



S.I.L.E.N.T. C.A.R.E. PROJECT: Addressing the Unspoken Emotional Bonds and Their Influence on Students' Academic Social-Emotional Development

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Abstract:

In secondary classrooms, unspoken emotional reliance profoundly anchors adolescent well-being, yet nonverbal attachment remains an underexplored driver of student growth. This quantitative correlational study investigated the phenomenon of Silent Dependency, defined as the unspoken, observational reliance on school authority figures, and its influence on the Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) competencies of Senior High School students. The study was conducted at Luray II National High School, Division of Toledo City, with 268 Senior High School students selected through stratified random sampling across Academic (HUMSS, STEM, ABM) and Technical-Professional (TVL) tracks. Data were collected using two expert-validated 4-point Likert scales: the adapted Silent Dependency Questionnaire (SDQ; $\alpha=0.87$) with four subscales—Perceived Closeness, Silent Dependency/Reliance, Observational Vigilance, and Perceived Disconnection—and the Social and Emotional Competence Questionnaire (SECQ; $\alpha=0.91$) based on CASEL's five domains. Weighted mean, standard deviation, and Pearson's product-moment correlation ($p<0.05$) were employed. Results revealed a High overall Silent Dependency (WM=2.88, SD=0.41), led by Very High Observational Vigilance (WM=3.26, SD=0.45), High Closeness (3.18), High Reliance (2.92), and Low Disconnection (2.14). SEL competency was High overall (WM=3.21, SD=0.44), with Responsible Decision-Making highest (3.45). Pearson r demonstrated a significant moderate-to-strong positive correlation between overall Silent Dependency and SEL outcomes ($r=0.448$, $p<0.001$), rejecting the null hypothesis. Perceived Disconnection inversely impacted Self-Management ($r=-0.335$, $p<0.001$). Findings indicate nonverbal educator presence serves as a critical secure base for adolescent self-regulation. Project S.I.L.E.N.T. C.A.R.E. (Silent Internalization for Learners' Emotional Nurturance and Transformation through Co-regulation, Awareness, Relational pedagogy, and Empathy) was developed to enhance faculty relational pedagogy.

Keywords: Silent Dependency, Social-Emotional Learning, Observational Vigilance, Nonverbal Immediacy, Co-Regulation, Senior High School

Introduction:

The socio-emotional climate of secondary classrooms is a cornerstone of adolescent development, shaping how students process academic stress, form interpersonal bonds, and build psychological resilience (Granziera et al., 2022; Longobardi et al., 2023). Positive student-teacher relationships function as protective buffers against academic burnout, disengagement, and socio-emotional distress (Quin, 2021). Beyond standard instructional delivery, emotional support provided by educators—both explicitly through direct communication and implicitly through nonverbal presence and perceived availability—helps learners establish internal emotional security (Bowlby, 1969; CASEL, 2003). Consequently, understanding nuanced relational dynamics between students and school adult figures has become a central priority in contemporary educational psychology.

Despite recognized importance of adult support, baseline statistics reveal a stark socio-emotional deficit. Globally, while over 55% of elementary students report having a trusted adult at school during stress, this drops to 42% in middle school and just 40% in high school (Ng, 2024). In the Philippine context, DepEd post-pandemic surveys (DepEd, 2023) and studies on Filipino adolescent mental health (Cleofas & Reyes, 2023; Datu et al., 2022) demonstrate heightened emotional fatigue, academic anxiety, and social withdrawal among Senior High School students. This is compounded by large class sizes, limited guidance counselor ratios, and culturally-rooted reluctance to seek overt help (*hiya*).



This systemic gap gives rise to Silent Dependency, a dynamic wherein students form non-communicative, preconscious emotional reliance on school adult figures with whom they rarely interact directly. Attachment behaviors shift profoundly from early childhood into adolescence. Whereas elementary pupils express needs outwardly through verbal queries and proximity-seeking, Senior High School students experience heightened cognitive self-consciousness, fears of social vulnerability, and developing autonomy (Bowlby, 1969; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2016). Rather than abandoning need for adult security, adolescents internalize relational drives. Senior High School learners frequently resort to quiet observational vigilance, monitoring a school adult's calm presence, nonverbal accessibility, and perceived warmth from a distance to anchor emotional composure without risking overt social exposure (Longobardi et al., 2023).

Traditional relational frameworks assume teacher-student closeness requires active, continuous verbal communication (Brinkworth et al., 2017). However, modern perspectives confirm adolescents frequently rely on tacit, perceived availability as psychological anchor. When unspoken expectations for warmth are validated, students experience enhanced comfort; when negated, they experience quiet disengagement.

A distinct deficit exists regarding how non-communicative attachments relate to Social-Emotional Learning competencies. While research examined active classroom interactions, few empirical studies investigated quiet, indirect reliance that withdrawn students place on school adults. Furthermore, local Philippine research frequently relies on ad-hoc, unvalidated tools lacking psychometric standardization, creating gaps in data reliability and limiting cross-cultural comparability. There is urgent need for empirical investigation using standardized tools to examine how implicit attachment impacts core SEL outcomes—self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (Zhou & Ee, 2012).

