. To address this gap, the present study investigates the strategies Malaysian lecturers employ in their classrooms to foster SEL. By focusing on lecturers' practices, this study not only identifies current approaches but also provides insights into how SEL can be effectively localized and institutionalized within Malaysia's diverse higher education landscape.

2.6 Approaches Related to Social-emotional Learning

The implementation of Social-emotional Learning requires thoughtful approaches that align with the developmental needs of learners and the instructional capacities of educators. As SEL becomes increasingly recognized as a foundational component of holistic education, various models and strategies have emerged to guide its integration across different educational settings. These approaches vary in scope, from individual classroom practices to institution-wide frameworks, and are shaped by factors such as educator involvement, student diversity, and institutional support.

SEL encompasses the development and application of essential emotional and social competencies. To accommodate the varied needs of students across different

educational stages, a range of implementation strategies has been adopted. Effective SEL approaches acknowledge the critical role of educators in cultivating students' social-emotional development by integrating developmental theories, adaptive strategies, and reflective teaching practices (Brackett et al., 2019). Core elements of these approaches include the promotion of social competence, bullying and substance abuse prevention, civic engagement, emotional intelligence, conflict resolution, and social skills training, each requiring educators to take a proactive and central role in both delivery and facilitation (Osher et al., 2016).

A systemic approach to SEL implementation is widely recognized for its potential to enhance student outcomes by embedding SEL principles throughout the entire educational institution. This comprehensive strategy transcends the confines of individual classrooms, aiming to support students not only as learners but also as engaged citizens and responsible individuals (Oberle et al., 2016). An example of such a model is RULER, the identification, understanding, expression and regulation of emotions. As an evidence-based framework, RULER includes extensive training for educators and is designed to embed SEL into the curriculum through collaborative and developmentally appropriate methods that foster emotional well-being and social competence (Brackett et al., 2019).

Durlak et al. (2011) categorize four principal approaches to SEL interventions. The Class by Teacher approach involves interventions conducted by regular classroom teachers, utilizing structured curricula and instructional techniques to support students' emotional and social growth. In contrast, the Class by non-school personnel approach relies on external facilitators, such as researchers or trained consultants, to deliver classroom-based SEL programs. Multicomponent Programs combine classroom instruction with additional components, such as parental involvement or broader schoolwide efforts, offering a more integrated and holistic strategy. Lastly, universal interventions, while available to all students, are often voluntary, raising concerns about self-selection bias, smaller sample sizes, and limited duration. These characteristics warrant careful consideration when evaluating the long-term impact and generalizability of such programs.

In summary, the diverse approaches to Social-Emotional Learning, from classroom-based strategies to comprehensive system-wide frameworks, highlight the pivotal role of educators in shaping students' social-emotional growth. Within

Malaysian higher education, lecturers are at the forefront of implementing these practices, as they are responsible for integrating SEL principles into teaching, managing diverse classroom dynamics, and fostering supportive learning environments. This makes it crucial to understand not only what SEL practices Malaysian lecturers currently adopt, but also how these practices influence their teaching effectiveness and the challenges they encounter in sustaining them. By exploring lecturers' perspectives and experiences, this study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of how SEL can be meaningfully implemented in higher education, ultimately preparing graduates who are both academically capable and emotionally resilient.

2.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, this literature review underscores the pivotal role of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) in fostering students' holistic development across educational contexts, with growing relevance within EMI classes in Malaysian higher education institutions. Theoretical frameworks such as the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) model, Emotional Intelligence, and Affective Filter Hypothesis theory provide a foundation for understanding how SEL can be integrated into teaching practices. Empirical studies consistently highlight the benefits of SEL in enhancing academic achievement, emotional well-being, and social behaviours, reaffirming its global applicability and importance.

Despite these insights, research in the Malaysian higher education context remains limited, particularly regarding how lecturers themselves implement SEL practices, the ways in which these practices influence teaching effectiveness, and the challenges faced in sustaining them. While existing studies primarily focus on school settings or student outcomes, there is a clear gap in understanding the role of lecturers as key agents in embedding SEL within higher education classrooms. By addressing this gap, the present study builds upon the reviewed literature to investigate lecturers' SEL practices, their impact on teaching, and the challenges encountered, thereby contributing to both theory and practice in the field of higher education pedagogy.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Research methodology is the systematic framework used to address research questions. This chapter outlines the comprehensive methodological approach adopted to investigate the research problem of this study. It details the research design, population and sampling techniques, data collection instruments, data analysis strategies, as well as measures for ensuring validity, reliability, and ethical integrity. By employing a structured and scholarly approach, this chapter lays a solid foundation for uncovering meaningful insights into the SEL practices in Malaysia's higher education landscape.

3.2 Research Design

This study employs a mixed-method research design to investigate the extent to which educators in Malaysian public universities employ SEL competencies in their teaching instruction, practices, and challenges in integrating social-emotional learning (SEL). Mixed-methods research combines both qualitative and quantitative approaches, offering methodological pluralism, which often yields more robust findings than monomethod approaches (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Saunders, 2024). Specifically, the study utilizes an explanatory sequential mixed-method design, which combines quantitative and qualitative measures to provide a comprehensive understanding of SEL integration in Malaysia through the integrated analysis and interpretation of both data sets (Kandiero, 2022). This design allows for methodological triangulation, where the integration of multiple data sources enhances the credibility and depth of the research findings.

3.2.1 Quantitative Method

The quantitative research method focuses on measuring variables and analyzing relationships related to social-emotional learning (SEL) among university lecturers who

apply English in teaching (Barella et al., 2024; Heddle, 2002). Its main objective is to generate reliable, generalizable data through statistical analysis (Queirós et al., 2017). In this study, the method quantifies variables that define lecturers' SEL practices in EMI teaching instruction, aiming to generalize findings from a representative sample (Mohajan, 2020). A structured survey questionnaire is used for data collection, and the responses are analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 26. This approach directly supports the first and second research objectives, which explore the influence of educators' SEL practices on teaching instruction and the incorporation of educators' SEL competencies in teaching instruction. Using SPSS for systematic analysis enables the identification of key trends and patterns, offering insights into the current state of SEL implementation in Malaysian public universities.

A structured survey questionnaire was developed to collect data from lecturers in selected Malaysian public universities. The survey questionnaire includes multiple items addressing practices of SEL competencies within classroom settings. Responses were numerically coded and analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software (IBM SPSS version 26), allowing for descriptive and inferential statistical procedures. These analyses include frequencies, means, correlations, and regression models to evaluate relationships among variables and test the research hypotheses.

3.2.2 Qualitative Method

The qualitative method focuses on exploring and clarifying the strategies and challenges lecturers face in integrating social-emotional learning (SEL) into their teaching practices (Polkinghorne, 2005). This approach offers valuable insights into lecturers' SEL experiences that are not captured through quantitative methods (Campbell, 2014). In this study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with lecturers from selected Malaysian public universities. This method allowed participants to express their views openly, to understand how they implement SEL, and what challenges they encounter. The interview responses were transcribed and analyzed using NVivo software. A thematic analysis approach was applied to identify key themes related to SEL.

3.3 Population and Samples

The research population for this study comprises educators in public universities in Peninsular Malaysia. According to the Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Higher Education, there are 18 (out of 20) public universities located in Peninsular Malaysia, from where thirteen (13) universities were selected randomly (DOHE, 2023).

Table 3:1
Location of Universities

University Name		Zone
1	Universiti Malaya (UM)	Central Zone
2	Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM)	
3	Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM)	
4	International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM)	
5	Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM)	South Zone
6	Universiti Teknikal Malaysia Melaka (UTeM)	
7	Universiti Malaysia Terengganu (UMT)	East Zone
8	Universiti Malaysia Kelantan (UMK)	
9	Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin (UniSZA)	North Zone
10	Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM)	
11	Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM)	
12	Universiti Malaysia Perlis (UniMAP)	
13	Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM)	

3.3.1 Sample Selection Criteria

Lecturers who participated in this study were selected from the above-mentioned Malaysian public universities based on specific inclusion criteria, such as

- Must use English as the Medium of Instruction
- Must be a master's or PhD degree holder
- Active teaching status on the university website
- Teaching experience of at least one year

3.3.2 Simple Random Sampling for Survey

For the survey, the study used a simple random sampling technique in selecting 100 educators from the 13 chosen public universities in Malaysia. Scholars recommend a minimum of 100 respondents to ensure validity, reliability, and statistical strength (Memon et al., 2020; Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). This probability sampling method ensures that each eligible educator from each selected university had an equal chance of being selected, thereby minimizing sampling bias and enhancing the generalizability of the findings. A list of eligible lecturers who met the inclusion criteria was compiled from official university websites, and each lecturer was assigned a unique identification number. A computer-based random number generator (MS Excel's RANDBETWEEN function) was used to randomly select 100 distinct numbers. The lecturers whose names matched the selected numbers were then contacted and invited to participate in the survey, ensuring a fair and unbiased selection process.

3.3.3 Purposive Sampling Technique for Interviews

The study has employed purposive sampling to select respondents for interviews. According to scholars, 12 interviews are sufficient to achieve data saturation, ensuring that a comprehensive understanding of educators' perspectives is attained (Guest et al., 2006; Morgan, 2022). Twelve participants were chosen from the selected Malaysian public universities. These participants were selected intentionally for their teaching in higher education and their familiarity with social-emotional learning (SEL) practices. Potential participants were identified through academic staff

directories and professional networks. They were contacted via email and WhatsApp to ensure they met the inclusion criteria and were available for interview.

However, to ensure data triangulation, the study collected information from educators across diverse disciplines and regions in 13 selected public universities, enhancing the credibility and depth of the findings (Alboul et al., 1999).

3.4 Instrumentation

3.4.1 Quantitative Instruments

The survey questionnaire was developed based on a comprehensive review of the literature on Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), with particular emphasis on Emotional Intelligence (EI) theory, the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), and the Affective Filter Hypothesis (AFH). Two teaching instruction-related variables, such as Incorporating Functional Emotional Strategies and Promoting Social-emotional Support, were included based on recent research emphasizing their relevance in higher education EMI teaching contexts. For the survey, the questionnaire consisted of seven parts.

The first part gathered demographic information through four questions, identifying educators' gender, university, faculty, and years of teaching experience, to understand respondents' backgrounds and examine possible relationships between these factors and their SEL practices. The remaining six parts assessed six key variables related to Social and Emotional Learning (SEL): educators' understanding of emotions, managing emotions, relationship skills, decision-making skills, incorporating functional emotional strategies, and promoting social-emotional support. Each variable was measured using seven statements on a structured five-point Likert scale, resulting in a total of 42 Likert-scale items. These sections aimed to explore lecturers' actual classroom practices related to SEL. The questionnaire was distributed through Google Forms to facilitate online data collection and reach respondents from chosen universities across Malaysia.

3.4.2 Qualitative Instruments

For the interviews, a semi-structured questionnaire comprising open-ended questions that address the challenges in incorporating SEL and their suggestions for improvement. These questions were developed based on identified gaps in the existing literature and to address aspects that the survey might not fully capture. The semi-structured format provided both flexibility and depth, enabling participants to elaborate on their experiences, issues, and offer detailed insights. This approach strengthened the objectivity and trustworthiness of the qualitative findings, enhancing the overall credibility of the study (Wilson, 2014).

The interview guide was reviewed by academic supervisors and piloted with two panels of experts to ensure clarity and effectiveness of the scope and questions. Feedback from the pilot was used to refine the questions to ensure they were easy to understand and capable of eliciting rich, honest responses. However, a total of 12 interviews were finally conducted, seven face-to-face and five online, depending on the availability and preference of the participants. All interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent to ensure accuracy in data collection.

3.5 Data Analysis

3.5.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

The study involved data cleaning and coding to ensure accuracy and consistency before importing the dataset into SPSS for analysis. This step was essential to prepare the data for valid and reliable statistical interpretation. The survey data were analyzed to address Research Question 1, using a combination of descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics summarized the basic features of the data, including frequencies, means, and standard deviations.

To explore relationships between variables, test hypotheses, and identify significant group differences, a range of inferential statistical tests was applied. These included non-parametric methods, such as Spearman correlation, ordinal regression, Mann–Whitney U test, and Kruskal–Wallis H test, which were used to validate and support the findings.

Table 3:2
Quantitative Data Analysis

Hypothesis	IV	DV	Statistical tests
There is no relation between UE, ME, RS, DMS, FES, and SES	UE, ME, RS, DMS, FES, and SES	UE, ME, RS, DMS, FES, and SES	Spearman correlation
There is no influence of IV on DV	UE, ME, RS, and DMS	FES and SES	Ordinal regression
There is no influence of gender on SEL domains	Gender	UE, ME, RS, DMS, FES, and SES	Mann-Whitney U Test
There is no influence of the Teaching Year on SEL domains	Year of Teaching	UE, ME, RS, DMS, FES, and SES	Kruskal-Wallis H Test

3.5.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

All recorded responses were transcribed into Word files and cleaned to ensure accuracy and clarity before analysis. For qualitative data analysis, the study employed NVivo 12 and used the thematic analysis method, which is a widely accepted approach for identifying themes and patterns within qualitative data. This method was guided by (Braun & Clarke, 2006) A six-step framework, allowing for systematic organization, coding, and interpretation of the interview responses. The study followed these six steps as outlined below:

Table 3:3

Qualitative data analysis methods

Steps Number	Procedures
Step 1	Familiarizing with the Data: The transcribed interviews were read out to gain a deep understanding of the content and overall meaning.
Step 2	Generating Initial Codes: Using NVivo 12, initial codes were created by identifying meaningful features of the data relevant to the research questions.
Step 3	Searching for Themes: Codes were reviewed and grouped into broader themes that reflected patterns across the data.
Step 4	Reviewing Themes: The themes were refined by checking their alignment with the coded extracts and the full data set to ensure coherence and relevance.
Step 5	Defining and Naming Themes: Each theme was clearly defined and named to capture its essence and distinguish it from others.
Step 6	Writing in Thesis: The final themes were organized and written up as part of the thesis, with illustrative quotes from participants used to support each theme.

The overall research procedure (Figure 4) is as below.

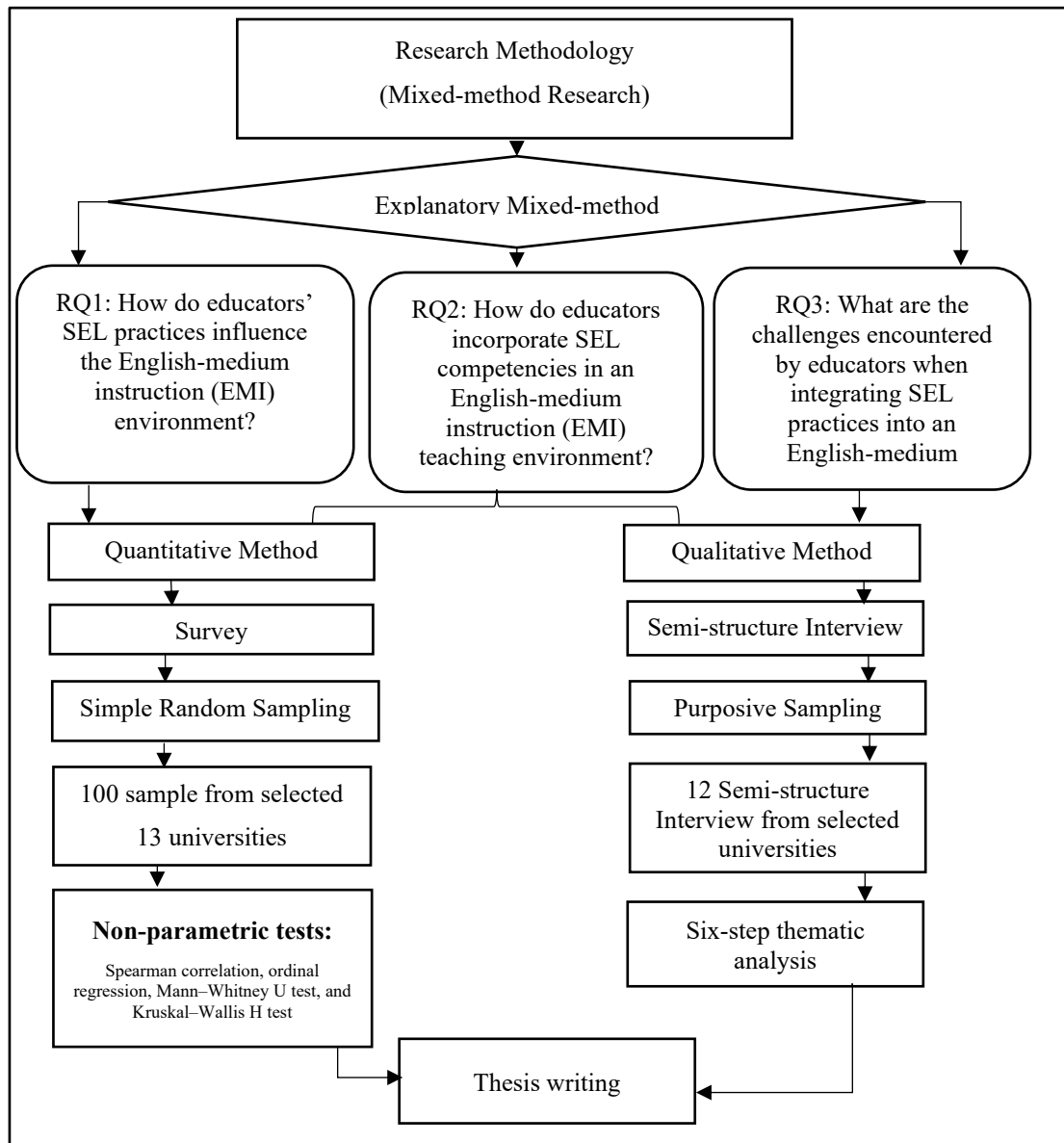


Figure 3:1 Overall Research Procedure

3.6 Validity

In this study, several strategies were employed to ensure that the findings were both accurate and trustworthy. Achieving validity depends on the use of appropriate measurement tools that accurately assess the concepts they are intended to measure (Sullivan, 2011). Therefore, the study instruments were reviewed and validated by field experts, and a pilot study was conducted to assess the clarity, consistency, and relevance of the items. These efforts contributed to establishing content validity, construct validity, and internal validity.

To ensure content validity, the survey questionnaire and interview guide were developed based on established theoretical frameworks and relevant literature on Social and Emotional Learning (SEL). Each item was carefully selected to comprehensively reflect the key SEL constructs relevant to Malaysian tertiary education. Expert reviewers evaluated the items for their relevance, clarity, and coverage, and minor adjustments were made based on their feedback to enhance the accuracy and appropriateness of the instruments.

Construct validity was ensured by designing questionnaire items that accurately represented the six core SEL variables under investigation. The items were adapted from existing validated instruments and contextualized for educators in the Malaysian higher education setting. Each item was critically assessed to ensure it aligned with the intended construct and did not overlap with unrelated concepts. This process helped confirm that the instruments measured what they were intended to measure, thus supporting the study's conceptual framework.

Internal validity was addressed through rigorous methodological procedures to ensure the credibility of the findings. For the survey, simple random sampling was used to obtain a representative sample and reduce potential selection bias. For the interviews, purposive sampling was applied to select participants with relevant knowledge and experience in SEL. Data collection followed standardized procedures to minimize variability and control for the influence of external factors. Additionally, thorough checks for data accuracy and consistency were carried out during the analysis phase to reduce of the biasness.

3.7 Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted prior to the main data collection to assess the safety of treatments, recruitment potential, and improve the quality and efficiency of the main study (In, 2017). The pilot study served as a critical step in ensuring that the questionnaire and interview protocols were appropriately designed to gather valid and reliable data aligned with the study's objectives.

A total of 10 university lecturers from UiTM Perlis and Kedah branches were selected to participate in the pilot phase. These participants met the inclusion criteria (e.g., holding a master's or PhD degree, teaching at the university level, and having at

least one year of experience). The survey was administered using Google Forms, while the interviews were conducted with two lecturers (one face-to-face at UiTM Perlis and one via online meeting at UiTM Kedah) using the same semi-structured guide intended for the main qualitative phase.

The pilot participants were encouraged to provide feedback regarding the clarity, wording, length, and relevance of the questions. Additionally, they were asked to highlight any issues encountered during the process, including confusion with response scales or difficulties in accessing and completing the form.

The feedback received from the pilot study led to several important refinements aimed at enhancing the quality and effectiveness of the research instruments. Minor rephrasing was made to several survey items to improve clarity and minimize the risk of misinterpretation, ensuring that participants could respond accurately. The instructions accompanying the questionnaire were expanded to provide clearer guidance on how to respond to Likert-scale items, which helped improve the overall user experience. Additionally, the sequencing of the survey questions was revised to enhance their logical flow and maintain coherence throughout the instrument. For the interview protocol, some open-ended questions were either simplified or merged to reduce redundancy, allowing for more focused and meaningful responses. These revisions collectively contributed to the refinement and validation of the research tools used in the main study.

The pilot study findings for each item, as detailed below, support the instrument's internal consistency:

3.7.1 Reliability of the Instrument

The reliability of the instrument was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha to determine the internal consistency of the scale. The analysis produced a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.898 and a standardized alpha value of 0.901, indicating a high level of reliability.

Table 3:4
Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on N of Items	Standardized Items
.898	.901	6

3.7.2 Item-Level Reliability Analysis

The reliability of the instrument was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha to determine the internal consistency of the scale. The analysis produced a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.898, and a standardized alpha value of 0.901, indicating a high level of reliability.

Table 3:5
Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Understanding Emotions	22.8843	2.609	.787	.649	.872
Managing Emotions	22.9014	2.659	.738	.602	.879
Relationship Skills	22.8786	2.762	.652	.465	.890
Decision-Making Skills	22.9586	2.386	.749	.575	.877
Incorporating Functional Emotional Strategies	22.9471	2.474	.742	.592	.877
Promoting Social Emotional Support	22.9586	2.492	.708	.521	.883

According to established benchmarks, alpha values between 0.8 and 0.9 are considered good, while values above 0.9 are considered excellent. Therefore, the results suggest that the six items in the scale are internally consistent and effectively measure the same underlying construct. The slightly higher value based on standardized items further reinforces the robustness and consistency of the instrument, confirming its suitability for assessing lecturers' social-emotional learning (SEL) practices.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

This study has prioritized ethical principles throughout all stages of research design, data collection, analysis, and report writing. Several key ethical considerations have been carefully addressed to protect participants' rights, confidentiality, and integrity.

3.8.1 Before Data Collection

Before data collection, the research proposal and an application for ethical approval were submitted to the UiTM Research Ethics Committee. The committee reviewed the documents and granted ethical approval under reference number REC/08/2024 (PG/MR/408).

3.8.2 During Data Collection

Prior to participation in any phase of the study, all participating educators were provided with clear and comprehensive information outlining the research objectives, procedures, potential risks, and anticipated benefits. Informed consent was subsequently obtained from each participant, signifying their voluntary agreement to take part in the study. Participants were also informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any point without facing any penalties or negative consequences. These ethical measures were undertaken to uphold the principles of autonomy, transparency, and respect for participants throughout the research process.

To protect participant privacy, all data were handled with strict confidentiality. Identifiable information was removed or dissociated from the research data, and pseudonyms were used in all reports and presentations. Any potentially identifying

details were either omitted or modified to maintain anonymity. Additionally, data were stored securely in password-protected files accessible only to the research team.

3.8.3 After Data Collection

Following data collection, all materials were securely stored to ensure confidentiality and data protection. Transcripts and survey data were stored in password-protected digital files accessible only to the research team. During the data analysis phase, all identifiable information was removed, and pseudonyms were used to protect participants' identities. The analysis was conducted objectively, without bias, ensuring that interpretations were based solely on participants' responses. These post-collection and analysis measures were implemented to uphold ethical standards related to confidentiality, responsible data handling, and integrity in research.

3.9 Conclusion

In conclusion, the research methodology outlined in this chapter provides a framework for investigating Social-emotional learning among educators in Malaysian public universities. By adopting a mixed-methods approach encompassing both qualitative and quantitative techniques, this study aims to comprehensively explore educators' socio-emotional competencies and their impact within academic settings.

CHAPTER 4

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the findings of the study, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data to address the research questions. The whole analysis is structured in alignment with the study's aims, providing a comprehensive exploration of educators' Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) practices and challenges they encounter within EMI classes in Malaysian higher education institutions. The quantitative section outlines statistical results using descriptive and inferential analyses to examine patterns and relationships among variables on lecturers' SEL practices. Following this, the qualitative section presents themes derived from participants' responses through thematic analysis, offering contextual insights into lecturers' experiences and perspectives. By adopting a mixed-methods approach, this chapter provides a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between statistical trends and individual perspectives. The final section critically discusses the findings, connecting them to existing literature, theoretical frameworks, and practical implications for higher education in Malaysia.

4.2 Quantitative Analysis

This section presents the quantitative findings of the study, focusing on seven key categories: demographic information of respondents, understanding emotions, managing emotions, relationship skills, decision-making skills, incorporating functional emotional strategies, and promoting social-emotional support. These categories reflect the core competencies of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) examined in the study. The analysis aims to assess the extent to which educators demonstrate these SEL competencies and explore how these competencies are reflected in their instructional practices. Both descriptive statistics (e.g., means, standard deviations) and inferential techniques (e.g., correlation and regression analyses) are employed to examine patterns and relationships within the data. The results offer

valuable insights into the interconnections among SEL dimensions and highlight their practical implications for teaching in Malaysian higher education settings.

