

Role of Socio-Emotional Skills in Fostering a Growth Mindset for Lifelong Learning

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Abstract

This study explores the relationship between socio-emotional skills and the development of a growth mindset, which are both essential for fostering lifelong learning in educational and professional settings. With globalization reshaping the workforce, individuals must adapt and continuously learn throughout their lives. Socio-emotional competencies, including self-awareness, resilience, empathy and collaboration, are critical in helping individuals cultivate a growth mindset. These abilities enable learners to view challenges as opportunities, stay motivated through setbacks and engage in continuous self-improvement. Through a comprehensive review of existing literature, this research analyses how socio-emotional skills contribute to a growth mindset and identifies gaps in the current understanding of these concepts. The study emphasizes the importance of integrating socio-emotional learning (SEL) into educational curricula and workplace training to foster flexibility, motivation and adaptability. Findings suggest that educational institutions and organizations that prioritize SEL can better equip students, teachers and employees for the challenges of a dynamic world. However, barriers such as socio-economic disparities and cultural resistance to change remain, hindering the widespread implementation of SEL initiatives. The study concludes with recommendations for relevant stakeholders to incorporate socio-emotional skills into learning environments, leveraging emerging technologies like AI and gamification to enhance the effectiveness of SEL interventions.

Keywords: Socio-emotional learning, growth mindset, lifelong learning, resilience, self-awareness, education policy

1.0 Introduction

Lifelong learning is gaining recognition as an essential competency in the present landscape, where individuals are required to adapt continually with the fast-paced technological advancements, globalization and economic disruptions (Thwe & Kalman, 2024). Apart from the technical know-how, the twenty-first century workforce needs to possess skills that enable them to continuously learn, unlearn and relearn during the course of their lifetime. Many studies showed that socio-emotional skills can significantly influence a person's motivation, flexibility and resilience during the learning process, regardless of the importance of their cognitive skills to succeed in education and at work (Chakraborty, 2024). Some of these skills include, self-awareness, emotional control and interpersonal skills, which enable individuals to develop a growth mindset, a belief that intelligence and skills can be developed through hard work and perseverance. The growth mindset idea, popularized by Carol Dweck, posits that people who think



intelligence is malleable are more likely to rise to challenges, continue even when they fail and perceive failure as an opportunity for self-development, not as a judgment of their innate ability (Mwaiselage, 2021). But cultivating a growth mindset is more than academic; it is embedded in socio-emotional skills that affect how individuals perceive learning, failure and the interactions with others. Emotional regulation, for example, allows learners to manage their anger and anxiety, while resilience keeps them engaged when it comes to their academic and professional challenges. Empathy and social support help facilitate an environment where persistence and collaboration thrive and self-awareness helps individuals analyze their learning preferences as well as areas where they can improve.

Socio-emotional learning (SEL) has emerged as one of the most powerful paradigms in promoting growth mindset and lifelong learning in educational as well as workplace settings (Simion, 2023). To prepare students for success in the classroom and at the workplace, schools and universities are increasingly including SEL in their curricula. Research shows that those students who receive SEL interventions demonstrate improved academic performance, increased self-efficacy, and a greater willingness to pursue lifelong learning (Kiptiony, 2024). In a similar vein, workplace training initiatives that prioritize collaborative problem-solving and emotional intelligence increase employee flexibility and job satisfaction. Such evidence of the link between learning attitudes and socio-emotional skills highlights the importance of an education system that focuses not only on knowledge acquisition but also on the psychological and emotional strength needed for lifelong learning. As the importance of socio-emotional skills in fostering learning behaviours becomes better known, little is yet known about how such abilities specifically aid the cultivation of a growth mindset across different learning contexts. Other studies have examined the role of emotional intelligence in education, though further research has explored the links between socio-emotional skills and lifelong learning. Additional experimental and longitudinal studies are also needed to determine the long-term impact of SEL interventions on students' ability to persist and adapt in the face of adversity. In doing so, curriculum creation and education policy might therefore be shaped to ensure that socio-emotional learning is treated as a core component of ensuring people are equipped for continuing education and career development throughout their lives, and not as an afterthought. Focusing on the role of socio-emotional skills in supporting a growth mindset, this study aims to provide educators, policymakers, and corporate trainers critical insights to inform the design of learning environments that foster flexibility, motivation, and continual self-improvement. The findings will contribute to the ongoing discourse around incorporating socio-emotional development into the practices of educational institutions and companies in order to encourage the growth of resilient, growth-oriented individuals who can thrive in a continually changing world.