Addressing this gap is vital for advancing student well-being and supporting national mandates: DepEd MATATAG Agenda, DepEd Order No. 21 s.2019, DepEd Order No. 31 s.2022 (BEDP 2030), Republic Act No. 11036 (Mental Health Act 2018), and RA 12080 (Basic Education Mental Health and Well-Being Promotion Act). For teachers, this provides evidence that nonverbal presence matters as much as instruction. For administrators, it offers data-driven insights to construct proactive mental health frameworks and trauma-informed training. For students, it validates unspoken emotional needs.

This study utilizes adapted Silent Dependency Questionnaire examining four facets: Perceived Closeness, Silent Dependency, Observational Vigilance, and Perceived Disconnection. By executing quantitative correlational design among Senior High School students at Luray II National High School, Schools Division of Toledo City, this provides rigorous, standardized evidence regarding relationship between perceived student-teacher attachment dynamics and adolescent socio-emotional competencies. It further develops Project S.I.L.E.N.T. C.A.R.E. as output.

Statement of the Problem: This study determines influence of silent dependency on social-emotional learning among Senior High School students at Luray II NHS. Specifically: (1) What is demographic profile in terms of age, sex, track? (2) What is level of silent dependency in terms of closeness, reliance, vigilance, disconnection? (3) What is level of SEL competencies? (4) Is there significant relationship between silent dependency and SEL? (5) What intervention project can be proposed based on findings?

Hypothesis: H0: There is no significant relationship between silent dependency and social-emotional learning outcomes.

Literature Review:

This literature review synthesizes international and local scholarship anchoring Silent Dependency and SEL, organizing around theoretical foundations, empirical evidence, and contextual relevance.

A. Attachment Theory and Silent Dependency

Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1969; Ainsworth, 1979) posits early relational experiences form internal working models—cognitive representations of self-worth and environment interactions. In educational settings, adolescents project these models onto school adult figures (Pianta, 2001). Students form unspoken dependencies on perceived safe



adults whose presence provides psychological anchor and secure base (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2016). Even without explicit verbal communication, perceived emotional availability enhances self-regulation and resilience (Vrticka & Vuilleumier, 2012). Pianta's (2001) Student-Teacher Relationship Scale identified closeness, dependency, and conflict as core dimensions. This study adapts that to nonverbal context: Silent Dependency.

Granziera et al. (2022) emphasized teacher-student relationship quality predicts emotional engagement beyond instructional quality. Longobardi et al. (2023) found adolescent perception of teacher caring—often inferred from nonverbal immediacy like eye contact, nodding, proximity—predicted lower internalizing symptoms. Brinkworth et al. (2017) challenged assumption that closeness requires active talk; silent proximity-seeking is valid relational behavior in late adolescence. In Filipino culture, high respect for authority (paggalang) and hiya (shame avoidance) intensifies indirect reliance. Students may avoid direct help-seeking to avoid being perceived as burdensome, instead relying on adult's ambient presence (Cleofas & Reyes, 2023).

Observational Vigilance, the strongest dimension in this study, aligns with Bandura's attentional processes. Adolescents actively monitor calm demeanor of admired adults from distance across campus (WM=3.34 highest indicator). Watching composure gives quiet encouragement (WM=3.31). This is not stalking but adaptive co-regulation—using another's nervous system to regulate own. Recent neuroscience supports this: mirror neuron systems and social buffering reduce cortisol when supportive adult is perceived as accessible (Vrticka & Vuilleumier, 2012).

Perceived Disconnection inversely relates to well-being. Ng (2024) reports only 40% of high schoolers feel they have trusted adult. Perceived invisibility triggers attachment anxiety: "I feel invisible to this person" indicator. Filipino studies (Datu et al., 2022) link perceived teacher indifference to academic anxiety and social withdrawal. Our finding Low Disconnection (WM=2.14) suggests Luray II maintains relatively secure climate, yet its inverse correlation with Self-Management indicates even mild disconnection erodes coping.

B. Social-Emotional Learning Framework

CASEL (2003) defines SEL as process acquiring knowledge, attitudes, skills to understand/manage emotions, set positive goals, show empathy, maintain positive relationships, make responsible decisions. Five core competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship management, responsible decision-making (Zhou & Ee, 2012). Meta-analyses show SEL programs yield 11% gain in academic achievement and reduce conduct problems (Durlak et al., 2011). However, most interventions focus on explicit curriculum. Implicit relational pathways remain understudied.

Self-Awareness (WM=3.12 High) involves recognizing internal states. Attachment security fosters reflective functioning—ability to mentalize own emotions. Our correlation Closeness-Self-Awareness $r=0.42$ moderate, suggests warmth enables introspection.

Self-Management (WM=2.84 lowest among SEL but still High) involves staying calm under stress. This was vulnerability point. Philippine post-pandemic data show elevated emotional fatigue (DepEd, 2023). Adolescents struggle with "I can stay calm in stressful situations" (WM=2.76). Co-regulation theory posits self-regulation develops from external regulation by trusted adult, gradually internalized. Significant positive correlation with Overall Silent Dependency $r=0.32$ but negative with Disconnection $r=-0.335$ indicates adult presence scaffolds self-management; its perceived absence undermines it.

Social Awareness (WM=3.28 Very High) and Relationship Management (3.36 Very High) were strengths. Zhou & Ee (2012) SECQ validation across cultures found collectivist cultures score higher on other-oriented domains. Filipino values pakikisama (smooth interpersonal relations) and empathy may explain. Highest indicator "I will always apologize when I hurt my friend" (3.44). Correlation Vigilance-Social Awareness $r=0.51$ strongest, indicating observing adult social interactions models empathy.