4.2.1 Demographic Details

This subsection presents the demographic profile of the 100 lecturers who participated in the quantitative survey. The demographic variables examined include gender, university affiliation, teaching experience (in years), and faculty. These variables provide essential contextual information that supports the interpretation of findings related to Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) practices in higher education. Understanding the demographic distribution allows for more nuanced analysis, including potential differences in SEL engagement based on professional background, institutional context, and teaching experience.

4.2.1.1 Gender of Lecturers

The survey was conducted on 100 lecturers from public universities in Malaysia. Among the participants, 56% identified as male and 44% as female (Table 4:1). Although the distribution is not completely equal, it demonstrates a relatively balanced gender representation. Such a distribution provides a valuable basis for conducting comparative analyses of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) practices across genders.

Table 4:1
Gender Distributions

	Frequency	Percent
Male	56	56.0
Female	44	44.0
Total	100	100.0

The slight gender imbalance is attributed to the availability and willingness of respondents at the time of data collection rather than reflecting actual workforce proportions.

4.2.1.2 University

This study involved 100 lecturers who were actively engaged in English-Medium Instruction (EMI) across ten public universities in Peninsular Malaysia, as shown in Table 4:2. Among them, the most lecturers at 14.0% are from Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM). This is followed by Universiti Teknikal Malaysia Melaka (13.0%), Universiti Malaysia Kelantan (12.0%), and Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (12.0%).

Table 4:2
University Details

University Name	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Universiti Teknologi MARA	14	14.0	14.0	14.0
Universiti Sains Malaysia	9	9.0	9.0	23.0
Universiti Malaysia Kelantan	12	12.0	12.0	35.0
Universiti Utara Malaysia	7	7.0	7.0	42.0
Universiti Malaysia Terengganu	8	8.0	8.0	50.0
Universiti Putra Malaysia	7	7.0	7.0	57.0
Universiti Teknikal Malaysia Melaka	13	13.0	13.0	70.0
Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin	9	9.0	9.0	79.0
Universiti Teknologi Malaysia	12	12.0	12.0	91.0
Universiti Malaya	9	9.0	9.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

In addition to the top four contributors, other participating institutions included Universiti Sains Malaysia (9.0%), Universiti Malaya (9.0%), Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin (9.0%), Universiti Malaysia Terengganu (8.0%), Universiti Utara Malaysia (7.0%), and Universiti Putra Malaysia (7.0%).

However, universities from the northern, southern, eastern, western, and central regions of Peninsular Malaysia ensured a broad geographic representation. This diverse institutional participation enhances the validity and generalizability of the findings, capturing a wide range of perspectives on Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) practices in higher education. The regional spread also enables the exploration of contextual variations across different university environments.

4.2.1.3 Faculty Name

To understand the disciplinary diversity of SEL practices within English-Medium Instruction contexts, it is essential to examine the faculty affiliation of the respondents. The participants in this study were drawn from six distinct academic faculties, reflecting a wide range of teaching backgrounds and subject areas. As presented in Table 4:3, the largest proportion of participants (26.0%) was affiliated with the Faculty of Engineering, followed by the Faculty of Social Sciences (22.0%). Both the Faculty of Language Studies and the Faculty of Science contributed equally, each comprising 17.0% of the total sample.

Table 4:3
Faculty Details

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Faculty of Language Studies	17	17.0	17.0	17.0
Faculty of Engineering	26	26.0	26.0	43.0
Faculty of Health Science	6	6.0	6.0	49.0
Faculty of Science	17	17.0	17.0	66.0
Faculty of Social Science	22	22.0	22.0	88.0
Faculty of Business Studies	12	12.0	12.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

The Faculty of Health Sciences had the lowest representation, with only 6.0% of respondents, while the Faculty of Business Studies comprised 12.0%. This

distribution demonstrates the inclusion of both science-oriented and humanities-oriented academic disciplines, offering a comprehensive perspective on Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) practices across diverse teaching contexts.

Such disciplinary diversity enhances the generalizability of the study's findings and allows for a more nuanced understanding of how SEL practices may be influenced by faculty-specific pedagogical approaches and professional cultures. This is particularly relevant in Malaysian higher education, where faculty differences may shape educators' priorities, emotional interactions, and student engagement strategies.

4.2.1.4 Year of Teaching

Understanding the length of teaching experience among respondents is essential for interpreting lecturers' perspectives on Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) across English-Medium Instruction classrooms. Table 4:4 presents the distribution of respondents according to their years of teaching experience. The largest proportion of lecturers (37.0%) reported having 11 to 15 years of experience, followed by those with 16 years or more (25.0%) and 6 to 10 years (23.0%). The smallest group (15.0%) consisted of early-career lecturers with 1 to 5 years of experience.

Table 4:4
Year of Teaching

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1-5	15	15.0	15.0	15.0
6-10	23	23.0	23.0	38.0
11-15	37	37.0	37.0	75.0
16- more	25	25.0	25.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Notably, over 60% of the respondents had more than 10 years of EMI teaching experience, suggesting that the sample primarily consists of experienced educators. This provides a valuable lens through which to examine SEL practices, particularly as seasoned lecturers may have developed more refined pedagogical and interpersonal

strategies. At the same time, the inclusion of early-career academics enables a comparative perspective, offering insight into how SEL competencies are understood and practiced across different stages of academic professional development in Malaysian higher education.

4.2.2 Frequency Distributions of Variables

This subsection presents the frequency distributions of six variables: Understanding Emotions, Managing Emotions, Relationship Skills, Decision-Making Skills, Incorporating Functional Emotional Strategies, and Promoting Social and Emotional Support. Each variable consists of seven Likert-scale statements and was measured using a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree. The scale ranges from lower agreement (1) to higher agreement (5), as the statements reflect essential teaching practices that lecturers are expected to implement in the classroom.

4.2.2.1 Understanding Emotions

The descriptive statistics reveal a strong endorsement among educators for integrating emotional awareness into their EMI teaching practices. As shown in Table 4:5, participants consistently agreed on the importance of understanding and addressing students' emotions, with mean scores for all seven items ranging from 4.49 to 4.90 on a 5-point Likert scale. The median and mode values for all items were 5, indicating a high level of consensus.

Table 4:5
Understanding Emotions

	N	Mean	Mode	Median	Std. Deviation
I believe that being aware of my students' emotions is crucial for effective teaching.	100	4.90	5	5.0	.333
I think that understanding my students' emotions helps me better in my teaching approach to meet their needs.	100	4.67	5	5.0	.493
I am always concerned about my own emotions in class.	100	4.57	5	5.0	.655
I regularly assess my students' emotional state before starting class (eg how are you feeling today?).	100	4.49	5	5.0	.643
I validate students' emotions by listening to their problems.	100	4.55	5	5.0	.592
I understand that negative emotions are part of human life.	100	4.59	5	5.0	.588
I cultivate trusting relationships so that students feel comfortable expressing their emotions freely in class.	100	4.58	5	5.0	.572

The low standard deviations, which range from 0.333 to 0.655, along with a consistent range of 2, suggest minimal variability in responses, pointing to a consensus among the educators surveyed. This consensus emphasizes the significance educators place on emotional literacy within the classroom. Notably, while all aspects of emotional understanding were positively endorsed, the item on routinely assessing students' emotional states before class recorded the lowest mean score (4.49). This indicates that although educators recognize the value of emotional check-ins, it may not yet be a consistently practiced strategy.

Overall, the findings indicate that educators not only understand the importance of emotional awareness in teaching but also actively strive to implement it. They particularly emphasize building trust and validating students' emotions, highlighting a commitment to creating emotionally supportive learning environments.

4.2.2.2 Managing Emotions

This subsection examines the frequency distribution of lecturers' beliefs and practices related to managing emotions in their English-taught teaching. Table 4:6 presents the descriptive statistics for seven items measuring different aspects of emotional regulation in teaching. The results show a consistently high level of agreement among respondents, with mean scores ranging from 4.50 to 4.76.

Table 4:6
Managing Emotions

	N	Mean	Mode	Median	Std. Deviation
I can manage my own stress effectively to improve teaching quality.	100	4.76	5	5.0	.474
I use time management techniques (to-do lists, Pomodoro, etc.) to reduce the feeling of being overwhelmed.	100	4.50	5	5.0	.611
I take preparation before class to avoid teaching burnout.	100	4.67	5	5.0	.551
I give students a break/ cool-down moment before giving the next instruction.	100	4.52	5	5.0	.611
I appreciate students who complete tasks on time.	100	4.64	5	5.0	.523
I prompt students to take steps to relieve immediate stress in different ways (deep breaths, washing their face, and walking).	100	4.55	5	5.0	.642
I adapt my lesson plans by using various strategies to meet the students' emotional state of my students (e.g. music/jokes).	100	4.59	5	5.0	.605

The highest mean score (4.76) corresponds to the statement on managing personal stress to improve teaching quality, reflecting strong self-regulation practices among lecturers. Other high-scoring items include taking class preparation to prevent burnout (4.67) and recognizing students' timely task completion (4.64), indicating these are commonly adopted emotional management practices.

The uniformity in responses is further supported by the median and mode values, all of which are 5.0, suggesting strong consensus across all items. In addition, the relatively low standard deviations (0.474 to 0.642) point to minimal variation in responses, indicating a shared understanding and consistent application of emotional regulation techniques.

However, the data suggest that lecturers in Malaysian public universities are actively engaged in managing their emotions as part of their EMI teaching approach.

4.2.2.3 Relationship Skills

The descriptive statistics presented in Table 4:7 illustrate what lecturers in Malaysian public universities believe and practice regarding relationship skills with their students. The average scores range from 4.52 to 4.88, signifying high levels of agreement across all items. The highest mean score (4.88) reflects a strong consensus that building positive relationships with students is fundamental to creating a supportive and effective learning environment.

Table 4:7
Relationship Skills

Statement	N	Mean	Mode	Median	Std. Deviation
I believe that building strong relationships with my students is fundamental for creating a supportive learning environment.	100	4.88	5	5.0	.327
I understand that active listening to students' views is essential for establishing rapport with my students.	100	4.56	5	5.0	.538
I believe that fostering a teamwork spirit among students promotes a sense of belonging in the classroom.	100	4.63	5	5.0	.614
I dedicate time and effort to getting to know each of my students individually.	100	4.52	5	5.0	.611
I strongly ignore favoritism among students to ensure collaborative learning.	100	4.69	5	5.0	.598
I facilitate classroom discussions that encourage students to share their perspectives respectfully.	100	4.54	5	5.0	.610
I equip students with the appropriate skills in conflicts/challenges with others, serving as mediators.	100	4.57	5	5.0	.655

All items report a median and mode of 5.0, indicating strong consensus among lecturers regarding the importance of relationship-building strategies. The relatively low standard deviations (ranging from 0.327 to 0.655) suggest consistency in responses and a shared understanding among participants.

While all statements received positive responses, slightly lower mean scores were observed for items such as getting to know each student individually (4.52) and facilitating respectful classroom discussions (4.54). These results may reflect the practical challenges of implementing such practices consistently, especially in large or diverse classroom settings. However, these efforts contribute significantly to fostering a positive and collaborative learning environment in higher education.

4.2.2.4 Decision-Making Skills

University lecturers in Malaysia demonstrate strong beliefs and consistent practices in promoting decision-making skills among students. As presented in Table 4:8, the mean scores for all seven statements range from 4.31 to 4.68, suggesting a generally high level of agreement among respondents. These findings reflect that many lecturers integrate effective instructional methods aligned with the principles of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), particularly in nurturing students' responsible decision-making abilities. The highest mean score ($M = 4.68$) corresponds to the statement, "I make a plan for each lesson considering that my students have different abilities," indicating that most educators thoughtfully design inclusive lesson plans that cater to diverse student needs.

Table 4:8
Decision-Making Skills

Statement	N	Mean	Mode	Median	Std. Deviation
I make a plan for each lesson, considering that my students have different abilities.	100	4.68	5	5.0	.601
I get feedback from students to modify my weak lesson practices.	100	4.31	5	4.0	.720
I support students in setting effective study plans for the full semester based on previous exam results.	100	4.63	5	5.0	.597
I assign tasks where students analyze multiple perspectives from others.	100	4.49	5	5.0	.611
I create a classroom culture where mistakes are viewed as opportunities for learning and growth.	100	4.61	5	5.0	.567
I always encourage questioning me, raising critical thinking.	100	4.54	5	5.0	.593
I foster open-ended questions that enhance a sense of curiosity among students.	100	4.57	5	5.0	.640

Conversely, the lowest mean ($M = 4.31$) is associated with the item on modifying weak lesson practices based on student feedback. While the mode for this item remains high (Mode = 5), the slightly lower mean and higher standard deviation (.720) suggest some variability in how consistently lecturers use student feedback to improve their teaching. This may point to an area for professional development in reflective teaching practices. Overall, the data show that educators foster environments where students are encouraged to think critically, explore diverse perspectives, and learn from mistakes.

4.2.2.5 Incorporating Functional Emotional Strategies

University lecturers incorporate functional emotional strategies into their English-language-mediated teaching practices to foster a supportive and emotionally responsive learning environment. As shown in Table 4:9, the mean scores for all seven statements range from 4.48 to 4.75, indicating a high level of agreement among respondents. These findings suggest that lecturers hold positive attitudes toward creating a caring, inclusive, and respectful classroom atmosphere. The highest mean score ($M = 4.75$) was reported for the item “I can reframe negative behavior in my classroom as an opportunity to understand my students’ needs,” reflecting a strong commitment to empathetic classroom management. This suggests that educators tend to view student misbehavior not simply as a disruption but as a meaningful signal that warrants deeper understanding and support.

Table 4:9
Functional Emotional Strategies

Statement	N	Mean	Mode	Median	Std. Deviation
I can reframe negative behavior in my classroom as an opportunity to understand my students' needs.	100	4.75	5	5.0	.557
I avoid unnecessary talk in class to keep students motivated.	100	4.50	5	5.0	.674
I guide my students on how to express their feelings calmly and respectfully during difficult moments.	100	4.51	5	5.0	.611
I incorporate diverse perspectives in my lessons where all students feel valued and respected.	100	4.53	5	5.0	.611
I make a point to provide compliments to my students, highlighting their strengths.	100	4.48	5	5.0	.627
I facilitate activities that prompt teamwork where students feel empowered to help each other.	100	4.57	5	5.0	.607
I prioritize building trust with my students by being empathetic and approachable to my students.	100	4.57	5	5.0	.590

Other statements with similarly high mean values, such as “I prioritize building trust with my students by being empathetic and approachable” ($M = 4.57$) and “I facilitate activities that prompt teamwork where students feel empowered to help each other” ($M = 4.57$), demonstrate that lecturers actively promote emotional safety, collaboration, and interpersonal growth among learners.

The relatively low variation in responses (standard deviations ranging from 0.557 to 0.674) indicates a strong consistency in how lecturers apply these emotional strategies in their teaching. This consistency reinforces the view that functional emotional strategies are commonly practiced and widely accepted among educators in Malaysian public universities.

Overall, the results reflect a widespread effort among lecturers to create emotionally responsive classrooms by fostering empathy, promoting positive student interactions, and helping students express their emotions constructively.

4.2.2.6 Promoting Social Emotional Support

Lecturers believe in and actively practice social and emotional support strategies as part of their teaching. As shown in Table 4:10, the mean scores for the seven related statements range from 4.35 to 4.70, indicating a generally high level of agreement among the 100 respondents.

Table 4:10
Promoting Social Emotional Support

	N	Mean	Mode	Median	Std. Deviation
I encourage peer support by fostering a sense of community through diverse group work.	100	4.70	5	5.0	.595
I encourage opportunities for students to express their emotions through creative platforms (e.g. drawing, poetry, journaling).	100	4.35	4	4.0	.609
I offer individualized support/ attention to students who may struggle socially and emotionally.	100	4.53	5	5.0	.703
I teach effective strategies for resolving agreement /disagreement in class.	100	4.45	5	5.0	.657
I establish classroom norms with students, emphasizing values (respect and empathy).	100	4.63	5	5.0	.614
I use effective techniques to reduce learning stress in class (e.g., music, jokes, artistic expression, etc.).	100	4.53	5	5.0	.674
I seek feedback about what works best for students to improve their emotional support.	100	4.64	5	5.0	.578

The highest mean score ($M = 4.70$) was recorded for the statement “I encourage peer support by fostering a sense of community by diverse group work,” suggesting that many lecturers emphasize collaborative learning as a way to build a sense of belonging and mutual support among students. Both the median and mode for this item are 5, reflecting strong and consistent agreement.

In contrast, the lowest mean score ($M = 4.35$) pertains to “I encourage opportunities for students to express their emotions through creative platforms (e.g. drawing, poetry, journaling),” which may indicate that such methods are employed less frequently or may not be prioritized in comparison to other support strategies. The slightly lower mode (Mode = 4) for this item also reflects some variation in responses.

Other statements, such as “I seek feedback about what works best for students to improve their emotional support” ($M = 4.64$) and “I establish classroom norms with students, emphasizing values (respect and empathy)” ($M = 4.63$), show high levels of agreement, demonstrating that many educators are intentional about creating emotionally safe learning environments. The standard deviation values, which range from 0.578 to 0.703, indicate relatively low variation, suggesting consistent practices across respondents. Overall, the findings suggest that lecturers consistently promote emotional and social well-being in their classrooms.

4.2.3 Data Normality Test Results

Normality tests were conducted for all six Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) variables to determine the suitability of statistical techniques for the analysis. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests were applied to assess the distribution of the data (Habibzadeh, 2024).

Table 4:11
Tests of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnova			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Understanding Emotions	.173	100	.000	.876	100	.000
Managing Emotions	.202	100	.000	.882	100	.000

Relationship Skills	.165	100	.000	.886	100	.000
Decision-Making Skills	.182	100	.000	.867	100	.000
Incorporating Functional Emotional Strategies	.222	100	.000	.854	100	.000
Promoting Social and Emotional Support	.173	100	.000	.887	100	.000

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

As shown in Table 4:11, both the Kolmogorov–Smirnov and Shapiro–Wilk tests returned statistically significant results ($p < .001$) for all variables: Understanding Emotion, Managing Emotion, Relationship Skills, Decision-Making Skills, Incorporating Functional Emotional Strategies, and Promoting Social Emotional Support. Specifically, Shapiro–Wilk statistics ranged from .854 to .887, with all associated p-values equal to .000, indicating significant deviation from a normal distribution. Similarly, Kolmogorov–Smirnov statistics ranged from 0.165 to 0.222, also with p-values less than 0.001. These consistent results across both tests confirm that the data for each variable does not follow a normal distribution.

Given the violation of the normality assumption, it was deemed appropriate to proceed with nonparametric statistical analyses in the subsequent sections. To answer the research questions, various nonparametric tests were employed, including Spearman’s rho correlation to explore relationships among SEL variables, ordinal regression to predict ordinal outcomes, Mann-Whitney U tests to compare differences between two groups, and the Kruskal-Wallis H test to examine differences across multiple groups.

4.2.4 Correlation Analysis

4.2.4.1 Nonparametric correlation: Spearman’s rho

This study applies a nonparametric correlation test, Spearman’s rho, to examine the relationships among the variables as the data are ordinal and not normally

distributed. Spearman's rho is suitable for assessing the strength and direction of associations between variables when the assumptions of parametric tests are not met (Arends & Perrone, 2025).

Table 4:12 presents the Spearman's rho correlation coefficients among the six SEL domains: Understanding Emotion, Managing Emotion, Relationship Skills, Decision-Making Skills, Incorporating Functional Emotional Strategies, and Promoting Social Emotional Support. All correlations are positive and statistically significant at the 0.01 level, indicating that as one competency increases, the others tend to improve as well.

Table 4:12
Spearman's rho

			Understanding Emotions	Managing Emotions	Relationship Skills	Decision- Making Skills	Incorporating Functional Strategies	Promoting Social Emotional Support
Spearman's rho	Understanding Emotions	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.675**	.575**	.604**	.527**	.450**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
		N	100	100	100	100	100	100
	Managing Emotions	Correlation Coefficient	.675**	1.000	.684**	.632**	.468**	.467**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000	.000	.000	.000
		N	100	100	100	100	100	100
	Relationship Skills	Correlation Coefficient	.575**	.684**	1.000	.596**	.502**	.480**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.	.000	.000	.000

	N	100	100	100	100	100	100
Decision-Making Skills	Correlation Coefficient	.604**	.632**	.596**	1.000	.648**	.567**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.	.000	.000
	N	100	100	100	100	100	100
Incorporating Functional Emotional Strategies	Correlation Coefficient	.527**	.468**	.502**	.648**	1.000	.621**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.	.000
	N	100	100	100	100	100	100
Promoting Social Emotional Support	Correlation Coefficient	.450**	.467**	.480**	.567**	.621**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.
	N	100	100	100	100	100	100

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Notably, Understanding Emotions shows strong correlations with Managing Emotions ($\rho = .675$), Relationship Skills ($\rho = .575$), and Decision-Making Skills ($\rho = .604$), suggesting that emotional awareness is closely linked to emotional regulation and interpersonal skills. Managing Emotions is also highly associated with Relationship Skills ($\rho = .684$) and Decision-Making Skills ($\rho = .632$), emphasizing the interconnected nature of emotional control and effective decision-making. The strongest correlation is found between Decision-Making Skills and Incorporating Functional Emotional Strategies ($\rho = .648$), highlighting the critical role of emotional strategies in making sound decisions.

In conclusion, the results demonstrate that SEL domains are significantly and positively interrelated, supporting the notion that improvements in one area may reinforce development in others. These findings underscore the importance of addressing SEL competencies as a cohesive and integrated framework rather than as isolated skills.

4.2.5 Ordinal Regression: Incorporating Functional Emotional Strategies

An ordinal regression analysis was conducted to examine how the SEL domains, Understanding Emotion, Managing Emotions, Relationship Skills, and Decision-Making Skills, predict lecturers' use of Functional Emotional Strategies. This nonparametric method is appropriate given the ordinal nature of the Likert-scale data and the violation of normality assumptions. The analysis includes five components: Model Fitting Information, Goodness-of-Fit, Pseudo R-Square, Parameter Estimates, and the Test of Parallel Lines, providing a comprehensive evaluation of model performance and predictor effects.

4.2.5.1 Model Fitting Information

An ordinal regression analysis using the logit link function was conducted to assess the influence of Understanding Emotion, Relationship Skills, and Decision-Making Skills (independent variables) on Incorporating Functional Emotional Strategies (dependent variable). This analysis aimed to determine whether the model

including these SEL competencies provides a significantly better fit than a model with no predictors.

As shown in Table 4:13, the Final model yielded a -2 Log Likelihood value of 348.635, a substantial improvement over the Intercept-only model's value of 423.047. The associated Chi-Square value is 74.412 with 4 degrees of freedom, and this result is statistically significant at $p < .001$.

Table 4:13
Model Fitting Information

Model	-2 Log Likelihood	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Intercept Only	423.047			
Final	348.635	74.412	4	.000
Link function: Logit.				

The significant chi-square value ($p < .001$) indicates that the model including Understanding Emotion, Relationship Skills, and Decision-Making Skills significantly improves the prediction of lecturers' practices in Incorporating Functional Emotional Strategies, compared to a model without predictors. Therefore, the model is appropriate for further analysis of the effects of each independent variable on the dependent outcome.

4.2.5.2 Goodness-of-Fit

The Goodness-of-Fit statistics evaluate how well the ordinal regression model fits the observed data. In this analysis (Table 4:14), both Pearson and Deviance chi-square statistics are reported to assess model adequacy under the logit link function.

Table 4:14
Goodness-of-Fit

	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Pearson	1556.778	1064	.000

Deviance	344.136	1064	1.000
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Link function: Logit.

The Deviance statistic is non-significant ($p = 1.000$), suggesting that the model fits the data well, as there is no statistically significant difference between the observed and predicted values. However, the Pearson statistic is significant ($p < .001$), which may indicate some model misfit. Nonetheless, in ordinal regression, the Deviance statistic is generally considered more reliable, particularly when sample sizes are moderate to large. In this study, the sample size is 100 respondents, which falls within the moderate range; thus, the model demonstrates an acceptable fit to the observed data.

4.2.5.3 Pseudo R-Square

The Pseudo R-Square values indicate the proportion of variance in the dependent variable, “Incorporating Social and Emotional Strategies”, explained by the independent variables (Understanding Emotion, Relationship Skills, and Decision-Making Skills). Although these values are not interpreted in the same way as R^2 in linear regression, they offer useful insight into the model’s explanatory power.

Table 4:15
Pseudo R-Square

Cox and Snell	.525
Nagelkerke	.532
McFadden	.174

Link function: Logit.

