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Teachers' competencies to effective support emotional intelligence development of deaf students in Secondary Schools in North Eastern, Kenya

Lornah Irene Ayako *

Department of Counseling Psychology, The Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Kenya.

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Abstract

Deaf students may not have exposure to rich emotional vocabulary in their first language, Kenyan sign language, which may result in difficulty in identifying their own and others' emotions, thus hinder their social interactions and academic success. The main aim of this study was to assess teachers' competencies in supporting the development of emotional intelligence in deaf students in secondary schools in North Eastern, Kenya. The study embraced a quantitative descriptive design approach and was based on the foundation of Bar-On model. The target population were teachers of secondary schools for the deaf in North-Eastern, Kenya. A sample size of 17 participants was selected through census sampling. Data was collected through a structured questionnaire with reliability coefficient 0.767 and analyzed descriptively. Findings revealed that the levels of participants' competence in development of emotional intelligence of deaf students was moderate ($M=3.45$ and $SD=0.275$). Participants recorded high levels ($M=4.35$ and $SD=0.493$) of competencies in creating a supportive classroom environment that allows students to express their emotions. However, it came out that participants had low levels ($M=1.41$ and $SD=0.712$) of competencies in integrating activities on emotional intelligence into the curriculum. The paper recommends that teachers for deaf students be regularly provided with adequate training on skills and competencies to effectively support the development of emotional intelligence of their learners.

Keywords: Deaf students; Emotional Development; Emotional Intelligence; Special Needs Education; Teachers Competencies

1. Introduction

Emotional intelligence (EI), as described by Salovey and Mayer (1990), involves understanding, expressing, and managing emotions, particularly in an educational context where teachers' emotional regulation significantly impacts students (Valente et al., 2022). Teaching requires emotional competence for effective instruction and creating a positive learning environment (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). Educators with higher emotional intelligence connect better with students (Al-Dababneh et al., 2016).

Research suggests that teachers can enhance their emotional intelligence, improving teaching and student relationships (Dolev & Leshem, 2016). Studies confirm that emotional intelligence influences teachers' attitudes and teaching effectiveness (Kaur et al., 2019) and is associated with positive outcomes like improved relationships and effective communication (Miao et al., 2017).

Emotionally intelligent teachers contribute to higher student engagement (Welmilla, 2020) and exhibit increased teacher efficacy (Valente et al., 2020). Research also explores emotional intelligence's relevance in addressing teacher

* Corresponding author: Lornah Irene Ayako

challenges, especially with students having special needs (Skura & Świdarska, 2021). Findings suggest that emotional intelligence and social competences play a role in teachers' ability to foster emotional intelligence in diverse students.

This study's focus is on assessing teachers' competencies in promoting emotional intelligence among deaf students in North Eastern Kenya's secondary schools.

2. Literature Review

Kaur et al. (2019) delved into comprehending emotional intelligence (EI) among higher education teachers and its integration into effective teaching practices as emotional intelligence competencies (EIC) for enhanced performance. They utilized structural equation modeling (SEM) to validate and propose a model that links EI-based teaching competencies with core competencies. Statistically, their findings established a robust correlation between EIC and teachers' attitudes, which significantly contributed to superior performance outcomes.

Tuyakova et al. (2022) aimed to investigate the impact of teaching emotional intelligence on the emotional competence of social pedagogues students. They conducted assessments of emotional intelligence levels before and after training using the Hall Emotional Intelligence Test, focusing specifically on Emotional Awareness, Emotion Management, Self-motivation, Empathy, and Managing Others' Emotions. The findings revealed significant enhancements across all these aspects of emotional intelligence. The research effectively illustrated the advantages of boosting teachers' emotional intelligence, showcasing its positive implications for the teaching and learning process.

2.1. Statement of the problem

The problem is that the competence of teachers in effectively developing the emotional intelligence of deaf students is not well understood or addressed. As a result, deaf students may not receive the necessary support and guidance to develop their emotional intelligence, which can lead to a range of negative consequences including decreased self-esteem, difficulty in forming relationships, and challenges in managing their emotions. Deaf students often face unique barriers and challenges in their emotional development due to communication difficulties, limited access to language, and a lack of understanding from others around them. They may struggle to express their emotions, interpret non-verbal cues, and develop empathy. Teachers play a critical role in the emotional development of students, but they may lack the necessary knowledge, skills, and resources to effectively address the emotional needs of deaf students. This can be attributed to a lack of training and professional development opportunities specific to teaching emotional intelligence to deaf students. Without proper support from teachers, deaf students may be left to navigate their emotional challenges alone, leading to negative outcomes both in their academic performance and overall well-being. Therefore, there is a need to explore the levels of competence of teachers in effectively developing the emotional intelligence of deaf students.

