

Association of Teachers' Emotional Intelligence with their Attitude Towards Inclusive Education

SIRSHA MONDAL¹ AND SUSMITA NEOGI*²

Post-Graduate Student and Professor

Department of Home Science, University of Calcutta, Kolkata (W.B.) India

ABSTRACT

The present study attempted to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and attitudes towards inclusive education among school teachers. A sample of 78 school teachers (59 females and 19 males) from various levels of school education (primary, secondary, and higher secondary) and different board affiliations (CBSE, ICSE, WBSE/WBCHSE) participated in the study. Two standardized tools on Emotional Intelligence and Teachers' Attitude towards Inclusion were used. Descriptive statistics and correlations were computed to analyse the data. The results revealed that significant and positive correlations exist between teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education and total scores of emotional intelligence. Further, specific areas of emotional intelligence, such as Self Awareness, Managing Relations, Integrity, Commitment, and Altruistic Behaviour were found to be positively correlated with the Psychological, Curricular and Co-curricular areas and Administrative aspects of Teachers' Attitude towards Inclusive Education. The study implies that emotional intelligence plays an important role on teachers' attitude towards inclusion. Thus teacher training courses should try to organize programmes to foster emotional regulation skills that will help in developing favourable attitudes towards inclusion.

Key Words : Attitude towards Inclusion, Inclusive Education, Emotional Intelligence

INTRODUCTION

Inclusive Education is a concept that aims to provide equal educational opportunities to learners from diverse backgrounds, abilities, and disabilities. It involves creating a learning environment that promotes participation and collaboration among all students, regardless of their differences. It helps learners develop a positive attitude towards diversity, reducing discrimination and prejudice among students while promoting social cohesion by bringing learners from diverse backgrounds together, improving their social interactions, and creating lasting bonds among them that goes above and beyond their differences. The framework for inclusive education dates back as far as 1994. Currently, the official definition of Inclusive education is "when all students, regardless of any challenges they may have, are placed in age-appropriate general education classes that are in their

neighbourhood schools to receive high-quality instruction, interventions and supports that enable them to meet success in the core curriculum" (Bui *et al.*, 2010; Alquraini and Gut, 2012).

Besides the necessity of establishing a framework and appropriate system for making inclusive education function on a practical level, teachers play one of the most crucial roles in creating an inclusive education environment. Teachers solely work as the enablers of cooperative learning. They are the ones at the wheels to steer the students to the right direction. Different research studies demonstrate that teachers who possess positive and welcoming attitude, classroom management and adaptation skills, effective communication skills, knowledge and skills related to inclusive education etc. can actively work to create an inclusive environment for all students and can significantly contribute to their success.

Achieving an effective learning environment where every student feels valued, respected and supported may require teachers to not only have an adequate knowledge and training, classroom management skills but also a high level of Emotional Intelligence. Emotional intelligence has become a popular concept in recent years, and it is increasingly being recognized as an essential determinant of success in both personal and professional life. New York Times writer Daniel Goleman (1995) popularized the term Emotional intelligence in his book on the subject. He stated that understanding and controlling emotions is one of the most important keys to health and success in life. Emotional intelligence refers to the ability to recognize, understand, and manage emotions in one and others.

Mayer and Salovey (Mayer *et al.*, 2004) suggest that there are four critical components to emotional intelligence. The first is accurate perception and expression of emotions. The second component is the ability to access and generate emotions in the service of thinking and problem-solving. To understand emotions and emotional meanings is the third component. The fourth component is emotion regulation, which means being able to manage and regulate one's own emotions appropriately. This does not emphasize complete control of the emotions that one feels because that amount of control could be completely unhealthy, but a regulated yet acceptable expression of all the emotions that are felt.

The above discussion brings forth that the role of the human emotions i.e. empathy, conflict resolution ability, positive and accepting perspectives of the educators are very important for effective inclusive education. These factors seem to contribute to teachers' attitudes towards Inclusion. Against this backdrop the present study has been undertaken to assess the emotional intelligence of school teachers as well as to find out how it is related with their attitudes towards inclusive education.

Objectives:

- To find out if there is any relationship between teachers' attitude towards inclusion of students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and their Emotional Intelligence (EI).
- To examine the nature of relationship between teachers' attitude towards inclusion of students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and their Emotional Intelligence (EI).

METHODOLOGY

Null Hypotheses:

H1- There is no significant correlation between overall emotional intelligence score and all areas of teachers' attitude towards inclusion.