According to Table 4:14, the Nagelkerke R^2 value of .532 suggests that approximately 53.2% of the variance in the likelihood of lecturers incorporating social and emotional strategies can be explained by the combined effects of the three predictor variables. The Cox and Snell R^2 supports this with a slightly lower value (.525), while the McFadden R^2 value of .174 is considered acceptable for models involving human behavior, where values between 0.2 and 0.4 indicate a good fit. However, the model

demonstrates a moderately strong explanatory power, indicating that the selected SEL competencies are meaningful predictors of how lecturers incorporate emotional and social strategies in their teaching practices.

4.2.5.4 Parameter Estimates

The results of the ordinal regression analysis, presented in the Table 4:16, examined the predictive effects of three key Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) competencies, Understanding Emotion, Relationship Skills, and Decision-Making Skills, on the likelihood of lecturers incorporating Functional Emotional Strategies in their English-mediated teaching practices. The model used the logit link function and demonstrated that several predictors had statistically significant effects.

Table 4:16
Parameter Estimates

Parameter Estimates								
		Estimate	Std. Error	Wald	df	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
							Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Threshold	[FES = 3.00]	20.809	3.465	36.059	1	.000	14.017	27.601
	[FES = 3.29]	22.311	3.443	41.981	1	.000	15.562	29.059
	[FES = 3.57]	22.882	3.467	43.553	1	.000	16.086	29.678
	[FES = 3.71]	23.365	3.495	44.701	1	.000	16.515	30.214
	[FES = 3.86]	24.416	3.570	46.767	1	.000	17.419	31.414
	[FES = 4.00]	25.630	3.664	48.926	1	.000	18.448	32.812
	[FES = 4.14]	26.274	3.708	50.217	1	.000	19.007	33.541
	[FES = 4.29]	26.670	3.733	51.051	1	.000	19.354	33.986
	[FES = 4.43]	27.185	3.764	52.160	1	.000	19.807	34.562

	[FES = 4.57]	28.712	3.861	55.309	1	.000	21.145	36.278
	[FES = 4.71]	29.526	3.907	57.114	1	.000	21.869	37.184
	[FES = 4.86]	31.187	3.984	61.286	1	.000	23.379	38.995
Location	UE	2.245	.831	7.294	1	.007	.616	3.874
	ME	-.396	.817	.235	1	.628	-1.997	1.205
	RS	1.664	.716	5.397	1	.020	.260	3.068
	DMS	2.670	.614	18.876	1	.000	1.465	3.874
Link function: Logit.								

Notably, Understanding Emotions emerged as a significant positive predictor (Estimate = 2.245, $p = .007$), indicating that lecturers who report higher emotional awareness are more likely to adopt emotional strategies in their instructional approaches. Similarly, Relationship Skills had a significant positive association with the outcome variable (Estimate = 1.664, $p = .020$), suggesting that the ability to build positive interpersonal relationships contributes meaningfully to the use of functional emotional practices. The strongest effect was observed for Decision-Making Skills (Estimate = 2.670, $p < .001$), underscoring that sound decision-making plays a crucial role in enabling educators to implement emotionally supportive teaching strategies. In contrast, Managing Emotions did not show a statistically significant effect (Estimate = -0.396 , $p = .628$), implying that, when controlling for the other competencies, its contribution to the model was not meaningful. These findings collectively highlight the interconnected role of emotional understanding, relational competence, and effective decision-making in enhancing lecturers' use of emotionally supportive English-mediated teaching strategies, which are critical components of Social and Emotional Learning in higher education.

4.2.5.5 Test of Parallel Lines_a

The Test of Parallel Lines assesses the proportional odds assumption of ordinal regression, which posits that the relationship between each pair of outcome categories is the same for all levels of the predictor variables. In other words, it tests whether the slope coefficients are equal across all thresholds of the dependent variable. As shown in Table 4:17, the null hypothesis that the location parameters are the same across response categories was rejected, $\chi^2(44) = 152.343$, $p < .001$.

Table 4:17

Test of Parallel Lines_a

Model	-2 Log Likelihood	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Null Hypothesis	348.635			
General	196.291b	152.343c	44	.000
The null hypothesis states that the location parameters (slope coefficients) are the same across				

response categories.

a. Link function: Logit.

b. The log-likelihood value cannot be further increased after the maximum number of step-halving.

c. The Chi-Square statistic is computed based on the log-likelihood value of the last iteration of the general model. Validity of the test is uncertain.

This indicates a violation of the proportional odds assumption, suggesting that the relationship between the predictors and the dependent variable is not consistent across different levels of the outcome. Additionally, a note in the output indicates that the log-likelihood value could not be further increased after the maximum number of step-halving iterations, raising some uncertainty about the test's validity. While this result calls for caution in interpreting the ordinal regression model under the assumption of proportional odds, it does not necessarily invalidate the model. Alternative approaches, such as generalized ordered logit models or multinomial logistic regression, may be considered in future studies to address this limitation and better capture the variation across response categories.

4.2.6 Ordinal Regression: Promoting Social Emotional Support

Building upon the previous analysis that examined how SEL domains contribute to the incorporation of functional emotional strategies, this section explores how the same domains predict lecturers' efforts in promoting social and emotional support in the EMI classroom. The analysis comprised five key components: Model Fitting Information, Goodness-of-Fit, Pseudo R-Square, Parameter Estimates, and the Test of Parallel Lines.

4.2.6.1 Model Fitting Information

To determine whether lecturers' Social Emotional Learning (SEL) competencies, such as Understanding Emotion, Managing Emotions, Relationship Skills, and Decision-Making Skills, significantly predict their efforts in promoting

Social Emotional Support, an ordinal regression analysis was conducted using the logit link function. In Table 4:18, the Final model yielded a -2 Log Likelihood value of 371.392, which represents a notable improvement over the Intercept-only model's value of 428.070. The difference between the two models resulted in a Chi-Square value of 56.678 with 4 degrees of freedom, and this was statistically significant at $p < .001$.

Table 4:18
Model Fitting Information

Model	-2 Log Likelihood	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Intercept Only	428.070			
Final	371.392	56.678	4	.000
Link function: Logit.				

This significant improvement indicates that the inclusion of the four SEL domains significantly enhances the model's ability to predict the dependent variable. Therefore, the final model provides a meaningful framework for further exploration of the individual predictors' effects.

4.2.6.2 Goodness-of-Fit

The Goodness-of-Fit results evaluate whether the ordinal regression model adequately represents the observed data. The Table 4:19 shows two key tests were examined: the Pearson Chi-Square and the Deviance statistic. The Pearson Chi-Square value was 1000.747 with 1064 degrees of freedom, yielding a non-significant p-value of .917. Similarly, the Deviance statistic was 359.491 with 1064 degrees of freedom, and the corresponding p-value was 1.000. Since both p-values are greater than .05, the null hypothesis that the model fits the data well cannot be rejected.

Table 4:19
Goodness-of-Fit

	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Pearson	1000.747	1064	.917

Deviance	359.491	1064	1.000
Link function: Logit.			

These findings indicate that the model's predicted values align closely with the actual data, suggesting a good overall model fit. As a result, the model is considered appropriate for further interpretation of individual predictor effects.

4.2.6.3 Pseudo R-Square

The Pseudo R-Square values provide an indication of how much variation in the dependent variable is explained by the model, although they should not be interpreted in the same way as traditional R^2 values in linear regression. According to Table 4:20, the Cox and Snell value is .433, and the Nagelkerke value is .438, suggesting that the predictors explain approximately 43%–44% of the variance in lecturers' practices for promoting Social Emotional Support. The McFadden value is .128, which is considered acceptable for models in the social sciences, where values between 0.1 and 0.2 often indicate a reasonable model fit.

Table 4:20
Pseudo R-Square

Cox and Snell	.433
Nagelkerke	.438
McFadden	.128
Link function: Logit.	

Although these values do not imply a perfect fit, they suggest that the model has a moderate explanatory power and is useful for understanding the relationship between SEL competencies and the promotion of social-emotional support strategies.

4.2.6.4 Parameter Estimates

The parameter estimates derived from the ordinal regression analysis offer insights into the predictive influence of the four SEL domains on lecturers' practices in promoting Social Emotional Support. Table 4:21 shows that among the predictors, Relationship Skills (Estimate = 1.758, $p = .013$) and Decision-Making Skills (Estimate = 2.059, $p < .001$) were found to be statistically significant. These findings suggest that lecturers with stronger relationship-building capabilities and decision-making abilities are more likely to implement strategies that foster Social Emotional Support in their teaching practices. The positive coefficients indicate an increased likelihood of higher levels of the dependent variable as these predictor values increase.

Table 4:21
Parameter Estimates

Estimate	Std. Error	Wald	df	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval			
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Threshold	[SES = 3.14]	16.555	3.237	26.157	1	.000	10.210	22.899
	[SES = 3.29]	17.525	3.184	30.292	1	.000	11.284	23.766
	[SES = 3.57]	18.592	3.207	33.612	1	.000	12.307	24.877
	[SES = 3.71]	18.945	3.223	34.562	1	.000	12.629	25.261
	[SES = 3.86]	19.612	3.260	36.196	1	.000	13.223	26.001
	[SES = 4.00]	20.728	3.332	38.710	1	.000	14.198	27.258
	[SES = 4.14]	21.283	3.364	40.017	1	.000	14.689	27.877
	[SES = 4.29]	21.610	3.383	40.804	1	.000	14.980	28.241
	[SES = 4.43]	22.165	3.414	42.148	1	.000	15.473	28.856
	[SES = 4.57]	23.081	3.465	44.363	1	.000	16.289	29.873

	[SES = 4.71]	23.835	3.505	46.252	1	.000	16.966	30.704
	[SES = 4.86]	24.940	3.552	49.292	1	.000	17.977	31.902
Location	UE	.932	.801	1.355	1	.244	-.637	2.501
	ME	.254	.806	.099	1	.753	-1.326	1.833
	RS	1.758	.710	6.128	1	.013	.366	3.149
	DMS	2.059	.587	12.292	1	.000	.908	3.211
Link function: Logit.								

On the other hand, Understanding Emotions (Estimate = 0.932, $p = .244$) and Managing Emotions (Estimate = 0.254, $p = .753$) did not yield statistically significant results. Its non-significance implies that, within the scope of this model, these competencies do not substantially predict the likelihood of promoting Social Emotional Support.

In summary, the model highlights the importance of interpersonal and decision-making competencies, specifically Relationship Skills and Decision-Making Skills, as significant contributors to the promotion of Social Emotional Support among lecturers.

4.2.6.5 Test of Parallel Lines

The Test of Parallel Lines examines whether the assumption of proportional odds holds for the ordinal regression model. This assumption means that the relationship between the predictors and the odds of being in higher versus lower categories of the outcome variable is consistent across all thresholds.

In this analysis (Table 4:22), the -2 Log Likelihood for the null (proportional odds) model is 371.392, while the more flexible general model has a value of 339.235. The Chi-Square value for the comparison between the two models is 32.157 with 44 degrees of freedom, and the associated significance level is .907.

Table 4:22

Test of Parallel Lines_a

Model	-2 Log Likelihood	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Null Hypothesis	371.392			
General	339.235b	32.157c	44	.907

The null hypothesis states that the location parameters (slope coefficients) are the same across response categories.

a. Link function: Logit.

b. The log-likelihood value cannot be further increased after the maximum number of step-halving.

c. The Chi-Square statistic is computed based on the log-likelihood value of the last iteration of the

general model. Validity of the test is uncertain.

Since the p-value is much greater than .05, the study fails to reject the null hypothesis. This suggests that the proportional odds assumption is met, indicating that the effect of each predictor is consistent across all response categories of the dependent variable.

However, it is important to note that a message in the output indicates that the log-likelihood value for the general model could not be further increased due to reaching the maximum number of step-halving iterations. As a result, the validity of the test may be uncertain, and caution should be exercised when interpreting these results. Nonetheless, in the absence of strong evidence to the contrary, the model is assumed to satisfy the proportional odds assumption.

4.2.7 Non-parametric based on Gender: Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test

An analysis of SEL practices by gender was carried out using the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test to compare male and female lecturers. This non-parametric test was chosen because the data were not normally distributed, and the independent variable, "Gender of Lecturers," comprised two distinct groups: male and female. As the analysis involved comparing two independent groups, the Mann-Whitney U test served as an appropriate alternative to the independent-samples t-test. Unlike parametric tests, this method does not assume normality and focuses on differences in median scores, making it suitable for ordinal data and ensuring the robustness and validity of the findings.

4.2.7.1 Mann-Whitney Test

The Mann-Whitney U test compared the scores of male and female lecturers across six SEL domains: Understanding Emotion, Managing Emotion, Relationship Skills, Decision-Making Skills, Incorporating Functional Emotional Strategies, and Promoting Social Emotional Support.

As shown in Table 4:23, the mean ranks indicate some variation between male and female lecturers, though these differences were not statistically significant. For example, female lecturers had a higher mean rank in Understanding Emotions (55.68 vs. 46.43), Relationship Skills (52.84 vs. 48.66), and Decision-Making Skills (54.34 vs. 47.48), suggesting a trend toward stronger engagement in those areas. Conversely, male lecturers showed a slightly higher mean rank in Promoting Social Emotional Support (51.99 vs. 48.60). The mean ranks for Managing Emotions (Male = 50.07; Female = 51.05) and Incorporating Functional Emotional Strategies (Male = 50.51; Female = 50.49) were nearly identical, indicating similar responses between genders.

Table 4:23
Ranks

	Gender of Lecturers	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Understanding Emotions	Male	56	46.43	2600.00
	Female	44	55.68	2450.00
	Total	100		
Managing Emotions	Male	56	50.07	2804.00
	Female	44	51.05	2246.00
	Total	100		
Relationship Skills	Male	56	48.66	2725.00
	Female	44	52.84	2325.00
	Total	100		
Decision-Making Skills	Male	56	47.48	2659.00
	Female	44	54.34	2391.00

	Total	100		
Incorporating Functional Emotional Strategies	Male	56	50.51	2828.50
	Female	44	50.49	2221.50
	Total	100		
Promoting Social Emotional Support	Male	56	51.99	2911.50
	Female	44	48.60	2138.50
	Total	100		

However, as reported in the Mann-Whitney U test statistics, none of these differences were statistically significant (all $p > .05$). While some minor variations in SEL domain engagement exist between male and female lecturers, the analysis suggests that gender does not significantly affect how lecturers practice SEL in teaching. Both groups appear to demonstrate comparable levels of commitment to emotional and social support in their instructional strategies.

4.2.7.2 Test Statistics a

As further confirmation, the Mann-Whitney U test statistics were analyzed for each SEL domain to assess the significance of the observed differences. The results in the Table 4:24 revealed that none of the comparisons reached statistical significance at the $p < .05$ level. The Z-scores and corresponding two-tailed p-values for each domain were as follows: Understanding Emotions ($Z = -1.609$, $p = .108$), Managing Emotions ($Z = -0.169$, $p = .866$), Relationship Skills ($Z = -0.725$, $p = .469$), Decision-Making Skills ($Z = -1.190$, $p = .234$), Incorporating Functional Emotional Strategies ($Z = -0.004$, $p = .997$), and Promoting Social Emotional Support ($Z = -0.586$, $p = .558$). These values indicate that the differences between male and female lecturers across all SEL domains are not statistically significant.

Table 4:24
Test Statistics a

	Understanding Emotions	Managing Emotions	Relationship Skills	Decision- Making Skills	Incorporating Functional Emotional Strategies	Promoting Emotional Support	Social
Mann-Whitney U	1004.000	1208.000	1129.000	1063.000	1231.500	1148.500	
Wilcoxon W	2600.000	2804.000	2725.000	2659.000	2221.500	2138.500	
Z	-1.609	-.169	-.725	-1.190	-.004	-.586	
Asymp. Sig. (2- tailed)	.108	.866	.469	.234	.997	.558	
a. Grouping Variable: Gender of Lecturers							

However, the results of the Mann-Whitney U test showed no statistically significant differences in Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) practices between male and female lecturers across all six domains. While some variations in mean rank scores were observed, for instance, female lecturers tended to score slightly higher in areas such as Understanding Emotion, Relationship Skills, and Decision-Making Skills, these differences did not reach the conventional threshold for significance ($p > .05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis, which states that gender has no significant impact on SEL practices, could not be rejected. This suggests that gender does not play a determining role in how lecturers apply SEL competencies in their teaching. Both male and female lecturers appear to demonstrate a similar level of engagement with SEL strategies, indicating a generally consistent approach to fostering students' emotional and social development, regardless of gender.

4.2.8 Non-Parametric Test Based on Year of Teaching: Kruskal-Wallis H Test

The relationship between lecturers' years of teaching experience and their application of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) competencies was examined using a non-parametric statistical approach. The Kruskal-Wallis H test was conducted, as the data were not normally distributed and the independent variable consisted of more than two groups.

The analysis aimed to determine whether teaching experience influences the extent to which lecturers implement SEL competencies in their instructional practices. The Kruskal-Wallis test yields two key outputs: mean ranks, which reflect the central tendency of SEL scores within each experience group, and test statistics, including the chi-square value and the associated p-value, which indicate whether the observed differences are statistically significant.

4.2.8.1 Kruskal-Wallis Test: Ranks

To identify whether lecturers' engagement with SEL practices varies according to years of teaching experience, the Kruskal-Wallis H test generated mean rank scores for six SEL domains across four experience groups: 1–5 years, 6–10 years, 11–15 years, and 16 years or more. In Table 4:25, the mean rank scores reveal some variation,

particularly in the domains of Understanding Emotion, Managing Emotion, Relationship Skills, and Decision-Making Skills. Lecturers with 6–10 years of experience consistently scored the highest across most of these domains, including Understanding Emotions (mean rank = 59.07), Managing Emotions (61.65), Relationship Skills (60.11), and Decision-Making Skills (62.85), suggesting that this group may be more actively engaged in applying SEL competencies. In contrast, those with 16 years or more of experience tended to score lower across these same domains, for example, 39.42 for Understanding Emotions and 43.66 for Managing Emotion, indicating a possible decline in SEL engagement among the most experienced lecturers.

Table 4:25
Ranks

	Teaching Experience (years)	N	Mean Rank
Understanding Emotions	1-5	15	52.40
	6-10	23	59.07
	11-15	37	51.89
	16-more	25	39.42
	Total	100	
Managing Emotions	1-5	15	52.67
	6-10	23	61.65
	11-15	37	47.31
	16-more	25	43.66
	Total	100	
Relationship Skills	1-5	15	54.90

	6-10	23	60.11
	11-15	37	45.70
	16-more	25	46.12
	Total	100	
Decision-Making Skills	1-5	15	45.33
	6-10	23	62.85
	11-15	37	48.65
	16-more	25	44.98
	Total	100	
Incorporating Functional Emotional Strategies	1-5	15	50.73
	6-10	23	52.26
	11-15	37	47.61
	16-more	25	53.02

	Total	100	
Promoting Social Emotional Support	1-5	15	50.47
	6-10	23	52.11
	11-15	37	49.65
	16-more	25	50.30
	Total	100	

In the remaining two domains, such as Incorporating Functional Emotional Strategies and Promoting Social Emotional Support, the mean ranks were more evenly distributed across all groups. For example, Incorporating Functional Emotional Strategies ranged narrowly between 47.61 and 53.02, while Promoting Social Emotional Support ranged between 49.65 and 52.11. This suggests that these particular SEL competencies are applied more consistently regardless of years of teaching experience. Overall, while certain domains show differences in SEL engagement based on teaching experience, especially among those with 6–10 years, others appear less affected by experience level. The significance of these observed differences is further evaluated through the Kruskal-Wallis test statistic.

4.2.8.2 Kruskal-Wallis Test Statistics

To determine whether the observed differences in SEL practices across different levels of EMI teaching experience were statistically significant, the Kruskal-Wallis H test statistics were examined. According to Table 4:26, the chi-square values and associated p-values (Asymp. Sig.) indicate that none of the differences across the six SEL domains reached statistical significance at the conventional alpha level of 0.05. Specifically, the p-values were as follows: Understanding Emotions ($\chi^2 = 5.990$, $p = .112$), Managing Emotions ($\chi^2 = 5.484$, $p = .140$), Relationship Skills ($\chi^2 = 4.568$, $p = .206$), and Decision-Making Skills ($\chi^2 = 5.856$, $p = .119$). Although these domains showed some variation in mean ranks across teaching experience groups, the p-values suggest that these differences could be due to chance. Furthermore, the domains Incorporating Functional Emotional Strategies ($\chi^2 = 0.660$, $p = .883$) and Promoting Social Emotional Support ($\chi^2 = 0.106$, $p = .991$) demonstrated very minimal variation across groups, reinforcing that no statistically significant differences exist.

Table 4:26
Test Statistics a, b

	Understanding Emotions	Managing Emotions	Relationship Skills	Decision-Making Skills	Incorporating Functional Emotional Strategies	Promoting Social Emotional Support
Chi-Square	5.990	5.484	4.568	5.856	.660	.106
df	3	3	3	3	3	3
Asymp. Sig.	.112	.140	.206	.119	.883	.991
a. Kruskal Wallis Test						
b. Grouping Variable: Year of Teaching						

Based on the results of the Kruskal-Wallis H test, the analysis failed to reject the null hypothesis, which posits that there is no significant impact of years of teaching experience on lecturers' engagement with Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) competencies. Although variations in mean ranks were observed, particularly higher engagement among lecturers with 6–10 years of experience, none of these differences reached statistical significance at the $p < .05$ level. Consequently, the findings do not provide sufficient evidence to support the alternative hypothesis, which suggests that teaching experience has a significant effect on SEL practices. Therefore, it can be concluded that lecturers' implementation of SEL competencies appears to be relatively consistent regardless of their years of teaching experience.

4.3 Qualitative Data Analysis

While the quantitative analysis provided an overview of lecturers' beliefs and practices related to SEL across the six measured variables, the qualitative findings presented in this section explore how lecturers implement these SEL competencies in practice, and the challenges they face in EMI classroom settings. Drawing from semi-structured interview responses aligned with all six variables, the qualitative data enrich the survey results by providing practical experiences, context-specific barriers, and constructive suggestions from the lecturers themselves. Together, these complementary analyses offer a more comprehensive and grounded understanding of SEL practices within EMI teaching in Malaysian higher education.

4.3.1 Thematic Tree Map

Social-emotional Learning plays a critical role in shaping effective teaching practices and fostering student engagement in higher education. To better understand the barriers to implementing SEL competencies by lecturers in Malaysia, qualitative interview data were analyzed thematically. This analysis led to the development of a thematic tree diagram that visually represents the core dimensions of SEL implementation.

Figure 4:1 presents a thematic tree diagram derived from the collected qualitative data. This figure illustrates the hierarchical organization of key dimensions of Social-emotional Learning in higher education, structured into six major themes:

Understanding Emotions, Managing Emotions, Relationship Skills, Decision-Making Skills, Incorporating Functional Emotional Strategies, and Promoting Social-Emotional Support. Each theme comprises several subthemes that reflect practical strategies and commonly observed challenges within English-taught instructional contexts.

For example, the theme Incorporating Functional Emotional Strategies emphasizes approaches such as interactive teaching, adaptive engagement, and enhancing emotional clarity, all aimed at supporting students' emotional regulation and improving classroom outcomes. The Decision-Making Skills theme underscores the role of self-reflection, student feedback mechanisms, and goal-oriented planning, while also acknowledging both student-specific and institutional challenges.

