

Perspectives of Students, Parents, and Teachers on Social-Emotional Learning in Afar, Ethiopia

An ethnographical research in understanding the Afar culture to contribute to the contextualization of the SEL programme of Edukans in primary education

Judith Mariska Pietersma | 6550495 | judithpietersma30@hotmail.com

Utrecht University | Master's programme Youth, Education & Society

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Dr. Paul Baar (1st supervisor)

Dr. Charlotte Vissenberg (2nd supervisor)

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“In the future [children] will gain self-confidence to express what they want. If that improves, they may tackle the problems behind the community, for example the forced marriage”

- Primary school teacher, Afar, Ethiopia

Abstract

The aim of this study was to gain insight in the perspectives of Afar people in Ethiopia on social-emotional learning and the applicability of the Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) programme of Edukans in this area. In Afar, many children don't go to school, and there are a lot of cultural challenges regarding social-emotional behaviour. In total, 10 primary school children, 3 parents, 14 primary school teachers and 1 primary school director were interviewed, using in-depth interview techniques. A qualitative analysis was carried out. It was found that the Afar culture has unique customs and norms, like sharing and negotiating. They mostly value social skills, and emotions ought not to be expressed. The variety of skills they value fits with Western models regarding social-emotional learning. However, the view of the Afar on SEL fits most with a collectivistic culture. The SEL programme is valued in Afar. Therefore, it is important that the SEL programme is adapted to cultural sensitive norms and the diverse living styles in Afar.

Key words: Afar, social-emotional learning, cultural sensitivity

Samenvatting

Het doel van deze studie was inzicht te verkrijgen in de perspectieven van het Afar-volk in Ethiopië op sociaal-emotioneel leren, en in de toepasbaarheid van het Sociaal-Emotioneel Leren (SEL) programma van Edukans in dit gebied. Veel kinderen in Afar gaan niet naar school, en er bestaan veel culturele problemen betreffende sociaal-emotioneel gedrag. In totaal zijn 10 basisschoolleerlingen, 3 ouders, 14 basisschoolleerkrachten en 1 basisschooldirecteur geïnterviewd, door middel van diepte-interviews. Er is een kwalitatieve analyse gedaan. Resultaten laten zien dat de Afar cultuur unieke normen en gebruiken kent. De Afar hechten de meeste waarde aan sociale vaardigheden, emoties worden liever niet geuit. De verscheidenheid aan vaardigheden die zij waarderen past bij Westerse modellen met betrekking tot sociaal-emotioneel leren. De perspectieven van de Afar op SEL passen echter het meest bij een collectivistische cultuur. Het SEL programma wordt gewaardeerd in Afar. Daarom is het belangrijk dat het SEL programma is aangepast aan cultureel gevoelige normen en aan de verschillende leefstijlen in Afar.

Sleutelwoorden: Afar, sociaal-emotioneel leren, culturele sensitiviteit

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Worldwide there is a growing interest in social-emotional learning among parents, educators and policymakers (Jones & Doolittle, 2017). Because of growing socio-economic challenges, including unemployment, declining civic engagement and environmental changes, children and youth need a variety of life skills to have a good future (OECD, 2015). Next to cognitive competencies, children should learn personal and social skills to be successful in life (Greenberg, Domitrovich, Weissberg, & Durlak, 2017). These social-emotional skills contain the abilities to know and regulate one's emotions, to maintain healthy relationships with others, and to cope with everyday challenges. Social-emotional learning can improve children's integrate thinking, emotion regulation and desirable behaviour (Jones & Doolittle, 2017). Also, when children are able to have positive attitudes and behaviours towards themselves, others and the school, academic performances will increase. This linkage is mainly caused by executive control, well-being and coping, and student involvement, which all increases when social-emotional skills increase (Corcoran & Slavin, 2016).

One of the most used theories that describes social-emotional learning in the Western world is the model of the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) (2015). This model states that there are five core competencies according to social-emotional learning: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making. Self-awareness means that children are aware of their own strengths, thoughts and emotions. Self-management means that children are able to regulate their emotions and control their impulses. Social awareness means that children learn to respect each other and show empathy. Relationship skills consist of communication skills and the ability to form and maintain friendships. Responsible decision-making signifies the skills to show appropriate behaviour and to solve problems (CASEL, 2015). Other theories about social-emotional learning use different concepts, but the long-term objectives are similar (Jones & Doolittle, 2017). CASEL uses an expanded, evidence-based and ecological approach to describe social-emotional learning. That is why in this study the model of CASEL (2015) will be used.

Worldwide there are many interventions that try to improve social-emotional skills in schoolchildren. To make sure these programmes are effective, years of research is needed (Corcoran & Slavin, 2016). Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, and Schellinger (2011) did a meta-analysis with 213 social-emotional learning interventions from kindergarten to high school. They found that these interventions significantly improved social-emotional skills,

attitudes and positive behaviour in children. Also, academic performance increased. Another meta-analysis carried out by Taylor, Oberle, Durlak and Weissberg (2017) also indicates that social-emotional learning programmes at school have a positive effect on social-emotional skills, attitudes, and indicators of well-being. This meta-analysis included 82 schools, from kindergarten to high school. However, the programme of Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) didn't result in improvements in social-emotional learning in secondary school children (Humphrey, Lendrum, & Wigelsworth, 2010). They found many inconsistencies between their samples across the United Kingdom. The schools didn't always have the time, skills or facilities to implement the programme well. This indicates that it is important to keep a close eye the implementation of programmes in schools.

Cultural sensitivity and contextualization

In contrast to the amount of research on Western interventions targeting social-emotional learning, research on non-Western interventions is still lacking. This happens not only in the educational field, but in all possible research areas. No less than 96% of all samples in research comes from Western countries, by which researchers often try to generalize their results (Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010). It is surprising that Western ideas are in favour when it comes to research, because the Western population covers only 12% of the world's population. Henrich and colleagues (2010) state in their research that the Western population is unusual compared to the rest of the world, in terms of lifestyle and resources. For example, research states that many Western theories about child rearing practices do not fit with for example the African view of childhood (Ansell, 2017).