H2- There is no significant correlation between the factors of emotional intelligence and psychological area of teachers' attitude towards inclusion.

H3- There is no significant correlation between the factors of emotional intelligence and social area of teachers' attitude towards inclusion.

H4- There is no significant correlation between the factors of emotional intelligence and curricular/co-curricular area of teachers' attitude towards inclusion.

H5- There is no significant correlation between the factors of emotional intelligence and administrative area of teachers' attitude towards inclusion.

H6- There is no significant correlation between the total score of attitude towards inclusion and the different factors of emotional Intelligence (Self Awareness, Empathy, Self-Motivation, Emotional Stability, Managing Relations, Integrity, Self Development, Value Orientation, Commitment, and Altruism).

Study Sample:

This study has used purposive sampling technique and the sample size was 78 and the research participants were all teachers from different schools of Kolkata with CBSE/ICSE/WBCHSE/WBBSE board affiliation. Their age ranged from 25 to 55 years and majority of them were females.

Tools:

Two standardized scales namely Teachers' Attitude Scale towards Inclusive Education by Vishal Sood and Arti Anand (2011) and Emotional Intelligence Scale by Anukool Hyde, Sanjyot Pethe and Upinder Dhar (2011) were administered on the sample. The first one was a 3 point Likert scale consisting of 47 statements covering the Psychological or Behavioral, Social and Parents related, Curricular and Co-curricular Structure related and Administrative System related aspects of a teacher's attitude towards Inclusion. The second scale was a 5 point Likert scale consisting of 34 statements covering the different factors of Emotional Intelligence - Self-awareness, Empathy, Self-motivation, Emotional stability, Managing relations, Integrity, Self-development, Value orientation, Commitment and Altruistic behavior.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive statistics, Correlation and Analysis of Variances were computed to verify the hypotheses of the study.

The inter-correlation matrix representing the different areas of teachers' attitude towards inclusive education as well as the total score of emotional intelligence (EI) clearly indicates that all the areas of attitude are significantly correlated among themselves. Each area as well as the overall attitude is positively and significantly correlated with emotional intelligence. So teachers who possess higher degree of emotional intelligence have more favourable attitude towards inclusion. Emotionally intelligent teachers are better equipped to handle stress, manage their emotions effectively and can build positive relationships with students and colleagues. This can result in a more inclusive and supportive learning environment (Table 1).

The Table 2 reveals that all the correlations between factors of Emotional Intelligence and different areas of attitude are positive. Among the different factors of EI, Self-Awareness and Managing-relations are correlated significantly with all the areas. Integrity, Commitment and Altruistic behavioural factors are significantly associated with psychological area of inclusive attitude. Emotional Stability, Self-motivation and Altruistic behavioural components are significantly related with curricular area of inclusive attitude. Emotional stability, Integrity, Commitment and Altruistic behaviours are significantly correlated with administrative area of teachers' attitude towards inclusion. As the administrative aspect of an educational setting majorly depends on the teachers who

run it based on their own viewpoints guided by some sets of rules and regulations and standards, the role of their emotional intelligence is very important. The overall attitude towards inclusive education is positively and significantly correlated with all the factors of emotional intelligence except Self-development and Value-orientation. The factors such as self-awareness, emotional stability, managing relation, integrity, commitment and altruistic behaviour are associated significantly at 0.01 levels. So it can be said that these factors have important role in determining favourable attitude of teachers towards inclusive education.

Review of research studies in the last decade suggest that many investigations are being carried out to find out the challenges teachers face in implementing inclusive education. Cagran and Schimdt (2011) have reported that numerous studies show that a successful implementation of inclusion of children with special needs (SEN) largely depends on the teachers' positive attitude towards it. Their study implies that the teachers who have taken part in different forms of education and training have a more positive attitude towards all domains of inclusion. So designing appropriate teacher training programme becomes imperative. The findings of our study can be utilized for this purpose.

