

Approaches and Strategies Used by Secondary School Teachers for Social and Emotional Development in Remote Regions of Pakistan

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Abstract

The study discloses the secondary school teachers' approaches to addressing the student's emotional and social development. The research employed qualitative research aspects such as interviews, observation, and document-based analysis, which were used for data collection using a purposive sampling technique in private schools in the study area. The professional needs of the teachers to deal with social or emotional problems and the strategies used to overcome them are both explored in the current research. Within the classroom, secondary school teachers deal with such students with group tasks by ensuring their self-respect, doing sports activities, and making the teacher a role model. The study further intensifies that the professionalism of teachers with proper training, inclusion of social and emotional concerns curriculum, support of management and an ideal teacher-student relationship is necessary to deal with such issues in a better way. By specifying the students with such issues and by using the strategies professionally, the social and emotional concerns among the students of secondary schools can be easily managed. The comprehension of students' social and emotional issues is inevitable for a conducive learning environment.

Keywords: Social and Emotional Needs, Qualitative Approach, Secondary School Teachers.

Introduction

The social and emotional development of students is increasingly recognized as a crucial aspect of overall educational outcomes (DeVries et al., 2022; Akintayo et al., 2024). Beyond academic achievements, fostering social and emotional skills in students is essential for their holistic development (Briesch et al., 2019; Sihotanget al., 2023). These skills include social and emotional learning awareness, social and emotional learning management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (Blazar, 2016). The development of these competencies helps students navigate the complexities of their personal and social lives, contributing to their well-being and success both inside and outside the classroom (Vaccaroet al., 2019).

Secondary school teachers play a pivotal role in the social and emotional development of the students (Schwab, 2019). During adolescence, students undergo significant emotional and social changes that can impact their academic performance and interpersonal relationships (Zammit,

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2024). Teachers are often the primary adult figures in students' lives during this critical period, and the approaches and strategies can significantly influence students' development (Hikmah, 2024). By creating supportive and nurturing environments, teachers can help students develop the skills necessary to manage their emotions, build healthy relationships, and make responsible decisions (Avramidi et al., 2018).

Educational frameworks and policies have begun to emphasize the importance of social and emotional learning. Programs and initiatives designed to integrate social and emotional learning into the curriculum are being implemented worldwide (Navarro et al., 2022). These programs aim to provide teachers with the tools and resources needed to support students' social and emotional development effectively (Rasool et al., 2021). However, the success of these programs largely depends on the teachers' understanding and implementation of social and emotional learning principles (Haskett et al., 2016). Thus, exploring the approaches and strategies used by secondary school teachers in this context is critical (Al-Yagon, 2012).

There are diverse strategies and approaches that secondary school teachers can employ to promote social and emotional development (Zamfirescu-Mareş, 2024). These include explicit social and emotional learning instruction, creating a positive classroom climate, integrating social and emotional learning into academic lessons, and using restorative practices (Taylor et al., 2017). Teachers might also employ techniques such as mindfulness, cooperative learning, and conflict resolution to enhance students' social and emotional skills (Sabey et al., 2017). Understanding which strategies are most effective in different contexts can help improve social and emotional learning programs and policies (Murano et al., 2020).

Despite the growing recognition of the importance of social and emotional development, teachers often need help with implementing social and emotional learning strategies (Duckworth & Yeager, 2015). These can include a lack of training and resources, time constraints, and varying levels of support from school administration and parents (Durlak et al., 2011). Additionally, cultural differences and diverse student needs can make it challenging to find one-size-fits-all solutions (Hobson et al., 2013). Identifying and addressing these challenges is crucial for the successful integration of social and emotional learning in secondary education (Duckworth, 2014).

While there is a substantial body of research on social and emotional learning, there is a need for more focused studies on the specific approaches and strategies used by secondary school teachers (Swift et al., 2021). Much of the existing research is either broad or focused on elementary education (Farmer & Adams, 2021). Secondary education presents unique challenges and opportunities for social and emotional learning, and teachers at this level may require different strategies and support (Rimfeld et al., 2016). This study aims to fill this gap by exploring the approaches and techniques that secondary school teachers use to foster social and emotional development in their students (Vaccaro et al., 2019).

