



NURTURING EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE: MINDFULNESS BASED PRACTICES FOR STUDENT TEACHERS

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Abstract

Emotional intelligence encompasses fully comprehending one's own emotions and those of others, showing empathy and compassion, and responding appropriately to both joyful and sorrowful situations (Yusuf and Nurishan, 2014: 242). In today's technologically advanced era, emotional intelligence has become crucial for individual success. However, due to the breakdown of traditional family structures, busy working parents, and early exposure to mobile devices and computers, students' emotional intelligence is waning due to decreased social interactions. Following the Covid-19 pandemic, many people spent much time alone and sometimes felt safer at home. It is essential to develop methods for enhancing emotional intelligence, whether in a group setting or alone at home. This research aims to enhance students' emotional intelligence through mindful practices and evaluate the impact of these practices. The study was conducted at G.V.M.C.O.E, Sonipat, using an experimental design. The sample comprised 50 student-teachers averaging 22 years of age, who were split into an intervention group (n=25) and a control group (n=25) using convenience sampling. Individuals in the intervention group partook in a mindfulness-based program twice a week for four weeks, involving a series of 5 breathing exercises and meditation training. Between the pretest and post-test evaluations, students in the intervention group demonstrated significant improvements in emotional intelligence. There were statistically notable differences in emotional intelligence scores between the intervention and control groups in the post-test. This suggests that exposure to mindful practices effectively enhances emotional intelligence.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence, Mindfulness, Student-Teachers, Learner-Centric Education, Social Emotional Learning

Introduction

The world of knowledge is evolving rapidly, driven by groundbreaking advancements in science and technology, particularly in fields like machine learning and artificial intelligence.

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In this dynamic landscape, teachers are no longer just experts in their academic disciplines but they bear the crucial responsibility of delivering learner-centric education that fosters critical thinking, adaptability, and creativity. As education shifts to meet the demands of the future, teachers must empower students with the skills to navigate and thrive in an increasingly complex, technology-driven world. The NEP 2020 states, "Education should not only develop cognitive abilities—like basic skills in literacy and numeracy, and higher-order cognitive skills such as critical thinking and problem-solving—but also social, moral, and emotional capacities and dispositions." The policy highlights the need to build SEL (Social and Emotional Learning) skills, such as communication, collaboration, teamwork, and resilience, across all age groups of students, with a foundation of equality. 'Education for Sustainable Development' (ESD) have touched upon focused aspects such as gender equality, emotional skills, social skills etc. Many Researchers also found that student learning improves when students are motivated, engaged (Saeed & Zyngier, 2012), autonomous (Grolnick & Ryan, 1987), and attentive (Kruschke, 2003). Educators agree that fostering these three factors is crucial for classroom success. To enhance these aspects, many psychologists emphasize the relationship between Emotional Quotient (EQ) and Intelligence Quotient (IQ), focusing on strategies that improve students' attention and academic performance. Recent studies have shown that emotional intelligence (EI) plays a significant role in academic, professional, and social success (CASEL, 2015). As a result, researchers are increasingly interested in how EI training can be integrated into the classroom to benefit students. Emotional Intelligence is closely tied to emotional development and related constructs, one of which is mindfulness. However, the relationship between EI and mindfulness has received limited attention. This paper explores the foundations of both concepts and examines their potential connections.

Emotional Intelligence (EI)

Ekman & Davidson (1994) define emotion as an internal event that strengthens humans, enabling them to react either to positive or negative circumstances by moving toward or away from them. On the other hand, intelligence refers to a person's ability to adapt to different circumstances. Taking into account these two factors, we can define Emotional Intelligence (EI) as our ability to perceive, understand, manage, and express emotions in a way that facilitates adaptation (Celma-Pastor & Rodríguez-Ledo, 2017). EI explains how well we recognize, regulate, and express emotions. This idea is further supported by Petrides et al.

(2007a), who proposed the "trait model" of EI, which suggests that EI is based on certain personality traits that can be measured. According to this model, EI can also be understood as emotional self-efficacy, meaning our belief in our ability to manage emotions, which is linked to different aspects of our personality (Petrides et al., 2007b). Additionally, research shows that EI can be improved through well-designed programs (Durlak et al., 2011). While many Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) programs focus on developing EI, they sometimes aim to improve related areas, like mindfulness, which is the focus of this study.