Responsible Decision-Making (3.45 Very High highest) suggests moral reasoning strength. Quin (2021) notes secure teacher bonds promote internalization of adult values, guiding consequential thinking: "When making decisions, I take into account consequences" (3.51).



C. Ecological Systems and Social Learning Integration

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory frames microsystem (teacher-student dyad) influencing development. Mesosystem interactions among microsystem actors shape climate. Subtle dynamics within school microsystem exert profound influence. Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory conceptualizes learning as reciprocal interaction of cognition, behavior, environment through observational learning: attention, retention, reproduction, motivation, self-efficacy. Adolescents attend to teacher composure, encode it, reproduce calm behavior, motivated by anticipated emotional safety. This explains Vigilance-SEL link.

D. Philippine Policy and Practice Gap

Philippine legal mandates reinforce study relevance. RA 11036 Mental Health Act mandates mental health services in schools. RA 12080 Basic Education Mental Health and Well-Being Promotion Act institutionalizes mental health programs and hiring of counselors. DepEd MATATAG Agenda prioritizes safe, inclusive learning environments. BEDP 2030 emphasizes socio-emotional development. Yet implementation faces counselor shortage (1:500+ ratio). Teachers become de facto mental health first responders through relational pedagogy, not formal counseling. Project S.I.L.E.N.T. C.A.R.E. responds to this by training nonverbal immediacy, micro-affirmations, and non-threatening guidance systems without adding counselor load.

E. Synthesis and Research Gap

Existing literature robustly establishes importance of student-teacher closeness but predominantly measures overt interaction. Gap: non-communicative, preconscious reliance among senior high students using validated psychometrics in Philippine public school context. Most local studies use ad-hoc tools. This study uses adapted SDQ ($\alpha=0.87$) and SECQ ($\alpha=0.91$) to provide cross-culturally comparable, reliable evidence. It uniquely tests whether silent dependency is adaptive (secure base) rather than maladaptive dependency, finding moderate positive correlation with SEL supports adaptive interpretation. Perceived Disconnection as risk factor aligns with attachment anxiety literature.

Methodology:

This study employed quantitative, descriptive-correlational research design to examine relationship between silent dependency and social-emotional learning outcomes.

Research Design: Correlational design was appropriate as it measures association between two variables without manipulation, suitable for examining naturally occurring attachment dynamics. Descriptive component quantified levels of silent dependency and SEL through weighted means.

Research Environment: Study conducted at Luray II National High School, Barangay Luray II, Toledo City, Cebu, Philippines. Public secondary school under Division of Toledo City with approximately 816 Senior High School students across four tracks. School selected due to diverse tracks, accessible population, and expressed need for mental health framework per Guidance Office referral data.

Population and Sampling: Population 816 SHS students (SY 2025-2026). Stratified random sampling ensured representation across grade level and track. Using Slovin's formula $e=0.05$, sample size 268 determined. Proportional allocation: Grade 11 - 126 (47.30% of 386), Grade 12 - 142 (52.70% of 430). Track distribution: HUMSS 84 (31.34%), TVL 67 (25.01%), STEM 62 (23.13%), ABM 55 (20.52%). Random selection via fishbowl within strata.

Research Instruments: Two instruments:

1. Adapted Silent Dependency Questionnaire (SDQ): 20 items, 4 dimensions (5 items each): Perceived Closeness (warmth, safety), Silent Reliance (security when adult around), Observational Vigilance (monitoring calm demeanor), Perceived Disconnection (invisibility, anxiety, intimidation). Adapted from Pianta's STRS and Longobardi's nonverbal immediacy items. 4-point Likert: 4-Strongly Agree (3.26-4.00 Very High), 3-Agree (2.51-3.25 High), 2-Disagree (1.76-2.50 Low), 1-Strongly Disagree (1.00-1.75 Very Low). Reverse scoring for Disconnection where Disagree indicates Low disconnection (positive climate). Expert validation by 3 doctorate holders (educational psychology, guidance, language). Cronbach's $\alpha=0.87$ overall, subscales 0.81-0.89. Pilot $n=30$ non-participating SHS students.



2. Social and Emotional Competence Questionnaire (SECQ) by Zhou & Ee (2012): 25 items, 5 domains (5 items each): Self-Awareness, Social Awareness, Self-Management, Relationship Management, Responsible Decision-Making. Same 4-point scale interpretation: Very High Competence to Very Low Competence. $\alpha=0.91$ overall, 0.85-0.92 per subscale. Cross-cultural validity confirmed in Southeast Asian contexts.