The different needs, norms and values of populations all over the world indicate that research, and especially interventions that try to change behaviour or perceptions, should not lean on Western samples only (Henrich et al., 2010). Implementing a programme of Western origin in a non-Western society can even be harmful (Savina & Wan, 2017). When it comes to social-emotional learning, it is important to adapt those interventions to different societies and minority groups, because perspectives on social interactions and emotions differ between cultures. For example, in China, shyness is seen as positive behaviour, while in Western societies, assertive behaviour is valued more (Rubin, 1998). Cultural adaptation can be done by investigating the cultural sensitivity of social-emotional learning programmes. The definition of cultural sensitivity according to Foronda (2008) contains five key concepts. First, knowledge about cultural differences and values is necessary for, among others, quality education. Second, consideration of someone's background, language and beliefs is important, and also the distinction between an individual or group identity. This can also be

referred to as the distinction between individualistic and collectivistic cultures (Savina & Wan, 2017). Third, understanding the effects and importance of someone's values is a key for cultural sensitivity. Fourth, respecting cultural differences is a fundamental component of cultural sensitivity. Last, tailoring, or adaptation, must take place to meet someone's needs and bring cultural sensitivity into practice (Foronda, 2008). These five key concepts are important for making interventions work in different contexts.

The culture and context of the Afar

All over the world, minority groups in underdeveloped countries have to deal with global changes in economics, education and lifestyle (Ansell, 2017). One of these minority groups is the Afar in Ethiopia, that covers 4% of the nation's population (Nations Encyclopaedia, n.d.). The Afar people originally live in Ethiopia, Eritrea and Djibouti (World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples, 2018). They herd their own livestock and are overall Sunni Muslim. They have to survive in the heat of the desert, with little water or other basic life resources. The pastoralists move twice a year, and live in dome-shaped tents made of animal skin. Their cattle mostly consist of camels, goats and cows. Even small children help with the herding of the cattle. Many of them don't go to school. As in every other East-African country (Carr-Hill & Peart, 2005), the number of Afar nomad children that go to primary education is below the national average. Furthermore, students drop out of school due to high distance and lack of schools and teachers (Woldab, 2012). Many teachers are not qualified to teach. This makes the Afar a vulnerable group of people, that gets little support from the government. Moreover, for over five years now, many Eritrean Afar nomads fled their country and ended up in refugee camps in Ethiopia (ECHO, 2018). This makes them even more vulnerable than the Afar nomads of Ethiopia.

Social-emotional learning in this study

To improve the living conditions and the educational situation for children in Afar, several international organizations and national non-governmental organisations (NGO's) are active in the region. For example, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Agency for Refugee and Returnee Affairs (ARRA) and Save the Children. From the Netherlands, Edukans is active in Ethiopia. Edukans is an NGO that is active in several countries across the world, and her mission is to improve education and make it assessible for every child. In Ethiopia, Edukans provides help in and around the refugee camps of Afar by doing research and improving the educational conditions in schools (<https://www.edukans.org>). In Ethiopia, Edukans works together with Development Expertise Centre (DEC), a national NGO. One of the projects that Edukans and DEC are running in

Afar is Social-Emotional Learning (SEL). Primary school children in and around the refugee camp learn during this project about emotions, social interactions and relationships, according to the model of CASEL (2015). At this point, the first pilot studies are being evaluated and Edukans plans on expanding the SEL lessons and implement them in the curriculum of the primary schools in the Afar region.

Education in combination with social-emotional learning can be the key to a better life for pastoralist and refugee children. However, as stated before, social-emotional learning interventions that are proven to be effective in the Western world are not necessarily effective in the non-Western world. To make sure the SEL programme of Edukans is effective in Afar, it is important that the specific culture of the Afar is being considered. Pastoralists are unlike any other settled folk (Woldab, 2012). Moreover, the refugee status that a part of them has now, is of big influence on their lives. DEC has provided input for contextualization in Afar, but more research has to be done about the specific situation of the Afar. With this study, insight in the cultural sensitivity and the working principles stated by Foronda (2008) can be gained for the Social-Emotional Learning programme of Edukans. This research can also be a starting point in contextualizing social-emotional learning interventions for other vulnerable minority groups.

Perspectives of Afar on social-emotional learning

For this research two research questions are formulated, based on the key aspects of cultural sensitivity (Foronda, 2008). Because knowledge about and understanding of cultural differences is important, the first research question is: *What are the perspectives of students, parents and teachers in Afar on social-emotional learning?* This stakeholder triangle is chosen because a full image of the perspectives of the Afar can be created. First, students are important stakeholders. Cultural norms and values shape a child's social development, but children also play an important part themselves. They actively select the social norms and values in activities with their peers. These peer activities and relationships with peers are important for the social development of the child (Chen & French, 2008). Second, parents are important stakeholders because they teach their children norms and values. Parenting practices differ between cultures, which indicates that also their ideas about their children's abilities and future may be different (Stewart & Bond, 2002). Finally, teachers are important because they see what children learn at school and how they express themselves, and they have to carry out the SEL lessons.

To investigate 'perspectives', Afar customs and cultural norms will be examined first. There are differences between collectivistic and individualistic cultures (Savina & Wan,

2017). Individualistic cultures value personal rights, autonomy and achievement in order to reach life satisfaction. Collectivistic cultures, on the other hand, value interpersonal relationships. Being a member of a group is part of one's identity, rather than being an individual (Savina & Wan, 2017). It is expected that the Afar have unique customs and norms, first because it is a collectivistic culture, second because they are nomads that usually grow up, marry and die in the same clan.

