

**RESEARCH PAPER****Enhancing Emotional Literacy: Investigating the Correlation between Soft Skills Proficiency and Emotional Intelligence****<sup>1</sup>Shaista Sahar\*, <sup>2</sup>Naeem Ullah and <sup>3</sup>Mazhar Hussain**

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**\*Corresponding Author:** saharshaista27@gmail.com**ABSTRACT**

The current study is an endeavor to “investigate the correlation between soft skills proficiency and emotional intelligence of primary school teachers”. Soft skills embrace a wide continuum of interpersonal traits these skills oblige as a basic component for the development of emotional intelligence, a critical facet for individuals across numerous sectors, including education. Emotionally intelligent teachers tend to be more vibrant and productive in accomplishing their roles. This study was quantitative and descriptive in nature; study population was all the primary school teachers (PSTs) of the elementary wing of district Rahim Yar Khan. Cluster random sampling was employed and 245 schools were selected as sample. Questionnaire was used for data collection. The results of the study showed a significant effect and positive correlation between the soft skills and emotional intelligence of teachers. It is recommended that soft skills must be developed in teachers to boost and nurture their emotional intelligence.

**KEYWORDS:** Emotional Intelligence, Primary School Teachers (PST), Soft Skills**Introduction**

Goleman (2021) characterizes Emotional Intelligence (EI) as an individual's capability to manage impulses, regulate emotions, be motivated and resilient while facing frustration, and defer personal gratification. It also involves fostering hope and maintaining persistence.

As articulated by Mayer and Salovey in 1997, emotional intelligence encompasses the skills of perceiving, assessing, and uttering emotions accurately. It involves the understanding of emotional acquaintance, the capability to adjust feelings, and intellectual and emotional growth. This involves the controlled emotions that enable thoughtful and productive thinking.

The capacity to comprehend and steer human dealings with insight is emotional intelligence. It is an indispensable skill for accomplishment in any set and a crucial factor of team performance. It has also been defined by other researchers as the capability to connect with others (Moss & Hunt, 1927) and the expertise in social affluence, social awareness, acquaintance to stimuli from fellows, as well as vision into sequential temperaments or underlying personality behaviors (Vernon, 1933). This underlines the comprehensive scope of emotional intelligence, highlighting its importance in interpersonal dynamics.

Schools possess definite administrative structures, processes, rules, procedures, inner channels, procedural modes, as well as individual and common purposes with

assessable outcomes (Morrison & Allen, 2007). The appraisal of a worker's performance is often judged in terms of individual and group efficacy, operative leadership, and skills such as assisting interactive connections and workplace security. These domains linked with emotional intelligence (EI) can be executed in the study of EI in teachers (Perry & Ball, 2008).

Fopiano and Haynes (2001) and Rosenthal et al. (2008) identified a considerable correlation between emotional intelligence and teaching quality. Coetzee and Jansen (2007) asserted that teachers capable of emotional and social skills are more skilled at achieving educational objectives. They show care, augment the learning settings, reduce conflicts, and create an emotional climate favorable to efficient learning.

Research revealed that in both personal and practical life there is an association between emotional intelligence and multiple features of human performance. These findings support the development of emotional intelligence (EI). Boyatzis (2007) theorized that contrary to IQ, emotional intelligence (EQ) can be enriched at any life phase. It is now decisively recognized that EI competencies and related behaviors can endure improvement (Bryan, 2006).

According to Fuel (2012), character education and emotional intelligence are linked. He opined that character education is anticipated to develop higher emotional intelligence in individuals. Dodds's (2016) perspectives were aligned; he affirms that character education can augment various facets of the emotional intelligence of an individual. Moreover, there exists an association between emotional intelligence and the adaptive capabilities allied with soft skills (Saptoto, 2010). Consistent with these findings, Firdaus (2017) upholds a notable connection between emotional intelligence and soft skills.

Pachauri and Yadav (2014) defined soft skills as an array of qualities, including personality characteristics, social enhancement, language articulacy, individual habits, friendliness, and positivity. They create a vibrant unification of cognitive skills, intrapersonal and interpersonal capabilities, moral values, and practical skills. Soft skills authorize individuals to approach routine life and professional challenges with an optimistic mindset, enabling effective problem-solving. Duncan and Dunifon (2012) and Romedios (2012) stated that soft skills considerably contribute to competence development, leading to positive changes and communal progress.

