

NiLayag: A socio-emotional learning based pedagogy for Araling Panlipunan junior high school teachers

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Abstract

Socio-emotional learning has been a trend in the 21st century with the aim of improving the intrapersonal and interpersonal skills of students. This research answers to the demand of the changing times by implementing a SEL-based pedagogy called NiLayag pedagogy which utilized four SEL strategies namely (1) collaborative activities; (2) stories; (3) games; and (4) routines. The study aims to investigate the effectiveness of SEL integration and strategies as intervention to enhance the social and emotional well-being of students. The research design utilized included a mixed-methods approach. Question and reflective prompts were used in the survey for the qualitative data while a 4-point Likert scale was employed to get the level of agreement of the participants regarding the effectiveness of the NiLayag pedagogy. The researchers used thematic analysis and measured the central tendency of the data gathered. The findings of this research showed that the participants have little to no knowledge about what SEL is. Through the intervention, the participants were able to be more aware of the SEL strategies and its effects. Most of the participants enjoyed collaborative activities and games which developed their social awareness and relationship skills. Motivational chips were also one of the highlights of the results since it posed a great increase in student motivation and participation. Further research is recommended to implement the NiLayag pedagogy in other grade levels and incorporate other SEL-based strategies.

Keywords: socio-emotional learning, pedagogy, collaborative activities, stories, games, routine activities

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1. Introduction

The 21st century education was shaped by various factors which reflect the demands and opportunities of the time. Some of its issues and trends were global citizenship, technological advancements, and mental health awareness. To respond to these issues and trends, educational institutions put efforts into honing the students both in academic and non-academic fields. However, most of the studies in education revolved around cognitive sectors like student achievement and intellectual development (Ventura, 1994, as cited by Rungduin & Reyes, 2015). The need for more studies regarding psychosocial skills or noncognitive skills has been advocated by papers from developmental psychology and neuroscience (Farrington et al., 2012, as mentioned by Holbein, 2017).

One of the most prominent noncognitive skills is called socio-emotional learning (SEL). According to the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) (1994), SEL is the process of acquiring and applying the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to have good intrapersonal and interpersonal development. Research confirms that SEL supports academic achievement (Durlak et al., 2022), improves student well-being (Cipriano et al., 2023), and builds skills for future readiness (Jones et al., 2015). CASEL advocates for the integration of SEL and academic instruction which the proponents of this research also aimed to do. The integration of SEL and academics has three components and this research intends to delve deeper into the usage of instructional practices and strategy to promote SEL.

The contemporary educational landscape necessitates a more direct and systematic integration of Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) into curricula. The global pandemic precipitated prolonged periods of domestic isolation, which exerted a profound influence on the socio-emotional development of the student population. Findings from Save the Children (2020) indicated that children experienced significant loneliness and psychological distress during this period; the resulting lack of peer-to-peer engagement subsequently impaired their social skills and interpersonal awareness. These findings are echoed by UNICEF (2020), which reported an escalation in isolation and anxiety among youth.

When regular face-to-face classes returned, it became clear that the pandemic caused lasting problems in how students behaved and talked to one another. Some students had emotional outbursts, while others lacked self-confidence. Because of this, the researchers designed a SEL-based pedagogy to seamlessly integrate SEL in teaching and learning Araling Panlipunan. NiLayag is wordplay between Nilay (Reflect) and Layag (Sail) which is a pedagogy rooted in SEL components and can be translated directly as reflective exploration. NiLayag consists of four SEL integration strategies namely (1) collaborative activities; (2) stories; (3) games; and (4) routine activities which will be presented through an inventory table. The proponents will categorize the learning competencies and content of the junior high school curriculum guide and provide activities where the four strategies can be utilized. The activities will also be classified according to the five key components of SEL which are (1) self-awareness; (2) self-management; (3) social awareness; (4) relationship skills; and (5) responsible decision-making. The main purpose of this study is to support the claim that SEL must be integrated into instructional practices and structures as it serves as an important foundation in promoting supportive relationships and emotionally safe environments.

