

Reading Project to Improve Self-awareness and Self-management Competence for Elementary School Students

Ngoc Tuan Hoang^{1,*}, Thanh-Hien Hoang-Ho¹ & Tram-Anh Nguyen-Tran¹

¹Faculty of Psychology, Ho Chi Minh City University of Education, Ho Chi Minh City, 700000, Vietnam

*Correspondence: Faculty of Psychology, Ho Chi Minh City University of Education, Ho Chi Minh City, 700000, Vietnam. E-mail: ngocht@hcmue.edu.vn

Received: May 15, 2024

Accepted: July 3, 2024

Online Published: August 13, 2024

doi:10.5430/jct.v13n4p304

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5430/jct.v13n4p304>

Abstract

Background: This study investigates the impact of a reading intervention program on self-awareness and self-management competence among elementary school students in Vietnam.

Methods: The study recruited 40 socio-economically disadvantaged primary students from Districts 6 and 10 in Ho Chi Minh City. The Social Emotional Competence Questionnaire (SECQ) measured self-awareness and self-management of thoughts, emotions and behaviors before and after the intervention.

Results: A Significant improvements were found in both self-awareness ($M_{pre} = 2.81$, $SD_{pre} = 0.44$; $M_{post} = 3.46$, $SD_{post} = 0.55$) and self-management ($M_{pre} = 3.13$, $SD_{pre} = 0.38$; $M_{post} = 3.83$, $SD_{post} = 0.36$) following the intervention ($p < .05$). The findings suggest that the reading intervention program effectively enhances students' ability to recognize and regulate their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. Rather than list the statistical results, these should be synthesized to tell the reader what the findings demonstrate. Phrase "following the intervention ($p < .05$) is okay to include.

Conclusion: This study underscores the potential of reading interventions to foster socio-emotional competence in elementary school students and advocates for a holistic approach to education that prioritizes both academic and social-emotional development.

Keywords: elementary school students, reading, self-awareness, self-management, home environment

1. Introduction

Elementary school lays the groundwork for a child's lifelong development (Darling-Hammond et al., 2019). While mastering core academic skills such as reading and writing is paramount (Graham et al., 2017), cultivating a robust social-emotional foundation holds equal importance. This study examined the potential of reading intervention programs to extend their impact beyond literacy gains, exploring their efficacy in fostering crucial socio-emotional competence, particularly self-awareness and self-management, in elementary school students.

The potential of literature to evoke empathy and self-reflection has been explored within a theoretical-empirical framework. Literature, particularly narratives rich in literary features, prompts readers to make mental inferences which promotes empathic imagination and understanding of others' perspectives. Fictionality encourages readers to engage in thought experiments, enhancing self-reflection. The combination of narrative experience and aesthetic emotions triggers self-reflection, facilitated by the concept of "stillness" in literary reading, allowing for slow thinking and self-contemplation (Koopman & Hakemulder, 2015). Literature has also been a potent tool for fostering socio-emotional development and problem-solving skills (Beck et al., 2013). It provides practical strategies for stress management, conflict resolution, and decision-making through discussions and reflections on characters' experiences. Analyzing characters' decisions cultivates critical thinking and metacognitive skills (Mar & Oatley, 2008), while exposure to diverse narratives expands emotional intelligence (Miall & Kuiken, 1995). These insights underscore the link between literary engagement and holistic socio-emotional development.

Previous research supports literature's role in promoting self-reflection and understanding of internal states (Brown, 2000; Rosenzweig et al., 2018), which is supported by significant improvements in self-awareness observed in this

study. Research by Durlak et al. (2011) has established a compelling link between robust socio-emotional competence and academic achievement. Students equipped with these abilities demonstrate not only improved learning attitudes but also increased prosocial behaviors, such as kindness and empathy, while experiencing reduced stress and depression. Self-regulation abilities are linked to academic performance (Sewasew & Koester, 2019).

