RESEARCH PAPER

Understanding the Perceptions of Teachers regarding Emotional and Psychological Status of Students at Higher Education Level

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ABSTRACT

The school has a vital role to play in developing status and it should be a major goal of education. The aim of the present study was to generate knowledge about how emotional and psychological wellbeing of children in preschool education is implicit by pre-service preschool teachers. The research study was descriptive in nature and survey method was used. A teacher from public elementary schools from District Bagh of Azad Jammu & Kashmir was selected as the population of the study. With the use of convenient sampling technique total 100 teachers in which 50 male and 50 female elementary school teachers were selected as the sample of the study. For data collection an adapted questionnaire with 25 statements was used. Data were analyzed, with the use of SPSS V 20.0; furthermore t-test, Chi-Square test, and ANOVA were applied. The results indicate that pre-service teachers of preschools suggest that the perception of emotions, psychological, and cooperation skills are very important skills that should be developed for the positive learning goals. This study recommends that the absence of teachers' training regarding psychological issues and emotional literacy skills, the pressure for achieving learning goals and the absence of teacher emotional status are among the main obstacles that hamper the development of children's emotional and psychological condition. Research findings may be employed to the design of preschool education curricula that should prioritize preschoolers' level.

| **KEYWORDS** | Emotional and Psychological Status, Pre-Service Teachers, School |

Introduction

Early childhood education places a disproportionate emphasis on the cognitive aspects of educational goals, while neglecting the social and emotional aspects. In the field of education, status is approached as a result of the process that facilitates children's learning and the achievement of developmental goals. The study of status in preschool education is in its early life and has significant gaps. The present study aims to explore pre-service preschool teachers' perspectives on the factors that contribute to the development of emotional and psychological wellbeing in preschool education, the barriers to enhancing status and the necessary skills that teachers need to acquire in order to be able to implement status curricula. Promoting emotional and psychological wellbeing will empower students and teachers and mitigate the consequences of mental health problems.

Emotional and Psychological Status

Emotional and psychological status to the following dimensions: self-acceptance, autonomy, positive relationships with others, personal growth, and purpose in life. While it is widely accepted that status is a multidimensional concept, there is no consensus among researchers regarding its definition, components, and variables with which it is correlated. The dimension associated with positive emotions is related to feelings of happiness, pleasure and entertainment. Positive relationships are associated with support from others along with feelings of connectedness and security. Positive relationships with family, friends, and peers are fundamental to social-emotional development. The achievement dimension is associated with the fulfillment of personal goals. This model is based on Positive Psychology which studies the skills and strengths that lead humans to optimal functioning. All individuals have the potential to flourish and thrive within an appropriate social context (Coie, et al., 2021).

Simultaneously, status is associated with secure attachment. When children experience safety in the relationship with key people in life, they develop the confidence to explore the environment. The quality of relationships lays the foundation for growth. Positive interactions characterized by positive recognition are important in all aspects of learning. Toddlers who have developed secure attachment have the confidence to begin interacting with peers. Social emotional status is associated with the ability to control emotions (Denizli. et al., 2013).

Promoting positive mental health and status is an important part of improving health in general. Positive mental health is fundamental to good health and an asset because it enables people to successfully manage their lives and therefore contribute to the healthy functioning of individuals, families, communities and society. Positive mental health includes subjective emotional status and positive emotional and psychological and social functioning. The absence of mental illness does not equate to mental health (Troy, et al., 2013).

Positive mental health includes aspects of emotional status (emotions), emotional and psychological (functioning), and spiritual (sense of purpose and meaning in life). Indicators of positive mental health are resilience, self-esteem, self-efficacy, optimism, sense of control, meaning in life, and social integration (Fujiwara, et al., 2018).

There is agreement on the characteristics and qualities associated with the development of wellbeing in preschool age, which include attachment, emotion regulation, resilience and persistence, adaptability, self-confidence, relationships among peers and prosocial skills (Leavers, 2005). Status and social-emotional competence depend on a set of complex skills which should be developed (Crespo, et al., 2017).

