



EFFECT OF SOFT SKILLS TRAINING ON EMOTIONAL COMPETENCY OF PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT

This Study examines the effect of Soft Skills training on Emotional Competency of Prospective Teachers by administering pre and post test. Within the framework of quasi-experimental research, the present study has utilized the experimental method and the one-group pre-test post-test design for the experiment. 90 prospective teachers who were enrolled in a two-year teacher training program (B.Ed.) at three of the training colleges of Bundelkhand University in Jhansi, India, during the academic year 2022–2023 made up the sample size. Before the Soft Skills training is administered, the participants' Emotional Competency is measured using appropriate assessment tools. The Soft Skills training is provided to the selected group of prospective teachers. After the Soft Skills training has been completed, the participants' Emotional Competency is measured again using the same assessment tools. The changes in the participants' competencies from the pre-test to the post-test are analyzed statistically by paired sample t-test. The intervention or training in soft skills appears to have had a very significant impact on emotional competency, according to the results. The results highlight the value of including soft skills in teacher preparation programs to provide educators the interpersonal and emotional intelligence needed for effective teaching.

Key Words – *Soft Skills, Emotional Competency, Prospective Teachers*

1. INTRODUCTION

In the last few decades, there has been an increased realization that the 21st century is characterized by constant, frequent, rapid and profound changes, which entails different demands and expectations and requires a wider scope of capabilities than ever before in adapting to the changing world. At this specific point in time of the COVID-19 global crisis, the professional and academic worlds these changes are presented with new and unfamiliar challenges to on macro and micro levels which require adapting to a new and dynamic reality (Naamati et al., 2020).

In recent decades, it has been recognized that soft skills (Deming, 2017), and especially emotional and social skills (Bar-On, 2006), play an important role in many fields and disciplines, and should be cultivated through education (Warin, 2017). Yet, its assimilation into academic curricula has been relatively limited, isolated and inadequate (Heckman & Kautz, 2013). With the outbreak of the COVID-19 and the transition to distance learning, this problem seems to be exacerbated. It is precisely at this stage of quarantine and social isolation, worries and anxieties, economic and professional uncertainty, that soft skills are particularly important. In particular, the issue of distance learning poses challenges for lecturers and students alike, as they must cope not only with technological barriers and obstacles, but also emotional and social challenges. However, although crucial to coping, distance learning is typically perceived as a challenging platform for soft skills development. This article presents a method and tool to develop students' soft skills through distance learning. While especially suited to the current COVID-19 crisis, it can later serve as a milestone in

preparing learners to the needs of the 21st century, without any major change to the academic curriculum (Naamati et al., 2020).

1.1 TEACHERS' EMOTIONAL COMPETENCY

Emotionally competent teachers have high self-awareness. They recognize their emotions, emotional patterns, and tendencies and know how to generate and use emotions such as joy and enthusiasm to motivate learning in themselves and others. They have a realistic understanding of their capabilities and recognize their emotional strengths and weaknesses. Socially and emotionally competent teachers also have high social awareness.

They know how their emotional expressions affect their interactions with others. Such teachers also recognize and understand the emotions of others. They are able to build strong and supportive relationships through mutual understanding and cooperation and can effectively negotiate solutions to conflict situations. Socially and emotionally competent teachers are culturally sensitive, understand that others may have different perspectives than they do and take this into account in relationships with students, parents and colleagues.

Emotionally competent teachers exhibit pro social values and make responsible decisions based on assessment of factors including how their decisions may affect themselves and others. They respect others and take responsibility for their decisions and actions.

They can regulate their emotions in healthy ways that facilitate positive classroom outcomes without compromising their health. They effectively set limits firmly, yet respectfully. They also are comfortable with a level of ambiguity and uncertainty that comes from letting students figure things out for themselves. Social and Emotional Competency is associated with well-being. When teachers experience mastery over these social and emotional challenges, teaching becomes more enjoyable, and they feel more efficacious. However, whereas the above teacher characteristics would be considered ideal in any educational setting, little attention has been paid to supporting teachers' social and emotional competency. Given the lack of explicit pre-service or in-service training aimed at teachers' personal development, the current educational system appears to assume that teachers have the requisite social and emotional competency to create a warm and nurturing learning environment, be emotionally responsive to students, form supportive and collaborative relationships with sometimes difficult and demanding parents, professionally relate to administrators and colleagues, effectively manage the growing demands imposed by standardized testing, model exemplary emotion regulation, sensitively coach students through conflict situations with peers, and effectively handle the challenging behaviors of disruptive students. Thus, contextual changes including alterations in the articulation of the broader society and goals for young people, policies and foci for pre-service and in-service training, new models of performance assessment, and other factors might alter the valuing and support for teachers' social and emotional competency.