Research Questions - This study aims to answer the following questions:

- What are the perceptions of the participants about socio-emotional learning?
- What are the SEL-related strategies that were used in the NiLayag pedagogy?

- What are the effects of integrating SEL strategies in teaching and learning Araling Panlipunan in terms of student motivation and learning experience?
- What is the level of agreement among the participants regarding the effectiveness of NiLayag pedagogy in terms of classroom environment and integration of SEL and instruction?

2. Methodology

Research Design - Accurately measuring and understanding students' social and mental competencies are crucial in generating effective interventions. In order to cover the complexity of SEL, the researchers decided to use a mixed method approach wherein qualitative and quantitative methods will be combined to generate a concrete conclusion. Qualitative techniques like observation provide insight into students' experiences, while quantitative methods such as surveys gauge the impact of socio-emotional learning interventions on learning experiences.

Sampling - The researchers employed a purposive sampling technique, wherein the researchers will select their participants based on a specific characteristic or criteria that a section must manifest from their assigned or preferred junior high school as their deployment location. As stated by Vijayamohan (2023), the purposive sampling technique involves selecting samples based on the researchers' judgment or specific purpose. Choosing variables that align with the specific characteristics needed for the research is a key component of this sampling technique. The researchers also chose two sections that were not always affected by unforeseen suspension of classes. The number of the participants from the two classes were 50 students.

Data Gathering Tools - To gather the necessary data in order to test if the implementation of NiLayag Pedagogy is effective to enhance the learning experience of Junior High School Araling Panlipunan students, the researchers used the following tools:

Questionnaire/Survey - The researchers used questionnaires or surveys that will be the vessel of Likert scale to measure if there is an improvement towards learners' learning experience numerically. The researchers used two questionnaires; The first one is the needs assessment to identify the prior knowledge of the students regarding SEL and their preferred SEL based strategies to be implemented. The second one is the post-assessment survey wherein it will calibrate the effects of implementation of Nilayag Pedagogy as it will be answered by the students after the implementation phase.

Validation of Data Gathering Tools - The researchers formulated questions for the survey questionnaire under the supervision of a professor in the Faculty of Behavioral and Social Sciences (FBEES) who has expertise in SEL. The most essential criteria in choosing the experts are, they should have an array of knowledge about the five components of socio-emotional learning and have an experience in making questionnaires. This will ensure the validity of content and construction of the questionnaire.

Data Gathering Procedure

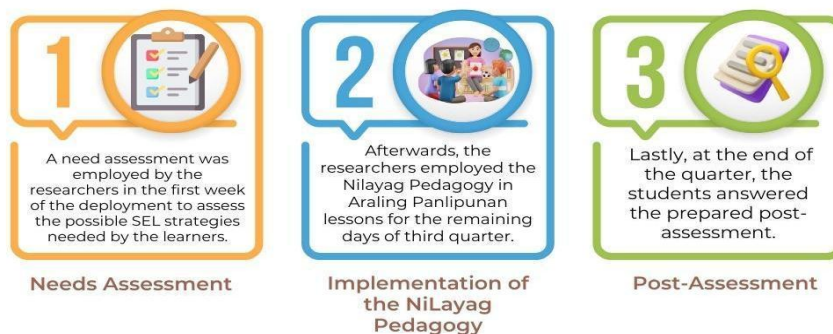


Figure 1. Data Gathering Procedure

The researchers conducted the data gathering for the whole 3rd Quarter in their chosen school. The needs assessment was employed by the researchers in the first week of the deployment to assess the possible SEL strategies needed by the learners in the implementation of the data gathering. Afterwards, the researchers utilized and employed the Nilayag Pedagogy in Araling Panlipunan lessons for the remaining days of third quarter. Lastly, at the end of the quarter, the students answered the prepared post-assessment.