The objectives of this study are to identify and analyze the approaches and strategies employed by secondary school teachers to support the social and emotional development of the students. By doing so, the study seeks to contribute to the understanding of effective social and emotional learning practices at the secondary school level. The findings can inform teacher training programs, educational policies, and classroom practices, ultimately helping to create environments that support the holistic development of students. This research is significant as it not only highlights the critical role of teachers in social and emotional learning but also provides actionable insights for improving educational outcomes in secondary schools.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The study employed a qualitative case study approach to investigate the social and emotional development of secondary school students within the Skardu district. This methodology was chosen to gain a deep understanding of the issues and challenges related to social and emotional issues. Development in secondary schools. By focusing on a specific context, the study aims to provide comprehensive insights that can inform both researchers and educational practitioners. This approach was explicitly implemented in private schools offering secondary education in the Skardu district.

A qualitative case study design provided us with an in-depth exploration of the social and emotional issues faced by secondary school students and the challenges encountered by their teachers. The case study approach is particularly suited to this research as it enables a detailed examination of a single, bounded system—here, a private secondary school in the Skardu district. This design facilitates a rich, contextual understanding of the phenomena under investigation, providing nuanced insights into the specific educational environment.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure they had relevant experience and expertise. Six secondary school teachers from the selected private school were chosen based on their experience with and knowledge of the social and emotional dynamics within the school setting. This sampling method allowed the study to include teachers from various subject areas and levels of experience, enriching the data collection process and providing diverse perspectives on the research topic.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected through multiple qualitative methods, including semi-structured interviews, observations, and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the selected teachers to gather their perceptions and experiences regarding the social and emotional development of students. Observations were carried out within the school environment to observe student behaviors and interactions directly. Document analysis involved reviewing relevant documents such as school policies, curriculum materials, and student records to gain additional insights into social and emotional issues within the school.

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis, which involved several iterative stages: transcription, transformation, coding, and interpretation. Transcripts of interviews and observations were meticulously reviewed to identify recurring themes and patterns related to social and emotional development. Coding was applied to categorize and organize the data, followed by the identification and interpretation of themes to draw meaningful conclusions and insights.

The results were analyzed and discussed based on the perceptions of secondary school teachers and the strategies they used to address the social and emotional needs of students. The qualitative data obtained from the purposively selected private school teachers in Skardu city served as the primary data source. Two main themes emerged from the analysis: perceptions of secondary school teachers, which included several sub-themes, and strategies for addressing social and emotional needs, also with various sub-themes. These themes provided a comprehensive understanding of the actual ground realities faced by teachers and students in the context of social and emotional development.

Findings of the Study

Focusing on the perspectives and practices of secondary school teachers, this study contributes

valuable insights into the strategies that can effectively support students' social and emotional development, highlighting both successful approaches and existing challenges. The findings underscore the need for continued attention to SEL in educational policies and teacher training programs, aiming to enhance the overall educational experience for secondary school students.

Inviting Motivational Speakers to the Classrooms

In the educational field, teachers must focus not only on students' academic achievements but also on their social and emotional development. As a result, it is essential to provide professional assistance to teachers in this area. A research participant mentioned, one way to provide such assistance is by inviting motivational speakers to address the issue. These speakers can share their personal experiences and provide practical tips on how to handle students who have social and emotional issues (Participant, 1).

It can also share techniques for creating a positive and nurturing classroom environment that promotes social and emotional development.

Motivational speakers can also inspire and encourage teachers to develop their skills and knowledge in this area. The speakers help teachers understand the importance of social and emotional development in students and how it can impact their academic performance and future success. By attending these sessions, teachers can learn how to create a more supportive and caring learning environment that promotes student well-being and achievement (Participant 2).

In conclusion, providing professional assistance to teachers in the area of social and emotional development is crucial for students' success. Motivational speakers can be a valuable resource for teachers, inspiring and guiding them to improve their skills and knowledge and create a more positive and nurturing classroom environment.

A Well-Trained Counselor

It was found that teachers also use trained counsellors in the classrooms. For instance, a research participant said,

A well-trained counsellor can play a significant role in supporting the social and emotional development of students. Counsellors are trained to identify and address a wide range of emotional, social, and behavioral issues that students may face, such as anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, anger management, and relationship problems (participant 2).

It can also help students develop coping mechanisms to deal with difficult situations, such as stress or bullying, and provide support for academic and career planning.

Counsellors can create a safe and supportive environment for students to share their feelings and emotions without fear of judgment or criticism. They can provide guidance and support to help students develop a positive self-image, healthy relationships, and effective communication skills (Participant 3).

