
Mental Health in Relation to Emotional Intelligence among Student Teachers

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Abstract

Mental health and emotional intelligence are two essential components that influence the personal, academic, and professional development of student teachers. As future educators, student teachers are expected to possess not only sound pedagogical knowledge but also emotional competence to manage classroom challenges, maintain interpersonal relationships, and promote positive learning environments. The teaching profession involves significant emotional labour, making emotional intelligence a crucial factor in maintaining good mental health. Emotional intelligence enables individuals to understand, regulate, and express emotions effectively while fostering empathy, resilience, and social competence. Mental health, on the other hand, encompasses emotional, psychological, and social well-being, influencing how individuals think, feel, and behave. This article explores the conceptual foundations of mental health and emotional intelligence, examines their relationship among student teachers, identifies influencing factors, discusses research findings, and suggests strategies for enhancing both variables in teacher education programmes. The article concludes that developing emotional intelligence is a powerful means of promoting positive mental health among student teachers, ultimately contributing to effective teaching and lifelong professional success.

Keywords: Mental Health, Emotional Intelligence, Student Teachers, Teacher Education, Emotional Well-being, Professional Development.

Introduction

Education is one of the most influential instruments for individual and societal development, and teachers occupy a central position in this transformative process. The quality of education largely depends on the competence, commitment, and emotional well-being of teachers. Student teachers, who are preparing themselves for future teaching careers, undergo rigorous academic preparation, teaching practice, classroom observations, examinations, and professional expectations. During this transitional period, they often experience considerable psychological pressure, academic stress, anxiety, emotional conflicts, and uncertainty regarding

their future careers. These challenges make mental health an important concern in teacher education.

Mental health is more than the absence of mental illness. It reflects a state of emotional, psychological, and social well-being that enables individuals to cope effectively with the normal stresses of life, work productively, maintain satisfying relationships, and contribute positively to society. Good mental health supports decision-making, creativity, problem-solving, and resilience, all of which are essential qualities for future teachers. Closely linked to mental health is emotional intelligence (EI), a concept that has gained significant attention in educational psychology. Emotional intelligence refers to the ability to recognize, understand, regulate, and utilize emotions effectively in oneself and others. Individuals with higher emotional intelligence are generally better equipped to handle stress, resolve conflicts, communicate effectively, and maintain positive interpersonal relationships.

For student teachers, emotional intelligence plays a vital role in classroom management, student engagement, instructional effectiveness, and professional satisfaction. Research consistently indicates that emotionally intelligent individuals experience lower levels of stress, anxiety, depression, and burnout while demonstrating higher psychological well-being and resilience. Therefore, understanding the relationship between mental health and emotional intelligence among student teachers has become increasingly important. Teacher education institutions should emphasize emotional development alongside academic and pedagogical training to prepare resilient and emotionally competent educators.

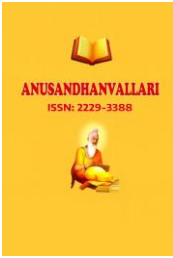
Concept of Mental Health

Mental health refers to a person's emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It determines how individuals perceive themselves, manage emotions, relate to others, make decisions, and respond to life's challenges. Positive mental health enables individuals to function effectively in personal, academic, occupational, and social settings. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), mental health is a state of well-being in which every individual realizes their abilities, can cope with normal stresses of life, work productively, and contribute to their community. Mental health is a dynamic process influenced by biological, psychological, social, educational, and environmental factors.

Importance of Mental Health among Student Teachers

Good mental health contributes to:

- Better academic achievement
- Improved teaching competence



- Positive classroom management
- Effective communication
- Professional commitment
- Emotional stability
- Better decision-making
- Enhanced creativity
- Increased resilience
- Higher teaching satisfaction

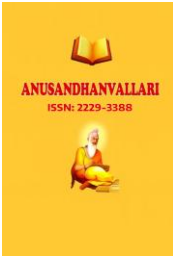
Concept of Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence refers to the ability to identify, understand, regulate, and utilize emotions effectively in oneself and others. The concept was popularized by Daniel Goleman (1995), who emphasized that emotional intelligence often predicts success more effectively than intelligence quotient (IQ). Emotionally intelligent individuals understand their emotions, manage stress effectively, motivate themselves, empathize with others, and build healthy interpersonal relationships.

Characteristics of Emotionally Intelligent Student Teachers

Emotionally intelligent student teachers generally demonstrate:

- Emotional awareness
- Self-confidence
- Patience
- Adaptability
- Positive thinking
- Leadership
- Effective communication
- Empathy
- Stress management
- Problem-solving ability



- Conflict management
- Professional ethics

Importance of Emotional Intelligence in Teacher Education

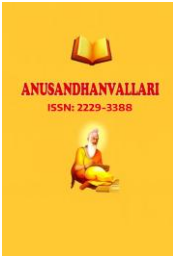
Emotional intelligence helps future teachers by:

- Managing classroom behaviour effectively
- Building healthy teacher-student relationships
- Improving communication
- Reducing occupational stress
- Enhancing motivation
- Promoting teamwork
- Increasing job satisfaction
- Improving leadership qualities
- Developing resilience
- Supporting inclusive education

