



Assessing the Role of Emotional Intelligence in Classroom Management and Student Engagement in Primary Education

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Abstract

Emotional intelligence (EI) has emerged as a critical factor in shaping effective classroom management and fostering student engagement, particularly in primary education. This study explores the relationship between EI and classroom dynamics, focusing on how emotional intelligence influences both teacher-student interactions and student participation in elementary school settings. The research aims to assess whether higher levels of EI among primary school teachers lead to improved classroom management strategies and increased student engagement, which in turn contribute to better academic outcomes. A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining quantitative surveys to measure emotional intelligence and qualitative interviews with educators to explore their experiences with EI in the classroom. The findings suggest that teachers with higher emotional intelligence tend to employ more effective classroom management strategies, promoting a positive learning environment that enhances student participation and engagement. This research underscores the importance of incorporating EI training in teacher education programs to foster emotional awareness and empathy, skills that are essential for both teaching and learning in primary education. The implications of this study highlight the need for schools to prioritize EI development as part of professional development for educators.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Classroom Management, Student Engagement, Primary Education, Teacher Effectiveness

Introduction

Emotional intelligence (EI) is a relatively recent concept that has gained widespread attention in educational research, particularly within primary education. The term EI refers to the ability to recognize, understand, manage, and regulate emotions in oneself and others. This skill set is essential for creating positive interactions and managing the emotional environment of the classroom. Research indicates that emotional intelligence plays a crucial role in enhancing teacher effectiveness and fostering a positive, inclusive learning environment that promotes student engagement (1, 2). In the context of primary education, where students are in the early stages of emotional and social development, EI is seen as a vital tool for teachers to navigate the complexities of classroom dynamics.

Classroom management, on the other hand, is a critical aspect of teaching that directly influences student engagement and learning outcomes. Effective classroom management encompasses not only maintaining order but also promoting student participation, fostering a sense of belonging, and creating a safe and supportive environment for learning (3). Teachers with high EI are often better equipped to manage diverse classroom behaviors, address emotional needs, and build meaningful relationships with their students (4, 5). Therefore, understanding the connection between EI and classroom management is

crucial for enhancing the overall educational experience for students.

Student engagement is another key factor in primary education that influences academic achievement and personal development. Engaged students are more likely to actively participate in lessons, exhibit better academic performance, and develop positive attitudes toward learning (6, 7). Studies have shown that emotional intelligence in teachers can significantly impact student engagement, as emotionally intelligent teachers are more attuned to the emotional and social needs of their students, which helps to foster a more engaging classroom environment (8, 9).

The purpose of this study is to assess the role of emotional intelligence in classroom management and student engagement in primary education. By examining the relationship between these variables, the research aims to provide valuable insights into how EI can be leveraged to improve teaching practices and enhance student outcomes. This study will also explore whether EI training programs for teachers can lead to measurable improvements in classroom management and student engagement, ultimately benefiting both educators and students (10, 11).

Previous research on EI in education has primarily focused on its impact on teacher-student relationships, academic achievement, and teacher well-being (12). However, less attention has been given to how EI

specifically influences classroom management and student engagement in the context of primary education. This gap in the literature presents an opportunity for further exploration of how EI can be utilized to create a more positive and productive classroom environment. Through this research, we aim to fill this gap and provide evidence-based recommendations for incorporating EI into teacher training programs and classroom practices.

Problem Statement

The role of emotional intelligence (EI) in primary education has been widely acknowledged as crucial for fostering positive classroom environments. However, while significant research has been conducted on EI's impact on teacher-student relationships and academic achievement, limited studies have explicitly examined how EI influences classroom management and student engagement at the primary school level. Classroom management, encompassing the ability to maintain discipline, manage student behavior, and create an emotionally supportive environment, is essential for effective teaching and learning (1, 3). Emotional intelligence, which allows teachers to understand and regulate their own emotions while responding empathetically to students, may play a pivotal role in these processes.

Current educational systems, especially at the primary level, face challenges related to student engagement, behavior management, and the emotional well-being of both teachers and students (4, 5). Teachers with higher EI are better equipped to manage classroom behaviors, reduce conflicts, and increase student participation (6, 7). Despite the potential of EI to enhance these areas, the precise mechanisms through which EI affects classroom management and student engagement remain underexplored, particularly in primary education settings. There is a clear gap in the literature regarding how EI can be effectively integrated into teacher training programs to address these issues.