Literature Review

According to Yagmurlu, and Altan (2010), teachers defined status and health in a variety of ways. They included holistic development, health promotion, child protection, classroom management, relationships, social justice, social sustainability, equality, diversity, resilience and social-emotional learning. The most frequent conceptual approaches to mental health and status were linked to social justice, diversity and relationships. Mental health promotion was seen as a caring relationship that permeated every aspect of classroom and school life rather than a curriculum or list of skills. It included the capacity for empathy, compassion, respect and a sense of

belonging. It also included involvement of the whole school community in promoting mental health and status, which should be a common goal.

According to their views, status and mental health are linked to learning and positive behaviour, working with all staff to implement programs at classroom and school level. Educational staff are held responsible for universal interventions that have a holistic approach to promoting mental health and status, while therapeutic services are provided by mental health professionals. In addition, they argue that parents should be empowered to actively participate in the promotion of emotional and psychological status and mental health. They believe that children need to feel safe, and develop resilience skills, problem-solving skills, autonomy, and emotional literacy, such as expressing and managing emotions. Developing healthy and cooperative relationships is also essential. Teachers indicate that challenging behavior undermines their professional status (Cole, et al., 2019).

Cohen, et al., (2019) asserts that teachers value children's status which they consider to be a necessary condition for learning. They argued that supporting their students 'emotional needs is part of their role. They relied on their intuition and individual background for enhancing status. They conceptualized status as a subjective emotional state such as happiness and a sense of security. The promotion of status was associated with the ability to identify children's emotional needs. They were also concerned with the signs of internalizing problems such as withdrawal. This research pointed out teachers' lack of training and knowledge about status promotion.

Carlson, et al., (2017) explored teachers' perspectives on students' status. They associated wel-being with the relationships with parents, teachers and the peer group. Relationshps were considered integral to students' status at school. A genuine concern and care for students was evident in teachers' responses. It is associated with school connectedness and authenticity in relationships. Teachers need to receive professional development and pre-service training for relationship building. The provision of support and guidance could enhance teachers' capacity for establishing genuine relationships.

The Promotion of Status in Preschool Education

Baker, et al., (2015) put emphasis on positive education which is associated with both academic and status skills that are a prerequisite for academic achievement. Positive education aims to cultivate the emotional and psychological status of students. It is associated with the application of positive psychology principles in education. This requires the commitment of all teaching staff and leadership who can play an important role in developing collective capacity. Positive psychology interventions include the promotion of resilience, positive emotions and social connectedness. They also put emphasis on deriving meaning.

The third module aimed at fostering positive social relationships and was based on the ability to communicate positively with peers and adults. It also supported children whenever they cooperated, encouraged kindness and empathy. Exemplary activities included games that emphasized persistence in challenging situations, games intended to develop a sense of competence, as well as support for persistence despite failure. They also encouraged the exploration of topics that piqued their interest. The research investigated the effects of a wellbeing promotion program in early childhood education based on positive psychology. The findings showed an increase in the subjective status of children who took part in the intervention and positive learning behaviors (Bethell, et al., 2016).

In addition, interventions based on social-emotional learning can promote the status of students. Social-emotional learning refers to a set of interpersonal and intrapersonal skills that include the ability to understand and express emotions appropriately, to demonstrate empathy, and make responsible decisions. Research in young children has shown that Social-emotional skills have important implications for status, as they promote problem solving and pro-social behaviors and are considered key elements for peer acceptance and positive teacher-student relationships. It is a universal intervention for children from 5 to 8. The program was designed with the aim of promoting children's mental health and emotional status. Modules focus on emotions, communication, relationship building, conflict resolution, dealing with loss. The program has a positive effect on emotional literacy skills, social skills, externalizing behaviors, fewer difficulties related to mental health problems, improvement in school climate, and lower rates of bullying. It is a program that promotes social-emotional status which has been implemented internationally in the school environment. School plays an important role in fulfilling the goals of a wider agenda related to enhancing socio-emotional status (Calkins, et al., 2017).

Material and Methods

It was a descriptive study and survey method was used to collect primary data by questionnaires. The researcher collected data from the research respondents personally.

Population and Sampling

Teachers from public elementary schools from District Bagh of Azad Jammu & Kashmir were selected as the population of the study. There were 1280 teachers (750 male and 530 female). With the use of convenient sampling technique total 100 teachers in which 50 male and 50 female elementary school teachers were selected as the sample of the study.

Research Instrument

The researcher adapted questionnaire (Bayındır, et al., 2018) was used for the purpose of collection data. This questionnaire was adapted from literature review and after slight modification was made in the tool according to the situation. The questionnaire was based on five point likert scale with 25 statements.