Soft skills incorporate an individual's ability to self-persuade and take initiative, being considerate of what needs to be done, and the aptitude to perform tasks efficiently. They prove valuable for addressing abrupt minor issues and sustaining suppleness in the face of unsettled problems (Grugulis, Hamida & Palupi, 2012). In crux, soft skills represent a personal power for initiating change and handling workplace challenges.

Teaching is a complicated exertion, demanding a varied set of skills accompanied by knowledge and includes both hard and soft skills, to efficiently navigate the intricacies of the classroom (Tang, Hashim, & Mohd Yunus, 2014a). A standard teacher is proactive and is likely to exhibit devotion to their work by engaging amalgamation of these skills.

Soft skills are broad-spectrum abilities that are fundamental for every individual's well-being, with the skills necessary for enhancing emotional intelligence. These skills are imperative and contribute to better work performance. However, the focus of this study is to explain the relationship between soft skills and emotional intelligence of primary school teachers.

## **Literature Review**

Thorndike in 1920 gave the concept that intelligence is linked to emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is the ability to observe, evaluate, and control one's own emotions and of others. It embraces the ability to identify and apprehend one's feelings and those of others, with the capacity to manage emotions and behave positively. At core, emotional intelligence is a pivotal element in social intelligence development.

A significant influence is exerted by emotional intelligence on individuals and organizations. Emotional intelligence (EI) was defined by Fox and Spector (2000) as a set of skills that enable individuals to excellently control emotions to attain desired consequences, such as leadership competency, affirmative work attitudes, and job fulfillment (Higgs & Aitken, 2003; Fisher, 2000). Robust social interactions are indicated by the individuals with high EI between organizations and within organizations. However low emotionally intelligent people may pose challenges (Mayer & Caruso, 2002). Emotional intelligence plays an essential role in personal life, easing the formation of satisfactory relationships and attaining accomplishment in the professional ground. EI is positively associated with adequate social manners and the refinement of significant interpersonal acquaintances.

Wheeler (2016) discusses organizations that may prefer appointing individuals based on their hard skills, but they necessitate individuals with robust soft skills. The findings highlighted that emotional intelligence forms the groundwork of what is commonly referred to as soft skills. While some may own these skills naturally, the study asserts that they can be developed and polished over time through deliberate exertions.

Soft skills are highly effective tools and techniques for evaluating the future capabilities of teachers and students in educational institutes (Salleh et al., 2010). Therefore, recognizing and improving the ways of attainment of soft skills has become a challenging task for curriculum designers as well (Hodges & Burchell, 2003). Teaching is a collective activity involving a mutual interaction between teachers and students. When selecting teachers, their soft skills, personality characteristics, and community skills must be considered (Tang & Tan, 2015).

Perry and Ball (2008) focused on discovering the features of emotional intelligence linked to teachers' careers and experiences in specific situations by teachers were reflected. The findings directed that emotionally intelligent teachers revealed greater effectiveness in managing negative emotional states. These teachers were able to identify their emotional weaknesses and conflicts were navigated effectively by their emotional management strategies. The study concluded that emotional intelligence has a significant impact on the professional competence of teachers signifying that high emotional intelligence associates with greater efficiency compared to their counterparts who are low in emotional intelligence.

The effectiveness of teaching is conditional not only on emotional intelligence but also on factors such as empathy, self-esteem, and leadership are also equally important.

As defined by Mahfud (2014) character education encompasses values education, ethical education, and the growth of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor abilities. The all-embracing goal is to prepare individuals with the capacity to take decisions, discriminate what is disadvantageous, reserve what is valuable, and enthusiastically represent goodness in their daily lives.

Zuniga (2007) indicated a connection between emotional intelligence and affective responses. As highlighted by Goleman (2009) emotional intelligence represents the balancing aspect of cognitive intelligence and expressively affects an individual's actions. It has the prospective to impact both capability and conduct.

### **Material and Methods**

The recent study is descriptive and provides insight into the relationship between soft skills and emotional intelligence of primary school teachers. It employs a survey method and data was collected through a questionnaire. Subsequently, data was analyzed through descriptive and inferential statistics.

### **Population**

The research study fixated on teachers as the analysis unit, and the population encompassed all male and female primary school teachers (PSTs) teaching in a total of 2451 public schools in all four tehsils of the elementary wing of district Rahim Yar Khan.