Data Analysis - The researchers analyzed the data gathered from the respondents in two ways. The first way is through thematic analysis. Initially, the group familiarized themselves with the dataset then set out on initial coding. Then, the researchers group similar codes to form potential themes. After developing themes, the group reviewed and refined it and wrote an interpretation for each. The second way was through measuring the central tendency of the quantitative data. The mean and mode of the results were computed and presented through graphs. Lastly, the group interpreted the results and corroborated it with the needs assessment to see the changes and effectiveness of the intervention.

Research Process



Figure 2. PAOR Cycle research process

Upon designing this classroom-based action research about NiLayag pedagogy and how it will help towards students' cognitive and affective development, the researchers follow the PAOR cycle. According to AgResearch 2024, when doing action research, the observation and reflection phase are often missed. Observation and Reflection phases are important in order to monitor and evaluate the progress towards problem solving. The first thing that the researchers did was to understand the current content of Socio-Emotional development of the learners in the presence of pandemic. It is an important first step in order for the researchers to generate a plan on addressing the issue. The next thing that the researchers did was to apply the NiLayag Pedagogy as an intervention on aiding the research gap through collaborative activities, stories, games, and routines. In the next phase, the researchers observed the effects of different SEL based strategies that the researchers implemented through Likert scale on the survey questionnaire. Lastly, reflecting the gathered data helped the researchers to draw a solid conclusion regarding the effectiveness of the NiLayag pedagogy in enhancing students' cognitive and affective development. Refer to the illustration for the step-by-step process done by the researchers.

Ethical Considerations - Ethical principles are vital for researchers to adhere to. Thus, the data and personal information gathered from the target participants of this study, which are high school students, was treated with strict confidentiality under the 2018 PNU Code of Research Ethics and Republic Act 10173 or the Data Privacy Act of 2012. The researchers strictly considered the ethical implications in gathering data and personal information such as informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality, and respect for intellectual property rights.

Informed Consent of the Participants - The participants were briefed on the purpose of the study and the potential risks, and they provided informed consent before answering the reflective prompts and questionnaire.

Anonymity and Confidentiality - The researchers made sure that all personal information and private data are kept with utmost confidentiality and anonymity to protect the security and identity of the participants.

Respect for Intellectual Property Rights - The researchers made sure that all resources and information culled from related literature review and study are all references and cited using American Psychological Association (APA) 7th edition to avoid plagiarism and other intellectual property infringement.

3. Results and Discussion

The following presented the key findings of the study and **discussed** their implications.

Table 1
Perceptions of the Participants about SEL

Research Question	Theme	Sample Response
		"None" – R21
What are the perceptions of the participants about socio-emotional learning?	Perceptions on SEL	"Pagkilala sa sariling emosyon at kaalaman." R17

The table delineates the perceptions of the participants regarding socio-emotional learning. It shows that the participants have little to no knowledge about socio-emotional learning. Most of the participants have answered that they have no knowledge about socio-emotional learning, predominantly indicating "none" as their response." Meanwhile, only some of the students are able to define socio-emotional learning. Most of the participants predominantly expressed their lack of knowledge regarding SEL before implementing the NiLayag pedagogy. Cook (2022) found out that in implementing a social emotional learning curriculum called character strong, students have a lack of knowledge with regards to the SEL intervention that prevented them to cultivate all the social and emotional needs.

Table 2
SEL-based Strategies utilized in NiLayag Pedagogy

Research Question	Theme	SEL Strategy	Frequency of Response
		Group Activity	41
	Socio-Emotional Strategies Experienced by the Students	Story	40
		Games	36
		Routine	36
		SEL Strategy	Sample Response
		Group Activity	"Pangkatang gawain dahil nadadagdagan n gaming kaalaman at nasasanay mag-report." – R28
	Most Favorite SEL-based Strategies	Games	"Ang paggamit ng laro sapagkat nabubuhayan ang mag studyante na makinig at nagkakaroon ng saya ang isang gawain." – R7
What are the SEL-related strategies that were used in the NiLayag Pedagogy?	Least Favorite SEL-based Strategies	Group Activity	"Pangkatang gawain dahil karamihan sa aking kagroup ay hindi nakipag-kooperasyon." – R1
		Routine	"Routine, dahil hindi ko naman ito nagagawa." – R29
		Positive Effects Appreciation	Sample Response
			"Yung pagtatanong sa amin ni Ma'am Kea kung paano namin ituring o i-describe yung kaibigan namin." – R2
	Positive Effects of Explicit SEL Activity in Preliminaries	Motivation	"Opo, dahil mas ginaganahan kami matuto sa paksang itatalakay sa amin ng aming guro." – R4

