Promoting Mental Health & Emotional Well-being Inside Classrooms

Mary Ghazarian Gurunlian iD

Educational Trainer, SEL Hub Founder–Lebanon

marygurunlian@gmail.com

Abstract

The current research sheds light on the teachers' knowledge and awareness of emotional intelligence and social-emotional learning in schools in Lebanon. It highlights the benefits of social-emotional learning programs in terms of creating equity in schools, nurturing the spirit of self-awareness, and offering learners emotion regulation tools and the capability to build healthy long-lasting relationships based on empathy. The research was carried out in Lebanon through focus groups, and one-to-one meetings, and a Google Form was used to survey the 104 participants. The teachers were from various governates, and different age groups, and taught different cycles, and across subject areas. The research offers recommendations and guidelines for schools that aim to introduce social-emotional learning effectively inside classrooms.

تعزيز الصحة النفسية والرفاهية العاطفية داخل الصفوف الدراسية

ماري غازاريان كورونليان (iD)

مدرب تعليمي، مؤسسة مركز التعلم الاجتماعي والعاطفي– لبنان

marygurunlian@gmail.com

ملخص

يسلط البحث الضوء على مدى إلمام المعلمين ووعيهم بالذكاء العاطفي والتعلم العاطفي الاجتماعي في المدارس في لبنان. كما يعنى بإبراز فوائد برامج التعلم العاطفي الاجتماعي من حيث خلق المساواة في المدارس وتعزيز روح الوعي الذاتي، وأهمية تزويد الطلبة بأدوات إدارة المشاعر والقدرة على بناء علاقات صحية طويلة الأمد وقائمة على التعاطف. أجري هذا البحث في لبنان من خلال مقابلات مجموعات التركيز والاجتماعات الفردية ، وقد استُخدم نموذج جوجل لاستطلاع آراء 104 مشاركًا. وشارك معلمون من محافظات وفئات عمرية مختلفة ويدرسون مراحل تعليمية متفاوتة، وفي مجالات متنوعة. يقدم البحث توصيات وإرشادات للمدارس التي تهدف إلى إدراج التعلم الاجتماعي العاطفي بشكل فعال في الصفوف الدراسية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الصحة النفسية؛ المهارات الاجتماعية؛ الرفاهية العاطفية؛ الذكاء العاطفي

1. Introduction

Schools prepare learners for the life of tomorrow, beyond the school, and then for the future. The type of future we aim to create dictates the education we must offer our learners. Tomorrow's workforce, schools, leaders, and citizens must be prepared through today's curricula, teaching and learning strategies, and overall interactions in pedagogical institutions. The Harvard Review, in its 2021 research, states that emotional intelligence is an essential skill for individuals to succeed in 21st-century life and the workforce. Nevertheless, social-emotional learning is a skill that is absent in the school national curricula of Lebanon. The research in the university courses that prepare teachers: education, and teaching diplomas showed that social-emotional learning skills are also absent there.

If a skill is an essential requirement for life success and is an imperative component in the global citizens of tomorrow, and yet absent in school curricula and teacher preparatory courses and programs, then how are our learners having the opportunity to acquire these skills and increase their chances of life success? We need to have policies set to have clear guidelines, roadmaps, and best practices in this matter to allow nationwide implementation of such programs and transformative initiatives.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), mental health is defined as: "A state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her potential, and can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and can contribute to his or her community." This definition emphasizes the importance of mental well-being about one's potential, coping abilities, productivity, and social contribution. Whereas, it defines emotional well-being as a vital component of mental health, encompassing the ability to recognize and manage emotions, develop positive relationships, and cope with life's challenges. It includes self-awareness, emotional regulation, resilience, and the capacity to form supportive social connections. Ultimately, emotional well-being is essential for improving overall mental health and quality of life, as highlighted in WHO's mental health resources.

Collaborative for Academic Social and Emotional Learning CASEL states that these skills of emotional well-being are needed for academic content retention along with emotional health. Such skills when catered for, help raise responsible active, caring, compassionate lifelong learners who work together to achieve their goals and create a more inclusive and just world.

The role of social skills beyond the creation of a just and inclusive world, is also about resolving problems. Recent research considers social skills, as the tool to resolve many of the problems in the community, offering adolescents the chance to move beyond the self and egocentrism to build and maintain healthy social skills with others. They elaborate that personality, culture, age, and neurological conditions affect social skills, and some have innate traits. Yet, some methods help improve and nurture these skills inside classrooms, such as role-playing, modeling, and cooperative learning.