Second, 'perspectives' refer to the social-emotional values of the Afar. The meaning of certain behaviour or expressions differ between cultures (Rubin, 1998). Research shows that culture also plays an important role in the social-emotional development because of the rules, habits and emotional expressions used (Savina & Wan, 2017). Children's social competence and the value of certain social interactions differ between cultures. Taking initiative and acting properly in social situations are characteristics of social competence (Chen & French, 2008). In individualistic cultures, autonomy and assertive behaviour is often valued more than shy behaviour. In collectivistic cultures, on the other hand, social initiative is less valued as it may not contribute to group harmony or cohesion. To maintain this harmony, individuals are expected to set aside their personal desires and act on behalf of the whole group. Also, cultural habits regarding emotion-regulation, emotional expressions, emotional language and the role of the school and parents in emotional development differ between cultures. Research suggests that, for example, collectivistic cultures choose to keep their emotions inside for the sake of the community's harmony, while in individualistic cultures people are encouraged to show their emotions (Savina & Wan, 2017). It is expected that the Afar will have a unique look at social-emotional learning, because of the differences in values between collectivistic and individualistic cultures.

A third expectation is that the perspectives of students, parents and teachers will not entirely agree. In a Tanzanian study about the value of social-emotional competencies, the results indicated that parents and teachers valued different competencies in children (Jukes et al., 2018). An explanation can be that children need different skills in the home and at school. Further, because of global changes, children from this generation have access to other resources to get information than their parents or teachers (Ansell, 2017). Also, changing factors like politics and the educational system in Ethiopia have an influence on the lives of children. It is therefore likely to expect that children's perspectives on their selves and their future differ from the perspectives of their parents and teachers.

Applicability of SEL in Afar

Because consideration of the perspectives, respect and adaptation to cultural values is important for cultural sensitivity, the second research question is: *To what extent do the perspectives of the Afar people fit with the SEL programme of Edukans?* 'Fit' can be operationalized as whether the SEL lessons are suitable for the Afar according to their perspectives about social-emotional competencies and whether the Afar people accept the SEL lessons. The SEL programme consists of 10 to 15 lessons. Edukans trains the local teachers to implement the lessons in the existing curricula at 11 schools in Afar. The programme is designed for three different age groups: age 7 and 8 (grade 1 and 2), age 9 and 10 (grade 3 and 4) and age 11 to 14 (grade 5 to 8). This question can be answered by investigating the perceived importance of education and the SEL lessons, the perspective change of teachers after the training, and the perceived importance of social-emotional learning in Afar.

According to the cultural differences in emphasized behaviour of children between collectivistic and individualistic cultures (Rubin, 1998), it is expected that there might be differences between the Afar perspectives and the topics of the SEL programme. There is little research about variability in social-emotional characteristics of people across the world (Henrich et al., 2010). However, there appear to be similarities between populations when it comes to social-emotional skills. For example, different populations use and recognize basic facial expressions in the same way (Ekman, 1999). Therefore, it can be expected that the Afar people will accept the SEL lessons.

Method

Type of research

This research can be defined as qualitative. Qualitative research allows the researcher to make a detailed description and interpretation of events, situations, interactions and people according to nature and characteristics (Baar, 2002). This research has tried to get an insight in the lifestyle, norms and values of the Afar people. Therefore, it can also be defined as ethnographical. Ethnographical research tries to describe the lifestyle of certain people or certain cultures (Verhoeven, 2016). The insights of this study are used to write scientific and practical recommendations for interventions targeting social-emotional learning in emergency situations.

Participants

The participants were gathered from in and around the town Aysaita, in the Afar region. In total, 28 participants were interviewed. Participants were gathered by members of DEC in collaboration with the directors of the schools. Teachers and students were selected

by the fact that they were participating in the SEL programme. Parents were selected by availability at the time of the school visit. The group of students that was interviewed existed of 10 participants. They were students from the highest age group of primary school (grade 5-8). The youngest student was 11 and the oldest 19 years old ($M=14,9$). The students were collected from five schools, one in the refugee camp and four in the host community. From each school, one boy and one girl were interviewed. All students were from the Afar community. This makes them a representative sample. The group of parents that was interviewed existed of 3 parents from Parent-Teacher Associations in the schools. Two of them were male, one was female. The reason that no more parents were interviewed is that parents were usually not available or present at the schools. Due to the same reason, there were no parents from the refugee camp included. This makes the parent sample less representative and reliable. The group of teachers that was interviewed existed of 14 teachers. 9 teachers were interviewed before the SEL training of Edukans, of which 4 teachers were also interviewed after the training. Due to unavailability, the other teachers that were interviewed before the training could not do the follow-up interview. That is why an additional 5 teachers that followed the training were interviewed afterwards. From the teacher participants, 8 were male, 6 were female. In total, 4 teachers were from the refugee camp. The teachers are a representative sample because they all followed the SEL training and are going to give the SEL lessons. In addition, the school director of the Aysaita Refugee Primary School was interviewed to get a full image of the different needs of the Afar people in and around the camp. He was also aware of the SEL programme.

Instrument

To answer the research questions, in-depth interviews were used (Baar, 2002). This interview-technique allows the researcher to be flexible in formulation and the order of the questions. Perspectives and experiences can be described in detail, and sense-making can be reached during the interview. For this study, five different interview questionnaires were made (see Appendix 1). The main topics regarding the first research question were: 1) Afar customs and cultural norms (community, daily life). Interview question for teachers: "How important is the community in the Afar culture?". 2) Valued social and emotional skills (expressions, communication, friendship). Interview question for parents: "What skills do you think your children need to develop to live a good life?". The main topics regarding the second research question were: 1) Perceived value of education and SEL in Afar (educational characteristics, importance of education, added value of SEL). Interview question for teachers: "Do you think it is important for children to learn about relationships and emotions

in school for their future? Why (not)?”. 2) Perspective change on SEL of teachers (knowledge and skills gained). Interview question for teachers: “If you think back about the ideas you had about emotions, what has changed for you after the training?”. 3) The importance of SEL for Afar (acceptance, behaviour, future). Interview question for school director: “In what way do you think the SEL lessons can influence the lives of the children in Afar and the refugee camp?”