While previous studies have investigated these factors in various populations, the unique circumstances of our participants offer a distinctive lens through which to examine their impact. We focus on some familial variables in the context of elementary school students' self-awareness and self-management. For instance, family structure pertains to the family unit's composition, including factors like two-parent households or single-parent arrangements. Research indicates that stable, two-parent homes are correlated with higher self-awareness and self-management levels due to consistent support (Amato & Keith, 1991). Conversely, single-parent or unstable settings might introduce stressors that hinder competency development (Pong & Ju, 2000). Family status, reflecting socio-economic factors like income and parental education, significantly influenced resources available to children. Higher socio-economic status correlates with better access to educational resources and supportive environments which fosters socio-emotional skills (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002). Birth order also plays a role, with first-borns typically displaying stronger self-regulation and leadership qualities (Hughes & White, 2018).

In examining the primary school landscape in Vietnam, our aim is to furnish persuasive evidence endorsing the fusion of social-emotional learning with academic interventions. By showcasing how reading programs can bolster literacy skills while nurturing crucial socio-emotional competencies for vulnerable elementary school students, we advocate for a holistic approach to elementary education. This research endeavors to illuminate the transformative potential of integrating social-emotional learning into the academic curriculum, particularly in the Vietnamese context. Through this endeavor, the overall goal is advocating for a more comprehensive educational framework that prioritizes the holistic development and well-being of primary students.

2. Methods

2.1 Hypothesis

Participation in the reading intervention program would lead to significant improvements in self-awareness and self-management competence among primary school students.

2.2 Participants

The study evaluated the social-emotional competence of 40 primary school students. These participants were recruited with the assistance of the People's Committees of Ward 2, District 10, and Ward 13, District 6. Inclusion criteria for participation included being over 5 years old, belonging to families of workers or migrant workers in industrial parks and industrial zones in the locality, who were children without a stable residence according to the regulations outlined in Article 5 of Decree 56/2017/ND-CP. {{first time this is mentioned}}

The 40 children who participated in the project were from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, with families facing financial constraints that limited the time and resources available for their children's development. Consequently, these children often experienced environments lacking in material resources, interactive opportunities, play {{unclear – needs clarification}}, and physical activity conducive to their overall development.

2.3 Research Design

The study utilized a one-group pre-test and post-test design. Participants underwent pre-test assessments of social-emotional competence using the Social Emotional Competence Questionnaire (SECQ) subscales for Self-awareness and Self-management. Following this, they engaged in the reading intervention program. Post-test assessments using the same SECQ subscales would be conducted after the intervention period.

2.4 Measurements

The study utilized the Social Emotional Competence Questionnaire (SECQ) developed by Zhou and Ee (2012), featuring five subscales. However, for this study, two subscales were employed: Self-awareness (16 items) and Self-management (17 items). Participants rated responses on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. This measurement approach facilitated the conversion of qualitative responses into corresponding quantitative values. Additionally, the reliability of the questionnaire was ensured, with Cronbach's alpha coefficient exceeding 0.8, indicating high internal consistency for both subscales. This allowed for robust assessment of self-awareness and self-management skills among the sampled primary school students.

2.5 Data Analysis

Data organization, coding, and cleansing were performed using Excel, with subsequent analysis conducted utilizing Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26.0. Descriptive statistics were computed for each subscale of the Social Emotional Competence Questionnaire (SECQ) – self-awareness and self-management – at both pre-test and post-test assessments, which yielded means and standard deviations. Paired samples t-tests were employed to compare mean scores of self-awareness and self-management skills between pre-test and post-test evaluations. These t-tests found significant differences in socio-emotional competence that followed the reading intervention program. Additionally, Cronbach's alpha coefficient gauged the internal consistency of SECQ subscales and yielded a coefficient surpassing 0.8 which indicates heightened reliability.

2.6 Ethical

The study received ethical approval from Ho Chi Minh City University of Education, Vietnam and informed consent by participants' parents. Participant confidentiality was ensured, and data securely stored. Vulnerable participants' socio-economic status and living circumstances were considered, with cultural sensitivity prioritized. The People's Committees of Ward 2, District 10, and Ward 13, District 6 assisted in participant recruitment. Principles of beneficence, respect for autonomy, and justice guided the research (World Medical Association, 2013; APA, 2017)

3. Results

Table 1 presented the demographic characteristics of the participants.