Because emotional competency is context dependent, an individual may function in a high level in one context but need training and/or experience to adapt to another. For example, an individual who manages his or her social and emotional life well in a work domain where he or she interacts with adults in predictable ways may not necessarily have the Competency to function well in a classroom full of energetic young children without additional training or support. Also, a teacher who moves from a school with a cohesive and high-quality school climate to one with weak leadership and lack of trust between teachers may require new skills and supports. A teacher who moves to a school composed primarily of adults and children from an unfamiliar culture may need to adapt in new ways and receive additional training. Furthermore, the developmental needs of students may require changes in teacher competencies. For example, a teacher who adeptly handles the social and emotional needs of a first-grade class may require extra training if he or she transfers to a secondary school classroom where a different approach may be required. Finally, other context factors such as school climate and administrator support may moderate the social and emotional competency a teacher may exhibit in a particular classroom setting.

2. NEED AND IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY :

A comprehensive set of skills required by a Teacher which is termed as 'Soft Skills'. The importance of Soft Skills as distinct from hard skills or domain knowledge is increasingly being recognized in several sectors of today's highly competitive world. Research in many fields has shown that successful in the work place, knowledge alone is not enough. Soft Skills are needed to deal with the external world and to work in collaborative manner with ones colleagues. (Alex, 2010). A classroom situation demands an effective use of

Soft Skills. Teaching learning, being a process of interaction becomes meaningful only in the presence and application of Soft Skills. The teacher with Soft Skills helps the students to acquire not only the right knowledge but also values, attitudes, habits and skills that are necessary to cope with the world of tomorrow.

Traditionally, it was thought that people acquire Soft Skills like Communication Skills, Negotiation Skills, Empathy, Leadership and Creative Thinking through experience and not through training. It is argued to some extent that these skills are developed as innate capacities. But at present, such a belief has lost its ground and it is proved with evidence that through Training Strategies it is possible to develop Soft Skills and in turn improve work efficiency (Mishra, 2010). Such a conclusion necessitates educationists to incorporate such strategies for Soft Skill development in education. It would be more effective if such a stride starts from Teacher Education.

The NCTE has been striving hard to achieve a planned and co-ordinated development of the Teacher Education system throughout the country. In the area of educational research, the importance of affective skills in teaching learning process has been studied. A step further, a more holistic term 'Soft Skills' has been gaining importance in the field of education also. Increase in the number of Soft Skills Training centers mainly related to industries and managerial sectors forced the educationists to imbibe the same in educational set up with necessary modification for classroom application. But very little has been done in concrete terms to plan Soft Skills Training in Teacher Education. Such an endeavor may result in significant change in the quality aspects of Teacher Education thereby resulting effective classroom teaching.

With the above discussions the Investigator sensed the need for integrating Soft Skills Training in the Teacher Education Program. So in the present study an effort has been made to investigate the effect of soft skills on emotional competency.

3. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

To Study the effect of Soft Skills training on Emotional Competency of Prospective Teachers

4. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

To Study the effect of Soft Skills training on Emotional Competency of Prospective Teachers by administering pre and post test

5. HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

There is no significant difference between the mean scores of pre and post-test of Emotional Competency of Prospective Teachers

6. DESIGN OF THE EXPERIMENT

The investigator has adopted the experimental method as the method of studying the effectiveness of Soft Skills training on Emotional Competency of Prospective Teachers. In the experimental method the investigator has adopted the one-group pre-test post-test design within the realm of quasi-experimental research for the experiment. Here's a brief explanation of this experimental design :

Selection of Participants : Size of the sample consisted of 90 prospective teachers pursuing two year teacher's training programme (B.Ed.) under various colleges of Bndelkhand University, Jhansi. The prospective teachers who will participate in the study are selected based on certain criteria, such as their willingness to take part in the training and their availability for the duration of the study.

