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# SEL - Opportunities For Applying Principles Of Social-Emotional Learning In The Family

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**Abstract:** The increasing complexity of the modern world necessitates that children develop skills beyond academic knowledge, with social-emotional competencies being critical for lifelong success. While the benefits of Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) are well-documented in educational settings, its application within the family context, particularly in non-Western cultures like Uzbekistan, remains largely unexplored. This article aims to bridge this gap by analyzing the opportunities and challenges of applying the five core principles of SEL (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making) within the Uzbek family environment. Through a review of foundational SEL literature and an analysis of Uzbek cultural values, the article reveals a natural synergy between SEL components and traditional values such as respect for elders (hurmat), hospitality (mehmondo'stlik), and communal solidarity (hamjihatlik). However, it also identifies a potential conflict between the Western emphasis on direct emotional expression and the Uzbek cultural value for collective harmony. To resolve this tension, the article proposes a framework of "respectful communication," which adapts SEL principles to the local context. Ultimately, this study offers a culturally sensitive model for parents and educators to foster emotionally healthy and adaptable children, equipped for the challenges of the 21st century.

**Keywords:** Family, child, parents, SEL, social-emotional learning, parenting, cultural adaptation, collectivism, Uzbekistan.

**Introduction:** Every parent wants their child to become not only intelligent but also happy and successful in the future. True success is not measured by academic

knowledge alone. It also includes life skills such as understanding one's emotions, building healthy relationships with others, and making the right decisions in difficult situations.

Today, developing these skills is becoming even more important and simultaneously more challenging. Social networks and the endless flow of information influence our children's worldview every minute. In these circumstances, traditional upbringing methods sometimes prove insufficient. So, how can parents prepare their children for the challenges of the modern world?

One of the effective solutions to this question is the Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)[1] approach. Simply put, SEL is a practical system that teaches children to recognize and manage their emotions, understand the state of others (empathy), establish friendly relationships, and make responsible decisions.

Numerous scientific studies have proven the benefits of SEL in schools and kindergartens. However, we must not forget that the first and most important educational institution for a child is the family. Unfortunately, there is very little information on how parents can simply and effectively apply SEL principles at home in everyday life.

Therefore, the purpose of this article is to explore the possibilities of applying the basic principles of social-emotional learning in the family environment and to demonstrate practical ways that are understandable to parents.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

SEL is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions.[1]

Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) plays a crucial role in a person's development into an emotionally and socially mature individual. The SEL model, developed by CASEL [1] (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning), encompasses five core components: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. All of these competencies directly influence the socialization of preschool-aged children.

Each of these competencies can be examined individually [7].

1. Self-awareness. This encompasses a child's ability to understand the interconnection between personal feelings, thoughts, and actions. Through this process,

preschool-aged children come to know themselves and develop their interactions with the environment. When preschool-aged children become aware of their feelings, adapting to the social environment becomes easier. Research indicates that as children become more conscious of their emotions, the socialization process is facilitated [2]. A self-aware child understands how they feel in various situations and can adapt to the social environment. In this regard, parents and educators should assist children in expressing their feelings.

2. Self-management. Individual differences in children's self-regulation are fairly stable after the first year or two of life.[3] This component is the ability to manage stress, exercise self-control, and solve problems positively. This skill plays a crucial role in children's adaptive behavior in social environments. Children who can manage themselves have more positive experiences in preschool educational settings. Such children accept rules more readily and participate successfully in group activities. Children who can control themselves have fewer conflicts with their friends and demonstrate a higher level of socialization.

3. Social awareness. This is the ability to understand others' feelings and perspectives, show empathy, and communicate effectively with others in various social and cultural contexts. The main methods for developing social awareness in preschool-aged children are discussing emotions, engaging in role-play, fostering communication skills, teaching cultural diversity, and providing adult role models.

4. Relationship Skills. This component represents the child's ability to communicate effectively with others, express their thoughts, resolve conflicts, and find their place in the social environment. Preschool-aged children do not yet possess fully developed communication skills, but this process is continuously evolving. During group activities, children learn to wait their turn, cooperate, and work in agreement with other children. When participating in group games, they develop the ability to patiently wait for their turn or listen to a friend's opinion. Initially, children may prioritize their own interests, but over time they learn to pay attention to their peers.

5. Making responsible decisions. This is a person's ability to make rational and responsible decisions, taking into account moral norms, risk assessment, and the impact on others. Although preschool-aged children are not yet able to consciously make complex decisions, they gradually begin to develop this ability. They start to understand concepts of what is good and what is bad. They typically act according to the moral rules provided by adults. For example, respecting queues and helping friends. If a child understands that they should share a

toy with another child and does so, or sees a crying friend and tries to help them, or apologizes for a mistake, they are considered to have made a responsible decision.

While these five components are often discussed in the context of schooling, their true foundation is laid not in the classroom, but within the earliest family interactions. During the early years of a child's life (especially from birth to 5 years old), their brain develops very rapidly, and their fundamental understanding of the world is formed. During this period, the child spends most of their time within the family circle. It is within the family that they first observe and learn about smiles, disapproval, affection, and anger. The early years are a critical window of opportunity, shaping a child's ability to learn, think and thrive. Early experiences –positive or negative – lay the foundation for their future.[4]

SEL skills are deeply emotional processes. A child needs to feel absolutely secure in order to freely express, understand, and learn to manage their emotions. This security can only be provided by parental love and a trusting relationship (in scientific terms, "secure attachment [5]"). A child who trusts their parents is not afraid to take emotional risks, make mistakes, and learn through these experiences. Their relationship with their parents serves as a model for all future relationships they will build with others.