Research Objectives

- To synthesize existing literature on the relationship between socio-emotional skills and the development of a growth mindset in higher education;
- To analyze how key socio-emotional competencies (e.g., self-awareness, resilience, and emotional regulation) contribute to fostering a growth mindset for lifelong learning;
- To identify trends and gaps in research on the role of socio-emotional skills in shaping students' attitudes toward continuous learning and improvement;
- To evaluate existing frameworks and interventions that integrate socio-emotional learning with the promotion of a growth mindset in higher education; and
- To provide recommendations for higher education stakeholders on leveraging socio-emotional skills to cultivate lifelong learning.



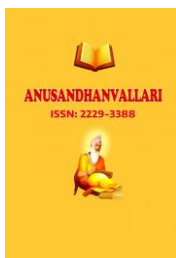
2.0 Theoretical Framework

2.1 Lifelong Learning

Lifelong learning envelops self-directed and experiential learning notwithstanding formal education and is considered to be the continual development of knowledge, abilities, and skills throughout a person's life (Charokar & Dulloo, 2022). Rapid technological advancements, shifting economic conditions, and changing labour market have made learning and adaptation more significant than ever in modern days. Once preparing students for a single lifetime job, the traditional educational approach is turning out to be less equipped for addressing the requirements of the contemporary workforce. To be innovative, competitive, and adaptable to change, people must instead pursue lifelong learning (Lim, 2023). The concept of lifelong learning is directly connected to personal and professional development. It fosters flexibility, problem-solving skills, and intellectual curiosity, and that enables people to adapt well with new situations. Lifelong learning, therefore, supports social inclusion, active citizenship and overall well-being along with professional development by empowering individuals to make informed choices and participate in meaningful social interactions (Atchoarena & Howells, 2021). The importance of digital learning platforms, flexible learning opportunities, and skill-development programmes to help foster a culture of lifelong learning has become very clear to employers, policy makers, and educational institutions. Lifelong learning relies heavily upon the approach individuals take when pursuing new information. A growth mindset, which means valuing effort, perseverance and adaptability, fosters a willingness to engage in lifelong learning (Landberg & Partsch, 2023). Socio-emotional skills, such as the ability to control emotions, resilience and self-awareness, are critical to help people understand that learning is an ongoing process rather than a finite product of formal education.

2.2 Socio-Emotional Skills

A person's ability for lifelong learning is to a great extent moulded by their socio-emotional capabilities. These capacities influence how individuals manage challenges, communicate with others, and conform to various learning settings (Tuomi, 2022). Among these, self-awareness, compassion, resilience, and collaboration are fundamental for developing a mindset that advances continuous improvement. Self-awareness is the foundation of learning and personal development (London, Sessa & Shelley, 2023). It enables individuals to take responsibility for their own growth by assisting them with identifying their learning preferences, areas of strength, and shortcomings. Continuous learning is more successful and self-directed when a self-aware learner actively considers feedback, modifies tactics, and establishes reasonable goals. Resilience is crucial for bouncing back from failures and pushing through hardships. Lifelong learning includes challenges, and resilience helps individuals convert stumbling blocks into stepping stones for self-improvement instead of hindrances (Ossiannilsson, 2022). Highly resilient individuals are able to keep up their motivation, adapt to changing circumstances and embrace new information even in uncertain contexts. Empathy results in better communication and open-mindedness, therefore more knowledge. Empathy also makes people appreciate what other's perspectives are, and that improves the collaborative learning experience (Nissilä, Karjalainen & Koukkari, 2022). In a globalized world, where education often occurs in multiple social and cultural contexts, empathy ensures that individuals are receptive to new ideas and constructive criticism, thus optimizing the learning experience. Since most academic and professional settings incorporate collaboration, teamwork is fundamental for lifelong learning. Problem-solving skills, shared learning and group dynamics awareness are all enhanced by effective cooperation. Social interaction in learning settings fosters creativity, flexibility, and critical thinking, highlighting the value of ongoing skill development in a globalized society.