### **Sampling**

Cluster random sampling technique was employed when conducting this study. The population was distributed in four tehsils of district Rahim Yar Khan which included a total of 2451 schools. Each school constituted a cluster of teachers and a sample of teachers was selected from these clusters. 10% sampling criteria were implemented. 245 schools were randomly selected from the overall cluster schools. The selection included 10% male and female schools within each tehsil. The primary school teachers (PSTs) within these clusters served as the unit of analysis or respondents. In total 245 schools including all PSTs were selected.

### **Research Tool**

In evaluating the soft skills of teachers, a scale was used with formal approval acquired from (Orlando, 2019). This scale contained five subscales: Communication, Leadership, Teamwork, Lifelong Learning, and Problem-solving. To modify the scale to the specific contextual requirements, certain items were omitted, while others were amended and revised through discussion with experts. The adapted scale finally consisted of 32 direct items on 5 point Likert scale, based on the five soft skills subscales. Following adaptation, the coefficient alpha value for the reliability of the soft skills scale was determined to be 0.93. In assessing teachers' emotional intelligence a five-point Likert scale initially designed by Mehta and Singh in 2013 was employed. This scale, converging on two subscales, viz. personal and social competence, was revised after formal permission from Dr. Sandhya Mehta. The Emotional Intelligence (EI) scale was revised to measure the emotional intelligence of teachers. Two parameters from each competence were selected. For personal competence, the selected parameters were self-awareness and self-motivation/management, while for social competence; the parameters were social awareness and social skill. A total of 39 items were carefully selected following revision and consultation with experts. The modified emotional intelligence scale established a reliability value with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.94.

### **Results and Discussion**

**Table 1**  
**Soft Skills of Teachers**

Sr #	Statement	Level of Agreem	1	2	3	4	5	Std.	Mean
1	Communication	F	56	61	178	251	294	0.782	3.792
		%	6.66	7.26	21.23	29.8	34.98		
2	Problem-solving	F	28.26	37.71	125.14	282.9	366	0.820	4.095

		%	3.4	4.5	14.9	33.7	43.6		
3	Lifelong learning	F	35.14	38.6	96.86	280.2	389.14	0.854	4.130
		%	4.196	4.586	11.53	33.36	46.31		
4	Leadership	F	29.14	52.28	161.15	269.1	328.29	0.841	3.970
		%	3.49	6.228	19.142	32.04	39.1		
5	Team Work	F	20.4	49.2	151.2	249.6	369.6	0.866	4.07
		%	2.4	5.84	18	29.7	44.02		
<b>Overall Scale</b>								.7535	4.012

Table 1 displays the responses of teachers regarding their soft skills. The results revealed that around 65% of the respondents stated their efficacy as communicators. Likewise, 78% of the participants showed aptitude in problem-solving, while 79% accredited owning lifelong learning skills. In terms of leadership potential, 71% of the respondents proclaimed this attribute, and 74% acknowledged their competency in teamwork. The total mean score of 4.012 indicates that a mainstream of teachers revealed to have a significant level of soft skills

**Table 2**  
**Emotional Intelligence of Teachers**

Sr #	Statement	Level of Agree	1	2	3	4	5	Std.	Mean
1	Self-awareness	F	24.55	33.82	114.55	247.09	420	4.1825	.80941
		%	2.918	4.018	13.636	29.418	50		
2	Self-motivation/Self-management	F	32.25	26.25	133.5	262.5	385.5	4.1223	.86117
		%	3.862	3.15	15.9	31.275	45.88		
3	Social Awareness	F	23.25	31.5	142.5	281.25	361.5	4.1027	.81419
		%	2.787	3.75	16.962	33.475	43.05		
4	Social Skills	F	31	38.5	122.5	261	387	4.1125	.83174
		%	3.708	4.6	14.59	31.08	46.08		
<b>Overall Scale</b>								4.13	.786

Table 2 presented teachers' responses about emotional intelligence. Results indicated that about 79% of respondents are self-aware. 76% of respondents are self-motivated. About 76% of respondents are socially aware. About 77% of respondents responded that they own social skills. Overall mean score of 4.13 shows that the majority of teachers are emotionally intelligent.

**Table 3**  
**Level-wise effect of soft skills on teacher's emotional intelligence**

Level of Soft Skills	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	df	t-Value	P-value
Low	78	3.0473	.64905	.07349	93.84	-15.95	.000
High	744	4.2793	.64824	.02377			

Table 3 presents the results about the level-wise effect of soft skills on emotional intelligence of teachers. It shows the substantial mean difference in emotional intelligence of high-level soft skills (M=4.279, Sd=.648) and low-level soft skills (M=3.04, Sd=.649) of teachers. The level-wise effect of soft skills on the emotional intelligence of teachers also has a significant difference (df= 93.84, p<.000). The sig value (p<.000) demonstrated strong variance between groups and within groups. Mean results (Mean= 4.2793) indicated that a high level of soft skills has a stronger effect on the emotional intelligence of teachers than a low level of soft skills.