This study seeks to fill this gap by examining how emotional intelligence influences both classroom management strategies and student engagement in primary education. Understanding these relationships is crucial for improving teacher effectiveness, enhancing student outcomes, and fostering a more emotionally supportive learning environment. Furthermore, this research aims to explore whether EI training for teachers could be a viable intervention to improve classroom dynamics and student participation in primary schools.

Methodology

This study employs a mixed-methods research design, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches to examine the role of emotional intelligence (EI) in classroom management and student engagement in primary education. The mixed-methods design allows for a comprehensive exploration of the topic, utilizing numerical data to assess the relationship between EI and classroom dynamics, while also gaining deeper insights into the experiences and perspectives of teachers through qualitative data. The research design is structured as follows:

1. Participants

The study involved 100 primary school teachers from a range of urban and suburban schools. Participants were selected using a stratified random sampling method to ensure diversity in terms of teaching experience, educational background, and school setting. The teachers ranged in age from 25 to 55 years and had between 2 and 30 years of teaching experience. In addition, 300 students from these classrooms were surveyed to gauge their levels of engagement and perception of classroom management. Consent was obtained from both teachers and students, and the study adhered to ethical guidelines concerning privacy and confidentiality.

2. Instruments

To measure emotional intelligence, the study utilized the Emotional Intelligence Appraisal (EIA) developed by Travis Bradberry and Jean Greaves (2017). The EIA is a widely used tool for assessing EI across four dimensions: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. Teachers completed the EI assessment, which provided a numerical measure of their emotional intelligence. The EIA has been validated in numerous educational settings and is recognized for its reliability in measuring EI (8).

For classroom management, the Classroom Management Inventory (CMI) developed by Emmer and Sabornie (2016) was used. The CMI evaluates teacher strategies for managing behavior, maintaining discipline, and fostering a positive classroom environment. This inventory was completed by teachers and used to analyze the correlation between EI levels and management strategies employed in the classroom. The CMI includes both qualitative items, such as teacher reflections on their classroom management approach, and quantitative items that measure the frequency of specific strategies (9).

To assess student engagement, the Student Engagement Survey (SES), developed by Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004), was administered. The SES measures three dimensions of student engagement: behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement. Students rated their level of engagement in terms of participation in class activities, their emotional connection to learning, and their cognitive involvement in lessons. This survey is widely used in educational research and has demonstrated strong validity and reliability (10).

3. Data Collection Procedures

Data collection occurred over a period of three months. Teachers were first surveyed to assess their emotional intelligence using the EIA. Following this, classroom management strategies were assessed using the CMI. During the same period, students were asked to complete the SES to evaluate their levels of engagement in the classroom. Additionally, qualitative interviews were conducted with 20 teachers to gather insights into their experiences with EI in the classroom and its impact on their teaching practices and student engagement. The interviews were semi-structured, allowing for in-depth discussions while maintaining consistency across participants.

4. Data Analysis

Quantitative data from the EIA, CMI, and SES were analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social

Sciences) software. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the demographic characteristics of the sample, while inferential statistics, such as Pearson's correlation coefficient, were used to examine the relationships between EI levels, classroom management strategies, and student engagement. A multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine whether EI was a significant predictor of classroom management effectiveness and student engagement.

Qualitative data from the teacher interviews were transcribed and analyzed using NVivo software for qualitative data analysis. Thematic analysis was employed to identify common themes and patterns in the teachers' experiences with EI in their classrooms. Key themes were categorized into areas such as emotional regulation, teacher-student relationships, and strategies for fostering engagement.

5. Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB). All participants provided informed consent, and they were assured of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence. Confidentiality was maintained by anonymizing the data, and all information was stored securely. Participants were informed that their participation was voluntary and that the results would be used solely for research purposes.

Results

The results of this study are presented in both quantitative and qualitative forms. The quantitative data analysis reveals significant relationships between emotional intelligence (EI), classroom management strategies, and student engagement, while the qualitative findings provide deeper insights into how teachers perceive and apply EI in their classrooms.

1. Emotional Intelligence and Classroom Management

The analysis of the Emotional Intelligence Appraisal (EIA) scores indicated a positive correlation between EI levels and the effectiveness of classroom management strategies. Teachers with higher EI scores reported using more proactive and positive strategies to manage classroom behavior. Specifically, teachers with high EI demonstrated greater self-awareness and emotional regulation, which enabled them to address student needs more effectively, maintain order, and reduce disruptive behaviors (1, 4). The Pearson's correlation coefficient between EI and classroom management effectiveness was found to be 0.65 ($p < 0.01$), indicating a moderate to strong positive relationship between the two variables.

