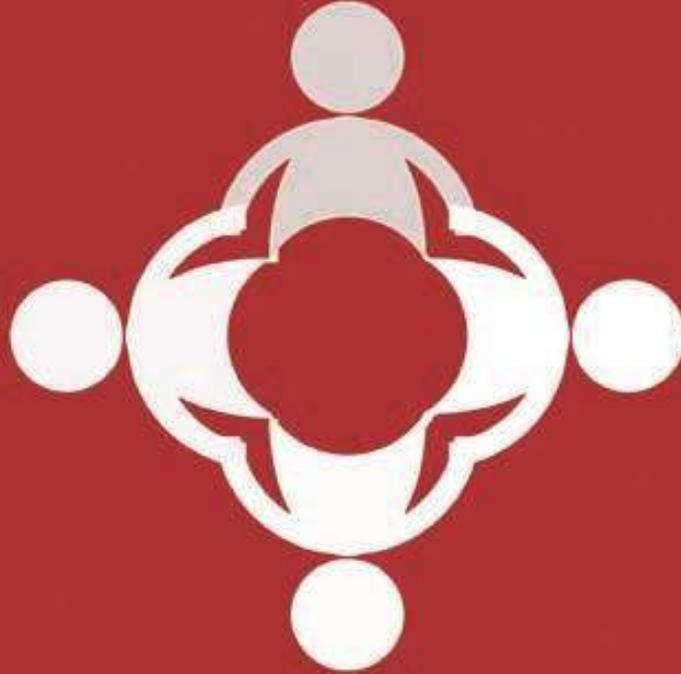


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I am very pleased to publish first issue in 2025. As an editor of Turkish International Journal of Special Education and Guidance & Counselling (TIJSEG) this issue is the success of the reviewers, editorial board and the researchers. In this respect, I would like to thank to all reviewers, researchers and the editorial board. The articles should be original, unpublished, and not in consideration for publication elsewhere at the time of submission to Turkish International Journal of Special Education and Guidance & Counselling (TIJSEG), For any suggestions and comments on TIJSEG, please do not hesitate to send mail. The countries of the authors contributed to this issue (in alphabetical order): Albania, Ethiopia, Lebanon, Morocco, Nigeria, North Cyprus, North Macedonia, and Türkiye.

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Vol 14, No 1 (2025)

Table of Contents

Research Articles

Message from the Editor

Prof.Dr. M Engin Deniz (Editor in Chief)

MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES OF INCLUSIVE TEACHERS IN SOUTH LEBANON DURING COVID-19: FACTORS AND COPING STRATEGIES

Faten Hussein FARDOUN, Ali Hussein EL AHMAD

1-25

PARENTING STYLES AND SELF-ESTEEM AS PREDICTORS OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE AMONG IN-SCHOOL ADOLESCENTS

Esohe G. EHONDOR, Eniola S. OPEOLUWA, Emmanuel E. UYE

26-34

THE ENVIRONMENTAL ACCESSIBILITY TO INCLUSIVE EDUCATION PRACTICE FOR PERSON WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITY

Gach Deng PAL

35-45

GENDER AND SCHOOL TYPE AS PREDICTORS OF SOCIAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT OF LEARNERS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY IN IBADAN

Oyeyemi Omolayo OLADIMEJI

46-52

THE ROLE OF MEANING IN LIFE AND HOPE IN PREDICTING PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING AFTER TRAUMATIC LIFE EXPERIENCES

Osman GÖNÜLTAŞ, Atilla ÖZER, Kevser Ceylin ÇOBAN, Cemil Emre GÜRDAL, Ahsen Sena ARIKAN

53-61

THE ROLE OF THE LEADER IN THE ADAPTATION OF NOVICE TEACHERS IN THE TEACHING PROCESS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Ermira KAJTAZI

62-84

EXAMINING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INTERNET ADDICTION AND AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIORS IN INDIVIDUALS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS (PARENTAL ASSESSMENT)

Alperen DAĞTEKİN, Cahit NURİ, Başak BAĞLAMA

85-97

EVALUATING THE IMPACT OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE TRAINING ON TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS: A PRE-POST COMPARATIVE STUDY

Dorentina MURTURI

98-109

AN INVESTIGATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN 36-72 MONTHLY
CHILDREN'S SCREEN TIME AND THEIR BEHAVIORAL PROBLEMS AND
EMOTION REGULATION SKILLS: A CASE STUDY IN TURKEY

Hande GÜNGÖR

110-126

UNRAVELLING THE NEXUS: EXTRACURRICULAR INVOLVEMENT,
ENGAGEMENT FREQUENCY, AND CGPA AMONG AL AKHAWAYN UNIVERSITY
STUDENTS

Rachid DAOUDI, Mohammed EL MESSAOUDI

127-145

ISSN: 1300-7432



MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES OF INCLUSIVE TEACHERS IN SOUTH LEBANON DURING COVID-19: FACTORS AND COPING STRATEGIES

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Abstract

In Lebanon, the COVID-19 pandemic compelled schools to swiftly adopt emergency remote or hybrid learning models, which presented distinctive challenges for teachers in general and for inclusive teachers teaching students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in mainstream classrooms in particular. These challenges led to increased workload and decreased mental health for inclusive teachers. This study aims to explore the factors contributing to the mental health challenges of inclusive teachers in private schools in South Lebanon following the reopening of schools for the 2021-2022 school year during the pandemic. It also seeks to describe the coping strategies these teachers employed to manage their mental health challenges. The study adopted a phenomenological research design. Data were obtained through semi-structured interviews conducted with a convenience sample of 6 inclusive teachers. Findings revealed that the factors influencing teachers' mental health were categorized into internal and external factors and fell under the themes: professionalism, the impact of COVID-19 on inclusive education, the education system, and support. Teachers' coping mechanisms were grouped into themes of personal coping strategies and support systems and categorized into emotion-focused and problem-focused mechanisms.

Keywords: Mental health, inclusive teacher, COVID-19, private schools, Lebanon.

INTRODUCTION

Background

The mental well-being of employees, notably in demanding roles like teaching, is universally recognized as a keystone of effective and efficient performance. In recent decades, there has been thorough research conducted on the subject of teacher stress. A recent survey in the United States revealed that 46% of teachers indicate they are under significant stress, ranking their profession alongside nursing as one of the most demanding occupations (Robu & Sandovici, 2023).

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound and extensive global impact, significantly affecting societies in various ways. In addition to the immediate health crisis, it has unleashed a chain of challenges in the social, economic, and educational domains.

Research Problem

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected Lebanon across multiple dimensions (Bizri, Khashfe, Fares, & Musharrafieh, 2020). According to El Ahmad (2024), Lebanese Law 220/2000, particularly Articles 59 and 60, guarantees the right of students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) to receive their education in mainstream classes in both public and private schools. Inclusive teachers'



primary responsibility is to ensure that students with SEND receive the necessary accommodations and support for improved access to educational opportunities in mainstream classes. Prior to the pandemic, Lebanese inclusive teachers faced a range of complex challenges, including inadequate teacher training (El Ahmad & Kawtharani, 2022; Kayal, 2014; Kobrossy, 2019), lack of resources (El Ahmad & Kawtharani, 2022; Khoshen & Radford, 2012), lack of direction for teachers (Kayal, 2014), crowded classrooms (El Ahmad & Kawtharani, 2022), disruptive behavior of students (Kayal, 2014), and poor communication and cooperation between the school, parents, and local community (El Ahmad & Kawtharani, 2022; Kayal, 2014).

The global pandemic compelled schools to swiftly adopt emergency remote or hybrid learning models, presenting distinctive challenges for SEND teachers. The new work-related responsibilities not only increased the workload for SEND teachers but also worsened their mental health (Ahmed, 2023), especially in the context of school reopening for the 2021-2022 school year during the pandemic. As Yusoff, Shafi, and Ismail (2023) highlight, transitioning to a new way of life has a psychological impact, often leading individuals to experience feelings of anxiety, depression, worry, and fear of contracting the virus.

Rationale for the Study

While many studies have explored the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on various groups, with a focus on mental health, there has been limited research on how it specifically impacts teachers (Atchan, 2022). In Lebanon, there is also a shortage of literature on stress among teachers (Baroud et al., 2022). McCarthy et al. (2017) emphasize the need for additional research into teacher well-being and emotional regulation. Furthermore, El Ahmad (2023) argues that only two studies were conducted on the stress and burnout experienced by inclusive teachers in Lebanon. Therefore, with the lack of research on teacher stress and the fact that no studies have been conducted on the mental health of teachers of students with SEND during the COVID-19 pandemic in Lebanon, there is a need for such a study, particularly following the reopening of schools during the pandemic.

Significance of the Study

This study helps bridge the gap in the lack of research on teacher stress in Lebanon in general and on the mental health of inclusive teachers teaching students with SEND in mainstream classes in Lebanon after reopening schools for the 2021-2022 school year during the COVID-19 pandemic, in particular.

This study helps emphasize the human dimension of the pandemic, illuminating the unique mental health experiences of inclusive teachers while also providing valuable insights. These insights can guide the development of strategies and interventions for preserving teachers' mental health and well-being and enhancing their resilience not just during crises but throughout their ongoing professional careers, which eventually can help reduce their burnout and turnover.

In addition, conducting a study of this nature is essential for promoting awareness of the mental health issues that teachers, in general, and inclusive teachers, in particular, encounter throughout the Middle East region. The study can contribute to facilitating an open and constructive dialogue regarding mental health challenges within the educational field.

Finally, the experiences and challenges faced by inclusive teachers in Lebanon during the pandemic have the potential to resonate with educators worldwide. This, in turn, can make a valuable contribution to the global discourse on teacher well-being and the importance of providing support to those who are dedicated to delivering quality education.

Purpose of the Study

This study seeks to achieve the following two objectives:



1. Explore the factors that contributed to the mental health challenges of inclusive teachers in private schools in South Lebanon after reopening schools for the 2021-2022 school year during the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. Describe the strategies employed by inclusive teachers in private schools in South Lebanon for coping with the mental health challenges they experienced after reopening schools for the 2021-2022 school year during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Research Questions

The study aims to answer the following two research questions:

1. What factors contributed to the mental health challenges of inclusive teachers in private schools in South Lebanon after reopening schools for the 2021-2022 school year during the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. What strategies did inclusive teachers in private schools in South Lebanon employ for coping with the mental health challenges they experienced after reopening schools for the 2021-2022 school year during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Theoretical Framework

In this section, two key theories that form the basis of this study, helping the readers better grasp the complex dynamics of inclusive education (IE) and teachers' mental health, are explored.

Indicators of Inclusive Schools (Alberta Education, 2013)

According to the indicators of inclusive schools (Alberta Education, 2013), IE is an attitude and a set of actions that believe in universal acceptance and belonging for all students. This value-based approach emphasizes the need for all students to be given equitable opportunities for inclusion in their selected learning environment (Alberta Education, 2013).

The approach is organized into five dimensions, each of which involves several key indicators, called the indicators of inclusive schools (Alberta Education, 2013):

1. Establishing Inclusive Values and Principles
2. Building Inclusive Learning Environments
3. Providing Support for Success
4. Organizing Learning and Instruction
5. Engaging with Parents and the Community

The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007)

Widely employed in occupational health psychology, the JD-R model, introduced by Bakker and Demerouti (2007), categorizes job characteristics into two fundamental groups: job demands and job resources. Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, and Schaufeli (2001) identified job demands as stressors capable of negatively affecting most individuals in various populations. These demands relate to the physical, social, or organizational aspects of a job that demand ongoing physical or mental effort, leading to physiological and psychological costs like exhaustion (Demerouti et al., 2001). Conversely, job resources, including physical, social, psychological, or organizational aspects of a job, contribute by aiding in goal achievement, facilitating job demands, and fostering personal growth and development (Demerouti et al., 2001).

While the JD-R model is relevant for understanding mental health, especially in inclusive teaching, inclusive teachers teaching students with SEND in mainstream classrooms face job demands that require continuous effort, potentially leading to psychological costs. The emotional and behavioral challenges of students further contribute to stress. Besides, job resources like training opportunities and good communication and cooperation among the school, parents, and local community act as shields, reducing the negative impact of demands and increasing teachers' motivation and overall engagement with their work. Maintaining a balance between the demands imposed on inclusive teachers and the resources at their disposal is vital. This balance is a significant factor that directly



supports and protects inclusive teachers’ mental health, consequently impacting their job performance. The theoretical framework of the study is shown in Figure 1.

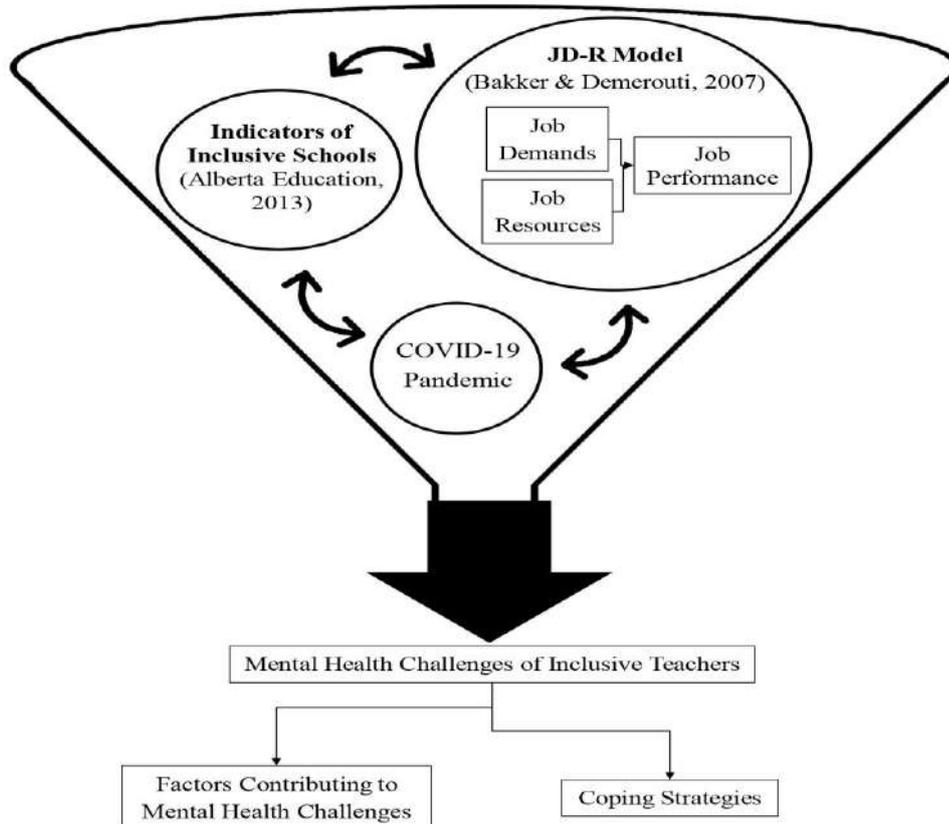


Figure 1. Theoretical framework of the study

Literature Review

Factors Contributing to Mental Health Challenges among Inclusive Teachers during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Psychological and biological factors, along with exposure to social, economic, geopolitical, and environmental conditions, contribute to people's vulnerability to mental health (World Health Organization [WHO], 2022). Teaching stands as one of the most stressful professions (Ahmed, 2023; Baroud et al., 2022; Gray, Wilcox, & Nordstokke, 2017; Salinas-Falquez, Roman-Lorente, Buzica, Álvarez, Gutiérrez, & Trigueros, 2022) due to its complexities (Zhang, Chen, Zhan, 2024). Excessive workload was identified as one of the key reasons contributing to increased teacher stress (Asia Society, 2018) and a lack of well-being across countries (Asia Society, 2018; Viac & Fraser, 2020). Other factors include reforms in the teaching profession following changes in the government, government interference in teaching methods, confusing accountability and evaluation systems, a lack of support for schools dealing with challenging student behavior, large class sizes, the challenges of inclusive classrooms, and a perceived lack of respect for the profession (Asia Society, 2018).

The COVID-19 pandemic added another layer of pressure, since teachers encountered new challenges, including the shift to emergency remote teaching [ERT] (Atchan, 2022; MacIntyre, Gregersen, & Mercer, 2020; Salinas-Falquez et al., 2022), social distancing, and technologically mediated communication with all stakeholders. All this while teachers were managing their routine responsibilities (Atchan, 2022) and implementing measures to prevent the spread of the disease in the classroom (Salinas-Falquez et al., 2022), especially in a country like Lebanon that had not been



prepared for such an outbreak (Baroud et al., 2022). A study revealed that high levels of generalized anxiety disorder, burnout, and depression during the COVID-19 pandemic were associated with gender, high workload, low job motivation, disruptions social relationships, fear of contracting the disease, and adherence to social distancing measures (Santiago et al., 2023).

In inclusive settings, teachers face various challenges in meeting the needs of all students (Gray et al., 2017). The new set of work-related responsibilities increased the workload of special education teachers, further impacting their mental health (Ahmed, 2023). Ahmed (2023) found that, after the reopening of schools during COVID-19, special education teachers experienced stress attributed to students' behaviors, safety measures, responsibilities related to IEPs, uncertainty, and the challenges associated with contact tracing (Ahmed, 2023).

Coping Strategies Employed by Inclusive Teachers for Managing Mental Health Challenges during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Teachers with poor coping skills experience high levels of stress, which adversely impacts their performance (Rajesh et al., 2022). Rajesh et al. (2022) state teachers report experiencing stress and anxiety by insufficient coping strategies. Brackenreed (2011) states that personal coping strategies include cognitive strategies, physical strategies, behavioral strategies, emotional strategies, and rational/time organization. Professional coping strategies entail self-management, and preparation for teaching while social coping involves contact with family and friends (Brackenreed, 2011). Institutional coping refers to utilizing the organizational structure and interacting with others at school (Brackenreed, 2011). Maintaining a sense of humor, looking on the bright side, making a plan of action, discussing the situation with colleagues, and developing interests outside the school were also perceived as useful (Brackenreed, 2011). Brackenreed (2011) found that, despite experiencing stress, inclusive teachers were least inclined to resort to giving up strategies such as applying for sick leave, or resigning from teaching.

In their study on stress and coping strategies among special education and general classroom teachers, Kebbi and Al-Hroub (2018) found that special education teachers commonly employ the strategy of taking a nap to step back from the demands of teaching and reduce stress.

The key findings of a study conducted on Ecuadorian teachers who adopted online learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted that social support and activities aimed at maintaining and enhancing participants' physical health were the most frequently mentioned approaches (Hidalgo-Andrade, Hermosa-Bosano, & Paz, 2021). During the COVID-19 pandemic, four female teachers in Peru who specialize in IE, mentioned resorting to activities they had not previously engaged in, such as watching television, listening to music, and finding solace in cleaning their homes (Arellano et al., 2022). Teachers' resilience acts as a protective factor for including students with special educational needs, even when they experience emotional exhaustion and frustration with their own psychological needs (Salinas-Falquez et al., 2022).

METHOD

Research Design

Wipulanusat, Panuwatwanich, Stewart, and Sunkpho (2020) state that the research design dictates the method for data collection and analysis to address the research questions, necessitating alignment of each component with these questions and significantly influencing the research process's scope. The current study adopts a phenomenological research design to study the factors affecting the mental health of inclusive teachers teaching students with SEND in mainstream classes at private schools in South Lebanon and their coping mechanisms.

Phenomenology, a philosophical and qualitative approach, offers a distinct perspective on human experience and has recently gained significant popularity in educational research as an alternative to the limitations of traditional quantitative methods (Gagura, 2024). This approach is grounded on the



assumption that the meaning of any concept is determined by how it is experienced. As a qualitative methodology, phenomenology focuses on detailed accounts of participants' lived experiences, enabling researchers to gain insights into multifaceted issues, such as inclusive teachers' mental health challenges, which may be difficult to quantify.

Research Sample

Selecting participants involves ensuring that the reasons for selecting a particular sample in a research study are consistent with the fundamental goals of the study (Campbell et al., 2020). Convenience sampling, a non-probability sampling technique, was employed to select participants who had provided their contact information and were willing to participate. This method is preferred by many researchers due to its minimal effort, cost, time investment, and simplicity of operation (Golzar & Tajik, 2022). The convenience sample consisted of six female inclusive teachers, aged between 22 and 34 years, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of research sample

Inclusive Teacher #	Age	Most Grade Levels Taught	Most SEND Category Encountered
1	31	*Grades 2-3	*Learning difficulties *Psychosocial disorders
2	34	*Preschool *Grades 1-3 *Grades 7-9	*Speech, language, and communication impairment *Visual impairment *Hearing impairment *Chronic health problems
3	33	*Preschool *Grade 3 *Grades 7 and 8 *Grades 10-12	*Learning difficulties *Psychosocial disorders *Speech, language, and communication impairment
4	24	*Grades 4-6 *Grades 7 and 8	*Learning difficulties
5	22	*Grades 1-3 *Grades 4 and 5	*Learning difficulties *Psychosocial disorders *Intellectual impairment *Visual impairment
6	26	*Grades 1-6	*Chronic health problems *Learning difficulties *Psychosocial disorders *Speech, language, and communication impairment

Research Instrument

In this section, semi-structured interviews were conducted to gain insights into the factors contributing to the mental health problems of inclusive teachers and their coping strategies when teaching students with SEND in mainstream classes at South Lebanon private schools following the reopening of schools for the 2021–2022 school year during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Semi-structured interviews are a qualitative research approach where a predefined set of open-ended questions, encouraging discussion, is combined with the flexibility for the interviewer to delve deeper into specific themes or responses as they arise (KnowFife, 2018). Thus, they combine aspects of structured and unstructured approaches (George, 2022). In a semi-structured interview, the interviewer usually follows a thematic framework while also ensuring thorough preparation of specific topics to explore (Ruslin, Mashuri, Abdul Rasak, Alhabsyi, & Syam, 2022). Ruslin et al. (2022) discovered that the semi-structured interview is advantageous for qualitative research, as it allows gathering detailed information from participants in a flexible and adaptable manner.

The interview questions were developed by the researchers in alignment with the research questions and the overarching objectives of the study, and they were reviewed by a special educator with an MA



in Special Education. The questions specifically addressed areas such as mental health experiences, challenges faced, coping strategies, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Pilot Study

A pilot study is a preliminary, small-scale investigation intended to assess the feasibility of the methods planned for a more extensive and rigorous research project (Lowe, 2019). The primary objective, as noted by Lowe (2019), is not to answer specific research questions, but to ensure that researchers have sufficient understanding of the methods before embarking on a large-scale study. Thabane et al. (2010) believe that conducting a pilot study before the main research can increase the likelihood of success for the study and help prevent potential failures.

Based on the results of the pilot study, which involved two interviews with general education teachers, several adjustments to the interview questions were made. The teachers, colleagues of the researchers, were selected for their experience in the school setting. The interviews were conducted by the researchers, recorded, and transcribed verbatim. The findings were reviewed to identify any issues with the questions, such as ambiguity or redundancy.

The pilot study revealed that the original order of the questions was not optimal, necessitating a reorganization for better flow and coherence. Additionally, the initial question was refined to focus more specifically on the teachers' experience with teaching SEND students, rather than a general introduction about themselves. Furthermore, it was observed that three questions related to the impact of COVID-19 pandemic factors on inclusive teaching and challenges impacting mental health were somewhat redundant. To streamline the interview and avoid overlap, one of these questions was canceled. The remaining two questions were revised to address distinct areas: one concentrates on the personal factors influencing the inclusive teacher's experience, while the other explores external factors in the work environment that affect inclusive teaching. Also, the question "How do you feel when you are depressed, anxious, and stressed?" was found to be unclear since it asks about feelings using terms that are themselves feelings. The question was rephrased to ask, "What symptoms or behaviors indicate that you are experiencing depression, anxiety, or stress? How do these feelings manifest in you?". These changes were intended to enhance the clarity and effectiveness of the interview, ensuring that they elicit the most relevant and insightful responses from the participants.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection began on May 30, 2024 transparently and with integrity, adhering to ethical guidelines, and encompassing several steps. The study protocol, including the pilot study, received approval from the Institutional Review Board at the Lebanese International University on April 9, 2024, with the reference number LIUIRB-240412-FHF-344. In both the pilot and main studies, participants received an informed consent form with detailed information about the study's purpose, procedures, participants' rights, potential risks, and benefits.

To ensure the accessibility and accuracy of the data collection instruments for participants with limited English proficiency, the informed consent and the interview questions underwent a comprehensive translation process. The initial step involved a forward translation, where the questions were translated from the original language to Arabic by a professional translator with a strong educational background, well-versed in both the source and target languages. This was followed by a rigorous back-translation process, where they were translated back to the original language to verify linguistic accuracy and semantic consistency. After the translation process, a pilot test was conducted to evaluate the clarity and comprehensibility of the Arabic version of the interview questions. This thorough translation and validation process ensured that the instrument maintained its integrity, thereby enhancing the validity of the study's findings.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted both face-to-face and via Zoom sessions, depending on the participants' preferences and availability. Each interview lasted approximately 25 minutes. During



face-to-face interviews, the researchers asked the questions orally and recorded notes on participants' answers. For Zoom sessions, the interviews were recorded to ensure accuracy in capturing the responses, which allowed for flexibility and accommodated the varying schedules and comfort levels of inclusive teachers.

Data Analysis Procedures

The data extracted from the interviews underwent thematic analysis (TA) to identify recurring patterns related to the mental health experiences and coping strategies of the participants. Braun and Clarke (2012) state that TA is not concerned with uncovering unique meanings within individual data items; instead, it aims to identify shared patterns in how a topic is discussed. Maguire and Delahunty (2017) suggest that this usually indicates that the data have been summarized and organized rather than thoroughly analyzed. Braun and Clarke (2006) believe that TA is not a linear process of moving sequentially from one phase to the next but rather a recursive process involving movement back and forth as needed throughout the phases. In their framework, they delineated six essential steps to conduct TA effectively.

The process begins with the researcher familiarizing themselves with the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Next is generating initial codes by systematically coding interesting features across the entire dataset and organizing data relevant to each code (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Maguire and Delahunty (2017) state that coding reduces large amounts of data into smaller, meaningful chunks. Braun and Clarke (2006) add that this is followed by the identification of themes, where codes are grouped into potential themes and all relevant data are collected for each identified theme. A theme is a meaningful pattern in the data that addresses the research question (Clarke & Braun, 2013). The fourth phase involves reviewing themes to ensure their alignment with coded extracts and the dataset and to create a thematic map of the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The fifth phase, according to Braun and Clarke (2006), requires defining and naming themes. Finally, the production of the report involves the selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, conducting a final analysis of these extracts, relating the findings to the research question, and ultimately presenting a scholarly report detailing the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Trustworthiness of Qualitative Findings

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, the researcher employed the four key criteria introduced by Lincoln and Guba (1985) which are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

To ensure credibility, the researchers employed negative case analysis and member checking. Negative case analysis refines hypotheses to include all cases while member checking validates data and interpretations with the original stakeholders (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Transferability, as discussed by Lincoln and Guba (1985), refers to the applicability of the findings to other contexts. The researchers ensured it by using thick descriptions of the research sample, and the number and details of semi-structured interviews conducted. Additionally, the researchers employed the audit trail to ensure dependability and confirmability. They described the sampling procedures and documented the steps involved in data collection and analysis and securely stored transcripts of the interview responses. Moreover, reflexivity was integrated into the research process to enhance confirmability by reflecting on potential biases and to strengthen the objectivity of the findings.

RESULTS

This section addresses the research questions, offering a detailed TA of the findings.

Factors Contributing to Mental Health Challenges of Inclusive Teachers Post-COVID-19 Reopening

Research Question 1: What factors contributed to the mental health challenges of inclusive teachers at private schools in South Lebanon after reopening schools for the 2021–2022 school year during the COVID-19 pandemic?



To address this question, themes and sub-themes related to factors contributing to the mental health challenges faced by inclusive teachers were identified. The TA of the semi-structured interviews revealed four overarching themes concerning the factors that contributed to the mental health challenges of inclusive teachers at private schools in South Lebanon after reopening schools for the 2021–2022 school year during the COVID-19 pandemic: professionalism, COVID-19’s impact on IE, the education system, and support. The first theme, professionalism, focuses on the values, attitudes, and skills expected in a professional setting, emphasizing how personal conditions and the teacher’s understanding of IE are influencing factors. The second theme, COVID-19’s impact on IE, explores how the pandemic contributed to the mental health challenges of inclusive teachers through a decline in students’ academic performance, disruptions in classroom routines, and the increased demands associated with the development of new teaching skills. The third theme, education system, examines how various factors, such as class size and SEND categories taught, the clarity of school communication regarding the cases of students with SEND to teachers, school strategy and workload, cooperative learning environment, financial compensation, and physical resources influenced inclusive teachers’ mental health. The final theme, support, illustrates how human resources support affected the mental well-being of these teachers. Figure 2 presents the sub-themes within the context of the four overarching themes.

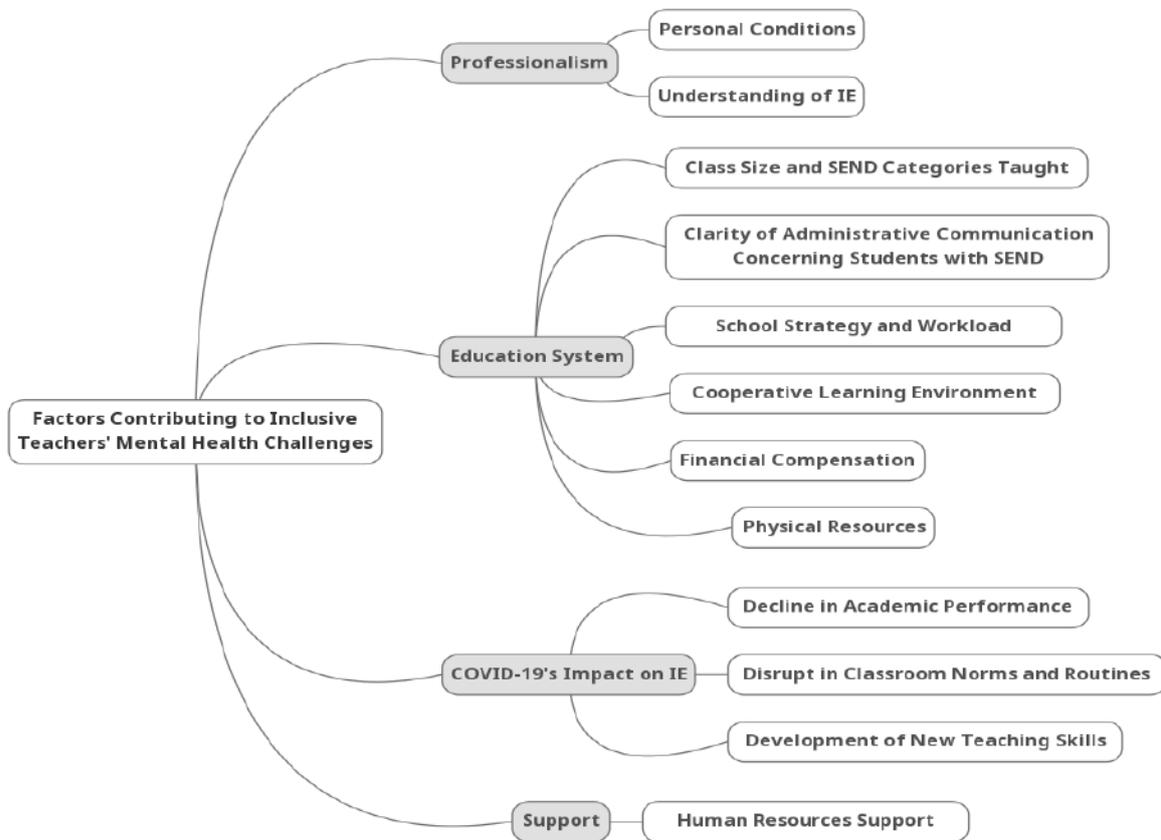


Figure 2. Thematic map of factors contributing to mental health challenges of inclusive teachers

1. Personal Conditions

Personal conditions play a significant role in shaping teachers’ mental health. For instance, family problems and health issues can create additional stress on inclusive teachers making difficult to manage their professional duties effectively. Balancing personal responsibilities with professional



duties can be challenging, and the support system within one's personal life can either favor or reduce the challenges. These factors were exemplified in the participants' statements as follows:

- *My family problems impacted my performance. (Inclusive Teacher 1)*
- *I think family circumstances and personal issues are primary considerations. A teacher's personality plays a crucial role in how they separate their personal issues from their performance at work. (Inclusive Teacher 2)*
- *Things that affected my job included conflicts with others or encountering car issues, like a flat tire. However, my passion for teaching and seeing students happy and energetic often helped me to overcome feelings of anger, stress, or depression. (Inclusive Teacher 3)*
- *Family issues, having other responsibilities, or experiencing conflicts with someone at home. (Inclusive Teacher 4)*
- *Problems at home and health issues. (Inclusive Teachers 5 and 6)*

2. Understanding of IE

IE is a value-based approach and set of actions that advocate for universal acceptance and belonging for all students (Alberta Education, 2013). It emphasizes the necessity of providing equitable opportunities for inclusion, as outlined by the Indicators of Inclusive Schools (Alberta Education, 2013). While three participants showed a robust understanding of IE:

- *IE is integrating students with disabilities into regular classrooms. (Inclusive Teacher 2)*
- *IE includes students with problems and difficulties alongside other students without impairments or difficulties. (Inclusive Teacher 5)*
- *IE are classes where students without difficulties and disabilities are included alongside those with educational difficulties and disabilities. (Inclusive Teacher 6)*

Two other participants expressed less comprehensive understandings of IE:

- *I think that IE is integrating students with learning difficulties or disabilities into classes with their peers of similar academic or cognitive abilities. Sometimes IE involves segregating these students from certain classes, such as Arabic and Spanish, where extensive writing is required. (Inclusive Teacher 1)*
- *IE is integrating a student who is different from their peers into the same classroom. This difference doesn't necessarily mean a disability or impairment but rather a difference in learning pace. (Inclusive Teacher 3)*

Some participants expressed skepticism about the effectiveness of inclusion, as reflected in the experience of inclusive teacher 2:

- *I do not actually believe in the effectiveness of IE, especially in Lebanon, where bullying among students is prevalent due to a lack of awareness among parents and students. Students with disabilities face bullying because of their distinct learning abilities, which creates a gap between them and their colleagues.*

According to Alberta Education (2013) and Jahnukainen (2011), the primary choice for educating students with SEND should be their inclusion in mainstream classrooms. Nevertheless, two participants favored segregation over IE, as shown in their following statements.

- *I remember having 10 learners with disabilities who struggled academically in grade four. To support them, I provided additional assistance outside their classroom. Unfortunately, this decision exposed them to increased bullying. (Inclusive Teacher 2)*
- *IE is placing students with SEND in the same classes as students without SEND. However, these students receive additional support outside the main classroom in some classes or sessions. (Inclusive Teacher 4)*



This gap in understanding IE can worsen inclusive teachers' mental health challenges faced by fostering role uncertainty especially without adequate guidance, leading to struggles with their professional responsibilities amidst conflicting expectations.

3. Decline in Academic Performance

Teachers, and inclusive teachers in particular, rely on students' prerequisite knowledge to introduce new concepts effectively. As inclusive teacher 2 stated:

- *Teaching is a cumulative process, where each teacher builds upon what previous teachers have taught.*

When students' academic performance is limited, it significantly complicates the teacher's role. Many participants noted that teaching during COVID-19 was ineffective, leaving students without essential foundational knowledge. This gap has made it difficult for teachers to address new material in their teaching, as illustrated by the statements below:

- *Students experienced a decline in academic performance, which significantly impacted us... even the most outstanding and capable students were academically weaker than before... We faced increased workloads to help students catch up after returning to school post-pandemic. (Inclusive Teacher 1)*
- *Academically, many students lacked the essential knowledge they should have acquired in elementary grades when they transitioned to online learning. (Inclusive Teacher 2)*
- *Teaching during COVID-19 had not been very effective and that students had missed some key concepts. (Inclusive Teacher 4)*
- *The academic level of students with and without disabilities decreased, requiring teachers to put in double the effort to review necessary prerequisites, as online teaching during COVID was ineffective compared to face-to-face teaching. (Inclusive Teacher 6)*

4. Disrupt in Classroom Norms and Routines

A well-managed classroom enables teachers to focus on teaching and facilitates students' learning processes. After COVID-19, many teachers struggled to re-establish these norms with participants in the interview noting that reteaching classroom rules was a major issue post-pandemic. Here are some statements from the participants:

- *Students exhibited a lack of interest and attention. (Inclusive Teacher 1)*
- *Students showed less maturity, sometimes requiring more basic guidance compared to younger children... This gap was evident even in basic classroom routines such as lining up, raising hands before speaking, and organizing their materials. (Inclusive Teacher 2)*
- *Students struggled to focus and were easily distracted. (Inclusive Teacher 4)*
- *Students were harder to manage, and some of them did not know the classroom rules. Younger students had trouble distinguishing between books and copybooks... After COVID, students lost their focus, became less attentive, and were harder to manage as they quickly got bored in class and wanted to play. (Inclusive Teacher 5)*
- *I also had to re-teach students discipline. (Inclusive Teacher 6)*

5. Development of New Teaching Skills

According to Alberta Education (2013), effective teaching involves collaborative planning and implementation of diverse strategies, leveraging students' needs, and interests. Some participants noted that the COVID-19 pandemic equipped them with new skills, particularly in information and communication technology (ICT), which introduced new demands on inclusive teachers. Demerouti et al. (2001) identified job demands as stressors that can negatively impact individuals. Participants' statements support the idea that using new skills acquired during COVID-19 has both benefits and challenges in the classroom:

- *I needed to exert much more effort compared to before. (Inclusive Teacher 2)*



- *IE requires direct interaction with students with SEND, which was impossible during the pandemic's shift to online platforms. The teacher needs to maintain eye contact and work individually with students... I began to incorporate more strategies and materials in the classroom. I started using the concrete representational abstract approach, it's important in helping students catch the missed concepts more effectively. (Inclusive Teacher 4)*
- *COVID-19 had a positive effect on teaching. During the pandemic, I and other inclusive teachers became more accustomed to using multimedia in our lessons. After schools reopened, I started relying more on videos and pictures in class. (Inclusive Teacher 5)*
- *Teaching during COVID-19 equipped inclusive teachers with new skills, like simplifying ideas so all students could understand. I became more knowledgeable about platforms, technologies, and the best ways to deliver ideas to students. (Inclusive Teacher 6)*

6. Class Size and SEND Categories Taught

A high number of students in inclusive classes increases the likelihood of encountering a diverse range of SEND within the same classroom which amplifies the challenges faced by inclusive teachers. IE necessitates tailoring instruction to meet the unique needs of each student. Consequently, managing a large class size adds pressure on teachers. This extensive individualization of teaching methods can be overwhelming leading to heightened stress. The additional workload significantly increases the demands placed on inclusive teachers. Participants expressed this challenge in their statements:

- *I worked with students who had hearing and vision impairments, as well as a student who underwent heart surgery. I tried hard to accommodate my teaching approach to each student's needs without emphasizing their disabilities negatively. (Inclusive Teacher 2)*
- *Having various SEND categories made communication with me less successful and affected my ability to deliver information effectively, which in turn impacted in some days my mental health. (Inclusive Teacher 3)*
- *My experience teaching students with SEND was challenging, especially because I worked with upper-grade students who had varying degrees of learning difficulties... The number of students in the class can sometimes be challenging. (Inclusive Teacher 4)*
- *My experience was challenging and hard to manage. I worked with a student with ADHD; it was difficult to manage his movements. I also had a student with dyslexia and another student who had a delay in speaking. (Inclusive Teacher 5)*
- *It's never an easy experience to teach students with special educational needs in mainstream classes: You have to focus on students without educational difficulties and those with different challenges. (Inclusive Teacher 6)*

7. Clarity of Administrative Communication

For an inclusive teacher to effectively plan for their class, a comprehensive understanding of their students' needs is essential. Access to detailed information about students with SEND is important to tailor the teaching strategies and provide appropriate accommodations. However, one participant expressed frustration about the lack of clarity and communication from the school regarding a particular student's situation. Here is their concern:

- *At the beginning, my experience with students with SEND was challenging, not because the student's case was especially severe, but because the administration had not clearly communicated the specific details about the student's condition. (Inclusive Teacher 3)*

8. School Strategy and Workload

Teaching, learning, and evaluation strategies differ from one school to another. Some schools burden their teachers with multiple tasks, which can put significant pressure on them, especially in inclusive settings. Participants have criticized certain school practices they deem unnecessary or counterproductive. Here are their statements:

- *Work-related factors that affected my experience were the administrative pressure, dissatisfaction with the school's working strategies. (Inclusive Teacher 1)*



- *The school assigned tasks of lesser importance while I was engaged in more critical work. For example, I remember a situation where I was asked to sign all students' copybooks with a strict deadline, which caused stress and pressure. (Inclusive Teacher 4)*

9. Cooperative Learning Environment

School administration and staff collaborate to enhance inclusion (Alberta Education, 2013) aligning the educational community's goals to create an inclusive environment. Effective implementation of IE relies on administrators and teachers working together to identify and accommodate diverse student needs. A supportive work environment helps reduce stress, isolation, and fosters a sense of community. Participants emphasized the importance of their collaboration in their words:

- *A supportive and positive environment significantly impacts a teacher's performance and well-being. (Inclusive Teacher 1)*
- *A positive work environment and good relationships with colleagues are essential. A teacher who feels comfortable and supported in their workplace tends to perform their best... Feeling successful and happy in the work environment contributed significantly to my overall job satisfaction and performance. (Inclusive Teacher 2)*
- *Having good relationships with my colleagues in the science unit has had a positive impact on my work. (Inclusive Teacher 4)*

On the other hand, a lack of cooperation and support increases the emotional burden on teachers, leading to heightened stress. This finding is illustrated in the statements below:

- *Work-related factors that affected my experience were..discomfort with colleagues. (Inclusive Teacher 1)*
- *Having problems with the principal, administration, or colleagues affected my performance. (Inclusive Teacher 5)*
- *Regarding work-related factors that affected my experience, I think conflicts with the administration, communication problems with the administration and the supervisors, not being praised or encouraged enough. (Inclusive Teacher 6)*

10. Financial Compensation

Fair and adequate compensation can influence teacher retention, enabling teachers to focus on delivering high-quality instruction, thereby effectively meeting the diverse needs of their students. Salary was the most common work-related factor mentioned by participants:

- *I was unhappy with the salary. (Inclusive Teacher 1)*
- *Salary, although agreed upon at the beginning of the academic year, impacted my performance. (Inclusive Teacher 4)*
- *Not being fairly compensated while working too much (Inclusive Teacher 5)*
- *Not being paid enough affected my experience. (Inclusive Teacher 6)*

11. Physical Resources

Demerouti et al. (2001) state that job resources encompass physical, social, psychological, and organizational aspects that aid in managing job demands. Inadequate physical resources can create feelings of overwhelm and frustration, impacting teachers' ability to effectively manage their classrooms and support their students' learning. This finding is illustrated in the comment below:

- *Lebanese schools generally lack adequate resources and infrastructure to fully support students with disabilities. (Inclusive Teacher 2)*

12. Human Resources Support

Inclusive teachers often need additional support from the school community, specialists, or parents which is important to ensure that students receive the tailored assistance they need to thrive academically and socially in inclusive settings. Some participants cited receiving inadequate human support as a factor contributing to their mental well-being:



- *The parental support was limited. As a result, we faced increased workloads to help students catch up after returning to school post-pandemic. (Inclusive Teacher 1)*
- *I received some support from the school, which included workshops, with one or two focusing on teachers' mental health. I would rate the school's support a six out of ten. (Inclusive Teacher 4)*
- *It took an entire academic year, with the help of a specialist, to hear the voice of the student with a speech delay... I needed support but felt that sometimes I received blame instead. (Inclusive Teacher 5)*
- *For classes where I was alone without an assistant, the experience was difficult. However, I was able to manage when I had an assistant in class to help take care of students with special difficulties... Among factors affecting my job were the communication issues with the parents of students. (Inclusive Teacher 6)*

Several factors, both internal, related to the teacher's personal attributes, and external, related to the work environment, contributed to the mental health challenges experienced by inclusive teachers. Almost all participants agreed that the teacher's mental health impacts their professional performance, as illustrated in the comments below:

- *A person with good mental health is patient and feels comfortable in their work environment... A bad mental health negatively affects professional performance. It decreases effectiveness in teaching and interaction with students. (Inclusive Teacher 1)*
- *A mentally healthy teacher performs to their fullest potential. I believe that a teacher's mental health is more important than their experience and educational qualifications. (Inclusive Teacher 2)*
- *Mental health issues have a negative impact on the teacher's professional performance. (Inclusive Teacher 3)*
- *My mental health issues have affected my job. My ability to effectively explain lessons has decreased, or I didn't explain them as thoroughly as she should. I became less patient, particularly when it comes to giving time for individualized work with students. I felt rushed to finish the class. (Inclusive Teacher 4)*
- *My mental health issues negatively affected my job. (Inclusive Teacher 5)*
- *Mental health issues made me not necessarily less productive but rather less energetic in class and less friendly with students. (Inclusive Teacher 6)*

To overcome their mental health challenges, these teachers referred to various coping mechanisms.