Table 1. Participant Demographic

Demographic Variables	n	%
<i>Family structure</i>		
Parents living together	23	57.5
Separated or divorced parents	28	20.0
Father or mother deceased	7	17.5
Other	2	5.0
<i>Gender</i>		
Female	21	52.5
Male	19	47.5
<i>Academic performance</i>		
Excellent	30	75.0
Good	10	25.0
<i>Hometown</i>		
Ho Chi Minh City	26	65.0
Immigration from elsewhere	14	35.0
<i>Family status</i>		
Average	21	52.5
Difficult	14	35.0
Very difficult	5	12.5
<i>Birth order</i>		
First-born	15	37.5
Middle child	14	35.0
Youngest child	9	22.5
Other	2	5.0
<i>Number of children</i>		
Only child (eldest)	6	15.0
Two children	14	35.0
Three children	14	35.0
More than three children	6	15.0
<i>Living with</i>		
Biological father	34	85.0
Stepfather	4	10.0
Foster father	2	5.0

Other	0	0
Living with		
Biological mother	29	72.5
Stepmother	6	15.0
Foster mother	3	7.5
Other	2	5.0

Table 2 demonstrated the reading intervention comprised interactive activities aligned with various children's books. Activities included role-playing, DIY crafts, group games, and storytelling, aimed at enhancing reading comprehension and fostering creative expression. Each book title was accompanied by engaging tasks, promoting diverse learning experiences across storytelling, art, science, and social skills development. Additionally, within a span of 3 months, specialized sessions and activities in the reading intervention project were organized for the experimental group. Coordination was conducted by faculty members from Ho Chi Minh City University of Education and trained students, providing specialized support.

Table 2. Reading Programs

Book Title	Activities
The Tortoise and the Hare	- Role-playing according to the story. - DIY: coloring and creating moving pictures of the tortoise and the hare.
If you plant a seed	- Group work: counting games with vegetables. - DIY: designing and decorating a "Good Deed" tree.
The Warm Breath	- DIY: children make polar bears from cotton. - Making cards for loved ones (father/mother/...).
What are manners?	- Self-themed board game. - DIY: children make a "Moral" hand-shaped tree from cardboard.
Kevin's Big Book of Emotions	- Memory game: children recognize different expressions and stick them onto a face containing the names of various emotions.
Meow! Katie's Big Book of Animals	- Team guessing game about animal themes. - Memory game: children work in groups to classify animals according to suitable habitats.
Vroom! Kevin's Big Book of Vehicles	- Traffic light game applying vehicle themes. - Shadow search game: children find and stick images of corresponding vehicles in the positions containing the shadows of those vehicles.
Little Red Riding Hood - Grimm's Fairy Tale	- DIY: designing and creating puppet characters from the story. - Storytelling: children use the puppets they have designed to retell the story in groups.
The Ugly Duckling	- Jumping and counting game to the tune of "Five Little Ducks on the Pond". - DIY: children paint duckling pictures from handprints using watercolors.
The Three Little Pigs	- Study: conducting a science experiment on wind based on the story of the three little pigs. - DIY: children build houses for the three little pigs using wooden sticks, red paper, and straws/paper scraps on A4 paper.

Table 3 showed the results from the Independent samples T-test indicated a significant improvement in both self-awareness and self-management skills among participants following the reading project intervention. The mean scores for self-awareness increased from 2.81 (SD = 0.44) at pre-test to 3.46 (SD = 0.55) at post-test, with a statistically significant difference ($p < .05$). Similarly, self-management skills showed improvement, with mean scores increasing from 3.13 (SD = 0.38) to 3.83 (SD = 0.36) at post-test, also demonstrating statistical significance ($p < .05$).