2.2. Research Objectives

The main aim of this study was to assess teachers' competencies in supporting the development of emotional intelligence in deaf students in secondary schools in North Eastern, Kenya.

3. Research methodology

The study was quantitative descriptive survey research design was used. The study area was North Eastern, Kenya. The region has two secondary schools for the deaf. Teachers from the two schools formed the target population. Census sampling was used to select 17 teachers from the two schools who agreed to take part in the study by signing a consent. Collection of data was made possible through use a structured questionnaire with reliability coefficient 0.767. A coefficient of 0.7 or above will be considered appropriate and reliable as expressed by Mugenda & Mugenda (2003). The questionnaires were distributed by the researcher to the sampled teachers within a span of two weeks after getting necessary approvals from the department of psychology, Catholic university and relevant authorities. Data was coded and entered in electronic spreadsheets with the help of SPSS and analyzed using descriptive statistics.

4. Results

4.1. Demographics

Review of demographic data showed that 13 (76.4%) were male whereas 4 (23.6%) were female. This might imply that male teachers are attracted to special needs education profession compared to female in the region. With regard to their

education qualification level, 17 (100%) had degrees in special needs education. This result indicates that all the teachers in the two schools have met the required qualifications to enable them teach and support special needs learners in their schools. The experience that the teachers had in teaching special needs ranged from one year to thirty-four years.

4.2. Participants' Competencies to Effective Support Emotional Intelligence Development

To assess participants' competencies in supporting the development of emotional intelligence in secondary school students with deafness, participants responded to a questionnaire to indicate the degree at which they felt they were competent.

Table 1 Teachers Competencies to Effective Support Emotional Intelligence Development

Teachers Competencies	Never	Rarely	Some times	Often	Always	M	SD
I have a good understanding of emotional intelligence and its importance in student development.	-	-	-	1588.2	211.8	4.12	0.332
I am aware of my own emotions and can effectively regulate them in the classroom	-	-	-	1376.5	423.5	4.24	0.437
I create a safe and supportive classroom environment that allows students to express their emotions openly.	-	-	-	1164.7	635.3	4.35	0.493
I actively promote positive teacher-student relationships based on trust, respect, and empathy.	-	-	211.8	1058.8	529.4	4.18	0.636
I integrate activities and discussions on emotional intelligence into my curriculum.	1270.6	317.6	211.8	-	-	1.41	0.712
I differentiate my instruction to meet the emotional needs of individual students.	-	-	423.5	1164.7	211.8	3.88	0.600
I regularly engage in professional development to enhance my knowledge and skills in supporting emotional intelligence development.	741.2	529.4	211.8	317.6	-	2.06	1.144
I collaborate with parents and families to foster emotional intelligence development in students.	-	-	952.9	847.1	-	3.47	0.514
I provide opportunities for students to practice emotional regulation and social skills in real-life situations.	-	-	1376.5	423.5	-	3.24	0.437
I believe that supporting the development of emotional intelligence is essential for students' overall well-being and success.	-	-	15.9	1164.7	529.4	4.24	0.562
I feel confident in my ability to effectively support the development of emotional intelligence in my students.	-	-	952.9	741.2	15.9	3.53	0.624
I actively seek feedback from students and colleagues to improve my practices related to emotional intelligence development.	635.3	423.5	529.4	211.8	-	2.18	1.074
I use a variety of instructional strategies to engage students in emotional intelligence development.	-	847.1	635.3	317.6	-	2.71	0.772
I am aware of research-based best practices for fostering emotional intelligence in students.	-	-	529.4	847.1	423.5	3.94	0.748

I recognize the impact of emotional intelligence on academic achievement and overall student well-being	-	-	317.6	741.2	741.2	4.24	0.275
Composite mean						3.45	2.75

Key: M-Mean and SD Standard Deviation.

