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Mindfulness and Social Emotional Learning: Need and Relevance in Teacher Education

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Abstract

During turbulence it's difficult to see clearly whereas things become clear when everything is calm. The state of calmness is mindfulness, total attention towards the present, observing minutely and dealing the difficult situations with various coping strategies. Mindfulness is an important tool to teach social and emotional competence. The present study is an attempt to explore the concepts of mindfulness, social and emotional learning, and benefits of practicing mindfulness. The study is descriptive in nature and the researcher has reviewed various research papers published in the journals. The present study explored that mindfulness can facilitate physical and mental well being which in turn can aid social and emotional learning.

Keywords: mindfulness, social competence, emotional competence

Introduction

The term mindfulness is in full swing in educational institutions. Practice of mindfulness is evident in ancient times in Indian education system. Mindfulness, rooted in Buddhist philosophy (Lyons & DeLange, 2016), has been defined by Kabat-Zinn (2013) as the deliberate, nonjudgmental focus on the present moment, leading to heightened awareness. This practice is beneficial, especially for children and adolescents, promoting self-awareness, improved impulse control, and reduced emotional reactivity (Thompson and Gilbert, 2008). It's particularly useful for those facing developmental challenges. Lyons and De Lange (2016) further suggest that

mindfulness can enhance self-regulation among adolescents by targeting conscious control over emotions and behaviours while mitigating reactive, automatic responses.

Since students vary in their self-regulation abilities, introducing mindfulness training in classrooms can assist teachers in addressing the diverse needs of their students (p. 273). This perspective is echoed by other researchers; for instance, Meiklejohn et. al. (2012) propose that mindfulness fosters present-centered, objective, and responsive behaviours, as opposed to future-oriented, subjective, and reactive ones.

Being conscious and aware of the present moment is very much important in today's time as the level of distractions has been increased number of times due to revolutionised use of technology.

Social Emotional Learning: SEL is a strengths-oriented, lifelong process that commences from birth and progresses throughout one's life journey (Weissberg et al., 2015). It represents the journey by which individuals, spanning from children to adults, acquire the skills needed to facilitate healthy development and nurturing relationships. The competencies within social and emotional learning, for both adults and students, encompass self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, interpersonal skills, and the ability to make responsible decisions (Weissberg et al., 2015).

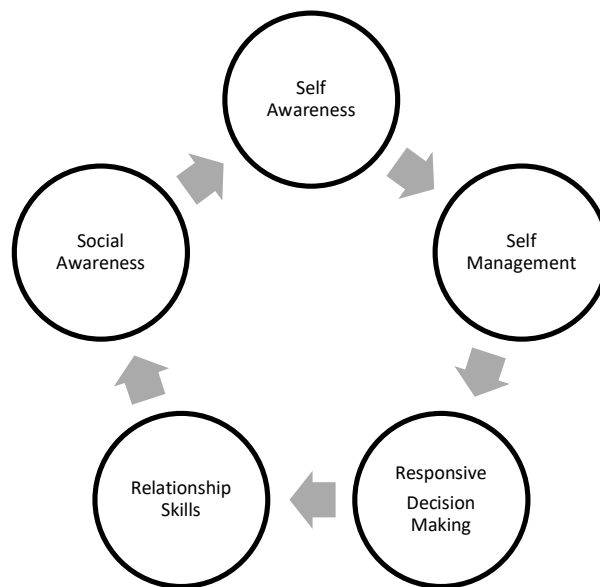
Research findings underscore the positive influence of social and emotional learning on academic success, overall well-being, favourable life outcomes, and a reduction in teacher burnout. Moreover, when conscientiously integrated into curriculum, teaching methods, and the overall school environment, it becomes a potent tool for prevention and bolstering resilience (Durlak et al., 2011; Taylor et al., 2017).

Within the framework of a Multi-Tiered System of Support, systemic social and emotional learning plays a vital role, encompassing not only school-wide but also district-wide initiatives aimed at fostering a positive school atmosphere (Berg & Moroney, n.d.). This approach additionally places emphasis on forging authentic partnerships with families, caregivers, young learners, and the broader community (Weissberg et al., 2015).

Five competencies are included in Social Emotional Learning (Weissberg et al., 2015).

Figure 1

Five Competencies of SEL



Social emotional learning supports in developing conducive environment; and helps in promoting mental well-being, effective living as well as resilience.

Rationale of the Study

To be successful in life, one has to collaborate with others and must have the skills to work in a group/community harmoniously. SEL emerged to prepare children “for citizenship in a democracy and for leading a morally-guided life” (Elias, et al. 2014, pg. 286). Stress created in life has challenged the good physical and mental health of teachers and students which is limiting the potential of both. Mindfulness is an important tool to develop the capacity of self-awareness and self-management which are the key components of SEL. The present study is the thrust to explore the need and relevance of mindfulness in developing social emotional learning among teachers.