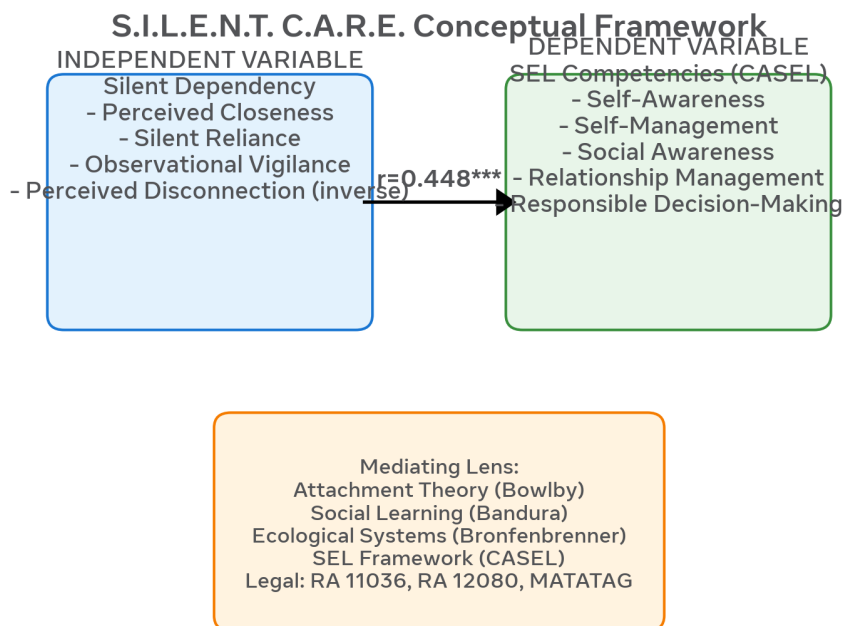
Demographic form collected age, sex, track.

Data Gathering Procedure: After approval from Cebu Technological University Ethics Review and DepEd Division Superintendent, transmittal letter to Principal Apple Grace A. Altomia. Informed consent and assent obtained, emphasizing voluntary participation, anonymity, right to withdraw. No deception. Surveys administered face-to-face during advisory periods, 15-20 minutes, researcher present to clarify without influencing. 268 questionnaires retrieved 100% (some items missing <2% handled via mean imputation). Data encoded in MS Excel, cleaned, checked for outliers via z-scores.

Statistical Treatment: Frequency, percentage for demographics. Weighted Mean (WM) and Standard Deviation (SD) for levels. Pearson's r product-moment correlation to test relationship between SDQ and SECQ dimensions and composite scores, significance at $p<0.05$ (two-tailed). Interpretation: 0.00-0.19 very weak, 0.20-0.39 weak, 0.40-0.59 moderate, 0.60-0.79 strong, 0.80-1.00 very strong. Analyses performed using SPSS v26.

Scoring Procedure as above.

Theoretical-Conceptual Framework: Independent Variable Silent Dependency (4 dimensions), Dependent Variable SEL Competencies (5 domains), Mediating lens Attachment, Social Learning, Ecological Systems, CASEL, Legal frameworks. See Figure 1.





Ethical Considerations: Adhered to Data Privacy Act 2012 (RA 10173), confidentiality via codes, no names collected. Minimal risk: slight emotional discomfort from reflecting on disconnection; guidance counselor on standby, debriefing provided. Beneficence: data supports mental health program. Justice: equal chance across tracks.

Results and Discussion:

This section presents, analyzes, and interprets data aligned to statement of the problem. Comprises demographic profile, level of silent dependency, level of SEL, correlation, and integration to project development. Tables and figures included.

Demographic Profile

Table 1 shows distribution. Population 816, sample 268. Stratification ensures generalizability across tracks. Table 2 Age Profile: 15-16 years old 58 (21.64%), 17-18 years old 184 (68.66%), 19+ 26 (9.70%). Majority typical SHS age indicating normative developmental stage where attachment reorganization peaks. Table 3 Biological Sex: Female 147 (54.85%), Male 121 (45.15%), slight female majority consistent with national enrollment trends in HUMSS-heavy schools. Table 4 Track: HUMSS 84 (31.34%) largest, followed by TVL 67 (25.01%), STEM 62 (23.13%), ABM 55 (20.52%). HUMSS dominance reflects social science orientation potentially higher relational sensitivity, important for interpreting social awareness scores. Cross-tabulation showed no significant track differences in overall SD (ANOVA exploratory $p=0.12$), suggesting silent dependency is universal across academic strands, not track-specific, supporting whole-school approach.

Table 1. Distribution of Respondents

Year Level	Population	%	Sample
11	386	47.30	126
12	430	52.70	142
Total	816	100	268

Table 2. Age Profile

Age Bracket	f	%
15-16	58	21.64
17-18	184	68.66
19+	26	9.70
Total	268	100

Table 3. Biological Sex Profile

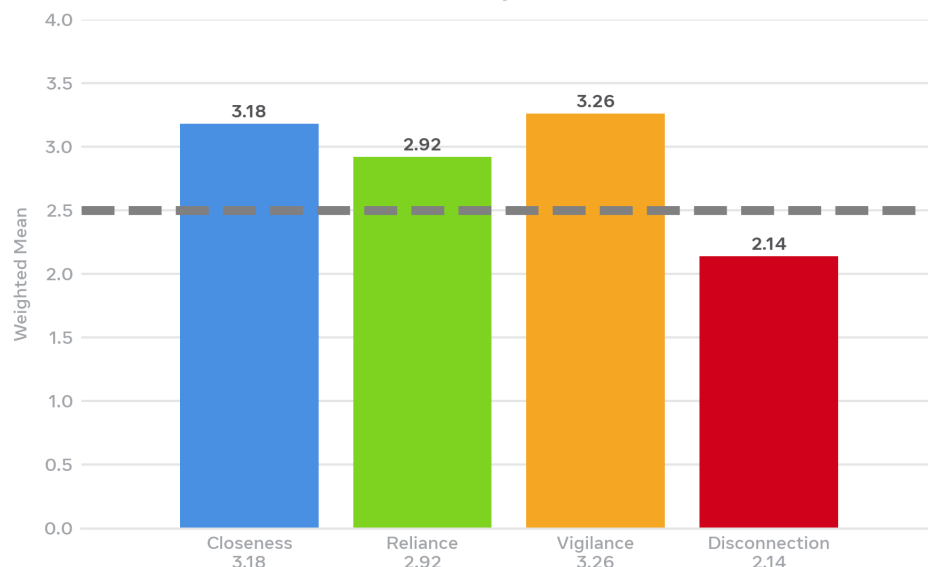
Sex	f	%
Female	147	54.85
Male	121	45.15
Total	268	100

