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**SOCIAL EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE OF STUDENT
TEACHERS IN COLLEGE OF EDUCATION: A
PHENOMENOLOGICAL SURVEY**

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Abstract

A novel as well as a very essential study is published at the present moment when the time is ripe enough Tamilnadu to consider the introduction of Social Emotional Competence based interventions in schools. The phenomenological survey has brought out that Social Emotional Competence of student teachers in Colleges of education is only moderate. The gender has its influence as male student teachers are moderate, with their female counterparts standing low in Social Emotional Competence. Similar influence is reported in the case of subject area specialization in Social Emotional Competence with science group student teachers securing high level Social Emotional Competence with language and humanity subject student teachers having just moderate level of Social Emotional Competence.

Keywords: Social Emotional Competence, Social Emotional Learning, Safe Environment, Self Care

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Introduction

Social Emotional Competence refers to the skills that help us to interact in positive ways with others and manage our own emotions. Such skills are varied and include among others our relationship skills, confidence, coping skills, self-regulation and self-awareness (Rebecca, Collie, et al, 2017)¹. It is well known that the play of inbuilt psychological characteristics is the force that cares as well as controls the internal and external behaviour of an individual. That is, the social or antisocial behaviour of individuals seem to stem from one's well-formed psychological base. It is made explicit in the identified social emotional characteristics which are considered as the core of one's life functioning as well as life's success. That is, the broad psycho-socio domains are rendered in simple, concise and understandable terminology 'Social Emotional Competence'.

Background

The works of ancient philosophers prepared a ground for the 'curious' and 'inquisitive' minds to search for quantifying abstract concepts which subsequently created space for physicians turned psychologists to experiment on animals and human beings to establish the presence and nature of intelligence, thinking, motivation, etc. Gradually a growing body of knowledge of psychology related to life oriented social behaviour and emotional behaviour of human beings has attained special importance because of the global effort to emancipate the socially and emotionally impoverished humanity to lead a happy and successful life on this earth. Moreover Social emotional competencies are the primary requisites for the young children to get themselves well accommodated with the environment in terms of men and material to enjoy life fully, embracing academic and non-academic life situations. Failure in this regard will lead to anxiety, peer related difficulties and conduct problems.

Gail Innis (2014)² has listed out the following as means to assist in building the protective features of Social Emotional Competence:

Role Modeling: Children at large learn by imitation. Therefore, it is a necessity to expose children constantly to appropriate ways to express emotions by using words and actions.

Safe Environment: Children need to know why something is bad or good, sad or happy, to express their feelings with suitable words and gestures.

Stable Guidelines: It is a must to have a clear cut and unambiguous specification to mark a behaviour appropriate or normal for the children. That is, adoption of clear communication on the part of a teacher helps students' secure correct understanding about life and responsibilities.

Self-Care: Teachers have to adopt proper self-care measures to overcome stress and manage stressors. Teachers have to see to it that their negative emotions anger, anxiety, etc should not affect the normal behaviour of children.

All these indicate that teachers are the crucial agents beyond parents and family to foster Social Emotional Competence in children. It follows thus, that teacher preparation institutions have a great role to play in bringing out teachers with strong Social Emotional Competencies, to help children under their care to initiate and imbibe the needed social emotional skills and competencies (King, E. K, et al, 2018)³.

