



RESEARCH PAPER

Emotionally Empowered Learners: Promoting Emotional Literacy Practices at Government Primary Schools

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed to identify emotional intelligence and literacy practices among Pakistan's primary school teachers. The population of the investigation involved 4927 teachers from government primary schools in the district of Multan, Punjab, Pakistan. Using the Schutte Assessing Emotions Scale, the data were collected from a sample of 391 teachers selected through simple random sampling procedures from primary schools. The data was analyzed through descriptive statistics (frequency, mean, and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (t-test). The results showed that teachers exhibited higher emotional competencies in primary schools. However, the study also found that primary school teachers were not effectively employing strategies for promoting emotional literacy in their classrooms. The study recommended that emotional literacy should be an integral part of education for developing students' emotional aspects and keeping them emotionally empowered in their academic lives in schools.

KEYWORDS Empowered, Emotional Literacy, Learners, Primary Schools, Teachers

Introduction

The early years of children's lives are of utmost significance, as their experiences and backgrounds profoundly impact their future trajectories. It is during these critical years that children establish the fundamental building blocks for their cognitive and educational development. According to Aktepe and Gündüz (2022), emotions are physical and physiological reactions that occur depending on the emotions we experience. Moreover, emotionally literate individuals can cultivate greater empathy, manage their emotions, and regulate them more efficiently (Devcich et al., 2017). In addition to this, Wilding and Claridge (2016) suggest that emotional literacy has introduced the emotional aspects of learning in the field of education.

Researchers have long recognized that emotions significantly impact a person's overall functioning and play a crucial role in interpersonal relations, motivation, and learning. However, according to Jurišin and Đermanov (2018), the way emotions have been addressed in educational settings was characterized as "emotionally blind" until recently. Furthermore, emotional literacy, defined as a notion about well-being alone would provide modest findings when assessing well-being (Krause et al., 2020). In this regard, Wilding and Claridge (2016) emphasize that social settings and interpersonal relationships shape emotional literacy, and students with better emotional balance perform more successfully (Ahmed et al., 2019).

In addition to this, all nations worldwide are now incorporating emotional factors in curricula, which strongly influence education. Indeed, the social and emotional

competencies are most effective when embedded within the school context (Barlas et al., 2022). Students who lack this emotional connection may feel distant, unmotivated, and as if their existence has no purpose or meaning (Bukhari et al., 2017). Furthermore, Timmons et al. (2016) detected changes in children's self-regulation in classroom contexts. Furthermore, teachers serve as valuable resources for facilitating learning, making emotional literacy an essential issue in the classroom. Additionally, Razaqat (2022) argues that understanding and managing stakeholders' emotions are crucial for making learning more effective and preventing conflicts. Nevertheless, schools face challenges in advancing emotional learning among staff members (Grant et al., 2023). These processes foster and develop emotional skills like self-regulation, mindfulness, and empathy (Petrosino et al., 2021). Additionally, both the mind and emotions largely drive education (Aktepe & Gündüz, 2022).

Researchers now recognize well-being literacy, often synonymous with emotional literacy, as a crucial field of study for enhancing positive emotional experiences and promoting widespread mental health (Francis et al., 2020). Similarly, positive psychology interventions (PPI) aim to safeguard emotional well-being, foster positive emotions, and improve overall functioning (Hendriks et al., 2020). Emotional literacy and emotional intelligence are increasingly becoming critical skills for personal and professional success. In the context of higher education, fostering emotional intelligence is essential for the holistic development of students (Perkasa et al., 2020).

Furthermore, emotional literacy can serve as an alternative framework for emotional intelligence, which is considered one of the most important factors influencing student success. As the research suggests, social-emotional learning (SEL) positively impacts students' emotional and academic development. However, schools in Pakistan face multiple obstacles in promoting SEL, such as a lack of awareness, insufficient resources, and a shortage of teacher training (Barlas et al., 2022). Furthermore, Baig (2019) also indicated that schools across developed nations increasingly recognize the importance of social and emotional aspects of learning.