Counsellors can work with teachers and parents to create a holistic approach to student support, providing a coordinated and comprehensive system of care" (Participant, 5). In summary, a well-trained counsellor can be an invaluable resource for students and schools. They provide individualized support and guidance to students who are struggling with social and emotional issues and contribute to creating a positive school culture that promotes healthy development and academic success.

Teacher Student Relationship

Teachers play a crucial role in the lives of students, not only as educators but also as mentors and role models. Teachers need to maintain a positive and supportive relationship with their students, as this can have a significant impact on their academic success and overall well-being. "Having a positive and friendly relationship with students allows them to feel comfortable and safe in the classroom environment. It enables them to trust their teachers and share their problems, both academic and personal" (Participant 3). The open and honest communication can help teachers identify any social and emotional issues the students may be facing and provide them with the necessary support and guidance to overcome these challenges.

It is also essential for teachers to be mindful of their behaviour toward students and avoid any form of bullying or negative interactions. A positive and respectful attitude towards students creates an atmosphere of mutual respect and helps establish trust between the teacher and students (Participant 5).

This, in return, fosters a more conducive learning environment where students feel motivated and engaged in their studies.

Teachers who maintain a positive relationship with their students are better equipped to address behavioural issues constructively and effectively. They are able to guide and encourage students toward positive behaviour, rather than resorting to punishment or negative reinforcement (Participant, 6).

To conclude, teachers cultivate a positive and supportive relationship with their students built on trust, mutual respect, and open communication. This helps create a safe and conducive learning environment where students feel empowered to share their problems and work towards their academic and personal goals.

Support from Management

The study found that support from the school management is a sine qua non to address students' social and emotional concerns. A research participant reflected,

In order to ensure the social and emotional development of students, it is essential for the school management to provide adequate support to the teachers. This support can come in the form of providing a proper space for teachers to talk to their students in private (Participant, 2).

When teachers have access to a designated space, they can listen to their students' problems without any interruptions or distractions. An important aspect is to establish a fixed timetable for classes, which allows teachers to identify students who may be struggling with social and emotional issues.

Teachers can address the students' problems and provide the necessary support and guidance. Moreover, with a fixed timetable, teachers can plan and prepare their lessons effectively, and thus have more time to focus on the individual needs of their students (Participant, 1).

School management can provide teachers with training and resources that can help them identify and address social and emotional issues among their students. This includes providing access to professional development programs, workshops, and seminars that can equip teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge to support their students effectively (Participant, 5).

Inclusion of Social and Emotional Development in Everyday Teaching

The inclusion of social and emotional development in the curriculum is crucial because it provides students with the necessary skills to navigate through life's challenges. The traditional curriculum focuses primarily on academic subjects such as mathematics, science, and literature while neglecting the importance of social and emotional development. The curriculum must address the student's social and emotional needs by integrating topics such as empathy, conflict resolution, stress management, and relationship building (Participant, 4).

By doing so, students can develop skills and techniques that help them manage their emotions, build positive relationships with others, and navigate through challenging situations. In addition, including social and emotional development in the curriculum can lead to positive outcomes for students such as improved academic performance, decreased behavioral problems, and better mental health outcomes.

This type of education can also promote social and emotional competence, which is essential for success in school, work, and personal relationships. Therefore, it is important that the curriculum includes social and emotional development to provide students with a holistic education that prepares them for their future lives as responsible and successful citizens (Participant, 6).

One of the participants said that, "The students should be given due respect, teachers should always try to give a reply to the student's greetings in the morning time should greet the students by calling the names" (Participant, 1).

The students who have some issues are never dealt in front of the whole class. Such students are given separate time in a separate place. Listen to them carefully and try to solve the issue. Always give them respect so that they don't de-motivate (Participant, 3).

Giving respect to students is a good strategy to solve the social and emotional issues. When students feel respected, they are more likely to develop positive self-esteem, feel valued, and have a sense of belonging. This, in turn, can contribute to their social and emotional wellbeing.

When teachers show respect to their students, they create a positive and supportive learning environment. This environment allows students to feel comfortable and safe, which is essential for their social and emotional development. Respectful teachers help students to develop positive relationships with their peers, which can reduce feelings of isolation and loneliness. Moreover, teachers who show respect to their students can help to reduce negative behaviors such as bullying, aggression, and violence. When students feel respected, they are less likely to engage in these negative behaviors as they understand the importance of treating others with respect. Respectful teachers also encourage open communication with their students.