Emotional Intelligence (EI) emerges as a distinctive construct linking cognitive processes with emotional dynamics. Divergent from emotions, emotional styles, emotional traits, and conventional intelligence quotients (IQ), EI encapsulates a spectrum of competencies and skills distributed among five critical domains:

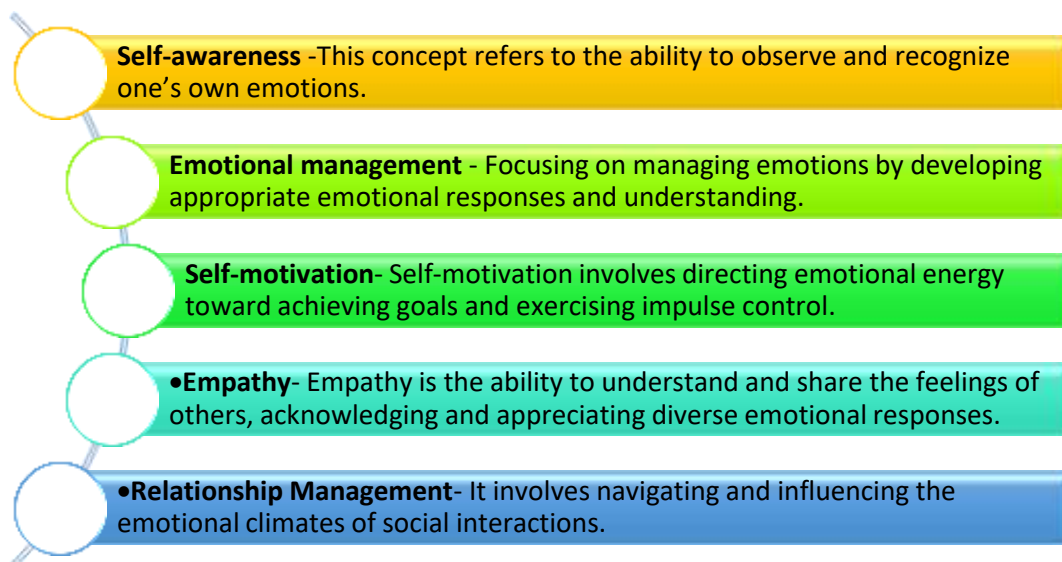


Fig.1 Five Critical Domains of Emotional Intelligence

The presumption that academic intelligence unequivocally translates into professional and personal success has been persistently challenged. In this context, Emotional Intelligence assumes a pivotal role in navigating the complexities of life's challenges and stresses. Intellectual capacity (IQ) and Emotional Quotient (EQ) are most effectively synergized, enhancing individual capabilities. Significantly, Goleman posits that Emotional Intelligence represents a dynamic skill set subject to development and refinement throughout an individual's lifespan.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness Education represents a paradigmatic shift in incorporating present-moment awareness and focused attention strategies into pedagogical practices. This

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educational approach is grounded in ancient methodologies, notably meditation and breathing exercises, which have been systematically adapted to suit modern educational environments. This adaptation is inspired by the holistic development frameworks of Ancient India, which included not only academic achievements but also emphasized ethical behaviours, student well-being, and comprehensive development—addressing the physical, mental, and emotional needs of the students. Such methodologies aim at enabling students to maintain acute awareness and mindfulness, thus facilitating a skilful response to their thoughts, emotions, and external stimuli. Contemporary research underpins the efficacy of regular mindfulness practices in enhancing cognitive focus and concentration, mitigating stress and anxiety, bolstering emotional regulation, and fostering overall psychological well-being. A study conducted by Bluth and Eisenlohr-Moul (2017) found that Mind Up's 8-week program significantly reduces perceived stress, resilience, curiosity, and gratitude, and that mindfulness is closely related to reductions in perceived stress, depression, and anxiety. In other studies, using young adolescents, interventions have shown benefits such as enhanced sustained attention (Zeidan et al., 2010), improved academic performance (León, 2008), and lowered anxiety (Sugiura, 2004). In addition, these programs have been linked to a reduction in burnout, increased motivation, and reduced engagement (De La Fuente et al., 2010, Hamilton et al., 2006), and a better state of emotional well-being overall.