In Pakistan, emotional literacy and emotional intelligence are critical to understanding, managing, and utilizing emotions in educational settings. The term emotional literacy encompasses non-intellectual abilities and skills, as well as their ability to cope with the expectations and demands of the educational environment. Furthermore, emotional intelligence allows children to think and behave more imaginatively, as well as use their emotions to solve everyday difficulties. Emotional literacy might thus serve as a temporary replacement for the idea of emotional intelligence, which is widely acknowledged as the most significant component deciding and affecting students' performance in life, particularly throughout childhood. Many students, although having exceptional cognitive talents, fail because they lack emotional competence in their academic life. Several studies have found that an individual's emotional life has a substantial impact on academic performance and social adoption both outside and within the classroom. Emotional intelligence outperforms cognitive intelligence in terms of resulting in positive life outcomes. In other words, emotional intelligence outpaces cognitive intelligence. Likewise, there is no denying the need to acquire emotional intelligence and emotional literacy in primary schools as this is the period when emotions have a considerable influence on children's intellectual progress, particularly at the primary level. Based on the scope of emotional literacy in the modern era there is a necessity for research into emotional literacy for optimal student accomplishment. The purpose of this study is to measure teachers' emotional intelligence in their attempts to promote emotional literacy practices in primary schools.

Literature Review

In a related study, Penfold (2021) argued that for children, especially in underdeveloped nations, emotional literacy is key to articulating a broad range of feelings. To help children develop this skill, practitioners should strive to create emotionally literate environments. Moreover, Malik and Shahid (2016) investigated the connection between emotional intelligence (EI) and academic achievement among Pakistani university students.

Furthermore, Ahmed et al. (2019) explored emotional intelligence, stating that social-emotional learning is an equity-based pedagogical approach. According to Penfold (2021), emotionally literate children are better equipped to cope with difficult emotions, such as grief and fear. Similarly, Kotsou et al. (2019) highlighted that emotional intelligence fosters the values and behaviors essential for sustainable development. Moreover, Iqbal and Haider (2016) explored the bond between emotional intelligence and leadership among university students in Pakistan, revealing a positive correlation that indicates students with high EI are more likely to become successful leaders. Cristóvão et al. (2017) found that individuals who lack social abilities often experience social stress and isolation, negatively affecting their academic motivation and self-esteem. In another study, Chan (2015) examined how emotional intelligence impacts sustainable development in green schools, noting that EI can play a significant role in empowering students emotionally.

Material and Methods

The current research investigation utilized a descriptive and quantitative research design. The study's population consisted of 4,927 teachers from primary schools in the district of Multan, Punjab Pakistan. The population of this study was heterogeneous, including males and females, primary school teachers from both males and females, different age groups, varying levels of experience and qualifications, and so forth. The population was drawn from primary schools, which were government-owned and run educational institutions offering education up to the 5th class. In the initial phase, the researchers selected 32 government primary schools from a total of 878 schools in the Multan district, which the researchers could easily reach within the city.

Eventually, the researchers obtained a sample of 391 teachers from various primary government schools, including both male (163) and female (228) teachers, using a simple random sampling procedure. The main tool for the collection of data was utilized by obtaining permission from the main author. Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale, based on Salovey and Mayer's (1990) innovative emotional intelligence paradigm, to accomplish the research objectives. The original SSEIT model consists of 33 items, structured on a five-point Likert scale for self-reporting, ranging from 1 for strongly agree to 5 for strongly disagree. Therefore, primary school teachers used the Schutte Self-Report scale to assess their emotional skills and competencies. Additionally, Schutte proposed a three-factor model that comprises three distinct sub-scales or factors: evaluation of emotions, optimism and regulation of emotions, and intrapersonal and interpersonal use of emotions. The Schutte three-factor scale consisted of 24 elements derived from the original SSREIT, which initially had 33 items.

