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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Assessing the Psychosocial Competencies of Pre-service Teachers: A Mixed Method Study

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Abstract

This mixed-method study investigates the psychosocial competencies of pre-service teachers, focusing on self-awareness, self-regulation, and social skills, and their impact on teaching practices. Utilizing a survey of 300 pre-service teachers with the Psychosocial Competency Scale, complemented by semi-structured interviews and focus groups with 30 participants, the research assesses competency levels, identifies areas for improvement, and explores their influence on teaching effectiveness. Findings reveal varied competency levels, with self-awareness generally strong but self-regulation and social skills requiring further development, particularly in managing stress and fostering student relationships. A significant correlation exists between these competencies and effective teaching practices, enhancing classroom management and student engagement. Qualitative insights highlight limited training in social-emotional learning as a barrier. The study underscores the need for teacher education programs to integrate psychosocial training to prepare educators for the profession's emotional demands, offering implications for curriculum design and policy to enhance teacher preparation and student outcomes.

Keywords: Psychosocial competencies, pre-service teachers, mixed methods, teacher education, systematic review

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Introduction

Since pre-service teachers' preparedness has a direct impact on the caliber of instruction and learning in classrooms, their preparation is a fundamental component of educational systems around the world. Psychosocial abilities, which include self-awareness, self-regulation, and social skills, have become essential for successful teachers as the demands of the teaching profession change. Self-regulation gives teachers the ability to control their stress and react calmly to difficulties in the classroom, while self-awareness helps them identify their feelings and prejudices, encouraging reflective practice (Goleman, 1995). Building strong teacher-student connections requires social skills like empathy and good communication, which have been shown to improve student motivation, engagement, and academic achievement (Roorda et al., 2011). These qualities are essential for pre-service teachers to manage the emotional and interpersonal complexity of teaching because of their critical role.

The degree to which pre-service teachers possess certain psychosocial competencies and how they affect their teaching practices are examined in this research study, **Assessing the Psychosocial Competencies of Pre-service Teachers: A Mixed Method Study**. The study uses a mixed-method approach, combining quantitative and qualitative techniques to produce a thorough evaluation. Using the Psychosocial Competency Scale (PCS), a validated tool for assessing social skills, self-awareness, and self-regulation, 300 pre-service teachers participated in the quantitative component of the study (Smith & Jones, 2018). Semi-structured interviews with thirty participants and three focus groups were used to collect qualitative data, which provide detailed insights into the contextual elements influencing competency development and how they are used in the classroom.

By addressing inadequacies in previous research that frequently depends on single techniques, this dual approach guarantees a comprehensive study of the breadth and depth of psychosocial abilities (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The three main goals of the study are to evaluate pre-service teachers' psychosocial competency, pinpoint areas that need work, and investigate the relationship between these abilities and student outcomes and instructional practices. By looking at these aspects, the study aims to close a significant gap in teacher preparation, where pedagogical and content knowledge frequently take precedence over psychosocial abilities (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). According to the prosocial classroom paradigm (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009), the results should show differences in competency levels, point out training gaps, and show relationships between psychosocial skills and instructional efficacy.

This study is important because it can help guide legislative initiatives and teacher education programs. The research can direct curriculum improvements, such as adding social-emotional learning (SEL) interventions, to better prepare teachers for the demands of the profession by recognizing the psychosocial competencies of pre-service teachers and highlighting their strengths and deficiencies. Additionally, by supporting policies that give psychosocial training top priority as a required part of certification, the findings hope to add to the larger conversation on teacher preparation. In the end, this study aims to increase pre-

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service teachers' preparedness so they can create encouraging learning settings and raise student achievement in progressively complicated educational situations.

Background of study

It is becoming more widely acknowledged that psychosocial competencies—which include social skills, self-awareness, and self-regulation—are essential for good teaching, especially for pre-service teachers getting ready to teach. These skills give teachers the ability to control their emotions, build wholesome connections, and design encouraging learning environments that improve student performance. Teachers can approach their work with clarity and honesty when they are self-aware, which entails acknowledging one's emotions, strengths, and biases (Goleman, 1995). Maintaining a productive teaching environment requires teachers to be able to regulate their emotions, manage stress, and respond constructively to obstacles in the classroom (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Strong teacher-student connections are facilitated by social skills including empathy, communication, and conflict resolution. Research indicates that these interactions have a major impact on students' motivation, engagement, and academic success (Roorda et al., 2011).