Procedure

Interviews were held with individual respondents, except from one occasion where two teachers were interviewed together due to lack of time. Teachers were interviewed at first, two weeks before the teacher training. The second teacher-interviews were conducted two to four weeks after the training. In this time, also the interviews of the students and parents were conducted. Informed consent was reached by explaining the purpose of the interview at the start (Heilbron, 2005). The participants were told that the recordings would be deleted soon after the transcription, and that they would stay anonymous. The interview questions were asked following the in-depth approach. To increase reliability, questions were probed to get a clear answer, summaries were made during the interview and participants were asked for more explanation (Baarda, De Goede, & Teunissen, 2013). Because of the language barrier, translators translated the answers of the respondents in English. In total, five translators were used. The first interviews were written down on paper in as much detail as possible. The three following sets of interviews were recorded and transcribed at a later time. This decision was made to ensure the reliability of the results. The average duration of the interviews was 20-30 minutes. Depending on the availability of transport for the participants, the interviews were held in the office of DEC and at the schools. Transportation costs were covered. The interview with the school director was held in the refugee camp, no translator was needed here.

Data analysis

A qualitative analysis was used based on Baar (2002) and Baarda and colleagues (2013). During this analysis, transcripts were fragmented, labelled and coded. The labels were given on the basis of the theoretical concepts about social-emotional learning, contextualisation and culture. This was done to guarantee construct validity. For each research question, labels were designed and eventually grouped into dimensions and core labels. During the composition of the labels, original formulations of respondents were adopted as closely as possible to ensure validity (Baar & Wubbels, 2013). Each label was coded so the original quote in the transcripts could be found again, contributing to reliability.

Results

This result section will discuss the main research findings from the qualitative data analysis described above. These findings consist of the most important labels from the analysis and corresponding quotes from participants. The findings are divided into sub-categories derived from the topics of the interview questions and analysis (see Appendix 2). The findings are distinguished according to the five sub-samples: students (ST), parents (PA), teachers interviewed before the SEL training (TB), teachers interviewed after the SEL training (TA) and the school director of the refugee primary school (SD). When there appear to be outstanding differences between participants, prevalence rates are mentioned. These prevalence rates then indicate that a statement was (almost) completely present in one group, and not (or not worth mentioning) in the other participant groups.

Perspectives of Afar on social-emotional learning

Afar customs and cultural norms. To be able to place the results of this research question into context, the Afar customs and cultural norms and values were investigated. First, community cohesion appeared to be important for the Afar. *“Community is base for everything. If there is no community, there is no service for giving”* (SD). *The connection between people and good social life* were mentioned most. *“In Afar, social rather than individual things have priority”* (5TB). This means that a collectivistic mindset is present in Afar.

About the structure of and roles within the family, participants talked mostly about the *contribution of children to the community by work and knowledge*. *“If some problems are bothering the community, I am clearly either in material or physically or in idea, I help them and I hope to share my knowledge for the community”* (1ST). Remarkable is here that many participants also specifically mentioned that *girls often help with household tasks*, like cooking, washing clothes and taking care of smaller children. *“Here the female is more, activities are more on females. More boys are in school and do less activity in the home”* (4ST). Further, it was mentioned that there is *no special upbringing of the children* and that *children are part of discussions*. Notable was also that there are differences between the rural (the nomads) and the urban (the village) areas. In the rural areas, people send their children less often to school, but they don't beat their children in comparison with the people in the urban areas.

An important custom in the Afar culture turned out to be the sharing system, called 'dagu'. Dagu means *sharing information and sharing money and goods* with everyone in the community. *“Because the dagu is also the way of transfer information for Afar. For example*

the Afar peoples, especially the pastoralist peoples, doesn't need telephone" (8TA). "I think for example when my uncle have enough money, so that is also mine. Simply he can share for me" (7TA).

Despite of the positive habits of the Afar like the sharing system, there are many challenges. *"In rural areas, when girls drop out of school, parents decide to early marriage, and then they don't finish education" (6TB). Also, circumcision and inequality of men and women are challenges in Afar. Next to this, challenging is that "they [Afar] only consider what is in their hand today, they don't think about tomorrow. If they have it today, they don't save it for tomorrow but share it" (3TB). This is also a problem for children who have poor families, like in the refugee camp:*

"The children are doing activities that may be affect their lives for their future. Especially the future of the students must be in education at this level. But, the students in the camp are doing different activities [...] At that time, they will get the money there. But their future will be broken" (SD).

Refugee children also face other challenges when it comes to daily life, such as *no access to internet and water and absence of playgrounds or other activities for children. Apart from that, it is notable that this is the only difference between the refugee children and the host community, because "they are all Afar: Eritrea, Djibouti, Ethiopia. They all have different relatives. So, they are already the same" (9TA).*

It was striking that many participants talked about changing and improving the Afar culture and community. Students often mentioned that they wanted to help their community: *"Especially in this area, early marriage is a wide problem. Especially in the rural area, the pastoralist peoples. So in the future I may learn to encourage, stop this idea" (2ST). Also, practical changes were mentioned, for example building infrastructure and helping with agriculture. Despite this, people mentioned that it will be a challenge to change the Afar culture. "Some people don't think children can change the community, but we saw it and we know they can" (8TB).*

Valued social and emotional skills. This topic is about the social-emotional skills that Afar people find most important for their children and themselves. The most striking result here is the division between men and women in their emotional expressions. It was mentioned that *men can express themselves, women can't and that girls fear talking about their problems and expressing emotions. "In males there are no such problems, due to their interest to express they are more happy, but for girls it is a challenge" (7TB). "Girls are more hidden than boys. Boys can express more freely" (8TB). However, when the participants were asked about their*

personal way of expressing emotions, there was no difference between men and women. Both equally pointed out that they either did or didn't express their emotions verbally or nonverbally. The use of *body language and facial expressions* was mentioned most by students (70% ST). The use of *vocal expressions* was mentioned most by parents and teachers (67% PA, 38% TB). This was the only difference between the stakeholders regarding social-emotional values. Almost all students said they would *express their feelings or problems first to their friends*.

