

The Impact of Emotional Intelligence on Teacher Performance: Evidence from Secondary Schools

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative research paper examines the role of emotional intelligence (EI) on the performance of secondary school teachers in Pakistan with a focus on classroom management, student engagement, and overall teaching and learning in the classroom. Based on Goleman's (1995) five-component theory, self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills, the paper will examine how the five emotional competencies influence the behaviors and interactions of the teacher in complex classroom settings. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews with twenty teachers working in secondary schools and 5 administrators representing both government and non-government schools. Thematic analysis indicated that EI plays a key role in increasing classroom management, better teacher-student relationships, and increased professional satisfaction. Teachers with high EI were better at stress management, teaching based on empathy, and responsiveness to student needs. The results also indicate that emotional awareness does not only reduce burnout, but also creates a positive learning environment that promotes respect and academic interaction. The research finds that EI training is also beneficial in strengthening teacher performance and emotional stability in teachers working in secondary education sector in Pakistan by integrating this training with the professional development programs.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Teacher Performance, Classroom Management, Teacher–Student Relationship, Qualitative Study, Pakistan

INTRODUCTION

Teaching has become one of the most emotionally challenging professions especially on the secondary school level whereby the teacher has to juggle between teaching and the various academic, behavioral and emotional requirements of the teens. Classrooms that are opened to the second generation are dynamic with a blend of personalities, learning potentials, and emotional expressions. Here, educators not only must know their subjects and be pedagogically qualified, but also reveal that they are stable emotionally and sensitive to others (Jennings and Greenberg, 2009). Emotional intelligence (EI) has become a crucial predictor of teacher effectiveness and well-being alongside the increasing importance of emotional labor in the educational process (Mayer, Caruso, and Salovey, 2016). It is the emotional intelligence which is generally described as the ability to identify, comprehend and manage emotions of self and others (Salovey and Mayer, 1990) which has a crucial influence in determining the behaviors and performances of teachers. In a classroom setting, the degree to which a teacher empathizes with students, is capable of stress management, and is an effective communicator defines the success of the instructional process, as well as the socio-emotional environment that fosters learning (Goleman, 1995; Brackett et al., 2021). Higher-level

EI teachers can better address classroom issues, react positively to student behavior, and help learners feel part of the group and become motivated (Zeidner, Matthews, and Roberts, 2021).

The teaching profession, especially in the secondary schools, is subject to a particular combination of emotional and institutional pressure in Pakistan. Educators have to work in overcrowded classrooms, with scarce resources, and with students of varying abilities and backgrounds, and attain excellent academic results. Increasing degrees of teacher burnout, stress, and emotional exhaustion have been reported in the Pakistani education sector (Aslam and Ahmad, 2020). This scenario highlights the need to have competencies that go beyond cognitive ability, and focus on emotional awareness, empathy, and self-regulation. Emotional intelligence also equips teachers with the mental strength to stay calm when under pressure, connect and be engaging with students, and remain motivated amidst institutional stress (Khan and Ullah, 2022). Although there is increased awareness of the role of EI, there is a paucity of empirical and qualitative studies on the subject with specific reference to secondary-school teachers in Pakistan. Most of the current studies focusing on teacher performance lean towards the cognitive and pedagogical aspect of teaching without much emphasis on the emotional aspect of the teaching process. Besides, the implementation of EI as part of professional development and teacher training in Pakistan remains at its infancy (Batool, 2021). This gap indicates that further research should be done to understand how EI is practiced in the daily life experiences of the teacher and how it influences their professional behaviors and relationships in real world learning situations.

This paper fills this gap by examining and discussing the influence of emotional intelligence on teacher performance in the secondary level classroom using the experiences of teachers and administrators. A qualitative approach will enable us to gain a subtle perception of the teachers perceptions, feelings and coping mechanisms that cannot be adequately captured using quantitative measures alone. The study explores the role of EI in enhanced classroom management, teacher-student relationships, and the quality of classroom instruction through semi-structured interviews. Teacher voices in themselves are the basis of knowing how understanding emotional awareness and emotional regulation can lead to effective teaching practices.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Introduction to Emotional Intelligence (EI)

Salovey and Mayer (1990) first defined Emotional Intelligence (EI) as the capacity to recognize, comprehend and manage emotions both in others and oneself. Subsequently, Goleman (1995) further developed the construct to include five dimensions; self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. Together, these competences identify the capacity of an individual to be emotionally flexible at the social and professional level. The author highlighted EI as a combination of emotional and social skills that determine success in environmental response (Bar-On, 2006). The EI theory has been used in education to develop a framework on how the emotional awareness of teachers can be used to improve the relationship in the classroom and the effectiveness of the teaching process. The theoretical premise is that teaching is an emotionally charged occupation, and it is useful when teachers are able to cope with emotional complexities positively. Therefore, EI is a psychological asset and professional resource of teachers who have to cope with the two tasks of teaching and emotional work.