Rationale of the study

Recent investigations into implementing mindfulness education within the academic environment have unearthed promising outcomes that warrant further scholarly attention. An empirical synthesis conducted by the Journal of Developmental Psychology determined that mindfulness-based interventions evoke a significant enhancement in cognitive functionality, overall well-being, and proficiency in social-emotional competencies among pupils. Furthermore, the evidence posits a beneficial impact of mindfulness practices on academic performance, social interactivity, and emotional health within educational contexts. Dr. Amy Saltzman, a prominent figure in the field and director of the Association for Mindfulness in Education as well as Still Quiet Place, posits the instrumental role of mindfulness in bolstering children's abilities to self-regulate, concentrate and foster efficacious interpersonal relationships—skills indispensable for academic and lifelong success. Integrating mindfulness into pedagogical frameworks is associated with tangible improvements in academic performance and social-emotional learning and fortifying foundational

developmental processes such as focus, resilience, and self-regulatory capacities, thereby endowing children with tools essential for their future endeavours. A consensus among experts suggests the paramount importance of educators possessing a personal mindfulness practice or, at the very least, a foundational understanding for effective implementation.

Tish Jennings, the progenitor of the Cultivating Awareness and Resilience in Education (CARE) for teachers' initiative, underscores the transformative effect of a teacher's mindfulness presence within the classroom environment on students' learning dispositions. Additionally, Jennings' recent inquiry into the efficacy of the CARE for Teachers program illuminates its positive ramifications for educators, manifesting in diminished perceptions of time pressure alongside increased positivity and sensitivity in instructional delivery. These teacher-centric benefits inherently translate to heightened student engagement and productivity, further endorsing mindfulness integration's value in educational settings. This compendium of findings underscores the indispensability of mindfulness education as a vehicle for nurturing intellectual, emotional, and social competencies in students, laying a foundation for holistic academic success and well-being. The evidence advocates for enhanced mindfulness-oriented professional development for educators, considering their pivotal role in facilitating mindfulness practices and the profound influence of their well-being on the educational milieu.

Many other types of research demonstrate promising results and show that practising mindfulness helps students to focus on the moment and enhance their capacity to learn and process their emotions effectively. However, the studies are only nascent, and no verifiable data is present for student teachers. Besides, there is confusion about what a Mindfulness Curriculum should include.

The researcher thus planned an investigation into the topic:

‘Mindful Education Practices: Fostering Emotional Intelligence in student Teachers’

Objectives of the Study

- 1) To devise an appropriate mindful practices program for student-teachers.
- 2) To study the effectiveness of a mindful practice program(M.P.P) for student-teachers.

Sub objectives

- 1) To study the effect of M.P.P on the emotional intelligence of student teachers
- 2) To study the willingness of student-teachers to accept this M.P.P.

Hypotheses

Without guiding research, null hypotheses were thought to be most appropriate.

- 1) The program has no significant effect on the emotional intelligence of student teachers.
As research included experimental design, one more hypothesis was framed
- 2) There is no significant difference between the emotional intelligence of the intervention group and the control group before and after the intervention program.

Limitations of the study

The study has several limitations concerning its design, tools, sampling techniques, and control measures. Specifically, the sample size employed was relatively small and selected through convenience sampling, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Furthermore, the observational techniques, checklists, case studies, and willingness scales utilized in the study were self-developed and lacked standardization. This absence of standardized measures could affect the results' reliability and validity.

Mindful Practice Program/ Experiment

This program included 15 minutes of breathing exercises starting with chanting of om with deep breaths and sukhasana position, then bhastrika, kapaalbhati, Agnisaar, Jalandharbandh thrice Shitli breath for a minute and ultimately Anulom Vilom Pranayama (fit-tuber) followed by a 5 minutes of meditation round and in the end a discussion and a short story to teach empathy and compassion. The program requires 30 minutes with a preferable eating gap of 30 minutes on both sides.

Methodology of the Study

This research was conducted at G.V.M.C.O.E, Sonapat, using an experimental design. The sample included 50 student-teachers (average age 22 years), who were divided into two groups 1) Intervention group (n = 25) and Control group (n = 25) using convenient sampling. The intervention group participated in a mindfulness-based program twice a week for eight weeks, which included five breathing exercises and meditation training.