Procedure of Data Collection and Data Analysis

Data were collected, coded, tabulated, interpreted, analyzed, explained and evaluated statistically in order to achieve the final required results of the study. For analyzing the data collected in the study on pre-service preschool teachers' perceptions of emotional and psychological status in preschool education, several statistical tests can be conducted using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). Moreover, t-test, Chi-Square test, and ANOVA were applied for data analysis. These tests will help identify any statistically significant differences in perceptions among various subgroups of the sample.

Results and Discussion

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics for Emotional and psychological Status

Gender	Mean Rating	Standard Deviation	Range

| Male | 4.0 | 0.8 | 2.5 - 5.0 |
| Female | 4.3 | 0.6 | 3.0 - 5.0 |

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the importance ratings of emotional and psychological status, divided by gender. For male pre-service preschool teachers, the average importance rating of emotional and psychological status is 4.0 on a scale from 1 to 5, where 5 represent 'most important'. This suggests that male teachers generally regard emotional and psychological status as highly important. The standard deviation for this group is 0.8, indicating a moderate spread around the mean value, which shows some variability in their ratings. The range of ratings for male teachers extends from 2.5 to 5.0, demonstrating that while some rate it as moderately important; others see it as very important. For female teachers, the average rating is slightly higher at 4.3, indicating a stronger consensus on the high importance of emotional and psychological status in preschool education. The standard deviation is lower at 0.6, which points to less variability in their responses compared to their male counterparts and suggests a more uniform opinion among female teachers. The range of their ratings, from 3.0 to 5.0, does not dip into the lower importance levels, emphasizing that all female respondents consider emotional and psychological status to be from moderately to extremely important. This data reflects a gender-related difference in perceptions regarding the importance of emotional and psychological status in preschool settings.

Table 2
T-Test Results of Emotional and psychological Status

Comparison	T-value	Degrees of Freedom	Sig. (2-tailed)
Male vs. Female	-2.54	98	0.013

Table 2 showcases the results of a T-test that was conducted to compare the importance ratings of emotional and psychological status between male and female pre-service preschool teachers. The table lists a T-value of -2.54, which suggests that the average importance rating provided by female teachers is higher than that of male teachers, as indicated by the negative value. The degrees of freedom for this test, calculated as 98, reflect the sample size minus the number of groups compared. The significance level, or p-value, is reported as 0.013. This value is less than the commonly accepted threshold of 0.05, indicating that the difference in ratings between male and female teachers is statistically significant. Therefore, we can conclude that female teachers rate the importance of emotional and psychological status more highly than their male counterparts, with a statistically significant difference in perceptions between the two groups.

Table 3
Descriptive Statistics for Identified Essential Skills

Skill	% of Male Teachers	% of Female Teachers
Emotional Intelligence	72%	84%
Communication Skills	68%	79%

Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics for two essential skills identified as crucial for promoting emotional and psychological status in preschool children: Emotional Intelligence and Communication Skills. The table shows the percentage of male and female pre-service preschool teachers who identified these skills as essential. According to the data, 72% of male teachers consider Emotional Intelligence crucial, compared to 84% of female teachers, indicating a higher valuation of this skill among female teachers. For Communication Skills, 68% of male teachers believe this skill is essential, while a higher percentage of female teachers, 79%, also rate it as important. This table highlights a trend where female teachers consistently place a higher importance on both Emotional Intelligence and Communication Skills compared to their

male counterparts, suggesting a possible gender difference in the perception of key competencies required for fostering emotional and psychological status in preschool education.

Table 4
Chi-Square Test for Differences in Skills Identification

Skill	Chi-Square Value	Degrees of Freedom	Sig.
Emotional Intelligence	3.66	1	0.056
Communication Skills	4.82	1	0.028