Regarding the topic of social-emotional skills, results show that social skills are more broadly mentioned than emotional skills. The most important social skills for Afar children that were mentioned are: *sharing, negotiating, conflict resolution, listening, relationship skills, respecting other people, communication skills* and *asking and answering questions*. Some students pointed out that they already possess these skills. For example "*when some problems are caused, am I identify the problems [...] and simply I have negotiating systems*" (1ST). Another student said: "*If there is a problem with me, even if the problem is for him, I will forgive him. And I will ask for mercy from him*" (9ST). Emotional skills were less mentioned. The most important emotional skills for Afar children that were pointed out are: *saving skills* (for example saving money for the next day), *working/learning ethics* (for example working and studying hard) and *self-confidence*. "*Another skill is that they have to learn to save things for their own instead of spending it all in one day*" (3TB). Some teachers mentioned that *learning to express emotions will be very important* for Afar children. Another important result is that it appeared to be a *cultural norm to keep feelings inside*. Especially girls are not allowed to speak out and are therefore shy, and students are afraid to ask questions in class. "*The social culture of Afar does not allow to express emotions, especially females*" (6TB).

The *inappropriate behaviour of children* was often mentioned by parents and teachers. "*Some students insult teachers, they misbehave*" (3TB). Regarding this issue, it was mentioned that *parents and teachers should be good examples for children*. "*There are sometimes ethical issues in school, because some children misbehave or don't know how to behave properly. The way they grow up at home could be the cause of that*" (1ST). "*If the father is nice and the father is good behaviour, the student will be a good behaviours*" (3PA).

The last important result of this section is the value of friendship that all students showed. One student said: "*Friendship for me is only, not only doing when we are safe, or when we are free. Friendship is being at the hardest time, for when your friend is sick, you have to be with him*" (10ST). Another student formulated: "*If I am going in the bad way, he*

[my friend] told me I am going in the bad way. If I am in the good way, he follow me” (9ST). Other valued aspects of a good friendship are: advising and encouraging each other, understanding each other and helping each other.

Applicability of SEL in Afar

Perceived value of education and SEL in Afar. In this topic, the importance of education for Afar is discussed, as well as the importance of social-emotional learning in school. First, it is important to describe the educational characteristics of the Afar region. The results show that *“education is very important, because I think here so many peoples doesn’t learn” (7ST). Especially, multiple participants noted that “female students are not send to the school because early marriage is a thing in the rural area” (2ST). The difference between rural and urban areas was considerably. “Still now, at the rural areas, more people have not a good idea for the importance of education” (2ST). However, in the urban areas, the perceived importance of education is growing. “Before ten years ago, I think no one is understand the importance of education [...]. So at the present they are good awareness” (8TA).*

About the importance of education, it was stated that *educated people can help the Afar community to gain more knowledge and skills. Next to that, educated people can help the Afar community to develop, improve or change:*

“If some is learning the importance of education [...], because especially in the rural area, there are so many bad problems. Cultural, for example circumcision, early marriage, something, something. So it [education] is important especially for the Afar people”(2PA).

Even more often mentioned was *creating opportunities/good life for the future with education* by students and parents (60% ST, 100% PA). Students pointed out that *“students make education for future life, firstly, in the school. So without learning, they cannot get a comfortable life” (1ST). And: “School is everything [...]. And every plan starts from the school. And every activity starts from the school, so it is important for the future” (6ST). Also, education is seen as a tool to shape behaviour of students. “I think there is a wide difference between a person who learn and without learning education [...]. Because the key of shaping of the human behaviours” (3PA). The upcoming use of technology makes it easier to get information. This is different in the refugee camp:*

“They [refugee children] may be not familiar for different things. Because, in there [host community], there is television, internet access, different things. There, the music, different things. In here, there is nothing, there is no internet, there is no access” (SD).

All participants valued social-emotional learning in school. The most mentioned profits of social-emotional learning were: *SEL gives confidence to students, through SEL children can express themselves without fear and SEL is important for girls because girls don't express. "Through this education it may help to enhance students' expression, and girls' motivation to express themselves"* (5TB). Also, it was mentioned by teachers that *expressing emotions can increase educational outcomes:*

"If children can practice to express their emotions properly, this enhances their understanding of the lessons. Now, some students, whether they understand the questions or not, they don't answer in class. So the teacher doesn't know if they understand the lesson, and it is then difficult to help them further" (1TB).

It was also explicitly mentioned that *social-emotional skills are important for Afar community development/change*, for example: *"In the future they will gain self-confidence to express what they want. If that improves, they may tackle the problems behind the community, for example the forced marriage"* (7TB). Next to that, the importance of SEL was mentioned explicitly for the Afar children: *"And it is also important for their future plan. Because SEL topics, every SEL topics are important for every next step [in the future]"* (2TA).

When it comes to SEL, the school director of the refugee camp pointed out that refugee children have an advantage, because:

"They are free from anything. Because their background is free, when you teach them they may accept you. But when you go to the host community, they will not accept.

"Oh, I already know this, I know about..." they may say" (SD).

The refugee children are *"free like, white paper [...], their minds are fresh"* (SD). Most of the benefits that were mentioned for the host community, were also mentioned explicitly for the refugee children. For example: *"It will be influence of the students of refugee, because here in community, students, children didn't have enough to ask, to ask the friends, to ask fathers, and to talk about themselves [...] The first include the confidence"* (9TA). Also, it was mentioned that *"in generally, when they learn the SEL, it will help them to self-confidence, speech, and different things. Because, Afar and from refugee they are already one [...] The same improvement will be seen in the host community"* (9TA). But there were also important aspects that were only mentioned for the refugee children. *"It [SEL] will be influence of the students of refugee, because [...] they have more influence about society. They will have good relationship with the community. So all things I think for the future"* (9TA). *"When they learn the SEL, we have the info that the students have the objective, they are learning, they will have a plan. To that things it will be good for them"* (9TA).