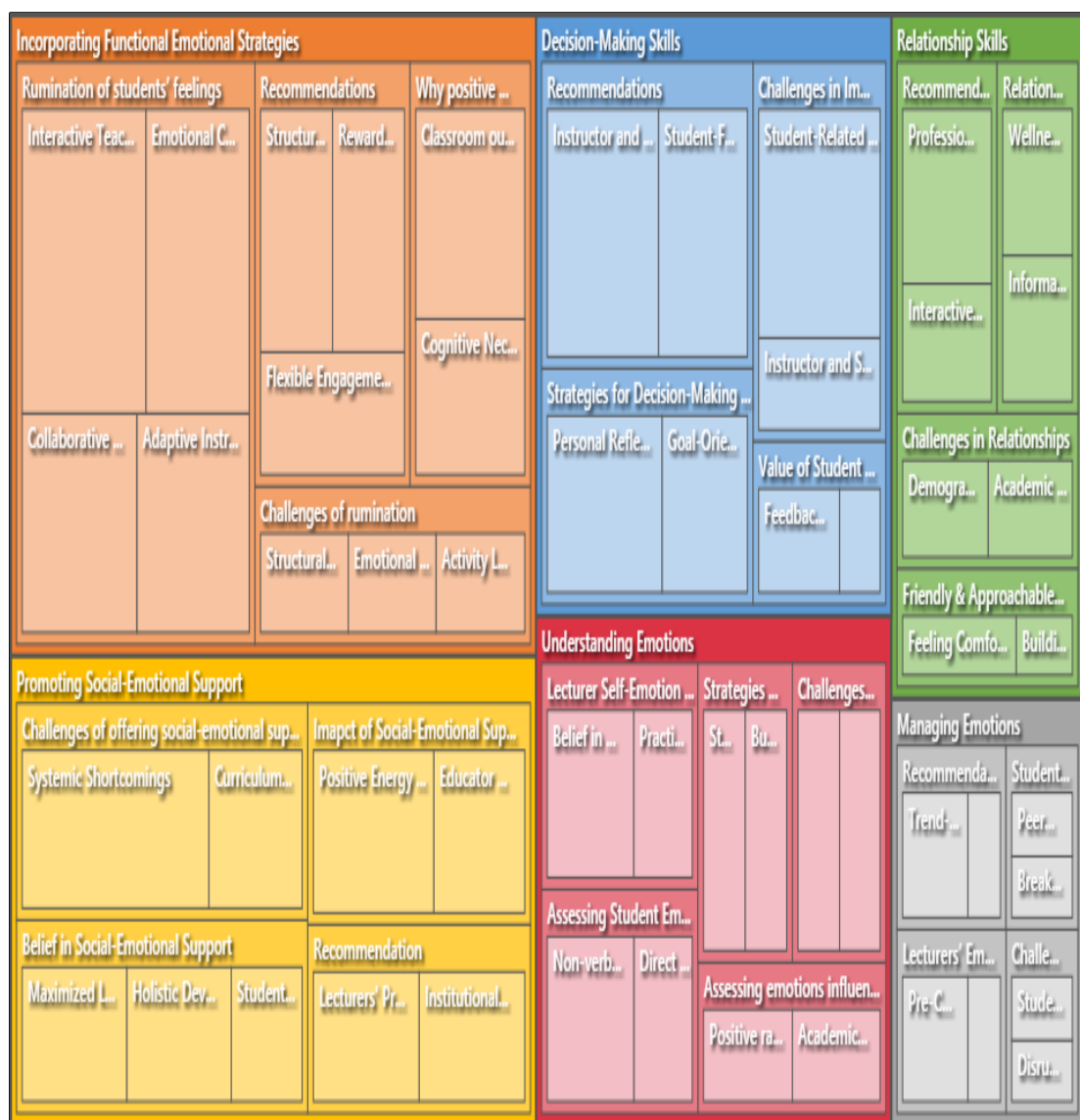


Figure 4:1 Thematic Tree Map

The theme Relationship Skills encompasses both formal and informal lecturer-student interactions, the significance of approachability, and the influence of students' demographic and academic backgrounds on relational dynamics. Meanwhile, Promoting Social-Emotional Support highlights systemic limitations in SEL provision, the benefits of emotional support for student and lecturer well-being, and the perceived potential of SEL to contribute to holistic educational development.

Furthermore, Understanding Emotions relates to lecturers' self-awareness and their capacity to identify and interpret students' emotional expressions, particularly non-verbal cues. Finally, Managing Emotions addresses patterns in emotional expression, peer influences, and the degree of emotional readiness among lecturers to cope with classroom demands. Collectively, this thematic framework offers a comprehensive understanding of how SEL is practiced, experienced, and conceptualized in tertiary education.

4.3.2 Word Cloud

Understanding the dominant language used by lecturers during interviews provides meaningful insight into the focus, concerns, and emotional undertones of their experiences with Social-emotional Learning. Figure 4:2 presents a word frequency analysis based on the 1,000 most commonly used terms in the qualitative dataset, filtered to include words with a minimum of five letters. This visual representation offers an overview of the key concepts and recurring ideas articulated by participants.

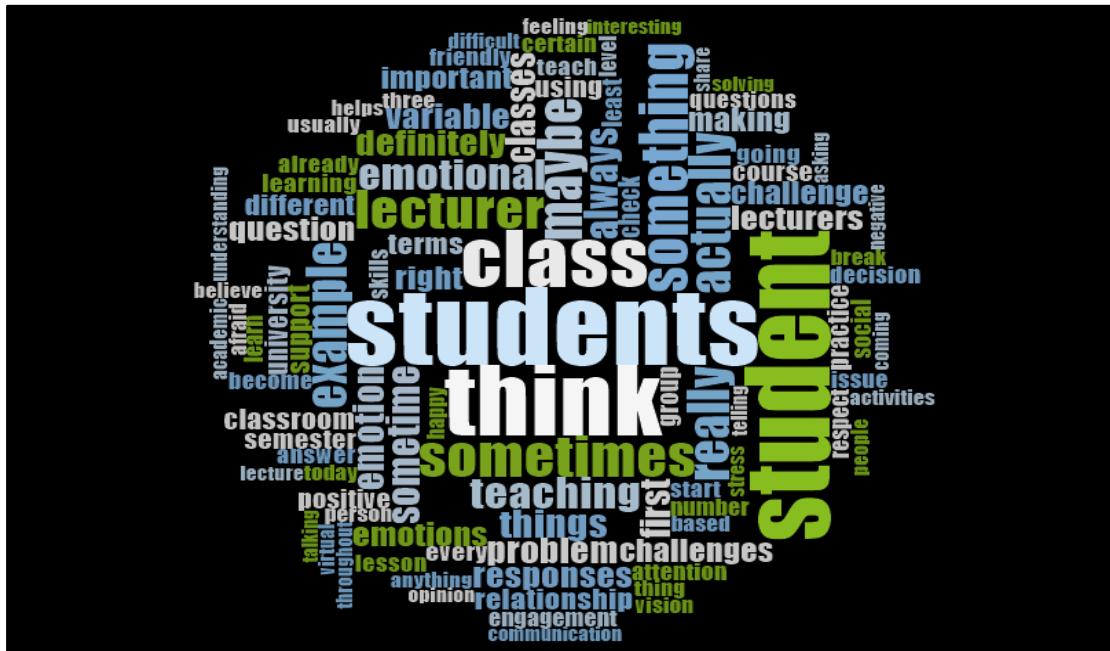


Figure 4:2 Word cloud

The most frequently used terms were “students” (1.57%) and “student” (1.51%), indicating that learners were the central focus of participants’ discussions. This highlights that lecturers consistently reflected on students’ behaviors, emotions, and learning experiences, an expected finding within SEL-focused studies, where student-centered reflections are crucial for improving pedagogical practices and fostering engagement.

Other prominent terms such as “think” (1.40%), “maybe” (0.71%), “really” (0.65%), and “actually” (0.65%) reflect the reflective and interpretative nature of the lecturers’ narratives. These words suggest that participants were actively contemplating their teaching methods, emotional responses, and classroom interactions. Such reflective language is critical in SEL and educational psychology, as it promotes self-awareness and professional growth.

Words like “class” (1.11%), “lecturer” (0.68%), “teaching” (0.53%), and “classroom” (0.27%) illustrate a clear emphasis on the teaching environment. This points to the importance lecturers place on instructional context, including classroom dynamics, pedagogy, and educator roles in shaping student experiences.

Emotional and interpersonal dimensions were also well-represented. Terms such as “emotional” (0.49%), “emotion” (0.44%), “support” (0.29%), “relationship” (0.29%), and “social” (0.22%) reflect the participants’ awareness of emotional well-

being, the importance of relational dynamics, and the value of social connectedness within academic settings. These elements are foundational to effective SEL practices.

Moreover, the presence of words such as “problem” (0.39%), “challenge” (0.32%), and “challenges” (0.32%), alongside coping-related terms like “decision” (0.20%) and “strategies” (0.08%), underscores lecturers’ recognition of the various difficulties faced in teaching and learning. These include academic, emotional, and structural challenges, highlighting the need for adaptive problem-solving and emotional regulation among students and educators alike.

The appearance of terms such as “engagement” (0.19%), “communication” (0.12%), “virtual” (0.13%), and “learning” (0.23%) reveals a strong focus on interactive and student-centered learning approaches. The emphasis on “virtual” particularly reflects a shift toward digital or blended learning environments in contemporary higher education.

Finally, emotionally expressive terms like “afraid” (0.18%), “happy” (0.16%), “feeling” (0.15%), “feelings” (0.06%), and “stress” (0.14%) demonstrate the range of emotional experiences reported. These findings reinforce the necessity of emotion-sensitive teaching strategies that recognize and respond to the complex emotional landscape in which students learn.

4.3.3 Text Search Query Analysis

To further investigate the barriers to Social-emotional Learning implementation in lecturers’ teaching practices, a systematic text search query analysis was conducted. This approach allowed for the extraction of targeted semantic patterns from the qualitative interview data, focusing specifically on the role and emotional portrayal of lecturers.

Figure 4:3 presents the concordance tree diagram generated from this text search. The analysis parameters were set to ensure contextual accuracy: the root term was “lecturer,” anchoring all semantic relationships to educator discourse; a five-word context window was applied on both sides of the root term to capture surrounding phrases; and the search string included the keywords “social and emotional” AND “lecturer” AND “practice.” These criteria enabled the identification of relevant excerpts from the transcripts, which were then visualized using a concordance diagram.

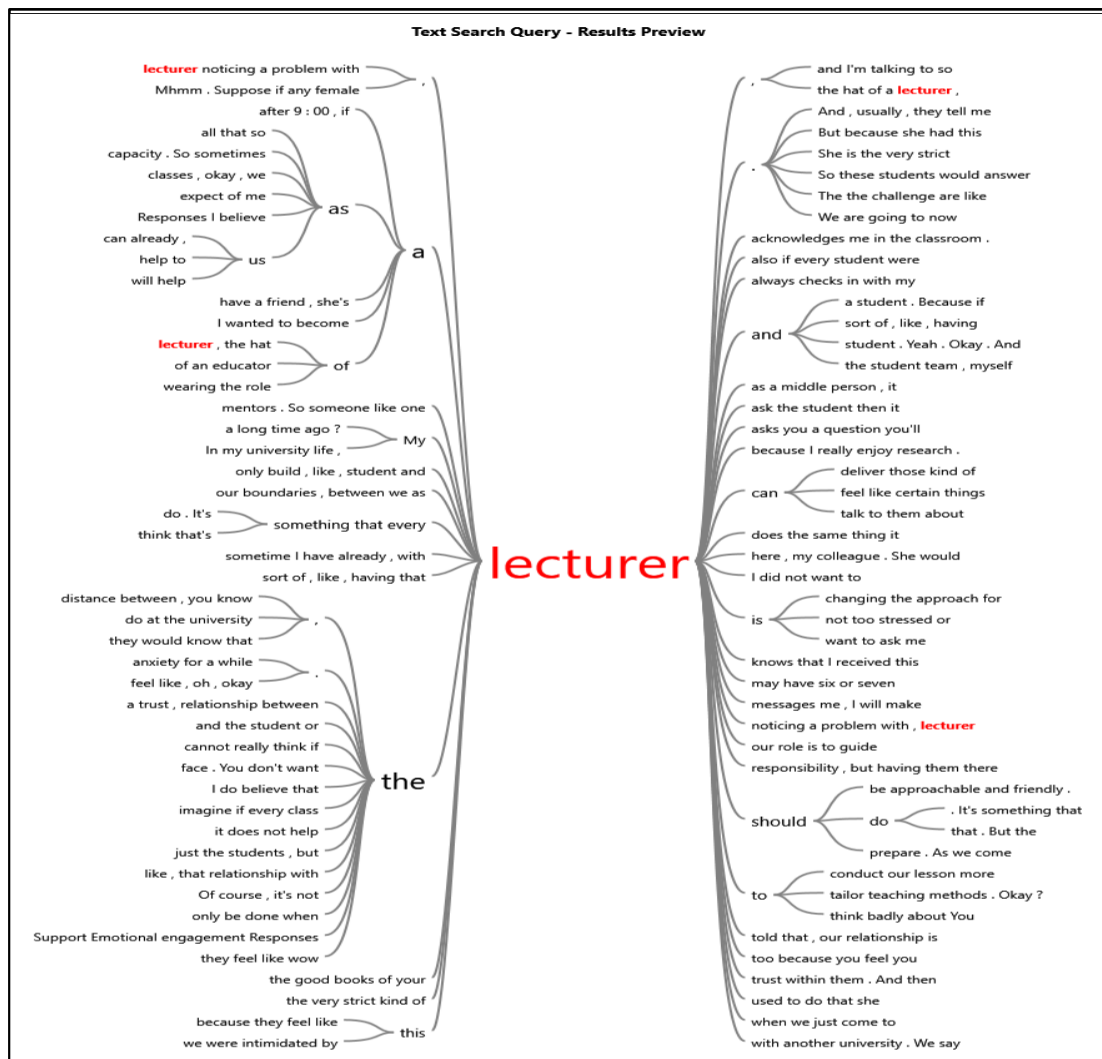


Figure 4:3 Text Search Query Analysis

In the diagram, the central term “lecturer” is displayed in red, with branches extending to the left and right, illustrating how the term is framed in surrounding discourse. The visualization highlights several key themes regarding how lecturers are perceived in emotional and relational contexts.

First, emotional characterizations of lecturers varied. Some were described with negative emotional tones, such as “strict” and “intimidating,” while others were associated with positive affective qualities, such as “trust” and rapport-building. Second, insights into professional identity emerged, with phrases like “wearing the hat of an educator” and “our role is to guide,” reflecting lecturers’ self-awareness, ethical responsibility, and role clarity.

Third, relationship-building and student engagement were prominent, evidenced by expressions like “approachable and friendly,” “acknowledges me,” and “asks you a question.” These suggest emotional availability and efforts to build positive classroom connections. Finally, the presence of terms such as “changing the approach” and “not too stressed” indicates that some lecturers are seen as adaptable and responsive to students’ emotional needs.

Overall, the concordance analysis revealed how core SEL competencies, including self-awareness, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making, manifest within lecturer narratives. These findings reinforce the value of promoting SEL training and reflective practices among higher education educators to enhance both teaching effectiveness and student well-being.

4.3.4 Thematic Analysis: Understanding Emotions

This section presents the qualitative findings on Understanding Emotions in classroom practices. The analysis aimed to uncover lecturers’ own strategies for fostering emotional awareness, measuring students’ emotions in the EMI classroom, understanding the impact of these practices on teaching and student engagement, and identifying the challenges faced in implementing emotional understanding.

Figure 4:4 illustrates the thematic map generated using NVivo, presenting five major themes supported by a total of ten child codes. Each theme reflects a distinct aspect of how lecturers address emotional understanding in their teaching:

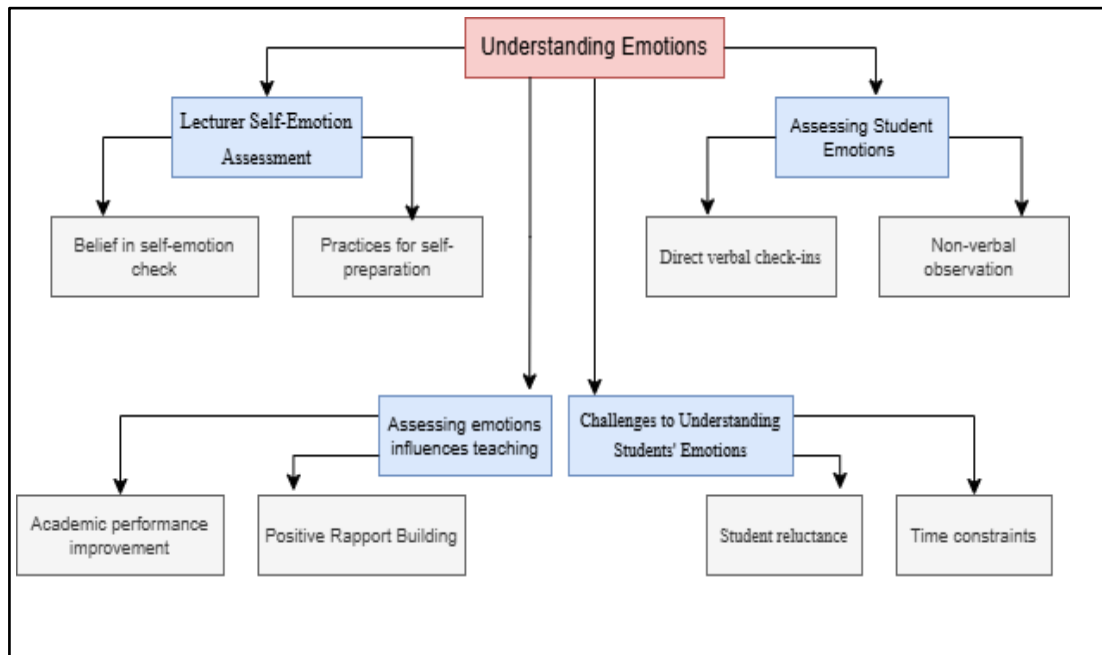


Figure 4:4 Thematic Analysis: Understanding Emotions

4.3.4.1 Lecturer Self-Emotion Assessment

The assessment of self-emotions by lecturers plays a vital role in enriching the teaching and learning process. Lecturers' emotional states significantly influence students' ability to focus, process information, and retain knowledge. When educators possess a clear understanding of their own emotional conditions, they are better equipped to implement pedagogical strategies that foster a supportive and engaging classroom environment. This study found that lecturers hold two different views regarding the assessment of their own emotions. These perspectives vary based on the university's geographical location across different zones of Malaysia, such as the North Zone (NZ) and Central Zone (CZ). Each lecturer's response is labeled numerically for analysis (e.g., Response 1 = R1), and the zone is also noted. For example, "R1, NZ" refers to Response 1 from a lecturer in the North Zone.

Belief in Self-emotion Check

There is a strong consensus among educators regarding the importance of emotional self-awareness prior to entering the classroom. Participants emphasized that assessing one's emotional state is as essential as preparing lesson content, positioning

emotional readiness as a core component of effective teaching. For instance, one respondent stated, “Yes, I do believe that lecturers should check their own emotions” (Response 1, Central Zone). Another highlighted the pedagogical value of emotional awareness, noting, “Yes, I do agree that checking our emotions helps us tailor teaching methods” (Response 2, North Zone). Similarly, a lecturer remarked, “Definitely, every lecturer should prepare both their material and their emotional state before class” (Response 6, North Zone).

These responses reflect a shared understanding that emotional preparedness is a professional responsibility. Educators believe that entering the classroom without being in the appropriate mental and emotional state can hinder instructional quality. Consequently, self-emotion checks are viewed as a necessary internal process for creating a positive, engaging, and effective learning environment.

Practices for Self-preparation

Building on this belief in the necessity of emotional self-assessment, lecturers reported engaging in specific preparatory practices to regulate their emotions and ensure mental readiness before teaching. These self-driven strategies are aimed at ensuring they are in an optimal state to facilitate effective teaching. For example, one participant described a reflective routine: “I recall all things I deliver... ask myself if I’m motivated” (Response 5, North Zone), indicating a conscious effort to evaluate personal motivation and mental readiness. Another lecturer referred to the value of mentorship and shared experiences, noting that “Training insights... [were] shared by seniors” (Response 4, Central Zone), suggesting that emotional preparation is often informed by professional development and collegial support.

These responses underscore the role of deliberate self-preparation in maintaining emotional stability and enhancing teaching performance. They also highlight the influence of reflective practices and peer guidance in shaping educators’ approaches to emotional readiness.

4.3.4.2 Assessing Student Emotions

In addition to monitoring lecturers’ own emotional states, they also recognize the importance of assessing students’ emotions as an integral aspect of effective

teaching. By understanding students' emotional conditions, educators are better equipped to adapt their instructional strategies, cultivate an empathetic and inclusive classroom environment, and support learning that addresses both academic and emotional needs. In Malaysia, lecturers assess students' emotions at universities in two ways, including direct verbal check-ins and non-verbal observations.

Direct Verbal Check-ins

One of the key strategies employed by lecturers to assess students' emotional well-being is the use of direct verbal check-ins. These intentional interactions serve as an accessible and immediate means for educators to engage with students' emotional states, thereby fostering a supportive and responsive classroom environment. Such inquiries allow lecturers to not only monitor students' emotional conditions but also to adjust their instructional approaches in alignment with learners' needs.

For instance, one respondent noted, "I ask, 'How are you feeling today?'" (R1, North Zone), illustrating a simple yet effective method for initiating emotional dialogue. Another participant described a broader, more reflective approach: "I ask, 'How have you been doing?'" (R6, North Zone), suggesting an effort to understand students' emotional experiences over time rather than on a single occasion.

These practices underscore the importance of cultivating personal connections within the learning environment.

Non-verbal Observation

Beyond verbal interactions, lecturers also employ non-verbal observation as a critical strategy to assess students' emotional states. By attentively observing students' physical behaviors, body language, and facial expressions, educators can identify signs of emotional distress, disengagement, or well-being that may otherwise go unspoken. One lecturer noted, "Observe body language... detect happiness/sadness" (R2, North Zone), indicating a conscious effort to interpret students' emotional cues. Another participant stated, "Note shyness/hiding faces" (R5, Central Zone), highlighting sensitivity to subtle indicators that may reflect discomfort or emotional vulnerability.

These observations enable lecturers to respond with empathy and adjust their instructional methods to create a more emotionally supportive learning environment.

Recognizing that not all students are comfortable expressing emotions openly, some educators also turn to digital tools to assess student well-being more discreetly and inclusively. For instance, one respondent shared, “Use apps for anonymous feedback” (R6, North Zone), demonstrating how technology can facilitate safe spaces for students to communicate their emotional states without fear of judgment.

Together, both direct and indirect strategies reflect a comprehensive and responsive approach to emotional assessment, one that integrates traditional non-verbal cues with digital innovations. This holistic perspective supports the development of emotionally attuned classrooms, where both observable behavior and less visible emotional needs are recognized and addressed with care.

4.3.4.3 Assessing Emotions Influences Teaching

Emotional assessment plays a critical role in shaping effective and responsive teaching practices. When educators are attuned to both their own emotional states and the emotional cues of their students, they are better equipped to foster empathetic, adaptable, and student-centered learning environments. This emotional awareness has a dual impact on the teaching-learning process, particularly in two key areas: the enhancement of academic performance and the development of positive lecturer–student rapport.

Academic Performance Improvement

Educator emotional checking significantly enhances academic performance by enabling tailored teaching strategies and stronger student engagement. As one educator from the north zone of Malaysia notes, “By understanding students’ emotional states, lecturers can tailor teaching methods. For example, students learn topics more effectively when their emotions are addressed” (R4, NZ). This personalized approach allows instructors to adapt their methodologies to meet the evolving needs of students. For instance, regular check-ins, such as asking students about their understanding before introducing new material, ensure that instruction aligns with their current knowledge level, an approach that has been observed to “improve learning outcomes” by matching teaching pace with student readiness.

Moreover, emotional check-ins foster a genuine human connection in the classroom. When students experience that their emotions are acknowledged, they feel more valued and are more likely to engage actively. One educator mentioned, “Students love emotional check-ins. It creates a human touch, builds rapport, and makes them more receptive to learning” (R2, CZ). This rapport-building, combined with playful teaching methods like gamification that increase participation and facilitate faster concept grasping, leads to an enhanced learning environment. Conversely, educators have observed that when students refrain from expressing their emotions, “their performance often suffers.” Recognizing and addressing this early by encouraging shy or disengaged students to voice their confusion is key to preventing them from falling behind.

Positive Rapport Building

Positive Rapport Building, educators emphasize the importance of fostering genuine, empathetic connections with students to create a supportive EMI classroom environment. One lecturer observed, “Students appreciate emotional check-ins because it adds a ‘human touch’, they feel seen beyond academics” (Response 1, North zone). This sentiment highlights how emotional check-ins go beyond transactional interactions, contributing to a sense of care and belonging. Another educator shared, “Genuine interactions (e.g., asking about their day) build deeper connections than just delivering content” (R2, CZ), emphasizing that building rapport is essential for engagement. By encouraging participation through simple, low-pressure activities, such as asking students for one word to describe their emotions, lecturers ensure that even shy students feel included. One participant (R3, CZ) described using storytelling to “reduce their fear of embarrassment,” making the classroom feel like a safe space. Early check-ins are particularly valuable, as they help set a positive tone, fostering trust that encourages students to share more openly as the semester progresses. The use of tools like “Anonymous feedback” or creating informal groups, such as a ‘Positive Squad’ Telegram group, further supports the development of comfort and trust, enabling even reserved students to open up over time.

In summary, emotional assessment emerges as a powerful pedagogical tool that enhances both academic outcomes and relational dynamics within the classroom. These

practices not only support students' academic success but also contribute to a psychologically safe and inclusive English-taught learning environment where all learners feel seen, heard, and valued.

4.3.4.4 Challenges to Understanding Students' Emotions

Although understanding students' emotions is essential for effective teaching, lecturers often encounter significant barriers that hinder this process. The findings from this study highlight two primary obstacles: students' reluctance to share their emotional states and the time constraints that limit lecturers' ability to observe and respond appropriately. These challenges reduce opportunities for personalized support, making it more difficult for educators to address students' emotional needs effectively.

Student Reluctance

Student reluctance to express emotions emerged as a significant challenge in understanding their emotional needs. As one respondent (R1, CZ) noted, "Sometimes some students may not be willing to express their emotions... reluctant to be vulnerable with us," highlighting a common tendency among students to hide their feelings. For example, a student may smile and claim that "everything is okay," yet avoid deeper interaction, masking their true emotional state.

Another respondent (R2, NZ) observed that some students deliberately display different emotions depending on the class context, appearing cheerful in one class while disengaged in another, suggesting that their behavior is often performative rather than genuine. This emotional masking makes it difficult for educators to assess students' real needs. Additionally, practical constraints such as large class sizes (R4, NZ) were noted to discourage open emotional engagement, as students are less likely to share in crowded environments. Furthermore, shyness and fear of embarrassment (R5, CZ) also contribute to this reluctance. Some students try to hide their faces or avoid speaking altogether, further complicating efforts to build emotional connections and provide support.