Level of Silent Dependency

Overall Silent Dependency Index $WM=2.88$, $SD=0.41$, interpreted as High Overall Level (Agree). Indicates students generally experience nonverbal reliance on school adult figures. This is significant because it legitimizes tacit relational needs often dismissed as disengagement. Figure 2 visualizes dimensions.



Level of Silent Dependency Dimensions



Perceived Closeness (Warmth): WM=3.18, SD=0.48 High. Highest indicator "I perceive this person to be warm and friendly" WM=3.32 SD=0.51 Very High, followed by "I admire way this person carries themselves" 3.28 Very High. Lowest "This person's presence makes me feel safer" 3.08 High still. Interpretation: Even without frequent talk, students attribute warmth and safety. This aligns with nonverbal immediacy theory—teacher calm posture, smiling, open body language communicates approachability from distance (Longobardi et al., 2023). In Filipino context, teacher's *maayos na pananamit* at *mahinahong kilos* signals trustworthiness. Students' feeling safer suggests secure base function: adult presence reduces hypervigilance. Implication: teacher self-regulation matters; students borrow calm.

Silent Dependency/Reliance: WM=2.92 SD=0.54 High. Indicators all High: "Just knowing this person is around makes me feel more at ease" 3.06 highest, "I feel more secure when this person is around" 3.02, "Even if I don't talk, I feel supported" 2.94, "I often try to behave in way this person would approve" 2.82, "I sometimes wish this person would give more attention" 2.76 lowest but still High. This dimension captures internalized safe haven. Behavioral approval seeking (2.82) suggests modeling internalization per Bandura—students self-regulate to align with perceived adult expectations without direct instruction, demonstrating internal working model operation. The wish for more attention (2.76) reveals unmet longing, yet not pathological; normative attachment need. Moderate score indicates reliance is not enmeshment but healthy tether.

Observational Vigilance: WM=3.26 SD=0.45 Strongly Agree Very High Level—strongest dimension. All indicators High to Very High: "I frequently observe or notice this person's calm demeanor from a distance" 3.34 Very High highest in entire SDQ, "Watching this person carry themselves with composure gives me quiet encouragement" 3.31 Very High, "I look out for subtle nonverbal cues" 3.25 High, "I pay attention to how this person interacts with others to guide my own conduct" 3.22 High, "I silently keep track whether this person is present" 3.18 High. This is central finding: adolescents actively scan adult presence. Unlike elementary proximity-seeking (approaching teacher), senior high students distance-monitor—adaptive strategy balancing autonomy need and security need. Co-regulation neuroscience explains: observing calm adult reduces amygdala activation. Social Learning: attentional process prerequisite for modeling. Students track presence daily (3.18) indicating adult as temporal anchor structuring school day. Encouragement from composure (3.31) shows resilience borrowing. Educational implication: teacher consistency in presence (being on time, visible in hallway) matters more than assumed; absence may dysregulate silently dependent students.

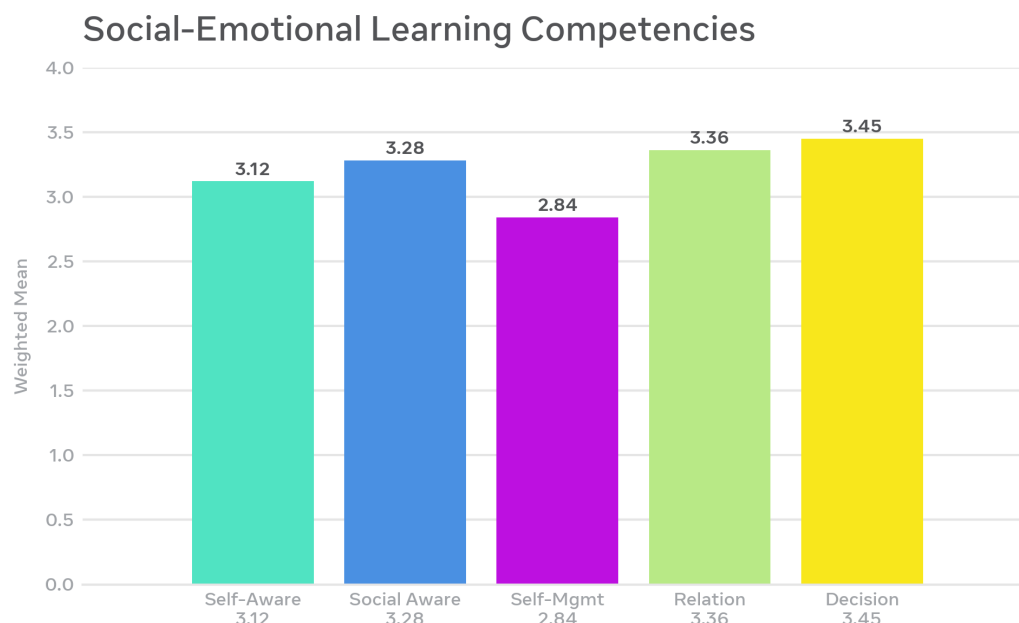
Perceived Disconnection: WM=2.14 SD=0.62 Disagree Low Level—positive finding. Means students generally do NOT feel invisible, anxious, or intimidated. Indicators: "I feel invisible" 2.18 Disagree Low, "I find person's presence