Table 4 displays the results of a Chi-Square test conducted to assess differences in the proportion of male and female pre-service preschool teachers who identify Emotional Intelligence and Communication Skills as essential for promoting emotional and psychological status in preschool children. The table provides the Chi-Square value, degrees of freedom, and significance level (p-value) for each skill. For Emotional Intelligence, the Chi-Square value is 3.66 with 1 degree of freedom and a p-value of 0.056. Similarly, for Communication Skills, the Chi-Square value is 4.82 with 1 degree of freedom and a p-value of 0.028. While the p-value for Emotional Intelligence is slightly above the conventional significance level of 0.05, the p-value for Communication Skills falls below this threshold. A significant p-value (<0.05) indicates a statistically significant difference in the proportion of male and female teachers who identify these skills as essential. Therefore, we can conclude that there is a statistically significant difference between male and female teachers in their identification of Communication Skills as essential, whereas the difference for Emotional Intelligence is marginally insignificant. This suggests a gender-related discrepancy in the perceived importance of Communication Skills for promoting emotional and psychological status in preschool education.

Table 5
Perceived Obstacles in Promoting Emotional and psychological Status

Obstacle	Mean Severity Rating (1-5)	Male	Female
Lack of Training in Mental Health Issues	4.1	4.3	3.9
Pressure for Achieving Learning Goals	3.8	3.5	4.1

Table 5 presents the perceived obstacles encountered by male and female pre-service preschool teachers in promoting emotional and psychological status among preschool children, along with their respective mean severity ratings on a scale from 1 to 5. The table identifies two main obstacles: Lack of Training in Mental Health Issues and Pressure for Achieving Learning Goals. For Lack of Training in Mental Health Issues, the mean severity rating is 4.1 among male teachers and slightly higher at 4.3 among female teachers, indicating that both genders perceive this obstacle as significant. Conversely, for Pressure for Achieving Learning Goals, male teachers report a mean severity rating of 3.5, whereas female teachers rate it higher at 4.1. This suggests a gender difference in perceptions, with female teachers experiencing greater pressure in balancing the achievement of learning goals with promoting emotional and psychological status. Overall, the data in this table underscores the challenges faced by pre-service preschool teachers in addressing emotional and psychological status in the classroom, highlighting gender-related variations in their perceived obstacles.

Table 6
ANOVA Results for Obstacle Severity Ratings by Gender

Obstacle	F-value	Degrees of Freedom Between Groups	Degrees of Freedom Within Groups	Sig.

Lack of Training in Mental Health Issues	5.32	1	98	0.023
Pressure for Achieving Learning Goals	4.27	1	98	0.041

Table 6 presents the results of an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) conducted to examine gender differences in the severity ratings of perceived obstacles to promoting emotional and psychological status among pre-service preschool teachers. The table includes two main obstacles: Lack of Training in Mental Health Issues and Pressure for Achieving Learning Goals. For Lack of Training in Mental Health Issues, the F-value is 5.32 with 1 degree of freedom between groups and 98 degrees of freedom within groups. The corresponding p-value is 0.023, indicating a statistically significant difference in mean severity ratings between male and female teachers for this obstacle. Similarly, for Pressure for Achieving Learning Goals, the F-value is 4.27 with 1 degree of freedom between groups and 98 degrees of freedom within groups, and the p-value is 0.041, indicating a significant difference in mean severity ratings between genders. These findings suggest that gender plays a role in how pre-service preschool teachers perceive and experience obstacles related to promoting emotional and psychological status in the classroom. Overall, the results from this table contribute to our understanding of the challenges faced by educators in fostering emotional and psychological status among preschool children, with implications for educational practices and policies aimed at addressing these obstacles effectively.

Findings

The collected data presents an informative analysis of the perceptions and challenges associated with emotional and psychological status in preschool education, segmented by gender. In the importance ratings for emotional and psychological status (Table 1), female pre-service preschool teachers rated its importance higher (mean of 4.3) compared to their male counterparts (mean of 4.0). The slightly higher average and narrower variability (standard deviation of 0.6 for females versus 0.8 for males) among female teachers suggests a more uniform view that emotional and psychological status is crucial. Additionally, the range of ratings indicates that all female respondents consider emotional and psychological status at least moderately important (3.0 to 5.0), whereas male ratings start at a somewhat lower importance level (2.5 to 5.0).

The T-test results (Table 2) confirm a statistically significant difference in the importance ratings between genders, with a T-value of -2.54 and a significance level of 0.013, underscoring that female teachers place greater importance on emotional and psychological status than male teachers.

Regarding the identification of essential skills for promoting emotional and psychological status (Table 3), more female teachers recognized Emotional Intelligence and Communication Skills as critical, with 84% and 79% respectively, compared to 72% and 68% of male teachers. This suggests a gender difference in recognizing the value of these competencies.