Time Constraints

Time constraints were frequently cited as a major barrier to understanding students' emotions. Educators shared that while emotional check-ins are important, they often get deprioritized due to syllabus demands and packed schedules. One respondent (R1, NZ) mentioned that emotional aspects are "not much emphasized" when rushing to complete the syllabus, especially towards the end of the semester. Similarly, another noted that emotional checks could only be conducted in the early weeks (R6, NZ), as the rest of the semester is focused on content delivery. The time-consuming nature of emotional check-ins was also highlighted, with one educator (R3, CZ) explaining that limited time prevents them from conducting such activities, particularly in large classes.

Managing 50–55 students makes it difficult to address each individual's emotional state, forcing educators to focus only on the "main cluster." Others echoed this concern, noting that engaging with students emotionally "eats up" lecture time (R4, CZ) and that efficiency often takes precedence over emotional depth (R5, NZ). These findings show that despite the recognized value of emotional engagement, time pressure significantly limits its practice in classroom settings.

In conclusion, while lecturers recognize the importance of understanding students' emotions for effective teaching, practical barriers such as student reluctance and time constraints pose significant challenges. These factors limit opportunities for meaningful emotional engagement, making it difficult for educators to identify and address students' emotional needs. Addressing these challenges requires institutional support, smaller class sizes, and the integration of emotional check-ins into regular teaching practices to foster a more emotionally responsive learning environment.

4.3.5 Thematic Analysis: Managing Emotions

This section presents the qualitative findings related to the variable Managing Emotions, which explores how emotional regulation is fostered within the classroom setting in Malaysian public universities. Emotional regulation is a core component of SEL, and this study focuses on lecturers' own regulation practices, students' emotion management strategies, the challenges encountered in implementing emotional regulation, and the strategies recommended to overcome these barriers.

Figure 4:5 illustrates the thematic map generated using NVivo, highlighting four major themes, each supported by two child codes.

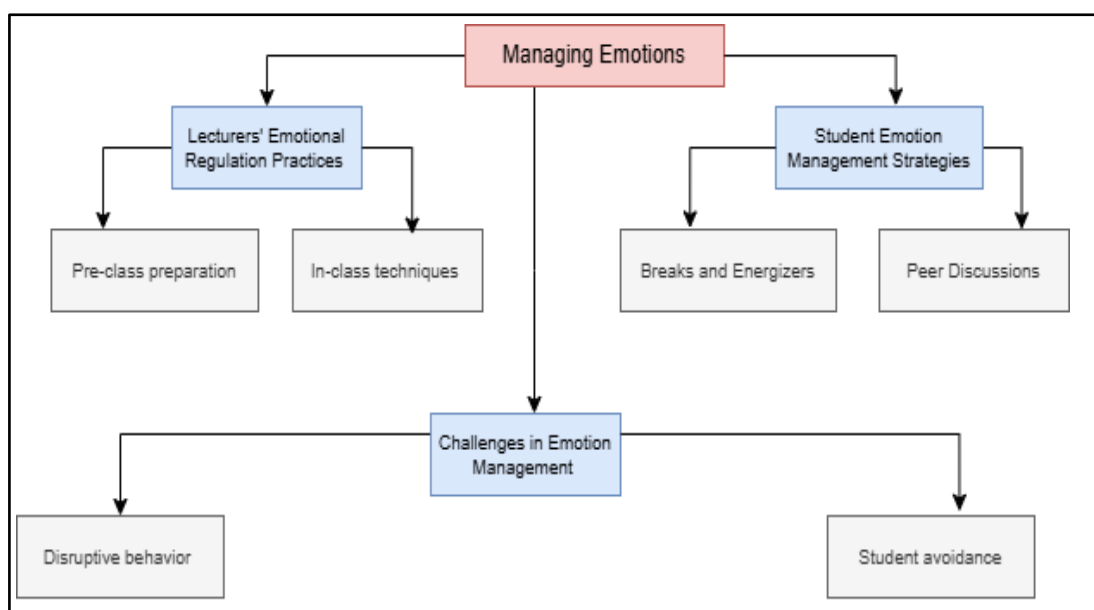


Figure 4:5 Thematic Analysis: Managing Emotions

4.3.5.1 Lecturers' Emotional Regulation Practices

Lecturers' emotional regulation practices play a crucial role in maintaining a positive and supportive classroom environment. By managing their own emotions, lecturers are better equipped to create an atmosphere of trust and respect, which encourages students to feel safe in expressing their feelings. The research identifies two key approaches to lectures' emotional regulation strategies, including in-class techniques and Pre-Class Preparation.

Pre-Class Preparation

Pre-class preparation is a crucial strategy for lecturers to regulate their emotions before entering the classroom and ensure a positive and focused teaching environment. One lecturer (Response 2, NZ) emphasized the importance of self-regulation in private spaces, like the office, before entering the classroom: "It should take place in our own personal space ... practice [emotional regulation] in our own space first before entering the classroom." This practice helps lecturers prepare mentally and emotionally for their role as educators, creating a regulated mindset. Another key strategy involves mental

compartmentalization (Response 3, CZ), where lecturers separate their personal emotions from their professional ones, ensuring that their personal struggles do not affect their classroom demeanor, such as “If I’m having a bad day, I won’t openly show it to students.” In addition, physical rituals such as “Before class, I go to the toilet, wash my face, massage, and smile” (Response 4, NZ) help reset the lecturer’s mood and prepare them emotionally for the lesson ahead. Finally, brief mindfulness exercises, like “deep belly breathing or silence to refresh focus before teaching” (Response 5, NZ), help center the lecturer, allowing them to approach the class with calm and clarity. These pre-class practices ensure that lecturers are emotionally prepared and able to maintain a positive, focused classroom environment.

In-Class Techniques

In-class techniques are practical strategies lecturers use to regulate their emotions during teaching, helping to create a calm, focused, and emotionally balanced learning environment. Several respondents mentioned the use of deep belly breathing and brief silent pauses, such as “Someone play deep belly breathing... to remove the space and start their listening like this” (Response 1, North Zone) and “I do deep belly breathing or remain silent for seconds to refresh focus” (Response 5, CZ), as mindfulness practices to manage stress and refocus both themselves and their students. Some incorporate “relaxation music” and “laughter therapy, team-building activities” (Response 2, NZ) to energize and uplift the mood of the class.

Others manage their emotions by adjusting class timing, as in “I will give [students] a long break... For example, start class 30 minutes late to calm myself” (Response 3, NZ). Pre-class personal rituals, such as “Before class, I wash my face, massage, and smile... to prepare emotionally” (Response 4), also help lecturers shift into a positive mindset. Finally, using humor like “I create jokes during breaks to make students feel at ease” (Response 2, CZ) helps lighten the classroom atmosphere and support a relaxed emotional tone. These in-class techniques show how emotional regulation is seamlessly woven into teaching moments.

4.3.5.2 Student Emotion Management Strategies

The study found that lecturers from Malaysian universities commonly applied student emotion management strategies to support learners' emotional well-being during class. These included incorporating Breaks and Energizers, such as short activities or moments of fun, to help students relax and stay focused. Additionally, lecturers encouraged Peer Discussions to create opportunities for students to express their emotions and engage in meaningful interaction, fostering a supportive and connected classroom environment.

Breaks and Energizers

Breaks and energizers are important techniques used by lecturers to manage students' emotions and keep them engaged during lessons. One lecturer shared, "I give them breaks... If it's a two-hour class, at the end of the first hour, I ask if they need a break. If most give a thumbs up, I give 5–10 minutes" (Response 1, CZ), showing the use of scheduled breaks based on student feedback. Another emphasized starting lessons with energy-boosting activities, such as "I start my class with an energizer laughter therapy, deep breathing, or team-building fun activities" (Response 2, NZ), highlighting playful openings to create a lively learning atmosphere.

Personal rituals were also used, as one lecturer mentioned: "I take breaks between classes (10–15 minutes). I use this time to wash my face, massage, and smile to reset" (Response 4, NZ), reflecting self-recharging strategies that indirectly support classroom mood. Additionally, short mindfulness moments, like "deep belly breathing or moments of silence" (Response 5, NZ), helped both lecturers and students refocus. Lastly, another lecturer practiced timed breaks with humor, saying, "Every 45 minutes, I give a 5–10-minute break. I crack jokes to lighten the mood" (Response 3, CZ). These combined strategies fostered emotional balance and sustained student attention throughout the lesson.

Peer Discussions

Peer Discussions were identified as an effective strategy by lecturers to support students in managing their emotions through shared communication and collaboration.

One lecturer explained, “In my tutorial classes, I give students a chance to talk among themselves with their peers... This helps affirm their understanding and reduces tension” (Response 1, NZ), using small-group discussions to build confidence and emotional ease. Another lecturer noted, “We discuss root causes of negative emotions (e.g., stress) in groups... and peers learn from each other” (Response 2, CZ), showing how structured group dialogues allowed students to exchange coping strategies. Creating a safe and open environment was also emphasized, as one shared, “I create open dialogue sessions where students share feelings about their day or stressors” (Response 3, CZ), encouraging whole-class sharing to normalize emotional expression. Additionally, “When students struggle to understand, I ask peers to explain concepts in their own words” (Response 5, NZ) illustrates how peer-to-peer teaching helped reduce academic stress. These peer-focused strategies promoted emotional validation, mutual support, and a stronger sense of classroom community.

4.3.5.3 Challenges in Emotion Management

Managing emotions in educational settings is a complex process, and lecturers often encounter significant barriers that affect their ability to foster a supportive and emotionally responsive learning environment. This study identified two prominent challenges in emotion management: disruptive student behavior and emotional avoidance by students. These issues can undermine classroom harmony, reduce student engagement, and impede effective teaching practices.

Disruptive Behavior

Students’ Disruptive Behavior presents a significant challenge for lecturers in managing classroom emotions and maintaining a conducive learning environment. As one lecturer noted, “Certain male students engage in disruptive behavior... shouting randomly during lessons, likely due to external stress or peer exclusion” (Response 3, CZ), highlighting how noise-making and attention-seeking actions can disrupt both the emotional atmosphere and class flow. Another lecturer shared, “Some students ‘push my buttons’... arriving 15–20 minutes late repeatedly, disrupting the class flow” (Response 4, NZ), illustrating how chronic tardiness can manifest as passive-aggressive behavior, further complicating emotional regulation. In response to distractions,

lecturers sometimes use direct interventions, such as “Students talk or make noise during lectures... I redirect them by suddenly calling on them about exam content” (Response 3, CZ), showcasing strategies to regain control. Lastly, “We encounter students with emotional problems (e.g., depression)... some withdraw or act out unpredictably” (Response 6, NZ), indicating that underlying emotional struggles may also manifest as unpredictable actions or withdrawal, further adding to the complexity of managing emotional dynamics in the classroom. These behaviors require thoughtful strategies to maintain emotional balance while addressing students’ needs.

Student Avoidance

Student avoidance poses a critical barrier to lecturers’ efforts in assessing and fostering emotional engagement in the classroom. Many students are reluctant to express their emotions, often defensive or disengaged, as one lecturer noted that “Some students may not be willing to express their emotions... reluctant to be vulnerable with us. Some might be defensive or put on a straight face while hiding their real emotions” (Response 1, NZ). This reluctance can manifest in students saying, “I’m not free today” when asked for emotional check-ins or avoiding conversations altogether. In online settings, camera-off behaviors can make it challenging to gauge engagement, as “Students sometimes don’t turn on their cameras... making it hard to know if they’re tired or disengaged” (Response 2, CZ).

Another common behavior is chronic tardiness, where students miss important instructions and later exhibit passive avoidance, such as giving brief, non-committal answers like ‘yes/no’ to avoid further elaboration (Response 3, NZ; Response 5, CZ). This emotional withdrawal is also seen in cases where students skip classes when overwhelmed or only appear for exams and assignments, indicative of withdrawal behaviors due to stress or workload (Response 6, NZ). These patterns of avoidance hinder lecturers’ ability to support students emotionally, making it necessary to find strategies to foster greater openness and engagement.

4.3.6 Thematic Analysis: Relationship Skills

Establishing positive lecturer–student relationships is a fundamental aspect of creating a supportive and effective teaching–learning environment. Relationship skills,

as a core domain of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), contribute significantly to students' sense of belonging, emotional well-being, and academic motivation. This study examined lecturers' approaches to relationship-building and the challenges encountered in maintaining positive relationships with students in higher education settings.

Figure 4:6 presents the thematic map developed using NVivo, illustrating four overarching themes supported by a total of eight sub-themes.

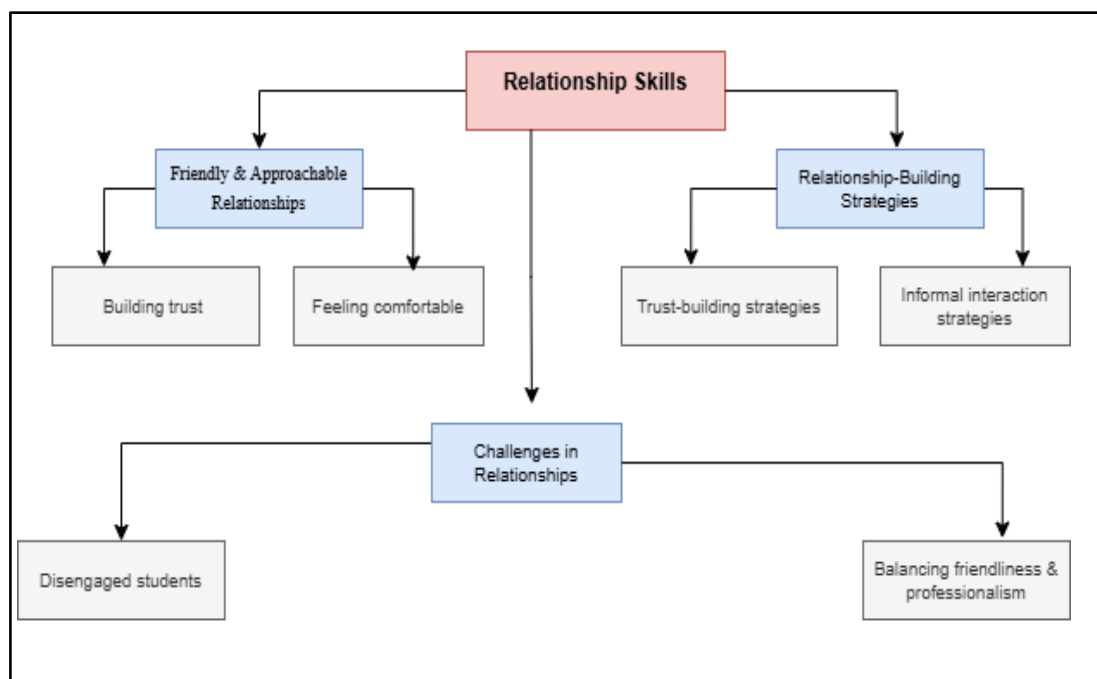


Figure 4:6 Thematic Analysis: Relationship Skills

4.3.6.1 Friendly & Approachable Relationships

In the context of Malaysian higher education, the cultivation of friendly and approachable relationships between lecturers and students is highly valued and contributes significantly to the learning environment. This study identified two primary dimensions through which such relationships are fostered, such as the development of trust and the creation of a sense of comfort. These elements are integral to promoting open communication, mutual respect, and emotional support within the academic setting.

Building Trust

The participants in this study emphasized that building trust is a fundamental component of fostering friendly and approachable relationships between lecturers and students. As one lecturer explained, “when lecturers are warm, respectful, and open, students feel psychologically safe to approach them” (R1, NZ). A positive classroom atmosphere, shaped by the lecturer’s friendly demeanor, was reported to increase students’ comfort and engagement in learning activities (R1, CZ). Maintaining good interpersonal relationships with students was consistently viewed as essential in establishing trust, which in turn facilitates a more effective teaching and learning process (R2, CZ; R3, NZ). One participant noted that “gaining students’ trust allows lessons to run more smoothly and helps students better understand the content” (R3, CZ).

In addition, several lecturers shared that viewing students as peers and encouraging open communication fostered a sense of closeness and increased students’ willingness to seek academic or emotional support (R5, NZ). Another lecturer emphasized the importance of ensuring students know they can “always reach out, either in person or through messages, if they have any concerns or questions” (R5, CZ). It was also noted that students are unlikely to initiate interaction unless they perceive their lecturers as genuinely approachable and welcoming (R6, NZ). These findings underscore that trust is not solely established through verbal assurances, but more critically through consistent, empathetic, and supportive behavior from the lecturer.

Feeling Comfortable

Another An equally important aspect of fostering friendly and approachable lecturer–student relationships is ensuring that students feel comfortable during interactions with their lecturers. Participants in this study reported that when students perceive an atmosphere of positivity and warmth from their lecturers, it alleviates anxiety and facilitates more effective learning (R1, NZ). Conversely, “when a supervisor appears intimidating or unapproachable, students tend to limit their interaction, which can negatively affect their learning experience” (R1, CZ).

A relaxed and non-authoritarian approach was consistently emphasized, with several lecturers asserting that reducing hierarchical tension enables students to engage

more openly in the learning process (R4, NZ). One lecturer remarked, “We are not disciplined masters,” underscoring the importance of fostering kindness and mutual respect rather than relying on fear or strict authority (R4, CZ). Gestures such as treating students as equals and maintaining a “friendly facial expression” were also perceived as crucial in creating a sense of safety and security (R5, NZ). As one participant explained, “The way that you spread your face to your student... makes them feel secure” (R5, NZ), while another observed, “There will be a barrier between me and the students... I have to have that friendliness” (R6, NZ).

These findings indicate that emotional safety and acceptance are key drivers of student engagement and openness. Furthermore, trust was identified as a foundational element that enhances comfort, as one lecturer noted that once trust is established, students are more confident in accessing and understanding the lesson (R3, CZ). Overall, cultivating a sense of comfort among students requires more than a positive disposition; it demands conscious, empathetic efforts to dismantle barriers and create an inclusive, welcoming classroom environment.

4.3.6.2 Relationship-Building Strategies

Lecturers in Malaysian universities employ a range of strategies to foster strong and meaningful relationships with their students. This study identified two prominent approaches, such as informal interactions and wellness check-ins. These strategies contribute to creating a supportive academic environment by encouraging open communication, emotional connection, and mutual trust between lecturers and students.

Trust-Building Strategies

Building trust was identified as a central strategy for fostering meaningful lecturer–student relationships. Lecturers emphasized that adopting a friendly and approachable demeanor contributes to a “sense of psychological safety,” which encourages students to engage more openly in the classroom environment (R1, NZ). When students perceive a positive and supportive attitude from their lecturers, it helps to establish a welcoming atmosphere that promotes both emotional comfort and academic involvement (R1, CZ).

Trust was also recognized as being directly linked to the effectiveness of learning. As one participant stated, “once trust is established, students find it easier to participate in lessons and absorb content” (R3, NZ). Open and consistent communication was another key component of trust-building, with one lecturer highlighting the importance of “reassuring students they can talk anytime” as a way to cultivate mutual respect and enhance coordination (R5, NZ).

These insights underscore that trust is not merely a byproduct of interaction, but rather the result of deliberate, caring, and student-centered behavior. When lecturers demonstrate consistency, empathy, and openness, they not only foster trust but also enhance students’ overall engagement and learning outcomes.

Informal Interaction Strategies

Informal interactions were identified as valuable strategies for fostering rapport and cultivating a sense of belonging among students. Lecturers described how simple, everyday gestures, such as “sharing meals or coffee, giving campus tours, and chatting during breaks”, served as effective means of connecting with students on a more personal level (R1, NZ; R4, CZ). Though these interactions occur outside formal academic settings, they carry significant emotional value and contribute to relationship-building.

One lecturer highlighted the importance of offering support during personal hardships, noting that “checking in with students during times of personal struggle, such as bereavement, shows care beyond academic roles” (R1, CZ). Another emphasized how “remembering students’ names and regularly asking about their well-being” helped students feel seen, acknowledged, and respected as individuals rather than merely learners (R6, NZ).

These informal interaction strategies play a critical role in creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment. By showing genuine interest in students’ lives beyond the classroom, lecturers foster emotional safety and trust, which in turn encourages greater student engagement and participation.

4.3.6.3 Challenges in Relationships

While building positive relationships between lecturers and students is essential for fostering effective learning environments, it is not without its challenges. Participants in this study identified key obstacles that can hinder the development of meaningful connections with students. Notably, two recurring challenges emerged: student disengagement and the difficulty of balancing friendliness with professionalism. These challenges highlight the complexities lecturers face in navigating relational dynamics within higher education settings.

Disengaged Students

One of the primary challenges in building strong lecturer–student relationships is engaging students who appear reserved or disengaged, particularly within STEM-related disciplines such as Computer Science and Applied Science. Lecturers reported difficulties in encouraging active participation among students who remain silent despite repeated prompting. As one lecturer explained, “My Computer Science students are too quiet. I ask questions, no reaction. They just stare blankly” (R3, NZ). Similarly, another noted that students in Applied Science only respond when addressed individually: “They won’t speak unless I call them one-by-one” (R3, CZ).

This pattern of limited interaction was particularly pronounced in STEM fields, where students may be less expressive or more hesitant to contribute in class. Such disengagement poses a significant barrier for lecturers, as it hampers their ability to assess student comprehension, foster meaningful dialogue, and build the relational foundation necessary for effective teaching and learning.

Balancing Friendliness & Professionalism

Another key challenge in lecturer–student relationship-building is maintaining an appropriate balance between being approachable and upholding professional boundaries. Several lecturers expressed concern that excessive friendliness could diminish their authority or lead to a loss of respect, particularly among students close to them in age. As one lecturer explained, “I’m only six years older than students. If I act too friendly, they lose respect” (R3, NZ). Another highlighted the difficulty of striking

this balance, stating, “We must be friendly but not friends, it’s a hard line to walk” (R3, CZ).

This issue is especially pronounced for early-career or younger lecturers, who may face additional pressure to assert their credibility while simultaneously creating an inclusive and supportive classroom atmosphere. The tension between fostering rapport and maintaining authority reflects a broader dilemma in higher education: how to humanize teaching without compromising professional roles and responsibilities.

4.3.7 Thematic Analysis: Decision-Making Skills

Decision-making skills are essential for both educators and students in navigating the complexities of academic and personal development. This study examines lecturers’ views on applying decision-making skills within the teaching context. As illustrated in Figure 4:7, the thematic analysis generated through NVivo reveals four major themes: value of students’ feedback, strategies for decision-making skills, and challenges in implementation. Each of these main themes includes several sub-themes which collectively reflect the complexity and depth of how decision-making is experienced in higher education contexts.

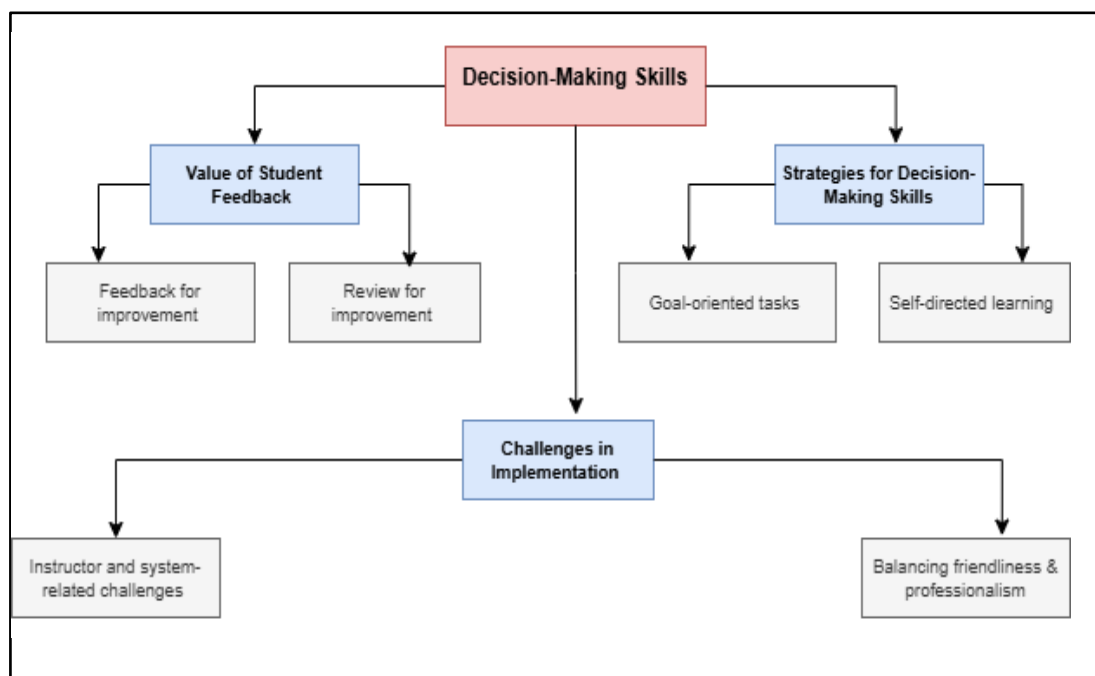


Figure 4:7 Thematic Analysis: Decision-making Skills

4.3.7.1 Value of Student Feedback

Student feedback plays a vital role in supporting university lecturers' decision-making processes in Malaysia. As higher education becomes increasingly student-centered, lecturers must continuously reflect on and refine their teaching practices. Research has identified two key findings that highlight the value of student feedback in this context, such as Feedback-Driven Adjustments and Review for Improvement.