2.3 Growth Mindset

The growth mindset concept, first proposed by psychologist Carol Dweck, is predicated on the concept that aptitude and intellect are not permanent qualities but instead might be improved with work, perseverance, and education (Westby, 2020). Individuals possessing a growth mindset embrace difficult situations, consider setbacks as learning moments and are constantly motivated to improve. On the contrary, people who have a fixed mentality avoid difficulties with a fear of failing since they think their abilities are innate and unalterable. Since a growth mindset fosters adaptation, curiosity, and resilience, these characteristics are essential in a world that is continuously changing. A growth mindset advances lifelong learning by motivating individuals to continue learning new things and developing their abilities (Stanciu, 2023). Students are better prepared to take on challenging tasks, ask for feedback and persevere in the face of failure if they have faith in their ability to improve. In professional contexts, where industries and technology are ever-evolving and people must acquire new skills to remain relevant, this approach is especially beneficial. Moreover, socio-emotional competencies like resilience and self-awareness are unequivocally connected with a growth mindset (Person, 2024). Individuals who effectively control their feelings and persevere despite hardships are bound to remain motivated all throughout their learning process. Employers and educational institutions are understanding the need of fostering a growth mindset and implementing methods like goal-setting, constructive criticism, and reflective practices to promote lifelong learning. In the end, adopting a growth mindset converts mere learning to a habit that propels both professional and personal achievement.

2.4 Interconnections

The foundation for adaptability and lifelong learning is the interplay between socio-emotional abilities and a growth mindset. An individual's conviction in their ability to gain new skills is moulded by their growth mindset, but socio-emotional skills give them the emotional and psychological support they need to maintain this mindset when confronted with obstacles (Gruijters, Raabe & Hübner, 2024). When combined, it cultivates an environment that urges individuals to view learning as an ongoing process rather than a fixed stage of life. Two significant socio-emotional skills that are particularly significant in advancing a growth mindset are self-awareness and resilience. Self-awareness is pivotal for long-term intellectual and personal development since it empowers individuals to recognize their learning styles, set goals, and ask for constructive criticism (Jaakkola et al. 2022). On the contrary, resilience allows individuals to continue forward even after failing, transforming setbacks into opportunities for development instead of depressing events. By promoting the idea that skills are flexible and that hard work leads to mastery, these abilities complement a growth mindset. Empathy and teamwork offer a collaborative learning environment that further enhances adaptability (Zhou & Colomer, 2024). Individuals that have empathy are better at grasping various perspectives, which expand their openness to novel ideas and techniques. In turn, collaboration encourages problem-solving, shared learning, and openness to different points of view, which are fundamental for both professional and personal development purposes. Eventually, a growth mindset combined with socio-emotional skills empowers individuals to continue being adaptable, inquisitive, and involved in lifelong learning. Developing these characteristics ensures that students can deal with change, with limited difficulty.



3.0 Findings and Discussion

3.1 Socio-emotional Skills and Growth Mindset Development

Socio-emotional abilities are fundamental for fostering a growth mindset since they give individuals the emotional intelligence they need to face challenges and consider setbacks to be opportunities for improvement (Diehl & Gómez, 2020). Skills like self-awareness, resilience, empathy, and cooperation give individuals the basis to continue to learn, conform to new circumstances, and remain motivated despite failures. These skills make it feasible for individuals to see intellect and ability as something that can be improved with hard work and persistence rather than as fixed characteristics. Students that have good socio-emotional abilities are more disposed to take on challenging tasks, actively seek constructive criticism, and remain engaged with problem-solving in educational environments (Chakraborty, 2024). Self-awareness, for example, empowers learners to identify their learning strengths and deficiencies, bringing about fruitful goal-setting agendas for personal development areas. Along these lines, resilience assists students in overcoming academic setbacks by viewing errors as opportunities for growth rather than insurmountable barriers (Fullerton, Zhang & Kleitman, 2021). Employees with a growth mindset, which is upheld by socio-emotional abilities, are bound to seek out opportunities for skill development, be proactive in addressing barriers, and conform to changing job needs. An employee who values empathy and collaboration, for instance, is more inclined to cooperate with other people, share ideas and come up with new ideas in response to market needs. Through the advancement of individuals who are responsive to learning, personal growth, and positive social connections, socio-emotional skills go beyond education and employment to support societal resilience. Promoting the acquisition of these abilities in a variety of fields helps people learn throughout their lives and keeps them flexible in a world that is always ever-evolving.