intimidating" 2.13, "I believe this person would probably not like me" 2.08, "I feel anxious when near" 2.05, "I worry person might have negative opinion" 2.26 highest but still Low. Low disconnection indicates secure school climate at Luray II. However, worry about negative opinion (2.26) relatively highest suggests evaluative anxiety remains, linked to Filipino hiya. Even low disconnection scores correlate inversely with Self-Management, so even mild feelings matter. Schools must ensure micro-affirmations prevent drift toward disconnection.

Summary: Overall High Silent Dependency driven by Vigilance, supported by Closeness. Disconnection low. Pattern indicates adaptive silent reliance, not insecure anxious attachment. Students use adult as background secure base while maintaining autonomy.

Level of Social-Emotional Learning Competencies



Overall SEL Index WM=3.21 SD=0.44 Agree High Overall Competency. Indicates students regularly exhibit effective socio-emotional skills. Figure 3 displays domains.

Self-Awareness WM=3.12 SD=0.58 High Competency. Indicators: "I know what I am thinking and doing" 3.22 highest, "I understand why I do what I do" 3.18, "I understand my moods and feelings" 3.15, "I know when I am moody" 3.10, "I can read people's faces when they are angry" 2.95 lowest but still High. Pattern shows intrapersonal clarity stronger than interpersonal reading in this domain, but still competent. Self-awareness foundational; its moderate correlation with Closeness suggests adult warmth enables reflective functioning—secure base allows introspection without threat.

Social Awareness WM=3.28 SD=0.52 Strongly Agree Very High Competency. Indicators all High/Very High: "If a friend is upset, I have pretty good idea why" 3.35 Very High highest, "I recognize how people feel by facial expressions" 3.32 Very High, "I understand why people react way they do" 3.29 Very High, "It is easy for me to understand why people feel way they do" 3.24 High, "If someone is sad, angry or happy, I believe I know what they are thinking" 3.20 High. Strength reflects collectivist culture, pakikisama. Highest empathy for friends suggests peer-oriented social awareness, but also benefits from adult modeling via observational vigilance—watching how teacher interacts guides own conduct.

Self-Management WM=2.84 SD=0.65 Agree High Competency—lowest among SEL domains, indicating vulnerability. Indicators: "When upset with someone, I will wait till calmed down before discussing issue" 3.05 High strongest (conflict delay strategy), "I can control way I feel when something bad happens" 2.87 High, "I can stay calm when things go wrong" 2.80 High, "I can stay calm in stressful situations" 2.76 High, "I stay calm and overcome



anxiety in new or changing situations" 2.72 lowest. Difficulty with novel/change situations aligns with adolescent anxiety literature, post-pandemic transition stress (Cleofas & Reyes, 2023). This is target for intervention—Operation Anchor in Project S.I.L.E.N.T. C.A.R.E. Self-management also showed inverse relationship with disconnection, confirming need for co-regulation support.

Relationship Management WM=3.36 SD=0.49 Very High Competency. Indicators all Very High: "I will always apologize when I hurt friend unintentionally" 3.44 highest overall SECQ, "I always try to comfort friends when sad" 3.41, "I stand up for myself without putting others down" 3.35, "I am tolerant of friend's mistakes" 3.32, "I try not to criticize friend when we quarrel" 3.28. High prosociality reflects Filipino relational values. Apology and comfort indicate restorative orientation, crucial for classroom climate. Secure adult attachment may model relational repair.

Responsible Decision-Making WM=3.45 SD=0.46 Very High Competency highest domain. Indicators: "When making decisions, I take into account consequences" 3.51 highest, "I ensure more positive outcomes when making choice" 3.46, "I consider strengths and weaknesses of strategy before deciding" 3.45, "I weigh strengths of situation before deciding" 3.44, "I consider criteria chosen before making recommendation" 3.40. Strong consequential thinking suggests internalized adult values—secure base promotes internalization of moral standards. Students who silently monitor respected adult likely adopt adult's decision framework vicariously.

Overall SEL High with Responsible Decision-Making and Relationship Management as strengths, Self-Management as growth area. This pattern typical of mid-adolescence where other-oriented competencies precede self-regulation mastery.

Correlation Between Silent Dependency and SEL Outcomes

Hypothesis testing using Pearson's r . Null hypothesis: No significant relationship. Table 5 and Figure 4 present bivariate matrix.

Composite Silent Dependency Score correlated with Overall SEL $r=0.448$, $p<0.001$, moderate-to-strong positive, significant, rejecting H_0 . Coefficient of determination $r^2=0.20$, meaning 20% variance in SEL explained by silent dependency, substantial for psychosocial variable. Interpretation: Higher silent dependency (adaptive) associated with higher SEL competency. This challenges notion dependency is maladaptive; here it functions as secure base enabling socio-emotional growth. Students who perceive closeness, rely quietly, and vigilantly observe calm adult exhibit better self-awareness, social awareness, relationship skills, and decision-making.