Since the correlations between teachers' Emotional Intelligence and its different factors and teachers' attitude towards inclusive education in every aspect are significant and positive, these factors can be considered in developing training programmes. Some earlier studies have also stressed the importance of teachers' emotional intelligence in the sphere of attitude towards inclusive

Table 1: Inter-correlations between Areas of Teachers' Attitude towards Inclusion and the total score of Emotional Intelligence

Areas of Inclusive Attitude	Psychological	Social	Curricular	Administrative	Overall Attitude	Total of EI
Psychological	1	.328**	.437**	.409**	.692**	.358**
		.003	.000	.000	.000	.001
Social	.328**	1	.529**	.469**	.745**	.268*
	.003		.000	.000	.000	.018
Curricular	.437**	.529**	1	.565**	.846**	.392**
	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000
Administrative	.409**	.469**	.565**	1	.791**	.367**
	.000	.000	.000		.000	.001
Overall Attitude	.692**	.745**	.846**	.791**	1	.452**
	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000
Total of EI	.358**	.268*	.392**	.367**	.452**	
	.001	.018	.000	.001	.000	
N	78	78	78	78	78	

Table 2 : Summary table of correlation between Factors of Emotional Intelligence and all the Areas of Teachers' Attitude towards Inclusive Education

Factors of EI	Psychological	Social	Curricular	Administrative	Overall Attitude
Self-Awareness	.372**	.237*	.326**	.276*	.393**
	.001	.037	.004	.014	.000
Self-Motivation	.189	.169	.364**	.208	.311**
	.097	.139	.001	.068	.006
Emotional-Stability	.187	.279*	.299**	.282*	.341**
	.101	.013	.008	.012	.002
Managing-Relations	.418**	.262*	.332**	.385**	.451**
	.000	.020	.003	.000	.000
Integrity	.288*	.163	.162	.236*	.271*
	.011	.153	.157	.037	.017
Self-Development	.159	.028	.000	.009	.053
	.165	.810	.999	.938	.645
Value-Orientation	.134	.157	.204	.112	.199
	.241	.171	.074	.330	.080
Commitment	.295**	.176	.174	.331**	.311**
	.009	.124	.128	.003	.006
Altruistic-Behaviours	.268*	.160	.313**	.278*	.334**
	.018	.163	.005	.014	.003
N	78	78	78	78	78

education. For instance, Ramana (2013) has analysed the concept of emotional intelligence and teachers' effectiveness in the class room of schools and universities. Role and the qualities of the teachers, programs for enhancing emotional intelligence and their results, emotional intelligence, proactive coping, burnout and supervisor support and ideas for improving the situation of the teachers have been discussed. Jeremy *et al.* (2014) have found that teacher attitudes towards including special educational needs pupils in mainstream settings have a significant impact on how they manage their classroom learning environments and how adequately they perceive available support. Teachers with more positive attitudes towards inclusion have classroom environments with greater levels of satisfaction and cohesiveness and lower levels of friction, competitiveness and difficulty than for those with teachers who hold less positive attitudes. Thus teacher attitudes towards inclusion increase with greater perceived adequacy of both internal and external support. Devalia (2018) has concluded that when emotional intelligence and altruism is high, then the teacher's competence is also high. Other similar studies also support that there is a strong relationship between emotional intelligence of teachers and their teaching effectiveness. In a recent study by Sekreter, Gulseren (2019) the effect of emotional intelligence skills in effective teaching, and its effect on the productivity of teacher's performance

during the teaching-learning process has been explored. This study asserts that teachers' emotional competence factors contribute to the teacher effectiveness more than any other single factor.

In the light of above studies and our findings it can be definitely stated that an ideal inclusive classroom climate depends on supportive teacher-student relationships, effective classroom management strategies, and successful emotional learning program implementation. Since the findings of our study are congruent with majority of the earlier researches, like Rajendran *et al.* (2020); Kingsley, Nwosu *et al.* (2022) we can justify the significance of emotional intelligence for teachers (both pre and in-service) to develop their competencies for practicing inclusive education. Further, the findings stress the importance of fostering emotionally intelligent teachers and promoting inclusive education practices in schools. By addressing the factors that influence emotional intelligence and attitudes, policymakers and educators can contribute to creating more supportive and inclusive learning environments for all students. Further, the specific factors of emotional intelligence that are significantly correlated with all the areas of a teacher's attitude towards inclusive education can be useful in designing and planning trainings and interventions for the teachers to equip them with better understanding and skills for not only just teaching but

also becoming actively involved with all the children in an inclusive classroom.

Conclusion:

The findings of the present study indicate that emotional intelligence, particularly the factors such as self-awareness, emotional stability, managing relation, integrity, commitment and altruistic behaviour, is significantly associated with attitude towards inclusion of SEN children in the classroom. Although much research and evidence are needed to further validate the present study for broader applicability of the findings, it can be concluded that there are some implications that can be utilized for developing favourable attitudes of educators towards inclusion. There is no doubt that schools should invest in resources, support, and provide comprehensive training focussing on the emotional aspects of teachers in order to create a positive and inclusive learning environment.

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