3.2 Role of Educational Systems

Integrating socio-emotional learning (SEL) into educational programmes and empowering students to have a growth mindset are significant tasks for educational institutions. Schools and universities might provide students with self-awareness, empathy, resilience, and collaboration abilities important for lifelong learning by integrating SEL into their academic curricula. A growth mindset is upheld by research showing that children who get SEL in a systematic way do better academically, are more motivated and have higher emotional intelligence (Palamar & Mykhailichenko, 2024). Finland's educational system is a vital model, underlining comprehensive development through the integration of SEL into daily learning. Finnish schools put emphasis on emotional control, group problem-solving, and student well-being, which helps students become more resilient and persistent (English et al. 2022). Similar initiatives have been put in place in the US, such as Social-Emotional and Academic Development (SEAD), which incorporates SEL into topic instruction and helps students cultivate a mentality that values hard work and making errors (Mchedlishvili & Gallagher, 2023). Institutions of higher learning have likewise acknowledged that encouraging a growth mindset is truly significant. Carol Dweck of Stanford University, whose studies on mindset have impacted educational practices throughout the world, has pushed academic institutions to make curricula that motivate students to rise to obstacles and become resilient. Moreover, courses such as Yale University's "Emotional Intelligence" course underlines restraint and adaptability, helping students in navigating both academic and professional obstacles effectively. Educational institutions may equip students with the socio-emotional skills necessary to succeed in a world that is always changing and to become lifelong learners by incorporating SEL into curricula, creating reflective learning environments, and encouraging a culture of continual improvement.

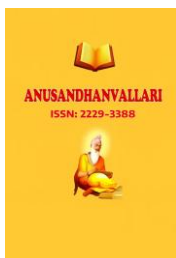


3.3 Implications for Workforce

Socio-emotional skills are essential for resilience, adaptability, and employability in today's rapidly evolving job market. As industries transform due to globalization and technological advancements, employees must continuously learn, unlearn, and relearn new skills (Oliveira & Saraiva, 2024). Key socio-emotional competencies, such as empathy, resilience, self-awareness, and collaboration, foster a growth mindset, enabling individuals to remain flexible and responsive to new challenges. Employers who prioritize these skills often see improved innovation, problem-solving, and teamwork. Many prominent organizations have acknowledged the value of socio-emotional abilities and have incorporated them into their employee training programmes. For example, Google's "Search Inside Yourself" initiative assists staff individuals with development of resilience and maintaining a growth-oriented mindset by underlining emotional intelligence, mindfulness, and adaptability (Downing, 2024). Similarly, Microsoft empowers continuous professional development and personal growth by encouraging a "learn-it-all" culture rather than a "know-it-all" one. These programmes help individuals in adopting the essential characteristics of a growth mindset, embracing difficulties, seeing feedback as a tool for improvement, and persevering through setbacks. Besides, to prepare their staff for the future, corporate learning and development (L&D) initiatives are progressively including socio-emotional training. Organizations such as IBM and Deloitte provide opportunities for continuous learning through leadership development programmes, emotional intelligence courses, and mentoring initiatives (Edwards, 2024). These programmes create an environment where employees are encouraged to pursue growth, adapt to industry changes, and collaborate effectively in diverse teams. By incorporating socio-emotional learning into their corporate frameworks, organizations can cultivate a workforce that is not only technically skilled but also resilient, adaptable, and prepared for ongoing learning in an uncertain work environment.

3.4 Barriers and Obstacles

Growth mindset and socio-emotional abilities are turning out to be increasingly more recognized in lifelong learning, yet its successful application is hampered by various obstructions. Socio-economic disparity is a significant obstruction that affects access to high-quality education and the resources needed to foster these skills (Broer, Bai & Fonseca, 2019). Students from underprivileged origins are in a difficult spot in both academic and professional settings since they often do not have access to situations that foster resilience, self-awareness, and collaboration. Due to lack of resources, teacher training, and institutional support, schools in disadvantaged communities may also find it difficult to include socio-emotional learning (SEL) avenues (Bayley et al. 2022). Cultural resistance to change complicates the implementation of SEL and growth mindset concepts. Many traditional educational institutions discourage risk-taking, creativity, and intrinsic motivation in favour of rote learning and standardized testing. They have a fixed mindset in nations where educational success is related to fixed intelligence rather than effort, being afraid of failure instead of viewing it as a chance for personal development. For instance, employees in companies with rigid hierarchies may be unwilling to take on continuous learning because they fear failure or retaliation from superiors. Moreover, there are still unanswered questions regarding the transfer of socio-emotional competencies to other occupational fields and cultural contexts. Even though many previous studies have shown the benefits of SEL, more empirical studies are needed to provide real, long-term effects and optimal implementation strategies. Without clear frameworks and legislative support, SEL's potential to encourage lifelong learning for a vast array of groups with differing needs is constrained by its uneven application in curricula and at workplaces. These barriers must be eliminated for lifelong learning programmes to be all inclusive and successful.