Emotional Intelligence and Teacher Effectiveness

Teacher performance involves pedagogical and classroom practices as well as the capacity to inspire learners both emotionally and intellectually. Research indicates that such performance largely depends on

EI (Brackett et al., 2010). EI teachers are more communicative, emphatic and adaptive-qualities that influence student performance in a positive way (Jennings and Greenberg, 2009). Zeidner et al. (2021) discovered that emotional intelligent teachers have increased self efficacy and job satisfaction, which leads to lower burnouts and turnover. Emotional intelligence also helps educators to read classroom interactions and handle stress efficiently. The ability to control emotions allows teachers to demonstrate patience, positive feedback, and steady motivation (Goleman, 2023). These attributes improve professional resilience and quality of teaching. Hence, EI is not simply a personal characteristic but professional skill that has a direct positive influence on the performance of teachers and the learning experience of students.

EI and Classroom Management

Teachers should exercise authority, empathy, and responsiveness in order to manage their classes. Emotional intelligence also prepares teachers with the ability to manage disruptive behaviors in a calm manner, decode emotional signals, and establish a healthy learning environment (Mayer et al., 2021). A study conducted by Brackett et al. (2021) found that emotionally regulated teachers create classrooms with a climate of mutual respect and engagement. EI helps resolve conflicts and de-escalate them, preventing the occurrence of behavioral issues (Jennings et al., 2021). High EI teachers are able to identify the mood of students and react to it in an empathetic, but not punitive manner, fostering trust and cooperation. Furthermore, emotional control helps a teacher to maintain composure and impartiality in discipline and as such enhances emotional safety of students. The final result of EI-based classroom management is that the behavioral disruption is reduced and allows an environment where learners can collaborate, as well as be focused on academic content, both of which are crucial to achieving success as a learner.

EI, Teacher-Student Relationships

Good education depends on teacher-student relationships which are the emotional basis of this process. One of the main elements of EI is empathy, which enables teachers to gain insight into the thoughts and emotional concerns of students (Kremenitzer, 2022). Highly empathetic teachers will provide emotionally secure classrooms in which students feel appreciated and honored. These forms of relationships increase student engagement, motivation, and academic performance (Jennings and Greenberg, 2009). Research indicates that emotionally intelligent educators are easier to approach, listen to, and engage students (Batool, 2021). They will be able to recognize the signs of distress or disengagement and provide suitable emotional support. Trust and cooperation are cultivated on the foundation of these emotionally driven relationships. Consequently, students will begin to model the emotional control of their teachers, and the classroom atmosphere will become friendlier and collaborative. Thus, EI is the bonding factor in the relationships between teachers and students and contributes to academic and social-emotional development.

EI and Teacher Well-being

Emotional intelligence is protective and helps to maintain a psychological health of teachers and decrease the burnout. Teaching is a stressful job that can cause emotional exhaustion when a person fails to cope with stress (Aslam and Ahmad, 2020). Higher EI teachers can detect stressors earlier on and utilize adaptive coping mechanisms like mindfulness and emotional control (Zeidner et al., 2021). Goleman (2023) argues that emotionally intelligent educators are resilient and optimistic, which enhances job satisfaction and longevity. EI also fosters a feeling of professional satisfaction through coherence of emotional stability and workplace objectives. Therefore, when teachers are emotionally balanced, they are able to be enthusiastic, patient and empathetic even in a difficult classroom atmosphere. The improvement of EI in the Pakistani context would help to reduce teacher burnout and increase the retention rates, thus improving the overall quality and sustainability of the system.

METHODOLOGY

The research design adopted in this study was qualitative because the research aimed to determine the effects of emotional intelligence (EI) on teacher performance at secondary school level. To understand the lived experiences, perceptions, and emotional interactions of teachers that cannot be sufficiently described by numerical data, the qualitative approach was selected (Creswell and Poth, 2018). The information was gathered in the form of semi-structured interviews carried out with twenty teachers in secondary schools and five school administrators of both public and private schools in Pakistan. The sample was chosen by purposive sampling, with a minimum of 5 years of classroom teaching experience and knowledge of classroom management and student engagement. This was a suitable sampling technique as different views were represented by gender, school category and profession. The interviews took about 45-60 minutes each and were conducted with open-ended questions that related to how the teachers comprehended emotional intelligence, how they handled classroom dynamics and how emotions affected their teaching performance. The audio-recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed. Thematic analysis was used to analyze data, in accordance with the six-step framework of Braun and Clarke (2006), familiarization, coding, theme generation, reviewing, defining, and reporting. Using the iterative coding, various themes were identified, including empathy, emotional regulation, motivation, and relationship management. To guarantee credibility, the researcher used member checking and triangulation by comparing the views of teacher and administrator. During the course of the study, ethical issues such as informed consent, non-disclosure, and voluntary involvement were adhered to. This approach allowed the researcher to obtain detailed, contextualized information on the role of emotional intelligence in teaching practice, how it can impact classroom settings and contribute to the professional and emotional well-being of teachers.