Perspective change on SEL in teachers. Because teachers were interviewed twice, the assumed perspective change on social-emotional learning could be measured. Many teachers mentioned similar outcomes, like “*before I had little knowledge about social and emotional learning. But after the training, especially for us, it is changing from my life, my day to day life*” (1TA). Also, *change in understanding and sharing feelings with students* was mentioned, as well as *change in communication and sharing information* and *change in planning skills*. Teachers stated that “*before the training, I don’t care about some things, but after the training I consider for every activity with a plan*” (7TA). Another important finding is that teachers changed their *teaching methods*, which they can use for other subjects. “*Before I never to be used in the class social-emotional learning. Simply writing, and simply lecture method. [...] I use the energizing method. After the training*” (4TA).

Because of the SEL training and lessons, teachers state that they learned new things about social-emotional learning. First, they learned various social and emotional skills, like “*I express it freely, without being afraid. So I can express my feelings clearly*” (1TA). And: “*Most valuable things, to controlling people, and to respect their idea, and to respect when they are anger*” (9TA). Also, they learned other skills like *building relationships with students* and *problem solving mechanisms*. “*To [...] understand the needs, what the students need. [...] So how to solve the students’ problems [...], how to close with students*” (2TA). **The importance of SEL for Afar.** Teachers mentioned that the SEL lessons would be very important for the Afar community, because:

“*The lesson is important for Afar, especially for Afar children, because all students are, when you see, all students are out of the class. So when you just learn these topics, simply the student to, the increase of the learning, or the interest of the students is high*” (5TA).

Also:

“*I think important for especially the Afar peoples. Because here is early marriage, or also the one is 60 years old, the other one is 15. Big difference, that is more here. So I think it is important for Afar people especially*” (7TA).

Especially, the *importance of SEL for pastoralist people* was mentioned:

“*It is very important, because this is a rural area, they are pastoralist people, mobile people. And their behaviour is so difficult. Because, there is not a kind of other information they have. So, this course is the main important for them, because it is the shaping of the behaviour*” (3TA).

Regarding the acceptance of SEL by the Afar, many participants mentioned that the Afar would be *open and ready to learn* and that *Afar community/parents will accept SEL*. “*When we learn in the class about circumcision, in the class, if simply they talk for their parents, so their parents will I think be open and understand the ideas*” (6TA). “*I think the peoples are simply accept it. Because it is the key, the key for future. Because [...] it is additional information for them. Simply, I think they will accept when students are tell them*” (4TA). However, teachers mentioned that *SEL is a very new concept for the Afar*. “*Before the training, no one is to be speak like this topics especially*” (7TA). And that *not everyone understands the content and the importance*. One teacher stated: “*I am still teaching them [the community]. Because I think it is new. [...] Some peoples are understand, some persons are also, still now they are confused*” (7TA).

Discussion

The aim of this study was to gain insight in the perspectives of Afar people in Ethiopia on social-emotional learning and the applicability of the Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) programme of Edukans in this area. In this section the two research questions will be answered, on the base of the models of CASEL (2015) and Foronda (2008). After that, a general conclusion will be made and limitations and implications will be explained.

Perspectives of Afar on social-emotional learning

The finding that the perspectives of students, parents and teachers do not differ is against the expectations and the literature (Jukes et al., 2018). However, most questions about the importance of SEL were asked only to parents and teachers. Also, there were only 3 parents, who were active in the school board, which indicates that they would likely have similar ideas as the teachers. It is clear, though, that the perspectives of the Afar differ from individualistic approaches on social-emotional learning. According to the literature, the distinction in value between social and emotional skills is not in line with social-emotional learning, because both skills ought to be equally important. Namely, social and emotional skills together can have a positive influence on emotion regulation, behaviour and educational outcomes (Greenberg et al., 2017). Also, social-emotional learning is focussed on both group cohesion and individual skills (CASEL, 2015), while individual skills are less present in the values of the Afar people. This means that these findings are in line with the expectations regarding differences in valued social-emotional skills between the Afar and Western ideas (Rubin, 1998). This also matches with literature regarding this topic, because research indicates that Western ideas can't be adopted automatically by non-Western societies (Henrich et al., 2010). The values of the Afar fit with a collectivistic culture, where social

cohesion and being part of a group is important (Savina & Wan, 2017). Also, they fit with pastoralist cultures that herd cattle and farm, for example in the free upbringing of children (Hewlett, Fouts, Boyette & Hewlett, 2011). However, the five categories of CASEL (2015) were all mentioned indirectly by the participants. For example, the importance of self-confidence can be accommodated with 'self-management', and the importance of friendship fits with 'relationship skills'. The fact that most valued skills did fit with the CASEL-model is contrary to the expectation of this study. This can be explained by the fact that the model of CASEL is a model that covers all social and emotional competencies, based on research (CASEL, 2015). Also, many social and emotional behaviours are universal (Rubin, 1998), so that can explain why those competencies were mentioned. Lastly, the interview questions were aimed at the competencies according to CASEL, so that could also be of influence on this result.

Applicability of SEL in Afar

The fact that the Afar will accept the ideas regarding social-emotional learning is in line with the expectations. However, this finding is slightly in contrast with the statements about the Afar being unique people and that it is difficult to change their customs. An explanation for this result can be that the participants have given social desirable answers, because they knew this study was carried out commissioned by the developers of the SEL programme. Another explanation of these results can be that SEL is a new concept, but because social and emotional skills are valuable in every culture (Elias, 2003), acceptance may be easy. The perspectives of the Afar on this topic do not entirely match with the content of SEL, because of the distinction between collectivistic and individualistic values discussed in research question one. This is also in line with the expectations (Rubin, 1998; Savina & Wan, 2017). Striking is that every participant points out the value of SEL for Afar children because they will be motivated for school and educational outcomes will increase. Literature also states that social-emotional learning can increase academic performance (Corcoran & Slavin, 2016). Also, the distinction between the rural and urban area, and between the refugee camp and the host community is important to make.