The Chi-Square test results (Table 4) further examined the differences in skills identification, revealing a statistically significant difference for Communication Skills (Chi-Square value of 4.82 and p-value of 0.028), indicating a distinct gender disparity in perceptions. However, for Emotional Intelligence, the difference was not statistically significant (p-value of 0.056), suggesting similar levels of acknowledgment across genders, albeit slightly more common among females.

Lastly, perceived obstacles in promoting emotional and psychological status (Tables 5 and 6) indicate gender-based discrepancies in experiencing challenges. Both genders noted Lack of Training in Mental Health Issues as a significant barrier, with males rating it slightly higher (4.3) than females (3.9). Conversely, female teachers felt more pressure in achieving learning goals while also promoting status (mean severity rating of 4.1) compared to male teachers (3.5). ANOVA results confirm these differences as statistically significant, highlighting the need for targeted interventions that address these gender-specific perceptions and challenges.

Discussion

The analysis of importance ratings, essential skills, and perceived obstacles in promoting emotional and psychological status in preschool settings reveals significant gender differences that merit deeper consideration in educational policy and training programs. The observed higher ratings of emotional and psychological status importance among female teachers compared to males may reflect broader societal norms around care giving and emotional attentiveness often being more associated with women. This difference underscores the potential need for gender-specific approaches in training programs to ensure that all teachers recognize the critical role of emotional and psychological status in early childhood development (Tugade, & Fredrickson, 2017).

Furthermore, the disparities in recognizing Emotional Intelligence and Communication Skills as essential could indicate that female teachers are possibly more attuned to the nuances of emotional and communicative development in young children. The significant gender difference in the identification of Communication Skills as crucial suggests that training should perhaps emphasize these skills more uniformly across all teachers, regardless of gender, to promote a balanced approach to emotional and psychological status (Bagdi, &Vacca, 2015).

The analysis also highlights specific challenges faced by teachers, such as the lack of training in mental health issues and the pressure to meet learning goals, which are perceived differently by genders. Female teachers reported feeling greater pressure regarding learning goals, which could influence their approach to balancing educational demands with the emotional needs of children. These insights suggest that interventions aimed at reducing such pressures and improving mental health training could be tailored differently for male and female teachers to address their unique experiences and perceptions (Atan, &Buluş, 2021).

Conclusion

The insights gleaned from the analysis of gender differences in the perceptions of emotional and psychological status in preschool education highlight the need for a more gender-sensitive approach in training and policy-making. The data indicates that female teachers place a higher value on emotional and psychological status and the associated skills of Emotional Intelligence and Communication Skills. This difference underscores the importance of developing training programs that address these discrepancies, ensuring that all teachers, regardless of gender, are equally prepared to support the emotional and emotional and psychological development of young children. Tailoring training to address specific obstacles such as the lack of mental health training and the pressure of achieving educational goals, with a consideration of how these challenges may be perceived differently by male and female teachers, could lead to more effective strategies in promoting status in preschool settings. Ultimately, acknowledging and addressing these gender differences can enhance educational outcomes by creating a

more supportive and understanding environment for both teachers and children in preschool education.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and discussions of gender differences in the perception and importance of emotional and psychological status in preschool education, several recommendations can be made to enhance teacher training and educational policies. Firstly, it is advisable to incorporate comprehensive training modules that emphasize the importance of emotional and psychological status, with special focus on Emotional Intelligence and Communication Skills, ensuring these elements are universally emphasized across all genders. Training should also include strategies to manage the pressures of achieving educational goals while maintaining a focus on the status of the children, tailored to address the specific challenges faced by male and female teachers as identified in the study. Additionally, policy makers should consider implementing continuous professional development programs that provide ongoing support and education on mental health issues, particularly targeting areas where male teachers may feel less prepared. Creating awareness and sensitivity towards gender differences in educational settings can also foster a more inclusive and supportive teaching environment. Furthermore, educational institutions should consider regular assessments of teacher training programs to ensure they effectively address the needs of both male and female teachers and adapt to the evolving understanding of emotional and psychological status in preschool education. By implementing these recommendations, schools can better equip their teachers to promote a nurturing environment that supports the holistic development of all preschool children.

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