RESULTS

Analysis of 25 interviews (20 teachers and 5 administrators) using thematic analysis identified four cohesive themes that characterized how emotional intelligence influences teacher practice in high school classrooms: (1) emotional self-awareness and regulation, (2) empathy and student connection, (3) motivation and professional resilience, and (4) relationship management and classroom harmony. All themes show the primary role of EI in improving teaching performance, classroom regulation, and emotional regulation.

Theme 1: Emotional Self-Awareness and Regulation

Participants noted that understanding and controlling individual emotions were important in keeping calm and professional. Educators noted that emotional self-awareness helped them to recognize stressors and manage impulsive responses. Since a teacher remarked, knowing about my own frustration allows me to help it not to get in the way of my students or my teaching. Administrators also pointed out that all teachers who were emotionally self-regulated ensured that their classroom remained the same even when they met difficulties like workload and student misbehavior. The data indicated that EI-based self-control decreases emotional exhaustion and leads to a persistent quality of instruction. More highly self-regulated teachers were found to deal with conflicts in a calm and constructive manner, to resolve disturbances constructively and to exude a sense of emotional stability- factors that favorably affected student conduct and trust.

Theme 2: Student Connection and Empathy

Effective teachers were found to be characterized by empathy. Participants explained how empathy about student feelings enhanced engagement, motivation and learning. Teachers said they could read the emotional tone of the classroom to modify the lesson and provide one-on-one help. One teacher said

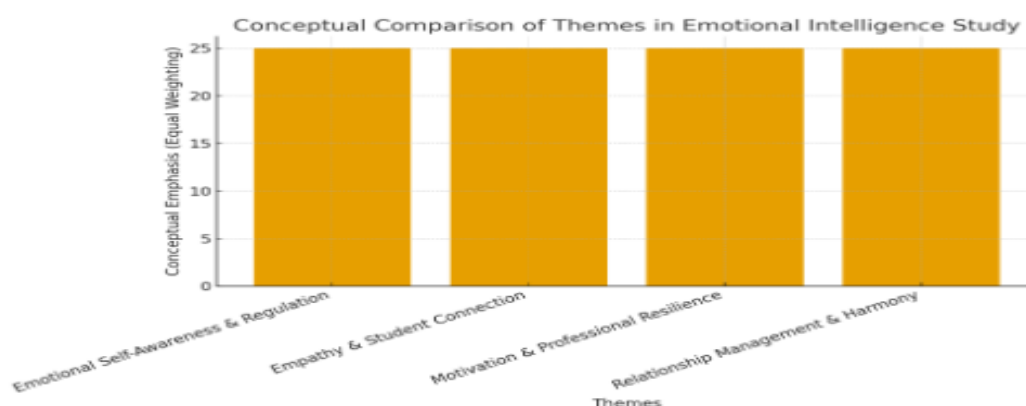
students misbehave at times because of issues at home. When I sympathize as opposed to penalize, they react more favorably. The administrators affirmed that caring teachers created safe and accepting classrooms that allowed students to feel valued and esteemed. This sensitivity of emotions was useful in the detection of struggling students in early years and giving them specific responses. Emotional trust, less behavioral conflict, and better student participation were, therefore, associated with empathy.

Theme 3: Motivation and Professional Resilience

The third theme was that of intrinsic motivation and resilience of teachers, which are two aspects of emotional intelligence that can support sustained performance. Participants recounted the sense of optimism, commitment and perseverance shown by emotionally intelligent teachers in the face of the difficult circumstances of limited resources or administrative stress. According to one senior teacher, emotional intelligence allows me to remain positive. I keep myself in mind that my work can transform the lives of students. Administrators noted that highly motivated teachers motivated their peers and helped to create a favorable institutional climate. Emotional intelligence was seen to convert stress to purposeful energy, lowering burnout and encouraging ongoing career development. Teachers who were motivated were also more apt to take on reflections and new teaching methods.