Conclusion

Overall, it can be concluded that the Afar don't have a unique look on social-emotional learning according to the skills they value, but their perspectives do differ from Western values that are based on the individual. The perspectives of the Afar are mostly in line with collectivistic cultures (Savina & Wan, 2017). Despite this difference, the skills that Afar people find important are in line with the model of CASEL (2015) and therefore in line

with the topics of the SEL lessons. Because the people are open for the lessons and value social-emotional skills broadly, it can be concluded that the SEL programme of Edukans fit with the Afar perspectives. However, there is some room for improvement. First, when it comes to individualistic approaches in the programme. Second, when it comes to the diverse needs of people with different living styles.

Limitations

There are several limitations in this study. First, in several interviews, the same words and expressions were used by the translator, which makes it possible that the answers of the participants were influenced by the ideas of the translator himself. In further research, translations should be checked on completeness and reliability. Second, as stated before, there were only 3 parents interviewed due to unavailability. In the future, more parents should be interviewed because they are a valuable source of information. Because of the lack of parents, their statements can't be seen as universal for all Afar parents. Also, the 3 parents were all from the Parent-Teacher Association, which indicates that they have more knowledge about education than the average Afar pastoralist. This could have influenced the outcomes of this research. Third, the interviews were quite short due to lack of time and the full agendas of the translators. Further research should focus on more in-depth interviews and observations in Afar, with more different stakeholders. Using mixed methods is important to enhance validity and reliability, to get an even clearer image of the region and the culture (Baarda et al., 2013).

Implications

With this study, more knowledge and understanding is gained about the Afar (Foronda, 2008). Tailoring is a very important aspect of this programme, because the Afar norms and values differ from the Western values about social-emotional learning. Contributing to the scientific debate around cultural sensitivity, this study points out that pastoralists in Ethiopia have their own customs in an ancient culture that is difficult to change. However, it is important to improve education and social-emotional learning to face the challenges. It is therefore necessary that cultural sensitivity is taken into account, by thinking about the individualistic approach of SEL (CASEL, 2015; Rubin, 1998; Savina & Wan, 2017).

Although SEL was valued by all stakeholders, it is a new concept for the Afar. It needs more attention to be understood by all people. It is therefore important that Edukans invests in providing more information about SEL in Afar. It is also important that Edukans looks at the different needs of the people in Afar. Results indicate that there is a difference in lifestyle, resources and knowledge between on the one hand the pastoralist and the village people, and

on the other hand the refugees and the native people. Research confirms this distinction, for example the lack of awareness of education in pastoralist people (Woldab, 2012). Further research should focus on the specific needs and challenges of these populations. However, the programme will likely improve the Afar culture and the future lives of the children. The Afar culture appears to contain several wide-spread challenges regarding emotional knowledge and regulation, such as not saving money or not thinking about the future. Also, social issues such as early marriage and circumcision are big problems in Afar. SEL programmes can tackle these kind of challenges, because they aim at creating awareness regarding goal setting, the importance of education and individual skills and confidence (Greenberg et al., 2017). SEL is a rising concept in the world (Jones & Doolittle, 2017). With the right adaptation to diverse cultures, it can change the lives of many children.

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Appendix 1

Interview questions – teachers (before SEL training)

Introduction. My name is Judith, I am a student from the Netherlands and I am doing my research here in Ethiopia with Edukans. I do research about what you as a teacher think about social-emotional learning, that you are going to get a training about. I would like to know what you think about social relationships, emotional expressions you use in your culture, things that are important in your culture to contribute to the community. With the interviews that I conduct, I will write a paper for my graduation. Do you understand what I mean? Do you have any questions beforehand? Are you ok with me recording the interview?

Background participant

1. Please tell me something about who you are, what is your name, where are you from and what is your background education? I can assure you that your name will not be used in the paper.
2. Why are you teaching in Afar?

Topic: Afar customs and cultural norms

1. How important is the community in the Afar culture?

Topic: Valued social and emotional skills

2. What social or emotional skills do you think children need to develop in order to contribute to the community? For example: let people know how you feel, build strong relationships, be helpful to other people.
3. What kind of expressions do you use to show people how you feel? For example, are you very open in your emotions or does everybody keep it for themselves?

Topic: Perceived value of education and SEL in Afar

4. Do you think it is important for children to learn about relationships and emotions in school for their future? Why (not)?

Topic: Expectations of SEL training

1. Do you know what you are going to learn in the training?
2. What would you like to learn in the training?

Interview questions – teachers (after SEL training)Topic: throwback SEL training

1. What did you think about the training?
2. Are there things that could be better or different about the training?
3. Can you give examples of what you liked and didn't like?

4. What new things did you learn?
5. What is the most valuable thing you have learned? Why?

Topic: perspective change on SEL of teachers

1. If you think back about the ideas you had about relationships, what has changed for you after the training?
2. If you think back about the ideas you had about emotions, what has changed for you after the training?
3. If you think back about the ideas you had about social skills, what has changed for you after the training?
4. Do you think it is valuable that you learned these new things? Why?
5. Do you think you have now enough skills or mechanisms to give SEL lessons to your students? If yes, can you illustrate what kind of skills you are going to use? If not, what do you still miss?

Topic: the importance of SEL for Afar

1. In what way do you think the SEL lessons can influence the future lives of the children?
2. What SEL skills are most important for children?
3. Looking at the Afar culture, what skills are especially important for them?

Interview questions – parents

Introduction. My name is Judith, I am a student from the Netherlands and I am doing my internship here in Ethiopia with Edukans. As you may know, your children are now going to learn about relationships and emotions in school, next to the other lessons. I would really like to know what you think of that. I would like to know what you think about social relationships, emotional expressions you use in your culture, things that are important in your culture to contribute to the community. I will do multiple interviews, and afterwards I will write a paper about it for my graduation. Do you understand what I mean? Do you have any questions beforehand? Are you ok with me recording the interview?

Background participant

1. Please tell me something about who you are.

Topic: Afar customs and cultural norms (community, daily life)

1. Where do you live and with whom?
2. What do you do for living/in your daily life?
3. What does the community mean in your culture?