**Table 4**  
**Relationship between Soft Skills and Emotional Intelligence**

	Soft Skill	Emotional Intelligence	Sig. (2 tailed)
1	Soft Skill	.822 **	.000
2	Emotional Intelligence	.822 **	.000

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated to investigate the strength and direction of the association between soft skills and teachers' emotional intelligence. Table 4 indicates that the correlation between the variables is significantly high and positive. The correlation value is .822 showing that the increase in soft skills level has an augmented effect on the emotional intelligence of teachers. It means that teachers encompassing soft skills are also emotionally intelligent.

### **Soft Skills of Teachers**

Almost two-thirds of the respondents acknowledged themselves as good communicators, whereas more than three-fourths considered themselves proficient problem solvers. A comparable proportion above three-fourths claimed to own lifelong learning skills. Yet, less than three-fourths of the participants alleged they possessed leadership abilities, and nearly three-fourths stated a belief in the importance of teamwork. The study's results show that a considerable majority of teachers parade noteworthy soft skills. This positive viewpoint on soft skills aligns with the remarks made by participants in a study led by (Streltsova & Ivanova, 2020).

### **Emotional Intelligence of Teachers**

More than three-fourths of respondents are self-aware. About three-fourths are self-motivated. About three-fourths are self-motivated. More than three-fourths of respondents own social skills. Studies showed that the majority of teachers are emotionally intelligent.

### **Level-wise effect of Soft Skills on teacher's Emotional Intelligence**

The level-wise effect of Soft Skills on the emotional intelligence of teachers has a significant difference. Mean results indicated that a high level of soft skills has a stronger effect on the emotional intelligence of teachers than the low level of soft skills.

### **Relationship between Soft Skills and Emotional Intelligence**

The Pearson's  $r$  for the correlation between soft skills and emotional intelligence is 0.822. Pearson's  $r$  value is very close to 1 therefore it is stated that there is a strong relationship between soft skills and emotional intelligence. On the other hand, the value of Pearson's  $r$  is positive; therefore the increase in the value of soft skills leads to the increase in the value of emotional intelligence. On the base of the significance value (.000), it is concluded that there is a statistically significant correlation between soft skills and emotional intelligence.

### **Relationship between Soft Skills and Emotional Intelligence of Teachers**

The objective of the study was 'to investigate the relationship between teacher's soft skills and emotional intelligence of teachers. The research highlights a convincing and robust positive association between teachers' soft skills, incorporating communication, problem-solving, lifelong learning, leadership, teamwork, and their emotional intelligence. The inclusive nature of soft skills, which goes afar interpersonal capabilities to embrace qualities such as adaptableness and flexibility, supports the facets of emotional intelligence. Teachers demonstrating expertise in communication can efficiently express compassion and consideration, contributing to amplified emotional intelligence. Likewise, problem-solving skills empower teachers to traverse emotional intricacies in the classroom, nurturing a compassionate environment. The affirmative correlation observed highlights the interconnectedness of these particular soft skills with

emotional intelligence, underscoring the essential role they play in forming the climate of the educational set. Humanizing these skills in educators is essential for augmenting emotional intelligence, finally manipulating their overall work performance and making a more emotionally intelligent and receptive educational experience for learners. Kumar and Sharma (2019) conducted a study to find an association between emotional intelligence and soft skills to suggest substantial soft skills to cultivate emotional intelligence for better employability and established that soft skills have a huge gamut of skills mandatory for all persons and skills indispensable for refining emotional intelligence, forms a subclass of these soft skills.

### **Conclusion**

The finding of the study showed that there was a positive and strong correlation between soft skills and the emotional intelligence of teachers. Teachers with high levels of soft skills also had high levels of emotional intelligence. The study concludes that fostering soft skills in teachers is vital and significantly affects and associates positively with the emotional intelligence of teachers.

### **Recommendations**

In the light of researchers and current study it is evident that soft skills development helps to foster emotional intelligence which in turn makes better teachers' performance so considering this relationship it is recommended that due importance must be given to soft skills in the education field.

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