Theme 4: Classroom Harmony and Relationship Management

Interpersonal communication and relationship management between nurses were cited as important in ensuring discipline and cooperation. The strong social teachers established peaceful classroom atmosphere based on respect and cooperation. One member mentioned that students would automatically do better when they know I respect them. These teachers employed active listening, humor and positive reinforcement to address conflicts and promote teamwork. Administrators reiterated that emotionally intelligent teachers had better relationships with parents and fellow teachers, and that helped them to create a cohesive school culture. The theme emphasizes EI as an element in enhancing professional communication, eliminating friction, and developing a sense of collective responsibility in advancing student achievement.



DISCUSSION

The research results of this study reveal that emotional intelligence (EI) plays a key role in the performance of secondary school teachers by enhancing classroom management, teacher-student relations, and emotional resilience. The findings are consistent with the theoretical framework of Goleman (1995) that

includes self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills as components of EI. The dimensions were also evident in the stories told by teachers, showing how emotionally intelligent instructors could create a supportive learning atmosphere and how they could stay in the profession during difficult situations. The initial significant theme is emotional self-awareness and regulation, which underlines the current body of research that teacher emotional awareness and regulation lead to increased classroom management and psychological stability (Zeidner et al., 2021). Those who participated stated that emotional regulation allowed them to remain calm in situations of disruption and to preserve a positive mood. This observation aligns with the idea of a prosociability effect proposed by Jennings and Greenberg (2009) according to which emotionally controlled teachers exude a sense of calmness, affecting the behavior and focus of students. Emotional control leads to fewer uncontrollable disciplinary measures, which encourages justice and emotional security.

The second theme, empathy and student connection, repeats the findings of Kremenitzer (2022), who hypothesized that empathy can help teachers build emotionally supportive classrooms. In this research, educators spoke of empathy as having a role in the detection of student challenges and the modification of teaching practices in response. Compassion changed the teacher-student relationship of power to one of empathy and understanding. This result confirms Brackett et al.'s (2021) claim that empathy enhances engagement, participation, and social-emotional growth in learners. Besides, compassionate working attitude seemed to avoid conflicts and absences, since the students were willing to attend classes where they felt appreciated and empathized with. Theme three: motivation and professional resilience focuses on the psychological buffer of EI against burnout. The highly intrinsically motivated teachers also displayed optimism and purpose driven behavior despite pressure of workload and lack of support at the institution. This correlates with the results of Goleman (2023), who argues that motivated individuals persevere and flex when stressed. The qualitative data demonstrate that EI promotes reflective practice, which allows teachers to reach a sense of meaning in their practice and endure in the face of adversity. Aslam and Ahmad (2020) remark that emotionally resilient teachers report greater job satisfaction and positively affect the morale in schools. Therefore, motivation among emotionally intelligent teachers works as an individual coping strategy and a driver towards professional excellence.

The last theme relationship management and classroom harmony brings to light the importance of the social skills that support effective teaching. Interpersonal competencies of teachers allowed them to establish mutual respect, conflict management, and cooperation with students and their colleagues. This helps to argue that social regulation of emotion leads to better team cohesion and problem-solving (Mayers et al., 2021). Relationship management in Pakistani classrooms was critical to maintaining order and involvement in classrooms often marked by large class groups and student behaviors. Teachers who developed EI well employed empathy, humor, and positive communication to ensure discipline and promote autonomy. This is similar to the findings of Brackett et al. (2010) that indicated that emotionally intelligent communication creates cooperative classroom environments and reduces behavioral disturbances.

The findings of the study add to a continuously developing literature supporting the inclusion of EI training in teacher education. According to Batool (2021), emotional competencies may be acquired as part of an organized program with a focus on reflective practice, mindfulness, and social-emotional awareness. The respondents of this research provided evidence that a significant number of teachers have no formal education on EI and make use of their own experience and intuitions. The explicit implementation of EI within professional development may assist teachers in consciously implementing emotional strategies to deal with stress, to engage students, and to endure the demands of the institution. Noteworthy, emotional intelligence, as shown by findings, is context-specific. EI acts as a resiliency mechanism in the educational climate of Pakistan, where resources are scarce, and teachers are overburdened by the administration. Emotional awareness enables teachers to re-frame stressors and balance emotions. This contextual aspect

builds on the Goleman (1995) model to show how cultural and systemic issues impact the manifestation of EI in practice.