Adolescents, at the stage of building their identity and becoming self-aware, need these skills the most, to become the citizens of tomorrow and help create a more empathetic and tolerant world. (Dhingra & Rani, 2019).

Children and youth are our biggest capital, and we need to create sustainable societies for them and offer quality, inclusive, and equitable education (SDG4), along with promoting health and well-being for all (SDGS3). Education is our best hope to transform and improve lives meanwhile touching the future and making it fairer and more inclusive for all the members of the society.

2. Research Problem

A growing body of social science research is offering evidence that emotional intelligence plays a crucial role in life success and personal happiness. Life pre- and post-COVID offered an opportunity to the world, to try and test the social skills theory in the social and educational context as well. Understanding oneself, relating to others, facing challenges with a positive outlook, and resilience were all put to the test when learners and educators were physically apart. Educational systems underwent this same test to assess the learning, development, effective relationship, and survival skills that teachers offered to learners to face challenging times. Forbes magazine considers social skills a vital requirement for the leaders of the future.

Successful changemakers possess emotional intelligence, and these social skills give them an edge over their peers. Learners need to acquire skills that can support them in times of conflict and challenges. These human capitals need to shed light on their strengths and emphasize them as tools to face life and its challenges. They need competencies that can allow them to move through hardship and pandemics while maintaining their mental health and emotional well-being. These life skills of self-knowledge, management, and motivation fall under the umbrella of Social-emotional Learning (SEL). SEL, according to CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning), is an educational approach that helps people develop social skills and awareness of themselves and others. School-based planned SEL programs can help students improve their academic and interpersonal performance.

SEL programs focus on the positive behaviors of students instead of the negative behaviors and help raise self-awareness, gain effective self-regulation tools, and promote healthy youth development. SEL programs help set school-wide policies that nurture individual differences and allow learners to reach their maximum potential. SEL targets learners, parents, teachers, administrators, and the community at large, as all stakeholders in the education system. Implementation of SEL curricula in schools promises hope on the larger scale of preparing lifelong learners, competent learners, who know themselves well, are aware of their strengths and weaknesses, and are empathetic citizens in their society (CASEL, 2021).

SEL also helps create a haven for all learners, regardless of their capabilities and background, allowing collaboration and effective communication. These programs improve academic performance, raise the self-esteem of learners, and increase their chances of building effective lifelong relationships. This interdisciplinary approach of offering academic content in parallel with life skills offers a theory to investigate and comprehend its implications. It is crucial to observe emotional intelligence through

the lenses of education, psychology, and both on national and international levels.

Developing social and emotional skills can have many benefits for learners, improving mental health and well-being, reducing disruptive behaviors, and also positively affecting academic performance. Studies have shown that these skills help protect students from becoming targets of bullying and lower the risk of someone being bullied or even bullying others. Through SEL, students can develop empathy and resolve conflicts better (Farrington; Ttofi; Zych, 2019).

Recently, students in Lebanon have shown signs of demotivation, lack of interest in attending schools and overall learning processes. The rate of disruptive behaviors in the classroom has increased, according to teachers in Lebanon. Additionally, students reaching university are often uncertain about which major to pursue or what career to plan for. The pre- and post- pandemic world differs significantly, and according to the United Nations, mental health is not a luxury anymore, it is a basic human right.

Various organizations, such as World Learning, have initiated campaigns to work on a national framework to introduce SEL inside schools in Lebanon. However, at the national level, there are still no official programs or curricula in place for teaching these skills to both teachers and students. Even if such curricula were to be developed, are teachers equipped with sufficient knowledge and awareness to effectively teach these skills in Lebanese classrooms?

This research sheds light on the knowledge and awareness of social skills among teachers in Lebanon. It aims to investigate whether teachers possess emotional intelligence awareness which is the basis of social-emotional learning. It highlights the benefits of social-emotional learning programs in terms of combating social stereotypes and increasing tolerance in schools.

The paper offers a sample of a teacher training module on emotional well-being and social-emotional learning that includes self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. The research investigates personal competencies of self-awareness and knowing the "self," identifying practical self-regulation tools, and effective ways of teachers to show empathy and "read" the emotions of others.

These best practices aim to teach learners skills such as emotional awareness, impulse control, stress management, adaptability, initiative-taking, and happiness. Life skills aim to future proof learners, giving them tools for a better quality of life as individuals, schools, and communities. The paper offers recommendations and guidelines for school leadership teams and policymakers that would aim to create more equity and tolerance inside their classrooms.