Moreover, the design of the observation sheet aimed to determine whether the chosen primary school teachers were implementing emotional literacy practices. To accomplish this, the researchers observed teachers twice in different classes on the same day, using a dichotomous scale of Yes or No. Moreover, the researchers used the

observation sheet to identify and determine whether teachers reporting high emotional intelligence were performing emotional literacy practices or not. The researcher developed the observation sheet for this purpose, observed teachers during visits to the chosen schools, and duly filled in the observation sheets for each teacher.

Furthermore, the observation sheets contained a total of 8 different aspects related to emotional literacy practices. The teachers responded to each statement using a dichotomous scale, indicating whether they performed these emotional literacy practices or not. The researchers ensured the reliability of the SREIT before its implementation. The present correlation matrix revealed a substantial positive correlation across all the subscales of the SREIT, ranging from .47 to .91. The study deemed the SREIT research instrument legitimate for measurement. The present investigation found that the test had good internal consistency, as shown by an alpha value of .89.

Thus, it validates Schutte's (1998) assertion that the scale's items assessed a single factor. Experts in the field of education verified the validity of the instrument. These experts vetted the observation sheet as part of the validation process, scrutinizing its reliability and validity. The researchers used descriptive statistics and other data presentation tools, including graphical methods for data representation and tabulation methods, to present the collected data in a specific format for the quantitative analysis of the observation sheets.

In summary, ensuring the study's integrity requires careful attention to ethical issues. Before commencing the data collection procedure, the researcher explained the study's aims to all participants to establish their trust. All respondents agreed on a mutually convenient time for data collection. Importantly, the subject matter of this research did not address any ethical or moral concerns for the participants. Thus, any scientific investigation involving human subjects must strictly conform to an ethical code of conduct. Ultimately, the research adhered to all relevant ethical criteria.

Results and Discussion

The research study utilized different statistical techniques for quantitative data analysis, metrics such as frequency, mean, and standard deviation were used as well as inferential statistics, and t-tests.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics for Responses of Selected Primary School Teachers on Appraisal of Emotions

Item no.	Statements	Mean	SD
2	When confronted with challenges, I draw upon past experiences when I encountered comparable difficulties and successfully surmounted them.	4.23	1.137
6	Several significant occurrences in my life have prompted me to reassess the significance of certain things.	3.82	1.336
7	My perception of fresh opportunities expands as my mood fluctuates.	4.45	0.882
17	When I am experiencing a pleasant attitude, I find it easy to solve challenges.	3.64	1.251

20	During periods of good effect, I can generate novel thoughts.	3.91	1.253
23	I inspire myself by envisioning a favorable conclusion for the things I do.	4.01	1.216
24	I express admiration to people after they have accomplished a task.	2.41	0.799

The data given in Table 1 shows the average responses of selected respondents to different items of the Schutte Assessing Emotions Scale. The results that the average responses of individuals to the items from 2 to 24 vary in range from 4.45 to 2.41. The average responses revealed that is that most of the teachers possess the capacity to see new possibilities in their lives however they lack the skill to complement others in their accomplishment.

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics for Responses of Teachers on Optimism and Regulation of Emotions

Item no.	Statements	Mean	SD
3	I anticipate achieving success in the majority of my endeavors.	4.18	1.163
10	I hope for positive outcomes.	4.12	0.988
12	When I encounter a favorable feeling, I possess the knowledge and ability to prolong its duration.	4.29	0.935
14	I actively pursue hobbies that bring me joy.	4.01	1.216
19	I understand the reasons for the fluctuations in my emotions.	4.28	0.969
21	I possess the mastery of my emotions.	4.28	0.969

Table 2 shows the average responses of selected respondents to different items of the Schutte Assessing Emotions Scale. The results show that the mean score of the teachers to these items from 3 to 21 varies in range from 4.28 to 4.1. The average responses revealed that most of the teachers have good control over their emotions and can successfully seek activities for their happiness.