A good teacher listens to the students' concerns, validate the feelings, and work with them to develop solutions to their problems. This open communication can help to reduce stress and anxiety in students, which can contribute to their social and emotional wellbeing. In conclusion, giving respect to students is a good strategy to solve their social and emotional issues. Respectful teachers create a positive and supportive learning environment, which allows students to feel comfortable and safe. This, in turn, helps to reduce negative behaviors and encourages open communication. When students feel respected, they are more likely to develop positive self-esteem, feel valued, and have a sense of belonging, which is essential for their social and emotional wellbeing.

Teachers as a role models for Social and Emotional Development of Students

The role of teachers emerged as a key factor as well. A research participant mentioned,

Teachers are role models; students copy or are inspired by the teacher's dress, the way of talking and caring, and the type of language the teachers use. So, teachers should try to select appropriate language while dealing with the students (Participant, 1).

“The teachers should always give their example that what they faced, so that students share their problems and they feel common to them” (Participant, 4). “I always change the seats of the students who exhibit some social issues so that they can't disturb the whole class” (Participant, 3). Teachers can act as role models for the social and emotional development of students in several ways.

Firstly, teachers can model positive social and emotional behaviors for their students. They can demonstrate healthy ways of managing emotions, such as expressing themselves calmly and constructively. Teachers can also model positive social behaviors, such as being kind and respectful to others, which can help students to develop similar behaviors. Secondly, teachers can provide students with opportunities to practice social and emotional skills. By creating a supportive and inclusive classroom environment, teachers can encourage students to work collaboratively, communicate effectively, and resolve conflicts constructively. Teachers can also provide students with opportunities to practice self-reflection and self-awareness, which can help them to develop a better understanding of their own emotions and behaviors.

Thirdly, teachers can provide students with feedback and guidance on their social and emotional development. By providing students with constructive feedback, teachers can help them to identify areas for improvement and develop strategies for addressing these areas. Teachers can also provide students with guidance on how to manage difficult emotions, such as stress and anxiety. Finally, teachers can foster positive relationships with their students. By building positive relationships, teachers can create a safe and supportive environment where students feel comfortable and respected. This, in turn, can help students to develop positive social and emotional skills, such as empathy, respect, and self-regulation.

“Teachers should be calm when experiencing problematic students and don't take anything personally. Teachers should always encourage such students in activities in discussions and presentations” (Participant, 3). Staying calm and composed in dealing with problematic students is indeed a valuable technique. When faced with challenging behaviors or situations, maintaining a calm and composed demeanor allows educators to approach the situation from a place of clarity and rationality. Here are a few reasons why this technique is effective:

By staying calm, teachers demonstrate to students the importance of self-control and emotional regulation. They serve as positive role models, showing students that it is possible to handle difficult situations without resorting to anger or frustration. Conflict de-escalation: Remaining calm helps to de-escalate conflicts and diffuse potentially volatile situations. When teachers respond calmly, it reduces the likelihood of escalating the problem further and promotes a more conducive environment for resolution.

Calmness Allows for Better Communication

When teachers remain composed, they are better able to listen actively, understand students' concerns, and respond in a constructive and empathetic manner, these fosters open dialogue and can lead to more productive problem- solving. Building trust and rapport: When students observe their teachers staying calm in challenging situations, it builds trust and rapport. It sends the

message that the teacher is approachable, understanding, and invested in their well-being. This can encourage students to be more receptive to guidance and support.

Students who exhibit problematic behaviors often have underlying social and emotional issues. By staying calm, teachers create a safe and non-threatening environment where students feel more comfortable expressing their thoughts and emotions. This paves the way for addressing the root causes of their behavior and providing appropriate support.

Maintaining Classroom Management and Learning Approaches

Calmness is essential for effective classroom management. It allows teachers to respond to disruptions or conflicts with measured and consistent strategies, ensuring a positive learning environment for all students. While staying calm and composed is a valuable technique, it is important to note that it does not imply being passive or indifferent. “Teachers should still address problematic behaviors, set appropriate boundaries, and provide necessary guidance and discipline. However, doing so with a calm and composed demeanor promotes a more constructive and supportive approach to managing and addressing student issues” (Participant, 3).