Review of Related Literature

Sl.	Author/s	Title of Research	Year	Findings
1.	Katherine Weare	Where Have We Been and Where Are We Going with Mindfulness in Schools	2023	Mindfulness education is a transformative process and effective in developing life skills among the students.
2.	Phillipa Mckeering & Yoon-Suk Hwang	A Systematic Review of Mindfulness-Based School Interventions with Early Adolescents	2019	MBI’s aim to support learning behaviour among adolescents.
3.	Daniel Simpson	From Me to We: Revolutionizing Mindfulness in Schools	2017	Mindfulness has great impacts on students’ life teaching them resilience.
4.	J. David Creswell	Mindfulness Interventions	2017	Analysis of growing evidence of mindfulness interventions RCTs.

5.	Chase Davenport Francesco & Pagnini	Mindful Learning: A Case Study of Langerian Mindfulness in Schools	2016	Mindfulness is an important tool for nurturing and enhancing social-emotional learning.
6.	Shauna L. Shapiro, Linda E. Carlson John A. Astin & Benedict Freedman	Mechanisms of Mindfulness	2006	Proposed a model of mindfulness and potential of mindfulness

Objectives

1. To explore the theoretical foundations of mindfulness and social emotional learning.
2. To study the role of SEL in teacher education.

Research Questions

1. How can mindfulness help students and teachers?
2. What are the most important social and emotional skills?
3. How SEL can go a long way in creating a safe and inclusive classroom?

Research Design

The present study is descriptive in nature and reflects on the conceptual understanding of mindfulness, social and emotional learning. For understanding the conceptual knowledge the journals, articles and books are referred.

Discussion

In search of the ways mindfulness can help students and teachers, researcher found that mindfulness, being aware of the present is an important practice which has many positive effects psychologically and cognitive too. Implementation in schools can modify the learners' behaviour permanently making their life successful. During the review of literature, researcher found researches which are evident that mindfulness cultivates a positive sense of agency in learners to empower them to change the social context (Katherine Weare,2023). Mindfulness offers a satisfying and coherent story for the reader, bringing together several interrelated threads in a masterful and illuminating way (Roeser et al., 2023). Mindfulness has unwavering effects on physical health, improved sleep, enhanced immunity, strengthen physical stamina and even in chronic pains when practiced by psychologists. Clinical psychologists found MBI's (Mindful Based Interventions) to be comparatively effective than the CBT (Cognitive Behaviour Therapy). Mindfulness interventions provided to In-service teachers had great results in enhancing teacher well-being (Hwang, Y.S., Bartlett, B., Greben, M., & Hand, K. (2017). Experiences of mindfulness practices aided reduction in depression, enhancing mental well-being, managing addictive disorders.

In context of cognitive and effective outcomes, the learners can develop accepting attitude, understanding and practicing empathy, feeling compassionate to others, show kindness. Practice of

mindfulness increases awareness and foster insights. Individuals using mindfulness are able to control and regulate their emotions.

The important social and emotional skills are self-awareness, self-management, empathy, effective communication, interpersonal relationship, social awareness, problem solving attitude and decision making. These skills if fostered there can be significant increase in mindfulness (Sarwate, Rucha., 2023).

Education, now a days is inclusive education, where learners irrespective of their abilities, class, creed, gender and economic status but in this context the major challenge faced by CWSN is the bullying or lack of empathy by the fellow students. Practicing mindfulness can help students to empathise and facilitate the conducive learning environment.

Conclusion

Awareness and practice of mindfulness is operative in increasing the social competence as well as emotional competence. Learners and teachers can well adjust in their working environment by adapting. The curriculum of in-service and pre-service teacher training programmes must focus on the practical implementation of mindfulness intervention strategies. These practices can facilitate the teachers and students with physical and mental well-being. The procrastinations can be dealt effectively with mindfulness. Skills of coping with stress and emotions be learnt through mindfulness. Challenges regarding the class room management of an inclusive setup can be met by developing social-emotional competence among students. Cognitive Behaviour Therapy with Mindfulness based Interventions can facilitate Clinical Psychologists to achieve better cognitive and effective outcomes. Self-awareness is one of the key elements of social emotional competencies which aids in learning self-management in very simple ways and proceeds to social

awareness, and in emotion provoking situation the individual responds by applying various coping strategies. In nut shell it can be concluded that mindfulness is the ultimate weapon against the adverse situations.

Limitations

The present study is descriptive in nature limited to gain the understanding of theoretical framework.

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