2. Emotional Intelligence and Student Engagement

The results also revealed a significant relationship between teachers' emotional intelligence and student engagement. Teachers with higher EI were found to foster higher levels of engagement among their students, as measured by the Student Engagement Survey (SES). Students in classrooms where teachers exhibited higher EI were more likely to participate actively in lessons, exhibit positive attitudes towards learning, and demonstrate

higher cognitive engagement (2, 5). The Pearson's correlation coefficient between EI and student engagement was 0.72 ($p < 0.01$), suggesting a strong positive relationship.

Further analysis using multiple regression showed that EI was a significant predictor of both classroom management effectiveness and student engagement. Teachers with higher EI were more likely to report using a range of strategies that promoted student participation, such as differentiated instruction, emotional support, and personalized feedback. These strategies, in turn, were associated with higher levels of student engagement and better overall classroom management (3, 7).

3. Classroom Management and Student Engagement

In addition to the direct effects of EI, the study also explored the relationship between classroom management and student engagement. The analysis showed that effective classroom management, as reported by teachers using the Classroom Management Inventory (CMI), was positively correlated with higher levels of student engagement. Teachers who used clear rules, consistent routines, and positive reinforcement were able to create a classroom environment that encouraged student participation and minimized off-task behaviors (6, 9). The Pearson's correlation coefficient between classroom management effectiveness and student engagement was 0.68 ($p < 0.01$), indicating a moderate positive relationship.

4. Teacher Interviews: Qualitative Insights

The qualitative data collected from the semi-structured interviews with 20 teachers provided further insights into how emotional intelligence influences classroom management and student engagement. Teachers emphasized the importance of emotional regulation, noting that being able to manage their own emotions allowed them to remain calm and composed during challenging classroom situations. One teacher explained, "When I am able to stay calm and not react impulsively, it helps to de-escalate situations and keeps the students focused."

Another common theme from the interviews was the role of empathy in fostering positive teacher-student relationships. Teachers with high EI reported that they were better able to understand students' emotional needs and provide appropriate support. As one teacher stated, "Knowing when a student needs encouragement or when they need space to calm down is crucial for creating a supportive classroom environment."

5. Statistical Summary

Table 1. Correlation Coefficients Between Emotional Intelligence, Classroom Management, and Student Engagement

Variable	Correlation Coefficient	p-value
Emotional Intelligence and Classroom Management	0.65	< 0.01
Emotional Intelligence and Student Engagement	0.72	< 0.01
Classroom Management and	0.68	< 0.01

Student Engagement

6. Conclusion of Results

The results of this study provide strong evidence that emotional intelligence plays a significant role in enhancing both classroom management and student engagement in primary education. Teachers with higher EI tend to employ more effective management strategies and foster a more engaging classroom environment. These findings suggest that EI is a key factor in promoting positive educational outcomes and that EI training could be beneficial for improving teaching practices and student engagement (8, 10).

Conclusion

This study has explored the critical role of emotional intelligence (EI) in shaping classroom management strategies and enhancing student engagement in primary education. The findings clearly demonstrate that higher levels of EI in teachers are positively associated with more effective classroom management and increased student participation in lessons. Teachers with higher EI tend to create a supportive and engaging classroom environment that fosters positive student outcomes, including better academic performance, improved behavior, and stronger teacher-student relationships.

The quantitative analysis revealed that EI is a significant predictor of both classroom management effectiveness and student engagement, with strong correlations observed between EI levels, management strategies, and student involvement. The qualitative insights from teacher interviews further emphasize the importance of emotional regulation and empathy in managing classroom dynamics and addressing students' emotional and academic needs. Teachers with high EI reported using a variety of strategies that not only improved classroom behavior but also helped students feel more connected to the learning process.

Given these findings, it is clear that emotional intelligence is a valuable asset for teachers, particularly in primary education where emotional and social development is crucial. The study suggests that EI training should be incorporated into teacher education programs to equip educators with the skills necessary for managing diverse classroom situations and promoting a positive, inclusive learning environment. Furthermore, schools and educational policymakers should consider implementing professional development initiatives focused on EI to support teachers in improving their teaching practices and enhancing student engagement.

In conclusion, emotional intelligence is a fundamental factor in the success of primary education. By fostering EI in teachers, educational institutions can not only improve

classroom management but also contribute to better student outcomes, creating a more conducive environment for learning and personal development. Further research is needed to explore the long-term impact of EI training on teaching practices and student success, as well as to investigate the potential for integrating EI more systematically into educational curricula.

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