Table 3. Pre-test and Post-test of Social-emotional Competence and Reading Project of Primary School Students

Factor	Pre-test		Post-test		p
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Self-awareness	2.81	0.44	3.46	0.55	< .05
Self-management	3.13	0.38	3.83	0.36	< .05

4. Discussion

The present study aimed to investigate the impact of a reading intervention program on self-awareness and self-management competence among elementary school students. The findings provided valuable insights into the effectiveness of this targeted intervention.

The substantial increase in mean scores for self-awareness from pre-test to post-test indicated a notable enhancement in students' ability to recognize and understand their own thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. This outcome aligned with previous research suggesting that engaging with literature could facilitate self-reflection and promote insight into one's internal states (Brown, 2000; Rosenzweig et al., 2018). Moreover, the observed improvements in self-management competence indicated that the reading project intervention also effectively contributed to enhancing students' ability to regulate their emotions, behaviors, and actions. Literature has been recognized as a valuable tool for promoting socio-emotional development and problem-solving skills (Beck et al., 2013). Through discussions, reflections, and activities inspired by the stories read during the intervention, students likely gained practical strategies for managing stress, resolving conflicts, and making responsible decisions (Mägi et al., 2016).

Additionally, by immersing students in narratives that feature characters grappling with various challenges and dilemmas, the reading project likely provided opportunities for students to relate their own experiences to those depicted in the stories, thereby enhancing their self-awareness. Analyzing characters' decisions and consequences in stories cultivated critical thinking and metacognitive skills, enabling students to reflect on their own actions and emotions (Mar & Oatley, 2008). Moreover, the exposure to varied experiences through literature expanded students' emotional vocabulary and emotional intelligence (Miall & Kuiken, 1995), facilitating better self-expression and emotional regulation, essential aspects of self-management competence.

The significance of these findings demonstrates that reading intervention programs in primary schools can yield benefits beyond literacy gains. Participation is associated with significant improvements in self-awareness and self-management competence, suggesting these programs can cultivate essential metacognitive skills that generalize across academic domains. This underscores the potential of reading interventions to contribute to a more holistic approach to student development. Cultivating self-awareness and self-management competence early in life lays a foundation for future success and resilience (Durlak et al., 2011). Educational experts and psychologists can leverage this knowledge by developing and evaluating evidence-based life skills programs specifically designed for students (Tran-Chi et al., 2023). By integrating interventions like the reading project into educational practices, educators can address the multifaceted needs of students and foster their socio-emotional competence alongside traditional academic skills.

5. Conclusion

This study underscores the profound impact of reading intervention programs on enhancing self-awareness and self-management among elementary school students. Integrating such interventions into educational practices is crucial for fostering holistic student development. Despite limitations such as sample size and absence of control groups, future research should explore larger and more diverse samples to validate these findings rigorously. These insights emphasize the critical role of cultivating socio-emotional competence alongside academic skills, promising improved well-being and resilience as students progress through their educational endeavors.

6. Limitations

It is essential to acknowledge some limitations of this study, such as the relatively small sample size and the lack of a control group. Future research could employ larger and more diverse samples, as well as experimental designs with control groups, to further validate the effectiveness of reading interventions for enhancing self-awareness and self-management skills in elementary school settings. Additionally, the study focused solely on short-term outcomes immediately following the intervention, which may not capture the long-term effects of the reading intervention

program on social-emotional competence. Further research with larger and more diverse samples, as well as longitudinal studies, could provide deeper insights into the effectiveness and sustainability of such interventions.