Transformations in the modern economy and labor market are fundamentally changing the list of skills required for personal success. As automation and artificial intelligence take over technical and repetitive tasks, social and emotional abilities inherent in humans are coming to the forefront. Research conducted by reputable international organizations shows that the skills developed through SEL are fundamental for "future professions."

The World Economic Forum, in its "The Future of Jobs" report [6] included critical thinking, problem-solving, people management, and emotional intelligence among the most important and highly demanded skills. All these skills are considered integral components of SEL. While technology can solve complex problems, tasks such as working effectively in teams, understanding and inspiring colleagues, and building trusting relationships with clients require a high level of socio-emotional competence.

## DISCUSSION

When adapting the concept of Social-Emotional Learning (SEL), which originated in the West, to the context of Uzbekistan, it is crucial to view it not as a foreign ideology, but rather as a modern scientific expression of socio-emotional principles already

inherent in our national values. An analysis of our traditional upbringing methods reveals that many foundational values of Uzbek culture are closely intertwined with the core components of SEL. This synergy significantly facilitates the process for parents to embrace and practically apply SEL principles.

Respect and consideration for elders - A practical manifestation of social awareness and self-management.

The sense of respect and consideration for elders, which is one of the foundations of Uzbek culture, actually embodies several important components of SEL. This, first and foremost, requires social awareness - that is, the child understands their place in the social environment, recognizes the age and status of their conversation partner, and chooses an appropriate communication strategy. Simultaneously, this situation also demands self-management: the child restrains their emotional impulses (such as interrupting or showing impatience) and maintains composure in relationships. Consequently, this value in traditional upbringing serves as a natural SEL mechanism that teaches children to understand social norms and regulate their behavior.

The concept of solidarity (helping one another during weddings and celebrations, participating in communal work) and the makhalla institution, which is a practical expression of this value, serve as a natural social environment for children to develop SEL skills. In this setting, a child learns to act not as an individual, but as part of a community. This, in turn, fosters the following skills:

Collaboration: Working together with others towards a common goal (for example, cleaning the makhalla in hashar).

Making responsible decisions: Prioritizing community interests over personal interests and contributing to the overall well-being.

Managing relationships: Resolving conflicts with neighbors and peers, fostering a culture of mutual assistance and support.

One of the central ideas of SEL programs developed in the West is to encourage individuals to openly and directly express their feelings (especially negative emotions such as dissatisfaction, resentment, and anger). This is considered important for "self-awareness" and healthy communication.

However, in Uzbek culture, maintaining collective harmony and hierarchical relationships in the family and society is often prioritized over the direct expression of personal feelings. Qualities such as discretion, patience, and composure are highly valued here. From this

perspective, a child's open expression of dissatisfaction or desire to adults may be perceived by some parents and elders as follows:

"Talking back to elders". The child's attempt to express their opinion may be interpreted as a sign of disrespect.

"Lack of discretion" or "poor upbringing". The inability to control one's emotions and openly displaying them in public may be seen as an act contrary to cultural norms.

Sign of selfishness. Viewed as an attempt to prioritize personal needs over the interests of the family or community.

The key to resolving this cultural conflict is to replace the idea of "expressing one's feelings" with the concept of "expressing one's feelings within the bounds of respect." The goal is not to teach the child to suppress their emotions, but to convey them at the right time, in the right place, with the right tone, and using appropriate words. To achieve this, parents can employ the following strategies:

Applying "I-statements" in a cultural context: Teach the child to say "When you raised your voice, I felt a bit scared" (expressing their own feelings) instead of "You yelled at me!" (accusation). This approach doesn't attack the other person, but rather explains one's own state while maintaining respect.

Choosing the right time and place: Teach the child that they can address their dissatisfaction or desires not in public, but by speaking calmly and composedly with their parents in private. This simultaneously demonstrates both consideration and the desire to resolve the issue.

Distinguishing between emotions and actions: Explain to the child that all emotions (anger, hurt) are normal, but actions taken under the influence of these emotions (shouting, throwing things) may be inappropriate. The aim is not to suppress the emotion, but to prevent it from turning into unacceptable behavior.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, when adapting SEL principles to Uzbek families, it is essential to harmonize the individualistic approach of the West with collectivist values. This approach teaches children to both satisfy their personal emotional needs and respect the cultural norms of the society in which they live, thereby contributing to the development of a socially and emotionally healthy and adaptable individual.

Our research has shown that SEL concepts do not contradict our national values such as respect, hospitality, and solidarity; rather, they complement

these values and provide them with modern terminology.

The main challenge is to find a balance between encouraging children to openly express their feelings and maintaining collective harmony. The "respectful communication" approach we propose is precisely the solution to this issue. It teaches children not to suppress their feelings, but to convey them in a way that respects those around them.

This approach helps parents raise their children as healthy and adaptable individuals who both respect national values and meet the demands of the modern world. Certainly, this topic should be further explored in the future through research such as conducting practical surveys among parents and developing specialized training programs for them.

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