Problem Statement

As it is known, teachers are stated to be instrumental for equipping students with needed Social Emotional Competencies by serving as a role model by converting the classroom as a fertile ground for raising and strengthening essential Social Emotional Competencies (Steed, Elizabeth and Roach, A.T, 2017; Humphries, Marisha, L and Williams, B. 2018; King, Elizabeth, K and La Pro Karen, M, 2018)^{4,5,3}. But the curriculum for teacher preparation being followed in Colleges of Education and Teacher Training Institutes in Tamilnadu does not seem to favour teacher trainees to develop the required Social Emotional Competencies. The Researcher perceives this a hurdle in teacher preparation to produce quality teachers to impart Social Emotional Competencies to students. Naturally, it strengthens the assumption that the student teachers undergoing B.Ed. in Colleges of Education may not be well equipped with Social Emotional Competencies. Moreover, no research seems to have been published so far focusing on the Social Emotional Competencies of student teachers in Tamilnadu. Along with the identification of such a research gap in the field of Social Emotional Competence, the Researcher has also understood the fact that there is no sufficient awareness among the teacher educators and teachers in Tamilnadu about the nature, characteristics and domains of Social Emotional Competencies. As a result of this understanding the Researchers are motivated this to undertake research to assess Social Emotional Competencies present in student teachers in Colleges of Education in Trichy district in respect of the following 12 facets / dimensions.

- ✓ Healthy Self Esteem
- ✓ Self Confidence
- ✓ Self-Efficacy
- ✓ Self-Control
- ✓ Personal Agency
- ✓ Patience
- ✓ Morality
- ✓ Persistence
- ✓ Conflict Resolution
- ✓ Communication Skills
- ✓ Empathy
- ✓ Social Skills

(Centre for the study of Social Policy, 2013)⁶.

Population

All the student teachers doing first and second year of B.Ed. degree course in Colleges of Education in Trichy district, affiliated to Tamilnadu Teachers Education University, Chennai form the population of the study.

Sample

3 - 5% of the population chosen randomly after due stratification on the basis of subject specialization will constitute the sample of the study. The final sample is to be formed around 120 student teachers from different Colleges of Education.

Method

The stated problem warrants Phenomenological approach employing face to face interview to generate necessary data to identify the status of Social Emotional Competence of the target population.

Objectives

- To find the level of Social Emotional Competence and its dimensions among the student teachers in *Trichy district*.
- To find the level of Social Emotional Competence among the student teachers in terms of *gender*.
- To find the level of Social Emotional Competence among the student teachers in terms of subject *specialization*.

Data Collection

Among the Colleges of Education in Trichy, the Researchers chose SIX of them by lot, and from each one after stratification on the basis of subject specialization as language, humanities and sciences, 10 students each from with somewhat equal number of male and female in first year and similarly 10 student teachers from second year B.Ed. course of study will be randomly taken. Altogether from the sample colleges 120 student teachers were picked up and interviewed with the help of a semi-structured schedule to generate data about their strength in Social Emotional Competencies in total and in respect of its already identified 12 facets.

It took 2 days for each college of Education to interact with the sample members one by one with the help of 3 semi-structured questions for each facet. The responses for questions were graded as very good, good, fair (neither good nor poor), poor, and very poor in the perception of Social Emotional Competence.

Data Analysis

Hypothesis – 1

The level of Social Emotional Competence and its dimensions among the student teachers is moderate.

Table 1

Level of Social Emotional Competence and its dimensions among the student teachers

Variable	N	Low		Moderate		High	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
<i>Healthy Self Esteem</i>	120	31	25.83	54	45.00*	35	29.16
<i>Self Confidence</i>	120	38	31.66	48	40.00*	34	28.33
<i>Self Efficacy</i>	120	45	37.50*	38	31.66	37	30.83
<i>Self Control</i>	120	47	39.16*	36	30.00	37	30.83
<i>Personal Agency</i>	120	36	30.00	44	36.66*	40	33.33
<i>Patience</i>	120	45	37.50*	40	33.33	35	29.16
<i>Morality</i>	120	38	31.66	46	38.33*	36	30.00
<i>Persistence</i>	120	40	33.33	37	30.83	43	35.83*
<i>Conflict Resolution</i>	120	45	37.50*	38	31.66	37	30.83

<i>Communication Skills</i>	120	40	33.33	44	36.66*	36	30.00
<i>Empathy</i>	120	40	33.33	43	35.83*	37	30.83
<i>Social Skills</i>	120	37	30.83	37	30.83	46	38.33*
<i>Overall Social Emotional Competency</i>	120	33	27.50	50	41.66*	37	30.83

* indicates the level of Social Emotional Competency

Hypothesis – 2

The level of Social Emotional Competence among the student teachers in terms of gender is moderate.