The emotional intelligence (EI) of both groups was measured using the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire-Short Form (TEIQue-SF), an internationally recognized tool developed by Petrides et al (2001). The responses to the TEIQue-SF were scored on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. Negative items on the questionnaire were reverse-scored. The TEIQue-SF is a self-

administered questionnaire, though the researcher was present to offer assistance when needed.

Result of the study

The objective was to assess the impact of mindfulness practices on emotional intelligence (EI). Both groups were assessed for their emotional intelligence before and after an eight-week mindfulness program using the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire-Short Form (TEIQue-SF). This allowed for a comparative analysis of the emotional intelligence levels in both groups across the study.

Table:1 Comparative Analysis of the Emotional Intelligence levels in both Intervention and Control groups

Group	Pre-Intervention Mean EI Score	Post- Intervention Mean EI Score	Mean Difference	t-test Result	Significance
Intervention Group	4.51	5.60	+1.09	Significant	Yes
Control Group	4.50	4.60	+0.10	Not Significant	No

The above table is presented as follows:

Pre-Intervention Scores:

- The intervention group scored mean of 4.51, while the control group had a mean emotional intelligence score of 4.50. This suggests that prior to the program's inception, the EI levels of the two groups were almost the same.

Post-Intervention Scores:

- After the eight-week mindfulness program, the intervention group's mean EI score rose significantly to 5.60, showing a noticeable improvement in their emotional intelligence.
- In contrast, the control group's mean EI score only slightly increased to 4.60, reflecting minimal change without mindfulness intervention.

Statistical Significance:

- A t-test was conducted to analyze the results. For the intervention group, the increase in EI was found to be statistically significant, meaning the observed change was meaningful and not due to random chance.

- For the control group, the small increase in EI was not statistically significant, implying no substantial improvement.

Discussion& Conclusion:

The experiment concluded that mindfulness practices had a **positive and significant effect** on the emotional intelligence of student-teachers in the intervention group, while the control group did not experience significant change. Mindful practice programs have demonstrated significant effectiveness in enhancing the student teachers' emotional intelligence. Research on the benefits of mindfulness in education demonstrates a clear link between mindfulness practices and improved emotional and cognitive outcomes. Schonert-Reichl et al. (2015) found that students who participated in mindfulness programs exhibited greater emotional regulation, empathy, and social competence. Similarly, Meiklejohn et al. (2012) emphasized the role of mindfulness in improving attention, working memory, and academic achievement, suggesting that mindfulness fosters an environment where students can better manage stress and engage more deeply in their learning.

Mindfulness has been identified as an efficient practice for improving the perception and expression of one's emotions, emotional assimilation or facilitation, and emotional understanding and regulation (Jiménez-Picón, N.,2021). The developmental literature has consistently demonstrated that emotional abilities can be taught and acquired at any stage in life (Denham et al., 2014). Furthermore, elucidating the determinants significantly influencing its development is crucial to enhancing emotional intelligence (EI) across different populations.

Incorporating Emotional Intelligence (EI) and mindfulness techniques in these particular situations enables a novel approach to mental and emotional health for both instructors and students. Developing EI via self-awareness—which is exemplified by the M.P.P.—is one of the key tactics. Students learn to be attentive through meditation or periods of quiet, observing thoughts and feelings without passing judgement. In contrast, pupils who practise self-regulation are better able to handle stress since it entails deep breathing during conflict, rephrasing obstacles as possibilities, and accepting emotions without resistance. As a result, physical well-being and motivation are correlated: frequent exercise and movement are meant to maximise oxygen delivery and hormonal balance. Increased awareness of emotional "vibes" in the surroundings, together with mindfulness, meditation, and breathing exercises, foster the development of empathy.

Furthermore, teachers are the key participants in bringing mindfulness into the classroom, with ongoing support from staff, faculty, and parents for an evidence-based, school-wide approach. Age-appropriate exercises for pupils at varying developmental stages are necessary, and mindfulness should centre around spirituality rather than religion to provide inclusivity for all students. By using these strategies, teachers may help children become more emotionally intelligent and resilient, enabling them to face obstacles both within and outside of the classroom.

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