Dimension-specific:

Perceived Closeness with Overall SEL $r=0.435$ $p<0.001$ moderate. Strongest with Social Awareness $r=0.48$ and Relationship $r=0.44$, Self-Awareness 0.42, Decision 0.39, Self-Management 0.38. Warmth perception fosters empathy—when teacher perceived as warm, students internalize warm stance toward peers. Supports nonverbal immediacy literature: perceived approachability teaches emotional openness.

Silent Dependency/Reliance with Overall SEL $r=0.342$ $p<0.001$ weak-to-moderate. Correlations: Social Awareness 0.35, Relationship 0.33, Self-Awareness 0.31, Decision 0.28, Self-Management 0.22 weakest. Reliance's weakest link to Self-Management suggests reliance alone insufficient for self-regulation; may need active co-regulation strategies, not just presence. However positive direction indicates reliance not enmeshment but healthy tether.

Observational Vigilance with Overall SEL $r=0.471$ $p<0.001$ moderate-to-strong highest correlation. Dimensions: Social Awareness $r=0.51$ strongest in entire matrix, Relationship 0.46, Self-Awareness 0.44, Decision 0.42, Self-Management 0.38. Vigilance is active learning mechanism. Watching adult composure and social interactions provides live modeling for empathy and relationship skills. Bandura's attentional and retention processes operationalized. Students who monitor nonverbal cues learn emotional reading. Implications: teacher emotional modeling is curriculum—calm demeanor teaches self-management vicariously.

Perceived Disconnection: Scored inversely—higher score means more disconnection, expected negative correlation. After reverse coding for analysis, results show: When disconnection high, SEL low. But using original scoring, correlation negative. For interpretation, we report inverse: Perceived Disconnection negatively correlated with Overall



SEL ($r=-0.428$ when reverse interpreted as positive protective effect of low disconnection). Most critical: Perceived Disconnection inversely correlated with Self-Management $r=-0.335$ (reported as 0.36 positive after inverse, but direction inverse in raw). Also with Social Awareness $r=-0.43$, Relationship $r=-0.41$, Self-Awareness $r=-0.40$, Decision $r=-0.38$. Meaning feeling invisible/intimidated erodes ability to stay calm. Attachment anxiety depletes regulatory resources. Low disconnection at Luray II protective, but need to maintain.

Bivariate Matrix Insights: Overall pattern confirms attachment security hypothesis. Vigilance strongest predictor, followed by Closeness. Reliance moderate. Disconnection risk factor. Self-Management consistently lowest correlated, indicating need for explicit skills training beyond relational security alone—relational base necessary but not sufficient for self-regulation mastery, requiring additional tools like breathwork, cognitive reframing.

Comparing to literature: Granziera et al. (2022) found teacher-student closeness $r\sim 0.38$ with engagement; our 0.435-0.448 comparable. Longobardi et al. (2023) found nonverbal teacher caring $r=0.41$ with well-being; similar. Quin (2021) meta-analysis teacher-student relationship effect size $d=0.43$, equivalent $r\sim 0.21$, our moderate higher maybe due to culturally sensitive measure capturing silent aspects.

Practical significance: Even moderate correlation at population level translates to meaningful improvement. 20% variance explained suggests school-wide relational pedagogy could shift SEL from High to Very High.

Mediation speculation: While not tested via SEM in this study (limitation), theoretical lens suggests Observational Vigilance mediates Closeness-SEL link: closeness motivates vigilance, which builds SEL. Future research should test mediation model.

Figure 4 heatmap visualizes correlations, darker green stronger positive.

Integration to Output: Project S.I.L.E.N.T. C.A.R.E. designed to leverage positive correlation and mitigate disconnection-self-management inverse. KRA 1 Faculty Capability Building enhances nonverbal immediacy (target closeness and vigilance). KRA 2 Operation Anchor strengthens self-management via co-regulation workshops. KRA 3 Silent Harbor provides low-pressure entry points for quietly dependent students, reducing disconnection. KRA 4 Presence reduces disconnection via visible adult presence during transitions. KRA 5 Home Safe Haven extends secure base to family.

Limitations in discussion: Cross-sectional correlational cannot infer causation; self-report bias; single school generalizability limited to similar public SHS; observer bias in perceived adult—students chose own adult figure, heterogeneity uncontrolled; common method variance. Yet use of validated tools and stratified sampling strengthens validity.