Relationship between Mental Health and Emotional Intelligence

Mental health and emotional intelligence are closely interconnected. Emotionally intelligent individuals possess greater emotional awareness and self-control, enabling them to cope effectively with stress, anxiety, frustration, and emotional challenges. They are better equipped to maintain positive relationships and psychological balance. Student teachers with higher emotional intelligence generally experience:

- Lower anxiety
- Reduced depression
- Better stress management
- Greater emotional stability
- Higher resilience
- Increased life satisfaction
- Better interpersonal relationships



- Improved psychological well-being

Conversely, poor emotional intelligence may lead to:

- Emotional instability
- Poor stress tolerance
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Burnout
- Low self-esteem
- Poor communication
- Social isolation

Thus, emotional intelligence serves as a protective factor that strengthens mental health.

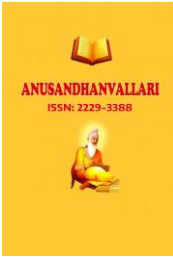
Findings

Numerous empirical studies have established a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and mental health. Major findings include:

- Emotional intelligence positively predicts psychological well-being.
- Student teachers with higher emotional intelligence experience lower stress.
- Emotional regulation significantly reduces anxiety.
- Self-awareness improves self-confidence and resilience.
- Empathy enhances interpersonal relationships.
- Social competence promotes professional adjustment.
- Emotional intelligence reduces burnout among teachers.
- Positive mental health improves teaching effectiveness.
- Emotionally intelligent teachers demonstrate better classroom management.
- Emotional intelligence contributes to professional success and career satisfaction.

Challenges Faced by Student Teachers

Student teachers commonly encounter several psychological challenges:



- Examination anxiety
- Teaching practice stress
- Fear of classroom observation
- Performance pressure
- Time management difficulties
- Financial constraints
- Career uncertainty
- Family expectations
- Peer competition
- Technological adaptation
- Emotional exhaustion

These challenges can adversely affect both mental health and academic performance if appropriate coping strategies are not adopted.

Strategies to Improve Mental Health among Student Teachers

Teacher education institutions should implement comprehensive mental health promotion programmes.

Counselling Services

Professional counselling helps students manage stress and emotional problems.

Stress Management Programmes

Workshops on relaxation, meditation, mindfulness, and yoga improve emotional well-being.

Physical Activity

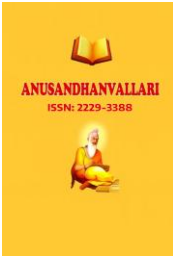
Regular exercise reduces anxiety and improves psychological health.

Positive Learning Environment

Supportive faculty and inclusive classrooms foster emotional security.

Peer Support Groups

Peer interaction promotes belongingness and emotional sharing.



Time Management Training

Effective scheduling reduces academic pressure.

Healthy Lifestyle

Balanced nutrition, adequate sleep, and recreational activities improve mental health.

Mental Health Awareness

Regular seminars reduce stigma and encourage help-seeking behaviour.

Strategies to Enhance Emotional Intelligence

Teacher education programmes should include activities that strengthen emotional intelligence.

Emotional Literacy Training

Students learn to identify and express emotions appropriately.

Reflective Practices

Reflective journals encourage self-awareness.

Communication Skills Training

Enhances interpersonal competence.

Role Play

Develops empathy and conflict-resolution skills.

Group Activities

Promote teamwork and emotional cooperation.

Mindfulness Practices

Improve emotional regulation and concentration.

Leadership Opportunities

Increase confidence and social competence.

Community Engagement

Service-learning experiences enhance empathy and social responsibility.

Role of Teacher Education Institutions

Teacher education institutions have a significant responsibility in promoting both emotional intelligence and mental health.

They should:

- Integrate emotional intelligence into the curriculum.
- Establish counselling centres.
- Organize mental health awareness programmes.
- Conduct emotional intelligence workshops.
- Encourage reflective teaching practices.
- Promote mentoring systems.
- Create supportive campus environments.
- Reduce unnecessary academic pressure.
- Encourage extracurricular participation.
- Monitor students' psychological well-being regularly.

Conclusion

Mental health and emotional intelligence are indispensable qualities for student teachers preparing to enter the teaching profession. While mental health enables individuals to function effectively, emotional intelligence provides the necessary emotional competencies to navigate academic, professional, and personal challenges. The relationship between these two constructs is positive and mutually reinforcing. Emotionally intelligent student teachers are more resilient, optimistic, empathetic, and capable of maintaining psychological well-being despite stressful situations. They are also more likely to become effective teachers who create supportive and inclusive classroom environments.

Teacher education institutions must recognize that preparing competent teachers extends beyond developing pedagogical knowledge. Equally important is nurturing emotional competence and psychological well-being through structured interventions, counselling services, reflective practices, and socio-emotional learning opportunities. By promoting emotional intelligence alongside mental health, institutions can develop confident, compassionate, and professionally competent educators who contribute positively to educational quality and societal development.

Ultimately, investing in the mental health and emotional intelligence of student teachers is an investment in the future of education itself, ensuring that tomorrow's teachers are emotionally resilient, mentally healthy, and capable of inspiring the next generation of learners.

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