Results that show that 15(88.2%) often and 2(11.8%) always had a good understanding of emotional intelligence and its importance in student development. This implies that majority of the participants (M=4.12 and SD=0.332) tend to regularly give their students opportunities to develop and hone good values, being honest, being trustworthy, and taking responsibility for their actions in the classroom. Research also showed that 13(76.5%) often, 4(23.5%) always understood their emotions. This can be connoted as a greater number of the participants (M=4.24 and SD=0.437) absolutely have cultivated an understanding of their own emotions. Students should feel secure and confident as they express themselves. It was also revealed that 11(64.7%) often and 6(35.3%) always create a safe and supportive classroom environment that allows students to express their emotions openly. This can be comprehended that many of the participants (M=4.35 and SD=0.493) routinely include strategies and activities in your lessons that allow students to express their thoughts and ideas, build relationships, and practice collaboration. A positive relationship between a teacher and student is critical for student success both academically and socially. The study revealed that 10(58.8%) often, 5(29.4%) always and 2(11.8%) participants actively promote positive teacher-student relationships based on trust, respect, and empathy. This suggests that a greater number of participants (M=4.18 and SD=0.636) certainly enhance a positive teacher student relationship which makes the classroom a safe and welcoming environment for all. Probed on integrating activities and discussions on emotional intelligence into the curriculum, the response was 12(70.6%) never, 3(17.6%) rarely and 2(11.8%) sometimes. This signifies that only a few participants (M=1.41 and SD=0.712) certainly create a social-emotional environment in class. Differentiating instruction requires a teacher to deliver lessons at varying levels of difficulty based on the ability of each student. The teaching approach is designed to meet the individual needs of each student in the classroom. Based on the results, 11(64.7%) often, 4(23.5%) sometimes and 2(11.8%) always differentiated instructions. It can be concluded that majority of the participants (M=3.88 and SD=0.600) are able to meet the emotional needs of individual learners. The findings also disclosed that 7(41.2%) never, 5(29.4%) rarely, 2(11.8%) sometimes and 3(17.6%) often engaged in professional development in supporting their emotional intelligence development. This implies that a small number of the participants, (M=2.06 and SD=1.144) have positive perceptions with emotional intelligence training and are open to self-improvement. Schools and parents can promote students' intelligence development. From the findings, 9(52.9%) sometimes and 8(47.1%) often collaborated with parents and families to foster emotional development in students. This infers that majority of the participants, (M=3.47 and SD=0.514) somewhat engaged families as partners in emotional intelligence development in students. Probed on whether they provided opportunities for students to practice emotional regulation and social skills in real-life situations, the responses were 13(76.5%) sometimes and 4(23.5%) often. This infers that huge number of participants (M=3.24 and SD=0.427) provided students with social-emotional learning activities in helping students develop crucial life skills that go beyond academics. Developing emotional intelligence encourages many positive traits. Based on the results, 11(64.7%) often, 5(29.4%) always and 1(5.9%) believe that supporting the development of emotional intelligence is essential for students' overall well-being and success. It can be concluded that majority (M=4.24 and SD=0.562) of the participants tend to cultivate skills such as active listening, self-awareness and empathy to their students so that they can equip them to succeed both academically and socially. The results also revealed that of the participants, 9(52.9%) sometimes, 7(41.2%) often and 1(5.9%) always felt confident in their ability to effectively support the development of emotional intelligence in their students. This infers that more than half of the participants (M=3.53 and SD=0.624) had the feeling that they are better equipped to helping students develop emotional intelligence. Feedback can help you identify your strengths and areas of improvement. From the findings, 5(29.4%) sometimes, 2(11.8%) often, 4(23.5%) rarely and 6(35.3%) never sought feedback from students and colleagues to improve their practices related to emotional intelligence development. This can be interpreted as most of the participants do not (M=2.18 and SD=1.074) seek feedback from others to gain a better understanding of how your emotions and behaviors are perceived by those around them which can help them identify areas where emotional intelligence needs to be improved. The findings additionally revealed that 8(47.1%) rarely, 6(35.3%) sometimes and 3(17.6%) often used variety of instructional strategies to engage students in emotional intelligence development. This implies that the participants averagely (M=2.71 and SD=0.772) reasonably had different approaches in cultivating emotional intelligence in learners. Additionally, results revealed that often 8(47.1%), often, 5(29.4%) sometimes and 4(23.5%) always were aware of research-based best practices for fostering emotional intelligence in students. This can be translated that many participants (M=3.94 and SD=0.748) for the most part incorporated research based best practices in developing emotional intelligence of the students. Lastly findings exposed that 7(41.2%) always, 7(41.2%) often and 3(17.6%) sometimes recognized the impact of emotional intelligence on academic achievement and overall student well-being. This entails that majority of the participants (M=4.24 and SD=0.752) entirely recognizes the impact of

emotional intelligence on academic achievement and overall student well-being. Composite data from the above statements reveal that the level of teachers' Competencies to Effective Support Emotional Intelligence Development among Deaf Students in Secondary Schools in North-Eastern Region, Kenya is at high level ($M=3.45$ and $SD=0.275$).