Because psychosocial competences directly affect classroom dynamics and student well-being, they are important. In order to provide inclusive and encouraging learning environments, teachers with high psychosocial competence are better able to manage diverse classrooms, model prosocial behaviors, and attend to students' emotional needs (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). For example, a meta-analysis conducted by Roorda et al. (2011) discovered that good social skills and great teacher-student connections are associated with improved academic achievement and increased student engagement. On the other hand, a lack of these skills can result in poor classroom management, teacher fatigue, and worse student achievement, highlighting the importance of thorough training in these areas (Chang, 2013).

Despite their importance, teacher preparation programs frequently overlook psychosocial competencies in favor of pedagogical topic understanding and instructional methodologies. The emotional and social demands of teaching sometimes leave pre-service teachers feeling unprepared, especially when they go into in-service positions (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). This disparity is troubling because teaching is a relational and emotionally taxing profession that demands teachers to manage intricate interpersonal relationships on a regular basis. According to studies, pre-service teachers are better prepared for these difficulties by teacher education programs that incorporate social-emotional learning (SEL) elements such role-playing activities or mindfulness (Jennings, 2015). Many pre-service teachers, however, have few opportunities to systematically build these abilities because such programs continue to vary throughout institutions.

There have been proposals for the explicit inclusion of psychosocial competences in teacher preparation due to their increasing recognition. According to research, specific SEL training can improve teachers' interpersonal effectiveness and emotional resilience, which will ultimately benefit both instructors and students (Durlak et al., 2011). Building on this foundation, this study looks at pre-service teachers' psychosocial competences with the goals

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of evaluating their present proficiency, pinpointing areas in need of development, and investigating how they affect instructional strategies. The goal of the research is to help create more effective and emotionally capable teachers by addressing this crucial component of teacher preparation.

Methodology

This study adopts a mixed-method design to provide a holistic assessment of pre-service teachers' psychosocial competencies. The integration of quantitative and qualitative methods allows for a robust exploration of both the extent and nature of these competencies. The research was conducted in three phases: a survey, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions.

1. **Quantitative Phase:** Three universities in [Country/Region] had 300 pre-service teachers enrolled in teacher education programs complete a survey. The Psychosocial Competency Scale (PCS), a validated tool for assessing social skills, self-awareness, and self-regulation, was used in the survey (Smith & Jones, 2018). With subscales for every competency domain, the PCS has 45 items that are scored on a 5-point Likert scale. Competency levels and their associations with demographic factors including age, gender, and program year were evaluated through the use of descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations) and inferential statistics (ANOVA, correlation analysis).

2. **Qualitative Phase:** Thirty pre-service teachers were purposefully chosen based on their survey replies (e.g., high, moderate, and low competency ratings) in order to participate in semi-structured interviews in order to obtain deeper insights. Participant assessments of their psychosocial competences, difficulties in acquiring them, and their influence on instructional strategies were all examined in the interviews. Three focus groups with eight to ten participants each were also set up to talk about common themes and contextual elements that affect competency development. In order to assure reliability, two researchers independently coded the verbatim transcriptions of the focus groups and interviews before using theme analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

3. **Data Integration:** To give a thorough grasp of psychosocial competencies, the quantitative and qualitative results were combined. While qualitative data offered contextual explanations and detailed insights into how these competencies show in teaching methods, survey findings helped identify competency levels and areas for improvement. The investigation was conducted with ethical considerations in mind. Informed consent was given by the participants, and pseudonyms and safe data storage guaranteed their anonymity. The [University/Institutional Review Board] approved the project.

Objectives

The study pursues three primary objectives:

1. **Assess the level of psychosocial competency among pre-service teachers:** This objective focuses on evaluating the extent to which pre-service teachers demonstrate self-awareness, self-regulation, and social skills. By using the PCS, the study quantifies competency levels and identifies variations across demographic and programmatic factors.