Participative	<i>“Opo, dahil sa pamamagitan nito ako ay nakakapagbahagi ng aking mga saloobin.” – R21</i>
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The table presents the socio-emotional learning-based strategies utilized in NiLayag Pedagogy. Based on the thematic analysis, the participants have observed all four SEL based strategies namely; group activities, stories, games, and routines. Some participants are favored more on group activities and games since they are able to enjoy and do activities at the same time. However, some participants also least favor group activities and routines since some participants do not cooperate with their activity. Lastly, these strategies have various positive effects that greatly reinforce the student’s motivation to participate in the preliminaries since they are appreciated.

The participants are becoming more aware of SEL strategies and its effects. The participants favored the strategies since they are now able to maximize their learning through the implementation of NiLayag pedagogy which is aligned with the study of Mahoney, Durlak, & Weissberg (2018), which discusses employing SEL pedagogy leads to a long-term positive effect on students’ academic performance and learning experience. Although most of the participants are in favor of groupings and games because collaborative activities in the classroom makes students work in shared tasks which allows them to develop collaboration and social awareness which is one of the key competencies of SEL. However, it also has shortcomings since some students do not cooperate with the others which causes unharmonious relationships.

Table 3
Effects of Motivational Chips to the Student’s Learning

Research Question	Theme	Positive Effects	Sample Response
What are the effects of integrating SEL strategies in teaching and learning Araling Panlipunan in terms of: student motivation and learning experience?	Effects of Motivational Chips to the Student’s Learning	Competitiveness	<i>“Nagiging competitive po at nagiging active.” – R46</i>
		Motivational	<i>“Ang paggamit ng aming guro sa chips na may motivational message ay nakakatuwa dahil may magaganda ito mensahe kaya mas lalo nakakagana mag-aral at makinig.” – R4</i>
		Participative	<i>“Ano kapag meron po sya pinapagawa laging po kami active sa kanya lagi po kami nagtataas ng kamay para mabigyan ng chips.” – R26</i>
		Student’s Satisfaction	<i>“Mas nagustuhan ko na mag-aral pa nang mabuti para mas dumami pa ang chips ko.” – R6</i>

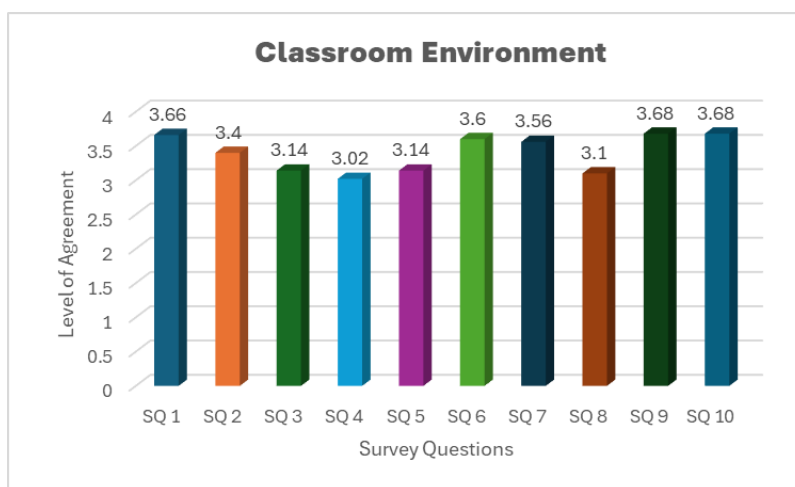
The table illustrates the effects of motivational chips on students’ learning within the framework of a Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)-based strategy. Through thematic analysis, it was discerned that these motivational chips serve to instigate a positive sense of competitiveness among the participants, compelling them to actively engage in recitation with the anticipation of more chips. The chips also have motivational messages that positively reinforces their recitations that improve their motivation. There is also an increase in participation of the students during the activities where chips are given. Lastly, participants became satisfied in their performance in the class that influenced their overall learning experience.