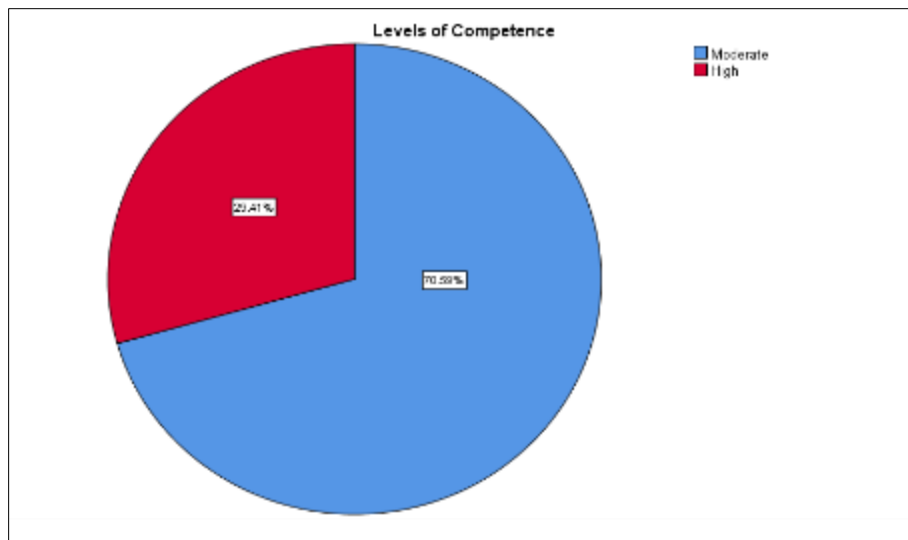


Figure 1 Summary Teacher Competencies in development of Emotional Intelligence of Deaf Students

The findings indicate that 70.59% of teachers in Secondary Schools within North Eastern, Kenya, working with deaf students had a moderate capacity to support the development of emotional intelligence among these learners. Additionally, it was observed that 29.41% of teachers in exhibited higher competencies in supporting the development of emotional intelligence in deaf students.

5. Conclusion

Teacher competence in the development of emotional intelligence in students is crucial for creating a positive and supportive learning environment. Teachers must improve their own SEC, understand how to specifically teach social and emotional skills, and possess the expertise, dispositions, and skills necessary to foster a healthy, inclusive, and sensitive school and classroom environment (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2017). It is necessary for a teacher to have knowledge and understanding of the concept of emotional intelligence and its significance in students' overall development. This knowledge of strategies and interventions will help promote the development of emotional intelligence in students.

It is also important for teachers to demonstrating emotional intelligence in interactions with students, colleagues, and parents by modeling effective emotional regulation, empathy, active listening, and conflict resolution skills. Teachers with positively emotional experience are likely to have resilient motivation, and feel more equipped to deal with the complex demands of teaching. (Dung & Zsolnai, 2022). In addition, the teacher should serving as a positive role model for students in terms of emotional awareness and healthy expression of emotions.

In a classroom setting, the teacher needs to create a safe and inclusive classroom environment that values and respects students' emotions and experiences. This can be achieved by incorporating activities and discussions that promote self-reflection, emotional expression, and empathy. Dung & Zsolnai (2022) allude that teachers with high SEC are those who recognize an individual student' emotions, understand the cognitive appraisals behind that. Providing opportunities for students to practice emotional regulation, problem-solving, and effective communication skills is also important. Besides, teachers are required to offer guidance and support to students in managing their emotions and building positive relationships. Teachers who are able to understand their students' emotional expression and the respective appraisals become the reliable and effectively supportive sources for students. (Dung & Zsolnai, 2022).

Establishing strong teacher-student relationships based on trust, respect, and understanding will aid a teacher in development of emotional intelligence of the students. This can include actively listening to students' concerns, perspectives, and emotions. Teachers who have social-emotional learning skills are able to employ their own SEC, manage classroom well, and tend to apply SEL skills effectively in their other teaching activities (Esen-Aygun & Salim-

Tasking, 2017). Teachers are also encouraged to provide constructive feedback and encouragement to help students develop their emotional intelligence. Besides, collaborating with parents, guardians, and other stakeholders will support students' emotional growth.

For effective support to develop emotional intelligence development among students, teachers need to engage in continuous professional development to enhance knowledge and skills related to emotional intelligence. Dung & Zsolnai (2022). suggests that social and emotional learning” could be added in teacher training for more practical application in real practice and in term of Social and emotional competence concern. This is because it provides significant supports for teachers for the sake of not only themselves but their many student generations later on. This can be achieved by seeking opportunities for self-reflection and self-improvement in terms of emotional intelligence competencies and actively participating in workshops, training programs, and conferences that focus on emotional intelligence and its application in education.

Recommendations

The research recommends that all teachers be regularly provided with training on approaches of emotional intelligence competencies on the deaf students. There is also need for the curriculum developer to include a unit on emotional intelligence as a prerequisite for teacher training.

Compliance with ethical standards

Acknowledgments

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Disclosure of conflict of interest

The author declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any financial relationship that could be interpreted as a potential conflict of interest.

Statement of informed consent

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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