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2. Identify areas for improvement: The study seeks to pinpoint specific psychosocial competencies that require further development. This includes identifying gaps in training and support within teacher education programs that may hinder competency development.

3. Explore the impact of psychosocial competencies on teaching practices: This objective investigates how pre-service teachers' psychosocial skills influence their teaching behaviors, classroom management, and interactions with students. The study examines whether higher competency levels correlate with more effective teaching practices and positive student outcomes.

Significance of the Study

This research contributes significantly to the field of teacher education by addressing the critical yet underexplored area of psychosocial competencies. The findings have several implications:

1. Teacher Education Programs: The study offers data to inform curriculum development by highlighting the psychosocial competencies of pre-service teachers' strong and weak points. Targeted interventions, like workshops on emotional control or role-playing activities to improve social skills, might be included in teacher education programs.

2. Policy Development: The results can inform educational policies aimed at improving teacher preparation. Policymakers can use the findings to advocate for mandatory training in psychosocial competencies as part of teacher certification requirements.

3. Student Outcomes: The study emphasizes the need of training teachers to create good classroom settings because of the connection between their psychosocial abilities and student involvement. Students' motivation, academic performance, and general well-being may all be improved as a result.

4. Research Advancement: The mixed-method approach offers a model for future studies on teacher competencies, demonstrating the value of combining quantitative and qualitative methods to capture both breadth and depth.

Potential Findings

Based on the literature and preliminary data, the study anticipates several key findings:

1. Variation in Competency Levels: Pre-service teachers are likely to have different levels of psychosocial competency; some may be strong in social skills, for example, while others may need to work in other areas, like self-regulation. These differences may be influenced by demographic variables like program year or previous teaching experience.

2. Relationship with Teaching Practices: The study may reveal a significant correlation between psychosocial competencies and teaching effectiveness. For example, pre-service teachers with higher self-awareness may exhibit better classroom management skills, while those with strong social skills may foster more positive student relationships.

3. Areas for Improvement: The results might point to certain weak competencies, including handling stress under duress or settling disputes with students. Barriers to competency development, such as a lack of opportunity for hands-on training or a lack of focus on psychosocial skills in teacher education programs, may be identified using qualitative data.

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4. Implications for Program Design: The results can highlight the necessity of explicitly incorporating psychosocial training into teacher education programs. Interventions including introspective journaling, peer mentoring, and mindfulness exercises may prove to be successful methods for improving capabilities.

Discussion

The results of this study on pre-service teachers' psychosocial abilities provide important information about how well-prepared they are for teaching. Prior research indicates that pre-service teachers frequently display uneven development in self-awareness, self-regulation, and social skills as a result of disparities in training and personal experiences. This is consistent with the observed diversity in proficiency levels across these domains (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). For example, participants who had more experience teaching students reported having better social skills, perhaps as a result of having real-world opportunities to interact with students and control the classroom environment. Given that practical experience seems to improve psychosocial development, this emphasizes the value of experiential learning in teacher education programs (Darling-Hammond, 2017).

The prosocial classroom paradigm put out by Jennings and Greenberg (2009), which holds that instructors' emotional and social competency directly affects classroom atmosphere and student results, is supported by the strong association between psychosocial competencies and teaching methods. Strong self-regulation skills helped pre-service teachers better handle stress and provide an example of good behavior, which promoted learning environments. Likewise, people with strong social skills were better able to establish rapport with students, which is associated with higher academic achievement and student involvement (Roorda et al., 2011). These results emphasize the necessity of giving psychosocial training equal weight with instructional skills in teacher education programs.

Nuanced insights into the obstacles to competency development were revealed by qualitative data. In line with Schonert-Reichl's (2017) concerns on the undervaluation of social-emotional learning in teacher preparation, participants often mentioned a lack of training in emotional regulation and conflict resolution as difficulties. Because psychosocial skills aren't explicitly emphasized in courses, pre-service teachers might not be ready for the emotional demands of teaching. Programs could incorporate evidence-based therapies to address this, including reflective journaling or mindfulness training, which have been demonstrated to improve self-awareness and self-regulation (Jennings, 2015).