Feedback for Improvement

The analysis of the Feedback for Improvement theme reveals that lecturers in Malaysian universities acknowledge student feedback as vital for enhancing teaching practices. However, the degree of its impact depends on how deeply the feedback is engaged with. For instance, Response One (R1, NZ) reflects a growth-oriented mindset, "Because when students give us feedback, we can take into consideration, like, okay, I need to improve for next semester," showing a direct link between student feedback and planning for instructional improvement. Similarly, Response Six (R6, NZ) illustrates a proactive and structured feedback loop.

The lecturer uses surveys at the beginning of the class to clarify mutual expectations: "I tell them what's my expectations of them... and I ask them to tell me what they expect of me as a lecturer" (R6, NZ). The lecturer also adjusts class activities based on student preferences, "Usually, they tell me that, oh, we want games in class... So, yeah, that's how I do it" (R4, CZ), demonstrating responsiveness and adaptability. These examples suggest that while feedback mechanisms exist, their effectiveness lies in reflective engagement and practical implementation. Thus, professional development efforts should not only promote feedback collection but also emphasize reflective interpretation and action to foster meaningful, long-term improvements in teaching.

Review for Improvement

The theme Feedback for Alignment with Student Expectations highlights the reciprocal nature of communication between lecturers and students, aimed at fostering shared understanding of roles, responsibilities, and learning goals. Response Six (R6, NZ) demonstrates this clearly: "I tell them what I expect of them, and I ask them to tell

me what they expect of me as a lecturer.” This two-way feedback approach builds trust and clarity, enhancing the overall learning experience. The lecturer also reflects on improving feedback mechanisms over time: “In my first semester, I made the mistake of making the question open-ended... Now I make it a point to specify several options” (R2, CZ).

This shows an evolving approach, learning from past mistakes to refine how feedback is collected. Similarly, another respondent emphasizes a reflective attitude: “I do take it very valuably. Yeah, feedback is important” (R1, CZ), indicating that feedback is not just received, but truly considered in improving teaching. Response Five (R5, NZ) adds another dimension, with the lecturer expressing a desire to understand the impact of their teaching: “I’m always trying to see that my student just to see the impact of... what I am just telling them in the class.” Collectively, these reflections underscore that effective alignment with student expectations requires ongoing review and adaptation. Feedback thus becomes a tool not only for improvement but also for ensuring that teaching practices remain responsive and aligned with student needs and goals.

4.3.7.2 Strategies for Decision-Making Skills

Enhancing students’ decision-making skills requires the intentional integration of instructional strategies, real-life applications, and opportunities for reflective practice. Based on the findings of this study, two key strategies were identified as central to developing students’ decision-making capacities: goal-oriented tasks and personal reflection through self-directed learning. These strategies support students in becoming more autonomous, critical, and thoughtful in their academic and personal choices.

Goal-Oriented Tasks

The strategy of Goal-Oriented Tasks involves structured activities designed with clear objectives to help students actively practice and develop their decision-making skills. Lecturers highlighted the use of problem-solving courses and critical thinking assignments as key methods, where students are required to make informed decisions based on data and logical analysis (R2, NZ; R4, CZ). Another effective approach is the

inclusion of simulated real-world tasks, such as “group projects” and “business event planning”, where students collaborate to solve problems and make joint decisions, mirroring professional environments (Responses 3, NZ; 5, CZ). These tasks not only build decision-making abilities but also foster teamwork and accountability. Additionally, lecturers mentioned scaffolded assessments, where early evaluation of “students’ skills is used to adjust assignment complexity” and develop “targeted exercises” (Responses 2, CZ; 6, NZ). This gradual and responsive approach ensures that students are challenged appropriately and supported in developing their decision-making competencies over time. Overall, goal-oriented tasks provide a practical, engaging, and adaptive framework for enhancing students’ decision-making skills.

Self-Directed Learning

The strategy of Self-Directed Learning emphasizes independent approaches that cultivate critical thinking, personal responsibility, and autonomy in students’ decision-making processes. Lecturers reported that encouraging students to engage with curated content, such as “TEDx videos” and supplementary reading materials, helps them gather diverse perspectives and make more informed decisions (Response 1, NZ). One creative example included using “Netflix series related to clinical psychology”, allowing students to analyze fictional diagnoses and apply theoretical knowledge in an engaging, self-initiated way (Response 1, CZ).

In addition, reflective practices, such as “writing reflections on lessons and feedback”, enable students to evaluate their past choices and improve future decision-making (Response 3, CZ). Socratic questioning, where lecturers ask open-ended questions instead of giving immediate answers, was also noted as a technique that encourages “deeper analysis” and “independent thinking” (Response 4, CZ). Altogether, these practices promote a mindset of inquiry, self-awareness, and lifelong learning, key components in strengthening students’ ability to make thoughtful, confident decisions.

4.3.7.3 Challenges in Implementation

The implementation of decision-making skills within higher education is not without its difficulties. This study identified two primary categories of challenges:

Instructor and System-Related Challenges and Student-Related Challenges. These encompass a range of issues, including limitations in pedagogical practices, insufficient institutional support structures, low levels of student engagement, and difficulties in translating decision-making concepts into real-world applications. Understanding these challenges is essential for developing more effective interventions and fostering an environment where decision-making can be meaningfully cultivated.

Instructor and System-Related Challenges

Instructor and system-related challenges in Malaysian universities often stem from pressures on teaching methods, institutional practices, and curriculum design. Although Socratic questioning and interactive exercises deepen critical thinking, “it takes time. Sometimes lecturers want to finish the syllabus” (Response 1, NZ), and even when instructors sacrifice breadth for depth, “there would not be enough time” to cover the whole chapter while engaging students meaningfully (Response 4, CZ).

Assessment design and adaptation also present hurdles. Early diagnostic assessments help tailor instruction, “we need to do a lot of assessment in the first, second week... adjust the assessment for them” (Response 2, NZ), but crafting tools that yield actionable data can require trial and error: “in my first semester, I made the mistake of making questions open-ended... now I specify options” (Response 6, NZ).

Resource and systemic barriers compound these issues. Many lecturers lean on pre-recorded pandemic lectures to conserve class time, yet “in-class critical thinking takes time” and cannot be replicated with static videos (Response 7, NZ). In courses with less autonomous learners, such as diploma programs, “I need to always ask about their progress,” placing extra demands on instructors (Response 5, CZ).

Finally, institutional expectations around grades can clash with skill-building. As one lecturer found, “students criticized me for pushing them to speak... but I believe it’s necessary” (Response 5, NZ), underscoring how a grade-focused culture may resist pedagogical approaches that prioritize decision-making and communication. Together, these challenges reveal a need for greater flexibility in syllabi, targeted support for interactive teaching, and institutional recognition of active learning as essential for nurturing students’ decision-making skills.

Student-Related Challenges

Student-related challenges in implementing decision-making and critical thinking tasks in Malaysian university classrooms stem from a mix of preparedness, engagement levels, and learner diversity. A recurring issue is limited participation, particularly among shy students. Some “will not participate unless pushed,” while others “couldn’t talk even if you try to push them,” and even criticized lecturers privately for encouraging participation (Responses 3 & 5, NZ). This hesitancy can significantly hinder interactive learning.

Skill gaps also emerge, especially among diploma students, who “need time to adapt to university-level thinking,” requiring lecturers to “constantly check their progress” (Response 3, CZ). These students often struggle with problem-solving tasks and instead focus on problem-stating, without offering solutions, and increasingly lean on AI tools instead of cultivating their own critical thinking abilities (Response 2, NZ).

There’s also attitudinal resistance. Some students offer vague, unhelpful feedback, such as simply writing “games” in open-ended surveys, without clarifying how such methods aid their learning (Response 6, NZ). This lack of specificity makes it harder for lecturers to meaningfully adjust their teaching. Furthermore, when critical thinking activities are selectively implemented due to time constraints (Response 1, CZ), it suggests that not all students are equipped to keep pace, reinforcing disparities in learning engagement and outcomes.

Lastly, learner diversity presents a major challenge. The varying competencies between diploma and degree students make it difficult to design one-size-fits-all decision-making tasks. These differences necessitate differentiated teaching strategies and targeted support systems that can better accommodate a broad spectrum of student needs, mindsets, and engagement styles.

4.3.8 Thematic Analysis: Incorporating Functional Emotional Strategies

Lecturers emphasized the critical role of supporting students’ emotional well-being as part of effective teaching and learning practices. This section explores their views on the importance of fostering positive emotions, the strategies they adopt to promote emotional functionality in students, the challenges they face, particularly

around rumination and emotional complexity, for improving emotional engagement in English-medium higher education settings.

As illustrated in Figure 4:8, the findings derived from NVivo analysis are organized into four main themes: Importance of Positive Emotions, Rumination on Students' Feelings, and Challenges of Rumination.

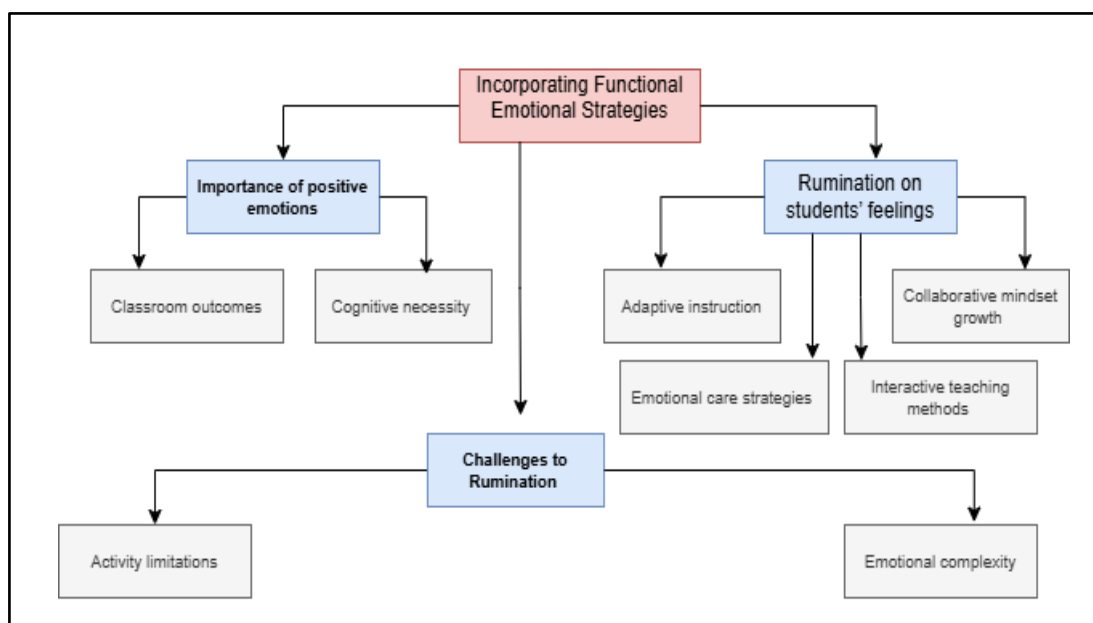


Figure 4:8 Thematic Analysis: Incorporating Emotional Strategies

4.3.8.1 Importance of Positive Emotions

Positive emotions play a vital role in shaping students' learning experiences by fostering a supportive, engaging, and psychologically safe classroom environment. When students experience emotions such as joy, interest, and confidence, their levels of motivation, participation, and overall well-being tend to increase significantly. This study identified two key areas in which positive emotions contribute meaningfully: Classroom Outcomes and Cognitive Necessity. These dimensions highlight the emotional foundations of effective learning and underscore the importance of integrating emotional awareness into teaching practices.

Classroom Outcomes

Classroom outcomes associated with positive emotions demonstrate that fostering a supportive emotional climate significantly enhances students' overall learning experience. Lecturers observed that when students feel calm, safe, and included, their motivation and ability to process and retain information improve noticeably. One lecturer noted that emotional stability helps prevent students from “blanking out” during lessons, emphasizing the importance of psychological safety for academic focus (Response 1, NZ).

A positive classroom atmosphere also encourages risk-taking and participation, even when students are uncertain of their responses. This not only builds their confidence but also reinforces a sense of belonging. As one participant explained, positive emotions “prompt more active classroom participation,” which contributes to a more dynamic and rewarding teaching experience for educators themselves (Response 3, CZ).

Moreover, students experiencing positive emotional states were more likely to demonstrate curiosity and engagement. For example, “when students feel happy and comfortable enough to ask questions,” it reflects a deeper emotional connection to the learning environment (Response 4, CZ). Lecturers also emphasized the role of emotional regulation, with one noting that “managing negative emotions” enhances students' focus and comprehension (Response 5, NZ).

To cultivate these outcomes, lecturers implemented simple yet effective techniques such as incorporating “music or interactive tools like polls” to create a more relaxed atmosphere (Response 6, NZ). These practices were found to promote emotional ease, thereby contributing to more meaningful and productive classroom interactions.

Cognitive Necessity

Cognitive necessity highlights why positive emotions are essential for optimal brain function and effective learning. Lecturers noted that when students experience stress or negative emotions, the “amygdala becomes overactive,” which interferes with the functioning of the prefrontal cortex, responsible for “decision-making, problem-solving, and logical thinking” (Response 1, NZ). As one lecturer explained, “a person

who's not at peace cannot think straight," illustrating how emotional disturbances impair cognitive clarity and academic performance.

Additionally, lecturers observed that "negative emotions hinder comprehension," making it difficult for students to follow lessons and absorb new information (Response 5, CZ). In contrast, positive emotional states were described as enhancing "active engagement and align[ing] with Bloom's taxonomy," contributing to learning across the "cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains" (Response 6, NZ). These insights affirm that emotional well-being is not just a classroom enhancer but a necessary condition for meaningful cognitive engagement and successful learning outcomes.

4.3.8.2 Rumination on Students' Feelings

Rumination on students' feelings refers to the process of acknowledging, exploring, and guiding students to process their emotions healthily and constructively. This reflective emotional practice allows students to become more self-aware and better equipped to navigate academic challenges. The findings identified two key strategies that facilitate this emotional transition, such as Adaptive Instruction and Collaborative Mindset Growth. These approaches not only validate students' emotional experiences but also create learning environments that promote resilience, openness, and emotional regulation.

Adaptive Instruction

Adaptive instruction plays a vital role in fostering functional emotional strategies among university students by enabling lecturers to adjust their teaching methods to align with students' emotional and cognitive needs. Lecturers in the study shared that they regularly modified their "instructional approaches," incorporating techniques such as "videos, role plays, or interactive questioning" to capture attention and sustain emotional engagement (Response 1, NZ).

One effective approach involved reusing "pre-recorded lectures," which allowed more in-class time for discussion and critical thinking, fostering deeper student engagement and reflection. Additional practices included offering "mental breaks,"

initiating conversations about “students’ personal challenges,” and demonstrating empathy to build stronger emotional connections with learners (Response 4, CZ).

Lecturers also adjusted their strategies based on class size and setting, using “more interactive techniques in smaller tutorial groups compared to formal lectures” (Response 6, NZ). These adaptive methods contributed to the creation of a supportive and responsive learning environment in which students felt emotionally safe, understood, and ready to participate meaningfully in their academic development.

Collaborative Mindset Growth

Collaborative mindset growth highlights the importance of peer interaction and shared responsibility in supporting students’ emotional and academic development. Lecturers in the study adopted strategies that encouraged students to work together, share their experiences, and learn from one another in emotionally supportive ways.

For example, one lecturer described “meeting students in small groups to check in and create a more personal and supportive environment” (Response 1, NZ), allowing for greater emotional connection and individualized attention. Another utilized “group role-play activities,” which enabled students to express their feelings, explore different viewpoints, and develop empathy and emotional intelligence (Response 3, CZ).

Peer discussion sessions were also viewed as a “valuable tool, where students could interact with classmates, exchange ideas, and support each other’s learning journeys” (Response 6, NZ). These collaborative approaches not only deepened emotional bonds among students but also cultivated a classroom culture where learners felt more connected, confident, and motivated to engage actively in both emotional reflection and academic tasks.

Emotional Care Strategies

Emotional care strategies are central to promoting students’ psychological well-being and creating a nurturing, emotionally safe classroom environment. Lecturers in the study emphasized the importance of fostering inclusion and empathy. One lecturer noted the value of ensuring that “students feel encouraged even when they give wrong answers, rather than facing discouragement” (Response 1, NZ). This approach was seen as essential for building student confidence and reducing the fear of failure.

Lecturers also underscored the significance of emotional attentiveness, such as observing when a student appears upset and taking the time to follow up with empathy and concern. Recognizing individual struggles and responding with “positive reinforcement and offering help when needed” was highlighted as an effective way to connect with students on a deeper emotional level (Response 4, CZ).

In addition to their instructional roles, many lecturers viewed themselves as mentors, taking on responsibilities that extended beyond academic instruction. They described the importance of “being patient, managing their own emotions, and modeling emotional stability” for their students (Response 5, CZ). These practices reflect the belief that emotional care is not a peripheral task but a critical component of effective teaching that builds trust, encourages motivation, and supports students’ overall well-being.

Interactive Teaching Methods

Interactive teaching methods involve engaging, participatory techniques that actively immerse students in the learning process, making classroom experiences more dynamic, inclusive, and emotionally engaging. Lecturers in the study shared a variety of strategies that blended academic rigor with emotional attentiveness. For instance, some lecturers balanced humor with meaningful content and employed gamification techniques such as “card reward systems to boost motivation and participation” (Response 1, CZ).

Pre-lesson engagement was also used to encourage curiosity and involvement, with lecturers “asking students what they already know about a topic” as a way to activate prior knowledge and stimulate interest (Response 3, NZ). Role-plays using WH-questions were incorporated to promote critical thinking and ensure active student participation.

To foster a relaxed and emotionally connected classroom atmosphere, some lecturers introduced “student-selected music” and used online “polling websites” to facilitate mood-check games, allowing students to feel heard and emotionally aligned with the session (Response 6, NZ). These interactive approaches were seen as instrumental in maintaining student interest, supporting emotional well-being, and improving overall learning outcomes.

4.3.8.3 Challenges to Rumination

Challenges of rumination refer to the difficulties lecturers encounter when supporting students in reflecting on and managing their emotions during the learning process. While emotional reflection is essential for student development, implementing it in classroom practice presents practical and emotional hurdles. This study identified two primary types of challenges in this area: Activity Limitations and Emotional Complexity. These challenges highlight the constraints faced by educators in balancing emotional support with instructional goals and navigating students' varied emotional responses in diverse learning environments.

Activity Limitations

Activity limitations refer to the practical constraints lecturers face when attempting to integrate emotional rumination into their teaching. Several lecturers expressed that they “lack the time” or “energy to attend to each student’s emotional needs individually,” particularly in “large classes” where personalized engagement is challenging (Response 1, NZ).

While reflective activities were acknowledged as valuable, they were also described as “time-consuming” and potentially disruptive to the “flow of the lesson or syllabus” (Response 4, CZ). These concerns highlight the difficulty in balancing emotional support with academic pacing and curriculum demands.

Additionally, some lecturers expressed caution about initiating emotional reflection, noting that “encouraging students to dwell on their feelings might sometimes trigger negative emotional responses” that are difficult to manage within the constraints of a classroom setting (Response 5, NZ). These insights underscore the importance of carefully planning emotionally reflective practices to ensure they are both constructive and manageable within educational contexts.

Emotional Complexity

Emotional complexity refers to the nuanced and often unpredictable nature of students' emotional experiences, which can challenge lecturers' efforts to provide consistent and effective support. One lecturer shared a "situation where they noticed a student crying but later forgot to follow up due to being overwhelmed with other responsibilities" (Response 1, CZ), highlighting how emotional care may unintentionally be overlooked in the midst of academic and administrative demands.

Another lecturer emphasized the importance of empathy, noting that "students have diverse emotional backgrounds and challenges that aren't always visible or easy to address" (Response 4, NZ). This underscores the difficulty in fully understanding or responding to each student's emotional state, particularly in large or diverse classrooms.

A further perspective acknowledged that "negative emotions are inevitable, and both students and lecturers must learn to manage them constructively" (Response 5, NZ). These accounts illustrate that emotional support in educational contexts is far from straightforward; it demands continuous attentiveness, emotional intelligence, and the ability to adapt to a wide range of student needs and responses.

4.3.9 Thematic Analysis: Promoting Social-Emotional Support

This study explores lecturers' perspectives on promoting social-emotional support in higher education, examining their beliefs in its value, the impact on teaching and learning environments, and the challenges faced in its implementation. As illustrated in Figure 4:9, the findings are organized into four main themes: Belief in Social-Emotional Support, Impact of Social-Emotional Support, and Challenges of Offering Social-Emotional Support, each supported by several subthemes derived from the lecturers' narratives.

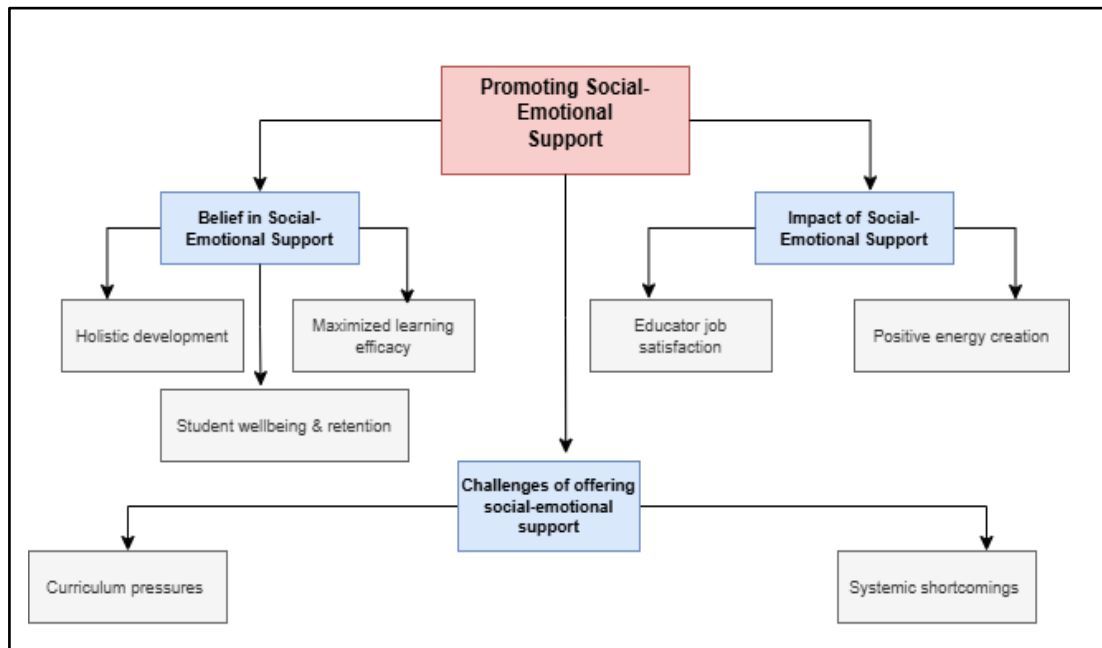


Figure 4:9 Thematic Analysis: Promoting Social Emotional Support

4.3.9.1 *Belief in Social-Emotional Support*

Lecturers emphasized that social-emotional support is vital for student success in higher education. They believed it promotes holistic development, enhances learning effectiveness, and improves student well-being and retention. By fostering emotionally supportive environments, students are more engaged, motivated, and likely to persist in their studies.

Holistic Development

Lecturers in the study emphasized that social-emotional support is integral to students' holistic development, contributing not only to academic success but also to emotional resilience and social adaptability. Participants reported that fostering a strong student–teacher relationship and establishing a supportive classroom climate are key to achieving a “predictive supportive learning environment” (R3, CZ). As one lecturer articulated, “a person comes with social and emotional aspects,” and therefore, it is within the educator’s responsibility “to help out in that way” (R1, NZ). These perspectives reflect a shared belief among lecturers that addressing students’ social and

emotional needs is not supplementary but essential for nurturing well-rounded individuals capable of managing challenges both within and beyond academic contexts.

Maximized Learning Efficacy

Lecturers in the study underscored the strong connection between emotional support and enhanced learning efficacy. They observed that when students feel emotionally safe and supported, they are more likely to participate actively, think creatively, and remain engaged throughout the learning process. One lecturer emphasized that when students are not afraid to voice their ideas, it creates a space where “learning and inspiration can take place” (R1, NZ). Another highlighted that a supportive emotional climate contributes to “a more creative and fun learning environment,” which positively influences student attention and sustained motivation (R3, CZ). These insights reflect the belief that emotional support reduces anxiety, fosters openness, and encourages collaboration, all of which are essential for maximizing the effectiveness of teaching and learning. By cultivating such emotionally responsive environments, lecturers play a key role in promoting deeper understanding and meaningful engagement among students.