Table 3
Descriptive Statistics for Responses of Selected Primary School Teachers on Intrapersonal and Relational Operation of Emotions

Item no.	Statements	Mean	SD
5	I struggle to comprehend the nonverbal cues shown by others.	4.15	1.034
15	I possess an understanding of the nonverbal cues that I transmit to others.	4.40	0.830
18	Through observing their facial expressions, I can discern the emotions that individuals are undergoing.	2.54	0.897

Table 3 shows the average responses of selected respondents to different items of the Schutte Assessing Emotions Scale. The results show that the average responses of teachers to these 5 to 18 items vary in range from 4.40 to 2.54. The average responses revealed that is that most of the respondents are well aware of their non-verbal messages communicated to others, however, the majority of the respondents are not able to identify other persons' emotional states and experiences.

Table 4
Gender-wise analysis of teachers' various factors from the Schutte three-factor scale

Factors	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Appraisal of Emotions	Male	130	43.0000	9.12066	1.17747	-.843	.400	-1.33571
	Female	228	44.3357	10.71851	.90588			
Optimism and Regulation of Emotions	Male	163	13.4500	3.12141	.40297	.450	.653	.24286
	Female	228	13.2071	3.64523	.30808			
Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Utilization of Emotions	Male	163	10.1167	2.17140	.28033	.272	.786	.09524
	Female	228	10.0214	2.31190	.19539			

Table 4 provides insights into the emotional intelligence levels of both male and female teachers. The results show that there is no statistically significant difference between male and female teachers' emotional intelligence or ability to judge emotions, as demonstrated by the fact that the mean scores were about the same and the t-value wasn't significant. However, in the domain of optimism and emotion regulation, male teachers are inferior at controlling their emotions and have a slightly lower mean score (43.000) than female (44.3357) teachers. Similarly, there is no significant difference between male and female teachers in the third factor, which pertains to the interpersonal and intrapersonal utilization of emotion. As a result, the findings imply that gender does not significantly influence emotional skills and competencies within the context of this study.

Table 5
Number of Respondents Promoting Mutual Cooperation through Small Activities

Responses	# of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	310	69.20%
No	138	30.80%
Total	448	100.00%

The Table 5 indicates that 69 percent of respondents were performing different activities during their time in class, aimed to promote cooperation among the students. For example, different teachers were found involved in assigning group tasks, and some teachers were found to provide opportunities for students to perform mutual tasks and activities. Similarly, the remaining 31 percent of teachers selected were found not involved in any of such activities that promote the cooperation among the students.

Table 6
Number of Respondents Teach Conflict Resolution Skills

Responses	# of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	25	5.58%
No	423	94.42%
Total	448	100.00%

The Table 6 shows that just 6 percent of selected primary school teachers were found involved in assigning leadership roles to the students of their classes. Different leadership roles observed during this study include monitoring of class by the head boy/girl, assigning them tasks to get things done, and so forth. However, 94 percent of selected primary school teachers were not active in initiating these roles for students.

Table 7

Foster a Safe and Supportive Environment

Responses	# of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	133	29.04%
No	315	70.96%
Total	448	100.00%

The Table 7 portrays that 29 percent of individuals were found involved in providing a safe and supportive environment to the students while 71 percent of respondents lacked this skill to create a supportive culture in classrooms.

Table 8
Employs Various Strategies of Appreciation

Responses	# of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	93	20.76%
No	355	79.24%
Total	448	100.00%

The Table shows showing number of respondents who were found involved in employing different strategies for the appreciation of their students. The analysis above suggested that only 21 percent of selected primary school teachers were found involved in employing different strategies that appreciate the students while the remaining 79 percent of respondents were not involved in employing such practices.