Coping Strategies Employed by Inclusive Teachers Post-COVID-19 Reopening

Research Question 2: What strategies did inclusive teachers at private schools in South Lebanon employ for coping with the mental health challenges they experienced after reopening schools for the 2021–2022 school year during the COVID-19 pandemic?

To address this question, themes and sub-themes related to the coping strategies employed by the inclusive teachers were identified. The TA of the semi-structured interviews identified two overarching themes regarding the coping mechanisms employed by inclusive teachers to manage their mental health challenges. The first theme, personal coping mechanisms, encompasses strategies such as dedicating time for relaxation and engaging in activities that teachers found beneficial. The second theme, support networks, highlights the importance of social and professional support that aided teachers in coping with their mental health challenges. Figure 3 presents the sub-themes within the context of the two overarching themes.

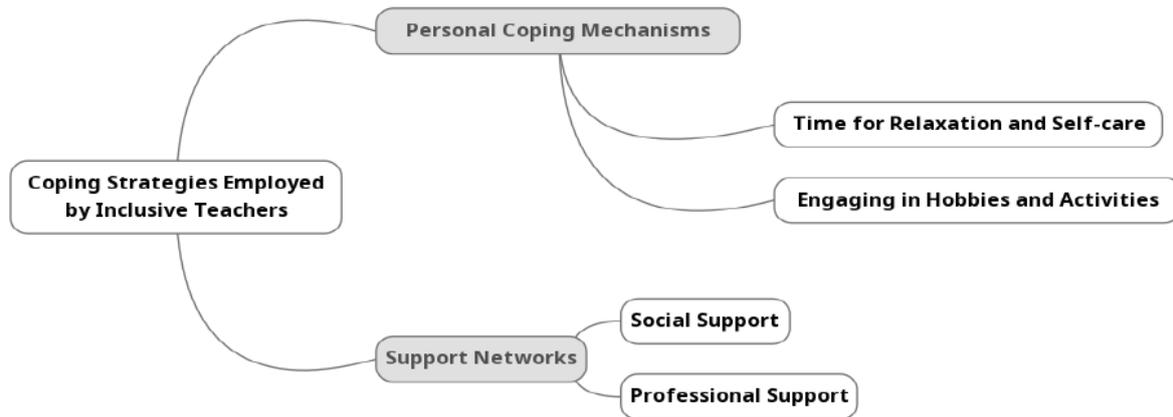


Figure 3. Thematic map of coping strategies employed by inclusive teachers

1. Time for Relaxation and Self-care

Personal coping mechanisms are strategies individuals employ to preserve emotional well-being and address mental health challenges. The choice of coping mechanisms reflects personal preferences and needs. The following statements illustrate personal coping mechanisms used by participants:

- *I used to take one to two hours for myself to distance myself from sources of stress and work-related pressures. (Inclusive Teacher 2)*
- *My coping strategy involved going home and consciously setting aside the causes of my stress. It is important to give myself time to calm down and relax. (Inclusive Teacher 3)*
- *One strategy I used is taking the weekend off for myself. No time to work! I disconnect from my phone and messaging apps like WhatsApp to relax. (Inclusive Teacher 4)*
- *I cope with challenges by taking time for myself, and not talking to anyone because I am not sure they will understand my issues. I sit by myself to relax. (Inclusive Teacher 5)*

2. Engaging in Hobbies and Activities

Additional personal coping mechanisms include pursuing hobbies, engaging in physical exercise, or participating in activities that promote personal well-being. The statements below exemplify some of the methods used by participants:

- *Taking personal time to engage in activities such as shopping, going out, or getting adequate sleep, provided me with distraction and relaxation. (Inclusive Teacher 1)*
- *I found relaxation in activities such as cycling. (Inclusive Teacher 4)*
- *I relied on outdoor activities that distracted me and helped me forget my work problems. Activities like karting and hiking, which increase adrenaline levels, were particularly helpful for me. (Inclusive Teacher 6)*

3. Social Support

Social support refers to the ways individuals utilize their social network to manage emotional challenges. This includes seeking emotional reassurance from friends and family, participating in group activities or therapy sessions, and receiving assistance from life coaches. However, not all inclusive teachers find this beneficial, as articulated by inclusive teacher 2:

- *I did not receive any external support for my mental health issues. People are their own support, and no one understands oneself better than oneself.*

This sentiment contrasts with other participants:

- *I engaged in activities outside the school, such as spending time with friends, colleagues, or even students, as a way to distract myself. (Inclusive Teacher 2)*
- *I received support from friends and family to cope with my mental health issues. (Inclusive Teacher 3)*



- *I found relaxation in activities such as going on picnics with friends. (Inclusive Teacher 4)*
- *At other times, I talk to someone I love or someone who can distract me from the main issue until I get the energy to return to work. (Inclusive Teacher 5)*
- *I received support from a best friend and a life coach. (Inclusive Teacher 6)*

4. Professional Support

Professional support refers to assistance that individuals receive from their work environment, such as colleagues, supervisors, or professional mentors. This includes practical advice, emotional reassurance, or access to resources that help teachers maintain their well-being in the workplace. However, some teachers did not receive adequate professional support, as reflected in their statements:

- *Discussing mental health issues with my colleagues did not address the root causes and led to no meaningful solutions. (Inclusive Teacher 1)*
- *I had to independently identify the best approaches to support my student... I did not discuss my mental health issues with my colleagues and preferred not to engage in such discussions. (Inclusive Teacher 3)*
- *I did not receive support from the school or administration. I needed support but felt that sometimes I received blame instead. (Inclusive Teacher 5)*
- *I do not find myself able to discuss mental health issues with all colleagues, as they are not often receptive, but I can discuss these issues with a few colleagues... I did not receive any support from within the school. (Inclusive Teacher 6)*

Conversely, some others did benefit from limited support:

- *I received some support from the school, which included workshops, with one or two focusing on teachers' mental health. I would rate the school's support a six out of ten. (Inclusive Teacher 4)*
- Others found effective support mechanisms within their workplace:
- *When I was dissatisfied with my salary, I went to the administrative personnel to seek a resolution. (Inclusive Teacher 1)*
 - *It was easy to discuss my mental health issues related to teaching students with SEND with my colleagues, especially those in the science unit. We often discussed various work-related issues, exchanged advice and solutions, and supported each other... The most significant support came from my colleagues. (Inclusive Teacher 4)*

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, and RECOMMENDATIONS

Factors Contributing to Mental Health Challenges of Inclusive Teachers Post-COVID-19 Reopening

Research Question 1: What factors contributed to the mental health challenges of inclusive teachers at private schools in South Lebanon after reopening schools for the 2021–2022 school year during the COVID-19 pandemic?

1. Personal Conditions

The research revealed that personal conditions influence teachers' mental health. Family problems in particular can cause stress for inclusive teachers, adversely affecting their well-being. This finding aligns with Santiago et al. (2023), who identified a strong correlation between high levels of distress and disruptions in family life. The impact of family-related stress on teachers' mental health can be attributed to the challenge inclusive teachers face in separating their personal and professional lives. Negative emotions stemming from disrupted family dynamics can be carried into the classroom, diminishing the teacher's overall effectiveness.



2. Understanding of IE

The study identified that an insufficient understanding of IE exacerbates mental health challenges among inclusive teachers, leading to uncertainty about their roles. This finding is consistent with Lee's (2021) emphasis on the necessity of understanding inclusion for effective teaching practices. Proficiency in inclusive instructional strategies empowers teachers to adapt their methods in ways that benefit their students optimally. Conversely, a lack of such understanding can leave teachers without essential knowledge, as highlighted by Acquah Tandon, and Lempinen (2016), who found a significant correlation between teachers' awareness of diversity and their ability to employ effective strategies for teaching diverse student populations. This finding can be attributed to insufficient professional development. Many teachers may not receive adequate training on IE, leading to gaps in their knowledge. Additionally, the rapid evolving demands in education, particularly during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, may have left teachers without the necessary resources and time to fully grasp and implement inclusive practices.

3. Decline in Academic Performance

The researchers noticed that the academic decline of students resulting from ERT during the pandemic has a significant impact on teachers' mental health. Teachers faced the challenge of addressing gaps in students' learning processes. This finding aligns with Agyapong, Obuobi-Donkor, Burbach, and Wei (2022), who highlighted that student performance contributes to teachers' stress. This situation led to varying levels of knowledge among students within the same classroom, compounded by their diverse abilities and disabilities. Upon returning to school, teachers were tasked with ensuring that all students acquired missed information and caught up with their peers. This necessitated providing feedback and forward guidance before proceeding with planned objectives.

4. Disrupt in Classroom Norms and Routines

The researchers found that following COVID-19, inclusive teachers encountered significant challenges in reinstating classroom norms. This observation resonates with Naghieh, Montgomery, Bonell, Thompson, and Aber (2015) and Ahmed (2023), who emphasized that primary stressors for teachers often include pupil behavior. It also aligns with Collie, Shapka, Perry, and Martin (2015), who noted that teacher dissatisfaction can stem from administrative issues, including managing classroom discipline. This finding might be attributed to the fact that maintaining effective classroom discipline is crucial for fostering smooth learning environments. It reduces interruptions during instruction and minimizes disruptions that can increase job demands and contribute to teacher stress. Effective discipline practices support overall teaching effectiveness and student learning outcomes.

5. Development of New Teaching Skills

The researchers' findings are consistent with those of Atchan (2022), MacIntyre et al. (2020), and Salinas-Falquez et al. (2022), which indicate that COVID-19 added another layer of pressure, compounding the pre-existing stress experienced by teachers. Teachers encountered new challenges, including the shift to ERT, which contributed significantly to their mental health issues. The pandemic equipped inclusive teachers with new teaching skills, such as mastering ICT. Upon returning to traditional classrooms, teachers integrated these new methods, potentially enhancing their instruction. However, while these skills enriched their teaching repertoire, the additional pressure of adopting new methodologies strained inclusive teachers' mental health. This finding is supported by Adeniyi, Olufemi, and Adeyinka (2010), Agyapong et al. (2022), Ahmed (2023), and Asia Society (2018), all of whom note that workload is a major contributor to teacher stress.

6. Class Size and SEND Categories Taught

One of the findings indicated a relationship between high student numbers and teachers' mental health. This aligns with Agyapong et al. (2022), who highlight that factors such as class size contribute significantly to teacher stress. Similarly, Collie et al. (2015) assert that dissatisfaction with working conditions often stems from coping with large class sizes.



Adeniyi et al. (2010) revealed that an increase in student overpopulation, particularly among learners with multiple disabilities or severe disabilities, contributes to stress among teachers. Gray et al. (2017) also highlight the challenges faced by inclusive teachers, where meeting the needs of all students, including those with SEND, is a significant challenge within mainstream classrooms. Thus, the situation is particularly complex in inclusive settings. The increased workload places significant demands on inclusive teachers. This finding is supported by Agyapong et al. (2022), who emphasize that teaching students with special needs requires substantial teacher input, depending on the severity and type of disability. A study by Engelbrecht, Swart, and Eloff (2000) found that teachers teaching students with cognitive disabilities experience higher stress levels compared to those teaching students with physical disabilities (Hay, Smit, & Paulsen, 2001).

7. Clarity of Administrative Communication Concerning Students with SEND

The researchers identified that inclusive teachers encounter frustration due to inadequate clarity from the school regarding specific students' circumstances. Access to detailed information about students with SEND is crucial for tailoring teaching strategies and providing appropriate accommodations. This finding aligns with Carlotto and Câmara (2015), who emphasized that role ambiguity contributes significantly to teachers' feelings of anxiety and depression.

Inclusive teachers require comprehensive information about all students, not just those with SEND, to plan their sessions and accommodate diverse learning preferences, such as visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and reading/writing styles. Without this, teachers may struggle to deliver effective instruction, resulting in vague teaching approaches, frustration, and negative feelings. Several factors can explain why administrations sometimes fail to provide clear information about SEND cases to teachers. Confidentiality concerns can lead to withholding detailed information about students' specific needs. A lack of awareness among school administrators about the importance of sharing detailed student information can result in incomplete communication. Administrative overload, with multiple responsibilities, can lead to insufficient time dedicated to detailed communication. In addition, administrators might assume that teachers have the necessary knowledge to identify and address the needs of students with SEND without needing detailed briefings, leading to a lack of clarity in communication.

8. School Strategy and Workload

The researchers found that burdening inclusive teachers with multiple tasks can exert significant pressure. This finding is supported by Adeniyi et al. (2010), Agyapong et al. (2022), Ahmed (2023), and Asia Society (2018), who all note that workload is a major contributor to teacher stress. Ahmed (2023) and Carlotto and Câmara (2015) emphasize that demanding workloads are significantly correlated with symptoms of depression and anxiety. Santiago et al. (2023) identify high workloads as significant risk factors for generalized anxiety, burnout syndrome, and depression. This finding may be attributed to several factors. Naghieh et al. (2015) suggest heavy workload, long working hours, covering for teacher shortages and absences, and administrative duties are factors contributing to teachers' mental health problems. Furthermore, the complexity of IE requires teachers to develop individualized learning plans with the need to address diverse student needs, especially those with SEND. The need for continuous assessment and adaptation of teaching methods can also contribute to a heightened sense of job demands.

9. Cooperative Learning Environment

The researchers found that a supportive work environment significantly alleviates stress. Conversely, a lack of cooperation increases the emotional burden on teachers, leading to heightened stress and burnout. This finding is consistent with Borrelli, Benevene, Fiorilli, D'Amelio, and Pozze (2014) and Viac and Fraser (2020), who emphasize the link between unfavorable work conditions and poor mental health. Similarly, Olafsen, Niemiec, Halvari, Deci, and Williams (2017) noted that a lack of



connection at work can lead to higher stress, physical and emotional exhaustion, and increased intentions to quit and absenteeism.

This finding can be attributed to several factors. Ineffective communication can lead to a lack of clarity regarding responsibilities. A competitive culture may be inadvertently promoted, where teachers feel the need to outperform their peers rather than collaborate. High workloads limit opportunities to collaborate, while a lack of professional development on teamwork can leave teachers without the skills needed for effective collaboration.

10. Financial Compensation

Collie et al. (2015) found that dissatisfaction is the primary reason why teachers leave their profession, with one significant factor being compensation. This finding resonates with the current research, which identified salary as a key factor affecting teachers' overall performance.

In Lebanon, the need for employment drives many teachers. Teachers who view their financial and non-financial compensation as reflective of their hard work are more likely to be motivated and dedicated to their roles. Conversely, inadequate compensation can negatively impact their willingness to invest in their teaching duties. In recent years, Lebanon has been facing economic challenges. Economic instability, budget constraints in public education, and the strain on the private education sector contribute to disparities in teacher compensation. Teachers, particularly in private schools, may not receive sufficient pay due to financial difficulties faced by these institutions.

11. Physical Resources

The researchers found that inadequate physical resources can create feelings of frustration among teachers, negatively impacting their ability to effectively support student learning. This, in turn, affects their mental health. This finding aligns with Collie et al. (2015), who identified teachers' dissatisfaction with working conditions, including facilities and classroom resources. It also resonates with Adeniyi et al. (2010), who found that the perceived causes of job stress among special educators include a lack of assistance with instructional materials from the government, leading to stress. Inclusive teachers require adequate physical resources for an effective learning environment. Therefore, the research supports Brackenreed (2011), who argues that with the right support in place, inclusion is not seen as a source of stress.

Economic challenges and budget constraints within Lebanon's education sector often limit schools' capacity to invest in updated equipment. Administrators may face difficult choices in allocating funds, potentially prioritizing educational needs over physical resources. Moreover, aging infrastructure and inadequate maintenance further compound the problem.

12. Human Resources Support

The researchers found that inclusive teachers often rely on support from the school community; a lack of this support can negatively affect their mental health. This finding aligns with Naghieh et al. (2015), who highlighted that primary stressors for teachers include relationships with colleagues and management. It also resonates with Carlotto and Câmara (2015), who cite low social support as a contributor to teachers' anxiety and depression. Similarly, Santiago et al. (2023) state that disruptions in social relationships can lead to high levels of generalized anxiety disorder, burnout syndrome, and depression.

Receiving support from classroom assistants helps inclusive teachers provide individualized attention. Specialists are also needed to diagnose issues and provide teachers with adequate strategies. The lack of professional support can stem from various factors. In some cases, educational institutions may face resource limitations that restrict their ability to hire additional personnel or provide specialized training. Cultural or social factors within the school community or among parents may also influence the involvement and support for IE initiatives.



Coping Strategies Employed by Inclusive Teachers Post-COVID-19 Reopening

Research Question 2: What strategies did inclusive teachers at private schools in South Lebanon employ for coping with the mental health challenges they experienced after reopening schools for the 2021–2022 school year during the COVID-19 pandemic?

1. Time for Relaxation and Self-care

The researchers found that individuals rely on personal coping mechanisms to address mental health challenges. The choice of coping mechanisms typically reflects personal preferences. The finding also aligns with Kebbi and Al-Hroub (2018), who found that special education teachers often take naps to step back from the demands of teaching and reduce stress.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Arellano et al. (2022) noted that teachers resorted to solo activities they had not previously engaged in, such as watching television and finding solace in cleaning their homes. These findings highlight a diverse range of personal coping mechanisms employed by teachers to maintain their mental health. The choice of coping mechanisms can be attributed to teachers' need to exert control over their stress levels in demanding educational environments. Time for relaxation and self-care might provide essential breaks and avenues for rejuvenation, crucial for promoting resilience.

2. Engaging in Hobbies and Activities

The researchers also found that teachers resort to other personal coping mechanisms, that promote personal well-being. This finding is consistent with Brackenreed (2011), who noted that teachers found physical activities to be particularly useful for coping. Additionally, it resonates with Hidalgo-Andrade et al. (2021), who found that the second most frequently mentioned coping mechanism involved activities aimed at enhancing participants' physical health. This finding can be attributed to teachers' proactive efforts to promote their well-being. These pursuits allow inclusive teachers to detach from work-related pressures. Prioritizing self-care through hobbies and activities enables teachers to better manage their mental health, leading to improved effectiveness in their professional roles.

3. Social Support

The researchers found that inclusive teachers relied on their social network to manage emotional challenges, including seeking emotional advice from friends and family and participating in group activities or therapy sessions. This finding is supported by Klapproth, Federkeil, Heinschke, and Jungmann (2020), whose study showed that most teachers used functional coping strategies such as seeking support. Similarly, Hidalgo-Andrade et al. (2021) found that social support was the most frequently utilized strategy, involving engagement with family and friends for emotional support.

Teachers may resort to social support because it offers emotional reassurance, practical advice, and a sense of belonging. Sharing experiences within trusted circles may validate their feelings, reduce isolation, and boost morale and motivation, helping teachers cope with the demands of their profession.

4. Professional Support

The researchers found that some teachers utilize professional support within their workplace to maintain their well-being, which aligns with Brackenreed (2011), who states that discussing the situation with colleagues and principals was considered highly valuable. Professional supports can provide strategies tailored to the inclusive teachers' specific roles. This support can enhance confidence in handling professional responsibilities. Moreover, seeking assistance from colleagues and administrators can promote collaboration and mutual understanding.

Recommendations for Policymakers and Practitioners

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations for policymakers and practitioners can be proposed to better support the mental health of inclusive teachers:



For policymakers:

1. Invest in comprehensive training programs to improve teachers' understanding of IE.
2. Develop policies that promote a healthy work-life balance for teachers.
3. Create a culture where teachers feel comfortable sharing emotional challenges, breaking barriers to accessing psychological support, especially in regions where it may not be common.
4. Implement policies that address optimal class sizes and adequate support for diverse SEND categories within classrooms.
5. Ensure clear and consistent communication channels between administration and teachers, particularly regarding students with SEND.
6. Allocate resources to ensure schools are equipped with up-to-date technology, specialized equipment, and sufficient classroom materials to support inclusive teaching practices.
7. Review and adjust teacher compensation to reflect the demanding nature of IE.

For practitioners:

1. Take advantage of available training opportunities to enhance understanding of IE practices.
2. Encourage open discussions about mental health to foster a supportive school environment. Challenge stigmas and myths surrounding mental health issues, emphasizing the importance of seeking support when needed.
3. Prioritize personal well-being through regular self-care activities.
4. Seek support from colleagues, mentors, and community resources to address classroom challenges and personal stressors.
5. Make use of educational resources and technological tools to adapt teaching methods and accommodate diverse student needs.
6. Engage in collaborative efforts with fellow teachers to share experiences for improving IE practices.

Limitations of the Study

Identifying the limitations reveals potential weaknesses of the study, which can impact the study's findings on the mental health of inclusive teachers teaching students with SEND within mainstream classrooms in South Lebanon after reopening schools for the 2021–2022 school year during the COVID-19 pandemic.

1. The findings might not fully represent the experiences of all inclusive teachers as the participants were chosen based on their easy availability.
2. The restricted size of the research sample may not be representative of the entire group of inclusive teachers which could impact the validity and generalizability of the findings.
3. The research focuses on private schools in South Lebanon, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other regions, diverse school types, or varying educational systems.
4. The study's regional focus on South Lebanon introduces contextual limitations, where specific cultural, economic, and political factors can influence the teachers' responses.
5. The instrument used had to be translated into Arabic. This translation process may have implications for the validity of the findings, as nuances in meaning could be altered, potentially affecting the accuracy of the responses.

Directions for Future Research

The study highlights several directions for future research that can be proposed to enhance our understanding of the mental health of inclusive teachers in diverse contexts.

Firstly, expanding the research to include public schools in South Lebanon would provide a broader perspective on the mental health challenges allowing for comparisons between private and public educational settings. Moreover, conducting similar studies in other regions of Lebanon would be valuable to capture the diversity of contexts under which inclusive teachers work. Regional variations



in cultural, economic, and educational factors can influence the teachers' mental health and understanding these differences can lead to more effective interventions. Finally, longitudinal studies would be beneficial to track the mental health of inclusive teachers over time. This approach would help in understanding the long-term effects of teaching in inclusive settings and the impact of ongoing support on teachers' well-being.

Conclusion

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Lebanese inclusive teachers faced a range of complex challenges. The shift to emergency remote or hybrid learning models, combined with new work-related responsibilities due to COVID-19 not only increased their workload but also exacerbated their mental health.

The factors contributing to mental health challenges after reopening schools for the 2021–2022 school year during the COVID-19 pandemic can be categorized into two groups: internal and external factors. Internal factors pertain to teachers' personal conditions while external factors include the impact of COVID-19 on students.

To manage these challenges, teachers employed various coping strategies, which can be categorized into emotion-focused and problem-focused approaches, as defined by the transactional theory (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Emotion-focused strategies included self-care activities while problem-focused strategies involve seeking support from the social network to address specific issues.

Ongoing efforts to address the factors contributing to mental health challenges and to enhance coping strategies are crucial for improving inclusive teachers' well-being in the long term. Further research is recommended to explore these dynamics in different contexts and to develop targeted interventions that support teachers' mental health globally.

Ethics and Conflict of Interest

All ethical rules were observed at each stage of the research. The authors declare that he acted in accordance with ethical rules in all processes of the research. The authors declare that they do not have any conflict of interest with other persons, institutions or organizations.

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PARENTING STYLES AND SELF-ESTEEM AS PREDICTORS OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE AMONG IN-SCHOOL ADOLESCENTS

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Abstract

There has an increasing database indicating that substance use and abuse among in-school adolescents in Nigeria is on the increase. Studies investigating psychological factors predicting substance abuse gave varying results. Therefore, this study examined parenting styles and self-esteem as predictors of substance abuse among in-school adolescents in Ido, Nigeria. Cross-sectional survey design was used while data were collected using validated scales from 306 in-school adolescents from five randomly selected secondary schools. Data collected were analyzed using t-test of independent sample and multiple regressions to test three hypotheses. The result revealed that parenting styles and self-esteem jointly predicted substance abuse among study participants. The implication of this study is that there is high prevalence of substance abuse among in-school adolescents which need to be addressed immediately.

Keywords: Parenting styles, self-esteem, substance abuse, in-school adolescents.

INTRODUCTION

The American Psychological Association (APA, 2023) defines substance abuse as a pattern of compulsive substance use marked by recurrent significant social, occupational, legal, or interpersonal adverse consequences. It is also the harmful or hazardous use of psychoactive substances that include alcohol and illicit drugs (WHO, 2023). Substance abuse is a major public health issue affecting over 155 million people across the globe and has been implicated in the death of over 2.6 million young people from ages 10-24 yearly globally (UNODC, 2023). The Nigerian Drug and Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA, 2023) reported that 40% of Nigerian youths between 18 and 35 are deeply involved in substance abuse. This is a disturbing issue as many in-school adolescents are equally involved. Substance abuse among in-school adolescents has been reported to cause academic difficulties, health-related problems including mental health, poor peer relationships and involvement in juvenile criminal justice problems (Adeloye et al., 2019; Aroh et al., 2021; Idowu et al., 2018; Obadeji et al., 2020).

Some factors have been investigated as predictors of substance abuse among in-school adolescents with varying results. One factor considered in this study is parenting styles which refer to the pattern of behaviors, attitudes, and approaches that a parent uses when interacting with and raising their children (Sanvictores & Mendez, 2023). In her seminal work, Burinbaum (1995) identified four types of



parenting styles: Authoritative, authoritarian, permissive and neglectful styles. Authoritative parenting style has high level of parental control (demandingness) and high level of responsiveness (Baumrind, 1995). Demandingness is the extent parents control their children's behavior or demand maturity. Responsiveness is the degree to which parents accept their children, and how they are sensitive to their children' emotional and developmental needs (Sarvar, 2016). Authoritarian (disciplinarian) parenting style is high in parental control (demandingness) but low in responsiveness (Baumrind, 1995; Moitra et al., 2017). Permissive (indulgent) parenting style has low demandingness but high responsiveness. Finally, the neglectful (uninvolved) parenting style is both low in demandingness and responsiveness (Sarvar, 2016).

Studies on parenting styles and substance abuse among different samples and populations are mixed. For example, Yang et al. (2014) found that lack of parental encouragement contributed to a high level of substance use among in-school adolescents. Also, there was a high correlation between parental substance use and uninvolved parenting. Other studies have reported higher levels of substance abuse among uninvolved parents because there was lack of child expectation and punishment (Berge et al., 2016; Adalbjarnardottir & Hafsteinsson, 2001; Aunola et al., 2000). Conclusively, studies have found authoritative and authoritarian parenting styles to reduce substance use while permissive and uninvolved parenting styles to increase the likelihood of substance use among various study participants (Sawai & Yusof, 2019).

The second factor considered in this study is self-esteem which refers to the way individuals characteristically feel about themselves (Rosenberg, 1986). Self-esteem, global self-esteem or trait self-esteem has been interchangeably used as a relatively enduring trait across both time and situation. Individual high in self-esteem is characterized by a general love for oneself while individual low in self-esteem is characterized by uncertain (ambivalent) feelings toward oneself (Tao et al., 2012). Studies on self-esteem and substance abuse have produced mixed results. For example, Farzad et al. (2014) found self-esteem as a consistent predictor of substance abuse among adolescents and adult populations. Other studies have also found self-esteem as the most consistent predictor of the likelihood and extent of substance abuse among adolescents (Zamboanga et al. 2009; Kumpulainen & Roine, 2002; Wang & Veugelers, 2008). However, some studies have found self-esteem to have no influence on substance abuse among adolescents (James, 2003; Liem et. al., 2010).

Although there have been studies on parenting styles and self-esteem on substance abuse in developed and other developing countries, specific studies that addressed parenting styles and self-esteem in developing countries such as Nigeria are sketches, hence the need to fill this gap in knowledge..

Purpose of the Study

Therefore, the main purpose of this study was to investigate parenting styles and self-esteem as predictors of substance abuse among in-school adolescents in Ido Local Government Area (LGA) in Oyo State, Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study were:

1. to determine whether parenting styles will influence substance abuse among in-school adolescents in Ido Local Government Area in Oyo State, Nigeria.
2. to establish whether self-esteem will influence substance abuse among in-school adolescents in Ido Local Government Area in Oyo State, Nigeria.
3. to test whether parenting styles and self-esteem will jointly and independently predict substance abuse among in-school adolescents in Ido Local Government Area in Oyo State, Nigeria.

Theoretical Background of the Research

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory: This theory posits that a child is influenced by a web of relationships due to the interactions of the parent (microsystem), the treatment centre when there is problem with addiction (mesosystem), the law/judiciary breaking the laws that would lead to punishment (exosystem), the societal beliefs and culture, breaking of societal norms (macrosystem) and



finally, the constantly changing external environment (chronosystem). The theory explains a framework for understanding how different relationships and environmental factors interact to influence individuals and families and by extension in-school adolescents' substance use and abuse behavior. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems model (1994) has been applied to substance abuse mothers and their children demonstrate the bi-directional influence between the mother's substance use and the multiple systems in the family's environment.

Hypotheses

Three hypotheses were tested:

H1. In-school adolescents with parents high in permissive and uninvolved parenting styles would report higher in substance abuse compared to parents high in authoritative and authoritarian parenting styles.

H2. In-school adolescents with low self-esteem would report significantly higher in substance abuse than in-school adolescents with high self-esteem.

H3. Parenting styles and self-esteem would jointly and independently predict substance abuse among in-school adolescents in Ido LGA.

METHOD

Research Design

The study employed a cross-sectional survey design where data were collected using validated questionnaires. The independent variables were parenting styles and self-esteem while the dependent variable was substance abuse. The study was carried out in Ido Local Government Area, Oyo State, Nigeria.

The Participants

The participants for the study were 306 senior in-school adolescents where 184(60%) were males and 121(40%) were females. The in-school adolescents age ranging from 14 to 16 years ($M = 15.24$, $SD = 3.19$). In terms of their religious faiths, 113 (37%) were Christians, while 193 (63%) were Muslims. Finally, in terms of their ethnicity, 246(80%) were Yoruba while 60(20%) were classified as from other ethnic groups. A preliminary analysis of the prevalence of substance abuse among in-school adolescents was 17% which warranted this study.

Sampling Techniques

Simple random sampling technique was used to select five public secondary schools: Apete Ayegun Community Grammar School, Community High School Arola, Community Secondary School Awotan, Community High School, Ologuneru and Community High School Elenu, Sonso, while convenience sampling was used to select in-school adolescents from the senior secondary school (SSS3) from each of the five schools for data collection.

Procedure for Data Collection

A formal Letter of Introduction was collected from the Department of Psychology, University of Ibadan to identify the researchers by the respective school principals. After the researchers have introduced themselves to the respective school principal, a teacher was assigned to them who took them to the classrooms to meet the students in their respective classrooms. The researchers introduced themselves to them and briefly explained the purpose of the study and sought and obtained oral consent from them. Specifically, they were informed that participation in the study was voluntary and that they can decline to complete the questionnaires at any point they feel uncomfortable. A total of 310 were administered to students across the five schools which were collected on the spot. However, when the questionnaires were screened, four questionnaires were filled wrongly and were subsequently removed then left with 306 used for the analysis.



Research Instruments

Three instruments were used for data collection.

Substance and Choices Scale (SACS) was developed by Christie et al. (2007) to assess and monitor the use of alcohol and drug taking behavior, symptoms and impacts/consequences over the last month. The scale consists of 10-item presented on 3-point Likert’s format ranges from Not true = 0, Somewhat true =1, Definitely true=2. Example of the item is: “I took alcohol or drugs when I was alone”. It took between 5 and 10 minutes to complete. The developers calculated Conbach’s alpha of 0.91 while in this study, it was 0.70.

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE) is a 10-item scale that determines an individual's overall sense of self value. The scale is presented in a 4-point Likert’s format that ranges from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Examples of items include: "I feel that I have a number of good qualities" and "I take a positive attitude toward myself". The RSE scale has a robust psychometric property. Rosenberg (1986) reported Cronbach’s alpha of 0.93 which has been replicated by many studies. The Cronbach’s alpha for the present study was 0.85.

Parental Demandingness and Responsive Scale (Paulson, 1995) was used to assess parenting styles. The scale consists of 7-item with two subscales: Demandingness and Responsiveness. The scale is presented on a 5-point Likert’s format ranges from strongly disagree to strongly agree scale. Sample items are: “My parent encourage me to talk with them about things” and “My parents praise me if I do things well”. Higher scores indicate higher levels of demandingness or responsiveness (Paulson, 1994). The authors reported Cronbach’s alpha of 0.75 while in this study, Cronbach's alpha was 0.83.

Data Analysis

IBM SPSS version 23 was used for data analysis. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse data collected. Hypothesis one and two were tested using t-test of independent samples while hypothesis three was tested using multiple regression analysis. All hypotheses were accepted at a $p < 0.05$ level of significance.

RESULTS

H1: In-school adolescents with high parenting styles would report significantly higher on substance abuse than in-school adolescents with low parenting styles. This was tested using t- test for independent samples and the result is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. T-test for Independent Samples Showing Mean Difference between High and Low Parenting Styles on Substance Abuse among In-School Adolescents in Ido LGA

Parenting style	N	Mean	SD	df	t	p
High	42	25.62	2.97			
Low	195	24.89	2.83		288	1.50 >.05

Dependent Variable: Substance abuse *Significant at $p < .05$*

Table 1 shows t-test of independent samples showing influence of parenting styles on substance abuse among in-school adolescents. The result indicated that parenting styles had no significant influence on substance abuse among in-school adolescents in Ido Local Government Area [$t(288) = 1.50, p > 0.05$]. Hence, the hypothesis was not accepted.

H2: In-school adolescents with low self- esteem would report significantly higher on substance abuse than in-school adolescents with high self- esteem. This was tested using t-test for independent samples and the result is presented in Table 2.



Table 2. T-test for Independent Samples Showing Mean Difference between High and Low Self-esteem on Substance Abuse among In-School Adolescents in Ido LGA

Self- esteem	N	Mean	SD	Df	t	p
High	137	26.34	3.07	288	4.52	<.05
Low	153	24.82	2.77			

Dependent Variable: Substance abuse *Significant at p <.05*

Table 2 shows t-test of independent samples showing influence of self-esteem on substance abuse among in-school adolescents. The results revealed that self- esteem had a significant influence on substance abuse among in-school adolescents in Ibadan [$t(288) = 4.52, p < 0.05$]. Furthermore, the result indicated that adolescents with high self-esteem ($M = 26.34, SD = 3.07$) scored significantly higher on substance abuse compared to those with low self- esteem ($M = 24.82, SD = 2.77$). This confirmed the hypothesis.

H3: Parenting styles and self-esteem would jointly and independently predict substance abuse among in- school adolescents in Ido LGA. The hypothesis was tested using multiple regression analysis and the results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Multiple Regression Analysis Showing on Predictive Influence of Parenting styles and Self Esteem on Substance Abuse among In-School Adolescents in Ido LGA

Predictor	β	t-value	p	R	R ²	F	p
Parenting styles	-.021	-.32	>.05	.65	.42	4.48	<.05.
Self-esteem	.061	3.92	<.05				

Dependent variable: Substance abuse. *Significant at p <.05*

Table 3 depicts multiple regression analysis of joint and independent predictors of substance abuse among in-school adolescents in the study area. The result showed that parenting styles and self-esteem jointly predicted substance abuse among in-school adolescents in Ido LGA [$R^2 = 0.42, F_{(2,224)} = 4.48, p < 0.05$]. This suggested that all predictors’ variables accounted for 42% of the proportion of variance in substance abuse while the remaining 58% could be attributed to unexplained variables not considered in the study. Further analysis showed that only self- esteem independently predicted substance among in-school adolescents in Ido LGA ($\beta = 0.061, p < 0 .05$). However, parenting styles did not independently predict substance abuse among study participants ($\beta = -0.021, p > 0.05$). Therefore, the hypothesis was partially supported.

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION and RECOMMENDATIONS

The hypothesis that in-school adolescents with high parenting styles (authoritative and authoritarian) would report higher on substance abuse than in-school adolescents with low parenting styles (permissiveness and neglectful) was not supported. This implies that there was no significant difference in substance abuse among in-school adolescents as a result of the types of parenting styles. This finding contradicted Baumrind’s (1991) finding that substance abuse was higher in children from homes where parents were supportive, lax, and unconventional. By extension, permissive parents were more likely to use illicit substances compared to authoritative parents. This finding also contradicted Sarvar’s (2016) finding that children of permissive parents were at the risk of engaging in substance use. It is further argued that parenting styles among the in-school adolescents may not influence substance abuse because children from permissive homes lack parental intervention, rule setting, and discipline. As



confirmed by Asimvwe (2018) and Sawai and Yusof (2019), uninvolved parents do not supervise or monitor their children's activities, further increasing their risk for substance use.

The hypothesis that in-school adolescents with low self-esteem would report significantly higher substance abuse than in-school adolescents with high self-esteem among in-school adolescents in Ido LGA was supported. This means that in-school adolescents with high self-esteem were less likely to engage in substance abuse compared to in-school adolescents with low scores in self-esteem. This finding lent credence to previous results that self-esteem plays an important role in the engagement of adolescents in self-experimentation with substances such as alcohol, marijuana, and other dangerous substances that would affect their mental health (Mann et al., 2004). Specifically, this finding supported Kim and Davis' (2009) result that many in-school adolescents on referral to the treatment centres mentioned low-esteem as their reason for substance abuse. However, some studies (James, 2003; Liem et al., 2010; Withya et al., 2007) have found significant negative correlations between self-esteem and substance abuse among adolescents. This means that self-esteem was not the cause of substance abuse among in-school adolescents.

Finally, the hypothesis that parenting styles and self-esteem would jointly predict substance abuse among in-school adolescents in Ido LGA was confirmed which explained 42% of the variance in substance abuse among study participants. Also, self-esteem was found to independently predict substance abuse among study participants. This means that the more balanced the parenting styles and the higher the level of self-esteem demonstrated by in-school adolescents, the less likely they would engage in substance abuse. This result supported Bassey (2012) finding that parenting styles and self-esteem tend to predict substance abuse among students. Also, self-esteem was found to be a strong predictor of substance abuse among the study participants which corroborated with Zamboanga et al (2009) result that self-esteem consistently predicts the likelihood and the extent in-school adolescents engaged in substance abuse. Finally, the present study supported Radin et al. (2006) and Kumpulainen and Roine (2002) findings that low self-esteem significantly predicted substance use and abuse among youths including in-school adolescents.

This study has established that parenting styles and self-esteem jointly predicted substance abuse among in-school adolescents. However, self-esteem was the most significant predictor of substance abuse among study participants.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are put forward: The school authority should engage the services of trained clinical psychologists and other mental health professionals to monitor and evaluate in-school adolescents' early tendency to be involved in substance abuse. Also, both the government and other stakeholders in the educational sector should organize seminars, training and other educational programmes for the in-school adolescents to help them stay away from substance use and abuse.

Limitations and suggestions for further studies

Some features of the present study limited the conclusions that were drawn in this study. First, the study used self-reported instruments for data collection which was not free of response bias. Further study should incorporate observational and focus group interview methods to triangulate data collected from self-reported questionnaires. Second, five secondary schools from one LGA with a sample size of 306 in-school adolescents were used in the study.

Further study should include more secondary schools with more LGAs and increase sample size to allow for generalization of the findings to other LGAs. Finally, three variables were investigated in this study, further studies should incorporate coping strategies, cultural differences, home environment, self-efficacy, and locus of control.



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Ethics and Conflict of Interest

We conducted this study in accordance with the prescribed ethical rules and regulations governing research in Social Sciences. We ensure that that participation was voluntary. Also, we declare that there was no conflict of interest among the authors.

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TIJSEG



THE ENVIRONMENTAL ACCESSIBILITY TO INCLUSIVE EDUCATION PRACTICE FOR PERSON WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITY

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Abstract

This study examines Dalkoch Primary School's environmental accessibility to inclusive practices for students with physical disabilities. Its goal is to evaluate the physical surroundings of the school in order to pinpoint any obstacles to inclusion. To comprehend accessibility potential and limitations, a mixed-methods design is used, includes a case study approach. Purposive and random samplings are used to choose participants, who include teachers, school administrators, and students with physical disabilities, in order to reflect a range of viewpoints. Surveys, semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and in-person observations of the school's facilities and classrooms are all used in the data collection process. Accessibility levels are assessed using statistical analysis of survey quantitative data, and major obstacles and enablers are identified through theme coding of qualitative data. Strengths and places for growth are identified by the findings, which include a lack of suitable infrastructure, a lack of inclusive practice training for teachers, and a need for a better understanding of the unique requirements of each student. Enhancing environmental accessibility through universal design principles, stronger support systems, and enhanced teacher training is what study suggests. Subsequent investigations ought to examine how these enhancements affect student performance and accessibility best practices in comparable learning environments.

Keywords: Environmental, accessibility, inclusive education practice, student, physical disability.

INTRODUCTION

Globally, there are over a billion people with impairments, and many of them encounter significant obstacles while trying to engage in physical activity. Maintaining a healthy lifestyle when disabled might be difficult because physical exercise typically calls for self-assured strength, endurance, balance, and coordination. People with disabilities may have one or more physical characteristics that are impacted by their impairment, which inhibits their ability to participate in sports, fitness, and physical activities connected to their jobs or homes (Barber & Barber, 2018).

The right to higher education has been in place since 1948, according to United Nations [UN] 1948's Universal Declaration of Human Rights, item 26.1. This Convention was followed by other international agreements that established the need to guarantee nondiscriminatory access to higher education for people with disabilities. Some of these are particularly noteworthy, such as the 2006 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities or the Disability Discrimination Acts in countries like Australia (Moriña & Morgado, 2018).

Worldwide, including in Turkey, inclusive education (IE), which advocates for equitable opportunity for kids with different skill levels to acquire knowledge, has emerged as a prominent pedagogical approach in elementary schools. The issue of IE becomes a significant topic of discussion among



designers who challenge the creation of inclusive, supportive learning environments, in addition to educators. In order to fully comprehend inclusion and assess the spatial nature of inclusive learning settings, it is imperative to consider equal opportunity, diversity, social justice, and participation. In Turkey, IE is only partially implemented due to unclear concepts regarding inclusion. A lack of efficient and thorough design approaches for physical learning environments and inadequate provision of school facilities required for IE further exacerbate this issue (Erkilic & Durak, 2013).

In context of Africa, the right to education is acknowledged as a fundamental right. It is essential for exercising other human rights and is a human right in and of itself (UNESCO 2015). Due to structural and other societal hurdles, people with disabilities (PwDs) in Africa have restricted access to education (Oyaro 2015). Higher education in African nations such as Botswana (Fidzani et al. 2013), Uganda (Emong & Eron 2016), Tanzania (Matonya 2016), and Ghana (Tudzi, Bugri, & Danso 2017) also reflects the difficulties they encounter in relation to the built environment. These studies were conducted in a physical accessibility context. PwDs must have equitable, inclusive, and nondiscriminatory access to education, which means that accessible constructed settings must be provided. In addition, in surroundings that are obviously inaccessible to PwDs, reasonable accommodations must be made to satisfy their unique demands for accommodations. Students with impairments, despite being pleased of their accomplishments despite all obstacles, have trouble accessing the built environment (Tudzi et al., 2020).

In context of Ethiopia, according to Tirussew (2005, p. 3), "in Ethiopia, PWDs are perceived as weak, hopeless, dependent, unable to learn," and "subject of charity" in reference to the undermining attitude in the Ethiopian setting. By evaluating and disclosing the circumstances and difficulties, as well as by making suggestions, the status of SWDs could be improved. There are several obstacles and challenges in the way of PWD education, particularly in higher education. The provision of learning resources and equipment, service delivery, architectural, cultural, and attitudinal factors are some of the obstacles to higher education accessibility for students with disabilities. In addition to the many other obstacles that impact the education of students with impairments, these students are clearly facing physical obstacles. On college campuses, it is considered that people have the right to roam freely (IDEA, 1997). Elements of physical accessibility include accessible classrooms, residence halls, dining rooms, recreational spaces, libraries, service delivery units, and exit pathways in case of emergencies; nevertheless, these fundamental prerequisites are not sufficiently met (Muzemil, 2018).

Recently, With the Education for All (EFA) goals, the globe is actively fighting for free, equitable, and high-quality education for everyone, beginning with basic education and progressing to secondary and, ultimately, higher education. Tanzania has been among the many nations that have adopted these aims. Education is a fundamental human right, especially for those with impairments, according to the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Fitriana, 2014).

In the present instance of Ethiopia, the second most populous country in Africa, which has pushed for inclusive education while quickly raising school enrolment to reach universal basic education (UBE), Using fieldwork done in 2014 at schools in the Tigray area, the paper first briefly reviews the arguments around inclusive education and Ethiopia's approach before analyzing its execution. In terms of changing public perceptions, teacher preparation, school resources, and school-society ties, it ends with several potential lessons (Fitriana, 2014).



Despite their varied educational demands, all pupils are increasingly being placed in general education classrooms due to the global trend towards inclusive education. In general, inclusive education is understood to encompass not only educational access but also acceptance, involvement, and the assurance of high-quality education for all. Therefore, inclusive classrooms and schools focus on making all students feel welcome, supported, and educated despite variations in ability, culture, gender, language, class, and ethnicity (Engelbrecht et al., 2017).

Teachers are identified as key factors in determining the success of inclusive education (Ackah-Jnr, 2010; Cate et al., 2018; Miyauchi, 2020; Voltz et al, 2001). But they can also be significant obstacles if they don't understand inclusion, don't support it, lack the necessary skills, or have a negative attitude towards inclusive education (Ackah-Jnr, 2010; Lamichhane, 2017; Rieser, 2012). Previous research revealed that many teacher-related factors, such as teachers' lack of confidence in their ability to manage students with disabilities (Ababa & Tesfaye, 2024).

These are research objective:

- ❖ To identify the specific barriers that hinder access to inclusive practices for persons with physical disabilities within the school environment,
- ❖ To investigate best practices in inclusive environmental design that promotes accessibility for persons with physical disabilities in schools,
- ❖ To assesses the impact of environmental factors influence on the educational experience of students with physical disabilities,
- ❖ To assess the perceptions of school stakeholders regarding environmental accessibility for persons with physical disabilities.

Significance of the study is to enhance understanding of how environmental accessibility in schools can improve educational quality for students with physical disabilities, enabling their full participation in academic and extracurricular activities and fostering an environment for reaching their potential. It emphasizes the importance of creating accessible environments that promote social inclusion, allowing students with physical disabilities to engage meaningfully with their peers and the broader school community, thereby supporting a more inclusive culture.

METHOD

The study utilized a descriptive design within a mixed-methods framework to assess environmental accessibility in inclusive practices for students with physical disabilities. It involved three participant groups: students with physical disabilities, teachers and administrators. The mixed-methods approach combined qualitative and quantitative research to provide a comprehensive understanding of the issue. Data collection involved structured surveys, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussion, and direct observations of school facilities to evaluate physical accessibility. Data analysis included quantitative methods using SPSS software, while qualitative data was analyzed through narrative accounts from respondents based on recorded information. This approach aimed to capture the complexities of environmental accessibility and inclusive practices in educational settings for students with physical disabilities.

Population and Sampling Techniques are given in Table 1.



Table 1. Target population and sample side

Target population and sample size				
Locations	Participants	Target Population	Sample size	Sampling techniques
	Students	2500	170	S. random
Dalkoch primary school at 01 kebele	Student with physical disability	10	10	Purposive
	Teachers	170	70	S. random
	School administrators	3	3	

RESULT

The study's Results section uses tables and visual aids to effectively summaries and explain the data gathered during the investigation. It describes the analysis techniques used, including thematic analysis and statistical tests. The most important discoveries in respect to the research questions in the data are highlighted in this section. Crucially, the Results section keeps its emphasis on providing data without interpretation, saving any of these for the discussion part that follows.

Table 2. Demographic Information of the respondent views of student

S/no	Items	Options	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Accumulative percent
1	Gender	Male	148	82.2%	82.2%	82.2%
		Female	32	17.8%	17.8%	100.0
		Total	180	100.0	100.0	
2	Age	15-17	14	7.8%	7.8%	7.8%
		17-20	15	8.3%	8.3%	16.1
		20-25	151	83.9%	83.9%	100.0
		Total	180	100.0	100.0	
3	Marital status	Single	178	98.8%	98.8%	98.8%
		Married	2	1.1%	1.1%	100.0
		Total	180	100.0	100.0	
4	Educational level	Primary	30	16.7%	16.7%	16.7%
		Secondary	150	83.3%	83.3%	100.0
		Total	180	100.0	100.0	
5	Occupation	Student	180	100.0	100.0	100.0
6	Address Location	Gambella region				
		Dalkoch primary and secondary school 01 Kebele				
		Total	180	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Survey 2024



In the above Table 2, male=140(82.4%), Female=30(17.6%), 14(7.8%) =15-17 years and, 15(8.3%) = 17-20 years. About 151(83.9%) = 20-25 years of age. The above table show that, about 178(98.8%) were single, and 2(1.1%) were married. About 30(16.7%) =were in primary school level .About 150(83.3%)=secondary school 5-8.

Table 3. Respondent view of the students.

	Descriptive Statistics				
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Do you have Physical disability?	180	1	2	1.94	.230
Does disability Influence on educational journey?	180	1	2	1.94	.230
Do the Physical barriers within school environment affect your ability to access for educational resource?	180	1	2	1.34	.475
Do you sometime attend the Training program about challenges faced by student with physical disability?	180	1	2	1.92	.269
Physical barrier within the school environment, such as stairs, narrow doorways, affect your movement around school compound?	180	1	2	1.26	.440
Design and school building hinder the participation in classroom activities?	180	1	2	1.28	.452
Specific areas of inaccessibility?	180	1	4	2.52	.924
Valid N (listwise)	180				

Source: Survey 2024

According to the above table 3, the student respondent were responded yes, mean value= 1.94 and, standard deviation=.230, According to the Table 3, the student responded was yes, about 10(5.6%). About 170 (94.4%) were respond No, the mean is 1.94, standard deviation of .230. About 119 (66.1%) were respond by, “YES”, with mean 1.34 and standard deviation .475, According to the Table 3, About 166 (92.2%) was responded by no, with mean 1.92 and standard deviation .269.

Based on table, about”, 133 (73.9%) were responded, ’YES with mean value of 1.26 and standard deviation of .440.

According to the Table 3, 129 (71.7%) responded, ‘YES,’ and about 51 (28.3%) respond, “NO” with mean value 1.28 and standard deviation .452.

In addition, (13.3% n=24) responded on narrow door with mean value of 2.52 and the standard deviation point is .924.



Table 4. Views of the Student Respondents.

	Descriptive Statistics				
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
School facilities easily access for student with physical disability.	180	1	3	1.40	.665
Equal opportunity to participated in school activities and events	180	1	3	1.84	.985
School provided adequate support	180	1	4	2.13	.983
School promoted welcoming and Inclusive Environment	180	1	4	1.52	.887
Technology effectively utilizes to enhance accessibility	180	1	3	1.64	.914
Personally witness of barriers that SWPD face in accessing facilities	180	2	5	4.32	.535
Improving environmental accessibility for swpd would benefit the entire school	180	1	5	4.04	1.155
Received adequate support from teacher	180	1	3	1.67	.897
School prioritizes making improvement to enhance accessibility	180	1	5	2.67	.909
Important of Inclusive practice	180	3	5	4.42	.558
Valid N (listwise)	180				

Source: Survey 2024

According to the table, about (70% n=126) were responded strongly mean value 1.40 and standard deviation point is .665.

According to the table above, with mean value 1.84 with standard deviation .985. The majority of respondent = (57.2% n=103) were responded strongly disagree.

According to table above, (52.2% n=94) were respondent disagree, with Mean value of 1.13 and standard deviation point of .983.

According to the table above, the Mean value is 1.52 and standard deviation point is .887. About (73.3% n=132) were respondent strongly disagree.

According to the Table 4. The Mean value is 1.64 and the standard deviation point is .914. About (66.1% n=119) were respondent strongly disagree.



According to the table. The Mean value is 4.32 and standard deviation point is .535. (64.4% n=116) responded agree.

According to the Table 4, (47.2% n=85) were responded agree The Mean value is 4.04 and the standard deviation point is 1.155.

According to Table 4. The Mean value is 1.67 and the standard deviation point is .897. (62.2% n=112) were responded strongly disagree.

According to the Table 4, the Mean value is 2.67 and standard deviation point is .909. (70.0% n=126) were responded disagree

According to the Table 4, the Mean value is 1.42 and the standard deviation point is .588. The majority of the respondent, the responded was agree.

Table 5. General demographic information of Teachers.

S/no	Items	Options	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Accumulative percent
1	Gender	Male	52	74.3%	74.3%	74.3%
		Female	18	25.7%	25.7%	100.0
		Total	70	100.0	100.0	
2	Age	20-25	26	37.1%	37.1	37.1
		26-35	31	44.3%	44.3	81.4
		36-45	13	18.6%	18.6	100.0
		Total	70	100.0	100.0	
3	Marital status	Single	20	28.6%	28.6	28.6
		Married	31	44.2	44.2	50.0
		Engage	15	21.4	21.4	94.3
		Divorce	4	5.7	5.7	100.0
		Total	70	100.0	100.0	
4	Educational level	Diploma	19	27.1	27.1	27.1
		Degree	51	72.9	72.9	100.0
		Total	70	100.0	100.0	
5	Occupation	Teacher	70	100.0	100.0	100.0
6	Address	Gambella region				
	Location	Dalkoch primary and secondary school 01 Kebele				
		Total	70	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Survey 2024



In the Table 5 (74.3% n=52) were male and about (25.7% n=18) respondents were female. Regarding on above table, (37.1% n=26) of 20-25 years, and (44.3% n=31) of (26-35) years of age. About (18.6% n=13) 36-45 years of age,

In other hand, about (21.4% n=15) were Engage About (5.7% n=4) were divorce. This data about (27.1% n=19) were diploma level about (72.9% n=51) were in secondary school

Table 6. The Respondent view of the Teachers.

	Descriptive Statistics				
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
School environment design is accessible for SWPD	70	1	5	2.37	1.729
Inclusive principle design is active incorporated in my classroom	70	1	5	2.36	.703
I'm aware of resource and support of SWPD to enhance the accessibility environment	70	1	4	2.21	1.141
SWPD are involved in design and modification of learning environment	70	1	4	2.17	1.167
Technology playing role to promoted the environmental accessibility for SWPD	70	1	2	1.23	.423
Valid N (listwise)	70				

Source: Survey 2024

According to Table 6, the Mean value is 2.37 and standard deviation point is 1.729. (58% n=41) responded strongly disagree

According to Table 6, the Mean value is 2.36 and the standard deviation point is .703. (67.1% n=41) responded disagree,

According to Table 6, (35.7% n=25) responded disagree and (32.9% n=23) responded strongly disagree,. The Mean value is 2.21 and standard deviation is 1.141.

According to the Table 6, the Mean value is 2.17 and the standard deviation point is 1.167. (40. % n=28) responded disagree.

According to the Table 6, the Mean value is 1.23 and standard deviation point is .423. (77.1% n=54) responded strongly disagree,

Table 7. The Respondent view of the School Teachers.

	Descriptive Statistics				
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
I found tool that are effective for SWPD	70	1	5	1.49	1.100
There is inclusive practice in your school.	70	1	5	2.33	.847
Environmental barriers limited the implementation of inclusive practice in your school.	70	1	5	4.47	1.248
You're providing support for SWPD to overcome the environmental challenges.	70	1	5	2.17	.761
Curriculum is supported the inclusive practice in your school.	70	1	5	2.00	1.142
Valid N (listwise)	70				

Source: Survey 2024



Based from the above, Table 7. The Mean value is 1.49 and the standard deviation point is 1.100. About (80% n=56) responded strongly disagree,

According to the Table 7, the Mean value is 2.23 and the standard deviation point is .847 (75% n=53) responded disagree that

According to the Table 7, (81.4% n=57) responded strongly agree with Mean value of 4.47 and the standard deviation point of 1.248,

According to above data, (84.3% n=59) responded disagree The Mean value is 2.17 and the standard deviation is .761.

According to the Table 7, the Mean value is 2.00 and the standard deviation point is 1.142. About (50% n=35) responded strongly disagree.

Table 8. Respondent views on demographic information of school admin.

S/ no	Items	Option	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Accumulative percent
1	Gender	Male	2	66.7	66.7	66.7
		Female	1	33.3	33.3	100.0
		Total	3	100.0	100.0	
2.	Age	26-35	2	66.7	66.7	66.7
		36-45	1	33.3	33.3	100.0
		Total	3	100.0	100.0	
3.	Marital status	Single	1	33.3	33.3	33.3
		Married	2	66.7	66.7	100.0
		Total	3	100.0	100.0	
4.	Education	Diploma	1	33.3	33.3	33.3
		Degree	2	66.7	66.7	100.0
		Total	3	100.0	100.0	
5	Occupation	Director	3			
		Total	3	100.0	100.0	
6	Address	Gambela region				
		Total	3	100.0	100.0	

Source: Survey 2024

According to the Table 8 of demographic information, about (66.7% n=2) were male. About (33.3% n=1) respondent were female, and about (66.7% n=2) were under the categories of (26-35) years of age. About (33.3% n=1) (36-45) year of age. About (66.7% n=2) respondent were married and the (33.3% n=1) respondent was single.

Respondent (66.7% n=2) degree and about (33.3% n=1) was diploma. About (100.0% n=3)

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION and SUGGESTIONS

The study's findings regarding the highlighted significant barriers faced by students with physical disabilities (SWPD) in Table 3 and Table 4 showed that respondents acknowledged the existence of



these students and those physical barriers in the school setting have a detrimental effect on their academic journey. Problems like stairs, small doorways, and poorly designed facilities limit access and participation in class activities. This shows that immediate changes are required to make the environment more accessible and meet SWPD's needs.

As in Table 6, and Table 7, the data reveals a concerning lack of support and resources available for SWPD. A large proportion of respondents strongly disagreed that school facilities are not easily accessible, and it showed that students with physical disabilities do not have equal opportunities to participate in school activities. The absence of a welcoming and inclusive environment, coupled with ineffective use of technology, further exacerbates the challenges faced by students with physical disability. This lack of adequate support from teachers and insufficient prioritization of accessibility improvements suggest systemic issues within the school that hinder the educational experiences of SWPD.

Regarding Table 7, the study emphasizes the importance of inclusive practices and the need for active involvement of SWPD in the design of their learning environments. With only 40% of respondents indicating that SWPD are included in these processes, the findings suggest a disconnect between the needs of these students and the school's approach to inclusivity. The overall low awareness of resources and the ineffective promotion of environmental accessibility through technology further illustrate the critical need for comprehensive strategies aimed at enhancing the educational experiences of students with physical disabilities at Dalkoch Primary School. In due regard of research gap from the previous study, despite the extensive exploration of inclusive education across various studies, significant gaps remain in understanding the specific factors influencing teachers' and principals' attitudes towards the inclusion of students with disabilities, particularly in the Ethiopian context. While several scholars highlight the importance of teacher perceptions in successful inclusive practices (Ackah-Jnr, 2010; Cate et al., 2018; Miyauchi, 2020), there is a notable of teachers' lack of confidence in their ability to manage students with disabilities. lack of resources, and negative societal attitudes (Plotner and Marshall, 2015; Hästbacka et al., 2016),(Abebe et al., 2023). There is insufficient qualitative investigation into the nuanced challenges faced by teachers with limited experience in inclusive settings.

Interviews conducted at Dalkoch Primary School revealed significant obstacles to creating an inclusive and accessible environment for students with physical disabilities. Respondents noted a lack of inclusivity and incomplete knowledge of inclusive practices among school administrators and staff, leading to insufficient planning for necessary accommodations. The school's physical layout further compounds these issues, with barriers such as steps without ramps, narrow doorways, and inaccessible libraries creating an unwelcoming atmosphere. Despite attempts to collaborate with governmental organizations to establish a special needs resource center, implementation has been ineffective due to insufficient staff training, negative attitudes, and limited resources according to focus group discussion. Observations highlighted critical deficiencies, including poorly arranged classrooms and the absence of ramps, which severely restrict students' mobility and participation in activities, contributing to feelings of isolation and marginalization. This lack of accessibility ultimately undermines students' sense of belonging and their overall educational experience.

Conclusion

The study found that Dalkoch Primary School has serious accessibility problems that make it difficult to create a welcoming atmosphere for students with physical disabilities. Key findings showed that students' emotions of loneliness and social exclusion were caused by bad design elements including



small entryway and inaccessible facilities. Furthermore, inadequate training on the requirements of these children, a lack of staff collaboration, and little student involvement in planning were the main causes of the inefficient implementation of inclusive policies. Limited access to technology and educational tools made it much harder for students to interact with the curriculum. Overall, the results highlight the pressing need for more inclusive practices and improved environmental accessibility, which could increase psychological well-being by lowering dropout rates and promoting healthy peer connections in addition to improving educational performance

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Ethic and Conflicts of interest

Regarding the research, authorship, & publication of this article, the authors stated that there is no conflict of interest. All necessary research ethics guidelines were carefully adhered to throughout the conduct of the study.

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GENDER AND SCHOOL TYPE AS PREDICTORS OF SOCIAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT OF LEARNERS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY IN IBADAN

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Abstract

This study explored gender and school type as predictors of social skills development of learners with Intellectual Disability (ID). Researches on Influence of Gender and School type on specific social skills development of learners with ID have been scarce in literature. Data on gender and school type as they influence the social skill development of learners with ID were collected using validated instruments. Forty (40) pupils with ID that scored below the border line of IQ score in Slosson Intelligent Screening test and have deficits in social skills development were purposively selected in four schools within Ibadan. Two public and two special schools to be specific. Two research questions were raised and answered. The instrument used were Slosson Intelligent Test ($r=0.73$) and Pupils Social Development Checklist ($r=0.80$). Data were analyzed using independent t-test at 0.05 level of significance. There is a significant difference between the social skills development of male and female pupils (Crit-t = 1.96, Cal.t = -1.975, DF = 38, $p(0.45) < .05$ level of significance). Female pupils ($\bar{x} = 46.04$) had a better social skills development compared to their male counterparts ($\bar{x} = 43.94$). There is also a significant difference between the social skills development of pupils from public and private schools (Crit-t = 1.96, Cal.t = 2.172, DF = 38, $p(0.036) < .05$ level of significance). Pupils from private school ($\bar{x} = 48.95$) had better social skills development compared to their counterparts from public school ($\bar{x} = 41.15$). Female pupils ($\bar{x} = 46.04$) had a better social skills development compared to their male counterparts ($\bar{x} = 43.94$). Conclusions and recommendation were made accordingly.

Keywords: Gender, school type, social skill development, learners with intellectual disability.

INTRODUCTION

Persons with disabilities are the most vulnerable and marginalized, they are group of individuals with various characteristics, challenges and needs that have negatively impacted and hindered their development of appropriate social skills. Most of them suffer from co morbid mental health issues and problems that lead to their inability or difficulties socializing. Some of these problems are difficulty in intellectual functioning and adaptive behaviour, slow or late development of self-help and communication skills and many more. Some also have problem performing day to day activities that are expected of people of their similar age. They have problems initiating social interactions and find it difficult responding to such. This inappropriate development of, or deficit in social skills is also associated with various challenging behaviours. This has made the development of appropriate social skills an essential need among learners with intellectual disability as it forms the bases for the development of every other skill, be it academic, vocational or functional life skills. Development of appropriate social skills provides structured interventions that can enhance social participation and competence of persons with disabilities.



Social skills play a pivotal role in building strong relationship, fostering connections, and bringing about a significant and successful academic achievement among persons with disabilities. Development of appropriate social skills has been found to be of necessity among learners with intellectual disability in that, it helps in overcoming the sedentary lifestyle that is a common phenomenon among them. Social skills development is generally believed to have a very strong connection with successful social interactions; it also has strong affiliation with healthy social relationships (Garrote, 2017). Most persons with intellectual disability are happy when they have reasons to participate in social gathering, community programs or when they go out for sight seen where they can have opportunity to meet with many people and to personally interact with people. This often has positive outcomes upon their health and overall well-being.

Social skills are complex set of skills that concerns issues like communication, decision-making, peer and group interactions, self-management and problem-solving (Kolb & Hanley-Maxwell, 2003). Many skills are embedded in social skill that learners with ID will need to learn how to perform for their effective navigation and daily interactions with their immediate environment, for instance, taking turns, looking neat, greetings, allowing others, participation in community discussion without creating scene, saying sorry as at when due, taking permission, ability to take responsibility for mistakes made and saying sorry when you have offended a person and ability to say thank you for rendering you an assistance (Kane, 2004).

Social skills are healthy ways of relating with every one we come in contact with such that positive interactions and outcomes can be maintained. It builds a kind of relationship that becomes difficult to fathom depending on how people concern go about it. Social skills help people to relate well, use language appropriately, endure pressure, respond adequately, make request politely, and even intervene when the need arises. This may have to do with being choosy in the use of words, adequate use of gesture and body language, making eye contact and being a good communicator. Development of an appropriate social skill will help an individual to interact and relate with others at any social function or gathering. It helps an individual to be an effective communicator at home, school, work, and at the community at large.

The concept of inclusion advocate for equal opportunity among every individuals with disabilities. However, it is quite unfortunate that discrimination is persistent and enduring among people with disabilities which had negatively impacted the prompt development of appropriate social skills. It is therefore necessary for all and sundry to rise up to the task of helping individuals with disabilities especially learners with intellectual disability develop the needed social skills that will easily lunch them to the part of fulfillment of their individual potential. Every child can learn if provided with an enabling environment and if exposed to series of active social situations. Social skills development is central and generic way of easy developing of every other life skills among persons with disabilities.

Gender is a strong construct which determines a lot about the development of appropriate social skills. Gender has played a pivotal role in the development of appropriate social skills among learners with intellectual disabilities. It has been reported and discovered through various researches that there have been gender imbalance in social relationships which can positively enhance the development of appropriate social skills among these group of learners. There have been serious gender gaps in education and skills development among learners with ID. Role differentiation is another cause of the gender gap in the educational pursuit among male and female learners with ID. Actually there are no general consensuses as related to the effect of gender on the development of appropriate social skills among learners with ID.



Females are not often allowed access to formal education in Nigeria like their male counterparts. In the past they were meant to believe that their places are in the kitchen and also in their husband's houses and therefore, they were prevented from going to school where they can learn a lot by interactions with peers and friends, whereas their male counterparts are often given opportunity to go to school and mix with different types of people. This has actually caused a serious gender gap and form the bases for gender differences not in the development of social skills alone, but as it has to do with development of other skill area among students. However, Aydin & Konyalioglu (2011) maintained that it has not been established through literature that there is an effect of gender on social skills development and behaviour modification among learners with intellectual disability. Researchers have also confirmed that female students have tendencies to develop higher levels of social skills than the male students (Huaqing & Kaiser 2003), whereas some other literatures affirms that male student have higher level of social skills development than the female students (Yildirim 2012).

School type is an important construct in this study. There are several preconceived notions about public and private schools. One of them is whether the type of school can possibly influence either positively or negatively the development of skills especially social skills among learners with intellectual disability. It is good to know and to take note that private schools are autonomous and so they have a soul responsibility to run the school in such a way that will promote the business of the owner, whereas, public schools are hundred percent controlled by the government and the students barely attend freely or support with very little amount of money. The private schools have many ways of raising money to run the school and this is majorly through the fees being paid by the parents. They will want to give their best so that the parents can have something to show for the money being paid.

Children who are educated at private schools benefit a lot as the private schools incorporate so many things into school system and the school curriculum such that can facilitate learning among students, therefore students that attend private schools are likely to develop greater self-esteem, locus of control (that is the ability to take charge of their lives, decisions and actions and reactions as it may), have high valued network and professional aspirations than their counterparts who attend public or state owned schools (Green et al 2017). More positive social emotional behaviours are observed in children who attend private schools than those who attend public schools. Those who attend private schools report higher-well-being, fewer behaviour problems and less peer victimization and bullying than those who attend state owned schools. Students who attend private schools tend to have overall positive development than those attend state owned or public schools. Lazarus, (2020) opined that private owned schools provide learners with opportunities for an improved learning outcomes and that teachers in the private schools have access to community navigation than their counterparts in public schools.

Statement of Problem

Social skills development of learners with intellectual disability has not been given adequate consideration by stakeholders and this has actually made the development of appropriate social skills a difficult task among learners with Intellectual disability. One of the best way through which learners with ID learn is through social skills. It is therefore necessary for teachers, parents and all the professionals working with learners with ID to give adequate attention to teaching social skills to learners with intellectual disability.

There have been various researches on social skill development among learners with intellectual disability, but few have considered the combined effect of gender and the school type on the development of social skills among learners with intellectual disability. Many factors can enhance the development of social skills among learners with ID, there is need to research into the relationship between gender and the school type a child is exposed to as they both influence the development of appropriate social skills development among learners with intellectual disability.



Learners with intellectual disability have unique characteristics that makes the development of appropriate social skills central to the acquisition of every other skills be it academic, vocational, daily living skills, and community navigation skills. This study therefore investigated gender and school type as correlate of social skills development among learners with intellectual disability in Ibadan.

Research Questions

In order to achieve the objectives of this study, the following research questions were raised and answered:

- 1) Is there any significant difference between the social skills development of male and female of pupils with intellectual disability in Ibadan?
- 2) Is there any significant difference between the social skills development of pupils with intellectual disability in Ibadan from public schools and private schools?

METHOD

Research Design

Descriptive research design of correlation type was adopted in this study to investigate into the relationship between gender and school type and social skills development among learners with intellectual disability. Data were collected from the respondent based on the construct investigated as no variable was manipulated. Mean, standard deviation and t-test analysis were used to analyze the data collected.

Population

The target populations for this study were all learners with intellectual disability in Ibadan Forty learners with ID (male 19 and female 21) were the respondent for this study. Twenty (20) of them were from public schools and the rest twenty (20) from private schools.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

Forty learners with Intellectual Disability that score below the border line in slosson intelligence test were purposively selected for this study. Both male and female were included in the study to ascertain the gender influence in the development of appropriate social skills among learners with intellectual disability. Random sampling techniques were used to select two private and two public schools with learners with intellectual disability. Simple random sampling techniques were used to select ten (10) learners each from each of the school to give us forty (40) respondents for the purpose of this study.

Instrument

A well-structured questionnaire that reflect the gender and the school type of the respondent and pupil social development checklist screening for social skills development 0.73 respectively were used to elicit responses from the respondent.

Method of Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed using the descriptive research design of independent t-test.

Research Question Testing

Research question one: Is there any significant difference between the social skills development of male and female of pupils with intellectual disability in Ibadan?



Table 1. Independent t-test showing the difference in the social skills development of male and female pupils.

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Crit-t	Cal-t.	DF	p value
Male	19	43.9474	11.80148				
Female	21	46.0476	12.15926	1.96	-1.975	38	.045

Table 1 above showed that there is a significant difference between the social skills development of male and female pupils (Crit-t = 1.96, Cal.t = -1.975, DF = 38, $p(0.45) < .05$ level of significance). Hence, female pupils ($\bar{x} = 46.04$) reported a better social skills development compared to their male counterparts ($\bar{x} = 43.94$) in the study.

Research question two: Is there any significant difference between the social skills development of pupils with intellectual disability in Ibadan from public schools and private schools?

Table 2. Independent t-test showing the difference in the social skills development of pupils from public and private school.

School type	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Crit-t	Cal-t.	DF	p value
Private school	20	48.9500	11.87866				
Public school	20	41.1500	10.80582	1.96	2.172	38	.036

Table 2 above showed that there is a significant difference between the social skills development of pupils from public and private schools (Crit-t = 1.96, Cal.t = 2.172, DF = 38, $p(0.036) < .05$ level of significance). Hence, Pupils from private school ($\bar{x} = 48.95$) had a better social skills development compared to their counterparts from public school ($\bar{x} = 41.15$) in the study.

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, and RECOMMENDATIONS

The aim of this study was to discover the relationship between gender and school type of learners with intellectual disability and their social skill development. Several authors have discussed about the influence of gender on social skills development of learners with intellectual disability. Aydin & Konyalioglu (2011) disclosed that it has not been established through research that gender has a significant effect on social skills development and behaviour problem among learners with intellectual disability.

The first research question says, is there any significant difference between the social skills development of male and female of pupils with intellectual disability in Ibadan? The result shows there is a significant difference between the social skills development of male and female pupils. Female learners with intellectual disability reported a better social skills development compared to their male counterparts with intellectual disability. This result is consistent with Gresham & Elliot (1990) findings, where it was ascertained that female score higher in development of social skills than their male counterparts. This result agrees with the findings of Taylor et al (2002) which states that female are more likely to have superior social and academic skills. The result is also in tandem with findings of Cartledge, Adedapo & Johnson (1998) which states that participants in his study agreed that boys had more social skills compared to their male counterparts. This result negates the findings of some previous studies that maintained that male students have higher development of social skills than their female counterparts (Amin, 2005, Luftig & Nichols, 1991, Yildirim, 2012). The findings also contradicts that of Rashid, Shehzadi & Yousaf (2021) which maintains that male students are higher in social skills of accepting criticism compared with their female counterpart.



The second research question says is there any significant difference between the social skills development of pupils with intellectual disability in Ibadan from public schools and private schools? The result shows that there is a significant difference between the social skills development of pupils from public and private schools. Pupils from private school reported a better social skills development compared to their counterparts from public school in the study. This result is in tandem with the findings of Furrer, (2003) which states that school type exerts a kind of substantial influences on academic achievement and social behaviour of students. The result is consistent with the findings of Smith-Woolley et al (2018) which maintain that the children who attend private schools achieve or perform better than children who went to public schools. The result also corroborates the findings of Reeves, Friedman, Rahal & Flemmen (2017) which states that Students who attend private schools can easily access key characteristics like classical academic curriculum, different and solid extra-curricular activities and a boarding school structures which makes development of skills like social skills and community navigation easy for me.

Conclusion

This study was carried out to investigate the relationships that exist between gender, school type and social skills development of learners with disability in Ibadan. Findings have shown that social skills development is crucial and germane to overall development of all learners especially learners with intellectual development. It has also been discovered through the findings of this study that gender can possibly affect the development of skills among learners with intellectual disability. Also the type of schools that a child has opportunity to attend also affects the development of social skills among these groups of learners. Students who attend private schools report easy and higher development of social skills while those that attend public school might struggles while developing necessary social skills.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following were recommended

- 1) Parents should expose their children to appropriate social skills they will need for the rest of their lives irrespective of the fact whether they are male or female, every child can learn.
- 2) Teachers both at the public or private schools should endeavor to expose students to appropriate social skills. Students can learn if an enabling environment is provided irrespective of the type of school attended.
- 3) Social skills training should be incorporated into the curriculum of learners with intellectual disability worldwide.

Ethics and Conflict of Interest

Throughout the study, all ethical guidelines were followed. The authors claim that they followed ethical guidelines during all phases of the study. There is no potential conflict of interest between the authors.

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THE ROLE OF MEANING IN LIFE AND HOPE IN PREDICTING PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING AFTER TRAUMATIC LIFE EXPERIENCES

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Abstract

In the current study, the extent to which meaning in life and hope predict the psychological well-being levels of earthquake victims was investigated. The relational survey model was used to investigate the relationships. The study group is comprised of 244 individuals over the age of 18 who have experienced the February 6, Kahramanmaraş-based earthquake. Participants were selected using the convenience sampling method. The participants were reached through Google Forms application. The “Psychological Well-Being Scale”, “Meaning in Life Scale” and “Dispositional Hope Scale” were employed in data collection. A multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to examine the predictive power of meaning in life and hope on psychological well-being. Findings showed that meaning in life and hope significantly predicted the psychological well-being of the participants. Meaning in life and hope together explained 65.10% of the variance in participants’ psychological well-being scores. Thus, higher levels of meaning in life and hope are correlated with improved psychological well-being. The results obtained were discussed within the framework of the relevant literature and recommendations were made for researchers and practitioners

Keywords: Trauma, psychological well-being, meaning in life, hope.



INTRODUCTION

Earthquakes are an inevitable reality in countries like Turkey, which are located on active fault lines. Our country has been subjected to various devastating earthquakes throughout history. Our country most recently experienced earthquakes on February 6, 2023 centred in Pazarcık and Elbistan (Kahramanmaraş). These earthquakes caused significant loss of life and property in 11 provinces. After trauma, individuals may face psychosocial challenges such as difficulties in social relationships, impaired sense of trust, social isolation and loneliness (Charuvastra & Cloitre, 2008). Similarly, Diener, Oishi and Tay (2018) stated that traumatic experiences negatively affect individuals' emotional well-being, leading to weakened social relationships and reduced life satisfaction by increasing stress and anxiety levels. According to Hefferon and Boniwell (2011), traumatic life events ranging from wars and violence to migration, accidents, natural disasters and famine are an inevitable part of the human experience and have a direct impact on individual development and well-being. In this context, it can be stated that traumatic experiences may be among the factors negatively affecting the psychological well-being of trauma victims.

Psychological well-being is defined as a person's mental and emotional health, life satisfaction, and ability to lead a meaningful life (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). Psychological well-being is not limited to momentary emotional states; it is also related to an individual's capacity to form social connections and lead a meaningful life (Seligman, 2011). Psychological well-being is a multidimensional concept which encompasses individuals' mental, emotional and social health (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). Ryff (1989) explained psychological well-being through six key dimensions: self-acceptance, positive relationships with others, autonomy, purposeful life, environmental control and personal growth. Self-acceptance is related to an individual's ability to accept both his/her positive and negative aspects; positive relationships involve the capacity to form close and secure social connections; autonomy refers to the ability to think independently and make decisions; purposeful life means having goals that give meaning to one's life; environmental control is the ability to adapt to the environment and manage environmental conditions and personal growth refers to the desire to develop through new experiences and enhance one's potential. According to Huppert (2009), psychological well-being refers to an individual's ability to feel good about himself/herself and maintain his/her functionality effectively. This process does not always involve a constant state of well-being and happiness; on the contrary, painful experiences are also considered a natural part of psychological well-being. Therefore, these types of experiences need to be effectively managed over time. According to Telef (2013), psychological well-being is closely associated with an individual's ability to express his/her potential in order to lead a meaningful life, despite the various challenges encountered in life. In this regard, the psychological well-being of each individual is essential for mental health (Gönültaş & Karataş, 2023). Diener et al. (1999) state that individuals having high psychological well-being experience lower stress, develop stronger social relationships and have higher overall life satisfaction. In conclusion, it can be said that psychological well-being is an important construct in terms of an individual's effective use of internal resources and his/her ability to live in harmony with his/her environment. In this connection, the investigation of the factors that affect psychological well-being was considered to be a necessity.

One of the variables examined in the study in relation to psychological well-being is meaning in life. Meaning in life is defined as the individual's effort to make sense of his/her existence and the process of attributing purpose to his/her life (Frankl, 1992). Meaning in life is related to a sense of value and the individual's perception of his/her life as meaningful and worth living (Martela & Steger, 2016). Steger (2012) argues that meaning in life allows individuals to structure the events in their life, the relationships they form and their future expectations within a specific framework. Steger et al. (2006) approached meaning in life as a two-dimensional construct and these two dimensions are the presence of meaning and the search for meaning. The presence of meaning refers to how meaningful an individual perceives his/her life to be and is related to assessing whether there is a specific purpose,



goal or value in his/her life. The search for meaning refers to an individual's effort to give meaning to his/her life and the quest he/she undertakes in this regard. George and Park (2016) consider meaning in life within the framework of three essential components. The coherence component refers to an individual's ability to interpret his/her experiences in a logical and systematic manner. The purpose component involves an individual's setting goals for the future and these goals taking on a guiding role in his/her life. The importance component involves an individual's perceiving himself/herself and his/her life as valuable and meaningful. Frankl (1992) suggests that even when a person faces inevitable suffering, he/she can find meaning by overcoming this pain and transform this process into a success for humanity. Research suggests that meaning in life acts as a factor protective against poor psychological health (Brassai, Piko, & Steger, 2011; Masten & Reed, 2002). According to Park (2010), individuals can develop their coping skills with difficult situations by assigning meaning to their experiences after traumatic or stressful events, thus strengthening their emotional well-being and psychological resilience. Krok (2015) states that meaning in life is a fundamental component of psychological well-being and that individuals use their systems of meaning as a tool in the process of coping with life's challenges and difficulties. In this regard, it can be stated that the sense of meaning in life is a fundamental element in the preservation and improvement of mental health.

Another variable examined in the study in relation to psychological well-being is the concept of hope. Hope is defined as an individual's belief that he/she can achieve positive outcomes in the future and the motivation to make active efforts to reach these goals (Snyder, 1994). Stephenson (1991) conceptualizes hope as a dynamic process involving cognitive, affective and behavioural components, all directed towards the anticipation of a positive future. According to Snyder (2002), hope is a goal-oriented mindset that involves individuals' perception of their ability to generate pathways to achieve desired goals, initiate these pathways into action and use them when necessary. Individuals with high levels of hope view their past challenges as a valuable source of information, both about themselves and the obstacles they may encounter in the future. In this regard, while coping with the challenges they face in the process of achieving their desired goals, they can use their past experiences to develop alternative solutions (Snyder et al., 2000). In situations of future pessimism and adversity, hope, which represents a strong belief in the possibility of positive developments, contributes to an individual's resilience – their ability to find meaning and persevere despite obstacles (Snyder et al., 2002). Hope can act as a buffer against potential negative impacts (Padilla-Walker, Hardy & Christensen, 2010). Aspinwall and Leaf (2002) emphasize that hope is strongly associated with positive emotions. Individuals with high levels of hope can maintain their positive emotions despite the difficulties they face. Tarhan and Bacanlı (2015) argue that hope functions as a protective factor that helps individuals survive and supports their well-being. It is stated that, especially in trauma survivors, the sense of hope strengthens psychological resilience and contributes to their readjustment (Hobfoll et al., 2007). In this context, hope, which contributes to the development of positive expectations about the future, can be considered an important psychological resource that facilitates coping with stress.

Traumatic experiences such as earthquakes can negatively affect individuals' psychological well-being and can cause mental health issues including stress, anxiety and depression. In this regard, identifying the factors that support psychological well-being can enhance individuals' capacity to cope with traumatic experiences and contribute to a healthier recovery process. In addition, it is anticipated that the findings obtained from the study will provide ideas for mental health professionals and policymakers in developing appropriate interventions. Thus, the present study aims to investigate the influence of meaning in life and hope on individuals' psychological well-being after the catastrophic earthquakes that impacted 11 provinces across Turkey on February 6, 2023. To this end, the study sought to answer the question, "Do meaning in life and hope play a role in predicting the psychological well-being of earthquake survivors?"



METHOD

Research Model

The study utilized a relational model to examine how meaning in life and hope predict psychological well-being. The relational model aims to determine whether two or more variables change simultaneously and to assess the level of this change (Karasar, 2012).

Study Group

The study group consists of 244 individuals who experienced the February 6th, Kahramanmaraş-centred earthquake and are over 18 years old. While 52% (127) of the participants are female and 48% (117) are male. While 28.3% (69) of the participants are single, 71.7% (175) are married. Moreover, 32% of the participants (78) experienced the earthquake in Adana, 15.2% (37) in Adıyaman, 11.5% (28) in Gaziantep, 16.8% (41) in Hatay, 12.3% (30) in Kahramanmaraş and 12.3% (30) in Malatya. In forming the study group, the convenience sampling method was used. This sampling method is based on researchers selecting participants starting from those who are most easily available until they reach the required sample size (Büyüköztürk, Kılıç-Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz, & Demirel, 2016).

Data Collection Tools

Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWBS)

Telef (2013) adapted and validated the scale originally developed by Diener et al. (2010) for use among Turkish-speaking populations. Exploratory factor analysis revealed a total explained variance of 42%, with factor loadings for the items ranging between .54 and .76. Confirmatory factor analysis produced the following fit indices: RMSEA = 0.08, SRMR = 0.04, GFI = 0.96, NFI = 0.94, RFI = 0.92, CFI = 0.95 and IFI = 0.95. The scale demonstrated strong test-retest reliability, as evidenced by a high, positive, and statistically significant correlation between the first and second administrations ($r = 0.86, p < .001$). The scale consists of 8 items, measured using a 7-point Likert scale, with total scores ranging from 8 to 56. Higher scores on the scale reflect a greater abundance of psychological resources and strengths. The internal consistency reliability, measured by Cronbach's alpha, was .80 in the original validation study. In the current study, the scale showed even higher internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of .88, indicating excellent reliability.

Meaning in Life Scale (MLS)

The Turkish adaptation of the scale originally developed by Steger et al. (2006) was carried out by Demirbaş (2010). Factor analysis results showed factor loadings ranging from .59 to .75, and consistent with the original scale, a two-factor structure was identified. The scale comprises 10 items, organized into two sub-dimensions: 'Presence of Meaning in Life' and 'Search for Meaning in Life.' Scores on the scale range from 7 to 70, with higher scores indicating a greater sense of meaning in life for the individual. The scale's internal consistency reliability, measured by Cronbach's alpha, was .86. In the current study, the scale demonstrated strong internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of .81.

Dispositional Hope Scale (THS)

Tarhan and Bacanlı (2015) adapted the scale developed by Snyder et al. (1991) into Turkish. Measured on an 8-point Likert scale, the scale consists of 12 items. Four filler items are included in the scale but are not considered when calculating the final scale score. The scale is structured into two sub-dimensions: "Agentive Thinking" and "Alternative Pathways Thinking". The score range for each sub-dimension is 4 to 32, and the total scale score range is 8 to 64. An increase in scale scores corresponds to an increase in the individual's level of hope. Both the original scale and the current study demonstrated high internal consistency, with Cronbach's alphas of .84 and .89, respectively.



Data Collection

Prior to data collection, email permission was obtained from the researchers who developed the scales used in the study. A personal information form used to gather demographic data from participants, along with other data collection tools, was converted into an online form via the Google Forms application. The online forms were made available to the participants through various social network groups. The form provided participants with crucial information, including the study's purpose, the voluntary nature of their participation, the confidential use of research data, and the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

Data Analysis

Before proceeding with the analysis, the skewness and kurtosis coefficients of all variables were assessed to evaluate the normality of the data distribution. The results showed that the skewness and kurtosis values for all variables were within the acceptable range of -1.00 to +1.00, confirming that the data met the normality assumption (Çokluk, Şekercioğlu, & Büyüköztürk 2014). In order to meet the assumptions required for regression analysis, the error terms in the model must be independent of each other. In this context, the Durbin-Watson value used to determine autocorrelation was calculated to be 1.574. An expected value between 1.50 and 2.50 indicates that there is no autocorrelation in the model and that the regression assumption is met (Kalaycı, 2006). In addition, pair-wise correlations between variables were examined to assess the presence of multicollinearity in the dataset. The analysis revealed that all pair-wise correlations between variables were less than .90, suggesting the absence of multicollinearity in the dataset (Çokluk et al., 2014). The relationships between psychological well-being, meaning in life, and hope were examined using Pearson product-moment correlation analysis. Multiple linear regression was used to investigate the predictive relationship between meaning in life, hope, and psychological well-being. All analyses were conducted in SPSS 22.0, and a significance level of .05 was adopted

RESULTS

This section begins with the presentation of descriptive statistics for all study variables in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for the variables

Variables	N	Mean	Min.	Max.	S	Skewness	Kurtosis
Psychological well-being	244	44.52	21.00	56.00	8.13	-.970	.319
Meaning in life	244	48.27	23.00	70.00	11.94	.243	-.847
Hope	244	50.35	24.00	64.00	9.53	-.777	-.036

Examination of Table 1 reveals that skewness and kurtosis values for all variables (psychological well-being, meaning in life, and hope) fall within the range of -1.00 to +1.00. These findings show that the data are normally distributed (Çokluk et al., 2014).

To determine the correlations between the participants' psychological well-being scores and their meaning in life and hope scores, Pearson product-moment correlation analysis was run and Table 2 presents the findings.

Table 2. Pair-wise correlation values for the variables

Variables	1	2	3
Psychological well-being	1	.489**	.787**
Meaning in life		1	.409**
Hope			1

**p< .01

Table 2 reveals significant positive correlations between the participants' psychological well-being and both meaning in life ($r = .489, p < .01$) and hope ($r = .787, p < .01$).



When the correlation coefficients are examined, it can be seen that a medium correlation ($.30 < r < .70$) exists between the participants' psychological well-being scores and their meaning in life and hope scores (Büyüköztürk, 2014). The finding supports the notion that increased meaning in life and hope contribute to enhanced psychological well-being.

After the correlation analysis, multiple linear regression was used to examine how meaning in life and hope predict participants' psychological well-being and Table 3 shows the findings.

Table 3. Findings on the prediction of psychological well-being by meaning in life and hope

Predictor Variable	B	Standard Error	β	t	p
Constant	7.639	1.774		4.306	.000**
Meaning in life	.137	.028	.201	4.833	.000**
Hope	.601	.035	.705	16.980	.000**

R= .808 R2= .651 F= 227.402 sd= 2/241 p= .000 Durbin Watson= 1.574

**p< .01

An examination of Table 3 reveals that the variables of meaning in life and hope are statistically significant predictors of participants' psychological well-being, and the regression model developed in this analysis is also statistically significant [$R = .808$, $R^2 = .651$, $F_{(2,241)} = 227.402$, $p < .01$]. The combined effect of meaning in life and hope accounts for 65.10% of the variance in participants' psychological well-being. T-test results (Table 3) show that both meaning in life ($t = 4.833$, $p < .01$) and hope ($t = 16.980$, $p < .01$) significantly and positively predict the participants' psychological well-being. The standardized regression coefficients (β) reveal that hope (.705) has a stronger relative influence on psychological well-being compared to meaning in life (.201). Collectively, these findings suggest that increased levels of meaning in life and hope are correlated with enhanced psychological well-being.

DISCUSSION and CONCLUSIONS

The study findings demonstrate that meaning in life and hope are significant predictors of participants' psychological well-being. This study's findings are consistent with prior research that has established a link between meaning in life and psychological well-being. The study conducted by Karaçalı and Korkmaz (2023) concluded that meaning in life significantly predicts psychological well-being, and that an increase in participants' levels of meaning in life also increases their psychological well-being. Similarly, Aytekin and Sakal (2021) stated that meaning in life has a positive and significant influence on individuals' perceptions of psychological well-being. In addition, García-Alandete (2015) revealed a significant relationship between meaning in life and psychological well-being, and that the experience of meaning in life is important for psychological well-being. The pursuit of meaning in the face of life's challenges significantly influences individual psychological well-being and shapes effective coping strategies (Frankl, 1992). According to Steger (2012), the basic components of meaning in life, such as the feeling that life is important, having a sense of purpose and the individual's ability to make sense of himself/herself and his/her life, have a direct impact on psychological well-being. This perception is expected to increase life satisfaction and positively affect the individual's emotions (Şahin, Aydın, Sarı, Kaya, & Pala, 2012). The existence of meaning in life is an effective factor in increasing the resilience of individuals in the face of psychological distress or mental disorders (Başarıkan & Seki, 2023). Individuals who find meaning in life are more resilient to stress and traumatic experiences (Park, 2010)

Another finding of the study is that hope significantly predicts psychological well-being. In a similar way, Yan, Zakaria, Akhir and Hassan (2024) found that hope contributes significantly to psychological well-being. Furthermore, Al Eid, Arnout, Alqahtani and Fadhel (2021) conducted a study on individuals who recovered from COVID-19 infection and determined that hope has a direct



and positive impact on psychological well-being. Imiroğlu, Demir and Murat (2021) argue that hope is positively correlated with psychological well-being, suggesting that individuals with high levels of hope tend to be more intrinsically motivated, a willingness to explore alternative strategies to achieve goals, a positive outlook on the future, enhanced coping mechanisms and increased goal-directed behaviour. Hope can play an effective role in the individual's coping with stress and can serve an encouraging function as a motivational source towards achieving goals (Alidina & Tettero, 2010). According to Aspinwall and Leaf (2002), hope can be an important protective factor in the face of challenging situations such as illness, loss or stressful life events. Individuals with high levels of hope exert more effort to overcome the difficulties they encounter and maintain their psychological resilience in the process. Özhan and Atalay (2022) stated that encouraging the development of hope is an important element in the process of increasing the psychological well-being of individuals and becoming happier. In addition, it has been emphasized that hope supports protective characteristics in individuals such as self-confidence, belief in coping with difficulties, being cognitively flexible, developing a positive perspective and a strong commitment to goals. In conclusion, this study reveals a significant effect of meaning in life and hope on the psychological well-being of individuals affected by earthquakes. According to this finding, enhancing levels of meaning in life and hope after traumatic events may be crucial for strengthening individuals' psychological well-being.

Although the current study provides important findings regarding the relationship between psychological well-being and meaning in life and hope, the results should be evaluated taking into account some limitations. First of all, the fact that the study group was limited to earthquake victims limits the generalizability of the results to groups with different demographic and psychosocial characteristics. In addition, the cross-sectional design used in the study may be limited in terms of determining causal relationships between the variables. Future studies could examine the long-term effects of meaning in life and hope on psychological well-being using longitudinal or experimental designs. Finally, psychological interventions aimed at alleviating the effects of trauma and supporting the healing process play an important role in this process. Therefore, it is recommended that practitioners include interventions based on meaning in life and hope to improve the psychological well-being of individuals after traumatic experiences

Ethics and Conflict of Interest

All requisite research ethics guidelines were meticulously followed during the study's execution. Furthermore, the authors affirm that no conflicts of interest exist among them about this article's research, publication or authorship.

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THE ROLE OF THE LEADER IN THE ADAPTATION OF NOVICE TEACHERS IN THE TEACHING PROCESS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract

The research "The role of the leader in the adaptation of novice teachers in the teaching process in primary schools" is a study with a mixed approach. The purpose of this research is to highlight the adaptation of teachers in the teaching process in the first years of work, to identify the challenges they have and the most common form of support from the leader in order to adapt more easily. The research is mixed, we are dealing with quantitative and qualitative data. Qualitative data were collected through interviews with principals, while quantitative data through a questionnaire with teachers. The population of this research includes all novice teachers of primary school in the Municipality of Vushtrri. Statistical data on the number of schools and teachers were borrowed from the Municipal Directorate of Education in Vushtrri. From the schools with novice teachers, 12 schools were selected with a non-random sample, more specifically with the quota sampling based on the largest number of novice teachers hired. From them 12 leaders and 30 teachers were elected. The data were analyzed through the SPSS statistical package, mainly descriptive analyzes (frequency, percentage, average and standard deviation) and inferential analysis (t-test) and for qualitative analysis thematic analysis was performed. The results of this research show the challenges and activities that the principal undertakes to support novice teachers to overcome the challenges, which are mainly related to time and classroom management, parent meetings and pedagogical planning. From the results obtained we can say that there is little principal support for novice teachers. Novice teachers after two years of work experience feel more relaxed, more confident and have more confidence in their professionalism.

Keywords: Leader, teacher adaptation, novice teacher, support, challenge.

INTRODUCTION

The qualities of teachers are undoubtedly the most important factors in the learning process of students. Policymakers have shown that the quality of a school depends on the quality of our teachers. Furthermore, together with educators, they have started to accept that students' learning in higher education is directly linked to how teachers learn. What and how teachers learn depends on the knowledge, skills, and commitments they bring to their teaching, as well as the opportunities they have to continue learning from their own practice (McCann & Johannessen, 2004). The reason that led me to study this topic is related to my experience as a novice teacher and the challenges I faced in the teaching process. At the end of the first teaching period, the head of my school asked for a meeting with all the novice teachers to reflect on our challenges. Most of the novice teachers stated that they were experiencing several challenges, such as time management and managing students in the classroom.

Being a novice teacher is a challenging position and difficult to adapt to. The first year of teaching was an emotional catalyst, filled with nerves, excitement, and uncertainty. There were many challenges to overcome, and every day they became harder. The demands were high, and support was limited. The experiences of novice teachers are considered to be the most difficult time in a teacher's career and have



been described in the research literature as the "trial of experiences" (Lawson, 1992). One scholar suggested that "novice teachers are leaving the teaching profession after one or two years because they have been exposed to the more negative aspects of schools without having the chance to work with positivity." The thoughts of a novice teacher captured in McCann and Johannessen's (2004) study are as follows:

"We are still learning and trying to figure out how teaching works for us, our styles, and I think it's just ongoing, you know. I don't feel good about myself as a teacher in all areas. I don't think I should develop that teacher side of me more than I needed to for myself... and I think I really struggled when I was a student, just getting through the middle (being) a person working with children to being a teacher" (p. 140).

As a result of these types of experiences, it is not uncommon for novice teachers to leave the profession. Ingersoll's (2002) study demonstrated that 20-25 percent of general education teachers leave the profession within the first three years of teaching. Ingersoll also states that 39% of all novice teachers leave the profession within a few years.

The findings of this study can help inform the work of teacher education leaders and those who support novice teachers. "We need to transform the way we select teachers for our schools. This is critical for the success of our schools, for the development of teaching as a learning profession, and for the achievement of our students" (Goldrick, Osta, Barlin, & Burn, 2012). In order to "transform" the way novice teachers adapt to the profession, we need to better understand their individual needs, experiences, and perspectives. This study is important because it shares the unique experiences of novice teachers during the first two to five years of teaching.

Providing novice teachers with the necessary support leads to their successful adaptation. The adaptation of teachers to the profession is an important component of student achievement. Improving teacher adaptation should be a goal for everyone in the education community. When teachers leave, schools struggle to maintain improvement, and students are harmed by the turnover of new teachers, as they will have a different teacher each year. Between 30% and 50% of teachers leave the profession within the first five years of their careers, a statistic that some consider to be a "global crisis" (Ingersoll, 2002, 2003).

Teacher learning does not begin when they enter the profession; their teacher education programs play a critical role in their learning. The strengths and weaknesses of this program have influenced their needs and experiences as new teachers, which is why this research study touches on the perspectives of teachers and examines their experiences from their first year through their fifth year of teaching. After reviewing the relevant literature, it has been noted that there is a gap in our knowledge regarding the adaptation of novice teachers. Subjective experiences as a teacher have made me realize that most novice teachers face many challenges, and of course, to overcome these, the support of the leader-principal is needed both in solving problems and in the initial decisions we make.

One of the main responsibilities of a principal is to provide continuous support and collaboration with novice teachers. Principals can promote high levels of classroom practice and ensure the academic success of all students by understanding the challenges that novice teachers face in schools. Through their readiness, leaders contribute to overcoming the challenges of teachers (Roberson and Roberson, 2009).

Novice Teacher Training is recognized as one of the primary objectives in the ET 2020 Strategy Framework (European Council, 2009). The education system of Kosovo needs to begin the process of ensuring that the best teachers will ultimately become career teachers. The education system should



develop an entry system to support novice teachers, as well as ensure quality control of teaching (MASHT, 2017).

In accordance with Article 65(1) of the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo, a person of any age who possesses approved professional and educational qualifications and holds the position of a full-time teacher for the first time must undergo an induction training lasting 2 academic years. Their performance will be regularly assessed during this period, according to the specific criteria set by the Teacher Professional Development Center (KSHLM), by a mentor teacher appointed by the institution's principal. Upon completion of the induction period, based on the positive assessment from the mentor, confirmed by the principal and the municipality, the teacher will obtain the qualified teacher status license (MASHT, 2014).

Porpuse of the Research

The purpose of this research is to determine whether teachers have adapted easily to the teaching process. To identify the challenges they have faced and the most frequent support from leadership in terms of facilitating easier adaptation. To provide an overview of the differences in experiencing challenges based on years of work experience.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Through this research, I will attempt to answer the following questions:

1. What are the most common challenges that novice teachers face during the adaptation phase?
2. What are the most frequent supportive measures for novice teachers from principals as assistance in the adaptation of novice teachers to their work?
3. What is the difference between the challenges faced at the beginning of the teaching process and the challenges faced after 3-5 years of work experience?

The research is based on two hypotheses:

H1: One of the main challenges faced by novice teachers is classroom management, pedagogical planning, and the successful implementation of all its components, especially in terms of time management.

H2: In most cases, there is a difference in the experience of challenges between teachers with 1 to 3 years of experience and those with 3 to 5 years of work experience.

Research Questions 1 and 3, as well as the hypotheses, will be analyzed using quantitative data. Meanwhile, Question 2 will be studied using qualitative data.

Literature Review

Novice Teacher

A novice teacher is typically referred to a teacher who is in their first year of teaching with little or no prior teaching experience (Kim & Roth, 2011). A novice teacher can be considered a graduate of the Faculty of Education who has just been employed in a school for the first time. For the purposes of this study, the term novice teacher is defined as a teacher with less than five years of teaching experience.

Novice teachers meet weekly with their mentor regarding lesson plans, classroom management, instruction, etc. They designate parts of their teaching for their mentors to observe and provide confidential feedback. They also take a few days to visit other classrooms in order to observe experienced



teachers. Novice teachers apply lifelong learning, which is a continuous search for knowledge and understanding (Kim & Roth, 2011).

When they experience the practical reality of classrooms, recent graduates of teacher preparation programs encounter difficulties. Theoretically or practically, teacher preparation systems tend to primarily focus on pre-service teachers, and this form of orientation will affect the success of novice teachers (Nottis, Feuerstein, Murray, & Adams, 2000). Factors such as job attraction and a sense of self-esteem are linked to the happiness teachers feel when performing their daily work routines. The daily work in schools is rooted in contexts, and novice teachers encounter unpredictable incidents and circumstances in school life every day. In a study (Kim & Roth, 2011), novice teachers were described as having difficulties in handling their tasks at work.

Novice teachers need support from their colleagues in their professional development plan for achievement, development of interpersonal skills, relationship-building, and balancing their work and life responsibilities in teaching (Ngang, 2013). One less recognized form of collaborative work is distributed collaboration, where each teacher's short-term goals may differ, but they contribute to a common goal. Collaborative work among teachers is a framework for improving the skills of novice teachers in ways that understand the established and collaborative aspects of competence, which are important for transitioning to learning practices (Fullan, 2007).

Novice teachers should observe other teachers who are teaching and receive support from colleagues when they encounter obstacles. Furthermore, novice teachers need their colleagues to help them learn more about classroom and school expectations, policies, and informal guidelines that are part of the school culture, important cultural teaching strategies, best practices in teaching and learning processes, students' families, and the school community. Additionally, colleagues are able to help them become more reflective, capable, problem-solvers, and better decision-makers.

Colleagues are able to help novice teachers become effective instructors in several ways, such as diagnosing their needs, providing meaningful feedback, and setting collaborative goals. Furthermore, colleagues can assist them in developing effective planning, teaching, and assessment strategies for student learning. In their early years of teaching, novice teachers will spend a lot of energy on work and will almost have no energy left for their personal lives (Ngang, 2013). In this study, information related to work helps in the formation of knowledge based on challenges, which teachers will need to perform their tasks.

Adaptation (Adjustment)

Adaptation is the ability of a person to face various challenges and problems that are unexpected and unorganized for them (Mursi, 2013). On the other hand, adaptation is also viewed as an action in which parts of the body or behaviors help a living species survive in an environment (Merriam-Webster, 2017).

Teacher adaptation is not about the first day of teachers in their jobs but about creating experiences that have a positive impact on student achievements. These novice teachers need to be more active in their professional development and in managing personal demands related to the title of "teacher." Novice teachers are always energetic and filled with creativity. For novice teachers, adaptation to the teaching process is quite important because it impacts their professional skills and is directly linked to student success (Gavish & Friedman, 2010).

When we mention adaptation in education, we are also dealing with the term induction. Induction refers to the help and guidance given in the early stages of a career to new teachers and school administrators. Induction includes organizational orientation, socialization, mentoring, and guidance through initial



practice. Induction is used to refer to a time during which all support and evaluation are provided to a newly qualified teacher to ensure that regulatory requirements are met (Lawson, 1992).

The role of leaders in the adaptation of novice teachers is to create the conditions for the implementation of theories learned in practice, as well as to advance their knowledge and experiences. These are achieved with support and guidance from the leader. A good adaptation of novice teachers can influence the practices they use in teaching, their professional and emotional identity, as well as their career orientation. Adaptation involves learning and adapting to cultures and collaborative relationships (Kim & Roth, 2011).

Novice teachers are the future of our profession, and that is why their start on the right path is so important. Ensuring quality adaptation and support is essential for the development of a teacher's skills and practices from the very beginning of their career, with the aim of improving student outcomes. Effective adaptation brings out the best in novice teachers by ensuring that they have the opportunity and support they need to make a positive change (Gavish & Friedman, 2010).

According to Gavish and Friedman (2010), adaptation is most effective when:

- It is extended over two years
- It contributes to daily practice
- It involves focused practices

Challenges of Novice Teachers

Every teacher faces challenges during their adaptation to the teaching process (Kim & Roth, 2011). Brickmore and Brickmore (2010) emphasized that some of the most common challenges are:

- Relationships with students, parents, colleagues, and supervisors;
- Workload;
- Time management and fatigue;
- Knowledge of subjects and curriculum;
- Authority and control;
- Identity;
- Classroom management;
- Preparation and planning;
- Effective teaching;
- Self-confidence;
- Motivating and encouraging students;
- Number of students in the classroom;
- Lack of materials;
- Children with learning difficulties;
- Shift-based system.

In the adaptation of novice teachers, leadership from the teacher's side is challenging, as they are not always ready for collaboration, or the expectations are not always favorable. However, leadership is the main pillar of the connection between teachers (Brickmore & Brickmore, 2010).

The collaboration of the leader with novice teachers

Having a supportive principal can change everything in the work of a novice teacher. Teachers want to know that their principal has their best interests at heart. One of the primary responsibilities of a principal is to provide continuous, collaborative support to teachers. The relationship between a teacher and a principal should be built on a foundation of trust. This type of collaboration takes time to develop.



Principals must slowly cultivate these relationships while taking time to understand each teacher's strengths and weaknesses (Roberson & Roberson, 2009).

The key expectations for novice teachers include professional attitudes, content knowledge, classroom management, communication skills, and a commitment to student learning and success (Brock & Grady, 1998). Novice teachers expect the principal to be a leader and primary point of contact, as well as an authority figure. S. Roberson and R. Roberson (2009) expand on these expectations to include an open line of communication, conducting meetings, classroom visits, providing feedback, and offering affirmation.

Quinn and Andrews (2004) concluded that support from principals was perceived as helpful for novice teachers. Meaningful interactions with novice teachers, principals, and other administrators provide opportunities to exchange problems and issues that reflect the experiences of novice teachers (Roberson & Roberson, 2009). This creates a space for sharing educational feedback to support the adaptation of novice teachers. From the perspective of novice teachers, the principal was expected to initiate regular meetings where teachers could make requests for support in specific areas. Teachers often seek support in areas of greatest need, such as classroom management, discipline, parent conferences, and student conflicts (Roberson & Roberson, 2009).

As the literature suggests (Brickmore & Brickmore, 2010; Gavish & Friedman, 2010; Roberson & Roberson, 2009), school leaders have a significant impact on the lives of novice teachers. Some teachers valued having supportive and competent leaders to whom they could turn with issues ranging from teaching to classroom management. In contrast, the experiences of others with a perceived weak leader were marked by important critical feedback. Part of the role of a leader in supporting novice teachers is to provide them with feedback on their teaching. Support from principals also contributes to the overall development of the school and student achievement through both collective and individual improvements in teaching. Principals can promote high levels of classroom practice and ensure academic success for all students by understanding the challenges novice teachers face in the school (Roberson & Roberson, 2009).

Roberson and Roberson (2009) describe school leaders as those with the ability "to empower others to act." A school administrator has the resources and the broader perspective to create school structures that encourage the support of novice teachers. School leaders understand that their investment will pay dividends in the form of teacher adaptation and high student achievement.

It should now be entirely clear that learning to teach effectively takes a great deal of time, and the way people begin their work has a profound impact on their future career (Fullan, 2007).

Educational Policies Regarding Novice Teachers

Despite the reform of teacher preparation programs at universities, alignment of curricula for initial teacher training has not been achieved due to the different approaches chosen by higher education institutions. These institutions are responsible for designing the curriculum for teacher training across all levels of study (Instituti i Zhvillimit të Arsimit, 2016).

Initial Teacher Training (ITT) is the first and crucial phase in the professional journey of teachers. By clearly defining the knowledge and skills for future teachers, the foundation is laid for their proper professional capacity, which leads to the successful learning of students. Teaching should be viewed as a continuous lifelong learning process, starting with initial teacher training, followed by a phase of professional integration in the early years of teaching, and continuing with a comprehensive process of professional development throughout the teacher's career. The design and implementation of this ongoing



process requires coherent policies and new approaches to support both the conceptualization and alignment of the phases of teachers' professional development (OECD, 2011).

Ensuring Quality and Attractiveness of Teaching, Initial Teacher Training (ITT), and Continuous Professional Development (CPD) are recognized as primary objectives in the *ET 2020 Strategy Framework* (European Council, 2009), which forms the basis for EU cooperation in education and training, as well as in the 2015 Joint Report on its implementation. In the *Conclusions of the EU Council 2014* on effective teacher training, EU ministers agreed that "Initial teacher training should equip future teachers with the core competencies necessary to develop high-quality teaching, as well as foster motivation to acquire and update competencies throughout their careers" (European Union Council, 2014).

In "*Rethinking Education*" (European Commission, 2012a), among the key policies aimed at increasing efficiency, sustainability, and coordination in education systems, the Commission emphasized actions to support teachers, school leaders, and teacher educators.

The "*International Surveys on Teaching and Learning*" (TALIS) for teachers in initial training considers the integration of three core components:

- The academic knowledge of the subject(s) to be acquired;
- Teaching theories, including teaching skills and support for students and learning; and
- Classroom practice experience.

After completing a teacher preparation program, a higher percentage of teachers in EU countries feel very well-prepared for their work in all three areas. However, the same study also highlighted urgent needs for professional development in a range of topics (identified by teachers) and relatively low levels of collaboration among teachers. Initial teacher training in Albanian higher education institutions includes 14 phases of training, which are designed to further adapt to changing circumstances (Instituti i Zhvillimit të Arsimit, 2016).

The education system in Kosovo needs to begin the process of identifying modalities to assess the personal dimension of candidates, as well as their potential to handle teaching tasks. Additionally, to ensure that the best teachers transition into long-term teaching careers, the system must develop an entry mechanism to support novice teachers and ensure quality control before teachers are permanently employed. Such an entry mechanism should be firmly embedded within the professional development system to ensure coherence between pre-service teacher education, entry, and in-service development (Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology - MASHT, 2017).

Legislation and Teacher Standards

The development of teacher professional standards aims to professionalize teaching, meaning that teaching should be considered a profession that needs to be standardized, just like other professions, in order to be in harmony with other social partners and interest groups.

The standards describe the professional characteristics that must be met by every teacher who has completed the initial phase and is licensed as such. These standards must be maintained throughout the teacher's ongoing career. However, if a teacher aims to attain a higher qualification level, such as specialist teacher, master, etc., they must also meet the additional standards for each of these career stages (Institute for Educational Development, 2010).

The standards will help teachers identify their professional development needs. When a teacher aims to progress to the next stage of their career, the standards for that stage will serve as a reference point for



their further professional development. However, if some teachers do not wish to advance in their careers, in such cases, the standards help them seek and find opportunities to expand and deepen their experiences within the career stage they are currently at.

The *Framework for the Standards for Professional Practice of Teachers in Kosovo* (2017) outlines the fundamental competencies in terms of knowledge, skills, and attitudes required for teachers. The skills that a teacher is expected to possess, according to the Standards, include key abilities essential for transforming the school culture toward being more democratic and fully inclusive. The standards are grouped into four areas of teaching:

1. **Professional values** (attitudes and behaviors),
2. **Professional knowledge and understanding**,
3. **Professional practice**, and
4. **Teaching and professional engagement**.

According to the standard "*Professional Values, Attitudes, and Behaviors*", teachers demonstrate positive attitudes by promoting values and excluding negative attitudes stemming from prejudice. They understand that the contexts in which they work are constantly evolving and changing, so they recognize the need to adapt and respond to these changes. While in the "*Professional Knowledge and Understanding*" standard, it is emphasized that teachers know and understand the core ideas, principles, and structure of the disciplines they teach. They also understand the connections between different content areas and are able to integrate learning across and between subject fields. Teachers offer a student-centered approach in their teaching and know how to deliver content effectively.

The standard "*Professional Skills and Practices*" presents the teacher as someone who creates safe, inclusive, and challenging learning environments. They possess a repertoire of teaching techniques and strategies, and know how to use these techniques, activities, and resources to engage their students in learning. Additionally, they regularly assess all aspects of their teaching practice. "*Teaching and Professional Engagement*" is another key standard. In this standard, teachers are dedicated to their continuous professional development. They are able to reflect on their professional practice to identify their learning needs, analyze, evaluate, and expand both their individual and collegial teaching practices (MASHT, 2014).

In accordance with Article 65(1) of the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo, a person of any age who possesses the approved professional and educational qualifications specified in paragraph (2) and, if applicable, in paragraph (3) of this article, and who holds the position of a full-time teacher for the first time, must undergo an induction training lasting two academic years. During this period, their performance will be regularly evaluated based on the criteria set by the *Kosovo Education Standards and Licensing Board (KSHLM)*, by a mentor teacher appointed by the school director. Upon completion of the induction period, based on a positive evaluation from the mentor, confirmed by the director and municipality, the teacher will receive the *qualified teacher* status license (SMK), which is granted in writing by the Ministry according to procedures specified in a secondary legislative act.

Zey's Social Exchange Theory

The theory behind induction holds that teaching is a complex profession, and that university-level teacher preparation is rarely sufficient to equip teachers with all the knowledge and skills necessary for successful teaching. A large part of the skills required can only be gained through on-the-job experience. For this reason, this perspective emphasizes the essential role of schools in providing an environment where novice teachers can learn the "craft," adapt, and succeed as teachers (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).



A key element of the theory of induction is Zey's (1984) model of mutual benefits, which is derived from social exchange theory. This model is based on the premise that individuals enter and remain in relationships to fulfill specific needs, as long as the parties continue to benefit. Zey extended this model by adding that the entire organization (in this case, the school), which includes leadership, also benefits from the interaction.

Pre-service refers to the education and training provided by an authorized institution with the aim of preparing individuals for the role of teachers before they begin practicing the profession. In-service development refers to the periodic improvement and ongoing professional development that occurs during employment. Teacher development during the entry phase into the profession starts with the employment of the teacher and includes the first 1-2 years of teaching, which are defined by a special program of supervision and mentoring for this phase. This phase is focused on adapting to the work culture within the school, further developing teaching competencies, and caring for personal development. Theoretically, induction is intended for teachers who have already completed their preliminary education and training (Fullan, 2007).

Although the general goal of these teacher development programs is to improve the performance of novice teachers, alongside the processes of adaptation, both strengthen and prevent the loss of novice teachers or the reduction in the number of teachers (MASHT, 2017). Induction theorists have identified multiple objectives. Among these are socialization, adaptation, development, and evaluation of teachers. For example, some programs are primarily developmental and designed to promote achievement by beginners, while others are also designed to evaluate and perhaps remove from the profession those considered to be weak. Mentoring by experienced teachers is the best way to facilitate the adaptation of novice teachers. Each school leader should have a support and professional development plan for novice teachers. Furthermore, these leaders should also have a plan for mentoring novice teachers during the teaching process (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

In California, the state has introduced a Program for the support and evaluation of novice teachers to assist teachers during the first two years of their careers. A formative assessment program has been developed as a framework, based on which the novice teacher must work with a mentor-teacher during the first two years. This framework includes mechanisms such as classroom observations, portfolios, and self-assessment. It also includes an evaluation process throughout the two-year period of employment as a novice teacher, alongside the state's evaluation system (Fullan, 2007).

METHOD

The research "The Role of Leadership in the Adaptation of Novice Teachers in the Teaching Process in Primary Schools" is a mixed-methods study, meaning it includes both qualitative and quantitative elements, while the strategy used is a descriptive strategy.

Research Population

The population of this research includes all novice teachers in the primary schools of the Municipality of Vushtrri. The term "novice teacher" is defined as a teacher with less than five years of teaching experience. The statistical data regarding the number of schools and teachers were obtained from official sources, specifically from the Municipal Directorate of Education in Vushtrri. The data used reflect numerical information for teachers from the period 2016-2020.

The Municipality of Vushtrri has a total of 35 primary schools. In the urban area, there are 8 schools, while in the rural area, there are 27 schools. Between 2016 and 2018, 64 classroom teachers were



employed in the Municipality of Vushtrri (DKA, 2018). This research focused on these 64 teachers employed during these years. A total of 20 primary schools in the Municipality of Vushtrri had novice teachers.

Sample

The sample for this research was selected from schools that employ novice teachers. A total of 12 schools were chosen using a non-random sampling method, specifically quota sampling, based on the largest number of novice teachers employed. The sample includes 12 primary school principals and 30 lower-cycle teachers. The teachers in the sample have teaching experience ranging from 0 to 5 years. The participants were selected non-randomly, by including all the teachers in each school who met the criteria for inclusion in the study.

Characteristics of the Sample

Out of the total 30 respondents, 16 are female, and 14 are male. This indicates a slightly higher participation of females compared to males.

Table 1. The data on the gender of participants

Gender	Number of Participants	Percentage
Female	16	53.3
Male	14	46.7
Total	30	100.0

Table 1 presents the gender distribution of the participants in the study

Table 2. The data on the location

Location	Number of Participants	Percentage
Rural	21	70.0
Urban	9	30.0
Total	30	100.0

Table 2 presents the location distribution of the participants in the study

Table 3. Data on the qualification of teachers

Qualification	Number of Participants	Percentage
University Education (Bachelor's level)	19	63.3
Master's Degree	11	36.7
Total	30	100.0

In *Table 3*, data is presented regarding the qualifications of the teachers participating in the research. It shows that 19 of them have a Bachelor's degree, while the remaining 11 have a Master's degree.

Table 4. Data on work experience

Work Experience:	Number of Participants	Percentage
6 months - 1 year	3	10.0
1 year - 2 years	15	50.0
3 years - 5 years	12	40.0
Total	30	100.0



Instrument and Analysis

Qualitative data will be collected through interviews with school directors. The interview is semi-structured and includes 8 main questions with several sub-questions. Meanwhile, quantitative data will be gathered through a questionnaire for teachers. The questionnaire will be anonymous to ensure that participants feel safe and confident in expressing their opinions. The questionnaire is divided into three sections, containing 23 questions related to the topic and 5 demographic questions. The first section addresses what teachers believe is important for directors to do in order to ease their adaptation. The second section focuses on the challenges faced by novice teachers. The third section examines the frequency of support provided by the director to novice teachers.

The data will primarily provide descriptive and thematic analyses. Additionally, a T-test will be conducted to examine the differences in the experiences of challenges between two groups of teachers: one group consisting of teachers with up to 2 years of experience, and the second group consisting of teachers with 3 to 5 years of work experience.

Research Design

The research methodology is of a mixed nature, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative elements, while the strategy employed is descriptive.

The first question, "What are the most common challenges faced by novice teachers during the adaptation phase?" and the third question, "What is the difference between the challenges faced at the beginning of the teaching process and those faced after 3-5 years of work experience?" will be analyzed using quantitative data.

Meanwhile, the second question, "What are the most frequent supportive measures provided to novice teachers by directors to assist in their adaptation to the role?" will be studied through qualitative data.

Procedure and Circumstances of Data Collection and Analysis

From various studies with similar topics to the theme of this research, a sufficient amount of material has been gathered during the literature review to continue the research process further. In this study, statistical data on the number of schools and novice teachers were collected from the Municipal Education Directorate. To carry out the fieldwork, it is necessary to obtain permission from the Directorate of Education, which grants the right to conduct the research in schools. Once the permission is secured, preparations for the fieldwork will be made. The data will be collected over a period of 15-20 days.

Data Analysis and Results

The data were analyzed using the SPSS statistical package, with descriptive analyses (frequencies, percentages, mean, and standard deviation) and inferential analysis (T-test). For qualitative analysis, thematic analysis was also conducted. The T-test was performed to examine the differences in the experiences of challenges between two groups of teachers: the first group includes teachers with up to 2 years of experience, while the second group includes teachers with 3 to 5 years of work experience.

In total, 30 teachers and 12 school leaders participated in the study, engaging in both interviews and surveys. As confirmed by these data, all participants considered the support from school leaders to be very important in the adaptation of novice teachers.



Findings from the quantitative data (questionnaire):

Table 5. Themes related to the support of the director for novice teachers

Themes	Not Necessary at All	Unnecessary	Neutral	Necessary	Very Necessary	Average	Standard Deviation
1. The director should communicate frequently with novice teachers.	0	0	3.3%	13.3%	83.3%	4.80	.484
2. The director should encourage novice teachers to learn from their colleagues.	0	0	6.7%	3.3%	90%	4.83	.531
3. The director should ask other teachers to share their experiences with novice teachers.	0	0	10%	13.3%	76.7%	4.67	.661
4. The director should show understanding towards novice teachers.	0	0	3.3%	23.3%	73.3%	4.70	.535
5. The director should provide novice teachers with additional materials.	0	3.3%	10%	40%	46.7%	4.30	.794
6. The director should encourage and enable novice teachers to attend training sessions.	0	0	0	23.3%	76.7%	4.77	.430

In *Table 5*, in the first section of the questionnaire regarding the support provided by the director to novice teachers, based on the percentages obtained, we can conclude that the majority of teachers believe they should receive support from the director. A significant portion stated that the director's support for novice teachers is extremely necessary, as it increases work productivity and provides substantial encouragement for them to continue their work in the best possible way.

Over 80% believe that communication should be a key point for supporting novice teachers. Additionally, the majority agree that there should be collaboration among colleagues, as their experience can be a great help to them.

One form of support, even technical, that greatly helps novice teachers is providing them with additional materials, as demonstrated by the majority of these teachers. Therefore, the collaboration and communication between the director and novice teachers is an important and indispensable part of their



development. Furthermore, 76.7% of the teachers stated that it is absolutely essential to encourage and enable the participation in training sessions.

Table 6. Themes by frequency related to the challenges experienced in work

Themes	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Often	Always	Average	D.s
1. I find it difficult to manage some of the administrative tasks.	6.7%	10 %	26.7%	43.3%	13.3%	3.27	1.01
2. I feel like no one at the school wants to listen to me.	30%	26.7%	40%	3.3%	0	2.17	.913
3. My colleagues plan together with me.	3.3%	0	36.7%	43.3%	16.7%	3.70	.877
4. Parent meetings are stressful for me.	10%	16.7%	23.3%	36.7%	13.3%	3.27	1.20
5. Time management is challenging for me.	13.3%	23.3%	23.3%	20%	20%	3.10	1.34
6. Resolving conflicts is very stressful.	13.3%	6.6%	33.3%	40%	6.6%	3.20	1.28
7. Checking students' assignments takes up a lot of time during class.	6.7%	10%	33.3%	36.7%	13.3%	3.40	1.070
8. Overcoming difficult situations causes me pressure.	13.3%	46.7%	33.3%	6.7%	0	2.33	.802
9. Lesson planning takes up a lot of my time.	6.7%	6.7%	20%	50%	16.7%	3.63	1.066
10. I find it difficult to control the noise.	13.3%	33.3%	16.7%	30%	6.7%	2.83	1.206
11. The large number of students is a challenge for good management.	3.3%	13.3%	36.7%	33.3%	13.3%	3.40	1.003
12. Difficulty in planning for students with special needs	36.7%	3.3%	40%	13.3%	6.7%	2.50	1.306
13. Disagreements with some parents on certain situations.	23.3%	26.7%	46.7%	3.3%	0	2.30	.877
14. The lack of teaching materials makes my work more difficult.	3.3%	3.3%	33.3%	36.7%	23.3%	3.73	.980
15. I feel insecure about the results of my work.	16.7%	26.7%	20 %	33.3%	3.3%	2.80	1.186
16. The first year of teaching was emotionally stimulating, filled with nerves, excitement, and uncertainty.	3.3%	16.7%	26.7%	33.3%	20%	3.50	1.106

In Table 6, in the second section of the questionnaire regarding the frequency of challenges faced by teachers at work, the results show that performing administrative tasks is difficult to manage for novice teachers, with over 50% sharing this opinion. This suggests that administrative tasks may be tiring and time-consuming, as indicated by these data. Regarding collegial collaboration, it can be said that the majority believe there is support from more experienced teachers for novice teachers, and this is a positive factor that helps overcome initial challenges more easily.

Parent meetings are a challenge in themselves, especially for these teachers. The data show a variety of opinions, and it's difficult to specify whether this process is perceived as highly stressful or not. However, the majority view it as stressful and awkward, while a smaller portion (though not large) believes that managing parent meetings is not difficult. Stressful situations and various conflicts remain a challenge for novice teachers, as these are harder to manage. The lack of experience and familiarity with these issues makes it more difficult to handle them well. This is also evidenced by the percentages obtained for some of these questions, where the majority indicate that managing and overcoming such situations is often difficult.



The large number of students presents another challenge for these teachers, both in terms of grading assignments, as it takes more time, and in keeping the noise under control, as demonstrated by the percentages in these questions where these teachers agree that the large number of students is challenging for them in these aspects.

In general, the first few years of teaching bring intense emotions and significant stress for novice teachers.

Table 7. The topics according to their frequency related to the support provided by the principal at work.

Themes	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Often	Always	Average	D.s
1. The principal has provided me with materials that have helped me.	20%	26.7%	30%	23.3%	/	2.57	1.07
2. The principal has allowed me to observe colleagues during a lesson.	60%	16.7%	16.7%	6.7%	/	1.70	1.08
3. The principal has collaborated with me to resolve conflicts.	6.7%	13.3%	36.7%	26.7%	16.7%	3.43	1.262
4. The principal has encouraged me to discuss my issues with colleagues.	10%	40%	13.3%	30%	6.7%	2.83	1.262
5. The principal has been open to discussions about matters related to my class.	3.3%	23.3%	20%	20%	33.3%	3.57	1.09
6. The principal has assisted me in managing student-to-student conflicts.	10%	20%	40%	20%	10%	3.00	1.114

In *Table 7*, in the third section regarding the support provided by the principal to novice teachers at work, the principal's support is not satisfactory based on the responses from this part of the questionnaire. Although initially, the teachers indicated that support and collaboration were the most important aspects for them, the percentages gathered from this section suggest that there is little support from the principal for these teachers, with over 60% indicating that they feel the principal's support is lacking. Similarly, other opportunities that could have facilitated their adaptation, such as the chance to observe lessons from more experienced colleagues or encouragement to discuss issues with other teachers, are also lacking according to the responses. The percentages show that such support is rarely offered, and when it is, it is not sufficient. This leaves much to be desired. Overall, novice teachers understand that the principal should provide substantial support, but based on the third part of the survey, it is clear that this support is very limited and needs to be improved for their benefit.

Table 8. Differences in the challenges faced by teachers based on work experience

Themes	Work Experience	N	Avg.	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Average
I find it difficult to manage some of the administrative tasks	1-2 years	15	3.87	1.056	.273
	3-5 years	12	2.58	1.165	.336
Parent meetings are stressful for me	1-2 years	15	3.67	.900	.232
	3-5 years	12	2.58	.793	.229
Time management is a challenge for me	1-2 years	15	3.40	1.056	.273
	3-5 years	12	3.08	.900	.260
Planning lessons takes me a lot of time	1-2 years	15	4.07	.799	.206
	3-5 years	12	2.92	1.505	.434
The large number of students is a challenge for effective management	1-2 years	15	3.47	.915	.236
	3-5 years	12	3.00	.953	.275

According to the results of the T-test analysis (the independent t-test measures the difference between the means of the groups) in *Table 8*, in the first field, the average for 15 teachers with 1 to 2 years of work experience is 3.87, while the average for 12 teachers with 3 to 5 years of experience is 2.57. Therefore,



there is a decline in handling challenges between teachers with up to 2 years of experience and those with 3 to 5 years of experience. Teachers with 3 to 5 years of experience have reported facing fewer difficulties in managing administrative tasks.

The statement "Parent meetings are stressful for me" shows differences between the two groups of respondents. Teachers with up to 2 years of work experience have an average of 3.67, while 12 teachers with 3 to 5 years of work experience have an average of 2.58. In the survey, the options were presented as 2=rarely, 3=sometimes, and 4=often. The values shown in the table indicate that teachers with up to 2 years of work experience frequently experience difficulties with parent meetings, whereas teachers with 3 to 5 years of experience report a reduction in difficulties during these meetings, with an average of 2.58 (which is between "rarely" and "sometimes"). The result of the Sig(2-tailed) test ($p=.003$) in *Table 9* indicates a statistically significant difference between the group means (the significance value is less than .05 within the 95% confidence interval).

Table 9. T-test - Differences in Challenges Faced by Teachers Based on Work Experience

Themes		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Dif.	Std. Error Dif.	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
- I find it difficult to manage some of the administrative tasks	Equal variances assumed	.016	.900	.740	25	.466	.317	.428	-.565	1.198
	Equal variances not assumed			.732	22.557	.472	.317	.433	-.580	1.213
- Parent meetings are stressful for me	Equal variances assumed	.102	.752	3.274	25	.003	1.083	.331	.402	1.765
	Equal variances not assumed			3.322	24.722	.003	1.083	.326	.411	1.755
- Time management is a challenge for me	Equal variances assumed	.090	.766	.826	25	.417	.317	.384	-.473	1.107
	Equal variances not assumed			.841	24.867	.408	.317	.377	-.459	1.093
- Planning lessons takes me a lot of time	Equal variances assumed	7.733	.010	2.552	25	.017	1.150	.451	.222	2.078
	Equal variances not assumed			2.391	15.883	.030	1.150	.481	.130	2.170
- The large number of students is a challenge for effective management.	Equal variances assumed	.209	.652	1.292	25	.208	.467	.361	-.277	1.210
	Equal variances not assumed			1.286	23.266	.211	.467	.363	-.283	1.217

The results in row four show that the 15 teachers with 1 to 2 years of work experience have an average of 4.07, while teachers with 3 to 5 years of experience have an average of 2.92. From this, we can conclude that teachers with less work experience need more time to plan their lessons (average of 4.04 = often), while with time, they will be able to work on these plans more quickly. This is because teachers with 3 to 5 years of experience reported that lesson planning rarely or sometimes takes them a lot of time. The result of the Sig (2-tailed) test ($p=.017$) indicates that there is a significant difference between the group means."

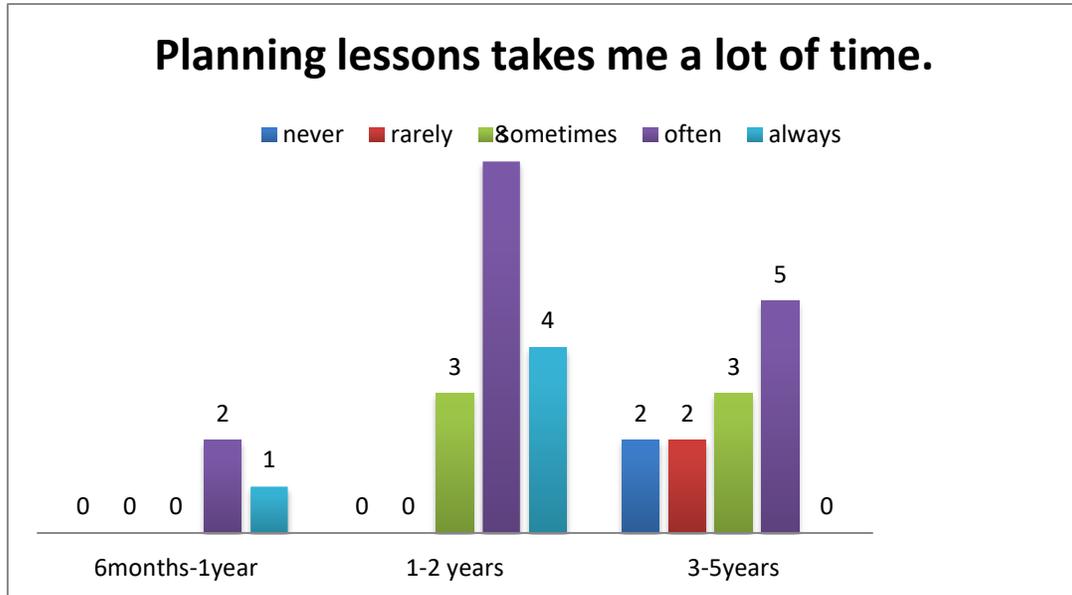


Figure 1. Lesson planning from the perspective of teachers based on their work experience.

The statement "The large number of students is a challenge for effective management" shows a slight difference between the two groups, or almost no difference at all. The group of teachers with 1 to 2 years of work experience has an average of 3.47, while teachers with 3 to 5 years of work experience have an average of 3.00. Both groups generally reported that sometimes the large number of students can be a challenge for effective classroom management.

The large number of students is a challenge for effective management

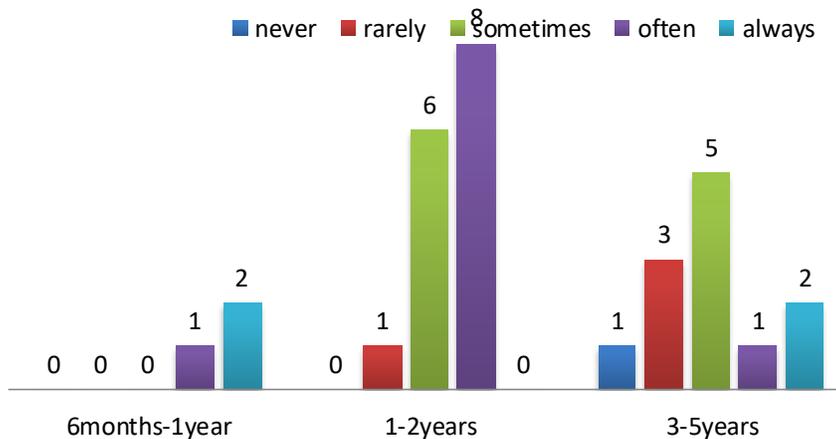


Figure 2. The large number of students as a challenge for effective management based on teachers' work experience.



Findings from qualitative data (Interviews):

Challenges and adaptation

In the question 'Have the teachers adapted quickly at the beginning of their work?' the respondent K.L emphasized that they have adapted well and easily. Similarly, the respondent S.H stated: 'Some have, others have not. I have more than 15 years of work experience, so I hold the position of principal. As such, most of the teachers currently working have started their careers here. Overall, they adapt easily.' Furthermore, the respondent F.H highlighted: 'Beginner teachers have generally adapted well and quickly. Fortunately, the staff is cooperative and ready to assist every new teacher, and certainly, as a principal, I am also ready for any aspect that has a positive impact.' The respondent M.S declared: 'Teachers manage to adapt to the teaching process within two years and start feeling more comfortable in the school.'

Regarding the question 'What are the factors that influence the adaptation of novice teachers?', certainly, each person expressed their opinion depending on their experiences. Almost all of the interviewees had similar views. One of the principals emphasized that, according to him, extremely important factors are cooperation and motivation among the staff, the positive climate created in the school, and the numerous trainings that further reinforce knowledge. Another principal stated that there are many factors that make this phase easier and influence the adaptation process. Genuine collaboration between them, the leaders, and the entire staff, greatly facilitates adaptation, followed by the provision of opportunities, their strong support, and significant assistance by helping them with the difficulties they face at the beginning, etc. Another interviewee stated: 'Adaptation depends on the person themselves. That is, how cooperative the teacher is, how open they are to discussion, how approachable they are with students, colleagues, and the entire school staff. However, he also mentions that other factors are also important.'

In the question 'What are the challenges that you have noticed that beginner teachers have faced in the school you lead?' the leaders who were selected for the interview, in general, gave answers that were approximately similar. Effective classroom management, specifically noise in the classroom, has been one of the most frequent challenges for beginner teachers, as expressed by almost all the principals who participated in the interview. Completing administrative tasks is still seen as a challenge for beginner teachers, according to M.S. Unlike the other principals, Principal R.K., in addition to the challenge of successfully managing the class, stated that beginner teachers also face the challenge of preparing tests and has noticed that their stress is noticeably higher during meetings organized by the school with the staff. Overall, the principals emphasized the fact that the lack of self-confidence and the management of conflict situations remain, even to this day, the main challenges faced by beginner teachers.

Support from the principal

In response to the question 'Do our schools offer support to novice teachers?' respondent F.H answered as follows: 'Beginner teachers receive sufficient support from the staff and the school as a whole. It depends a lot on the principal, the staff, and the school, but I still think that the majority of our institutions offer the necessary support. Whereas respondent A.H expressed that 'Our schools, in general, do not offer the proper support to beginner teachers, because they need much more than what is provided to them.' Respondent A.S links the support to the school's position, saying 'It depends on the school. Some schools offer more support, while others less, depending on whether the school is located in the city or in the countryside, the number of students, and the staff. In general, little support is offered to these teachers.'

In the sub-question 'What support have you provided as a school principal?', one of the respondents answered by saying: 'Beginner teachers need more advice and suggestions as they are at the beginning of their professional careers, so for them, this has been the greatest support I have offered.' Meanwhile, respondent F.H emphasized: 'I try to be cooperative, open to discussions, to clarify all uncertainties, to be tolerant, in order to create a positive climate that also reflects on my work staff.' Respondent A.H



expressed: 'From the first day, I have tried to offer them enough comfort by trying to remove stress and fear, I have introduced them to the staff and the administrative tasks, as well as the school rules, and other aspects have been addressed continuously during the work process.'

The role of leaders in the adaptation of novice teachers is to create the conditions for applying the theories learned in practice, as well as to advance their knowledge and experiences. These are achieved through support and guidance from the leader.

Almost all of the respondents, in response to the question 'What measures have you taken as a principal to help teachers overcome these challenges?', emphasized in one way or another that support, guidance, and counseling were some of the main measures they took to help teachers overcome the challenges they face. All of the respondents gave similar answers, highlighting collaboration, a positive climate, and tolerance as supporting measures.

One of the respondents emphasized: 'I have tried to maintain continuous contact with these teachers, offer them different models of lesson plans or classes for them to use as examples, I have tried to involve them in various activities the school has organized, and I have also asked more experienced teachers to support them and provide continuous assistance.' Based on the responses from the respondents, a generalization of the measures can be observed, with emphasis on support and guidance. However, no specific or more concrete measures are mentioned, which creates a negative impression regarding the actions taken by the principals in this case.

In response to the question 'What have been the most effective strategies for overcoming the challenges faced by novice teachers?', two of the respondents mentioned that the best strategies are calm discussions, conversations, and collaboration with teachers. One respondent explained that when it comes to these issues, they deal with them in a broader manner and remain close to the teaching staff and the entire school, where advice is a great help, and collaboration is the best way to support these teachers. Similarly, another respondent stated that simply being present and showing that you are there to help them is enough. According to him, creating a warm and non-authoritarian environment further facilitates the process. In other words, it is enough to collaborate and be open with them so that they feel free to express their thoughts and difficulties.

Support Plan for Novice Teachers

In the question, "Do you think a principal should have a support plan for the adaptation of novice teachers?", the principals we interviewed expressed varying opinions. Two principals agreed that having support plans is necessary for an appropriate and effective approach to the issue at hand. One of the principals was not very familiar with the existence of a support plan but agreed that having such a plan would be beneficial. The final participant stated that even in the absence of a support plan, solutions could be found for the adaptation of beginning teachers, implying that the existence of such a plan is not essential.

In the follow-up question, "If you think there should or should not be a support plan, please explain why?", the interviewed principals stated that having a support plan provides relief and an appropriate approach to the adaptation of beginning teachers in the school. Although the principals did not have support plans in place, they declared that every school leader should have a support plan and a professional development plan for beginning teachers.

The interviewees stated that after two years of experience, beginning teachers gained more confidence in themselves, were more self-assured, had acquired more knowledge in managing unexpected situations in school, and felt more involved in activities taking place in the school. It is worth mentioning that one of



the interviewees emphasized that, for some teachers, after completing two years of work, there is a noticeable decrease in enthusiasm for the job compared to the first year, although their performance is significantly better as they gain more years of experience.

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, and SUGGESTIONS

This research explored the topic "The Role of Leader in the Adaptation of Novice Teachers in the Teaching Process in Primary Schools," based on various literatures as well as questionnaires and interviews conducted with participants. The aim of this research was to highlight the adaptation of teachers to the teaching process during their first years of work, identify the challenges they face, and examine the most common forms of support from leadership to facilitate their adaptation. The results show that one of the main challenges faced by new teachers on a daily basis is classroom management. Other challenges include lesson planning and successfully implementing all its components, especially in terms of time management. Communication with parents is another significant challenge. Generally, new teachers adapt easily and within two years, they have successfully adapted to the teaching process and started feeling more comfortable in school. The most frequent support from school leaders in the adaptation of new teachers is monitoring and mentoring. However, other types of support expected are cooperation on both small and large issues, as well as the organization of additional lectures and discussions within the school staff.

The views of new teachers highlighted in the study by McCann and Johannessen (2004) are almost identical to those of the teachers who participated in our research. Both groups agree that classroom management, particularly in relation to the number of students in the classroom, is a significant challenge. Additionally, motivating and encouraging students is considered a common challenge faced by every new teacher. Quinn and Andrews (2004), in their study, concluded that the support provided by principals was perceived as beneficial for new teachers, which aligns with the findings of our research. Roberson and Roberson (2009) expand the expectations of new teachers to include maintaining an open line of communication, holding meetings, conducting classroom visits, providing feedback, and offering affirmation. Similarly, the expectations expressed by the teachers who participated in our survey align with these findings, with the importance of training sessions led by school leadership also being mentioned as a key form of support.

Based on the collected data, we are able to answer the research questions. The first question was: "What are the most common adaptation challenges faced by new teachers?" The data show that carrying out administrative tasks is difficult for new teachers to manage (over 70% of the participants). Additionally, meetings with parents are considered a challenge, especially for these teachers. While a larger percentage found this process stressful and uncomfortable, a smaller portion, though not insignificant, believe that managing meetings with parents is not particularly difficult. Stressful situations and various conflicts remain a challenge for new teachers, as they are harder to manage due to the lack of experience and familiarity with these issues. This is evident from the percentages collected for some of these types of questions, where the majority report that it is often difficult to manage and overcome these situations.

The large number of students presents another challenge for these teachers, in various aspects such as checking assignments, as it takes more time, as well as in controlling or keeping the noise in check. This is supported by the high percentages in these questions, with over 30% reporting that they often face this type of challenge. Based on the findings of the research, we conclude that the first hypothesis is confirmed: "Among the main challenges faced by new teachers are classroom management, pedagogical planning, and successfully implementing all its components, especially in terms of time management."



The lack of experience and familiarity with these issues makes it difficult to manage them effectively, as evidenced by the percentages in the responses to some of these questions, where the majority (over 50%) report that classroom management and pedagogical planning are often or always difficult to manage.

The second research question was: "What are the most common support measures for new teachers provided by principals to help them adjust to their work?" Based on this question, we can distinguish between the expectations of teachers regarding the support from their leaders, which primarily include communication, conducting meetings, classroom visits, providing feedback, offering affirmation, trainings, and additional materials. Over 80% believe that communication should be a key point for supporting new teachers. Additionally, the majority agree that there should be collaboration among colleagues, as their experience could be a great help to them. However, from the responses received, it appears that only a small percentage of support was actually provided to these teachers. On the other hand, from the responses of the principals, we understand that they generally do offer support to new teachers, although some reported that adequate and necessary support is not always provided. The support offered includes *advice, suggestions, open discussions, clarification of uncertainties, tolerance, opportunities to reduce stress and fear, introducing them to the staff and administrative tasks, ongoing communication, encouragement, motivation regarding work, and providing necessary materials.*

Experience naturally has a positive impact on the professional improvement of individuals, although sometimes it can also have a negative effect. From the responses of the interviewees, we understood that new teachers, after two years of work experience, feel more at ease, more confident, and have greater trust in their professionalism. This, of course, depends on many factors—some teachers feel more motivated, some receive greater support from colleagues and school staff, and so on. The adaptation of new teachers and their performance after two years of work experience should clearly be addressed within the framework for the professional development of teachers. In addition to the documents that need to address this issue, a very important factor is the approach of the school leader, which undoubtedly has a significant influence, whether positive or negative, on the adaptation of new teachers within the school. Depending on the support and collaboration between leaders and new teachers, either ease or difficulties arise for the teachers in adapting to the teaching profession.

In response to the final question, "What is the difference between the challenges faced at the beginning of the teaching process and those faced after 3-5 years of work experience?", we can clearly state that there are differences between these two groups. The majority of teachers have overcome several challenges, such as meetings with parents, where it is evident that teachers with 3 to 5 years of experience rarely, if ever, face difficulties. According to the results of the T-test analysis, there is a noticeable decline in the challenges faced by teachers with up to 2 years of experience compared to those with 3 to 5 years of experience. Teachers with 3 to 5 years of experience reported facing fewer difficulties in managing administrative tasks, handling stressful situations, lesson planning, grading assignments, and managing time. However, the large number of students in the classroom remains a challenge for both groups. Based on the results of the T-test from the research, we conclude that the second hypothesis is confirmed: "In most cases, there is a difference in the perception of challenges between teachers with 1 to 3 years of experience and those with 3 to 5 years of work experience." Therefore, the T-test shows that there is a statistically significant difference between the means of the two groups.

The statements made by the interviewees regarding the possession of a support plan in schools for the adaptation of new teachers are highly accurate and effective in helping novice teachers adjust more easily to the work process. In Kosovo, most schools lack such plans and a proper approach to address this issue. In our educational system, the entry phase into the teaching profession is addressed through the new



teacher licensing system. This phase of teacher development is intended to be regulated by a separate document. According to the descriptions in the Strategic Framework for Teacher Development, this phase includes the early years of teaching, which are defined by a special program of supervision and mentoring. It is a phase of adaptation to the school's work culture, further development of teaching competencies, and personal development care. The document that should regulate this phase began to be drafted in early 2018 with support from the ESIP project; however, it has not yet been approved, which causes new teachers to experience insecurity and difficulties in integrating into the profession, depending on the support they receive from the school. The possession of support plans leading to easing the transition was also stated by the interviewees, and this is further confirmed by research conducted in this field, validating the "Social Exchange Theory" as discussed in our research by Zey (1984). The directors agreed that every school leader should have a support plan for the professional development of novice teachers and a mentoring plan for new teachers in the teaching process.

Depending on the character or nature of the teachers, some are more open and sociable, not hesitating at all, which makes them adapt more quickly to their work. However, there are also those for whom the adaptation process takes longer, as mentioned by the respondents. Overall, though, teachers tend to adapt quickly to their work, and this is influenced not only by the support of the principal but also by the support of the staff, as they emphasized.

Based on the responses received from principals of different schools, we have concluded that nearly all of them agree that *collaboration, motivation, training, providing opportunities, support, encouragement, positive climate*, etc., are factors that are indeed very important in the adaptation of novice teachers. There was also a small number of principals who believe that it also depends on the beginner teachers themselves, such as their behavior and what kind of character or personality they have, but without overlooking the other factors, which undoubtedly have a significant impact.

Regardless of the fact that we are talking about novice teachers, the responses from the principals clearly show that collaboration is one of the key factors in this process. Similarly, creating a good collaborative, supportive, and advisory climate not only helps but also makes the adaptation of these teachers easier. Therefore, from the perspective of these respondents, these are seen as the best strategies, demonstrating that collaboration is a powerful tool to achieve any desired success. Additionally, it is considered an effective strategy for overcoming the challenges faced by beginner teachers. Challenges are always present, and they are more pronounced among beginner teachers, making their work more difficult. Therefore, we, as principals, must keep these difficulties and their feelings in mind, not overlook them, but engage with them and offer help and support in all aspects.

Limitations of the Study

Normally, the current situation with the Covid-19 pandemic has also limited the proper execution of the research. One of the impacts has been the inability to research a larger sample size, from which more sustainable conclusions and recommendations could be drawn.

Future research

In the future, it would be beneficial to use more support plans in schools for the adaptation of novice teachers, in order to be more accurate and effective in helping them adapt more easily to the work process. Therefore, this would provide future researchers with the opportunity to analyze a larger sample regarding the use of the support plan, its role, and the effect it has created, as well as the impact it has had on the adaptation process of teachers.



Practical Implications of the Study

The results of this research will practically contribute to raising the quality of teaching in our schools by helping novice teachers adapt more easily, leading to higher outcomes in the teaching process. These results will assist school principals, teachers, as well as other stakeholders involved in enhancing the educational process.

Based on the results of the research regarding the role of leadership (the principal) in the adaptation of novice teachers in the teaching process, and also supported by the literature and studies of various researchers worldwide, I am providing the following proposals (recommendations):

- There should be greater attention from principals towards novice teachers.
- Support and assistance in all forms, especially during the initial stages, should be provided to these teachers.
- Principals should explore as many ways as possible to help teachers overcome this phase with greater ease.
- The research also shows that collegial collaboration and support from leaders is one of the strongest factors for success and overcoming challenges, so there should be as many collaborative forms between these parties as possible, with the collaboration being as strong and supportive as possible.
- Leader should offer opportunities for novice teachers to apply the theoretical knowledge they have gained in practice, thus facilitating their easier adaptation.
- In order for novice teachers to have an overview of their work, principals should ensure that feedback is provided regarding their lessons, as this is essential for interaction and easing the process for them.

Ethics and Conflict of Interest

I declare and confirm that we have acted in accordance with ethical rules throughout the entire research.

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EXAMINING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INTERNET ADDICTION AND AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIORS IN INDIVIDUALS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS (PARENTAL ASSESSMENT)

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Abstract

The aim of this research is to examine the relationship between internet addiction and aggressive behaviors among individuals with special needs attending special education in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) and to determine whether this relationship varies according to various variables. A correlational survey model was employed in the study. The parents (either mother or father) of 239 individuals with special needs who were enrolled in special education schools and institutions during the 2022-2023 academic year participated in the research. With the necessary permissions obtained from the institutions, the parents who voluntarily agreed to participate were administered a “Socio-Demographic Information Form”, “Parent-Child Internet Addiction Scale” and “Aggression Scale for Children Parent Form”. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 26.0 software was used for the statistical analysis of the collected research data. Results of the study showed that internet addiction levels of individuals with special needs were low based on the total scores of the Parent-Child Internet Addiction Scale, but the Difficulty in Control subscale of the scale was found to be high. The total scores of the Aggression Scale for Children Parent Form were found to be average, while the scores of the Verbal Aggression subscale of the scale were high. Significant correlations were found between the Parent-Child Internet Addiction Scale and the Aggression Scale for Children Parent Form and its subscales. It was also found that the Withdrawal subscale scores of the Parent-Child Internet Addiction Scale predicted the scores of the Aggression Scale for Children Parent Form. The results of the study are considered significant for professionals in the field of special education, as well as for families and researchers. It is believed that this research could provide guidance for future studies in the field.

Keywords: Internet addiction, aggressive behavior, individuals with special needs.

INTRODUCTION

Individuals with special needs are those who exhibit significant differences in learning and/or physical characteristics compared to their peers (Akçamete, 2019). The type and severity of these differences determine their specific needs and requirements for special education services. Therefore, considering individual differences is crucial for the successful integration of individuals with special needs into the educational system. Taking into account these individual differences, the educational system should be organized to best meet their personal, social and educational needs (Ataman, 2011; Kara



and Nuri, 2023). In line with this approach, the term special education refers to the educational services provided to individuals with special needs (Akçamete, 2019).

When examining the fundamental objectives of special education, it is observed that it aims for individuals with special needs to benefit optimally from educational and learning opportunities, to enhance their independent living skills, to cope more effectively with external barriers and to acquire skills in various disciplines. Therefore, the identification of the educational needs of individuals with special needs and the fulfillment of these needs through specially designed programs and educators are of paramount importance (Borova, Nuri, & Bağlama, 2023). In this manner, these individuals can be more rapidly integrated into society by receiving education in behavioral, physical, sensory and cognitive domains (Tsampalas, Dimitrios, Papadimitropoulou, Vergou, & Zakopoulou, 2018).

In today's technological era, the use of the internet holds significant importance for all age groups (Arnavut, Nuri, & Direktor, 2018; Sakallı Demirok, Haksız, & Nuri, 2019). The internet offers a range of functions from accessing information to social interaction (Ceyhan, 2008). However, the widespread use of the internet has also brought about some negative consequences. Internet addiction emerges as one of these adverse outcomes, increasingly becoming a prevalent issue among individuals. Individuals with special needs exhibit noticeable differences in learning or physical characteristics compared to their peers. These individuals require special education services to integrate into the education system and be integrated into society. However, the impacts of internet use and potential addiction problems on these individuals are still not sufficiently understood (Alyanak, 2016). Providing technology-supported educational services to individuals with special needs, implementing therapies involving various methods based on the internet and facilitating access to support groups via the internet demonstrate the advantages of the internet for individuals with special needs (Altınyay, 2016; Şentürk & Keskin, 2018; Karabıyık, Nuri, Bağlama, & Haksız, 2023). Additionally, acquiring skills necessary for individuals requiring special education to communicate with their social environment can be internet-based. Utilizing technology is crucial for overcoming communication difficulties and accelerating development due to the limitations associated with disabilities.

The phenomenon of internet addiction has emerged alongside the widespread use of the internet, leading researchers in this field to develop various diagnostic criteria to define this addiction. Shapira et al. (2000) defined internet addiction based on impulse control criteria and Young's pathological gambling criteria in DSM-IV (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders – 4th Edition) (Young, 2009; Shapira, Goldsmith, Keck, Khosla, & McElroy, 2000). Griffiths (2005) conceptualized internet addiction as a subtype of technology addiction and identified criteria for addictive behavior as follows: Tolerance, withdrawal, conflict, mood changes and relapse. While internet gaming disorder is included as an additional section in DSM-V (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders – 5th Edition), the debate over whether internet addiction should be recognized as a behavioral addiction has been ongoing for a long time.

Studies focusing on internet addiction reveal that individuals with internet addiction face a myriad of challenges. These studies indicate that individuals experiencing internet addiction encounter difficulties in interpersonal relationships and face hurdles in face-to-face communication. Moreover, they exhibit underdeveloped social and emotional skills, high levels of neuroticism with low self-control, a propensity towards aggressive behavior, a predisposition to engage in arguments and even resort to using derogatory language. Furthermore, they tend to experience high levels of dissatisfaction and low self-esteem, along with feelings of loneliness. Their lack of social adjustment and participation skills, associated with difficulties in adapting to work life, are also evident. Additionally, numerous studies have identified that excessive internet use leads to severe emotional loneliness (Moody, 2001; Engelberg and Sjöberg, 2004; Caplan, 2005; Kurtaran, 2008; Durak Batıgün and Kılıç, 2011; Cam & İsbulan, 2013; Bozoglan, Demirer, & Sahin, 2013; Odacı &



Berber-Çelik, 2013; Van Der Merwe, 2014; Ogelman, Körükçü, Güngör, & Körükçü, 2015). These findings emphasize the adverse impact of internet addiction on individuals' social, emotional and psychological well-being.

The social learning theory posits that aggression is not inherent to human nature but rather acquired through learning. According to this theory, aggressive behaviors emerge through reinforcement and modeling. However, experimental and observational studies on how media content containing aggression can influence behaviors in both the short and long term present a different perspective on this issue (Gümüş, Şıpkın, Tuna, & Keskin, 2015). Furthermore, it is noted that due to the lack of oversight and the ambiguity of boundaries on the internet, it has significant effects on children and adolescents, thereby rendering them more vulnerable to content containing violence (Bozkurt, Şahin, & Zoroğlu, 2016). A study conducted by Lim, Gwak, Park, Kwon, Lee and Jung (2015) found that aggression and internet addiction are mutually influencing phenomena.

In today's digital age, the accessibility and use of the internet are rapidly increasing. Particularly, adolescents and children are engaging more with the internet through social media, online games and other digital platforms. However, this rapid technological advancement poses both significant challenges and opportunities for individuals with special needs. In this context, the relationship between internet addiction and aggressive behaviors among individuals with special needs is gaining increasing importance. These individuals exhibit differences in learning and physical characteristics compared to their peers, implying that they may respond to online content and interactions with different sensitivities. It is crucial to clearly understand the relationship between internet addiction and aggressive behaviors among individuals with special needs. Indeed, compared to typically developing individuals, individuals with special needs often encounter difficulties in education, communication and social life, which may lead them to become withdrawn and consequently turn to the internet, thereby increasing their risk of addiction. Based on this, it is believed that examining the relationship between internet addiction and aggressive behaviors among individuals requiring special education from various perspectives will reveal the underlying causes of internet addiction. In this context, this research aims to investigate the relationship between internet addiction levels and aggressive behaviors among individuals with special needs attending special education schools in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). In line with this objective, answers to the following research questions were addressed in the study.

1. What is the level of internet addiction and aggressive behaviors among individuals with special needs?
2. Is there a relationship between perceived internet addiction levels and aggressive behaviors among individuals with special needs?
3. Do perceived internet addiction scores in individuals with special needs predict aggressive behaviors?

METHOD

Research Model

This research was conducted using a correlational survey model. The correlational survey model is utilized to determine the presence and degree of variation between two or more variables. Accordingly, correlational analysis can be conducted in two ways, namely, correlation-type relationships and relationships obtained through comparison. Thus, it enables the determination of attitudes and tendencies (Creswell, 2017; Karasar, 2007).



Population and Sample

In research, the term “population” refers to the entirety to which the data obtained is intended to be generalized. In other words, the population is defined as the group that allows validity and interpretations to be made based on the results of the analyses conducted on the data obtained from the research (Büyüköztürk, 2010). The population of this study comprises the parents of individuals who continue their education in special education schools and institutions in TRNC during the 2022-2023 academic year. When it comes to sampling, it appears as a phenomenon aimed at obtaining information about existing characteristics and constitutes a limited part of the population. Indeed, sampling is a concept representing the process of selecting appropriate samples for determining and predicting existing characteristics, along with all the procedures carried out in this process (Büyüköztürk, 2010).

A total number of 239 parents (mothers or fathers) participated in the study including 102 (42.68%) parents of individuals with autism spectrum disorder, 63 (26.36%) parents of individuals with learning disabilities, 20 (8.37%) parents of individuals with intellectual disabilities, 14 (5.86%) parents of individuals with hearing impairments, 4 (1.67%) parents of individuals with physical disabilities, 2 (0.84%) parents of individuals with visual impairments, 11 (4.60%) parents of individuals with multiple disabilities and 23 (9.62%) parents of individuals with other types of disabilities who are currently enrolled in special education schools and attending educational activities in TRNC. Non-probabilistic sampling techniques, specifically the convenience sampling method, were utilized in the selection of parents (mothers or fathers) of individuals with special needs for this study. In this method, the researcher begins to form the sample by starting with the most accessible respondents until reaching the desired size of the group (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2005). While using the convenience sampling method, efforts were made to reach parents of children attending different special education schools to ensure strong representation of the main population. The socio-demographic characteristics of the children of the parents included in the study are provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Socio-demographic characteristics of the children.

Variable	Category	Number (n)	Percentage (%)
Age of the child	1-5 years	64	26,78
	6-10 years	89	37,24
	10 years and above	86	35,98
Gender of the child	Boy	171	71,55
	Girl	68	28,45
People the child lives with	Parents	222	92,89
	Social institution	6	2,51
	Relatives	11	4,60
Type of disability of the child	Autism Spectrum Disorder	102	42,68
	Learning Disabilities	63	26,36
	Intellectual Disability	20	8,37
	Hearing Impairment	14	5,86
	Physical Disability	4	1,67
	Visual Impairment	2	0,84
	Multiple Disabilities	11	4,60
	Other	23	9,62
	Total	239	100,00

When examining Table 2, it is observed that among the children included in the study, 26.78% were aged between 1-5 years, 37.24% were aged between 6-10 years and 35.98% were aged 10 years and above. It was found that 71.55% were boys and 28.45% were girls. Moreover, 92.89% of the children lived with their parents, 2.51% lived in social institutions and 4.60% lived with relatives. Regarding

their disabilities, 42.68% had autism spectrum disorder, 26.36% had learning difficulties, 8.37% had intellectual disabilities, 5.86% had hearing impairments, 1.67% had physical disabilities, 0.84% had visual impairments, 4.60% had multiple disabilities, and 9.62% had other disabilities. The socio-demographic characteristics of the parents included in the study are provided in Table 2.

Table 2. Socio-demographic characteristics of the parents.

Variable	Category	Number (n)	Percentage (%)
Participant	Mother	195	81,59
	Father	44	18,41
Age of the mother	20-30 years	66	27,62
	31-40 years	114	47,70
	41 years and above	59	24,69
Age of the father	20-30 years	34	14,23
	31-40 years	109	45,61
	41 years	96	40,17
Parents' perceptions on the child's internet addiction	Yes	135	56,49
	No	104	43,51
Child's daily internet usage time	1 hour	100	41,84
	2-3 hours	96	40,17
	4 hours and above	43	17,99
The social networks your child uses most on the phone	Game	97	40,59
	Music (Youtube, Spotify)	116	48,54
	Social networks (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter)	20	8,37
	Homework and courses	6	2,51
	Total	239	100,00

When Table 2 is examined, it is observed that among the parents included in the study, 81.59% were mothers and 18.41% were fathers. Regarding the mothers, 27.62% were between the ages of 20-30, 47.70% were between 31-40 and 24.69% were 41 years and older. Regarding the fathers, 14.23% were between the ages of 20-30, 45.61% were between 31-40 and 40.17% were 41 years and older. It was found that 56.49% of parents believed their child to be addicted to the internet, while 43.51% did not perceive their child as internet addicted. Additionally, 41.84% of the children were reported to use the internet for 1 hour, 40.17% for 2-3 hours and 17.99% for 4 hours or more. Furthermore, 40.59% of the children were found to mostly play games on their phones, 48.54% were primarily interested in music (YouTube, Spotify), 8.37% were most engaged with social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter) and 2.51% were mostly engaged in homework or research on their phones.

Research Exclusion Criteria

- Individuals with severe disabilities (due to communication difficulties)
- Those exhibiting problem behaviors
- Forms with incomplete responses (for the reliability of the study)
- Individuals who have not yet adapted to the educational process (those who have not completed the orientation process)
- Families experiencing communication difficulties and those unwilling to participate were not included in the study.

Data Collection Tools

Socio-Demographic Information Form

The Socio-demographic Information Form was developed by researchers. It was filled out by the parents of individuals with special needs who participated in the research. The form content includes demographic information about the parents and their children who participated in the study.



Parent-Child Internet Addiction Scale

The adaptation of the Parent-Child Internet Addiction Scale (PCIAT-20), originally developed by Young (1998) and subsequently adapted into Turkish by Eşgi (2014), aimed to ensure its validity and internal consistency. The study included parents (mothers or fathers) of 480 children aged between 8 and 17 years residing in Tokat province, comprising 250 females and 230 males. The scale, consisting of 20 items, was structured under four different factors: Factor 1: Social Withdrawal, Factor 2: Dysfunction, Factor 3: Deprivation and Factor 4: Control Difficulty. The Parent-Child Internet Addiction Scale, a Likert-type scale, was prepared for participants to mark with options including “Not Applicable”, “Rarely”, “Occasionally”, “Mostly”, “Very Often” and “Always”. It was noted that the options corresponded to scores of 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, respectively. Participants scoring 80 points or above were defined as “internet addicted”, those scoring between 50 and 79 points were classified as having “limited symptoms”, while those scoring 49 points or below were categorized as “symptom-free”. Following the translation of the scale into Turkish by five different experts, conceptual, idiomatic, experiential and semantic criteria were compared. It was found that all five translations were consistent; however, the simplest expressions were preferred to enhance comprehensibility. After the completion of the Turkish translation, the scale was presented again to four different experts and 11 parents for validation of the understandability of the items, which were approved by both experts and parents.

Aggression Scale for Children Parent Form

The adaptation of the ASC-PF into Turkish was initially conducted by Ercan, Ercan, Ardiç and Uçar (2016) following the acquisition of necessary permissions from Psychological Assessment Resources (PAR), the developer and copyright holder of the scale. The first phase of adapting the scale into Turkish commenced with the translation of the items by two experts, one proficient in English and Turkish. The two translations were compared and discrepancies were resolved through consensus, resulting in the initial version of the ASC-PF. This initial version, along with the original scale, underwent scrutiny by an expert in the field and seven different faculty members. Following feedback from the faculty members, necessary adjustments were made and the scale was revised. Subsequently, to assess the clarity of the items and their expressions across sub-scales, three faculty members specializing in measurement evaluation and psychometrics re-evaluated the scale. Based on the experts’ feedback, amendments were made to items perceived to have clarity issues, resulting in the final version of the scale. The scale was developed to measure the prevalence, frequency, variety and severity of aggressive behaviors (Ercan et al., 2016). The CSA-BPA comprises a total of 33 items and five sub-scales (verbal aggression, aggression towards objects and animals, provoked physical aggression, unprovoked physical aggression, total family aggression score). The scale was administered to the parents of 473 primary school children referred to a psychiatric clinic for diagnosis and treatment of aggressive behaviors. The validity of the scale was assessed through its relationships with criterion measures and confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to assess structural validity. Reliability was determined through internal consistency analysis. The findings yielded consistent results compared to previous studies, confirming the internal structure of the CSA-BPA through confirmatory factor analysis. The study concluded that the adaptation of the ASC-PF into Turkish yielded a reliable and valid measurement tool suitable for research and therapeutic purposes (Ercan et al., 2016).

Data Collection and Analysis

In this study, data collection was facilitated through the use of a socio-demographic information form developed by the researcher, alongside the “Family-Child Internet Addiction Scale” and the “Aggression Scale for Children Parent Form”, whose applicability had been established through prior validity and reliability studies. The data collection process commenced with the completion of scale forms by the parents (either mother or father) of 239 students attending special education schools in TRNC, based on permissions obtained and voluntary participation principles between October 15,



2022 and March 15, 2023. Subsequently, the collected data were subjected to analysis. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 26.0 software was employed for the statistical analysis of research data. Statistical procedures pertaining to the sub-objectives of the study are outlined below. The reliability of responses provided by participants on the Family-Child Internet Addiction Scale and the Aggression Scale for Children Parent Form was examined through Cronbach’s Alpha test, yielding alpha coefficients of 0.978 and 0.980, respectively. This high reliability coefficient indicated the reliability of the responses. Descriptive statistics were provided for scores on the Family-Child Internet Addiction Scale and the Aggression Scale for Children Parent Form. The results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test conducted to assess the normality of scores on the Family-Child Internet Addiction Scale and the Aggression Scale for Children Parent Form are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Normality tests of scale scores.

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov		
	Value	sd	p
Social withdrawal	0,148	239	0,000
Dysfunction	0,115	239	0,000
Deprivation	0,129	239	0,000
Control difficulty	0,129	239	0,000
Parent – Child Internet Addiction Scale	0,113	239	0,000
Verbal aggression	0,167	239	0,000
Aggression towards objects and animals	0,195	239	0,000
Provoked physical aggression	0,193	239	0,000
Provoked physical aggression	0,238	239	0,000
Aggression Scale for Children Parent Form	0,177	239	0,000

According to Table 3, it was determined that the scores on the Parent-Child Internet Addiction Scale and the Aggression Scale for Children Parent Form did not exhibit a normal distribution. Due to the non-normal distribution of the data, nonparametric tests were employed. The Spearman test was utilized to assess the relationships between scores on the Parent-Child Internet Addiction Scale and the Aggression Scale for Children Parent Form. Additionally, the predictive capacity of Family-Child Internet Addiction Scale scores on Aggression Scale for Children Parent Form scores was investigated through multivariate regression analysis.

Research Ethics

This study was conducted in accordance with publication and research ethics. Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Cyprus International University Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee under decision number EKK22-23/07/001 on January 23, 2023. Data collected from participants on a voluntary basis were treated with confidentiality.

RESULTS

This section of the study presents the findings obtained from the research. Table 4 displays the scores on the Family-Child Internet Addiction Scale and the Aggression Scale for Children Parent Form.

Table 4. Parent-child internet addiction scale and aggression scale for children parent form scores.

	n	\bar{x}	SD	Min	Max
Social withdrawal	239	7,77	6,73	0	25
Dysfunction	239	7,91	6,59	0	25
Deprivation	239	6,51	5,45	0	20
Control difficulty	239	9,45	8,36	0	30
Parent – Child Internet Addiction Scale	239	31,65	26,11	0	100
Verbal aggression	239	12,51	12,94	0	48



Aggression towards objects and animals	239	3,62	4,21	0	16
Provoked physical aggression	239	5,70	6,58	0	24
Unprovoked physical aggression	239	4,71	6,61	0	24
Aggression Scale for Children Parent Form	239	26,54	28,63	0	112

When Table 4 is examined, it can be seen that participants scored an average of 7.77 ± 6.73 points on the Social Withdrawal subscale of the Parent-Child Internet Addiction Scale, with a minimum score of 0 and a maximum score of 25. Similarly, on the Dysfunction subscale, participants obtained an average score of 7.91 ± 6.59 points, ranging from 0 to 25. Regarding the Deprivation subscale, the average score was 6.51 ± 5.45 points, ranging from 0 to 20, while on the Control Difficulty subscale, participants scored an average of 9.45 ± 8.36 points, ranging from 0 to 30. For the overall Parent-Child Internet Addiction Scale, participants obtained an average score of 31.65 ± 26.11 points, with scores ranging from 0 to 100. Furthermore, participants scored an average of 12.51 ± 12.94 points on the Verbal Aggression subscale, 3.62 ± 4.21 points on the Aggression towards Objects and Animals subscale, 5.70 ± 6.58 points on the Provoked Physical Aggression subscale and 4.71 ± 6.61 points on the Unprovoked Physical Aggression subscale of the Aggression Scale for Children Parent Form. The overall score on the Aggression Scale for Children Parent Form was found to be 26.54 ± 28.63 points, with scores ranging from 0 to 112.

Table 5. Correlations between parent – child internet addiction scale and aggression scale for children parent form scores.

		Verbal aggression	Aggression towards objects and animals	Provoked physical aggression	Unprovoked physical aggression	Aggression Scale for Children Parent Form
Social withdrawal	r	0,681	0,629	0,692	0,708	0,723
	p	0,000*	0,000*	0,000*	0,000*	0,000*
	N	239	239	239	239	239
Dysfunction	r	0,673	0,629	0,682	0,688	0,712
	p	0,000*	0,000*	0,000*	0,000*	0,000*
	N	239	239	239	239	239
Deprivation	r	0,715	0,677	0,725	0,715	0,754
	p	0,000*	0,000*	0,000*	0,000*	0,000*
	N	239	239	239	239	239
Control difficulty	r	0,715	0,674	0,691	0,705	0,744
	p	0,000*	0,000*	0,000*	0,000*	0,000*
	N	239	239	239	239	239
Parent – Child Internet Addiction Scale	r	0,723	0,678	0,723	0,731	0,761
	p	0,000*	0,000*	0,000*	0,000*	0,000*
	N	239	239	239	239	239

*p<.05



Table 5 presents the correlations between scores on the Parent-Child Internet Addiction Scale and the Aggression Scale for Children Parent Form. It was found that there were statistically significant positive correlations (p<0.05) between the general scores on the Parent -Child Internet Addiction Scale and its subscales including Social Withdrawal, Dysfunction, Deprivation and Control Difficulty, as well as the general scores on the Aggression Scale for Children Parent Form and its subscale scores including Verbal Aggression, Aggression towards Objects and Animals, Provoked Physical Aggression and Unprovoked Physical Aggression. Accordingly, as the general scores and subscale scores of the Parent-Child Internet Addiction Scale increase, the scores on the Aggression Scale for Children Parent Form also increase positively and significantly at a statistical level. This suggests that as the general scores and subscale scores of the Parent-Child Internet Addiction Scale increase, the scores on the Aggression Scale for Children Parent Form increase positively and significantly.

Table 6. Results regarding whether parent-child internet addiction scale scores predict aggression scale for children parent form scores.

	Non-standardized		Standardized	t	p	F	R ²
	β	Standard error	β			p	Adj. R ²
(Constant)	0,03	1,90		0,018	0,986		
Social withdrawal	0,79	0,50	0,19	1,600	0,111	84,637	0,591
Dysfunction	-0,11	0,53	-0,03	-0,211	0,833	0,000*	0,584
Deprivation	2,12	0,60	0,40	3,515	0,001*		
Control difficulty	0,79	0,42	0,23	1,862	0,064		

*p<.05

Table 6 provides the results of the multivariate regression analysis examining the predictive capacity of Parent-Child Internet Addiction Scale scores on Aggression Scale for Children Parent Form scores. According to Table 6, it was determined that the scores on Social Withdrawal (β=0.19; p>0.05), Dysfunction (β=-0.03; p>0.05) and Control Difficulty (β=0.23; p>0.05) in the Parent-Child Internet Addiction Scale did not significantly predict the scores on the Aggression Scale for Children Parent Form. However, it was found that scores on Deprivation in the Parent-Child Internet Addiction Scale significantly and positively predicted the scores on the Aggression Scale for Children Parent Form at a statistical level (β=-0.40; p<0.05).

DISCUSSION and CONCLUSION

The results of the present study showed that total scores on the internet addiction scale indicate low levels of internet addiction among individuals with special needs. This result, contrary to expectations, was obtained despite the fact that individuals from various age groups and backgrounds engage in internet use for a variety of purposes (Korkmaz, 2013). It was initially assumed that this result might be applicable to the individuals comprising the research sample; however, it was unexpectedly found that individuals with special needs exhibited low levels of internet addiction based on total scale scores. Consistent with findings from a study by Korkmaz (2013), examining internet addiction among individuals with physical disabilities, the participants included in this study were also found to have low levels of internet addiction. Similarly, in a study conducted by Üdücü (2019), investigating internet addiction among individuals with and without learning disabilities, it was concluded that individuals exhibited low levels of internet addiction. The averages of the Social Withdrawal and Dysfunction subscales fell within similar ranges, with low scores on the Deprivation subscale and high scores on the Control Difficulty subscale. Müezzın (2017), in a study focusing on determining internet addiction among high school students in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), found high levels of Control Difficulty. It can be said that the high scores obtained by individuals with special needs on the Control Difficulty subscale in the current study may stem from the fact that their internet usage levels are not completely eliminated.

Individuals with special needs exhibit average scores on the verbal aggression, aggression towards objects and animals, provoked physical aggression and unprovoked physical aggression subscales, as



well as on the overall Aggression Scale for Children Parent Form. It was found that scores on the aggression towards objects and animals subscale were low, while scores on the verbal aggression subscale were high. Caca (2020), in a doctoral thesis focusing on inclusive practices, noted that students with special needs participating in inclusive settings demonstrated high scores on the aggression towards objects and animals subscale, attributing this to the lack of engagement in leisure activities. Consequently, the low scores on the aggression towards objects and animals subscale among individuals with special needs participating in the current study may be associated with their engagement in activities. According to Moeller (2001), verbal aggression is preferred by individuals when they do not opt for physical aggression. Accordingly, individuals may intend to harm others using certain words. Therefore, it can be inferred that individuals requiring special education participating in the study prefer verbal aggression over physical aggression.

As the overall scores on the Parent-Child Internet Addiction Scale and its subscales of Social Withdrawal, Dysfunction, Deprivation and Control Difficulty increase, the scores on the Aggression Scale for Children Parent Form also increase positively and significantly at a statistical level. This phenomenon may be attributed to the possibility that individuals with internet addiction may exhibit aggressive behaviors when faced with any form of obstruction or limitation. Additionally, inadequate communication and social isolation may also be factors contributing to the escalation of individuals' levels of aggression. The findings of the study are consistent with existing research from the related literature (McRae, Stoppelbein, O'Kelley, Fite, & Smith, 2017; Carli et al., 2012; Sanbay, 2021).

It was found that scores on the Deprivation subscale of the Parent-Child Internet Addiction Scale significantly and positively predicted scores on the Aggression Scale for Children Parent Form at a statistically significant level. Deprivation is defined as the physical or emotional symptoms that occur in an individual following the sudden cessation of a substance or behavior that has become addictive (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). These effects can influence an individual's level of aggression and may also lead to experiencing stress. Toma et al. (2022) indicated that individuals experiencing deprivation may experience anger and anxiety. As the stress level of an individual experiencing deprivation increases, they may not refrain from displaying aggressive behaviors. Studies demonstrating the potential emotional consequences of internet deprivation support the research findings (Wang, Ho, Chan, & Tse, 2015; Kuss & Griffiths, 2017).

Based on the results obtained from the research, practical implications can be drawn for implementation. Informative programs on internet addiction and aggressive behaviors can be organized for parents by guidance services. These programs can offer practical strategies to parents on managing, balancing and intervening in their children's internet usage and negative behaviors. Programs focusing on enhancing emotional skills of individuals with special needs can be developed. Parents should be guided on recognizing their children's emotional needs and how to provide support for these needs. Guidance services can provide support in establishing technology usage rules that are applicable at home in collaboration with families. These rules can cover topics such as screen time, content control and regulating online interactions. Campaigns can be organized to raise social awareness about internet addiction and aggressive behaviors. Awareness-raising activities can be conducted through media channels and social media platforms. Furthermore, prospective research can be designed to longitudinally monitor changes in internet usage and aggressive behaviors of individuals requiring special education over a specified period. Research examining the effectiveness of technology education and support programs for families of individuals with special needs can be conducted. The effectiveness of these programs in intervening in children's internet addiction and aggressive behaviors can be evaluated. Expanding the scope of the study, other variables influencing the relationship between internet addiction and aggressive behaviors can be examined. For example, factors such as individuals' social skills, levels of emotional intelligence and learning abilities could be taken into account.



Ethics and Conflict of Interest

This study was conducted according to ethical and research standards. All participants participated to study were volunteers. Information about study subject, aim and researchers were given to the participants. As the authors of this study, we declare that we collected data in accordance with ethical rules during the research process and acted in accordance with all ethical rules. This study was conducted in accordance with publication and research ethics. Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Cyprus International University Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee under decision number EKK22-23/07/001 on January 23, 2023. Data collected from participants on a voluntary basis were treated with confidentiality. We also declare that there is no conflict among the authors.

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EVALUATING THE IMPACT OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE TRAINING ON TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS: A PRE-POST COMPARATIVE STUDY

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Abstract

The current study evaluated the impact of a structured Emotional Intelligence (EI) training program on teachers' emotional competencies and teachers' effectiveness. Using a pretest-posttest design, 100 teachers who were purposefully selected, completed the Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT) and the Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES) before and after participating in the McPheat Emotional Intelligence Training Manual (2010). Results from paired sample t-test showed significant improvement in overall EI (pretest: $M=126.85$, $SD=14.42$; posttest: $M=139.63$, $SD=12.85$; $t_{(99)}=13.77$, $p<.001$, Cohen's $d=1.28$) and teacher efficacy (pretest: $M=7.12$, $SD=.74$; posttest: $M=8.75$, $SD=.65$; $t_{(99)}=9.85$, $p<.001$, Cohen's $d=.98$), with large effect sizes. The analyses from EI dimensions revealed significant improvements in all emotional competencies, particularly in Emotional Awareness, Emotional Control, and Emotional Regulation (Cohen's $d > 1.09$). The results also showed large improvements across instructional strategies, classroom management, and student engagement which were subscales of the TSES. These results were supported also by qualitative interviews administered with a subsample of 20 teachers. Post-training data revealed enhancement on emotional self-regulation, empathy, conflict management, resilience, and classroom climate. The teachers mentioned a redefined self-concept regarding their work that included emotional intelligence as critical aspect to effective teaching. Taken together, these results confirm that structured EI training significantly enhances both the emotional and instructional competencies of teachers, suggesting important implications for teacher professional development programs.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence, teacher effectiveness, emotional competencies, emotional education, teacher training.

INTRODUCTION

The process of teaching is known as a complex and multidimension activity, encompassing a large set of skills. As it was defined by Mangal and Mangal (2019), teaching is a complex social process that involves art and science, professional efforts, diverse actions, initiatives and suitable practices for scientific observation and analysis as well. Teaching as an important process, plays a fundamental role in leading people to develop further their critical thinking, creativity which leads to personal and professional growth.

According to Muna and Kalam (2021), the teaching process consists of several key stages: identifying and establishing clear learning objectives, developing effective instructional resources, and employing strategies that facilitate meaningful learning experiences. Teachers are required to integrate cognitive, pedagogical, and emotional competencies to meet the diverse needs of their students.

In comparison with other professions, teaching is the most vulnerable job for facing emotional exhaustion, psychological strain and burnout (Luiniene et al., 2021). Considering this, there is an urgent need to support teachers in acquiring the proper resources to maintain and cultivate their overall and emotional well-being. As a result, they will be more professionally prepared to manage well their everyday challenges inherent to this profession.



Building upon this understanding, Emotional Intelligence (EI) has become as a critical determinant of teacher effectiveness. Goleman (1995) defines EI as the ability to recognize, understand, manage, and effectively utilize emotions in oneself and others. He highlights that emotional intelligence functions as a "*master aptitude*," which has a significant impact on how all other cognitive abilities are developed and used.

According to the Goleman (1995) self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills, were identified as five core dimensions of emotional intelligence. As the author emphasized, these domains are so essential for managing daily social interaction, for controlling emotional states and above all for promoting social cohesion, as well.

Supporting this statement, different studies have demonstrated the crucial role of Emotional Intelligence in fostering the relationship between teacher and student and improving instructional quality in schools. Todmal, Rao, and Gagare (2023), founded that teacher who scores high in emotional intelligence are more able to create supportive, inclusive and emotionally responsive learning environments. As a result, such environments contribute systematically in effective classroom management and student engagement.

It is worthy to keep in mind that emotional intelligence is not a static trait, but it is a set of skills that can be cultivated and improved over the time. Based on this, John (1996) and Goleman (1996) emphasized the importance of training in enhancing emotional intelligence competencies, particularly within educational environments. They highlighted the importance of EI training by considering that teachers serve as role models for student's emotional regulation and empathy. By cultivating emotional self-awareness and emotional regulation among educator, schools can significantly improve students' emotional and social development (Goleman, 1996). Such an active approach will be doubly profitable.

Ponmozhi and Ezhilbharathy (2017) further claim that emotional intelligence is critical for teachers' personal and professional success. It enables educators to manage their own emotions effectively while also understanding the emotional requirements of their students, which promotes more responsive and encouraging teaching practices.

Considering this, emotional intelligence is directly related to teacher effectiveness (TE). Strong, Ward, and Grant (2011), define teacher effectiveness as the capacity to use diverse instructional methods, develop meaningful relationships with students, and foster positive learning outcomes. Emotional intelligence in school context serves as a powerful tool for effective communications skills, strong curriculum knowledge and clear explanation of instructional objectives, all of which contribute to teaching effectiveness.

Enhancing teachers' EI not only improves teaching effectiveness but also mitigates emotional distress. Molero, Ortega, Jiménez, and Valero (2019) found that higher emotional intelligence is associated with lower levels of stress, anxiety, and frustration among teachers, which eventually improves mental health and professional performance.

Knowing those huge benefits, Matthews (2020) constantly advocates for the systematic integration of emotional intelligence training into teacher education programs. According to his point of view, training teacher on IE as a part of professional development is a crucial component for sustaining both emotional well-being and teacher effectiveness.

Emotional intelligence has become so crucial component for navigating diverse classrooms considering educational landscape. The teacher ability to manage one's emotions and comprehend students' emotional experiences is central to effective teaching (Valente, Lourenço, & Dominguez-Lara, 2022). These teachers, as it was explained by Ganesan et al. (2023) foster secure and supportive learning environments that improve students' collaboration, participation, and emotional well-being.

A significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction among teachers were found in a study conducted by Mousavi et al. (2012), which emphasized the importance of empathy, motivation and social skills in enhancing occupational well-being.



Moreover, Pugh (2008) emphasized the importance of developing and formally assessing emotional intelligence to ensure alignment between educators' emotional competencies and their teaching practices. This is supported by Turi, Ghani, Sorooshian, and Abbas (2017), who emphasize that the development of socio-emotional skills improves teacher effectiveness.

Considering the importance of emotions in education settings, Bachler, Segovia-Lagod, and Porras (2023) emphasize the necessity of training future educators to understand the intrinsic relationship between cognition and emotion. Understanding this relationship is crucial for fostering emotional intelligence in both teachers and students, which will ultimately enhance educational outcomes.

Gonzales (2022) further asserts that emotional intelligence significantly influences personal, social, and professional relationships. He points out that emotionally intelligent individuals develop stronger interpersonal connections through empathy, emotional compatibility, and open communication, and these emotional competencies evolve and strengthen through lifelong learning and experience.

In enhancing emotional intelligence, Sparrow and Knight (2006) highlighted the role of reflective learning, which cultivates self-awareness that serves as a crucial aspect of emotional competences. These reflective practices need to be integrated into training teacher programs.

In this light several scholars advocate for mandatory EI training as part of teacher preparation. Considering this, Matthews (2020) emphasized the importance of structured EI training programs, while Valente and Lourenço (2020) have put in focus the large role of evidence-based programs for teacher's emotional professional and their personal growth.

In support of these assertions, Maillefer and Saklofske (2018) found that emotional intelligence programs significantly improve teachers' emotional skills, enhance their capacity to manage occupational stress, and contribute to greater teacher retention, job satisfaction, and improved student outcomes (as cited in Keefer, Parker, & Saklofske, 2018).

In the other side, in one experimental research conducted by Nelis et al. (2011) has revealed that well-structured EI training interventions improve emotional regulation, emotional understanding, and interpersonal skills. As a result, these teachers create more emotionally, flexible and supportive learning environments. Similarly, in the study done by Hen and Sharabi-Nov (2014) it was found that teachers who participated in EI training reported improvements in self-awareness, emotional regulation and interpersonal competencies. All of this improvement contributed directly to increased professional effectiveness.

Pertegal-Felices et al. (2019) in a quasi-experimental study, assessed the effects of an eight-session Emotional Intelligence (EI) training program on 192 Master of Primary Education students. The main idea of the intervention was focused on enhancing participants' abilities to perceive, understand, and manage emotions. Compared to the control group, experimental group showed significant improvements in emotional intelligence after the training. These findings suggested that structured emotional intelligence training can enhance emotional competencies and professional development as well.

Training programs that target EI development show measurable outcomes in different studies. To examine the effect of a two-year Emotional Intelligence (EI) training program on secondary school teachers, Dolev and Leshem (2016) has revealed significant improvements in teachers' self-awareness, empathy and interpersonal skills. Using the Bar-On EQ-i assessment and interviews with 20 teachers, it was found that emotional intelligence training enhanced and improved teachers' emotional management, classroom relationships and teaching practices.

These results are in the same line with recent researches. Smith and Kamm (2024) demonstrated that EI training enhances teachers' ability to understand and respond to students' emotional needs and requests. Based on the study data, IE training improved further classroom relationships, academic performance and teacher accountability.



Research by Rico et al. (2022) indicates that EI, resilience, and well-being training strengthens teachers' emotional regulation, optimism, and adaptability, enabling them to meet the requirements of each individual student, foster collaboration, and adapt to changes in the educational landscape. According to the point of view of Ganesan et al. (2023) emotional intelligence training has positive effect on creating inclusive and emotionally supportive classrooms. This approach fosters further the student engagement, collaboration, and emotional security.

In light of the existing theoretical and empirical foundations, the current study aims to evaluate the impact of structured emotional intelligence training on teacher effectiveness before and after training teachers on EI. Specifically, the study will implement the *McPheat's Manual for Training Emotional Intelligence* (2010). This program was designed to develop further key emotional competencies such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management—through a series of 6 to 8 focused training sessions.

The first objective of the study is to conduct a comparative analysis of teachers' emotional competencies and teaching effectiveness before and after their participation in the training intervention. This study aims to provide empirical evidence on the efficacy of Emotional Intelligence (EI) training by evaluating pre- and post-training outcomes.

The study aims to find whether enhanced emotional competencies will serve into improved instructional practices, greater classroom engagement, and better classroom management which are part of teacher effectiveness.

The study will contribute to the growing body of literature by advocating for the integration of emotional intelligence training within teacher education curricula and other professional development initiatives. By doing this, it aims to develop a teaching workforce that is more thoughtful, emotionally resilient, and effective in order to address the emotional and educational demands of today's learners.

METHOD

Research Design

This quasi-experimental study used pre-test/post test design to evaluate the impact of Emotional Intelligence (EI) training program on Teacher Effectiveness. Same group of participants were part of the study to analyze the training effect before and after intervention. The study was conducted during October 2024 - April 2025 and data were collected by using quantitative and qualitative methods.

Participants

This study involved 100 teachers selected from two elementary schools and two secondary schools in Pristina district. The participants were divided by gender, comprising 50 male and 50 female teachers. Purposive sampling was used to choose participants in order to guarantee representation of both genders, educational levels and teaching experience.

All participating teachers were experienced educators, each having a minimum of five years of service at their respective schools. Additionally, 20 teachers from the sample were selected to participate in semi-structured interviews. The purpose of these interviews was to acquire qualitative information about the teachers' viewpoints and experiences with the Emotional Intelligence training program and its impact. Participants were assured of confidentiality and their participation in the study was voluntary.

Instruments

Emotional Intelligence

The Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT) developed by Schutte et al. (1998) was used to assess teachers' emotional intelligence. This questionnaire has 33 items rated on a 5-point Likers scale. The SSEIT measures three components of EI, including here the emotion perception, utilization of emotions and emotion regulation. The internal consistency of this instrument was ($\alpha = .87$) which make it a reliable tool for



evaluating emotional intelligence in educational contexts. When Jonker and Vosloo (2008) conducted a psychometric analysis of the Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale (SEIS) they have identified a six-factor structure of it. Optimism, emotional control, social skills, non-verbal emotions, emotional awareness, negative outlook were integral part of this structure. These factors were also measured both before and after the implementation of emotional intelligence training for teachers.

Teacher Effectiveness

Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES) developed by Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001) was used to measure teachers' effectiveness, before and after training teachers on emotional intelligence. This questionnaire has 3 key subscales such as: student engagement, instructional strategies, and classroom management. This questionnaire has 24 items rated on a 9-point Likers scale. Higher scores reflecting greater levels on teacher effectiveness. The internal consistency of the three sub-scales was shown to be high. The Cronbach's alfa for Student Engagement was .84 and for Instructional Strategies was .89. In the other side the value of Cronbach's alfa coefficient for Classroom Management was .86. The TSES is known for its strong psychometric properties and has been widely used in educational researches.

Semi-Structured Interview

A semi-structured interview was conducted to explore teachers' perceptions of the role of emotional intelligence in educational settings. Ten main questions and follow-up inquiries were included in the interviews which are used before and after Emotional Intelligence training sessions. Teachers' learning processes, their ability to identify and regulate emotions, relationship between teachers and students, ongoing professional development were covered during the semi-structured interviews. Emotional connection, support and feedback were the main aim of these semi-structured interviews.

Intervention

McPheat Manual for Training Emotional Intelligence (2010) was used as a manual to train teachers' emotional intelligence. This manual for training (EI) has 6-8 sessions that are well structured. Each of them lasted approximately 90 minutes. Self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and social skills were the main topics of training sessions which are planned to develop core emotional intelligence competencies. Role-playing exercises, practical exercises, introspective conversations, and theoretical instruction were all incorporated into the program of training. The McPheat's Manual for IE, has structured modules and practical activities that makes it a valuable resource for enhancing emotional competencies, leading to better workplace dynamics, effective teaching practices, and improved individual well-being. By addressing multiple dimensions of EI, the manual supports comprehensive emotional development, leading to improved personal and professional outcomes (McPheat, 2010). All content from the McPheat's Manual for Training Emotional Intelligence was thoroughly covered during the training.

RESULTS

A paired-sample t-test was used to compare participants' Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT) scores before and after the training intervention in order to investigate the impact of the Emotional Intelligence training on teachers' emotional competencies.

After the training program, the results showed a significant improvement overall emotional intelligence. The mean pre-test score for emotional intelligence was shown to be $M = 124.85$, $SD = 13.42$, and the mean post-test score was $M = 137.62$, $SD = 11.85$.

The paired-sample t-test revealed that this difference was statistically significant referred to the results: $t_{(99)}=12.76$, $p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 1.28$, indicating a large effect size according to Cohen's (1988) criteria.

**Table 1.** Presents the descriptive statistics and t-test results.

Variable	M (Pre-test)	SD (Pre-test)	M (Post-test)	SD (Post-test)	T	P	Cohen's d
Emotional Intelligence (SSEIT)	126.85	14.42	139.63	12.85	13.77	<.001	1.28

These results reveal that the McPheat Emotional Intelligence Training Manual (2010) was a very successful program for improving the emotional intelligence of teachers, including in this current study.

In addition to overall EI scores, pre- and post-training comparisons were made across the following IE 6-factor dimension such as: Emotional Utilization, Emotional Appraisal, Emotional Regulation, and six-factor structure of it such as: Optimism, Emotional Control, Social Skills, Non-verbal Communication, Emotional Awareness, Negative Outlook.

Below in the table is a summary of the findings from the paired-sample t-tests for each 6 factors/dimensions:

Table 2. Descriptive statistics and t-test result for Emotional Intelligence Sub-scales and six-factor structure

IE subscales and 6 factor structure	M (Pre-test)	SD (Pre-test)	M (Post-test)	SD (Post-test)	T	P	Cohen's d
Emotional Utilization	16.32	2.46	18.84	2.14	10.49	<.001	1.05
Emotional Appraisal	15.89	2.33	17.92	2.19	9.87	<.001	0.98
Optimism	14.45	2.68	16.31	2.36	8.95	<.001	0.89
Emotional Control	15.12	2.59	17.40	2.17	11.23	<.001	1.13
Social Skills	16.08	2.42	18.12	2.02	9.74	<.001	0.97
Non-verbal Communication	14.92	2.51	16.80	2.19	9.16	<.001	0.91
Emotional Awareness	16.64	2.39	18.83	1.98	11.55	<.001	1.16
Negative Outlook (reversed)	13.22	2.76	11.05	2.39	-9.37	<.001	0.94
Emotional Regulation	15.21	2.64	17.35	2.29	10.93	<.001	1.09

Across all subscales, as it showed in the table above, statistically significant improvements were observed, all with large effect sizes (Cohen's $d > .80$).

The greatest improvements were showed in Emotional Awareness ($d = 1.16$), Emotional Control ($d = 1.13$), and Emotional Regulation ($d = 1.09$). These outputs indicate that teachers particularly benefited in managing their own emotions and understanding others as well. Negative Outlook significantly was decreased, indicating that after the training intervention, teachers also showed a more optimistic emotional perspective.

These results proved that Emotional Intelligence training program was beneficial for improving both intrapersonal and interpersonal emotional competencies among teachers.

To assess changes in teachers' perceived effectiveness after the Emotional Intelligence training program, a paired-sample t-test was conducted as well for comparing pre-test and post-test scores on the Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES).

The results revealed a significant increase in teachers' overall sense of effectiveness after the training on teacher's emotional intelligence. The mean pre-test score for overall Teacher Effectiveness was $M = 7.12$, $SD = .74$, while the mean post-test score increased to $M = 8.75$, $SD = .65$.

The paired-sample t-test indicated that the difference was statistically significant referred to the results: $t_{(99)}=9.85$, $p < .001$, Cohen's $d = .98$, representing a large effect size.

**Table 3.** Descriptive statistics and t-test result for Teacher Effectiveness

Measure	M (Pre-test)	SD (Pre-test)	M (Post-test)	SD (Post-test)	t ₍₉₉₎	P-value	Cohen's d
Teacher Effectiveness	7.12	0.74	8.75	0.65	9.85	< .001	.98

These results suggest that participation in the Emotional Intelligence training program positively impacted teachers' self-perceptions of their professional effectiveness.

Changes Across Teacher Effectiveness Subscales

Further analysis was conducted to examine changes across the three key subscales of the TSES. Below in the Table 4 is described the changes.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics and t-test result for Teacher Effectiveness Sub-scales

Subscale	M (Pre-test)	SD (Pre-test)	M (Post-test)	SD (Post-test)	T	P	Cohen's d
Student Engagement	7.08	.79	7.82	.66	8.92	<.001	.89
Instructional Strategies	7.18	.76	7.89	.63	9.34	<.001	.94
Classroom Management	7.11	.77	7.85	.62	9.07	<.001	.92

All three subscales showed statistically significant improvements with large effect sizes (Cohen's $d \approx 0.90$). The greatest improvement was showed in Instructional Strategies ($d = 0.94$). These results suggesting that after completing the Emotional Intelligence training, teachers felt particularly more confident in planning, organizing, and delivering effective lessons. Significant advances were also showed in Classroom Management and Student Engagement, highlighting also improvements in managing student behavior and fostering an engaging learning environment.

These results show that improving teachers' emotional intelligence competencies leads to improved professional self-efficacy in the classroom as well as improved emotional skills.

Qualitative data

Pre-Training Phase

Twenty teachers were interviewed to explore their perspectives on emotional intelligence in the classroom before the Emotional Intelligence training. The importance of emotions in education context was widely known by teachers. During the pre-interviews one teacher expressed, *"Emotions, play a very important role in schools. Teachers and the students are affected by their emotions daily. I think the emotional aspect has been neglected over the years, but we need to strengthen it if we want a calm, safe, and one understanding environment."* Another teacher emphasized that, *"When students feel emotionally supported, they are more motivated to learn and engage."*

In qualitative semi-interviews, teachers reported some significant challenges in managing their emotions effectively. They have emphasized that emotional exhaustion is one state that follows them often. Based on this, emotional exhaustion was a recurring theme. *One teacher said that "We as a teacher experience high degree of psychological workload from the daily work we do. Sometimes our responsibilities both at home and school become unmanageable"*. As they explained, sometimes is so hard for them to maintain emotional balance due to the unpredictable classroom situation. One teacher stating that *"In our classrooms there are many unexpected events that I can't deal with them as I would like. Sometimes it's impossible to manage my emotions"*.

Empathy for students as teachers explained was seen a crucial component in school context but they struggle with limited time. During the interview one teacher reflected that *"We have limited time to dedicate to emotions in the classroom, even though I try to understand well my students' emotions"*.



Furthermore, the teachers highlighted a serious lack of formal training in emotional intelligence. As one commented, *“We have received training on teaching techniques, but never on emotional intelligence, which is vital for our well-being and that of our students.”*

Personal exercising and speaking with their colleagues about school issues were used by teacher as coping strategies to manage their emotions. These techniques were often insufficient and they reported that teachers need extra preparation to manage well with school emotions. *A teacher shared that “Talking with my colleagues helps, but it doesn’t eliminate the emotional load that we carry every single day”.* Considering this, a common suggestion for all teachers was the need to integrate emotional education into teaching. *“The better we manage our emotions in school the easier it will be for students to manage theirs” said one of the participants.*

Teachers have reported that conflict management practices often relied on ad hoc strategies, due to the fact that they don’t have special training how to manage with students’ emotions. One teacher explained that *“Usually, I try to give my students space to express their emotions during conflicts, but often I lack the tools to guide them properly”.* Based on the teacher’s answers, the pre-training phase revealed that although teachers know the value of emotional intelligence, they felt emotionally overwhelmed and underprepared to manage well the emotions. In such circumstances they highlighted the critical need for systematic EI training.

Post-Training Phase

The same group of twenty teachers were interviewed again, after completing the Emotional Intelligence training program. Post-training output found significant positive improvements in their professional and personal emotional intelligence competencies.

Teachers reported that after the training they feel more prepared and they learnt more strategies for recognizing and managing their own emotions. One teacher said that *“After the emotional intelligence training, I feel much more in control of my emotions. Even in stressful situations, I don’t react immediately but I’m able to step back and respond more reasonably. Another teacher emphasized that “Now I’m able to respond in a way that de-escalate tension in the class, due to the fact that I’ve learned during the training how to recognize emotional triggers.*

Teacher reported that after training on emotional intelligence competencies, they have improved obviously their empathy and emotional awareness. Teacher concluded that after the training they could better perceive and address students’ emotional needs and requests. One teacher highlighted that, *“Now, I feel like I really understand well my students. I’m able to understand them even when they are not saying something. I’m more prepared to read between the silence”.* Another teacher reflected that *“After the training the classroom atmosphere is much calmer and more positive. Behavioral problems were reduced significantly after building emotional connections with students”.*

Training teachers on emotional intelligence competencies has affected also the conflict resolution strategies. Teacher approaches toward conflict resolution strategies shifted from reactive to proactive. Considering this one teacher said that *“In conflict situations, now I react differently. I can sense immediately when something is about to happen and I try to intervene early by helping students to articulate their emotions.”* Teachers emphasized that after the training active emotional support and open communication became key tools in their classroom. One teacher explained that *“I help my students to find solutions themselves by encouraging them to express how they feel. This active approach empowered them and made my daily work less stressful”.*

Psychological resilience was significantly improved as teachers reported during the post interview. Teachers expressed that after the training they feel more equipped to separate their personal lives from work stress. As one teacher stated, *“Now, I have strategies to not carry the emotional weight of school back home with me”.* Another teacher added that *“Mindfulness techniques and other techniques that we have learned to manage*



emotions have been so helpful in managing my emotional load''.

Teachers also reported changes in their perception on professional identity. They evaluate emotional intelligence as a core competency of effective teaching. In this direction, one teacher summed it up by saying that *''After the emotional intelligence training, we as a teacher don't think about what we teach, but we are preoccupied how we make our students to feel daily. This emotional connection seems to be fundamental for real learning''.*

During the semi-interviews all teachers expressed deep desires to continue further to develop emotional intelligence competencies. Referred to this a teacher said that, *''This emotional intelligence training was only the beginning, because we need to be systematically part of such emotional management preparation. I see personally how much emotional intelligence affect our job as a teacher, and I express my desire to keep improving further''.*

Overall, the post-training interviews demonstrated that the EI training profoundly impacted teachers' emotional management, classroom climate, teacher-student relationships, stress regulation, and overall teaching effectiveness. Teachers moved from a place of emotional struggle and limited tools and strategies to one of greater self-awareness, emotional control, empathy, and professional satisfaction.

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, and SUGGESTIONS

The findings of this current study supporting a significant amount of previous research and offer empirical data for the critical role of Emotional Intelligence training in improving teachers' effectiveness. These results align with previous research that indicate EI's impact on professional competency and resilience (Goleman, 1995; Todmal, Rao, & Gagare, 2023). This study demonstrates that structured emotional intelligence training, significantly improves teacher's emotional competencies and their approach to student interactions.

Quantitative analyses revealed substantial increases in teacher's emotional intelligence competencies. All sub-scales of emotional intelligence were improved after the training, with particularly improvements in emotional awareness, emotional control, and emotional regulation. These findings reinforce earlier research on targeted intervention for emotional intelligence development (Kotsou et al. 2011; Hen & Sharabi-Nov, 2014). Additionally, the observed decrease in negative emotional outlook aligns with findings that EI training strengthens emotional resilience and foster more optimistic perspective (Molero et al 2019).

In addition to strengthening emotional competencies, the results showed a significant improvement in teachers' self-perceived professional efficacy across all domains evaluated, including instructional strategies, classroom management, and student engagement. The biggest improvement was found in instructional strategies, indicating that heightened emotional intelligence empowered teachers to plan, organize, and carry out their instructions more effectively. These findings align with established definitions of teacher effectiveness and underscore the value of integrating EI training into professional development initiatives (Strong, Ward, & Grant, 2011; Matthews, 2020).

These quantitative results were further explained by the qualitative outputs. Teachers in pre-training interviews emphasized that they recognized the importance of emotional intelligence, but they aren't prepared well to manage their emotions and emotions of their students. Due to a lack of formal emotional intelligence training, emotion exhaustion was present, which is seem by Luiniene et al. (2021) as a risk factor in professional inadequacy. Affected by the lack of formal emotional training, teachers reported using informal coping mechanisms in order to handle the emotional demands. As they have reported, these informal coping mechanisms were frequently insufficient to manage well with emotional demands.

Post-training interviews revealed significant changes. Teachers reported greater emotional self-awareness, improved emotional regulation strategies, increased empathy towards students, and more proactive conflict management. They described a transformation from emotional reactivity to thoughtful emotional responsiveness, which improved teacher-student connections and created calmer classroom situations. These



qualitative findings support existing research on the role of emotionally intelligent teachers in creating inclusive and emotionally secure learning spaces (Ganesan et al. 2023; Bachler et al. 2023).

The current study showed that emotional intelligence can be cultivated through structured training. This is in line with previous findings by John (1996) and Goleman (1996), who indicating that emotional intelligence is not a static trait but a dynamic set that can be developed. Teachers' answers suggested that gaining knowledge about emotional intelligence competencies not only enhanced their professional practice but also contributed to better psychological resilience and work-life balance, a statement that was emphasized by Rico et al. (2022) findings.

Given the strong effect sizes observed in both emotional intelligence and teacher effectiveness it was observed systematic intervention in schools through emotional intelligence training should be prioritized in teachers' development efforts, as advocated in previous research (Matthews 2020, Valente & Lourenço 2020).

A number of teachers who actively participated on this study expressed interest in further intensive emotional skills training emphasizing that emotional intelligence development is a continuous process requiring sustained reflective learning. This sentiment aligns with perspectives that view EI growth as an ongoing professional endeavor (Sparrow & Knight 2006).

This study offers empirical validation for the integration of emotional intelligence training into teacher professional development. Findings confirm that EI training significantly enhance teacher emotional competences and teaching effectiveness including instructional strategies, classroom management, and student engagement. In light of these findings, integrating emotional intelligence programs into teaching curricula and professional development is a crucial and critical step toward cultivating a more reflective, resilient, and productive teaching workforce.

Suggestions

The results of this study demonstrated that Emotional Intelligence (EI) training significantly enhances teachers' emotional intelligence competencies and teaching effectiveness. The results were supported by existing literature.

Based on the study results, several key recommendations are proposed to follow:

1. Firstly, Emotional Intelligence training should be formally integrated systematically in each level of education. As it is evidenced by the literature and by the results of this current study, emotional awareness, emotional control and regulation are important skills that can be enhanced after systematic training. To reach the desirable level of emotional intelligence competencies and to guarantee long-term progress, such training and follow-up workshops are particularly crucial.
2. Secondly, by promoting reflective practices teachers' emotional intelligence can also be enhanced. The quantitative and qualitative data revealed emotional exhausting in teachers, which should be addressed immediately by including such as emotional intelligence training, stress management programs and regular counseling services. This approach will enhance and cultivate further teachers' emotional well-being.
3. Thirdly, to create supportive educational environments, training for school leaders and teacher in emotional intelligence competencies is so vital. In this direction, emotional intelligence (EI) programs of training should be customized for various level of education and professional evaluations forms should incorporate emotional competency indicators.

Finally, future research should incorporate all educational settings and conduct longitudinal studies to examine further the long-terms effects of emotional intelligence training. This will help to increase the generalizability of the findings.



Ethics and Conflict of Interest

All ethical guidelines were followed in this study, ensuring informed consent, confidentiality and the voluntary participation of all teachers involved. The author declares that there were no conflicts of interest influencing the design, implementation, or reporting of this study.

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AN INVESTIGATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN 36-72 MONTHLY CHILDREN'S SCREEN TIME AND THEIR BEHAVIORAL PROBLEMS AND EMOTION REGULATION SKILLS: A CASE STUDY IN TURKEY

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Abstract

The amount of time young children spend in front of screens is on the rise and the relationship between the children's screen time and their social/emotional development is becoming a widely discussed issue. This research sought to determine the relationship between passive and active screen time of children in early childhood and their social competence, behavioral problems and emotion regulation skills. The sample of the study consisted of 36-72 month-old 504 children living in a city in Turkey. The results revealed that the active and passive screen time of children was positively associated with behavioral problems, and negatively associated with their social competence and emotion regulation skills. The study also indicated that children's screen time exceeded the time recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics (APA). The results also unveil that boys spend more time on screens than girls. The study will be beneficial to child caregivers in ever increasing screen-integrated lifestyles.

Keywords: Preschool children, passive screen time, active screen time, social competence, emotion regulation.

INTRODUCTION

Excessive exposure to media technologies has a significant place in the lives of both adults and young children. The media's effects on young children may be greater than adults (Güngör, 2020). Given both our observations of the environment we live in and the findings in some reported research in the existing literature (Durmuş & Övür, 2021; Kabali et al., 2015; Orde & Durner; 2016), children in early childhood interact with screen-integrated devices at an increasing rate. According to the OFCOM's report (2021), children mostly engage in TV broadcasts and watch videos. It is also stated that the majority of 3 to 7 year-old children watch videos with variety of content than television broadcasts, and almost all of them interact with one or more video sharing sites. According to the study conducted by Yalçın et al. (2021) on 1245 children between 2 to 5 years of age, 25% of them were found to play video games at home, 54.5% of their parents did not know the names of the video games they were playing. Akin (2019) suggested that preschool children mostly prefer watching television in the range of 2 to 3 hours daily. Recently, in addition to television, mobile smartphones and tablet PCs have increased children's screen exposure time dramatically. Sweetser et al., (2012) define two categories of children's screen time as passive and active screen time. Passive screen time (PST) refers to screen time that requires little or no interaction with the user, as in the case of watching television. During PST, content continues to play without user input until the screen is turned off (Hu et al., 2020; Sweetser et al., 2012). On the other hand, active screen time (AST) refers to intentional and cognitive engagement with a screen-based device. In other words, the user becomes interactive and provides various types of input to a screen integrated device based on feedback received from the device like a computer, an internet-connected device like a smart mobile phone, a tablet, a game platform, and etc.



(Hu et al., 2020; Sweetser et al., 2012). During AST, one can be seen incorporating physical movement or active participation while using electronic devices. For example, a child can be considered in AST when touching the screen, talking to a microphone of the device or showing physical movement like moving hands or legs to react the commands coming from the device and etc. There are also other studies in the literature that categorize this distinction as interactive and non-interactive screen times (Anderson & Hanson, 2009; Choi & Kirkorian, 2016) or traditional media and interactive media (Chassiakos et al., 2016). Sweetser et al., (2012) remark that AST and PST distinction provides a better understanding of the related positive and negative effects on young children.

The proposed study examines the effects of AST and PST of 36–72-month-old children on their social/emotional development. This early period of life offers remarkable growth in cognitive, social, and emotional domains. The experiences and relationships are formed during this time. This period serves as the foundation for later development and play a critical role in shaping the child's personality. Some of the social and emotional development that can be seen in the children during this early period of life are as follow: Play becomes more interactive and cooperative during this period. Children start engaging in parallel play and gets into more complex social play. They interact and collaborate with peers. Social skills develop and children start to learn about sharing, taking turns, and cooperating with others. These skills are essential for forming positive relationships and functioning in social groups. During this period, children also learn to manage their emotions. They begin to express their feelings in more effective ways. They may also experience new fears and anxieties.

The current study also aims to understand whether children's screen time (AST and PST) significantly differs by age, gender, sibling status, and parental education level.

The following subheadings present the findings and results found by the related studies in the available literature. Please note that subheadings are aligned with the general variables considered the current study.

Children's demographics and screen time

With their quick and easy access, mass media tools such as television and internet-enabled devices are frequently used by preschool children in their daily lives. However, spending too much time on screens may lead to an addiction. According to Yiğit and Günüç (2020), 44% of children are in the risk group for digital addiction and 15.1% of them are already digital game addicts. However, APA (2016) offers no screen time (except for video chatting) for children younger than 18 months. They also recommend that 2 to 5 years old children should get maximum of an hour of screen time per day, and quality content should be offered to children during this period. Given the relevant literature, it can be said that children's screen time exceeds the screen time limit set by the APA (2016) (Akın, 2019; Hu et al., 2020; Işın, 2019; Konca, 2021; Merdin, 2017).

Some part of the existing literature reports that boys spend more time in front of a screen than girls whereas some studies have found no correlation between gender and children's screen time (Hu et al., 2020; Tun, 2021). Children's screen time also increases as they get older. Children engage with the screen at an early age, and the time spent in front of screens increases as they grow (Olgun & Tuğrul, 2019). The literature also provides findings that children's screen time differs by the education levels of parents and the number of siblings. According to Yiğit and Günüç (2020), the parents' interest to the child and the population per household influence children's screen time. Hu et al. (2020) argue that the PST of preschool children differs by number of siblings they have. Children without siblings have more PST than children with siblings (Hu et al., 2020). Mutlu (2019), on the other hand, claims that younger children with siblings spend more time watching television. Eslami Shahrabaki et al. (2020) reported that children's screen time was significantly associated with the gender of the child and the education level of the mother.



PST and social/emotional development of children

Social development is related to the acquisition of skills that enable a person to interact with others. Social development includes interpersonal relationships, attitudes and behavioral skills (VandenBos, 2007). Social competence is a concept that includes emotional transitions on social interactions and relationships. Emotional competence supports social competence. Socially competent children express their feelings in an appropriate way. Children's ability to regulate their emotions appropriately and those who are aware of the causes of their emotions also have social competence skills (Denham, 2006; Hay et al., 2004; Ogelman, et al., 2021; McDowell & Parke, 2005).

There are studies in the literature indicating that there is a relationship between young children's PST and their social/emotional development and behavioral problems (Akçay & Özcebe, 2012; Cliff et al., 2018; Demir & Yıldırım Şişman, 2021; Eslami Shahrabaki, et al., 2020; Hu et al., 2020; Manganello & Taylor, 2009; Parkes, et al., 2013; Skalická et al., 2019; Swing, et al., 2010; Zimmerman, et al., 2005). The study by Hu et al., (2020) indicated that the PST of young children was negatively associated with their social skills. Additionally, no significant relationship was found between children's PST and their behavioral problems. Eslami Shahrabaki, et al., (2020) reported that time spent viewing television clearly affects the behavioral disorders and aggression dimensions. Cliff et al. (2018) posited that when children ages 4-6 reduced their television viewing time by an average of 9 minutes per day, a significant increase was observed in children's self-regulation skills. Parkes, et al., (2013) argued that watching TV for 3 hours or more daily in the last two years increases conduct problems for children between the ages 5 and 7. In their longitudinal study, Zimmerman et al., (2005) detected a correlation between the duration of TV-watching and later bullying behavior in children. In a similar vein, Manganello and Taylor (2009) concluded that three-year-old children exposed to TV more are at increased risk for exhibiting aggressive behavior.

On the other hand, there are also other contradicting studies indicating that there is a positive or no significant relationship (Güral & Önder 2015) between children's PST and their social skills (Jackson, 2018; Omrak, 2019). Examining the impact of duration of watching TV on social skills of young children, Güral and Önder (2015) expressed that the social skills of children who spend more time watching TV are more than those who spend less time watching TV. In a study conducted by Omrak (2019), no significant relationship was detected between young children's TV time and their emotion regulation skills.

AST and social/emotional development of children

Active screens with access to the Internet improve children's social interaction, nurture relationship-building skills; increase communication, imagination, curiosity, creativity, aspirations; and encourage team play, cooperation, and rise social status (De Decker et al., 2012; Hu et al., 2020; Wong, et al., 2015). There is also abundant evidence in the literature indicating a relationship between active screen use such as tablets and smartphones in early childhood and emotion regulation and negative social behaviors. Cerniglia, et al., (2021) found a negative relationship between the use of digital devices such as smartphones and tablets at 4 years of age and children's emotion regulation skills. Eslami Shahrabaki, et al., (2020) reported that playing with a tablet device more than two hours per day was significantly related to anti-social behaviors, while using a smartphone for more than 2 hours a day was significantly related to anxiety, anti-social behaviors, and behavioral problems. Omrok (2019) claimed that the score of emotion regulation and secure attachment observed decrease when the time of using technological devices increase. Gülay et al., (2018) pointed out that the duration of watching television during the week, the total duration of use of portable computers, and all mobile technologies significantly predicted the social influence level of children among their peers. They also concluded that the duration of children's use of smartphones during the week significantly predicted the social preference levels of children among their peers. There are contradicting studies indicating a negative relationship between emotion regulation and technology use (Elhai et al., 2018; Işık Karaşahin, 2021).



The Aim and the Contribution of the Current Study

The above analysis of the research on screen time of preschool children, we can conclude that only a few studies have examined the relationship between children’s screen time and social/emotional skills. This is one of the main goals of the current study is to contribute to fulfill this research gap. The study provides robust data and evidence-based guidance on the selection and use of the screen time by the experts working in the field (teachers, psychological counselors, and guidance specialists, etc.) and parents. Also note that some reported findings in the literature is contradictory. For example, some research findings contradict with each other on the gender difference on screen times. Somewhat it is an expected contradiction as the studies withdraw results from case-based selected data. Therefore, another contribution of the current study is to provide additional results to the related literature based on a Turkish case data. This may help the literature to expand and may reduce the contradiction level of results on key variables studied.

Motivated by these goals, this research was carried out to determine the relationship between PST and AST of children in early childhood period and their social competence, behavioral problems (aggression, anxiety levels), and emotion regulation skills (emotion regulation, variability/negativity). The contribution of the current research is generated by the following research questions:

- Is there a difference in children’s AST or PST based on age, gender, sibling status and parental education level?
- Is there a relationship between children's screen time (AST or PST) and their social competence skills, behavioral problems (anger-aggression and anxiety-introversion), and emotion regulation skills (emotion regulation and variability/negativity)?

METHOD

Research Model

The relational survey model was employed in the study in which AST and PST of preschool children between 36 and 72 months, along with the relationship between social behavior problems and emotion regulation skills among the children, were investigated. A relational survey model is conducted to identify the relationship between two or more variables (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014).

Study Group

The study group consisted of children aged between 36 and 72 months who attend pre-school institutions in the city of Denizli, Turkey. Demographic data of the study group are provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographics of the study group.

Demographic variable		<i>n</i>	%
Gender	Female	251	49.8
	Male	253	50.2
	Total	504	100.0
Age (Month)	36-48	71	14.1
	48-60	153	30.4
	60- 72	280	55.6
	Total	504	100.0
Education Level of Mother	Primary / Secondary School	83	16.5
	High school	136	27.0
	University	285	56.5
	Total	504	100.0

**Table 1 (Continued).** Demographics of the study group.

Demographic variable		<i>n</i>	%
Education Level of Father	Primary / Secondary School	113	22.4
	High school	130	25.8
	University	261	51.8
	Total	504	100.0
Sibling Status	None	141	28.0
	Yes	363	72.0
	Total	504	100.0

Data Collection Tools

Personal Information Form, the Social Competency and Behavior Evaluation-30 Scale (SCBE-30), Emotion Regulation Scale and Screen time Questionnaire were used in the research.

Personal Information form was specifically developed by the researcher to determine the key demographic data of the participants such as month group, gender, parental education level, etc.

The Social Competency and Behavior Evaluation-30 (SCBE-30) Scale

The scale developed by La Freniere and Dumas (1996) was adapted into Turkish by Çorapçı et al. (2010). It is used to measure emotional and behavioural problems in preschool children and to identify children at risk. The SCBE-30 assesses symptoms related to emotional and behavioural problem like anger-aggression and anxiety-introversion. The children may exhibit these symptoms during the preschool period. The scale has also the capacity to quantify social skills expected to be developed in this period. SCBE-30 has three subscales (Social Competence, Anger-Aggression, and Anxiety-Introversion) with 10-items each. Items 2, 6, 11, 13, 15, 17, 20, 22, 27 and 30 in the Social Competence (SC) subscale measure the positive characteristics of children such as cooperation with their peers and seeking solutions to conflicts. Some of the items in SC subscale are given as follow: “Comforts or helps a child in distress”; “Seeks solutions to conflicts”; and “Works and collaborates with other children in group activities”. Items 3, 4, 5, 10, 16, 18, 24, 25, 28, and 29 in the Anger-Aggression (AA) subscale measure externalizing disorder symptoms such as defying adults’ requests and maladaptive and aggressive behavior in peer relationships. Items in AA subscale are exemplified as follow: “He gets angry when his activity is interrupted”; “He is grumpy, quick to anger and get angry”; and “Hits, bites or kicks other children”. Items 1, 7, 8, 9, 12, 14, 19, 21, 23, and 26 in the Anxiety-Introversion (AI) subscale evaluate children's sad and depressed moods and symptoms of internalizing disorders such as shyness-sensitivity in the group. Some of example items are given as follow: “S(he) is shy; avoids new environments and situations”; “Separated from the group, s(he) remains on his(her) own”; and S(he) is sad, unhappy, or depressed”.

The scale has no reverse scored items in the 6-item Likert-type. The high scores obtained from the scale indicate high anger, high social competence, and high introversion whereas the low scores obtained from the scale indicate low anger, low social competence, and low introversion (Çorapçı et al., 2010). In the study, children were evaluated by their teachers. The Cronbach’s alpha internal consistency coefficients for the sub-dimensions of the scale were .83 (social competence), .76 (anger/aggression) and .72 (anxiety/introversion).

Emotion Regulation Scale (ERS)

The ERS developed by Shields and Cicchetti (1997) was adapted into Turkish by Batum and Yağmurlu (2007). The scale consists of two sub-dimensions, "Emotion Regulation", "Variability-Negativity", which evaluates preschool and school children's emotional states, their regulation and expression of emotions according to environmental conditions. The scale, which can be filled in by the teacher or the family, is a 4-point Likert-type scale and consists of 24 items. The Emotion Regulation sub-dimension of the scale consists of 8 items, including 1, 3, 7, 15, 21, 23, 16R, 18R items. In scoring, the scores of the items marked with R were reversed (1=4, 2=3, 3=2, 4=1). High scores on this sub-dimension indicate high emotion regulation. The lowest score that can be obtained from the



Emotion Regulation sub-dimension is 8 and the highest score is 32 (Batum & Yağmurlu 2007). The following items are given as examples found in ERS: “S(he) might say s(he) is upset, angry, or scared.”; “If his/her peers act aggressively or forcefully interfere with him/her, s(he) appropriately displays the negative emotions (anger, fear, anger, distress) s(he) may feel in these situations.”; and “S(he) puts him(her)self in the shoes of others and understands their feelings; takes care of others when they are sad or distressed.”

The Variability-Negativity Sub-dimension of the Scale consists of 16 items as 2, 4R, 5R, 6, 8, 9R, 10, 11R, 12, 13, 14, 17, 19, 20, 22, 24 items. High scores indicate high level of regulation disorders. In scoring, the items marked ‘R’ are to be reverse scored. The lowest score that can be obtained from the negativity sub-dimension is 16 and the highest score is 64 (Batum & Yağmurlu, 2007). In this study, the Cronbach’s alpha internal consistency coefficient of the Emotion Regulation sub-dimension of the scale was calculated as .61 and the variability/negativity sub-dimension was calculated as .75. Some of the example items are given such as “Mood is very variable (a child’s mood is difficult to predict because s(he) can easily become sad when s(he) is cheerful and happy).”; “Easily frustrated and angry (grumpy, angry).”; and “S(he) is prone to outbursts of anger and tantrums.”

Screen time questionnaire created by the researcher to determine the children’s passive and AST entails two questions. The questionnaire is filled out by the parents to identify the daily average AST and PST. Parents are also pre-informed what is AST and what is PST.

Data Collection

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from Pamukkale University under approval number 68282350/2018/G06.

The research data related to personal information, emotion regulation skills, and screen time of the children were collected from parents via Google Forms. The forms were delivered to the parents by the teachers who participated in the research through various networks (e-mail, social media, etc.). In the study, data on emotional and behavioural problems of children, such as anger-aggression and anxiety-introversion, and the social skills expected to develop in this period were provided by the children’s classroom teachers. Based on their observations, teachers randomly selected 10 children in their classes and filled out SCBE-30.

Data Analysis

The SPSS 22 software program was used to analyse the data. The kurtosis and skewness values of the variables were examined to determine whether the variables had a normal distribution. If the kurtosis and skewness values range between -1.5 and +1.5, the distribution is considered normal (Tabachnick et al., 2007). The kurtosis and skewness coefficients of the variables related to passive screen time, active screen time, SCBE-30, and the sub-dimensions of the Emotion Regulation Scales in the study are presented in Table 2.

Tablo 2. Normality test results

Variables	N	Skewness	Kurtosis
Social competence	504	-.549	-.051
Anger/Aggression	504	.995	1.041
Anxiety/Introversion	504	1.109	1.430
Emotion regulation	504	-.048	-.525
Variability-Negativity	504	.595	1.490
PST	504	.867	.986
AST	504	1.049	.367



The values in Table 2 indicate that the data are normally distributed. For this reason, parametric tests were used for the data analysis. Pearson’s Correlation Coefficient was used to find the relationship between PST and AST and scores obtained from SCBE-30 and Emotion regulation scales.

RESULTS

The findings of the study are presented in Table 3 through Table 5. Table 3 presents descriptive statistics of PST and AST in minutes. Table 4 show PST and ASTs based on gender, age, sibling status and parent’s education level, respectively. Table 5 presents the correlations among PST-AST and children’s social development and emotion regulation skills.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of PST and AST.

Table with 8 columns: PST - Mean, PST - SD, AST - Mean, AST - SD, 36-48 month (Male/Female), 48-60 month (Male/Female), 60-72 month (Male/Female), Total (N=504). Values include means and standard deviations for each category.

It is seen from the Table 3 that the average PSTs of children is 134.2 minutes per day, and the average AST is 86.64 minutes per day. In Table 3, it can be said that the average PST (Mean=154.9min) and AST (Mean=101min) of 60-72 month-old boys is the highest. The high values of standard deviations in the table resemble the variability of the AST and PSTs of the participants. This indicates that the PSTs of some participants in the 60-72 month-old group can reach up to more than 4 hours per day!

In Table 4, which illustrates the differences in children’s PST based on some demographic variables, the PSTs of the participants significantly differ according to their gender (t= -3.394), age (F= 4.071), and education levels of mother (F= 6.210) and father (F= 6.289) (p<.05). According to the findings presented in Table 4 the ASTs of the participants significantly differ by their gender (t= -2.319), sibling status (t= -2.195), and educational levels of mother (F= 9.093) and father (F= 11.325) (p<.05).

Table 5. Correlations among passive-AST and children’s social development and emotion regulation skills

Table with 7 columns (2-7) and 7 rows (1-7). Correlation coefficients are shown between variables: 1.PST, 2.AST, 3.Social competence, 4.Anxiety/Introversion, 5.Anger/Aggression, 6.Emotion regulation, 7.Variability/Negativity.

*p<.05 **p<.01



Table 4. PST and AST based on demographics of children

Variables	Gender	n	PST Mean	SD	Std. Error Difference	t	p	AST Mean	SD	Std. Error Difference	t	p
1	Female	251	121.51	81.481	7.470	-3.394	.001**	78.51	75.432	6.989	-2.319	.021*
2	Male	253	146.86	86.164				94.72	81.385			
Variables	Age (Month)	n	Mean	SD	F	p	Significant Difference	Mean	SD	F	p	Significant Difference
1	36-48	71	125.77	91.880	4.071	.018*	2-3	77.39	85.602	1.243	.289	-
2	48-60	153	120.82	75.962				82.22	75.110			
3	60-72	280	143.71	86.467				91.41	78.947			
	Total	504	134.23	84.737				86.64	78.818			
Variables	Sibling status	n	Mean	SD	Std. Error Difference	t	p	Mean	SD	Std. Error Difference	t	p
1	None	141	129.01	80.939	8.411	-.863	.389	74.89	72.548	7.436	-2.195	.029*
2	Yes	363	136.26	86.190				88.87	81.655			
Variables	Mother's Education Level	n	Mean	SD	F	p	Significant Difference	Mean	SD	F	p	Significant Difference
1	Primary / Secondary School	83	143.55	91.410	6.210	.002**	2-3	107.59	81.594	9.093	.000**	2-3
2	High school	136	152.19	85.029				100.62	89.454			
3	University	285	122.95	80.995				73.87	69.938			
	Total	504	134.23	84.737				86.64	78.818			
Variables	Father's Education Level	n	Mean	SD	F	p	Significant Difference	Mean	SD	F	p	Significant Difference
1	Primary / Secondary School	113	152.24	90.022	6.289	.002**	1-3; 2-3	104,60	90,798	11.325	.000**	1-3;2-3
2	High school	130	143.58	82.015				102,73	77,116			
3	University	261	121.78	81.992				70,85	70,686			
	Total	504	134.23	84.737				86.64	78.818			

*p<.05

**p<.01



According to the findings presented in Table 5, it is seen that there is a positive significant relationship between the PSTs of the participants and Anxiety/Introversion ($r=.109, p<.05$), Anger/Aggression ($r=.130, p<.01$) and Variability/Negativity ($r=.176, p<.05$). Similar findings were obtained with respect to the children's AST. As detailed in Table 5, as the PST and ASTs of the participants increased, the Anxiety/Introversion levels, Anger/Aggression and Variability/Negativity scores of the children increased. Table 5 also demonstrates that there is a significant negative correlation between children's PST/ASTs and their Social Competence ($r=-.123, p<.01$; $r=-.140, p<.01$) and Emotion Regulation skills ($r=-.114, p<.01$). 05; $r=-.190, p<.01$).

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, and RECOMMENDATIONS

Children's demographics and AST/PST

In the updated report by the APA (2016), it is recommended that children aged 2 to 5 should get an hour or less of screen time per day and that quality content should be provided to children during this period. The Australian government limits screen time to no more than one hour per day for children aged 3 to 5 and recommends no screen time for children younger than 2 (Active Healthy Kids Australia, 2014).

The findings of the present study (Table 3) indicated that the PST of 36-72 months old children was 134.2 minutes per day, and the AST was 86.1 minutes. The average daily total screen time of children was 220.3 minutes. Konca's (2021) study revealed that children spent approximately 2 hours for watching TV, little more than an hour for using smartphones, and almost 40 minutes for using tablet computers every day. A study conducted by Hu et al. (2020) in China demonstrated that the PST of young children was 2.16 hours. Merdin (2017) reported that children's television screen time is 100 minutes per day, and 57 minutes for other mobile devices with screen. Although, OFCOM's report (2021) announces that children spend more time using mobile devices compare to watching television, the present study concluded that young children have more PST while watching television. These results are significantly higher than the recommended one hour per day screen time (APA, 2016).

The results of the present study (Table 4) display that boys spend more AST/PST than girls; a similar finding as reported in the literature (Saunders & Vallance, 2017; Trinh, et al., 2021). Some studies in the literature informed that there was no significant gender difference in children's screen time (Akkuş et al., 2015; Hinkley et al., 2012; Hu et al., 2020). According to the existing literature, while the screen time does not differ by gender among young children, there is a difference in favor of boys in older children. The present study revealed differences among young children as well.

In the current study (Table 4), the PST differs significantly according to the age of the children, and the longest PST recorded belongs to the group of 60-72 month-year old children. Although the AST does not differ significantly according to age, the age group accumulating the most AST is the 60-72-month-old group. In their research with young children, Çelik, et al. (2021) illustrated the positive relationship between the child's age and his(her) screen time. In the OFCOM's report (2021), it is stated that many children aged 3-7 watch videos with very different content than television broadcasts, almost all of them use video sharing sites. Less than half of the children aged 5 to 7 play online games. The report also states that the likelihood of having access to appropriate devices increases with the age of the child. In addition to that, use of all devices may lead to an increase in children's screen time. The number of screen-enabled digital devices at home is linked with children's screen time (Işın, 2019). Especially the presence of a television and other devices such as mobile phones and tablets in a child's bedroom may increase this time even more (Işın, 2019; Çelik, et al., 2021). Olgun and Tuğrul (2019) asserted that children engage with the screen at an early age, and the time spent in front of screens increases as they grow.

According to the results of the current research (Table 4), children with siblings have higher rates of than single child, and the PST did not differ significantly. The study also demonstrated that parental education had a significant impact on children's PST and AST (Table 4). Furthermore, it was observed



that the PST and ACT of the children of university graduate parents were lower. Given the relevant literature, it is seen that children's screen time differs by the parental education level (Eslami Shahrabaki, et al., 2020; Işın, 2019; Çelik, et al., 2021; Trinh, et al., 2019) and the number of siblings (Hu et al., 2020) Çelik, et al. (2021) states that screen time of children is increased by the following reasons: low parental educational levels, absence of family rules about screen use, children's ownership of devices with screens, and short of screen use recommendations by the related professionals. Işın (2019) put forward that the length of time spent watching TV (PST) among children with university graduate parents is shorter than children whose parents holding a lower educational degree. In the same study, it was determined that children with university graduate parents spend less AST on smartphones. In their study in Australia, Hesketh et al. (2007) suggested that mother's education level influenced the child's TV time, and as the mother's education level increased, the children's screen time decreased. A study carried out by Lapierre et al. (2012) yielded similar results that children of parents who hold more than high school degree were exposed to less screen time, i.e., 2,5 hours, versus the screen times of other parents' children, i.e., approximately 5 hours per day. According to Barkin et al. (2020), active parental mediation is associated with media exposure behaviors of children aged 2 to 5 years. As a result, it can be argued that as the parent's educational level increases, the parental awareness about the screen increases whereby children spend less time on screen and tend to have a better health.

According to the results of the current research, children with siblings have higher rates than single children, yet their PST did not differ significantly (Table 4). Işın (2019) asserts that the length of time spent watching TV and using smartphones and tablets do not differ according to the number of siblings. However, Hu et al. (2020) found that the PST of young children differs by the number of siblings, i.e., children without siblings spend more PST than children with siblings. One of the most probable reasons for this difference is interactions among siblings. Children in the study group can have an older sibling. Supposing that an older sibling uses phones and tablets such as digital games and social media more, this serves as a role model for the child and might lead to increased AST (Table 4). Previous studies in the literature show that there is a positive relationship between child's screen time and child's home environment (Hu et al., 2018; Jago et al., 2014; Işın, 2019; Sanders et al., 2016; Wong et al., 2020).

AST/PST and social/emotional development of children

The current study (see Table 5) found that the PST and AST of children were negatively correlated with the sub-dimensions (emotion regulation skills and social competence levels) of the SCBE-30 and Emotion Regulation Skills scales. On the other hand, the PST and AST of children were found to be positively correlated with the the sub-dimensions related to negative behaviors (anger/aggression, Introvert/anxiety, and negativity scores) (see Table 5). In view of data obtained, it can be interpreted that the increase in children's screen time (passive or active) has a positive impact on the children's undesirable behaviors.

Several studies in the literature have revealed the relationship between PST of young children and their social/emotional development and behavioral problems. Hu et al. (2020) found a negative relationship between PST and social skills of young children. Parkes, Sweeting, Wight, and Henderson, (2013) claimed that seven-year-old children who watch three or more hours of TV in the last two years were at a greater risk of behavioral problems. They found association among TV exposure, aggressive behavior and bullying. Eslami Shahrabaki et al. (2020) underlined that behavioral disorders and the aggression behaviors of young children were positively associated with the duration of watching TV. Eslami Shahrabaki et al. (2020) also reported that using tablet over two hours every day was significantly related to anti-social behaviors while using a smartphone more than two hours a day was positively related to anti-social behaviors, anxiety, and behavioral problems. Gülay et al. (2018) argued that the duration of watching television during the week, the total duration of use of portable computers and all mobile technologies significantly predicted the social influence



level of children among their peers. The study also revealed that the duration of children's use of smartphones during the week significantly predicted the social preference levels of children among their peers. Cerniglia et al. (2021) found a negative relationship between the use of digital devices like smartphones and tablets at 4 years of age and children's emotion regulation skills. According to the result obtained from Omrok's study (2019), the score of emotion regulation and secure attachment is negatively correlated with the duration of using technological devices. There are other studies report similar results (Elhai et al., 2018; Işık Kardeş, 2021).

Unlike the findings of the present study, other studies in the existing literature detected a positive relationship (Güral & Önder 2015; De Decker et al., 2012; Wong, et al., 2015) or no significant relationship (Hu et al., 2020; Jackson, 2018; Omrak, 2019) between children's passive and AST and their social skills. Examining the effects of TV time on social skill levels of young children, Güral and Önder (2015) found that children who spend more time watching TV demonstrated higher social skills than those who spend less time watching TV. Omrak, (2019) found no significant relationship between TV time of young children and their emotion regulation skills. Hu et al., (2020) pointed out that there was no correlation between AST of Chinese children and their social development and behavioral problems.

Given the relevant studies in the literature, it can be contended that there are different results regarding the relationship between children's screen time and social development, and between children's screen time and their emotion regulation skills in early childhood. Further, a few studies focused on the relationship between children's screen time and their emotion regulation skills. Emotion regulation skills in children have an essential role in their development (Cohodes, et al., 2021). Emotion regulation skills, which refer to children's ability to focus attention, organize themselves for a purpose, and regulate their difficult and intense emotions, have an impact on many areas of children's development, such as creativity, academic success, social competence, and sports participation (Bayındır, et al., 2018; Demirci, et al., 2020; Gülay Ogelman, et al., 2021; Köse, 2019; Yılmaz & Akcan, 2021). Additionally, disorders related to emotion regulation are associated with multiple problems such as behavioral disorders, aggression, anxiety, and mood swings (Ersan & Tok, 2019). Omrak (2019) found no relationship between the children's time of watching TV alone and emotion regulation skills, and the children's total screen time was found to be inversely proportional to their emotion regulation skills. It was also stated that children with poor emotion regulation skills might apply to technological tools to regulate their emotions (Omrak, 2019). Cerniglia, et al. (2021) emphasized that there was a negative relationship between the use of digital devices such as smartphones and tablets at 4 years of age and children's emotion regulation skills. Very few studies have shown that children's AST is negatively associated with their emotion regulation skills. The present study revealed that both AST and PST are correlated with children's emotion regulation skills negatively and significantly. This outcome can be emanated from the content that children are exposed to during their PST. APA (2016) stresses the importance of the quality of children's media.

It can be contended that the positive relationship between children's screen time and social competence levels, which was obtained in previous studies in the literature, can be related to the media content that children engage in while viewing. Young children exposed to media with a violence content can learn and normalize those unwanted behaviors through observation. Exposure to violent games, television programs, etc. may lead to aggressive behaviors in children (Demir & Yıldırım Şişman, 2021; Huesmann et al., 2003; Manganello & Taylor, 2009; Morgan, 2020; Saleem, et al., 2012; Yaşar & Paksoy, 2011). In addition, exposure to media with prosocial content increases children's aggressive cognition and aggression-related variables whereas children's social competency skills may increase (Coyne et al., 2018; Liu et al., 2015; McHarg & Hughes, 2021).



Conclusions

As discussed in the previous section, the key conclusions can be expressed as follows. Supporting the findings reported in the related literature, the present study revealed that the average daily total screen time of children is much greater than the recommended screen times. In addition, boys spend more active/passive screen time than girls. Similarly, children with siblings have higher active screen times than the single child, though passive screen times did not differ significantly. The study also demonstrated that parental education had a significant impact on children's passive and active screen times. It was observed that the children of university graduated parents have the lowest passive and active screen times as compared to other children in the study group. Thus, it can be argued that as the level of the parent's education level increases, parental awareness of the screen increases, so their children spend less time watching screens and tend to have better health.

Further findings suggest that the increase in children's active screen time (AST) and passive screen time (PST) were negatively correlated with the emotion regulation skills and social competence levels. On the other hand, the PST and AST of children were found to be positively correlated with the negative behaviors such as anger/aggression, introvert/anxiety, and negativity scores. It can also be interpreted that the increase in children's screen time (passive or active) has a positive impact on the children's undesirable behaviors.

Recommendations

Recommendations can be stated under two categories. One for caregivers and the other for researchers. The recommendations are mainly around the key findings reported in the conclusion sections.

The main problem is the total screen time to which the children exposed. Therefore, the caregiver should find innovative and better approaches to minimize the screen time of the children under their responsibility. The parents or caregiver can create such fulfilling environment for the child that the child does not prefer to use devices with screens. This requires sincere effort by the adults as they are also under the influence of devices with screens like mobile phones. Physical games, boxed games, art events etc. may help. The adult caregivers may get benefit from online training and reading relevant books etc. to become more innovative. As the findings indicated, a single child is likely to spend more time with screen integrated devices, the care givers of that children can create an environment where the friends are present. The outdoor activities are always helpful for all children to stay away from screens. Besides the individual efforts of the children's care givers, preschools and civil society organizations have the potential to bring together the efforts to reduce screen times of children through collaboration and various types of events. In order to control and reduce the children's screen times, software-based tools can be researched and be used in devices of the children.

There are some recommendations for the researchers mostly based on the limitations of the current study. The study can be expanded to consider both central and rural areas across different cities to understand the potential differences. The independent variables used in the study are limited to the child's gender, age, sibling status, and parental education level. It is important to note, however, that there are other factors that influence screen time in children. It would be useful to investigate the effects of different variables such as the socio-economic status of the family, the place of residence, the number of screen-enabled devices at home, the age of first screen exposure, parents' use of screens, and digital parenting awareness levels on children's screen time. Further studies may focus on the content that children are exposed to during passive and active screen times. Conducting research with multiple data collection tools, such as observation and interviews, and using qualitative and/or mixed models can provide more in-depth information about the topic. Longitudinal studies can be performed to determine the effects of passive and active screen times on children in the 'age of screens'.



Limitations

This research is limited to 504 children attending preschools in the center of the city of Denizli in Turkey. The independent variables used in the study are limited to the child's gender, age, sibling status, and parental education level. Another limitation of this study is that children's social activities and emotion regulation skills were only associated with their passive and active screen times. In the study, the SCBE-30 was used to identify the social competence levels of the children. Additionally, the emotion regulation skills scale was employed to determine the children's emotion regulation skills, and lastly, parents were called on to estimate the active and passive screen times of their children. This study is cross-sectional. Therefore, it is not possible to conclude that behavioral problems and low levels of emotion regulation skills are solely due to screen time. There is a probability that children with behavioral problems and low emotion regulation skills are inclined to watch screens.

Ethics and Conflict of Interest

This study was presented as an oral presentation at the 3rd Educational Research Congress held in Istanbul on October 14-15, 2022. Ethical approval for this study was obtained from Pamukkale University under approval number 68282350/2018/G06.

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TIJSEG



UNRAVELLING THE NEXUS: EXTRACURRICULAR INVOLVEMENT, ENGAGEMENT FREQUENCY, AND CGPA AMONG AL AKHAWAYN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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Abstract

This study investigated the link between extracurricular involvement, engagement frequency, and academic performance in 4,092 undergraduates at Al Akhawayn University. Utilizing SPSS 28, a variety of statistical techniques, including the Kruskal-Wallis test, quantile regression, and two-way ANOVA, were employed. Meaningful differences in CGPA based on club types were found, with Educational and Cultural clubs linked to higher GPAs. Gender disparities in participation and leadership were also noted, highlighting the need for promoting equity in academia.

Keywords: Extracurricular involvement, engagement frequency, academic performance, gender disparity, gender-smart initiatives.

INTRODUCTION

Extracurricular activities (ECAs) have a pivotal role in academic success in universities across the globe. Frequently, student-driven, and often, faculty-supported, these activities provide a unique learning environment which transcends the classroom dynamics. Solid evidence suggests that ECAs are among the most important factors which can directly complement formal education through real-world experiences and indirectly boost student well-being, leading to higher motivation, satisfaction, and retention, categorically improving academic achievement (Abizada et al., 2020; Chan, 2016; Che Hashim & Ahmad, 2019; Eccles et al., 2003; Hunt, 2005; Kanar & Bouckenoghe, 2021; Lau et al., 2014; Mansi, 2023; Xu & Hu, 2024). Recently, there has been renewed interest in Extracurricular activities (ECAs). Existing research incontestably recognizes the critical role played by ECAs in improving academic performance, fostering personal Growth, yielding greater well-being and reduced stress, and climatically refining future career readiness skills (Gutierrez et al., 2024; Xu & Hu, 2024). To this end, the current study is a humble attempt to investigate the crucial role of ECAs in Moroccan higher education. Markedly, it aims at providing practical insights for students, educators, and decision-makers on ways to promote and support these student-driven, and often, faculty-supported, activities. Finally, yet importantly, the study explores the differential effects of various ECAs on academic performance (CGPA).



Literature Review

Previous research overwhelmingly supports the diverse benefits of extracurricular participation for university students, ranging from leadership skills and self-concept to improved academic performance (Griffiths et al., 2021). The following literature review sub-sections scrutinise the impact of ECAs, and lay emphasis on how different types and levels of involvement influence student outcomes.

Extracurricular Activities and Academic Performance

To start with, the fact that extracurricular activities (ECAs) play a critical role in shaping student outcomes has long been acknowledged in educational research. ECAs provide students with a platform that enables them to develop key soft skills and achieve personal growth which the formal academic curriculum cannot suffice to obtain. As a result, this can complement and enhance academic performance (Astin, 1999; Eccles et al., 2003). According to Abizada et al. (2020), participation in ECAs substantially advances student motivation and engagement, which in turn indirectly boosts academic success by means of improved well-being and satisfaction.

Studies on specific types of extracurricular involvement assert that structured activities, such as academic clubs, sports, and arts, leads to the most positive outcomes for students (Pol & Prakash, 2023). Defined as those with clear objectives and adult supervision, structured activities foster crucial qualities like discipline, teamwork, and time management. Precisely, all of these contribute to improved academic performance (Svensson et al., 2022). On the contrary, unstructured activities, such as casual socializing, have been found to have limited academic benefits and might even detract from academic focus (Griffiths et al., 2021).

Types of Clubs and Student Outcomes

Essentially, students' academic performance is greatly impacted by the type of club they participate in. Research shows that participation in educational and cultural clubs is positively correlated with higher academic performance, particularly in terms of GPA (Chan, 2016; Hunt, 2005). In particular, these types of clubs often foster intellectual development and critical thinking, which subsequently translates into better academic attainment (Mansi, 2023).

In contrast, participation in recreational and sports clubs presents a more complex picture. Whereas recreational activities offer relaxation and stress relief, excessive participation has been linked to lower academic performance (Mayhew et al., 2016). Likewise, while sports may enhance self-discipline and emotional development, as Nakazawa (2014) points out, their effects on academic achievement are less reliable and frequently contingent upon the level of participation.

Intensity of Involvement in Extracurricular Activities

It has been demonstrated that the duration and frequency of participation in ECAs, which indicate the degree of involvement, have a complex impact on academic results. According to Astin's (1999) Involvement Theory, the more students devote physical and psychological energy to academic experience, the more effect will be on their development and growth. Precisely, this energy is what defines the level of involvement both quantitatively and qualitatively, making growth and learning directly proportional to their success (Astin, 1999). Interestingly, moderate involvement in extracurricular activities is often linked to higher academic performance, as students are able to balance their academic and non-academic commitments effectively (Zacherman & Foubert, 2014). However, excessive involvement—spending over 30 hours per week on ECAs—has been shown to detract from academic duties, particularly for male students (Zacherman & Foubert, 2014).

Similarly, Hyatt (2011) found that excessive involvement in social or recreational activities correlates with lower GPAs, whereas Foreman and Retallick (2012) noted that moderate engagement in leadership and educational clubs fosters better leadership skills and academic outcomes. Thus, the



balance of time and commitment to ECAs is a critical factor in concluding their effect on student success.

Gender Differences in Extracurricular Participation and Leadership

Research constantly showed gender disparities in not only participation rates, but also in leadership roles within ECAs. Eventually, females participate in extracurricular activities at a higher rate than men, but the latter are more likely to hold leadership roles. (Jones et al., 2021). In particular, leadership roles in clubs, such as presidents or vice-presidents, are often dominated by male students, which can impact the opportunities for personal and academic growth that female students experience (Choudhury & Singh, 2023).

This gender disparity extends to academic outcomes as well. Studies suggest that female students typically achieve higher academic performance (as measured by GPA) than their male counterparts, despite engaging in fewer leadership roles (Smith et al., 2021). This aligns with findings that females tend to prioritize academic clubs, which are more closely associated with higher academic performance (Griffiths et al., 2021). However, as (Nakazawa, 2014) points out, males may benefit from leadership experiences in sports or recreational clubs, which help develop soft skills but may not have a direct impact on academic performance.

Interaction of Club Type and Engagement Frequency and its impact on Academic Performance

While both club type and engagement frequency independently influence academic outcomes, the interaction between these variables needs more scrutiny. Some studies suggest that participation in certain types of clubs, like academic or cultural organizations, can increase the benefits of frequent engagement (Gutierrez et al., 2024). Nonetheless, other studies indicate that the frequency of engagement in non-academic clubs (e.g., recreational or social clubs) does not substantially boost academic performance and might, in fact, lead to tapered outcomes if participation becomes too time-consuming (Leksuwanakun et al., 2023).

The current literature is divided on the extent to which engagement frequency interacts with club type to influence academic success. Some studies highlight the potential for over-engagement in social clubs to negatively affect academic outcomes (Hossan et al., 2019), whereas others draw attention to the advantages of high engagement in educational clubs, which fosters academic discipline and personal growth (Subhadrammal et al., 2010).

The literature evidently backs up the idea that extracurricular activities have a significant impact on how well students succeed academically and develop their leadership. Nevertheless, the relationship between specific types of club participation, engagement frequency, and academic success remains complex and multifaceted. While educational and cultural clubs have been shown to significantly enhance academic performance, recreational activities might have a more limited or even negative impact when over-engaged. Furthermore, gender disparities in participation and leadership roles further complicate the relationship between ECAs and student outcomes. Future research should continue to explore these nuanced interactions to provide a clearer understanding of how extracurricular involvement can be optimized for student success.

METHOD

Research Objectives

To address the limited research on extracurricular activities in Moroccan universities, this study is geared towards achieving four objectives:

- (1) To investigate the relationship between the type of club participation (e.g., academic, sports, arts) and the academic performance (CGPA) of undergraduate students in Moroccan universities.



- (2) To examine the influence of the frequency of engagement in student activities on the academic performance (CGPA) of undergraduate students at Moroccan universities.
- (3) To explore any potential interaction effect between the type of club participation and the frequency of engagement on the academic performance (CGPA) of undergraduate students in Morocco. This objective aims to understand if the impact of one factor (club type) depends on the other factor (engagement frequency).
- (4) To determine how gender (male/female) influences participation in extracurricular activities, leadership roles within clubs, and overall CGPA among undergraduate students in Moroccan universities. This objective seeks to understand potential gender differences in these areas.

Research Questions

In line, this research explores the complex interplay between extracurricular involvement and academic performance in undergraduate students. Thus, three central research questions guide the investigation. The first question examines whether the type of club participation (humanitarian, educational, cultural, recreational, arts, and sports) exerts a significant influence on a student's CGPA. The second question delves into the independent effect of engagement frequency within a club (1-35) on academic performance. Most importantly, the third question explores the presence of an interaction effect. In simpler terms, this question investigates whether the impact of belonging to a specific club type on a student's CGPA is contingent upon the level of their participation within that club.

This research sought to answer the following questions:

- Research Question 1: Does the type of club participation have a significant effect on the academic performance (CGPA) of undergraduate students?
- Research Question 2: Does the frequency of engagement in student activities have a significant effect on the academic performance (CGPA) of undergraduate students?
- Research Question 3: Is there a significant interaction effect between the type of club participation and the frequency of engagement on the academic performance (CGPA) of undergraduate students?
- Research Question 4: How does gender influence participation, leadership roles in clubs, and overall CGPA?

Data Collection & Analysis

To tackle the research questions, this study employed a quantitative approach to investigate the relationship between club participation, engagement frequency, and academic performance (CGPA) in 4,092 undergraduate students (1,636 males, 2,456 females) at Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane, Morocco (2010-2023). Data was collected through a survey on club type, engagement frequency, and CGPA points. The research aimed to determine if there are significant differences in CGPA between students involved in various club types, if engagement frequency within a specific club type impacted CGPA, and whether the influence of club participation on CGPA varied depending on the level of engagement and the parameter of gender. The data was analysed using SPSS 28, employing a range of statistical tests. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the data. The Kruskal-Wallis test was applied because the assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variance were violated for the variables of engagement frequency and club participation. Tukey's HSD and means plots were utilized for post-hoc analysis. Quantile regression provided insights into the relationship between predictor variables and the CGPA distribution. A two-way ANOVA on ranked CGPA data helped examine the interaction effects. Estimated marginal means of ranked CGPA were calculated for a deeper understanding of the results. Crosstabulation and Chi-Square tests were conducted to explore relationships between categorical variables. The independent samples t-test and effect size calculations were performed to compare CGPA points across different groups.



Limitations

As this study brings insightful ideas about the relationship between club participation, involvement frequency, and academic performance, the findings of this study have to be seen in light of some limitations.

First, the present research is based on self-assessment data that have been collected from students through an online survey. This fact may present a certain bias that affects the accuracy of the responses obtained. Besides, this can be a result of the respondents' intention to answer the survey questions untruthfully or imprecisely. In addition to this, this study utilized non-parametric tests like Kruskal-Wallis test as a result of violations of normality and homogeneity of variance. This matter may weaken the robustness of the results when compared to parametric alternatives. The third limitation concerns the lack of tackling socio-economic factors, such as the family background and financial status, that can affect the academic achievement. Finally, the cross-sectional nature of our research limits the evidence it brings to infer causal relationship. In spite of the fact that this study has explored the linkage between the clubs participation and CGPA, a longitudinal approach would be more prolific to assert whether the clubs participation impacts the academic performance over time. These limitations should be considered when interpreting the results of this study.

RESULTS

Demographic Information

As shown in Figure 1, 60.02% of participants identified as male and 39.98% of participants identified as female.

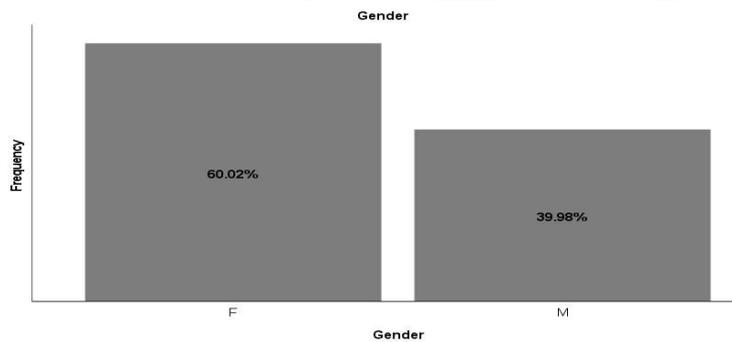


Figure 1. Gender Representation.

Club Type Involvement

Figure 2 shows the percentage of students involved in five different clubs (Humanitarian, Cultural, Educational, Recreational, and Sports). Educational clubs are the most popular (30.77%), followed closely by Humanitarian clubs (30.35%). Cultural clubs hold the third position (19.67%), while Recreational and Sports clubs come in fourth (15.57%) and fifth (3.64%) respectively.

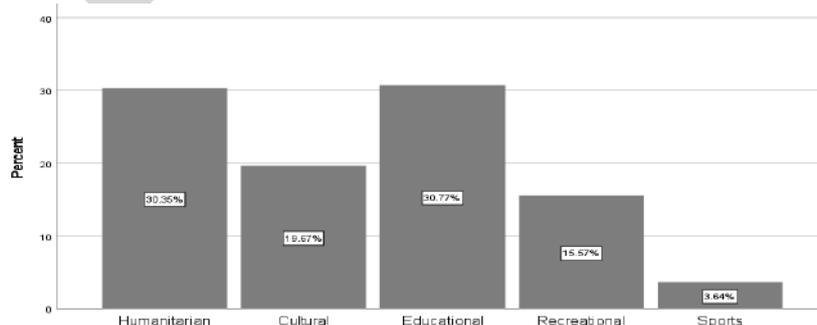


Figure 2. Club Type Involvement

The Figure 2 provides a summary of how many students are involved in each type of club, which helps to understand the distribution of the sample used in the analysis. The high involvement in Educational and Humanitarian clubs might reflect a student body that values intellectual development and social responsibility. The popularity of these clubs could also be influenced by factors like specific programs offered or the perceived benefits of participation (e.g., college applications, leadership skills). The lower involvement in Sports and Recreational clubs could be due to various reasons, such as scheduling conflicts, or a preference for other forms of leisure activities.

Engagement Frequency

Table 1 summarizes the number of clubs that students participate in (Engagement Frequency). The data includes information for 4,092 students (N). Engagement frequency ranges widely, from a minimum of 1 to a maximum of 35. On average, students participate in 3.27 clubs (Mean), but there is a substantial spread around this value (Std. Deviation = 3.389). This suggests some students are minimally involved (1 engagement), while others are highly engaged (up to 35 engagements).

Table 1. Engagement frequency.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Engagement Frequency (number of clubs involved in)	4092	1	35	3.27	3.389
Valid N (listwise)	4092				

Understanding this variability is important for club management. This helps devise context-bound strategies to reach students with different engagement levels and encourage participation from those with minimal involvement and supporting highly involved students to avoid burnout.

Participation in Clubs

Figure 3 depicts the frequency of students holding various roles within clubs. The bar chart lists various roles that students can hold in clubs, including "Active Member," "President," "Co-President," "Vice President," "Secretary," "Treasurer," and many others. "Active Member" is the most common role, with a frequency of 3,406 students. The other roles have significantly lower frequencies, ranging from 1 to 138 students.

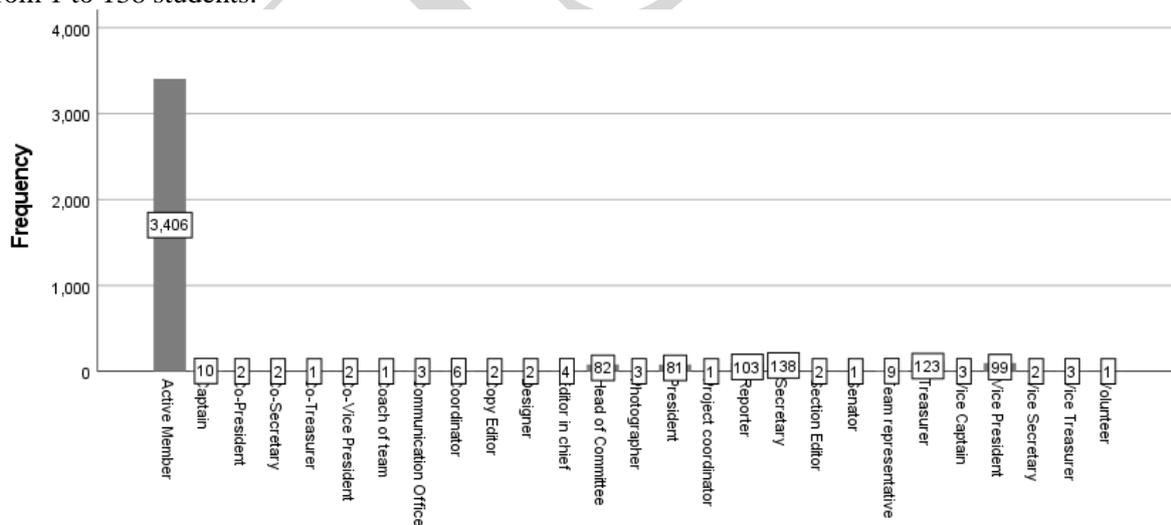


Figure 3. Participation in clubs.

Examples include "Project Coordinator" (1 student), "Head of Committee" (82 students), and "Team Representative" (9 students). The overwhelming majority of students are "Active Members," with 3,406 out of 4,092 students (about 83%) holding this role. This indicates that most students participate in clubs without taking on specific leadership or specialized roles. A smaller number of students take



on leadership or specialized roles. For example, there are 138 "Secretary" roles, 123 "Treasurer" roles, and 103 "Reporter" roles.

Leading Status

Figure 4 displays the distribution of students between leadership roles and regular membership roles within clubs.

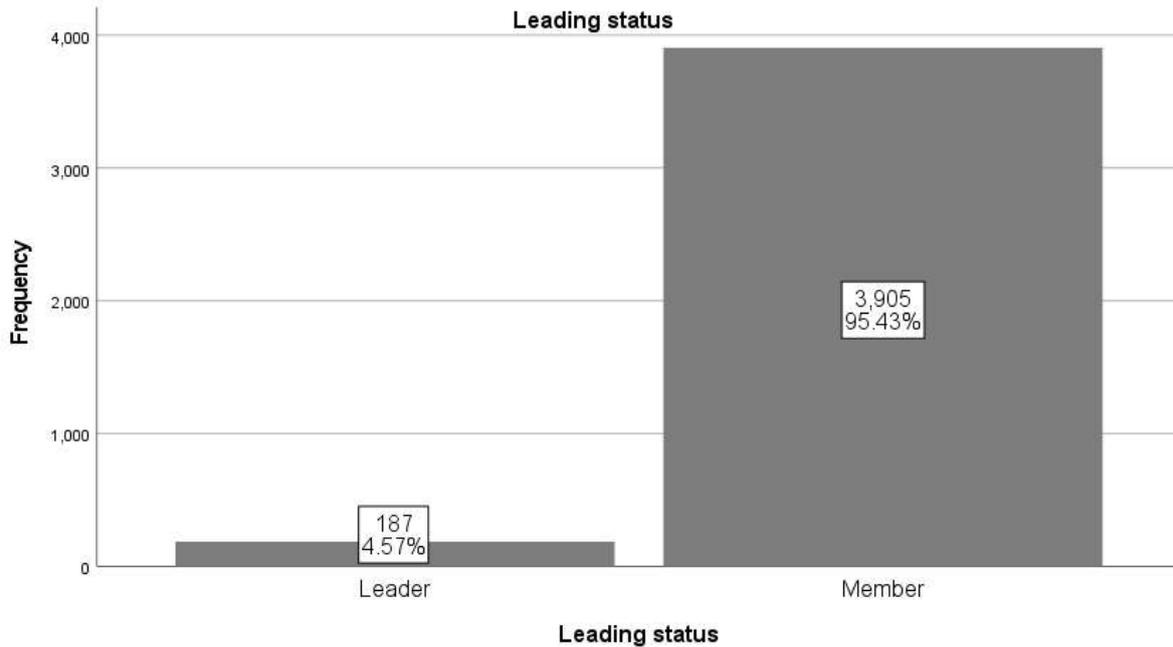


Figure 4. Leading Status.

The "Leader" category has a frequency of 187 students. The "Member" category has a frequency of 3,905 students. Most students (3,905 out of 4,092) are categorized as Members. This indicates that most students participate in clubs without holding leadership positions. Members constitute approximately 95.4% of the total student population involved in clubs. A small number of students (187) hold leadership roles within clubs. This accounts for about 4.6% of the total student population involved in clubs. This relatively low number suggests that leadership positions are limited and possibly more competitive or demanding.

CGPA

Table 2 provides descriptive statistics for the CGPA of 4,092 students, showing a minimum CGPA of 1.06 and a maximum of 4.00. The average CGPA is 3.1702, indicating overall good academic performance, with the mean being above the midpoint of the CGPA scale. The standard deviation of 0.52073 suggests moderate variability in the CGPA scores, meaning most students' CGPAs are close to the mean, but there are some who perform significantly better or worse.

Table 2. Participants' CGPA

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
CGPA points	4092	1.06	4.00	3.1702	.52073
Valid N (listwise)	4092				

As depicted, the range of CGPAs from 1.06 to 4.00 highlights a wide diversity in student academic achievements and raises various important questions.



Involvement and Club Types in Relation to Academic Performance

Table 3 shows the differences in mean ranks and suggests that there might be a significant effect of club type on CGPA. Students participating in educational and cultural clubs tend to have higher CGPA points, while those in recreational clubs tend to have lower CGPA points.

Table 3. Ranks of CGPA Points and Club Type

	Club type	N	Mean Rank
CGPA points	Humanitarian	1242	1930.81
	Cultural	805	2139.18
	Educational	1259	2186.91
	Recreational	637	1890.07
	Sports	149	1992.48
	Total	4092	

Based on this, a Kruskal-Wallis H test is necessary to assess statistical significance. Table 4 contains the results of the Kruskal-Wallis H test, which allows us to determine whether there are statistically significant differences in CGPA points based on club type.

Table 4. Kruskal-Wallis H test statistics

Test Statistics ^{a,b}		CGPA points
Kruskal-Wallis H		46.129
df		4
Asymp. Sig.		<.001

Note. a. Kruskal Wallis Test. b. Grouping Variable: Club type

In line, the p-value ($p < .001$) is less than the commonly used significance level (e.g., .05). This indicates that there are statistically significant differences in CGPA points among the different club types. Since the Kruskal-Wallis test is significant, we can conclude that the type of club participation has a significant effect on the academic performance (CGPA) of undergraduate students. The Kruskal-Wallis H test shows that there is a significant effect of club type on CGPA points among undergraduate students ($H = 46.129, df = 4, p < .001$). Specifically, Educational clubs have the highest mean rank, indicating that students in these clubs tend to have higher CGPA points. Recreational clubs have the lowest mean rank, indicating that students in these clubs tend to have lower CGPA points. Other club types (Humanitarian, Cultural, Sports) fall in between. To crosscheck things out, the Tukey HSD test is performed to control for Type I error across multiple pairwise comparisons (Table 5).

Table 5. CGPA points: Tukey HSD

Club type	N	Subset for alpha = 0.05		
		1	2	3
Recreational	637	3.0968		
Humanitarian	1242	3.1213	3.1213	
Sports	149	3.1664	3.1664	3.1664
Cultural	805		3.2058	3.2058
Educational	1259			3.2332
Sig.		.259	.104	.300

In turn, the Tukey HSD test results for CGPA points among different club types show that Recreational clubs (3.0968) have significantly lower mean CGPAs compared to Cultural (3.2058) and Educational clubs (3.2332). Humanitarian clubs (3.1213) overlap with Recreational and Cultural clubs, and Sports clubs (3.1664) show no significant differences with other club types. Cultural and Educational clubs have the highest mean CGPAs, but the difference between them is not statistically



significant. Figure 5, a means plot, visually confirms the Kruskal Wallis H Test results, showing that there are differences in mean CGPA points among the different club types.

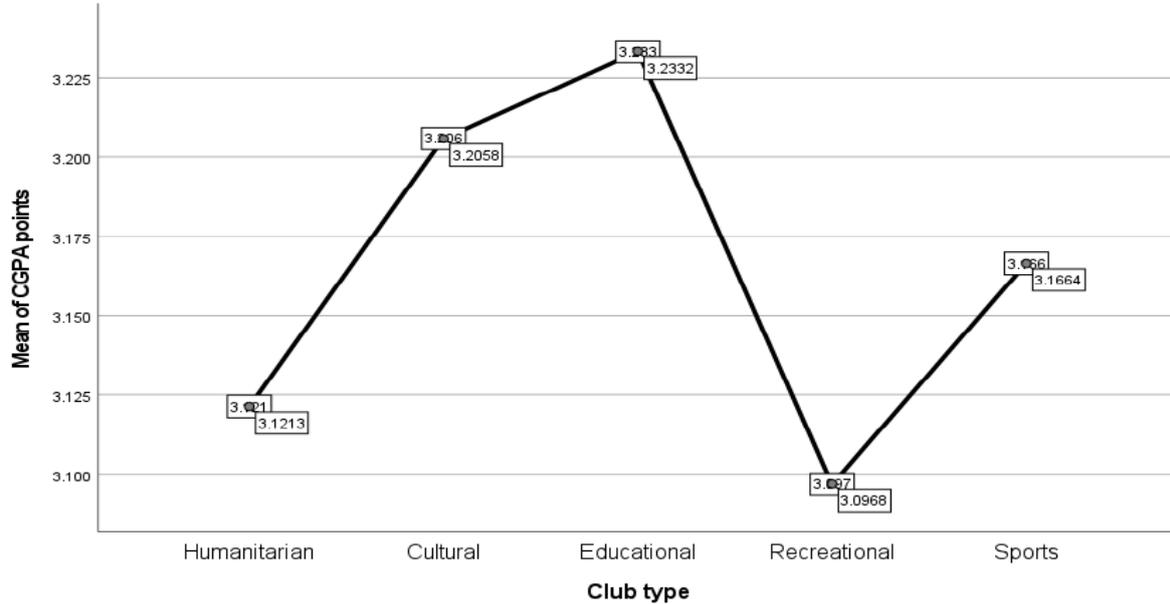


Figure 5. Means Plot

Succinctly, students in Educational clubs tend to perform better academically, while those in Recreational clubs tend to have lower academic performance. The differences between certain club types are statistically significant as indicated by the previous analyses.

The Level of Involvement in Student Activities and Academic Performance

Considering the nature of data (violations of normality and homogeneity assumptions of two main variables), a robust regression technique, known as Quantile Regression, was used to address the second question. It does not require assumptions about the distribution of the residuals or the homogeneity of variance and can handle skewed or heteroscedastic data well. Table 6 shows the results of a statistical model that examined the relationship between engagement frequency (number of involvement times) and CGPA points as a measure of academic performance.

Table 6. Quantile Regression

Model Quality (q=0.5) ^{a,b,c}	
Pseudo R Squared	.007
Mean Absolute Error (MAE)	.4143

Note. a. Dependent Variable: CGPA points

b. Model: (Intercept), Engagement Frequency (number of clubs involved in)

c. Method: Interior Point non-linear optimization

As shown above, the model’s Pseudo R-squared of .007 suggests that the model explains very little of the variance in CGPA points. In other words, there is very weak evidence to indicate that engagement frequency has a significant effect on a student’s CGPA. Largely, the analysis suggests that there is no statistically significant relationship between frequency of involvement (number of times, ranging from 1 to 35) in extracurricular activities and academic performance (CGPA) for undergraduate students.



The Interaction Effect between Type of Club Participation and Frequency of Engagement on the Academic Performance

Table 7 shows the results of a two-way ANOVA on the ranked CGPA data, focusing on the effects of club type and frequency of engagement on academic performance.

Table 7. Two-way ANOVA on the Ranked CGPA Data

Table with 7 columns: Source, Type III Sum of Squares, df, Mean Square, F, Sig., Partial Eta Squared. Rows include Corrected Model, Intercept, REngagem, RClubtype, Error, Total, and Corrected Total.

Note. a. R Squared = .019 (Adjusted R Squared = .010)

In line, there is a significant main effect of club type on CGPA ranks (p < .001, Partial Eta Squared = .011), indicating that different types of club participation influence academic performance. However, the frequency of engagement does not have a significant effect on CGPA ranks (p = .448, Partial Eta Squared = .007).

Table 8. Tukey HSD Test for Rank of CGPA Points by Club Type

Table with 5 columns: Rank of Club type by Students, N, 1, 2, 3. Rows include numerical values for ranks and a Sig. row.

The Tukey HSD test for CGPA ranks shows that Recreational (1890.07) and Humanitarian (1930.81) clubs form a homogeneous subset with no significant difference (Sig. = .687). Humanitarian and Sports (1992.48) clubs also form a subset with no significant difference (Sig. = .061). Sports, Cultural (2139.18), and Educational (2186.91) clubs form another subset with no significant differences (Sig. = .095).

The graph suggests that there is no significant interaction effect between the type of club participation and the frequency of engagement on CGPA. Lines for the different club types (academic, social, or recreational) are roughly parallel. This means that the effect of engagement frequency on CGPA is similar regardless of the type of club a student participates in.

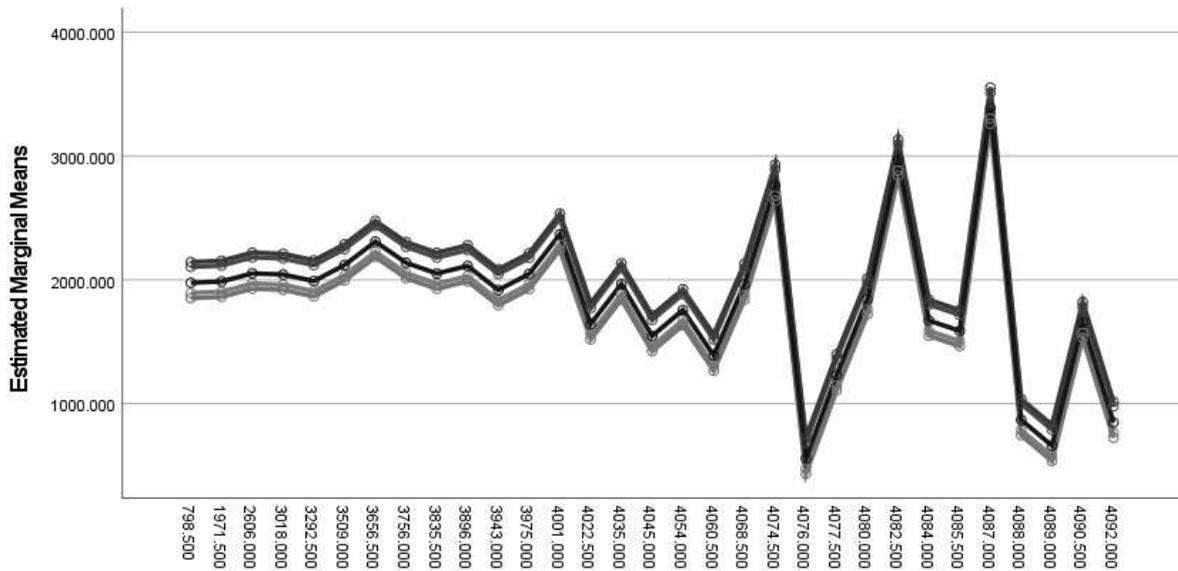


Figure 6. The Estimated Marginal Means of Rank of CGPA

Gender and Participation, Leadership Status, and Overall CGPA

Nature of Participation in Clubs and Gender.

Figure 7 shows the distribution of different participation roles in clubs broken down by gender.

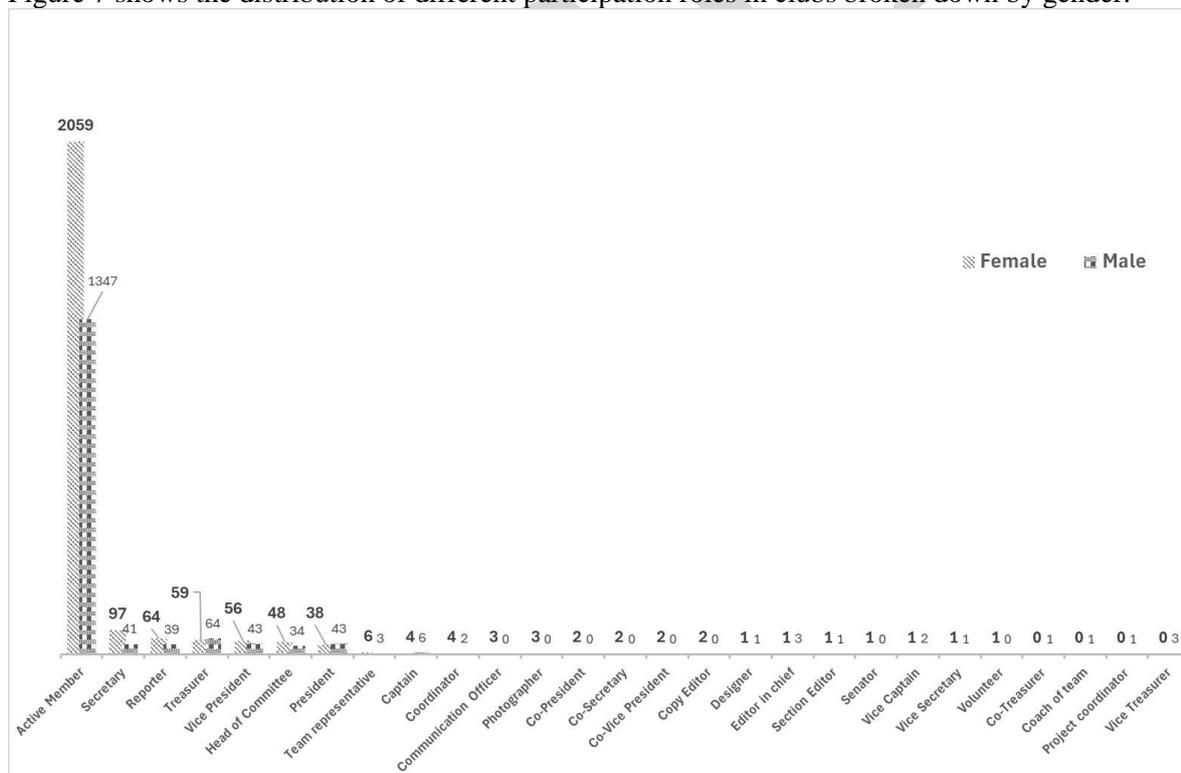


Figure 7. Distribution of different participation roles across gender



Figure 7 presents the distribution of participation roles in clubs by gender, revealing key insights. While females show a higher overall participation rate (2059 as active members), males dominate leadership positions (43 as presidents). The data also highlights roles with minimal participation, indicating areas needing increased engagement. Table 9 further analyses this by providing statistical evidence to determine if there is a significant association between gender and participation roles in clubs.

Table 9. Chi-Square tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	45.132	26	.011
Likelihood Ratio	52.639	26	.002
N of Valid Cases	4092		

With reference to Table 9, the Chi-Square tests suggest that there is a significant relationship between gender and the various participation roles within clubs. Both the Pearson Chi-Square and the Likelihood Ratio tests yield p-values less than .05, supporting this conclusion.

Nature of Leading Status in Clubs and Gender.

Table 10 shows the distribution of gender across different leading statuses (Leader vs. Member) within clubs.

Table 10. Gender Leading status Crosstabulation

		Leading status		Total
		Leader	Member	
Gender	F	97	2359	2456
	M	90	1546	1636
Total		187	3905	4092

Interestingly, the crosstabulation reveals that while females form a larger part of clubs' total membership (2359), males have a slightly higher proportion of leadership roles relative to their total number (1546). Specifically, 5.50% of females (97) are leaders compared to 3.95% of males (90). This suggests a gender disparity in leadership within clubs, with females being more likely to hold leadership positions than males. Table 11 provides statistical analysis to determine if there is a significant association between gender and leading status within clubs.

Table 11. Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	5.421	1	.020		
Continuity Correction	5.071	1	.024		
Likelihood Ratio	5.330	1	.021		
Fisher's Exact Test				.022	.013
N of Valid Cases	4092				

The Chi-Square tests consistently indicate a significant association between gender and leading status within the organization. Both the Pearson Chi-Square and the Likelihood Ratio tests yield p-values below .05, as does Fisher's Exact Test, confirming the relationship. The continuity correction also supports this result. These results, combined, suggest that gender is significantly related to whether an individual is a leader or a member, with females being slightly more likely to hold leadership positions compared to males.



Gender and CGPA.

Table 12 shows the distribution of CGPA points across gender categories (F for female and M for male). It reveals a statistically significant difference; Females (Mean = 3.2408, SD = 0.49949) tend to have a higher CGPA compared to males (Mean = 3.0642, SD = 0.53397).

Table 12. CGPA Statistics

Table with 6 columns: Gender, N, Mean, Std. Deviation, Std. Error Mean. Rows for CGPA points (F and M).

As indicated, the difference in means, coupled with the narrow standard error, suggests a reliable variation between the groups. This result underscores potential gender-based disparities in academic performance, warranting further exploration into underlying factors influencing CGPA outcomes.

Table 13. The Independent Samples T-Test

Table with 5 columns: CGPA points, Equal variances assumed/not assumed, Levene's Test for Equality of Variances (F, Sig.), t-test for Equality of Means (t, df), Significance (One-Sided p, Two-Sided p), Mean Difference, Std. Error Difference, 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference (Lower, Upper).

Thus, the results persist even when assuming unequal variances (t = 10.634, df = 3340.591, p < .001), reaffirming the robustness of the gender-based disparity in academic performance. Relating to this, Table 14 shows the effect sizes for CGPA points between genders are indicative of a moderate to large difference.

Table 14. The Effect Sizes for CGPA Points

Table with 5 columns: CGPA points, Standardizer, Point Estimate, 95% Confidence Interval (Lower, Upper). Rows for Cohen's d, Hedges' correction, Glass's delta.



These effect sizes underscore the practical significance of the observed difference in CGPA points between male and female students, suggesting a meaningful gender gap in academic achievement.

DISCUSSION and CONCLUSIONS

It is primordial to note that the study results are discussed in line with the research questions respectively. Each question is addressed individually. This approach helps achieve a thorough examination of each research question.

The Effect of Club Participation on the Academic Performance (CGPA)

To address the question whether the type of club participation significantly affects the academic performance (CGPA) of undergraduate students, the analysis reveals several key points. Table 3 indicates that students in Educational and Cultural clubs tend to have higher CGPAs, while those in Recreational clubs tend to have lower CGPAs. The Kruskal-Wallis H test (Table 4) confirms these differences are statistically significant ($H = 46.129$, $df = 4$, $p < 0.001$), implying that the type of club participation does have a significant effect on CGPA. The Tukey HSD test (Table 5) further supports these results, showing that Recreational clubs have significantly lower mean CGPAs compared to Cultural and Educational clubs, with the latter having the highest mean CGPAs. Humanitarian clubs overlap with both Recreational and Cultural clubs, while Sports clubs show no significant differences with other club types. Figure 5, a means plot, visually corroborates these results, indicating clear differences in mean CGPA points among the different club types. Largely, the data suggest that club type significantly influences academic performance, with students in Educational clubs performing the best academically and those in Recreational clubs performing the worst. These results tie well with previous research (Eccles et al., 2003; Hawkins, 2010; Hunt, 2005; Magolda & Astin, 1993; Marsh & Kleitman, 2003; Rahman et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2024).

The Effect of Frequency of Engagement in Student Activities on the Academic Performance (CGPA)

To address the question whether the frequency of engagement in student activities significantly affects the academic performance (CGPA) of undergraduate students, a Quantile Regression analysis was employed due to violations of normality and homogeneity assumptions. This robust method can handle skewed or heteroscedastic data effectively. The results, shown in Table 6, reveal a pseudo R-squared value of 0.007 and a Mean Absolute Error (MAE) of 0.4143. The very low pseudo R-squared indicates that the model explains only a tiny fraction of the variance in CGPA points, suggesting that the frequency of engagement in student activities has minimal impact on academic performance. The Mean Absolute Error indicates the average magnitude of errors between predicted and observed CGPA values. Overall, the analysis provides weak evidence of a significant relationship between the frequency of involvement in extracurricular activities and academic performance (CGPA) for undergraduate students. Engagement frequency, ranging from 1 to 35, does not significantly influence CGPA, as highlighted by the negligible pseudo R-squared value. These results contrast with some existing studies (Issahaku, 2017; Mohamed Mohamed Bayoumy & Alsayed, 2021; Zacherman & Foubert, 2014) that have highlighted a positive association between student engagement frequency and academic performance.

The Interaction Effect between the Type of Club Participation and the Frequency of Engagement on the Academic Performance (CGPA)

To address the question whether there is a significant interaction effect between the type of club participation and the frequency of engagement on the academic performance (CGPA) of undergraduate students, a two-way ANOVA was conducted on ranked CGPA data. The results, summarized in Table 7, indicate a significant main effect of club type on CGPA ranks ($F(4, 4057) = 11.218$, $p < .001$, Partial Eta Squared = .011), suggesting that different types of club participation influence academic performance. However, the frequency of engagement does not significantly affect



CGPA ranks ($F(30, 4057) = 1.012, p = .448, \text{Partial Eta Squared} = .007$). The Tukey HSD test (Table 8) reveals that Recreational and Humanitarian clubs form a homogeneous subset with no significant difference in CGPA ranks (Sig. = .687). Humanitarian and Sports clubs also form a subset with no significant difference (Sig. = .061), and Sports, Cultural, and Educational clubs form another subset with no significant differences (Sig. = .095). Visual analysis (Figure 6) of the estimated marginal means of rank of CGPA by frequency of engagement and club type shows roughly parallel lines, indicating no significant interaction effect between club type and engagement frequency on CGPA. The minor variation in slopes suggests that the effect of engagement frequency on CGPA is consistent across different club types. Overall, the analysis indicates that while the type of club participation significantly affects CGPA, the frequency of engagement does not, with Educational and Cultural clubs generally having higher CGPA ranks and Recreational clubs having lower ranks. These results differ from previous findings (Çapa Aydın et al., 2016; Che Hashim & Ahmad, 2019; Hawkins, 2010; Rahman et al., 2021) that have shown a significant relationship between student engagement in extracurricular activities and academic performance. Unlike those studies, the current analysis does not find a significant interaction effect between club participation and engagement frequency on CGPA.

The Influence of Gender on Participation, Leadership Roles in Clubs, and Overall CGPA

The analysis investigates the distribution of different participation roles in clubs based on gender. While females show higher overall participation rates, males hold a significant share of leadership positions. The Chi-Square tests confirm a significant relationship between gender and participation roles within the organization. The examination of gender distribution across leading statuses (Leader vs. Member) within clubs reveals a disparity, with males slightly more likely to hold leadership roles. Statistical analysis confirms a significant association between gender and leading status, indicating that males are more likely to be leaders compared to females. An analysis of CGPA letter grades across genders indicates a clear disparity, with females achieving higher grades on average than males. Statistical tests confirm a highly significant association between gender and CGPA letter grades, suggesting that gender significantly influences academic performance.

These results align with previous studies that have highlighted gender disparities in participation, leadership roles, and academic performance (Choudhury & Singh, 2023; Jones et al., 2021; M. Fournier & M. Ineson, 2014; Smith et al., 2021). The results underscore the importance of addressing gender imbalances within organizations and academic settings to promote equity and inclusivity. Moreover, they emphasize the need for targeted interventions to support academic success and leadership opportunities for all genders.

Implications for Practice

Based on the results of this study, it becomes clear that the type of club participation is a crucial factor in positively influencing academic outcomes, particularly CGPA. Among the five types of clubs, Educational and Cultural organizations prove to be essential for students to reap academic benefits, provided that they are actively involved.

Besides this, this study explored also the effect of the frequency of engagement in student clubs on the academic attainment of undergraduate students as measured in CGPA. In our data analysis, it becomes evident that there is no considerable association between the level of engagement (ranging from 1 club to 35 clubs in students' university journey) and the academic performance (CGPA) for undergraduate students.

Another aspect we considered in our study is the interaction effect between the type of club participation and the frequency of engagement on the academic performance (CGPA) of undergraduate students. As the results indicated, no interaction effect was detected between the type of club participation and the frequency of engagement on CGPA of undergraduate students.



Finally, our study tackled the aspect of gender in influencing level of participation, leadership roles and overall CGPA. The evidence suggests that even the females have greater level of participation than males, the latter are inclined to hold more sensitive roles that require obligatory commitment. Compared to males, girls tend to select positions with fewer responsibilities, which gives them a space of relaxation and easiness to step back from serious responsibilities that may pop up due to the involvement with the administration. Likewise, the CGPA is reported to be influenced by the gender suggesting that girls academically perform better than males.

This study provides a comprehensive assessment of the effect of clubs participation on the academic performance. Thus, it provides important insights of how to deal with the programming of student club participation within colleges and universities. The results of our study are of paramount importance to students, faculty, students affairs professionals and top managers in the field of higher education. First, the students can rely on the findings of this study to make sure that their club participation should be meaningful and purposeful. Hence, they become aware that they should prioritize educational clubs more than any other types when they decide to be involved. This study's findings make it clear for students that by adhering to education and cultural clubs, they can both perform well academically and socially. Second, our study can motivate faculty to opt for getting more involved in advising more student clubs outside of the classroom in an attempt to link their efforts for the betterment of their student's academic performance. Also, faculty will have the evidence to consider diversifying their teaching activities by creating student groups within classes and assigning different roles within these groups to enhance their teaching endeavour. Thus, the students will foster their understanding of the curriculum and develop soft skills such as teamwork and critical thinking. Third, this study can serve the student affairs professionals as a guidance through their efforts to program and manage student activities. Their responsibility is to set out the priorities for student involvement and align them with academic mission of their institutions. Additionally, our insights will give the reason to justify their decision to prioritize funding educational clubs more than other types and forms of club participation. Furthermore, student affairs practitioners can cooperate with faculty and school deans to prioritize the creation of new student clubs that can spring up from the academic courses and programmes to complement the mission of the formal curriculum. As a matter of fact, these initiatives can result in procedural guidelines of student affairs divisions to warrant allocating an important portion of resources to educational and cultural clubs since they align closely with the academic objectives of their institutions.

Finally, the results of our study will be in the service of the top managers in the field of higher education as this will guide them to identify the best types of extracurricular activities that can be both appealing and beneficial to students, and to tailor extracurricular programs that meet the students' needs and interests. Top managers can exploit our data to promote extracurricular participation as a unique strategy to enhance student overall performance. Also, the present study will help top managers to create a more inclusive campus environment that becomes more conducive to student satisfaction and belonging.

Based on the current results and their implications for research and practice, the authors recommend: (1) promoting active engagement in educational clubs by organizing academic events, workshops, and mentoring programs; (2) providing academic counselling and support services tailored to students with irregular or low engagement frequency to improve their academic performance; (3) developing gender-inclusive leadership programs to ensure equitable opportunities for leadership roles across genders; (4) implementing gender-sensitive policies to reduce gender disparities in participation and leadership within clubs, fostering a more inclusive campus environment; and (5) conducting ongoing research to continuously monitor and assess the impact of interventions and policies on student engagement, leadership, and academic success, using research findings to inform future initiatives.



Implications for Research

The current study provides valuable insights into the relationship between extracurricular involvement and academic performance among undergraduate students at Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane, Morocco. Despite valuable insights on student involvement at Al Akhawayn University, limitations exist. Self-reported data and the cross-sectional design restrict causal conclusions. Future studies should use longitudinal designs and qualitative methods, along with replicating the research in broader contexts to improve generalizability.

Conclusion

In a nutshell, this study sheds light on the intricate relationship between extracurricular involvement and academic performance among 4092 undergraduate students at Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane, Morocco. The results reveal significant associations between club participation, engagement frequency, and academic performance, albeit with some notable nuances. Educational clubs emerged as particularly influential in enhancing academic performance, while engagement frequency showed a non-significant relationship with academic outcomes. Furthermore, the interaction between club participation and engagement frequency did not significantly impact academic performance. Gender disparities were evident in participation rates, leadership roles, and academic achievement, highlighting the need for targeted interventions to promote equity and inclusivity within the college community. Despite these valuable insights, the study is not without its limitations, including reliance on self-reported data and a cross-sectional design. Future research should address these limitations and explore the underlying mechanisms driving the observed relationships, eventually contributing to a deeper understanding of how extracurricular involvement shapes academic success.

Ethics and Conflict of Interest

As the authors of this article, we have acted in accordance with ethical rules at all stages of the research. We also declare that there is no conflict of interest among the authors.

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