Student Wellbeing & Retention

Lecturers identified emotional support as a key factor influencing both student well-being and retention in higher education. They observed that when students feel emotionally supported, they are more motivated to attend classes and remain committed to their studies. One lecturer remarked that emotional connection can enhance class attendance and mutual enthusiasm, noting, “They feel happy to come to class... even if I’m having a bad day, I look forward to our class” (R1, CZ). Another emphasized the role of lecturers in guiding students through personal and emotional difficulties, stating, “We will know how to handle their problems” (R3, NZ).

Furthermore, a participant highlighted the lecturer’s role as a bridge between students and institutional support systems, particularly when students lack access to administrative services, explaining how lecturers often step in to provide immediate emotional assistance (R6, NZ). Collectively, these insights reinforce the notion that

sustained emotional support from educators contributes not only to students' psychological well-being but also to their academic persistence and long-term retention.

4.3.9.2 Impact of Social-Emotional Support

The study examines the impact of providing social-emotional support to students and how it influences teaching dynamics and educator experiences. Two key outcomes emerged from lecturers' perspectives. First, offering emotional support enhances educator job satisfaction by fostering meaningful connections with students, making the teaching experience more rewarding. Second, it leads to positive energy creation in the classroom, where a supportive environment encourages enthusiasm, mutual respect, and a stronger sense of community among students and lecturers alike.

Educator Job Satisfaction

Educator job satisfaction is notably enhanced through the integration of social-emotional support within the classroom environment. Lecturers emphasized that fostering strong emotional connections with students increases their sense of confidence and fulfillment in their professional roles. As one lecturer expressed, "It makes me feel more confident in my career" (Response 6, NZ), highlighting the personal and professional reassurance gained through positive student relationships. Another lecturer shared the reciprocal nature of this connection, stating, "I feel happy to go to class... They feel happy to come to class" (Response 3, CZ), indicating that emotional support creates a mutually uplifting atmosphere. Similarly, the transformative impact of emotional engagement on teaching was noted by a participant who remarked, "Teaching gives me a fulfilling sense" (Response 2, NZ). Collectively, these reflections illustrate how social-emotional support plays a crucial role in enhancing lecturers' job satisfaction and overall teaching experience.

Positive Energy Creation

Positive energy creation in the classroom emerges as a key outcome of providing social-emotional support, contributing to a lively, inspiring, and student-centered learning environment. Lecturers observed that such support led to an uplifting

classroom atmosphere, with one noting, “The whole classroom environment has this exuberant, vibrant energy” (Response 1, CZ), which fosters both enthusiasm and deeper engagement in learning. Students echoed this sentiment, with one remarking, “Class feels like we’re just having fun, it doesn’t feel like class” (Response 1, NZ), indicating that emotional support can transform the learning experience into something enjoyable and motivating. By balancing professional boundaries with a sense of joy and connection, educators are able to cultivate a dynamic classroom climate that enhances student motivation, participation, and emotional well-being.

4.3.9.3 Challenges of Offering Social-emotional Support

Providing social-emotional support in higher education is essential yet often constrained by institutional and instructional demands. The research identified two main challenges in offering social-emotional support to university students: curriculum pressures and systemic shortcomings.

Curriculum Pressures

A central challenge identified by lecturers in providing social-emotional support is the pressure to complete curriculum content within constrained timeframes. The study found that while educators acknowledge the importance of addressing students’ emotional needs, the demands of academic delivery often limit their capacity to do so consistently.

One lecturer noted, “The lecturer should do that. But the challenge to that is essentially because you have a curriculum to finish. So you cannot spend too much time on personal relations” (R4, NZ), highlighting the tension between pedagogical care and curriculum accountability. Another lecturer added that students themselves may at times prefer to focus solely on course material, stating, “Maybe imagine if every class the lecturer does the same thing, it might be too much... they just want to talk about the material” (R1, CZ). These insights reveal the dual pressures lecturers face, navigating institutional expectations while also responding to varied student preferences, making it difficult to consistently integrate emotional support into teaching without compromising academic goals.

Systemic Shortcomings

Another significant challenge in providing social-emotional support is the lack of robust institutional mechanisms, which often shifts the burden onto lecturers. One lecturer noted that “students will not come to [administrative staff]... sometimes the students will even know who they can go to... lecturers have access to students almost every day, whereas administrative people don’t teach as much... students don’t have that relationship with them” (Response 6, NZ).

This observation highlights the relational gap between students and administrative personnel, compelling lecturers, who have more frequent and personal interactions, to assume additional advisory roles. Similarly, another lecturer explained (Response 4, CZ), implying an overreliance on teaching staff to compensate for insufficient dedicated counseling services, often resulting in lecturer burnout. Furthermore, institutional support appears limited to referring issues back to students’ families; as one lecturer stated, “university expect a student to talk to parents or guardians... if not solved, [lecturers] can contact guardians” (Response 3, CZ). This suggests a lack of formalized, university-led support structures, with emotional and personal challenges often being redirected outside the academic setting. Collectively, these challenges underscore systemic gaps that complicate lecturers’ efforts to support students’ holistic well-being effectively.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

This section critically examines Social-emotional Learning in the Malaysian higher education context by integrating both statistical results and lecturers' personal experiences. This discussion combined the study's findings to offer a balanced understanding of quantitative data reveals patterns and relationships, while qualitative insights provide depth and context through lecturers' personal experiences. Together, these findings offer a clearer picture of how emotional and social competencies shape instructional behavior in Malaysian higher education. The discussion also relates these findings to existing literature and theoretical perspectives, highlighting consistencies, new insights, and implications for improving teaching practices through SEL within English-medium teaching.

5.2 Research Question 1: How do educators' SEL practices influence the English-medium instruction (EMI) environment?

5.2.1 Understanding Emotions

Lecturers' emotional awareness plays a pivotal role in shaping responsive and student-centered teaching practices, particularly within English-medium instruction (EMI) contexts where language-related demands can intensify students' emotional and cognitive challenges. The quantitative findings indicate that the Understanding Emotions domain received the highest level of agreement among lecturers, with mean scores ranging from 4.49 to 4.90. Further regression analysis confirmed that this domain significantly predicts the use of functional emotional strategies in the classroom, suggesting that emotionally aware lecturers are better equipped to adapt their instructional practices to students' needs.

These findings are consistent with prior research emphasizing the importance of emotional awareness in effective teaching. Timoštšuk and Ugaste (2012) and Oberle et al. (2016) reported that educators with higher emotional awareness are more capable of modeling emotional expression, fostering openness, and supporting students' psychological well-being. Similarly, Zhoc et al. (2020) found that emotionally intelligent teachers positively influence students' engagement, communication, and collaborative learning.

Qualitative insights from the present study further support these findings. Lecturers reported engaging in emotional self-checks before class and modifying their teaching approaches based on students' emotional states. Such practices reflect emotionally responsive pedagogy as advocated by the CASEL framework (CASEL, 2020). Collectively, these results demonstrate that understanding emotions is not only foundational to effective teaching in EMI contexts but also essential for cultivating a supportive, inclusive, and emotionally attuned learning environment.

5.2.2 Managing Emotions

Managing emotions represents another important way lecturers incorporate Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) practices by modeling emotional regulation and fostering a calm, supportive classroom environment. Although this domain did not emerge as a significant predictor in the regression analysis ($p > 0.05$), the qualitative findings indicate that lecturers actively engage in emotional management strategies as part of their teaching practice.

Lecturers reported using personal regulation techniques such as mindfulness, deep breathing, and brief physical refreshment routines prior to teaching to maintain emotional balance. During classroom interactions, they demonstrated emotional control through measured speech, appropriate use of humor, and positive verbal reinforcement aimed at encouraging constructive student behavior. These practices help establish a psychologically safe learning atmosphere, which is particularly important in English-medium instruction (EMI) settings where students may experience heightened anxiety due to language demands.

These findings are supported by existing literature. Lindqvist (2019) emphasized the educator's critical role in setting the emotional tone of the classroom, noting that emotionally regulated teachers contribute to more stable and supportive learning environments. Similarly, Dolev and Leshem (2017) highlighted the importance of pre-class emotional preparation in minimizing reactive or emotionally charged responses during instruction. Furthermore, Mérida-López and Extremera (2017) demonstrated that emotional intelligence practices among educators reduce stress and enhance emotional resilience for both teachers and learners. Collectively, these insights suggest that while managing emotions may not directly predict EMI practices statistically, it remains a foundational SEL component that supports effective and emotionally balanced teaching.

5.2.3 Relationship Skills

Developing strong relationship skills is fundamental to building trust and enhancing student engagement in English-medium instruction (EMI) higher education classrooms. Quantitative findings indicate that the Relationship Skills domain received high levels of endorsement, with mean scores ranging from 4.52 to 4.88. Moreover, this domain emerged as a significant predictor of both emotional strategy use and the promotion of social-emotional support, highlighting its central role in effective SEL practices. These results align with the CASEL framework, which emphasizes relationship-building as a core component of successful SEL implementation (CASEL, 2020).

The qualitative findings further complement the quantitative results. Lecturers reported intentionally fostering supportive classroom environments by greeting students warmly, informally checking on their well-being, and engaging in casual conversations to build rapport. Such relational practices appeared to increase students' comfort, motivation, and classroom participation, particularly among those who were initially shy or hesitant in English-taught classes. As noted by Reynolds et al. (2013), communication and empathy are essential for developing meaningful educator–student relationships. Similarly, Barnes and McCallops (2019) found that educators with positive attitudes toward SEL are more likely to cultivate engaged and supportive learning environments. Interestingly, Ee and Cheng (2013) observed that relationship-

building practices are more readily integrated into emotionally expressive subjects such as English.

Taken together, these findings suggest that when lecturers prioritize relationship skills, they not only enhance instructional effectiveness in EMI contexts but also foster emotionally responsive, inclusive, and student-centered learning spaces.

5.2.4 Decision-Making Skills

Decision-making skills play a critical role in enhancing lecturers' instructional responsiveness and promoting student empowerment, particularly within English-medium instruction (EMI) environments, where pedagogical choices directly affect students' comprehension, engagement, and emotional confidence. Quantitative findings indicate that the Decision-Making Skills domain is a significant predictor of both the use of functional emotional strategies and the promotion of social-emotional support, with mean scores ranging from 4.31 to 4.68.

Qualitative data further revealed that lecturers employed diverse strategies to guide their instructional decisions. These included incorporating student feedback, connecting lessons to real-life contexts, and conducting classroom observations to monitor engagement and learning outcomes. Techniques such as Socratic questioning, reflective exercises, and adaptive lesson planning enabled lecturers to respond effectively to the evolving needs and dynamics of their classrooms.

These findings align with prior research emphasizing the importance of reflective and ethical decision-making. Lee (2007) viewed decision-making as a process grounded in critical analysis, ethical reflection, and values-based judgment, while Brewer et al. (2019) highlighted its role in fostering resilient and responsible learners. The CASEL framework similarly identifies responsible decision-making as a core competency that supports classroom engagement and ethical reasoning (CASEL, 2020b). The present study extends these insights by demonstrating that lecturers' reflective and responsive decision-making practices not only enhance instructional effectiveness but also promote student voice, autonomy, and meaningful participation in EMI settings.

5.2.5 Incorporating Functional Emotional Strategies

Incorporating functional emotional strategies into teaching enhances student engagement and fosters emotionally supportive learning environments, particularly within English-medium instruction (EMI) settings where students may face heightened emotional and linguistic demands. Quantitative findings revealed strong lecturer endorsement of this domain, with mean scores ranging from 4.48 to 4.75. Regression analysis further indicated that competencies in *Understanding Emotions*, *Relationship Skills*, and *Decision-Making Skills* significantly predicted lecturers' use of functional emotional strategies in the classroom. This suggests that educators who are emotionally aware, relationally skilled, and reflective are more likely to embed emotion-based techniques into their instruction.

Qualitative insights highlighted how lecturers operationalize these strategies in practice. They described using gamification, group-based activities, storytelling, and emotional encouragement to sustain student interest, promote peer collaboration, and redirect negative behaviors. Such practices are consistent with findings by Naragon-Gainey et al. (2017) and Bavarian et al. (2013), who emphasize that functional emotional strategies transform emotional experiences into learning opportunities, fostering motivation, empathy, and resilience among students. The CASEL framework (2020) similarly advocates integrating social and emotional learning within instruction to cultivate emotionally intelligent, self-regulated learners.

5.2.6 Promoting Social-Emotional Support

Promoting social-emotional support is essential for creating inclusive and psychologically safe learning environments, particularly in English-medium instruction (EMI) settings where students may experience linguistic and emotional challenges. Quantitative findings revealed strong lecturer endorsement of this domain, with mean scores ranging from 4.45 to 4.72, indicating that educators actively engage in fostering social-emotional support in their classrooms. Regression analysis further highlighted that competencies in *Understanding Emotions*, *Relationship Skills*, and *Decision-Making Skills* significantly predict the promotion of social-emotional support,

suggesting that emotionally aware, relationally skilled, and reflective lecturers are more effective in providing this support.

Qualitative data illustrated several strategies lecturers use to cultivate social-emotional support. These include actively checking in on students' well-being, offering constructive feedback, encouraging peer collaboration, and creating opportunities for students to share concerns or express emotions. Such practices contribute to a supportive classroom climate that enhances student engagement, motivation, and confidence. Consistent with the literature, Naragon-Gainey et al. (2017) and Bavarian et al. (2013) emphasize that fostering social-emotional support helps transform challenges into learning opportunities, promoting empathy, resilience, and self-regulation among learners. Likewise, the CASEL framework (2020) underscores that integrating social-emotional support within instruction is vital for developing emotionally competent and self-regulated students.

5.3 Research Question 2: How do educators incorporate SEL competencies in an English-medium instruction (EMI) teaching environment?

5.3.1 Understanding Emotions

Understanding emotions is a key way educators incorporate SEL into their teaching by enabling emotionally responsive instructional planning in EMI settings. Quantitative results from this study revealed that "Understanding Emotions" recorded the highest mean values among all SEL domains, indicating that lecturers consistently recognize and respond to students' emotional states during instruction. This widespread agreement suggests that emotion-checking, such as being attuned to students' moods, stress levels, and engagement, has become an integral part of teaching routines. These findings align with Timoštšuk and Ugaste (2012), who highlighted that emotional awareness enhances classroom responsiveness and promotes openness.

Qualitative data supported this insight, showing that lecturers engaged in both verbal and non-verbal emotional assessments, including asking emotional check-in questions and observing body language. These practices allowed educators to make real-time pedagogical decisions, such as adjusting tone, content pacing, or classroom activities when signs of disengagement or emotional discomfort emerged. This approach reflects Oberle et al.'s (2016) and Zhoc et al.'s (2020) arguments that

understanding students' emotional states contributes not only to instructional effectiveness but also to the creation of emotionally safe, engaged learning environments. In this way, lecturers incorporated SEL by embedding emotional sensitivity into their daily instructional planning and classroom interactions, particularly when content is delivered through English.

5.3.2 Managing Emotions

Managing emotions is another way lecturers incorporate SEL by modeling emotional control and fostering a calm, supportive classroom environment. While this domain did not emerge as a significant predictor in the regression analysis, its consistently high mean scores indicate that emotional regulation is frequently practiced. Lecturers reported engaging in personal regulation techniques such as mindfulness, deep breathing, and short physical refreshment routines prior to teaching. Within the classroom, they modeled emotional balance through controlled speech, humor, and patient responses to student behavior. These strategies align with Lindqvist (2019), who emphasized the educator's role in setting the emotional tone of the classroom.

Dolev and Leshem (2017) also highlighted the value of pre-class emotional preparation in preventing reactive or emotionally charged responses during EMI instruction. In addition to self-regulation, lecturers embedded similar techniques into their teaching to support students' emotional management, incorporating energizers, short breaks, and laughter therapy to help maintain a balanced emotional climate. This approach is consistent with Mérida-López and Extremera (2017), who found that emotional intelligence practices reduce stress and enhance emotional resilience among both teachers and learners. Through these intentional actions, educators model and teach emotional regulation as a practical SEL skill embedded within the instructional process.

5.3.3 Relationship Skills

Relationship skills serve as a cornerstone of SEL-integrated instruction by fostering trust, emotional safety, and student engagement through relational English-taught teaching practices. The quantitative findings indicated high levels of practice in this domain, with statistically significant predictive relationships, underscoring the

centrality of relational competence in effective SEL implementation. These findings support prior research that positions relationship-building as fundamental to creating emotionally responsive classrooms (Reynolds et al., 2013; CASEL, 2020). In the qualitative phase, lecturers reported using strategies such as wellness check-ins, informal conversations, and storytelling to build rapport and strengthen emotional connections with students.

These relational practices contributed to greater trust, openness, and participation, aligning with Barnes and McCallops (2019), who found that emotionally supportive teacher-student relationships enhance learners' engagement and well-being. Additional techniques, such as calling students by name, maintaining eye contact, and facilitating open dialogue, were frequently employed to establish a sense of belonging. This reflects Ee and Cheng's (2013) assertion that SEL is most effectively embedded when educators take on the role of facilitator and emotional role model, particularly in student-centered disciplines. The present findings reinforce the view that relational teaching is not a supplementary component but a core instructional approach for promoting emotional development and meaningful learning.

5.3.4 Decision-Making Skills

Decision-making skills enable educators to integrate SEL by adapting instruction based on students' emotional cues and feedback. Quantitative findings revealed that this domain significantly predicted both the use of emotional strategies and the promotion of social-emotional support, indicating that lecturers frequently draw upon emotional and behavioral information to guide instructional decisions. This aligns with the CASEL framework's (2020) emphasis on responsible decision-making as a foundational SEL competency.

Qualitative data further illustrated how lecturers incorporated student feedback through tools such as anonymous surveys, mood-check polls, and informal discussions, using the insights to adjust lesson content, pacing, or delivery style. Some lecturers also tailored instructional activities around student interests or classroom energy levels, applying flexible and context-sensitive EMI teaching approaches. These practices reflect Lee's (2007) view that effective decision-making involves ethical reflection and awareness of emotional dynamics in learning environments. Similarly, Brewer et al.

(2019) highlighted that such responsiveness enhances student autonomy, motivation, and cognitive engagement. These findings demonstrate that decision-making is not merely administrative but represents a dynamic, emotionally informed process through which educators embed SEL into everyday instructional choices and classroom interactions.

5.3.5 Incorporating Functional Emotional Strategies

Incorporating functional emotional strategies reflects educators' intentional efforts to embed SEL techniques directly into pedagogy. Quantitative findings showed high levels of lecturer agreement with this domain, and regression analysis identified it as significantly predicted by Understanding Emotions, Relationship Skills, and Decision-Making Skills. This suggests that lecturers who are emotionally perceptive, relationally competent, and pedagogically reflective are more likely to apply emotion-driven strategies in their instructional practices. Qualitative data further revealed how lecturers used approaches such as humor, storytelling, gamification, and art-based tasks to respond to students' emotional and academic needs.

These strategies were not treated as supplemental activities but were purposefully integrated into lesson planning to promote both cognitive engagement and emotional well-being. This aligns with Naragon-Gainey et al. (2017), who emphasized that functional emotional strategies can transform classroom interactions into opportunities for empathy, motivation, and resilience. Similarly, Bavarian et al. (2013) found that embedding emotional techniques improves classroom climate and fosters collaborative learning. These findings reinforce the CASEL (2020) framework's view that SEL should be an essential and embedded element of instructional design, supporting a holistic approach to student development.

5.3.6 Promoting Social-Emotional Support

Promoting social-emotional support is a central way lecturers embed SEL into their teaching by designing emotionally safe and inclusive English-taught classroom environments. Quantitative data indicated strong practice in this domain, with high agreement scores and statistically significant regression results, confirming its

relevance in instructional contexts. Qualitative findings further demonstrated that lecturers implemented a range of simple yet impactful techniques, such as mood-check polls, soft background music, peer-to-peer discussions, and the establishment of safe spaces for emotional expression. These strategies align with Nordengren's (2019) emphasis on climate-building and goal-setting as foundational tools for fostering emotional growth.

They also support the work of Sointu et al. (2017), who found that emotionally secure classrooms enhance students' motivation and participation. In this study, lecturers not only normalized emotional expression but intentionally cultivated psychological safety, treating SEL as an integrated component of instructional practice rather than a separate add-on. This approach resonates with global perspectives on sustainable SEL implementation, as advocated by Hamer et al. (2024) and Wood (2022), who emphasize the importance of culturally responsive, routine-based SEL practices. By embedding emotional support into the structure of their teaching, lecturers actively advanced CASEL's (2020) values of equity, inclusion, and holistic student development.

5.4 Research Question 3: What are the challenges encountered by educators when integrating SEL practices into an English-medium instruction (EMI) environment?

5.4.1 Emotional Masking and Student Reluctance

Emotional masking and student reluctance present significant challenges to the effective implementation of SEL in EMI courses in higher education classrooms. Many lecturers reported difficulty in accurately interpreting students' emotional states, especially in large or formal academic settings. Students were often observed to conceal emotional distress due to fear of judgment, cultural norms, or a lack of confidence in emotional self-expression. This emotional masking impeded lecturers' ability to assess classroom dynamics accurately and limited opportunities for tailoring instruction to meet students' emotional needs.

These findings align with Huynh et al. (2021), who observed that in Vietnamese classrooms, the lack of attention to students' psychological needs and the absence of emotional openness created substantial barriers to SEL integration. Similarly, the

CASEL framework (2020) emphasizes emotional transparency as a foundational component of SEL, while also acknowledging that cultural values and social expectations can restrict students' willingness to engage in emotionally focused dialogue. As a result, student reluctance remains a critical barrier to implementing emotionally responsive teaching, requiring educators to find culturally sensitive strategies that foster trust, psychological safety, and gradual emotional openness.

5.4.2 Time Constraints within Tight Academic Schedules

Time constraints within tight academic schedules present a significant barrier to the consistent integration of SEL in EMI university teaching. Many lecturers reported that dense syllabi, limited contact hours, and pressure to meet assessment deadlines left little room for emotion-centered practices such as group check-ins, reflection sessions, or classroom discussions focused on emotional awareness. This tension between content coverage and emotional scaffolding often resulted in fragmented or inconsistent implementation of SEL.

These findings are consistent with Ee and Cheng (2013), who found that Malaysian educators were more likely to incorporate SEL in flexible or expressive subjects, while those teaching structured, assessment-heavy courses struggled to align SEL with existing curricular demands. International studies by Todd et al. (2022) and Kilborn et al. (2024) also confirm that overloaded teaching schedules and a lack of dedicated planning time hinder teachers' ability to embed SEL consistently and meaningfully. These challenges underscore the need for more adaptable curriculum structures and institutional recognition of SEL not as an optional supplement, but as an essential element of holistic and effective teaching practice.

5.4.3 Student Disengagement and Mixed Responsiveness

Student disengagement and mixed responsiveness pose ongoing challenges to the successful implementation of SEL in university classrooms, especially in English-medium instruction courses. Despite lecturers' efforts to create emotionally supportive and inclusive learning environments, they reported inconsistent levels of student participation in SEL-related activities. While some students responded positively,

others appeared passive, distracted, or resistant, often perceiving SEL as peripheral to academic achievement. Lecturers attributed this disengagement to external distractions, a grade-oriented mindset, and the impersonal nature of large lecture-based settings.

These observations are consistent with Oliveira et al. (2021), who found that the effectiveness of SEL interventions varies based on students' personal interests, contextual factors, and perceived academic relevance. The CASEL framework (2020) also emphasizes that SEL must be contextually and culturally meaningful to ensure student engagement. The present findings highlight a critical implementation gap: unless students' emotional readiness is acknowledged and nurtured over time, SEL may not reach its full potential. This underscores the importance of sustained institutional support and intentional classroom practices that reinforce the value of emotional learning alongside academic goals.

5.4.4 Diversity of Student Backgrounds and Emotional Needs

The diversity of student backgrounds and emotional needs presents a significant challenge in implementing socially and emotionally responsive teaching conducted in English. Lecturers reported difficulty in addressing the wide range of emotional expression, engagement levels, and communication styles within a single classroom. While some students were emotionally expressive and readily engaged in relational tasks, others were more reserved or unsure about participating in emotionally driven activities. This variability required lecturers to constantly adapt their instructional strategies to accommodate differing emotional temperaments and cultural expectations.

These findings align with Abd Hadi et al. (2023), who highlighted the need for culturally responsive SEL in Malaysian classrooms, emphasizing that emotional strategies must be attuned to students' social contexts, values, and lived experiences. Similarly, Burgin et al. (2023) emphasized the importance of differentiated and culturally sensitive SEL approaches when working with linguistically and culturally diverse learners. The current study reinforces the importance of emotional inclusivity and flexible pedagogical approaches in multicultural higher education settings, where one-size-fits-all models of SEL are insufficient for meeting diverse student needs.

5.4.5 Lack of Institutional and Peer Support

Lack of institutional and peer support remains a significant barrier to the sustainable implementation of SEL in EMI settings in higher education. Lecturers in the study reported limited access to structured training, formal guidance, or collaborative peer networks that could support the consistent integration of SEL into their teaching practices. In many cases, educators relied on personal intuition, self-directed learning, or trial-and-error methods rather than evidence-based frameworks or coordinated faculty initiatives. This absence of systemic support resulted in fragmented understandings and inconsistent application of SEL across departments.