Moreover, this research is a qualitative addition to a scientific field dominated by quantitative research. Unlike past researchers who assessed the EI using psychometric scales (e.g., Bar-On, 2006), the interviews in this study were used to capture the lived experiences of teachers who navigated their emotional and institutional complexities. The teacher and administration voices exposed the way EI is practiced on a daily basis by being compassionate, patient and thoughtful about teaching. These are insights that can be used to get a true picture of the emotional work that goes into education which is not always captured by statistical analysis. Overall, this discussion has established that emotional intelligence is not a hypothetical mental concept but an applicable, acquirable skill that can increase teacher performance. Emotionally sensitive, understanding, inspired, and relational teachers are more in control, flexible, and satisfied with their work. Therefore, enhancement of EI in teaching education and professional growth can result in better quality of instructions, emotional balance, and inner peace in the secondary educational sector of Pakistan.

Practical Implications

The results of the given research provide various practice implications to teachers, school leaders and policymakers who want to improve their teaching performance and classroom efficiency. First, the findings highlight the importance of introducing emotional intelligence training into teacher education and professional development programs. Emotional competency like empathy, self-control and relationship management directly affect teaching outcomes, so training workshops in these areas may arm teachers with effective strategies to cope with stress, communicate effectively, and react empathically to needs of students. This is essential especially in Pakistan, whereby teacher training programs usually focus on what is taught instead of how to feel (Batool, 2021). Second, school administrators must create a work environment that is emotionally supportive by promoting collaboration, peer mentoring and open communication. Administrators can also foster healthy organizational climate by modeling emotionally intelligent leadership to encourage teachers and decrease burnout. To measure interpersonal effectiveness of teachers and academic performance, EI-based evaluation metrics can also be introduced to institutions. Third, the research also proposes that emotional intelligence may develop with time with reflective practice and learning through experience. Educators can be facilitated to participate in peer feedbacks and journaling to promote their emotional awareness and flexibility. These exercises can assist teachers to cope with the classroom challenges positively and to stay emotionally balanced. Lastly, interventions at the policy level must be in place to institutionalize the development of EI. Emotional literacy modules should be included in the framework of teacher training by the Ministry of Education and curriculum authorities. It would not only enhance the performance of teachers but it would also help breed emotionally intelligent students that will have a trickle effect throughout the education system. Focusing on emotional intelligence as a professional competency, schools can improve the quality of instruction and the emotional health of professionals and students alike.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Although this research offers useful information on the effect of emotional intelligence (EI) on teacher performance, it is important to note a number of limitations. First, the study was done in a small sample of secondary school teachers and administrators in selected secondary schools in Pakistan. Despite the fact that qualitative research methods enable in-depth research, the results cannot be applied to every level of education or region. It would be possible in future research to make a study sample more diverse in number and in general size by including primary, secondary, and higher education teachers to reflect a more general view on the EI in the teaching scenario.

Second, this article was based on self-reported data gathered by interviewing, and such data could be tainted by social desirability bias. Participants may have painted themselves in a better light, particularly when speaking about emotional regulation and professional behavior. Further studies may include qualitative interviews as well as classroom observations or a mixed design to triangulate the results and enhance validity. Third, the authors did not consider the views of students and parents, as this research was limited to the perspectives of teachers and administrators only, and thus did not offer more perspectives on how teachers with high emotional competencies influence student learning and classroom climate. This would be essential in future studies to provide a comprehensive understanding of the effects of EI in various dimensions. In addition, emotional intelligence was studied as an individual and behavioral characteristic and not as an organizational factor. Future studies may examine the effect of institutional policy, leadership styles and school culture on the growth and use of EI in teachers. Longitudinal research could also be conducted to study the effects of EI training on teacher performance in the long run. In conclusion, the study, though an important contribution to qualitative research, is limited in scope as well as methodological and stakeholder breadth and should be extended in the future to gain full insight into the transformative power of emotional intelligence in education.

CONCLUSION

This paper concludes that emotional intelligence (EI) is a key determinant of teacher performance especially in the emotionally charged context of secondary schools. The research found through the lived experiences of teachers and administrators that emotional competencies, including self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, motivation, and relationship management help improve classroom management, improve teacher-student relationships, and promote professional resilience. Effective teachers positively contribute to the learning environment by identifying and controlling their emotions and thus fostering respect, engagement, and academic motivation. The findings also indicate that emotional intelligence is not a trait but a skill set which can be developed through reflection, training and institutional culture which fosters the development of emotional intelligence. Integrating EI in teacher education programs and continuous professional development can also contribute tremendously to the quality of instruction, burnout, and emotional well-being. On the whole, the research offers qualitative data that emotional intelligent teachers not only do a better job but also make the education system more caring and effective. With the efforts that schools in Pakistan are making to band up with the contemporary educational demands, emotional intelligence can be viewed as a revolutionary instrument in empowering teachers and learners alike.

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