References

- Amato, P. R., & Keith, B. (1991). Parental divorce and the well-being of children: A meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*, *110*(1), 26-46. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.110.1.26>
- American Psychological Association. (2017). Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct. *American Psychological Association*. Retrieved from <https://www.apa.org/ethics/code>
- Beck, I. L., McKeown, M. G., & Kucan, L. (2013). *Bringing words to life: Robust vocabulary instruction*. Guilford Press.
- Bradley, R. H., & Corwyn, R. F. (2002). Socioeconomic status and child development. *Annual review of psychology*, *53*(1), 371-399. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.53.100901.135233>
- Brown, W. (2000). The Impact of Reading Recovery Participation on Students' Self-Concepts. *Reading Psychology*, *21*, 13-30. <https://doi.org/10.1080/027027100278329>
- Darling-Hammond, L., Flook, L., Cook-Harvey, C., Barron, B., & Osher, D. (2019). Implications for educational practice of the science of learning and development. *Applied Developmental Science*, *24*, 140-97. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10888691.2018.1537791>
- Durlak, J. A., Weissberg, R. P., Dymnicki, A. B., Taylor, R. D., & Schellinger, K. B. (2011). The impact of enhancing students' social and emotional learning: A meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions. *Child development*, *82*(1), 405-432. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2010.01564.x>
- Graham, S., Liu, X., Bartlett, B., Ng, C., Harris, K., Aitken, A., Barkel, A., Kavanaugh, C., & Talukdar, J. (2017). Reading for Writing: A Meta-Analysis of the Impact of Reading Interventions on Writing. *Review of Educational Research*, *88*, 243-284. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654317746927>
- Hughes, C., & White, N. (2018). *Birth order and sibling relationships*. In Springer eBooks (pp. 1-10). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-16999-6_836-1
- Koopman, E., & Hakemulder, F. (2015). Effects of Literature on Empathy and Self-Reflection: A Theoretical-Empirical Framework. *Journal of Literary Theory*, *9*, 111-79. <https://doi.org/10.1515/jlt-2015-0005>
- Mägi, K., Männamaa, M., & Kikas, E. (2016). Profiles of self-regulation in elementary grades: Relations to math and reading skills. *Learning and Individual Differences*, *51*, 37-48. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.LINDIF.2016.08.028>
- Mar, R. A., & Oatley, K. (2008). The function of fiction is the abstraction and simulation of social experience. *Perspectives on psychological science*, *3*(3), 173-192. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-6924.2008.00073.x>
- Miall, D. S., & Kuiken, D. (1995). Aspects of Literary Response: A New Questionnaire. *Research in the Teaching of English*, *29*(1), 37-58. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40171422>
- Pong, S. L., & Ju, D. B. (2000). The effects of change in family structure and income on dropping out of middle and high school. *Journal of family issues*, *21*(2), 147-169. <https://doi.org/10.1177/019251300021002001>
- Rosenzweig, E., Wigfield, A., Gaspard, H., & Guthrie, J. (2018). How Do Perceptions of Importance Support From a Reading Intervention Affect Students' Motivation, Engagement, and Comprehension?. *Journal of research in reading*, *41*(4), 625-641. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9817.12243>
- Sewasew, D., & Koester, L. (2019). The developmental dynamics of students' reading self-concept and reading competence: Examining reciprocal relations and ethnic-background patterns. *Learning and Individual Differences*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.LINDIF.2019.05.010>
- Tran-Chi, V. L., Van Huynh, S., Nguyen, H. T., Giang, T. V., & Luu-Thi, H. T. (2023). The Perception Of Implementing Social-Emotional Learning In Soft Skills Among Vietnamese High School Students. *Association of Southeast Asian Nations Journal of Psychiatry*, *24*(9), 1-12.
- World Medical Association. (2013). World Medical Association Declaration of Helsinki: Ethical Principles for Medical Research Involving Human Subjects. *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)*, *310*(20), 2191-2194. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2013.281053>
- Zhou, M., & Ee, J. (2012). Social Emotional Competence questionnaire [Dataset]. In *PsycTESTS Dataset*.

<https://doi.org/10.1037/t69172-000>

Acknowledgments

We sincerely thank the People's Committees of Ward 2, District 10, and Ward 13, District 6, for their assistance in participant recruitment. We also appreciate the primary school students' participation. Our gratitude extends to the faculty members and trained students from Ho Chi Minh City University of Education for their support.

Authors contributions

Not applicable.

Funding

The authors did not receive any specific funding.

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Informed consent

Obtained.

Ethics approval

The Publication Ethics Committee of the Sciedu Press.

The journal's policies adhere to the Core Practices established by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE).

Provenance and peer review

Not commissioned; externally double-blind peer reviewed.

Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

Data sharing statement

No additional data are available.

Open access

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

Copyrights

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal.