

Emotional Intelligence Of Special School Teachers

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Abstract

Emotional intelligence plays a significant role in determining the professional effectiveness and well-being of teachers, especially those working in special education settings. Special school teachers face unique emotional challenges while addressing the diverse cognitive, behavioral, and emotional needs of children with disabilities. The present study aims to examine the level of emotional intelligence among special school teachers and to analyze differences based on gender, locality, teaching experience, and age. The study adopted a survey method. The population comprised special school teachers working in Tamil Nadu, and a sample of 500 teachers was selected through random sampling. The Emotional Intelligence Scale developed by the investigator and guide was used to collect data. The scale measured five dimensions of emotional intelligence, namely self-perception, self-regulation, self-drive, empathy, and social motive. Statistical techniques such as percentage analysis, t-test, F-test, and chi-square test were employed to analyze the data. The findings revealed that the majority of special school teachers possessed a moderate level of emotional intelligence and its dimensions. Significant differences were found between male and female special school teachers, with female teachers showing higher levels of emotional intelligence across all dimensions. No significant differences were observed between rural and urban special school teachers. A significant difference was found among teachers with different levels of teaching experience, indicating that teachers with more than ten years of experience demonstrated higher emotional intelligence than those with lesser experience. However, no significant association was found between age and emotional intelligence. The findings highlight the importance of emotional intelligence as a vital psychological resource for special school teachers. The study emphasizes the need for structured emotional intelligence training programmes, mentoring support, and professional development initiatives to enhance teachers' emotional competencies. Strengthening emotional intelligence among special school teachers can contribute to improved classroom climate, effective management of emotional challenges, enhanced teacher well-being, and better educational outcomes for students with special needs.

Key Words: Emotional intelligence, special school teachers, inclusive education, teacher well-being, special education.

Introduction

Emotional intelligence (EI) plays a vital role in the professional effectiveness and well-being of teachers, particularly those working in special education settings. Special school teachers encounter unique emotional demands while addressing the diverse learning, behavioral, and emotional needs of children with disabilities. Teaching in special schools demands not only professional knowledge and pedagogical skills but also strong emotional competencies. Special school teachers work with children who have intellectual, physical, sensory, or emotional disabilities, often facing behavioral challenges and emotional sensitivities. Emotional intelligence enables teachers to understand their own emotional responses and those of their students, facilitating positive interactions and effective instructional practices. In recent years, emotional intelligence has gained recognition as a key factor influencing teacher performance, mental health, and job satisfaction, particularly in special education contexts.

Review of Related Literature

Emotional intelligence has gained importance in educational research due to its strong relationship with teacher effectiveness, well-being, and classroom climate. Salovey and Mayer (1990) defined emotional intelligence as the ability to perceive, understand, and regulate emotions in oneself and others, while Goleman (1995) emphasized its relevance to professional success and interpersonal relationships, including teaching. Research indicates that teachers with high emotional intelligence demonstrate better classroom management, stronger teacher–student relationships, and reduced emotional stress (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

Studies on special education teachers reveal that they experience higher emotional stress due to the complex needs of students with disabilities. Emotional intelligence helps teachers manage classroom challenges, maintain emotional balance, and foster inclusive learning environments (Brackett & Katulak, 2006). Teachers with strong emotional regulation skills show greater resilience, lower burnout, and higher job satisfaction (Sutton & Wheatley, 2003). Palmer, Donaldson, and Stough (2002) also reported a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and life satisfaction.

In the Indian context, research has shown moderate levels of emotional intelligence among special school teachers and highlighted the need for emotional skill development through professional training programmes. Emotional intelligence has been found to influence teachers' resilience, job satisfaction, and overall well-being. Although existing studies confirm the importance of emotional intelligence, there is a need for focused empirical research on special school teachers. The present study seeks to address this gap by examining emotional intelligence among special school teachers in detail.

Significance of the study

The present study is significant as it highlights the importance of emotional intelligence among special school teachers who operate in emotionally demanding environments. Understanding emotional intelligence can help in identifying teachers' strengths and areas requiring support. The study provides insights for teacher educators, administrators, and policymakers to incorporate emotional intelligence development into pre-service and in-service training programmes. Enhancing emotional intelligence among special school teachers can contribute to improved classroom climate, reduced stress and burnout, better student outcomes, and overall professional well-being.

Operational Definition of Key Terms

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence refers to the ability of special school teachers to perceive, understand, regulate, and manage their emotions and the emotions of others. It includes components such as self-perception, self-regulation, self-drive, empathy, and social motive, which are crucial in addressing the emotional and behavioral challenges encountered in special education.

Special School Teachers

Special school teachers are educators who work in specialised educational settings catering to students with disabilities or special needs, such as intellectual disabilities, autism, learning difficulties, or physical impairments. These teachers are responsible for creating and implementing individualised educational plans, fostering inclusive learning environments, and addressing the unique developmental needs of their students.

Population and Sample

The population taken for the survey was special school teachers. A sample of 500 teachers was chosen randomly from the special schools in Tamil Nadu.

Tool Used

The Emotional Intelligence Scale was developed by the investigator and guide.

Objectives of the Study

1. To find out the level of self-perception, self-regulation, self-drive, empathy, social motive and emotional intelligence of special school teachers.
2. To find out the significant difference between male and female special school teachers in their self-perception, self-regulation, self-drive, empathy, social motive and emotional intelligence.
3. To find out the significant difference between rural and urban school special school teachers in their self-perception, self-regulation, self-drive, empathy, social motive and emotional intelligence.
4. To find out the significant difference among teaching experiences below 5 years, 6 to 10 years and above 10 years' special school teachers in their self-perception, self-regulation, self-drive, empathy, social motive and emotional intelligence.
5. To find out the significant association between the age of special school teachers in their self-perception, self-regulation, self-drive, empathy, social motive and emotional intelligence.

Null Hypotheses of the Study

1. The level of self-perception, self-regulation, self-drive, empathy, social motive and emotional intelligence of special school teachers is moderate.
2. There is no significant difference between male and female special school teachers in their self-perception, self-regulation, self-drive, empathy, social motive and emotional intelligence.
3. There is no significant difference between rural and urban school special school teachers in their self-perception, self-regulation, self-drive, empathy, social motive and emotional intelligence.
4. There is no significant difference among teaching experiences below 5 years, 6 to 10 years and above 10 years' special school teachers in their self-perception, self-regulation, self-drive, empathy, social motive and emotional intelligence.
5. There is no significant association between the age of special school teachers in their

self-perception, self-regulation, self-drive, empathy, social motive and emotional intelligence.

Analysis of Data

Table 1

Level of self-perception, self-regulation, self-drive, empathy, social motive and emotional intelligence of special school teachers

Variable	Special School Teachers	Low		Moderate		High	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Self-perception	500	131	26.2	292	58.4	77	15.4
Self-regulation		118	23.6	292	58.4	90	18
Self-drive		84	16.8	337	67.4	79	15.8
Empathy		73	14.6	279	75.8	48	9.6
Social Motive		114	22.8	233	46.6	153	30.6
Emotional Intelligence		82	16.4	333	66.6	85	17

(Low = Below 40; Moderate = Between 40-60; High = Above 60 from the ‘T’ Scores)

It is inferred from the above table that 26.2%, 58.4% and 15.4% of special school teachers have low, moderate and high level of self-perception respectively. 23.6%, 58.4% and 18% of special school teachers have low, moderate and high level of self-regulation respectively. 16.8%, 67.4% and 15.8% of special school teachers have low, moderate and high level of self-drive respectively. 14.6%, 75.8% and 9.6% of special school teachers have low, moderate and high level of empathy respectively. 22.8%, 46.6% and 30.6% of special school teachers have low, moderate and high level of self-motive respectively. 16.4%, 66.6% and 17% of special school teachers have low, moderate and high level of emotional intelligence respectively.

Figure 1: Level of emotional intelligence of special school teachers

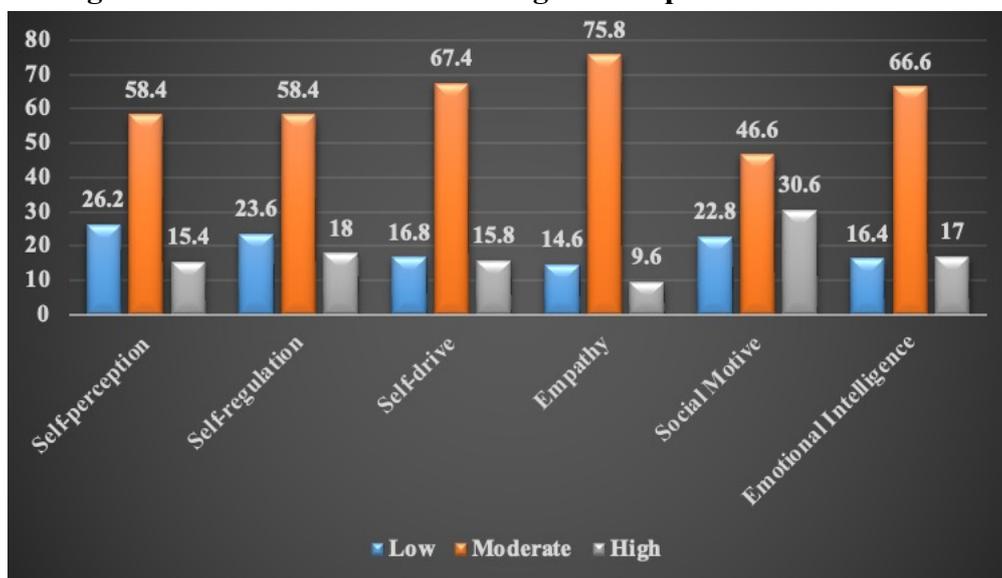


Table 2

A t-test showing the mean difference between male and female special school teachers in their self-perception, self-regulation, self-drive, empathy, social motive and emotional

intelligence

Variable	Male (N = 108)		Female (N = 392)		Calculated 't' value	Remarks
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.		
Self-perception	27.67	2.778	28.40	3.310	2.335	Significant
Self-regulation	20.49	2.451	21.57	2.534	2.291	Significant
Self-drive	18.90	3.663	19.15	3.401	2.637	Significant
Empathy	20.57	1.925	21.53	2.168	2.226	Significant
Social Motive	26.69	2.592	27.70	2.468	2.035	Significant
Emotional Intelligence	114.32	5.593	115.35	6.744	2.610	Significant

(At 5% level of significance the table value of 't' is 1.96)

It is inferred from the above table that there is significant difference between male and female special school teachers in their self-perception, self-regulation, self-drive, empathy, social motive and emotional intelligence. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. While comparing the mean scores of male and female special school teachers, female special school teachers are better in self-perception (28.40), self-regulation (21.57), self-drive (19.15), empathy (21.53), social motive (27.70) and emotional intelligence (115.35) than male special school teachers.

Table 3

A t-test showing the mean difference between rural and urban special school teachers in their self-perception, self-regulation, self-drive, empathy, social motive and emotional intelligence

Variable	Rural (N = 263)		Urban (N = 237)		Calculated 't' value	Remarks
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.		
Self-perception	28.37	3.241	28.10	3.186	0.943	Non Significant
Self-regulation	20.35	2.523	20.78	2.490	1.901	Non Significant
Self-drive	18.92	3.435	19.29	3.478	1.184	Non Significant
Empathy	20.57	2.101	20.50	2.136	0.339	Non Significant
Social Motive	26.85	2.438	26.54	2.547	1.377	Non Significant
Emotional Intelligence	115.06	6.370	115.21	6.697	0.255	Non Significant

(At 5% level of significance the table value of 't' is 1.96)

It is inferred from the above table that there is no significant difference between rural and urban special school teachers in their self-perception, self-regulation, self-drive, empathy, social motive and emotional intelligence. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted.

Table 4

F-test showing the mean difference among teaching experiences below 5 years, 6 to 10 years and above 10 years’ special school teachers in their self-perception, self-regulation, self-drive, empathy, social motive and emotional intelligence

Variable	Source	Sum of squares	df	Mean square variance	Calculated ‘F’ value	Remarks 5% level
Self-perception	Between	68.360	2	34.180	3.339	Significant
	Within	5087.872	497	10.237		
Self-regulation	Between	0.809	2	0.404	3.064	Significant
	Within	3152.839	497	6.344		
Self-drive	Between	82.965	2	41.483	3.506	Significant
	Within	5879.617	497	11.830		
Empathy	Between	13.482	2	6.741	3.509	Significant
	Within	2220.870	497	4.469		
Social Motive	Between	0.845	2	0.422	3.068	Significant
	Within	3099.753	497	6.237		
Emotional Intelligence	Between	209.379	2	104.690	3.476	Significant
	Within	21010.429	497	42.275		

(At 5% level of significance for df 2, 497 the table value of ‘F’ is 3.00)

It is inferred from the above table that there is significant difference among teaching experiences below 5 years, 6 to 10 years and above 10 years’ special school teachers in their self-perception, self-regulation, self-drive, empathy, social motive and emotional intelligence. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected.

The Duncan test shows that the mean scores shows that teaching experiences above 10 years’ special school teachers have better mean scores than below 5 years, and 6 to 10 years’ special school teachers in their self-perception (28.74), self-regulation (20.61), self-drive (19.58), empathy (20.75), social motive (26.76) and emotional intelligence (115.99).

Table 5

The chi-square test shows an association between the age of special school teachers in their self-perception, self-regulation, self-drive, empathy, social motive and emotional intelligence

Variable	df	Calculated χ^2 Value	Remarks
Self-perception	6	4.321	Non Significant
Self-regulation		2.291	Non Significant
Self-drive		1.474	Non Significant
Empathy		3.095	Non Significant
Social Motive		3.608	Non Significant
Emotional Intelligence		2.856	Non Significant

(At 5% level of significance the table value of χ^2 is 9.488)

It is inferred from the above table that there is no significant association between age of special school teachers and their self-perception, self-regulation, self-drive, empathy, social motive

and emotional intelligence. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted.

Delimitations

1. The study is restricted to the special school teachers in Tamil Nadu only.
2. Though there are many data collection techniques, the investigator has used a questionnaire for a survey to measure the emotional intelligence of special school teachers.
3. Selected dimensions such as self-perception, self-regulation, self-drive, empathy, social motive only selected.
4. The sample will be delimited to 500 special school teachers in special schools.

Recommendations and Educational Implications

1. Regular in-service training programmes should be organized for special school teachers to enhance their emotional intelligence components such as self-perception, self-regulation, empathy, and social motive.
2. Since female teachers showed higher emotional intelligence than male teachers, special orientation and counseling sessions may be provided to support male teachers in developing emotional awareness and regulation skills.
3. Senior special school teachers with more than ten years of experience may be encouraged to mentor novice teachers, as experienced teachers demonstrated higher emotional intelligence levels.
4. Workshops on stress management, emotional balance, and coping strategies should be conducted regularly to reduce emotional exhaustion and burnout among special school teachers.
5. Emotional intelligence competencies may be considered as one of the criteria in teacher appraisal systems to promote emotional competence alongside academic performance.

Educational Implications

1. Enhanced emotional intelligence among special school teachers can lead to a positive and emotionally supportive classroom environment, benefiting students with special needs.
2. Teachers with high emotional intelligence can manage challenging behaviors more effectively through empathy, patience, and emotional regulation.
3. Emotional intelligence strengthens trust and emotional bonding between teachers and students, which is crucial in special education settings.
4. Developing emotional intelligence helps teachers cope with stress, increasing job satisfaction and reducing teacher attrition in special schools.
5. Emotionally intelligent teachers are better prepared to implement inclusive educational practices and collaborate effectively with parents and multidisciplinary teams.

Suggestions for Further Study

1. Future research may compare emotional intelligence between special school teachers and general school teachers to identify contextual differences.
2. Experimental studies may be conducted to assess the effectiveness of emotional intelligence training programmes on teacher performance and well-being.
3. Long-term studies may examine how emotional intelligence develops over time among special school teachers across different career stages.
4. Further studies may explore the relationship between emotional intelligence and variables such as job satisfaction, resilience, burnout, or teaching effectiveness.

5. Future research may adopt qualitative or mixed-method designs to gain deeper insights into the emotional experiences and challenges faced by special school teachers.

Conclusion

Emotional intelligence is a crucial attribute for special school teachers, influencing their ability to manage emotional challenges and foster supportive learning environments. Teachers with higher emotional intelligence demonstrate greater empathy, resilience, and adaptability, which are essential for effective special education. Promoting emotional intelligence through structured training and professional development can enhance teacher effectiveness and well-being. The study underscores the need to prioritize emotional intelligence as a core component of special teacher education and educational policy.

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