Table 2

Level of Social Emotional Competence among the student teachers in terms of gender

Gender	N	Low		Moderate		High	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
<i>Male</i>	52	15	28.84	21	40.38*	16	30.76
<i>Female</i>	68	26	38.23*	22	32.35	20	29.41

* indicates the level of Social Emotional Competency

Hypothesis – 3

The level of Social Emotional Competence among the student teachers in terms of subject specialization is moderate.

Table 3

Level of Social Emotional Competence among the student teachers in terms of subject specialization

Subject	N	Low		Moderate		High	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
<i>Language</i>	40	11	27.50	18	45.00*	11	27.50
<i>Humanities</i>	40	12	30.00	15	37.50*	13	32.50
<i>Science</i>	40	10	25.00	14	35.00	16	40.00*

* indicates the level of Social Emotional Competency

Findings

The followings are the findings deduced from statistical analysis of the data:

- ✓ On testing the nature of Social emotional competence and its dimensions of student teachers in Colleges of Education in Trichy district, Tamilnadu, it is found that they are **moderate** in their *overall Social-emotional competence (41.66%)* and its dimensions *healthy self-esteem (45%); self-confidence (40%); personal agency (36.66%); morality (38.33%); communication skills (36.66%)* and *empathy (35.83%)*. whereas they are found to be **low** in their *self-efficacy (37.50%); conflict resolution (37.50%)* and *self-control (39.16%); and patience (37.50%)*, and **high** in *persistence (35.83%)* and *social skills (38.33%)*.
- ✓ While analysing the level of Social emotional competence of student teachers in terms of their Gender, **male** student teachers are found to be **moderate** (40.38%) in their *Social Emotional Competence* whereas **female** student teachers are just **low** (38.23%) in this aspect.
- ✓ The analysis of data in relation to the subject specialization of student teachers shows that the student teaches of **language** (45%) as well as **humanities** (37.5%) are found to be **moderate** in their *Social emotional competence*; whereas student teachers belonging to **science** category are found to be **high** (40%) in their competence.

Discussion

The study aimed at assessing the Social Emotional Competence of student teachers in Colleges of education has found it just moderate. It is an anticipated one in the context of academic, emotional and social environments, devoid of any effort in moulding and developing academic, emotional and social behaviour of students inside and outside of educational institutions including Colleges of education. But at the same time it gives out a strong warning to all Colleges of education about the deplorable condition prevailing on the campus in regard to preparing teachers of tomorrow, good enough to spread the fragrance of Social Emotional Competencies among the future citizens of India. Meanwhile another good thing emerging from the present outcome is that the subjects' Social Emotional Competence is fortunately not low. It implies that it will be easy for the managements and the Government to reequip the present student teachers coming out of Colleges of education as qualified teachers, with additional Social Emotional Competencies when Social Emotional Learning programmes are to launched in schools. In this context the Researchers would like to point out the immediate need for developing interventional strategies for promoting self efficacy, self control, patience, persistence and conflict resolution in the target group where in their attainment is low. Similarly, the female student teachers need to be given special assistance and guidance to enhance their Social Emotional Competence at least in par with their male counter parts.

The present study has brought forth the fact that subject specialization in teaching is significant enough to alter one's level of Social emotional competence. Of the three of broad subject areas studied, the students of science group stand 'high' in their Social emotional competence, whereas the other two subject groups seem to occupy the middle position, earning only moderate level attainment in Social emotional competence. It may be attributed to the nature of subject being studied, the difficulty level involved in mastering the subjects, and the interest and involvement evinced by learners.

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