Emotional intelligence has been integrated into educational systems throughout Europe and the United States through Social-emotional Learning (SEL) programs. According to CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning), SEL is an educational approach that helps people develop social skills and awareness of themselves and others. School-based SEL can help students improve their academic and interpersonal performance. It focuses on the positive behaviors of students instead

of the negative behaviors to promote healthy youth development. It helps set school-wide policies that nurture individual differences and allow learners to reach their maximum potential. SEL targets learners, parents, teachers, administrators, and the community at the large, as all stakeholders in the education system. Implementation of SEL curricula in schools promises hope on a larger scale for preparing lifelong learners, competent individuals who know themselves well, are aware of their strengths and weaknesses, and are empathetic citizens in their society (CASEL, 2021).

Educational curricula and programs need to begin with a careful examination of these competencies in the teachers in Lebanon before establishing set curricula and frameworks for nationwide implementation. It is vital to advocate for raising awareness about these skills through evidence-based research before it is set as a vital need for policy.

3. The Research Significance

Research on emotional intelligence and social skills has revealed various definitions and competencies, ranging from "self-awareness" to "leading one's self" to understanding and leading others. Mayer and Salovey (1997) elaborate that emotional regulation follows emotional self-awareness. It is the ability to regulate emotions by understanding them, perceiving them, and also reasoning through them. Emotional self-awareness, along with self-regulation, creates harmony in the mind and heart of the individual.

This harmony in the mind is reflected through various aspects. According to Mayer and Salovey (1997) the first branch of emotional intelligence is perceiving emotions. It is the ability to identify and understand emotions from facial expressions, vocal cues, and even visual stimuli such as pictures. This branch also encompasses the capacity for individuals to recognize and interpret their own emotions. Labeling and understanding emotions serve as the foundation for utilizing this emotional "data" and taking appropriate action.

The second branch involves using emotions. This entails employing perceived emotions in decision-making, critical thinking, and problem-solving. When individuals harness their positive energy and motivation to enhance performance, they leverage their emotional state to benefit their personal and professional lives. Being aware of emotions and utilizing them effectively facilitates cognitive processes and enables better decision-making. The third branch of emotional intelligence involves the ability to understand emotions, including their causes, nature, and patterns. By identifying and labeling different emotions and discerning even subtle differences among them, individuals can better recognize how emotions evolve, what triggers them, and the factors that influence them. Consequently, they can more effectively channel their emotions towards constructive outcomes and implications.

Lastly, the fourth branch entails a higher level of skill in managing emotions. Individuals at this stage can take control of their emotions and regulate them, allowing themselves to master the emotion rather than allowing emotions to dictate their decisions and behaviors. At this stage, individuals can

direct emotions such as anger and disappointment towards more positive emotions such as motivation, thereby setting a framework for more productive outputs (Mayer & Salovey, 1997).

Intelligence is now beyond its traditional definition of academic success and it trespasses the classrooms. Goleman (1995) explains that there's a new way of being intelligent beyond traditional IQ, which involves gaining self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. Boyatzis and Goleman (1999), in their Intentional Change Theory, emphasize the importance of change, suggesting that when individuals, teams, and communities undergo intentional change, sustainable transformations occur, impacting organizations, countries, and the global community. Drawing from two decades of research, Goleman and Boyatzis provide evidence that emotional intelligence is essential for leaders and professionals in leadership roles to effectively navigate change and foster growth with a positive mindset (Boyatzis & Goleman, 1999).

Training and development emerge as crucial areas for further exploration when discussing emotional intelligence. Cherniss and Goleman advocate that EI competencies can be taught through the creation of supportive environments and sustained commitment and support. If emotional intelligence is considered a skill, then, akin to other skills and competencies, training becomes pivotal in amplifying the impact of these skills (Cherniss & Goleman, 2001).

In general, individuals aspire to create and live happy lives filled with satisfaction and joy. Social psychology research endeavors to understand how individuals are influenced in their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors by their surroundings and the communities in which they exist. Just as employers seek the "right" employee suited to the role, task, and work culture, schools also strive to prepare the "right" citizens for the community and cultivate future leaders for the 21st century.

The current research aims to provide insight into the foundation of emotional intelligence within classrooms. It offers a data-driven analysis of areas where teachers excel and identifies competencies that teachers need to enhance. By doing so, it aims to better equip teachers to train the citizens of tomorrow in the social-emotional learning skills necessary for personal and social competencies.

SEL programs designed to promote social well-being in schools can aid learners in identifying their emotions, labeling their feelings, monitoring and regulating emotions, and gaining an understanding of both themselves and others. These learners often experience improvements in academic outcomes and behavior, as well as foster a supportive environment among their peers. Consequently, such programs contribute to creating a more positive atmosphere within schools.

Recently, a systematic review conducted in 2021 demonstrated that Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) interventions on a global scale contribute to increased social and emotional well-being and mental health among young people, while also decreasing instances of depression and negative behavior. This review provided evidence that implementing such programs in schools facilitates the positive development of students from diverse family backgrounds and geographical contexts. By affording all learners equal opportunities to be regarded as equal partners in education, SEL

programs help minimize stereotypes among students. Moreover, longitudinal studies have indicated that students who attend schools emphasizing the importance of emotional well-being exhibit better mental health later in life. These students are more adept at self-awareness, regulating their lives, and making effective decisions (DePaoli; Atwell; Bridgeland & Shriver, 2018).

Students, alongside teachers and administrators, recognize the benefits of attending schools that prioritize social and emotional teaching (SEL), particularly in terms of improving relationships, reducing bullying, and preparing for post-secondary education, work, and life (DePaoli; Atwell; Bridgeland; Shriver & 2018).

Research within the pedagogical community has revealed that schools offering SEL exposure and activities are highly appealing to students from diverse backgrounds. Students in SEL-focused schools exhibit social skills and emotional development that contribute to a conducive learning environment, where they feel respected and valued. Consequently, they experience enhanced academic performance, foster positive relationships with others, are better prepared for life beyond school, and are more inclined to serve and contribute to their communities compared to peers who did not receive SEL education in their schools.

When students have supportive relationships and opportunities to develop and practice social, emotional, and cognitive skills across various contexts, academic learning accelerates. Numerous studies provide consistent evidence that Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) enhances academic performance.

Results from a landmark meta-analysis examining 213 studies involving over 270,000 students revealed the following:

- SEL interventions addressing the five core competencies led to an 11 percentile point increase in students' academic performance compared to non-participating students.

- Students engaging in SEL programs demonstrated improved classroom behavior, enhanced stress and depression management skills, and more positive attitudes towards themselves, others, and school.

- Further meta-analyses corroborated these results, indicating consistency across independent research teams and providing robust support for the benefits of well-implemented SEL programs (Durlak et al., 2011).

More recently, a systematic review conducted in 2021 revealed that universal Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) interventions effectively enhance young people's social and emotional skills while also reducing symptoms of depression and anxiety in the short term. In contrast, other approaches such as mindful interventions have shown inconsistent results, and positive youth development interventions have demonstrated limited evidence of impact (Aguirre, 2021).

Worldwide data provides compelling evidence that social-emotional learning (SEL) programs are essential for fostering a more tolerant world. Education serves as the means to shape tomorrow's citizens,

equipping them with self-awareness, teaching them self-regulation, and fostering understanding of themselves and others. Through these means, individuals can build and maintain healthy relationships with themselves and their surroundings.

Given the diverse definitions and approaches to SEL, it is crucial to unify efforts and create harmony around concepts of the "self" and the "other," encompassing understanding, empathy, and effective decision-making. Without a clear nationwide policy, these efforts may diverge, resulting in varied definitions and implementations, potentially leading to chaos instead of peace.

4. Research Objectives

SEL programs target learners, parents, teachers, administrators, and the broader community, encompassing all stakeholders within the education system. The implementation of SEL curricula in schools holds promise on a larger scale, aiming to prepare lifelong learners who are competent, self-aware, and empathetic citizens in their society (CASEL, 2021).

SEL plays a crucial role in fostering equity within the community, providing a safe environment for all learners regardless of their abilities or background. By promoting collaboration and effective communication, these programs contribute to a supportive learning environment. Moreover, SEL initiatives enhance academic performance, boost learners' self-esteem, and improve their ability to form lasting, meaningful relationships. This interdisciplinary approach, which integrates academic content with essential life skills, offers a framework for investigating and understanding its profound implications.

It is imperative to examine emotional intelligence through the perspectives of both education and psychology, at both national and international levels. Developing social and emotional skills has the potential to foster greater equity in education, while also improving mental health and well-being, increasing tolerance levels, reducing disruptive behaviors, and positively impacting academic performance. Studies have demonstrated that these skills serve as protective factors, reducing the likelihood of students becoming targets of bullying and decreasing the risk of either being bullied or engaging in bullying behaviors themselves. Through Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), students can cultivate empathy and enhance their ability to resolve conflicts effectively (Farrington; Ttofi; Zych & 2019).

The study provides a sample of a teacher training module on emotional well-being and social-emotional learning, encompassing skills such as self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. The current research seeks to explore the awareness and preparedness of teachers regarding social-emotional learning and to propose an effective program to assist teachers in introducing these essential skills into classrooms and school cultures. It underscores the significance of emotional intelligence and social skills in the lives of both learners and teachers, with the following goals in mind:

1. Conducting a comprehensive analysis of the literature dedicated to emotional intelligence to establish a foundational understanding of the topic.

2. Explaining the concept of emotional intelligence, identifying its components, and presenting its key characteristics to provide clarity and insight.

3. Investigating teacher awareness and understanding of emotional intelligence through surveys, interviews, or other data collection methods.

4. Proposing a training module designed to equip teachers with the knowledge and skills necessary to intentionally introduce social-emotional skills in schools.

5. Providing pre-training and post-training data and findings on teacher awareness to assess the effectiveness of the training module and inform future improvements.

5. Methodology

The study commenced with a pilot study involving interviews with school principals and teachers to establish the groundwork for the research. Focus groups were then conducted to introduce the concepts of emotional intelligence and social skills, aiming to ascertain a common general understanding among educators in Lebanon. Questions posed during these focus groups included inquiries such as "Can you define emotional intelligence?" "What do you believe are the social skills needed for learners in the 21st century?" "Do you have policies related to social-emotional well-being?", and "Have your teachers attended any workshops or courses on this subject?". Responses to these questions predominantly ranged from "I don't know" to "We don't have time for it." The focus groups revealed a lack of a common definition among participants, and it became evident that they had little to no experience in implementing social-emotional learning (SEL) skills within classrooms. Despite this, teachers mentioned various activities they were utilizing in their classrooms with the hope of improving the social skills of their students. However, they were not aware that these activities were directly targeting social-emotional learning. This highlights a gap in understanding and implementation of SEL practices among educators in the studied context.

Following this, a letter was distributed to school principals to encourage teachers to participate in the current study.

Additionally, the survey tool was shared across various social media networks of teachers, who voluntarily filled the form. The initial section of the Google Form distributed to all participants focused on collecting demographic information. A total of 87 females and 17 males participated in the study. The participants' ages were diverse, Fig. 1: Age distribution of participants, as were their years of experience in teaching Fig. 2: Teaching experience of teachers. The second section of the study consisted of the various tools to measure the emotional intelligence of teachers.
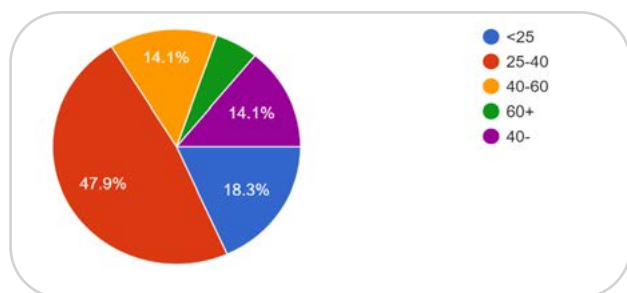
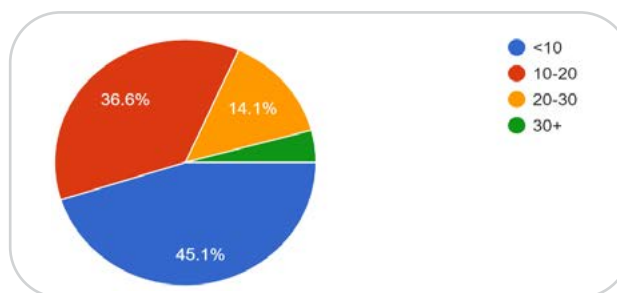**Fig. 1:** Age distribution of participants

Fig. 2: Teaching experience of teachers

The first tool in this area was N. Hall's tool that is used for assessing "emotional intelligence" (EQ questionnaire) 09.02.2017 Irina Andreeva 9 N. Hall's method for assessing "emotional intelligence" (EQ questionnaire) // E.I. Ilyin. Emotions and feelings. – St. Petersburg: Peter, 2001. – S. 633-634. N.

Hall's technique is proposed to identify the ability to understand the relationship of the individual, represented in emotions, and manage the emotional sphere based on decision-making. It consists of 30 statements and contains 5 scales: 1) emotional awareness, 2) management of emotions (rather it is emotional outgoing, emotional non-rigidity), 3) self-motivation (rather, it is just arbitrary control of one's emotions, excluding paragraph 14), 4) empathy, 5) recognition of emotions of other people (rather – the ability to influence the emotional state of others). Table of contents: 1. Instructions for using the N. Hall technique. 2. The text of the questionnaire by N. Hall. 3. Key to N. Hall's method instructions for the use of N. Hall's technique. Below you will be offered statements that one way or another reflect various aspects of your life. Please write a number to the right of each statement based on your score: Completely disagree – (-3 points); Mostly disagree — (-2 points); Partially disagree — (-1 point); Partially agree – (+ 1 point); Mostly agree – (+2 points); Completely agree – (+ 3 points).

6. Findings

The Hall's tool was utilized to measure the emotional awareness of the participants. Upon comparison between males and females, it was found that females exhibited higher levels of self-awareness compared to males, who scored lower on this aspect.

Table 1: Emotional awareness of participants

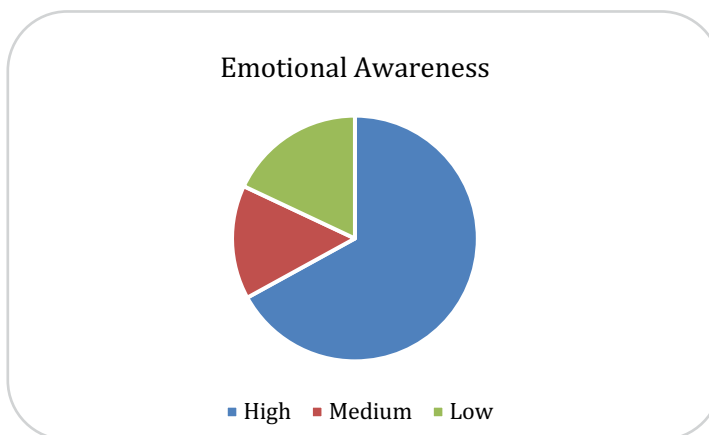|	Emotional awareness
Female	%
High	73
Medium	15
Low	12
Male	%
High	30
Medium	23
Low	47

Fig. 3: Emotional awareness of participants

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Female teachers exhibited a higher level of self-awareness compared to male teachers. However, across the entire population, whether male or female, a majority (67%) demonstrated high levels of self-awareness and self-knowledge, with 15% exhibiting medium levels, and only 18% displaying low self-awareness.

Similarly, in terms of emotional management, women tended to have higher levels of emotional control and regulation compared to men. Overall, the analysis of emotional management skills revealed that 59% of participants demonstrated high levels of emotional regulation, 22% exhibited medium levels, and the remaining 19% displayed low emotion regulation skills.

Table 2: Emotional Management of participants

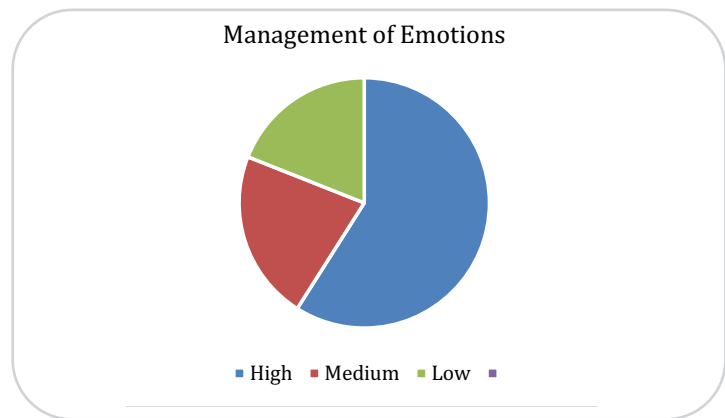|	Emotional management
Female	%
High	62
Medium	24
Low	14
Male	%
High	42
Medium	12
Low	46

Fig. 4: Emotional Management of participants

The third aspect measured by Hall's tool was self-motivation. The results remained consistent with the previous components. The majority of teachers demonstrated high levels of motivation (56%), with 16% exhibiting medium levels, and 28% displaying low motivation.