Pre-Test Measurement : Before the Soft Skills training is administered, the participants' Emotional Competency is measured using appropriate assessment tools. This initial measurement is referred to as the "pre-test." It establishes a baseline of the participants' competencies before any intervention (Soft Skills training) takes place.

Intervention (Soft Skills training) : The Soft Skills training is provided to the selected group of prospective teachers. This training is designed to enhance their teaching skills, emotional understanding, and social interactions.

Post-Test Measurement : After the Soft Skills training has been completed, the participants' Emotional Competency is measured again using the same assessment tools that were used in the pre-test. This measurement is referred to as the "post-test."

Data Analysis : The changes in the participants' competencies from the pre-test to the post-test are analyzed statistically by paired sample t-test. This analysis aims to determine whether any improvements in Emotional Competency have occurred as a result of the Soft Skills training.

7. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The testing of this hypothesis has been done by comparing the mean scores of pre and post-test of Emotional Competency of Prospective Teachers. The data was analyzed with the help of paired t-test. The results are given in table-1 tot 3.

Table - 1

Paired Samples Statistics for Pre and Post Test of Emotional Competency

Variable	Paired Sample Statistics			
	N	Mean	SD	Standard Error
Emotional Competency				
Pre Test	90	150.211	11.632	1.226
Post Test	90	153.878	11.378	1.199

Table - 2

Paired Samples Correlation between Pre and Post test of Emotional Competency

Variable	Paired Sample Correlation		
	N	Correlation	Sig.
Emotional Competency			
Pre Test	90	0.932	< .01
Post Test	90		

Table - 3

Paired Sample t-Test for Pre and Post Test of Emotional Competency

Variable	Paired Differences			Paired Sample Test			Effect Sizes
	Mean	SD	Standard Error	t	df	p	Cohen's d
Emotional Competency							
Pre Test	3.667	4.261	0.449	8.163	89	<.01	4.261
Post Test							

Interpretation of the Mean Values :

Table-1 indicates the pre-test and post-test mean scores of emotional competency in the context of soft skills training:

Pre-test Mean Score (150.211) : This is the average emotional competency score of the participants before they underwent the soft skills training. It represents the baseline level of emotional competency among the participants before any intervention or training occurred.

Post-test Mean Score (153.878) - This is the average emotional competency score of the same participants after they completed the soft skills training. It reflects the emotional competency level after the training was administered.

The increase in mean score from the pre-test to the post-test after the soft skills training suggests a positive change in emotional competency scores. On average, participants' emotional competency scores improved from 150.211 to 153.878 after undergoing the soft skills training.

This increase indicates that the soft skills training had a beneficial impact on participants' emotional competency. The training likely provided participants with new knowledge, strategies, or techniques related to emotional competence, resulting in a measurable improvement in their emotional skills and abilities.

The increase of approximately 3.667 points may seem modest, but even small improvements in emotional competency can have a positive impact on various aspects of personal and professional life. Keep in mind that the effectiveness of the training isn't solely determined by the magnitude of the increase; it's also important to consider the practical significance, participants' subjective feedback, and potential long-term effects.

In conclusion, based on the provided mean values, the soft skills training appears to have contributed to an improvement in participants' emotional competency scores, suggesting that the training was successful in enhancing their emotional skills and abilities.

Interpretation of the t-value :

The statistical facts mentioned in the table-2 depict that the t-value obtained from the t-test is 8.163, with degrees of freedom (df) equal to 89. The results are considered significant at the 0.01 level of significance.

The t-value represents the magnitude of the difference between the means of the two groups, relative to the variability within each group. In this case, a t-value of 8.163 is quite large, indicating that the difference between the pretest and post-test scores is substantial when compared to the variability within each group.