Topic: Social-emotional skills

1. What skills do you think your children need to develop to live a good life?
2. What kind of social skills do you think are important in your community?
3. What kind of emotional skills do you think are important in your community?
4. What is your opinion about communicating with other communities?
5. What kind of expressions do you use to show people how you feel? (For example, are you very open in your emotions or does everybody keep it for themselves?)

Topic: Perceived value of education and SEL in Afar

1. How many of your children go to school?
2. Do you think it is important for your children to go to school? What about boys and girls?
3. Do you think it is important for children to learn about relationships and emotions in school for their future? Why (not)?
4. What would you like your children to be when they grow up?

Interview questions – students

Introduction. My name is Judith, I am a student from the Netherlands and I am doing research here in Ethiopia with Edukans. You have a new subject in school, right? Social-emotional learning. How do you call it? I would really like to know what you think of the lessons, and if you think it is important for your future. So I am going to ask questions about you, about your family and your community, and about what you think of the topics that are discussed in the lessons at school. Do you understand what I mean? Do you have any questions beforehand? Are you fine with me recording the interview?

Background participant

1. Please tell me your name and your age. I assure you that your name will not be used in the paper.
2. Where do you live and with whom?
3. Who are your friends?
4. What do you do when you are not at school? Do you have hobbies?

Topic: Perceived value of education and SEL in Afar

1. Do you like going to school? Why?
2. What is your favourite subject? Why?
3. How do you think education can influence your future?
4. What did you learn so far in the SEL lessons? What do you think of the lessons?

Topic: Valued social and emotional skills

Now I would like to ask questions about the topics of the new lessons. I would like to know what you think, so there are no wrong answers. I am very curious about your opinion.

1. Do you tell people how you feel? Why (not)?
2. Who are the people that you talk to about your feelings?
3. What kind of body language or facial expressions do you use to show people how you feel?
4. What is friendship to you?
5. What do you do to be a good friend?
6. If you are in a conflict with others, what do you do?
7. What social skills do you think you will need to be successful in life?
8. What emotional skills do you think you will need to be successful in life?

Topic: dreams

1. What do you want to be when you grow up? Why?
2. Do you have other dreams for your future?

Interview questions – School director Aysaita Refugee Primary SchoolBackground participant

1. Can you tell me something about yourself?
2. What is it that you do in the refugee camp and at ARRA?
3. Can you tell me what the activities and goals of ARRA are?

Topic: Afar customs and cultural norms

1. What does the community mean in the Afar culture?
2. What challenges do the Afar people face, according to their cultural norms and values?

Topic: Valued social and emotional skills

3. What skills do you think children need to develop to live a good life in the camp and the host community?

Topic: The importance of SEL for Afar

1. Do you think the content of the SEL lessons fit with the Afar culture?
2. In what way do you think the SEL lessons can influence the lives of the children in Afar and the refugee camp?
3. You now know about the concept of SEL, can you explain what is specifically important for the children in the camp and in the host community?

Topic: Differences between refugees and host community

4. What is the difference between the people in the camp and the host community?
5. What specific challenges do the children in the camp face?

Appendix 2

Analysis

TB = teachers before SEL

TA = teachers after SEL

PA = parents

ST = students

SD = school director Aysaita Refugee Primary School

Research question 1: What are the perspectives of students, parents and teachers in Afar on social-emotional learning?

1.1 Afar customs and cultural norms

A = Community cohesion is an important value

B = Taking care of community members is important for Afar

C = No special upbringing of children, but children play roles in household, discussions and retaining cultural heritage

D = Sharing system is most valuable custom

E = Contact with other communities is high and seen as important, marriages are not allowed between communities

F = Challenges in Afar are lack of future plan, early marriage, circumcision and inequality of men and women

G = Other Afar customs are pastoralism, living by the day and unique wearing style

H = Differences and similarities host community and refugee camp: same people, different challenges and resources

I = Changing the Afar culture is important, achievable but difficult

1.2 Valued social and emotional skills

A = Emotions are expressed via body language and speech, valued as important, shared mostly with friends

B = Absence of emotional expressions especially in females and students, it is a cultural norm

C = Valuable social skills: sharing, negotiating, conflict resolution, listening and respect, relationship, communication

D = Behaviour of Afar children is often bad

E = Valuable emotional skills/life skills: saving, working ethics, self-confidence

F = Differences between men and women: women express emotions/feelings less because they are afraid

G = Friendship is important for Afar children, because: solving problems together, advising, shaping behaviour, helping, being there for each other

Research question 2: In what extent do the perspectives of the Afar people fit with the SEL programme of Edukans?

2.1 Perceived value of education and SEL in Afar

A = Educational characteristics in Afar: absenteeism of girls, growing awareness, growing use of technology

B = SEL is valued because: improvement of social skills, emotional skills, future, girls' expression, confidence, community development

C = Education is valued because: helping/improving community, important for future, shaping behaviour

D = SEL is perceived valuable for refugees because: confidence, future and community change, higher knowledge

2.2 Expectations of SEL training

A = Learning emotional skills

B = Learning social skills

C = Learning teacher mechanisms

D = Getting knowledge and awareness

2.3 Throwback SEL training

A = Difficulties about the training: practical part

B = More training and longer training is needed

C = Language of the training has to fit

D = The training was valuable because: motivating, understanding oneself, future activities, solving problems, other subjects

2.4 Perspective change on SEL

A = Before training: no knowledge and techniques, after training: knowledge, teaching mechanisms, understanding students, planning skills

B = Skills/knowledge gained in training: emotional, social, teacher mechanisms, relationships students, solving problems, knowledge of SEL

2.5 Importance of SEL for Afar

A = Acceptance of SEL by Afar is good, open for new ideas

B = SEL is important for Afar because: pastoralists show bad behaviour, better future, school attendance, facing challenges

C = SEL is new, but understandable for Afar

2.6 SEL lessons

A = Challenged and improvements for SEL: after school is challenge, SEL should be implemented in more classes

B = Good things about the SEL lessons: increasing motivation, important ideas, important for other subjects