Table 3: Self-motivation of participants

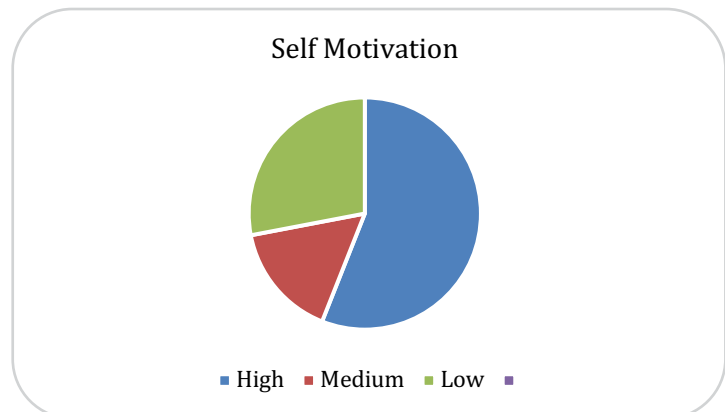|	Self-motivation
Female	%
High	58
Medium	16
Low	26
Male	%
High	47
Medium	17
Low	36

Fig. 5: Self-motivation of participants

The next section of the Hall's tool measured the social skills and interpersonal capabilities. The results differed from those of the first section, which focused on intrapersonal skills and personal attributes.

Table 4: Empathy level of participants

	Empathy
Female	%
High	25
Medium	32
Low	43
Male	%
High	6
Medium	30
Low	64
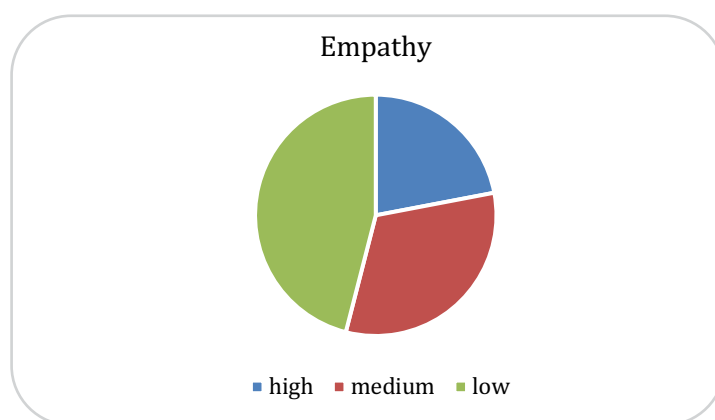
Fig. 6: Empathy level of participants

Forty-three percent of females and 64% of males scored low on empathy, while the overall scores were consistent with the detailed description. On average, 53% of the general population scored low on empathy. Specifically, 46% of the participants scored low on empathy, 32% scored medium, and only 22% scored high.

Table 5: Ability to recognize emotions of others

Recognition of other people's emotions	
Female	%
High	24
Medium	17
Low	59
Male	%
High	12
Medium	35
Low	53
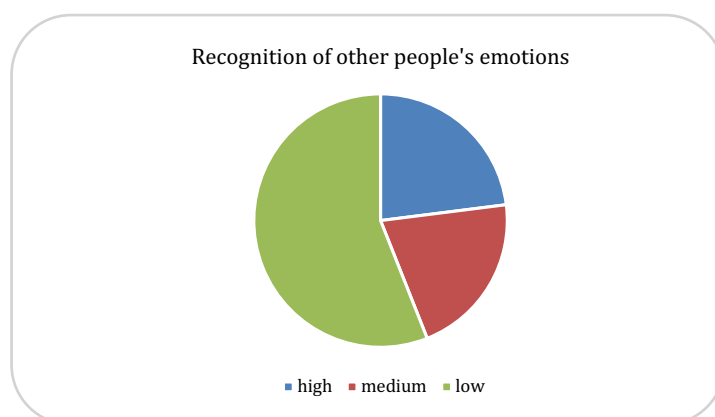
Fig. 7: Ability to recognize emotions of others

The final component aimed to evaluate individuals' capacity to recognize emotions in others. The results indicated that 59% of females and 53% of males scored low in their ability to recognize and interpret emotions in others. Overall, 56% of participants demonstrated a low score in these skills. Fifty-six percent of overall participants showed low scores in these skills.

These findings raised concerns about the current situation. In response, a new training course was developed by the researcher, drawing upon various research in the field, including resources from CASEL and Daniel Goleman's theory. The training module was based on a literature review and the researcher's teaching and training experience. It was then offered to a group of participants to enhance their emotional intelligence.

Second, data were collected post-training after three months to compare results and assess the potential benefits of such training modules for teachers. The participants in the training were all females with varying years of experience in teaching.

Post-training Analysis of the Results were as Follows: The Hall's tool

Pre-training	
Self-awareness	
High	67
Medium	15
Low	18

Post-training	
Post-training Self-awareness	
High	68.5
Medium	15.5
Low	16

Management of emotions showed slight improvement as well.