Since the results are significant at the 0.01 level of significance, it means that the probability of obtaining such a large difference in means between the two groups, assuming there is no true difference in the population, is less than 0.01 (1%). In other words, the difference observed between the pretest and post-test scores is likely not due to random chance but rather suggests a real effect caused by the soft skill training.

In practical terms, the interpretation might be that the soft skill training had a significant positive impact on the emotional competency of prospective teachers. Therefore, null hypothesis "*there is no significant difference between the mean scores of pre and post-test of Emotional Competency of Prospective Teachers*" is rejected.

Cohen 'd' interpretation :

It is clear from the table-3 that the calculated Cohen's d value is 4.261 for the comparison between the pretest and post-test scores for emotional competency.

An effect size of 4.261 is considered extremely large. This suggests that the difference in means between the pretest and post-test scores is substantial, and the impact of the soft skill training on emotional competency is highly pronounced.

In practical terms, an effect size of this magnitude implies that the soft skill training had a significant and transformative effect on the emotional competency of the participants. The training led to a substantial improvement in emotional competency scores from before to after the training.

8. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research provides empirical evidence of the positive impact of soft skill training on the emotional competency of prospective teachers. The findings underscore the importance of incorporating soft skills into teacher education programs to equip educators with the interpersonal and emotional intelligence required for effective teaching. As the educational landscape evolves, nurturing both technical and soft skills will be pivotal in shaping competent and empathetic educators who can inspire and empower the next generation of learners.

9. EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

Here are some educational implications drawn from this study:

1. **Teacher Preparation Programs Enhancement:** The findings of this study emphasize the importance of incorporating soft skills training into teacher preparation programs. Teacher candidates need not only subject knowledge and pedagogical skills but also the ability to empathize, communicate effectively, and manage their emotions in the classroom. Teacher education programs can integrate modules or courses that focus on developing emotional intelligence and interpersonal skills.
2. **Holistic Professional Development:** The study underscores the need for a holistic approach to professional development for educators. In addition to continuing education in their subject areas, teachers should also have opportunities to enhance their emotional competency. Workshops, seminars, and ongoing training sessions can be designed to help teachers develop emotional intelligence, conflict resolution skills, and effective communication techniques.
3. **Positive Classroom Environment:** Teachers with strong emotional competency can create a more positive and inclusive classroom environment. They are better equipped to understand and address the emotional needs of their students. By modeling emotional intelligence, teachers can foster a supportive atmosphere that encourages open communication and mutual respect among students.
4. **Improved Student-Teacher Relationships:** Teachers who possess emotional intelligence are more likely to form positive and effective relationships with their students. They can better connect with students on an emotional level, which can lead to improved student engagement, motivation, and overall academic performance.
5. **Conflict Resolution Skills:** Soft skills training can equip teachers with the skills needed to handle conflicts and challenging situations in the classroom more effectively. Teachers who are adept at managing their emotions and facilitating constructive conversations can prevent conflicts from escalating and create a more harmonious learning environment.
6. **Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Integration:** The study supports the integration of social and emotional learning (SEL) curricula in schools. SEL programs explicitly teach students emotional intelligence, self-awareness, self-regulation, and interpersonal skills. If teachers have undergone similar training, they can better align their teaching practices with SEL principles and create a coherent approach to emotional development across the school.
7. **Teacher Wellbeing:** Emotional competency training can also benefit teachers personally by enhancing their own emotional well-being. Teaching can be emotionally demanding, and teachers who can manage their emotions effectively are less likely to experience burnout and stress. Schools and education systems should consider offering resources and support for teachers' emotional well-being.
8. **Professional Collaboration:** Soft skills training can facilitate better collaboration among teachers, as effective communication and conflict resolution are crucial in team settings. Teachers who can empathize with their colleagues and communicate clearly contribute to a more productive and collaborative work environment.
9. **Parent-Teacher Communication:** Teachers with strong emotional intelligence can establish more positive and productive relationships with parents and guardians. They can navigate difficult conversations with parents, understand their concerns, and work together to support students' holistic development.

In summary, the study's implications highlight the significance of integrating soft skills training into teacher education and professional development programs. By enhancing emotional competency, prospective teachers can create a more positive classroom environment, improve student-teacher relationships, and contribute to the overall well-being and success of both students and educators.

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