About the effects of motivational chips as integrating SEL strategies in teaching and learning Araling Panlipunan in terms of student motivation and learning experience, during the NiLayag pedagogy, the teacher

established a SEL strategy in the form of routine which is giving students chips during recitation with motivational quotes which result in positive outcomes. This strategy directs students to become competitive, motivated, participative, and satisfied with their own academic performance. The established routine regulates students' learning which is aligned with the study of Corso (2007) which explored the effectiveness of applying classroom routine as teaching strategy. Bracket & Rivers (2014) lamented that applying SEL strategies in classroom-based instruction improves student's motivation and self-satisfaction that cultivates healthy emotional well-being. Lastly, students became competitive and participative after the NiLayag pedagogy which prompted them to be active in the discussion and learning activities, in which Mahoney, Durlak, & Weissberg (2018) asserted that it can lead to student's academic growth.

Figure 1

Level of Agreement Regarding the Effectiveness of Nilayag Pedagogy in Classroom Environment



The graph above shows the level of agreement of the participants regarding the effectiveness of Nilayag pedagogy in terms of classroom environment. Survey questions numbers 1, 6, 8, and 10 measure the self-awareness of the students and got a total mean score of 3.51. Meanwhile, question numbers 2, 4, and 9 measured the relationship skills of the students and got a total mean score of 3.37. Lastly, question numbers 3, 5, and 7 measure the social awareness of the students and got a total mean of 3.28. This shows that the 50 participants were agreeing that Nilayag pedagogy enhanced their self-awareness, relationship skills, and social awareness that it gets 3.4 total mean score. This is equivalent between strongly agree to agree in the Likert scale.

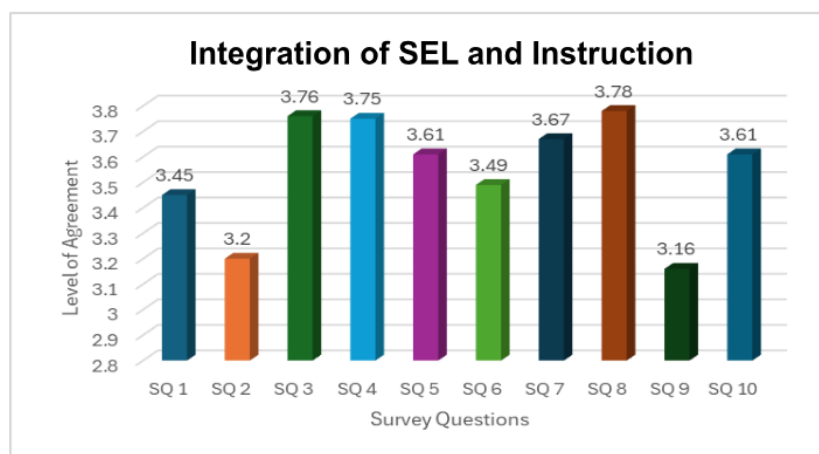
According to the results, most of the participants expressed that through the use of NiLayag pedagogy in the classroom environment, their perceptions towards their environment improved as they now see it as a safe space for them allowing them to express their opinions freely. In another positive note, most of the students also professed that they are also able to recognize the importance of their fellow students as well as respect their individual differences. Moreover, most of them also asserted that their relationship with their teacher and interest for the subject itself increased considerably. This supports CASEL (2020) statement that knowledge, skills and attitudes may be acquired through enhancing interpersonal relationships and collective values.