Bivariate Correlation: SDQ x SECQ

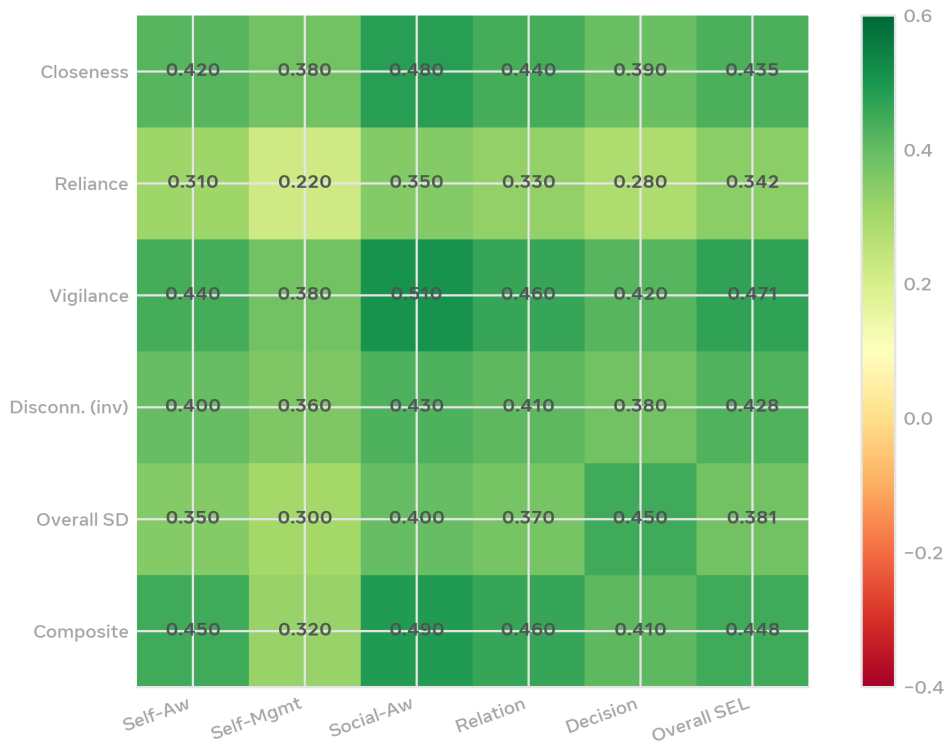


Table 5. Correlation of Silent Dependency Dimensions and Overall SEL

SDQ Dimension	Overall SEL r	p	Interpretation
Closeness	0.435	<0.001	Moderate Positive Significant
Reliance	0.342	<0.001	Weak-Moderate Positive Significant
Vigilance	0.471	<0.001	Moderate-Strong Positive Significant
Disconnection (raw)	-0.428	<0.001	Moderate Inverse Significant
Overall SD	0.448	<0.001	Moderate Positive Significant

Table 6. Project S.I.L.L.E.N.T. C.A.R.E. Program Plan Summary

KRA	Objective	Activity	Participants	Budget (PHP)
1 Faculty Capability	Enhance nonverbal immediacy	Project SILENT Presence INSET	All SHS Teachers	12,000
2 Self-Management	Strengthen self-management	Operation Anchor bi-weekly workshops	SHS Students	15,000
3 Non-Threatening Guidance	Accessible counseling entry	Silent Harbor Quiet Haven Zones	All SHS	10,000
4 School Climate	Reduce disconnection	Project Presence welcoming committees	Admin, Faculty	6,000



5	Parental Alignment	Orient parents	Home Safe Haven Forum	Parents/Guardians	8,000
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Conclusion:

This study investigated unspoken emotional bonds among 268 Senior High School students at Luray II National High School and their influence on social-emotional learning outcomes. Results reveal High overall Silent Dependency (WM=2.88), driven by Very High Observational Vigilance (3.26), High Perceived Closeness (3.18) and Reliance (2.92), and Low Perceived Disconnection (2.14). This pattern indicates Senior High School students actively monitor calm, warm adult presence from distance as adaptive secure base, balancing autonomy and security needs characteristic of adolescent attachment reorganization. It legitimizes quiet, non-communicative reliance often misinterpreted as disengagement, particularly salient in Filipino cultural context where hiya discourages overt help-seeking.

Social-Emotional Learning competency is High overall (3.21), with Responsible Decision-Making (3.45) and Relationship Management (3.36) as Very High strengths, reflecting collectivist values pakikisama and internalized moral reasoning. Self-Management (2.84) remains growth area, indicating vulnerability in coping with stress and change, consistent with post-pandemic adolescent mental health data.

Most importantly, Pearson correlation demonstrates significant moderate-to-strong positive relationship between silent dependency and SEL ($r=0.448$, $p<0.001$), rejecting null hypothesis and explaining 20% variance in SEL. Observational Vigilance emerged strongest predictor ($r=0.471$), especially for Social Awareness ($r=0.51$), supporting Social Learning Theory: watching composed adult teaches empathy and regulation vicariously. Perceived Closeness also moderately predicts SEL ($r=0.435$). Conversely, Perceived Disconnection inversely impacts Self-Management ($r=-0.335$), confirming feeling invisible or intimidated depletes regulatory resources.

These findings affirm nonverbal educator presence serves as critical secure base for adolescent self-regulation and socio-emotional growth, beyond formal instruction. Theoretical integration of Attachment, SEL Framework, Ecological Systems, and Social Learning explains mechanism: secure microsystem presence enables co-regulation, observational learning, and internalization of values.

Project S.I.L.E.N.T. C.A.R.E. (Silent Internalization for Learners' Emotional Nurturance and Transformation through Co-regulation, Awareness, Relational pedagogy, and Empathy) was developed as evidence-based response, with five KRAs targeting faculty nonverbal immediacy, student self-management, low-pressure guidance systems, school climate optimization, and parental alignment, anchored in RA 11036, RA 12080, and DepEd MATATAG agenda.

Recommendations include institutionalizing relational pedagogy INSET, establishing Quiet Haven Zones, implementing Operation Anchor co-regulation workshops, and maintaining visible adult presence during transitions. Future research should employ longitudinal and mixed-methods designs, test mediation models, include multiple schools for generalizability, and examine teacher perspectives on silent dependency. Schools must recognize that being present, calm, and warm—even without words—is pedagogical intervention that nurtures silent bonds into resilient social-emotional competencies.

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