Table 9
Narrates Inspirational Quotes and Storytelling: In Class to Enhance Positive Thinking

Responses	# of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	33	7.37%
No	415	92.63%
Total	448	100.00%

The Table 9 aimed to identify whether or not, the selected primary school teachers in primary schools are involved in narrating inspirational quotes in the class, aimed to enhance the positive thinking with the class. The data above shows that only 7 percent of selected primary teachers were involved in narrating inspirational quotes in the class to develop positive thinking among the students while the remaining 93 percent of teachers were not involved in such types of activities.

Table 10
Number of Teachers Use Visual Aids and Emotion Cards:

Responses	# of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	13	2.90%
No	435	97.10%
Total	448	100.00%

The Table 10 reveals that just 3 percent of selected and observed teachers were involved in using visual aids and emotion cards while the remaining 97 percent of primary school teachers were not promoting this aspect of emotional literacy.

Table 11
Number of Teachers Empathize with Students in Class

Responses	# of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	23	5.13%
No	425	94.87%
Total	448	100.00%

The Table 11 indicates that just 5 percent of selected and observed teachers were involved in empathizing with the students while the remaining 95 percent of primary school teachers were not equipped with this emotional skill.

Table 12
Number of Teachers Involves students while making Classroom rules

Responses	# of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	18	4.02%
No	430	95.98%
Total	448	100.00%

This Table 12 reveals that just 4 percent of selected teachers were found to make their students involved in making rules and regulations for class. On the other hand, the remaining 96 percent of selected primary school teachers were found involved in nothing regarding the involvement of students in making rules and regulations of class.

Conclusions

This study explored the emotional competencies of teachers and their endeavors to promote a culture at school in establishing a literate environment where students can express their feelings, and emotions adequately. According to the study outcomes, teachers possess a high level of emotional competencies. The present study results align with Alemdar and Anilan, (2022) in which teachers' overall emotional competencies were found to be high. The results showed that the teachers were found more active in performing activities only while the rest of the aspects were majorly ignored by the teachers. Crucially, the teachers appeared unmotivated, discouraged, and not involved in emotional literacy practices in schools. Results are consistent with Dolev and Leshem (2017) in which it was indicated that negligence of affective education and emotional literacy in schools seems to cause problems in society. The recommended approach involves prioritizing these skills in school programs and aligning goals with the individual's developmental stages and grades. Thus, emphasizes holistic development, engaging social, emotional, and spiritual gains through prevailing affective education and emotional literacy skills (Aktepe & Gündüz, 2022). Kids need to learn how to manage their own emotions, develop self-awareness, and navigate relationships. But these abilities aren't enough to foster a child's moral growth and development on their own. Students who are emotionally and socially literate can also read people in a group (Burroughs & Barkauskas, 2017). The investigation consequences disclosed that there was a noteworthy variance in the optimism and regulation of emotions among male and female teachers in schools. Similarly, Sarker et al. (2017) in their research study highlighted that traditional gender roles have different effects on the emotional regulation and socialization of females and males depending on the cultural effects. The possible reasons for this result can stem from that families are socially and culturally different and the regions where they live are different from each other. These findings can be different due to the different emotional intelligence levels of females and males. The results of the study may facilitate the teachers to organize the environment of the school in a way that all the students may be provided with a conducive environment for social and academic stability and growth. The discussion above shows that based, female primary school teachers possess different emotional skills they in general can regulate such practices in schools to promote emotional literacy among students in schools.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the basis of analysis.

- Teachers at the primary school level must be provided with training regarding emotional literacy practices so that they can practice emotional literacy at their schools and play their role in the development of students.
- Secondly, it is important for the administration to add emotional literacy to the curriculum at the primary school level so that children and students can be emotionally trained from their basic level of education.
- Awareness programs, seminars, presentations, and publications for head teachers, parents, and pupils should be organized for the recognition of emotional literacy in educational institutions.
- Pilot projects in school should be started to foster social competence and self-awareness to determine the fact what can be achieved in reality and to ground the world in an observable setting.

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