These findings reinforce the work of Barnes and McCallops (2019), who argued that effective SEL implementation requires not only individual initiative but also institution-wide support, including leadership engagement and regular professional development. Similarly, Hamer et al. (2024) and Todd et al. (2022) emphasized the importance of institutional infrastructure in shaping educators' confidence and long-term commitment to SEL practices. The current study highlights that without clear institutional policies, shared resources, and a culture of collective responsibility, SEL is likely to remain inconsistently applied and largely dependent on individual motivation. Addressing this challenge requires strategic policy support and faculty-wide collaboration to position SEL as a shared pedagogical priority.

5.5 Conclusion

This study demonstrates that Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) practices, particularly understanding emotions, relationship-building, and decision-making, are central to effective and emotionally responsive EMI teaching in Malaysian higher education. Lecturers actively integrate SEL into their instruction through emotional check-ins, relational engagement, and adaptive strategies, aligning with established frameworks such as CASEL and Emotional Intelligence theory. However, several challenges persist, including students' emotional masking, limited instructional time, disengagement, cultural diversity, and lack of institutional support.

These barriers reflect global concerns about the sustainability of SEL implementation. Despite this, many educators displayed strong individual commitment to integrating SEL through reflective, student-centered teaching. The findings highlight

the need for structured institutional frameworks and professional development to support consistent and culturally sensitive SEL practices. Overall, SEL should be recognized not as an optional supplement but as a core component of holistic, inclusive, and effective EMI university instruction.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

This concluding chapter synthesizes the key findings of the study, offering a comprehensive overview of how Social-emotional Learning is practiced and perceived by lecturers who use EMI in Malaysian public universities. Drawing on both quantitative and qualitative data, the chapter highlights the integral role of SEL competencies in shaping effective teaching practices and fostering positive learning environments. The findings underscore the importance of embedding SEL within institutional structures to promote holistic student development and professional growth among educators.

6.2 Summary of Key Findings

This section synthesises the key findings of the study in relation to the research objectives and research questions, offering an integrated understanding of educators' Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) competencies within English-Medium Instruction (EMI) contexts in Malaysian public universities.

First, the findings indicate that educators' SEL practices significantly influence their teaching instruction in EMI classrooms. Lecturers demonstrated a strong capacity to recognise and interpret students' emotional states, particularly anxiety, uncertainty, and disengagement associated with learning through English. By responding sensitively to these emotional cues, educators adjusted their instructional approaches, communication styles, and classroom interactions. This emotional responsiveness contributed to a more supportive learning environment, reduced students' affective barriers, and enhanced overall classroom engagement.

Second, the study found that educators actively incorporate SEL competencies into their EMI teaching practices through multiple, interconnected strategies. Understanding and managing emotions enabled lecturers to regulate their own emotional responses and model emotional stability, which helped establish a calm and respectful classroom atmosphere. Relationship skills played a central role in building

trust and rapport, encouraging students to participate without fear of linguistic errors. Decision-making skills further supported educators in balancing academic demands with students' emotional and linguistic readiness, allowing for flexible and context-sensitive teaching practices.

In addition, educators integrated functional emotional strategies and social-emotional support within their instructional practices. These included encouraging positive emotional expression, providing reassurance, fostering peer collaboration, and creating inclusive classroom environments. Such practices supported students' emotional well-being, strengthened motivation, and promoted resilience in EMI learning contexts, where language-related stress is often present.

Third, the findings reveal several challenges that constrain the effective and consistent integration of SEL in EMI classrooms. Student-related challenges included reluctance to participate, emotional masking, and varied responsiveness to emotional support. Educator-related challenges involved limited time, heavy teaching and administrative workloads, and emotional fatigue. Furthermore, institutional challenges such as insufficient professional development opportunities, limited resources, and the absence of explicit SEL-oriented policies restricted educators' capacity to implement SEL practices systematically and sustainably.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that SEL competencies are integral to effective EMI teaching in Malaysian higher education. Educators who possess strong emotional awareness, emotion regulation, relationship-building, and reflective decision-making skills are better equipped to create emotionally supportive and inclusive learning environments. However, the findings also highlight the need for greater institutional support, structured training, and policy-level integration of SEL to ensure its sustained and meaningful implementation in EMI contexts.

6.3 Highlight Contributions

This study contributes to both academic literature and professional practice in several important ways. Firstly, it shifts the focus of SEL research from student-centered interventions, which dominate existing literature, to educator-centered practices in EMI settings in higher education. While much of the global SEL discourse is centered on primary and secondary education, this research emphasizes that SEL is

equally relevant and actively practiced by lecturers at the university level (Elmi, 2020). By foregrounding educators' voices, this study brings attention to how their emotional skills and interpersonal strategies influence the teaching-learning process.

Secondly, the study's mixed-methods design offers a robust and multidimensional understanding of SEL in Malaysian universities (Almeida, 2018). Quantitative results provided measurable insights into the prevalence and strength of SEL competencies, while qualitative findings captured the lived experiences, reflective practices, and professional challenges faced by lecturers. This dual approach ensures both statistical generalizability and contextual richness, enhancing the study's credibility and relevance.

Thirdly, the study offers practical insights that SEL is directly applicable to teaching practice, faculty development, and institutional planning (Ferreira et al., 2020). The findings demonstrate that SEL is not a separate or supplementary component of instruction but is deeply embedded in classroom strategies, student interactions, and lesson planning. Real-world techniques, such as emotional check-ins, classroom games, reflective journaling, and feedback systems, were highlighted by lecturers as effective tools to enhance emotional engagement and student motivation in EMI contexts.

Moreover, the study adds cultural and regional relevance to the broader field of SEL research. By focusing on Malaysia's multilingual and multicultural university context, the research accounts for unique social dynamics and communication practices that influence emotional expression and engagement (Hurtado et al., 2012; Matu & Perez-Johnston, 2024). This context-specific perspective enriches the global SEL conversation and encourages the development of more culturally responsive models of emotional learning in higher education.

6.4 Implications of the Study

The findings highlight the need for higher education policymakers to recognise social-emotional competencies as a critical component of effective English-Medium Instruction classrooms. While existing EMI policies tend to prioritise linguistic proficiency and academic outcomes, this study demonstrates that lecturers' ability to integrate social-emotional strategies plays a significant role in shaping student engagement, classroom inclusivity, and emotional well-being. Consequently,

policymakers may consider incorporating SEL-oriented guidelines into national EMI frameworks and quality assurance standards. Such policy-level integration could enhance Malaysia's efforts to internationalise higher education while simultaneously sustaining student-centred and emotionally responsive pedagogical practices.

In line with these policy implications, the study underscores the importance of continuous professional development that equips EMI lecturers with both pedagogical and emotional competencies. Professional training initiatives should move beyond a narrow focus on language proficiency to include structured modules on emotional awareness, culturally responsive communication, and classroom emotional regulation strategies. Additionally, universities may benefit from embedding SEL and emotional intelligence (EI) components into lecturer induction programmes, particularly for those teaching linguistically and culturally diverse student populations within EMI contexts.

At the instructional level, the findings indicate that EMI lecturers who employ functional emotional strategies and provide social-emotional supports are better positioned to cultivate supportive and inclusive learning environments. Lecturers are therefore encouraged to adopt flexible and adaptive teaching approaches that acknowledge students' diverse emotional expressions, communication styles, and varying levels of confidence when using English as the medium of instruction. Such practices may help alleviate language-related anxiety, foster a sense of belonging, and promote more active classroom participation, especially among students with lower English proficiency.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by bridging EMI research with SEL and EI frameworks, an area that remains relatively underexplored in higher education. The findings offer empirical support for conceptualising EMI not merely as a linguistic or instructional concern, but as a socially and emotionally embedded pedagogical practice. By foregrounding the emotional and relational dimensions of teaching and learning, this integration enriches current models of EMI implementation and extends their applicability to more holistic and inclusive educational contexts.

Overall, this study highlights the central role of social-emotional competencies in the successful implementation of English-Medium Instruction within Malaysian higher education. By demonstrating how lecturers' social-emotional practices influence student engagement, inclusivity, and well-being, the findings reinforce the need for a

more holistic approach to EMI that extends beyond language and content delivery. Integrating social-emotional learning into policy frameworks, professional development, and instructional practices not only strengthens the effectiveness of EMI but also supports more equitable and supportive learning environments for diverse student populations.

6.5 Recommendations

The recommendations in this study are drawn directly from the voices of participating EMI educators, who shared practical strategies to overcome the challenges faced during the implementation of Social and Emotional Learning in higher education. Their suggestions highlight both individual and institutional approaches that can strengthen SEL practices in diverse English-medium teaching contexts. By adopting these strategies, educators and policymakers can foster emotionally supportive, inclusive, and student-centered learning environments that enhance both academic achievement and personal development.

Recommendations for Understanding Emotions

Building Rapport: Establishing strong lecturer-student rapport from the start of the semester is essential in EMI classrooms to reduce anxiety and promote emotional safety. Trust enables students to express concerns and engage without fear of judgment. Sharing personal stories or discussing relevant events helps humanize lecturers, increasing emotional connection and focus.

Structured Check-ins: Structured check-ins help lecturers gauge students' emotional readiness and engagement. One-on-one or small-group sessions allow for personalized support, while anonymous tools like surveys encourage honest emotional expression. Brief lesson recaps with self-evaluation promote reflection, self-awareness, and emotional insight.

Recommendations for Managing Emotions

Rewarding Participation: Tangible rewards, such as recognizing active or consistently attending students, help sustain motivation. Anonymous public recognition via tools like Padlet validates contributions, while verbal praise reinforces improved

behavior and focus. Celebrating small achievements, such as a quiet student speaking up, fosters a supportive and positive emotional classroom climate.

Trend-Based Engagement: Incorporating trending topics, viral content, or social experiments captures students' attention and aligns with Gen Z learning preferences. Using platforms like Telegram with GIFs and emojis promotes informal, engaging communication. Discussing current events or relatable stories connects lesson content to students' real-life experiences, enhancing relevance and engagement.

Recommendations for Relationship Skills

Interactive Methods: Digital tools like Kahoot and Mentimeter boost engagement, especially with anonymous responses, and outdoor sessions, such as campus walks, foster community-building, particularly in active courses. Using multicultural examples strengthens connections with international students. Quick post-class feedback polls increase responsiveness, while small participation rewards motivate quieter students and promote inclusivity.

Professional Boundaries: Maintaining clear boundaries, “friendly, but not friends”, helps sustain respect. Students value clarity and structure in lecturer-student relationships, and lecturers who model self-respect earn reciprocal respect from their students.

Recommendations for Decision-Making Skills

Instructor-Focused: Reusing pre-recorded lectures frees class time for active learning, such as Socratic questioning. Emphasizing critical cases over all content and embedding decision-making skills into the curriculum fosters peer learning among instructors. Research-backed methods, early assessment adjustments, structured surveys, flexible deadlines, and collaborative scheduling enhance instructional effectiveness and student engagement.

Student-Focused: Using real-world examples, group projects, and reflective writing promotes independent thinking and self-awareness. Vision boards align personal and academic goals, while individual presentations, inclusive discussions, and positive verbal cues boost confidence. Analyzing real cases before theory and involving students in course planning further deepens engagement and decision-making skills.

Incorporating Functional Emotional Strategies

Flexible Engagement Tools: Use music, polls, and interactive games (e.g., “Describe your day in three words”) to create a light, choice-driven environment that enhances participation. Demonstrate emotional sensitivity by allowing breaks, acknowledging challenges, and adjusting for language barriers to maintain inclusivity.

Reward-Based Participation Systems: Implement awards for active participation (e.g., book vouchers) to sustain motivation. Gamified, phone-based activities (QR codes, digital games) engage digitally inclined students and encourage consistent contributions.

Structured Support Opportunities: Organize group check-ins to understand student challenges without overwhelming lecturers. Recognize the lecturer’s role as an emotional anchor and manage personal emotions to support students effectively. Attend to individual struggles with empathy and tailored interventions.

Promoting Social-Emotional Support

Institutional Support Systems: Seek mentorship from experienced lecturers to navigate challenges. Maximize available resources, such as grants, and leverage informal peer support, like social interactions during tea breaks or lunches, to build community and emotional resilience.

Lecturers’ Proactive Strategies: Recommend formal counseling while providing ongoing personal follow-up. Foster an open environment that encourages students to seek help without stigma. Engage with students’ families to understand emotional needs better, and maintain personal support networks to manage emotional labor effectively.

6.6 Future Studies

Future studies could adopt a longitudinal research design to examine how lecturers’ social-emotional practices in English-Medium Instruction (EMI) evolve over time and how these changes influence students’ academic performance and emotional well-being. Such an approach would enable a deeper understanding of causal relationships and developmental patterns in the integration of social-emotional learning within EMI contexts.

In addition, further research may explore students' perspectives on social-emotional practices in EMI classrooms. Incorporating student voices would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how emotional strategies are perceived and experienced, particularly among learners from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, thereby complementing lecturer-focused findings.

Moreover, comparative studies involving private universities, international branch campuses, or higher education institutions in other ASEAN countries could be conducted to examine contextual similarities and differences in the integration of SEL within EMI. This would enhance the generalisability of the findings beyond Malaysian public universities and contribute to a broader regional understanding of EMI practices.

Finally, future research could employ experimental research designs to evaluate the effectiveness of specific SEL-based interventions or professional training programmes for EMI lecturers. Such studies would provide stronger empirical evidence for identifying best practices and inform the development of targeted professional development initiatives in EMI pedagogy.

6.7 Conclusion

Overall, this study confirms that SEL competencies are deeply ingrained in Malaysian higher education teaching. Educators not only possess strong emotional and relational skills but also translate them into practical classroom strategies, despite structural constraints. By sustaining institutional support and expanding research on innovative SEL delivery, Malaysian universities can continue to cultivate emotionally attuned, socially responsible graduates capable of thriving in complex academic and professional landscapes.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

Consent Form

Y.Bhg Dato'/Datin/Prof/Prof Madya/Dr/Tuan/Puan

You are invited to participate in a research study titled “An Investigation on Educators’ Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Competencies Using English as a Medium of Teaching Instruction in Selected Universities in Malaysia.” This study aims to assess various competencies related to Social and Emotional Learning, including understanding emotions, managing emotions, relationship skills, decision-making skills, incorporating functional emotional strategies, and promoting social-emotional support. Your participation will help us gain valuable insights into how SEL practices are implemented in tertiary institutions and how they contribute to enhancing teaching effectiveness and student well-being. By taking part in this study, you will contribute to the development of strategies that foster a supportive, emotionally intelligent learning environment in higher education in Malaysia.

Procedures:

- Kindly make sure that you use English as a medium of teaching instruction.
- You will be asked to complete a survey that will take approximately 20 minutes.
- The survey consists of 7 sections: demographics, understanding emotions, managing emotions, relationship skills, decision-making skills, incorporating functional emotional strategies, and promoting social-emotional support.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation is entirely voluntary. You may withdraw from the survey at any time without any consequences.

Confidentiality: All responses are anonymous and will be kept confidential. The data will only be used for research purposes and will not be shared with anyone outside of the research team.

Risks and Benefits: There are no known risks associated with this study. However, the benefit of participating is the opportunity to contribute to improving online learning environments and enhancing student engagement.

Thanks

Abdul Karim Gazi

Master's in Applied Language Studies

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APPENDIX 2

Survey Questionnaire

This form aims to evaluate educators' perceptions and strategies regarding social-emotional learning (SEL) in the context of classroom teaching. Please respond honestly to the following statements by selecting the option that best reflects your agreement or disagreement. Your responses will help us to understand your perception and strategies for fostering SEL within the classroom environment.

Instructions:

This form consists of five (7) types of statements, including demographics; Understanding emotions, Managing emotions, Relationship skills, Decision-making skills, Incorporating functional emotional strategies, and Promoting Social-emotional support. Your responses will remain confidential and will be used solely for assessment and improvement purposes in SEL implementation within classroom settings.

Thank you for your participation!

▸ Email address:.....

▸ I use English as a medium of teaching instruction:

1. Yes
2. No

If yes, kindly fill up the survey

▸ Gender:

- Male
- Female

▸ Year of Teaching:

- 1-5
- 6-10
- 11-15
- more than 15

▸ University:

- Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM)
- Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM)

- Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM)
- Universiti Malaya (UM)
- Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM)
- Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM)
- Universiti Malaysia Terengganu (UMT)
- Universiti Malaysia Kelantan (UMK)
- Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin (UniSZA)
- Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM)
- Universiti Teknikal Malaysia Melaka (UTeM)
- Universiti Malaysia Perlis (UniMAP)
- Other:.....

► Faculty:

- Faculty of Language Studies
- Faculty of Engineering
- Faculty of Health Science
- Faculty of Science
- Faculty of Social Science
- Faculty of Business Studies
- Others...

Kindly answer the following questions. You may choose only one of the answers that best describes you.

Variable one: Understanding emotions		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	I believe that being aware of my students' emotions is crucial for effective teaching.					
2	I think that understanding my students' emotions helps me better in my teaching approach to meet their needs.					
3	I am always concerned about my own emotions in class.					
4	I regularly assess my students' emotional state before starting class (eg how are you feeling today?					
5	I validate students' emotions by listening to their problems.					
6	I understand that negative emotions are part of human life.					
7	I cultivate trusting relationships so that students feel comfortable expressing their emotions freely in class.					

Variable two: Managing emotions		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
8	I can manage my own stress effectively to improve teaching quality.					
9	I use time management techniques (to-do lists, Pomodoro, etc.) to reduce the feeling of being overwhelmed.					
10	I take preparation before class to avoid teaching burnout.					
11	I give students a break/ cool-down moment before giving the next instruction.					
12	I appreciate students who complete the task on time.					
13	I prompt students to take steps from immediate stress in different ways (deep breaths, washing their face, and walking)					
14	I adapt my lesson plans by using various strategies to meet the students emotional state of my students (e.g. music/jokes)					

Variable three: Relationship skills		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
15	I believe that building strong relationships with my students is fundamental for creating a supportive learning environment.					
16	I understand that active listening to students' views is essential for establishing rapport with my students.					
17	I believe that fostering a teamwork spirit among students promotes a sense of belonging in the classroom.					
18	I dedicate time and effort to getting to know each of my students individually.					
19	I strongly ignore favoritism among students to ensure collaborative learning.					
20	I facilitate classroom discussions that encourage students to share their perspectives respectfully.					
21	I equip with students with the appropriate skills in conflict/challenges with others serve as mediators.					

Variable Four: Decision-making skills		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
22	I make a plan for each lesson, considering that my students have different abilities.					
23	I get feedback from students to modify my weak lesson practices.					
24	I support students in setting effective study plans for the full semester based on previous exam results.					
25	I assign tasks where students analyze multiple perspectives from others.					
26	I create a classroom culture where mistakes are viewed as opportunities for learning and growth.					
27	I always encourage questioning me, raising critical thinking.					
28	I foster open-ended questions that enhance a sense of curiosity among students.					

Variable five: Incorporating functional emotional strategies		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
29	I can reframe negative behavior in my classroom as an opportunity to understand my students' needs.					
30	I avoid unnecessary talk in class to keep students motivated.					
31	I guide my students on how to express their feelings calmly and respectfully during difficult moments.					
32	I incorporate diverse perspectives in my lessons where all students feel valued and respected.					
33	I make a point to provide compliments to my students, highlighting their strengths.					
34	I facilitate activities that prompt teamwork where students feel empowered to help each other.					
35	I prioritize building trust with my students by being empathetic and approachable to my students.					

Variable six: Promoting Social-emotional support		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
36	I encourage peer support by fostering a sense of community through diverse group work.					
37	I encourage opportunities for students to express their emotions through creative platforms (e.g. drawing, poetry, journaling).					
38	I offer individualized support/ attention to students who may struggle socially and emotionally.					
39	I teach effective strategies for resolving agreement /disagreement in class.					
40	I establish classroom norms with students, emphasizing values (respect and empathy).					
41	I use effective techniques to reduce learning stress in class (e.g., music, jokes, artistic expression, etc.)					
42	I seek feedback about what works best for students to improve their emotional support.					

APPENDIX 3

Semi-structure-interview Questions

Interview Questions

The interview questions aim to explore the challenges educators face in fostering a range of social-emotional learning, including understanding emotions, managing emotions, relationship skills, decision-making skills, incorporating functional emotional strategies, and promoting social-emotional support, within the context of higher educational institutions in Malaysia.

Name:

Gender:

Department:

University:

Year of Teaching:

1.0 Understanding Emotion

- Do you believe that lecturers should assess students' emotional states in the classroom? Why or why not?
- If you agree, what methods do you use to check students' emotions?
- Why is it important to know how your students feel?
- Does this check action impact your teaching?
- What are the difficulties you face when measuring?
- How do you overcome challenges in understanding the emotions of students?

2.0 Managing Emotions

- Do you actively practice emotional regulation techniques in the classroom, such as staying calm under stress or taking breaks during long sessions?
- Why do you believe it is important to teach students how to manage their emotional states effectively?
- Which challenges do you find in handling difficult emotions in class? Can you share an example?
- What are your suggestions for managing students' emotions in class?

3.0 Relationship Skills

- What is your perspective on the significance of maintaining a good relationship with students?
- Why do you believe fostering positive relationships with students is important for their learning and development?
- What strategies do you employ to maintain and strengthen relationships with your students?
- What are the challenges in practicing good relationships with students? Can you provide examples of these challenges?
- What are your suggestions for maintaining a good student-educator relationship?

4.0 Decision-Making Skills

- How would you assess the importance of decision-making skills for students in the classroom setting?
- What strategies or practices do you implement to cultivate decision-making skills, such as problem-solving, critical thinking, and collaboration, among students?
- What are the challenges you think of when practicing this in class?
- Can you describe specific instances where challenges arose?
- What are your suggestions to overcome these challenges?

5.0 Incorporating Functional Emotional Strategies

- Do you think students' positive emotion is important for effective teaching-learning in the classroom?
- If any students feel negative emotion (Bored/flustered/ nervous), what do you do to turn them into positive emotion?
- What are the challenges you think for the rumination of students' feeling?
- What methods or tools do you recommend to overcome the challenges?

6.0 Promoting Social-Emotional Support

- Do you believe in educators' social-emotional support to students (e.g., discussing students' problems and giving advice and guidance)?

- What do you provide social-emotional support to your students?
- Does providing social-emotional support impact your teaching practice? If so, how?
- What are the other challenges you face in practicing social-emotional support?
- What are your suggestions for avoiding challenges in practicing social-emotional learning?

APPENDIX 4

Ethical Approval

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MARA

Pejabat
Timbalan Naib Canselor
(Penyelidikan dan Inovasi)

Reference : 600-TNCPI (5/1/6)
Our reference : REC/08/2024 (PG/MR/408)
Date : 1445H 17
22 August 2024

Mr Gazi Abdul Karim - 2023273518
(Supervisor: Dr Marcia Jane Ganasan)
Academy of Language Studies
UiTM Perlis Branch
Arau Campus
02600 Arau
PERLIS

and Greetings سلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته

Mr

APPROVAL LETTER - UiTM RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Thank you for submitting your research proposal to the Research Ethics Committee (REC). After considering your application, the Committee approved your proposal titled "An Investigation on Educators' Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Practices on Teaching Instructions in Tertiary Institutions in Malaysia" at UiTM, UUM, USM, UM, UKM, UPM, UMT, UMK, UniSZA, UTM and UTeM. Details of the approval are as follows:

Ref. number:	REC/08/2024 (PG/MR/408)
Approval Period:	22 August 2024 until 30 September 2025
Authorised personnel:	1. Gazi Abdul Karim 2. Dr Marcia Jane Ganasan

The UiTM Research Ethics Committee operates in accordance to the ICH Good Clinical Practice Guidelines, Malaysian Good Clinical Practice Guidelines and the Declaration of Helsinki. The approval of this project is conditional upon your continuing compliance with these guidelines and declaration.

We draw to your attention the requirement that a report on this research, must be submitted every 12 months from the date of the approval or on the completion of the project, whichever occurs first. Failure to submit reports will result in withdrawal of consent for the project to proceed. Amendments, if any, to the study documents are to be submitted to the REC for approval.

If you require further information, please contact the REC Secretariat at 03-55448069/03-55442794 or email at recsecretariat@uitm.edu.my.

اوسها، تقوى، موليا

"MALAYSIA MADANI"

"BERKHIDMAT UNTUK NEGARA"

Yours sincerely,



(EMERITUS PROFESSOR DATO' DR RAYMOND AZMAN ALI)

Chairman
UiTM Research Ethics Committee

c.c.: Deputy Rector (PJIM&A), UiTM Perlis Branch

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AUTHOR'S PROFILE



Abdul Karim Gazi obtained a Bachelor of Social Science in Sociology (BSS Hons.) in 2019 and a Master of Social Science in Sociology (MSS) in 2020 from the University of Barishal, Bangladesh. Now he is pursuing a Master's in Applied Language Studies (by Research) at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Malaysia. His master's thesis involves Social and Emotional Learning practices at higher education institutions in Malaysia.

LIST OF PUBLICATION:

- Gazi, A. K., Ganasan, M. J., & Yahaya, M. F. B. (2025). Global trends and themes in Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) competencies among educators: A bibliometric analysis. *International Journal of Education, Psychology and Counseling*, 10 (59): 794-813.
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