3.5 Future Directions

Incorporating emerging technology and innovative educational techniques, are critical to the future of lifelong learning and socio-emotional learning (SEL). Over the years, artificial intelligence (AI) has been increasingly used to customize learning experiences through tailored feedback and adaptive pathways that emphasize a growth mindset. Artificial intelligence-powered platforms such as *Duolingo* and *Coursera* use machine learning to evaluate how online learners are doing and encourage them to keep practicing by offering assignments tailored to their skill levels. In contrast, AI-fuelled chatbots and virtual mentors provide immediate emotional assistance, helping individuals foster self-regulation within an academic and professional environment. Gamification is another possible strategy for increasing socio-emotional skills. Gamified learning systems promote the idea of failure as an opportunity for self-growth by introducing mechanisms of trials and rewards. Games like *Kahoot!* and *Classcraft* encourage perseverance, collaboration, and problem-solving skills, reinforcing the theory that effort leads to mastery. In addition, through interactive simulations and real-world problem-solving exercises, these platforms offer engaging workplaces in which employees and students can cultivate emotional intelligence. Pedagogical innovations such as social-emotional learning and experiential learning are transforming education and workforce training. To develop these SEL capabilities, schools and organizations are already employing mindfulness exercises, reflection activities and group projects. Furthermore, hybrid models are being explored which integrate online and face-to-face delivery in various proportions, in order to allow for more inclusive and flexible learning settings. Integrating AI, gamification, and experiential learning into SEL initiatives will be crucial for fostering lifelong learning as technology advances. These developments can help people learn the socio-emotional skills they need to thrive in a fast-changing, unpredictable world.

3.6 Implications for Practice

Through project-based learning, reflective exercises and mentoring programmes, teachers might incorporate socio-emotional learning (SEL) into curricula and support students' development in self-awareness, resilience, and teamwork. SEL teacher training ought to be a first priority for institutions to encourage growth mindsets in various learning environments. Policymakers should ensure the inclusivity and flexibility of SEL programmes to accommodate diverse socio-economic conditions. Funding should be allocated to support underfunded educational institutions, ensuring equitable access to SEL initiatives. Additionally, policies should promote lifelong learning frameworks that integrate SEL into post-secondary education and career training. Organizations can foster a growth mindset through leadership development, mentorship, and workplace learning activities. To ensure relevance and effectiveness, strategies should be tailored to cultural contexts, such as promoting self-reflection in individualistic cultures or emphasizing group learning in societies. By aligning educational, business, and government efforts, SEL can become a transformative tool for lifelong learning across global contexts.

4.0 Conclusion

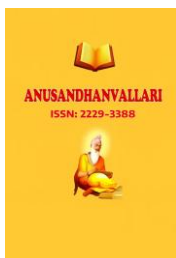
This study stresses how significant socio-emotional abilities are for developing a growth mindset, which advances lifelong learning. It is clear from the synthesis of existing literature that critical skills like empathy, resilience, self-awareness, and collaboration give individuals the psychological and emotional resources they need to tackle the difficulties, persevere through failures, and continue to learn new things. By integrating these skills into professional



and educational environments, it may be possible to develop adaptable learners who are capable of navigating the challenges of a world that is always changing. According to the findings, socio-economic disparity, cultural resistance, and implementation strategy gaps are only a few of the major obstacles that still exist even though certain educational institutions and organizations have begun implementing socio-emotional learning (SEL) concepts. To overcome these obstacles, educators, legislators, and organizations must work together at several levels: individual (micro level), departmental (meso level), institutional (macro level), and beyond (mega level) to include SEL into corporate training initiatives, curricula and legislative frameworks. Promising opportunities to make SEL more approachable and interesting in a variety of learning contexts are also presented by emerging technologies like artificial intelligence and gamification. Further research is needed to assess the long-term impacts of SEL programmes, especially their effectiveness across diverse cultural and socio-economic contexts. Longitudinal studies are essential to understand how socio-emotional skills influence lifelong learning beyond formal education, extending to both professional and personal development areas. Future investigations should also explore how technology can enhance SEL, focusing on how tools like gamification, virtual reality, and AI-driven learning platforms can foster emotional intelligence and adaptability. Additionally, cross-disciplinary research is required to better understand how psychological, social and educational factors interact to shape lifelong learning behaviours. A deeper understanding of the connection between socio-emotional skills and cognitive development can be achieved by integrating insights from behavioral psychology, neuroscience and educational research.

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