“Teachers should give group and peer tasks to the students so that they build good relations with others” (Participant, 4). Group activities and discussions offer numerous benefits for introverted students. By engaging in these collaborative tasks, introverts can actively participate, develop social skills, gain exposure to diverse perspectives, build relationships, and thrive in a safe and supportive environment. Group activities also foster skill development in areas such as problem-solving and critical thinking. However, it's important to strike a balance by providing opportunities for individual work and reflection to accommodate introverted students' needs for solitude and independent processing. Creating a well-rounded learning environment that caters to both introverts and extroverts is important.

“Teachers should always give time to students or opportunities for students to share the thoughts and experiences” (Participant, 6). Providing students with opportunities to share their thoughts and feelings is indeed beneficial for identifying their social and emotional growth. When students feel comfortable expressing themselves, it allows teachers and caregivers to gain insights into their experiences, concerns, and perspectives. By actively listening and encouraging open communication, teachers can better understand students' social interactions, emotional well-being, and any challenges they may be facing. This approach helps create a supportive and inclusive environment where students' social and emotional needs can be addressed effectively.

“During the lecture, mostly it is observed that students facing some social-emotional issues have different body language and facial expressions. The teachers should create a bonding with them so that the student can easily share the problem” (Participant, 5). Creating positive connections with students is highly beneficial for their social and emotional well-being. When teachers establish positive relationships with students, it fosters a sense of trust, belonging, and emotional safety. This connection provides a supportive environment where students feel comfortable expressing themselves, seeking help when needed, and developing their social skills. Positive connections also contribute to students' self-esteem, resilience, and overall mental health. By showing genuine care, empathy, and understanding, teachers can positively impact students' social and emotional development and create a good learning environment.

“To engage the students in sports that have social and emotional problems is a best strategy to use”. Sports are good for building relations and being happy” (Participant, 4 and 5). Sports activities play a crucial role in the social and emotional development of students. Engaging in sports promotes physical fitness, teamwork, discipline, and resilience, which are all essential skills

for personal growth. Through sports, students learn to communicate effectively, cooperate with others, and develop strong interpersonal relationships. They also experience the joy of success, learn to handle failure gracefully, and develop resilience in the face of challenges. Sports activities provide opportunities for students to manage their emotions, develop self-control, and practice good sportsmanship. Additionally, participation in sports helps students build confidence, improve self-esteem, and develop a positive body image. Overall, sports activities contribute significantly to the holistic development of students, fostering their social skills, emotional well-being, and overall character development.

Background Knowledge about Student

Talking about the teacher's knowledge about their students two participants shared that "Having knowledge about the family background of the student is very important" (Participant, 3 and 6). "For dealing with the students with absentees, teachers should try to contact the parents and try to understand the problem" (Participant, 1). To have background knowledge about students is indeed crucial for teachers. It allows them to understand each student's unique needs, abilities, interests, and challenges. By knowing their background, such as cultural, social, and familial context, teachers can create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment.

Understanding a student's prior knowledge and experiences helps teachers tailor their instruction to meet individual needs and build upon existing knowledge. It also enables teachers to identify any potential social or emotional issues that may impact a student's learning and well-being. By establishing a positive teacher-student relationship based on this knowledge, teachers can effectively support their students' academic, social, and emotional growth.

Conclusion

For better academic and social performances, the development of students emotionally and socially is essential and the teachers play the key role in providing better environment for the students to improve the social and emotional issues. The two different aspects are considered important for social and emotional concerns among the students; first to have the professional capability to work with such students and second, the strategies to cope with such issues. To support social and emotional development, teachers should build positive relationships with students, tailor teaching approaches, act as positive role models, give students opportunities to express themselves, providing support and resources for teachers, utilizing counselors, ensuring school management support, offering professional development opportunities, and integrating social and emotional development into the curriculum. The professional counseling of the secondary school teachers and inclusion of emotional issues related contents in the curriculum is significant to deal such issues in a better way.

Recommendations

1. School systems should provide teachers with training and resources that can help them identify and address social and emotional issues among their students.
2. Teachers should aim to cultivate a positive and supportive relationship with their students, built on trust, mutual respect, and open communication.
3. The curriculum must address the student's social and emotional needs by integrating topics such as empathy, conflict resolution, stress management, and relationship building.
4. Teachers should provide a safe and supportive classroom environment that encourages students to express their emotions in constructive ways.

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