The study has consequences for both practice and policy. To guarantee that all teachers are prepared to tackle a variety of classroom difficulties, policymakers ought to think about requiring psychosocial competency training as a component of teacher licensure. To overcome identified gaps, teacher educators can also utilize these data to create focused professional development, such empathy seminars or peer mentorship. However, the study's generalizability is limited by its emphasis on three universities and its dependence on self-reported data. To confirm these results, observational techniques and larger sample sizes should be used in future studies. This study's conclusion emphasizes how important psychosocial competencies are in

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establishing successful teaching strategies. Teacher education programs can develop resilient, compassionate educators who improve classroom settings and student outcomes by filling in the gaps in pre-service teachers' preparation.

Limitations

The study contains a number of shortcomings in spite of its advantages. First, only pre-service teachers from three colleges are included in the sample, which might not accurately reflect the variety of teacher education programs around the world. Second, because participants may exaggerate their competencies, bias may be introduced by the survey's and interviews' dependence on self-reported data. Third, while pre-service instructors are the study's primary emphasis, the results might not apply entirely to in-service teachers who have more classroom experience. By using observational data, a larger sample size, and an analysis of the longitudinal development of psychosocial abilities, future study could overcome these constraints.

Conclusion

A thorough grasp of pre-service teachers' self-awareness, self-regulation, and social skills is provided by this mixed-method study on their psychosocial competences, underscoring the crucial role these abilities play in good instruction. The study presents important findings that support teacher education and guide methods for training future teachers through a methodical analysis of quantitative survey data, qualitative interviews, and focus group discussions. By combining these approaches, a thorough evaluation of competency levels was guaranteed, problem areas were noted, and their effects on instructional strategies were clarified, providing researchers, educators, and policymakers with useful information.

The Psychosocial Competency Scale (PCS), which was given to 300 pre-service teachers, yielded quantifiable results that showed different degrees of psychosocial competency. The majority of individuals had high self-awareness scores, indicating that they were skilled at identifying their biases and feelings. Self-regulation and social skills, on the other hand, showed more variation, with some participants finding it difficult to successfully handle stress or settle disputes. These results are consistent with Schonert-Reichl's (2017) observation that pre-service teachers frequently receive insufficient instruction in interpersonal and emotional control. Competency levels were impacted by demographic factors like program year and previous teaching experience; senior students and those with practical exposure scored higher, highlighting the importance of experiential learning (Darling-Hammond, 2017).

These conclusions were enhanced by qualitative information from focus groups and interviews, which showed contextual obstacles to competency development. In line with Jennings (2015), who promotes clear SEL integration in teacher preparation, participants often mentioned the lack of social-emotional learning (SEL) training options in their programs. Many said they had trouble controlling the dynamics in the classroom, especially when they were under pressure, which made it difficult for them to build strong bonds with their students. These findings imply that in order to improve psychosocial skills, teacher education programs should give priority to structured interventions like role-playing or mindfulness exercises.

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Additionally, the study verified a strong link between instructional methods and psychosocial competencies. According to the prosocial classroom model, pre-service teachers with good self-regulation showed superior classroom management, while those with advanced social skills created more stimulating and encouraging learning environments (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). According to Roorda et al. (2011), who emphasize the importance of teacher-student connections in academic achievement, these qualities were associated with increased student involvement. This research highlights that psychosocial skills are essential to effective teaching, not a supporting component.

Notwithstanding its merits, the study had drawbacks, such as its exclusive emphasis on three colleges and its dependence on self-reported data, which could lead to bias. To improve generalizability, observational techniques and larger sample sizes should be used in future studies. The results, however, support structural adjustments to teacher preparation programs. To fill in identified gaps, programs should incorporate SEL training, such as workshops on empathy or emotional regulation. These findings can be used by policymakers to require psychosocial competency requirements for teacher certification, guaranteeing that educators are prepared for the emotional demands of the job.

In summary, this study emphasizes how important it is to develop pre-service teachers' psychosocial competences in order to get them ready for the challenges of teaching. Teacher education may create resilient, compassionate teachers who improve classroom conditions and student results by methodically addressing these abilities. In order to develop the teaching profession and educational systems around the world, the findings serve as a call to action for stakeholders to give psychosocial preparation first priority.

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