The graph above indicates the level of agreement of the participants regarding the effectiveness of NiLayag Pedagogy in terms of integrating it to the lesson through groupings, stories, routines, and games. The survey questions 1, 6, 7, and 10 measure the effectiveness of NiLayag pedagogy through integrating it with routines and got a total mean score of 3.55. While survey question 2 measured the effectiveness of NiLayag pedagogy through integrating in group activities and got a mean score of 3.2. Questions 3, 4, and 5 measure the effectiveness of NiLayag pedagogy through integrating it in stories and got a total mean score of 3.71. Lastly, question numbers 8 and 9 measure the effectiveness of NiLayag pedagogy through integrating on games and got a total mean score of 3.47. The 50 participants strongly agree that the said SEL strategy is effective by getting a

solid 3.5 total mean score. This is equivalent between strongly agree to agree in our Likert scale.

Figure 2

Level of Agreement Regarding the Effectiveness of NiLayag Pedagogy Through Integration of SEL and Instruction



The results show the effectiveness of NiLayag pedagogy in terms of integration in daily lessons. According to the data, most of the participants find stories that are contextualized in their lessons helpful in understanding the topic. Citing some of the best practices that can be applied in integrating SEL, Heath, Smith, & Young (2017) mentioned the use of stories as another strategy in teaching was considered as a functional way for students to develop their social and emotional capacities.

Another SEL strategy cited is the use of games to increase students' collaborative skills (Boghian & Cojocariu, 2023). Following this suggestion, the researchers found out that most of the participants viewed group activities as a way to connect with their classmates especially if they are in the same group. As what participants explained, they are becoming more competitive and motivated at the same time.

4. Conclusion and Recommendation

In conclusion, the findings of study suggest that integrating socio-emotional learning-based strategy can enhance teaching and learning Araling Panlipunan, particularly through the implementation of the NiLayag pedagogy. The lack of knowledge regarding the concept of SEL did not stop the students from developing a positive reception when the SEL-based strategies were utilized. Additionally, the students became more aware of the SEL strategies and how it can help them to understand themselves, others, and the lesson in a deeper way. The results of this research showed that using SEL-based strategies lead to enhanced motivation, participation, and better academic performance of the respondents. The incorporation of motivation chips as part of the routine also imposed a great effect on student motivation and emotional well-being. In terms of classroom environment, this research suggested that the incorporation of SEL strategies makes the classroom a safe space for students. Furthermore, the introduction of the four strategies made Araling Panlipunan a fun and relatable subject for the respondents.

Based on the results of this study, it is recommended that teachers consider using the NiLayag pedagogy as an initiative to integrate SEL in their teaching practices. Teachers may adopt and use the NiLayag inventory table provided by the researchers as a reference for incorporating SEL into Araling Panlipunan lessons, as well as into other learning areas. The inventory provided by the researchers can be modified based on the content that the teachers aim to teach. To address the challenges brought by uncooperative behavior in some collaborative activities, teachers could design and utilize other SEL strategies to promote positive collaboration among

students besides group reporting. On the other hand, the future researchers who plan to also contribute to SEL studies in the Philippines can make inventory tables for other grade levels since this research focused only on Grade 10 level. Other SEL-based activities aside from the four strategies used in this research can be used to address the differentiated learning needs and styles of students.

Furthermore, the education administration can provide professional development for teachers to be more knowledgeable about SEL and how to integrate it in their lesson plans. The school is also an influential part in enhancing the implementation and sustainability of SEL initiatives in the classroom, thus, school culture must be cultivated in line with SEL competencies. The school administration can conduct seminars and team building sessions to equip teachers in integrating SEL-based strategies in their lessons. Overall, this research serves as a call to action for every stakeholder to take part in promoting SEL for better student well-being as well as holistic development of the students.

AI declaration: Grammarly and Google Gemini, February 2026 – used to revise text and ChatGPT, February 2026 was used in fact checking, citation checks

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