Management of emotions	
High	59
Medium	22
Low	19

Post-training Management of emotions	
High	61
Medium	22
Low	17

Nevertheless, the interesting part was about motivation.

Motivation	
High	**56**
Medium	16
Low	28

Post-training Motivation	
High	**27.4**
Medium	53
Low	19.6

Next, empathy was measured. The analysis revealed that prior to training, 46% of teachers scored low on empathy. However, following the training, only 3.9% scored low on empathy. Additionally, the percentages of medium and high levels of empathy increased from 32% and 22%, respectively before training to 49% and 47.1% post-training.

Empathy	
High	22
Medium	32
Low	46

Post-training Empathy	
High	47.1
Medium	49
Low	3.9

The next section provided insight into recognizing emotions in others, also known as "reading" emotions, as an additional competency in emotional intelligence.

Recognizing emotions in others	
High	23
Medium	32
Low	45

Post-training Recognizing emotions in others	
High	41.3
Medium	50.9
Low	7.8

The low levels decreased from 45% to 7.8%, while the medium and high levels increased.

7. Discussion

Evidence indicates that teachers demonstrate self-awareness and possess effective skills to manage and regulate their emotions, particularly in terms of personal competencies such as self-awareness and self-regulation, enabling them to lead and motivate themselves effectively.

However, there are significant concerns regarding their level of empathy and their ability to understand and interpret the emotions of others. This is particularly concerning as empathy and understanding others are fundamental aspects of the teaching and learning process. For schools to improve academic performance and provide students with a solid foundation in social skills, teachers play a crucial role as agents of change.

As role models, teachers must possess the ability to empathize and understand the emotions of others. This allows them to demonstrate empathy and kindness effectively, fostering a supportive and nurturing learning environment for students.

It is crucial to identify, the need for social-emotional and emotional intelligence skills among teachers, both before and during their teaching careers, whether in pre-service or in-service teaching tracks. Providing teachers with training and professional development opportunities to enhance these skills is essential to ensure their readiness to implement curricula and national frameworks effectively.

Furthermore, integrating social-emotional learning and emotional intelligence into teacher preparatory courses and programs is of utmost importance. This ensures that future teachers are equipped with the necessary empathetic skills to enter classrooms and establish supportive relationships with learners. By incorporating these concepts into teacher training, educators will be better prepared to implement teaching strategies that prioritize emotional well-being and foster positive learning environments.

It is noted that the Ministry of Education is currently preparing a Social-emotional Learning curriculum and framework at the national level, although it has not yet been fully disseminated to all schools in Lebanon. Once these curricula reach teachers, it will be imperative to provide them with unique courses and training to prepare them for effective implementation.

The research conducted demonstrated that training, similar to the one administered throughout the study, has the potential to improve teachers' empathy levels and enable them to develop and maintain healthy social skills. Therefore, for teachers already in classrooms, it will be essential to offer training sessions, workshops, and courses to equip them with the necessary skills to implement the Social-emotional Learning curriculum effectively.

Moreover, for student-teachers, these courses should be integrated into their teaching diploma programs. These programs typically cover topics such as the philosophy and psychology of education, as well as lesson planning and classroom management skills. By incorporating training on Social-

emotional Learning into these programs, future teachers will be adequately prepared to meet the needs of 21st-century learners and create supportive and nurturing classroom environments.

Targeting both pre-service and in-service teachers is indeed an effective approach to training educators on emotional intelligence and empathy. By equipping teachers with these essential skills, they can better support demotivated learners and emotionally unbalanced youth, thereby contributing to the healing and recovery of society as a whole.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated teacher burnout, and lowered motivation, making it a major concern. Without addressing the mental health needs of educators and providing them with tools for self-care, motivation, and empathy, they may struggle to cope with the demands of the profession. It is crucial to prioritize the well-being of teachers, as they play a pivotal role in shaping the educational experiences of students and fostering positive learning environments. Investing in teacher training programs focused on emotional intelligence and empathy can help mitigate burnout and ensure that educators are better equipped to navigate the challenges they face in their profession.

Kindness and empathy are essential qualities for future leaders, and we must provide our children with training in empathy and social skills. Without these skills, they may encounter difficulties as they navigate their way through life. As educators it is our role, to propose tools for teachers to:

- Target their emotional well-being and health.

- Identify tools to effectively introduce Social-emotional learning inside classrooms.

- Structure lessons that target the mental health and emotional well-being of learners creating safe classrooms for all learners

It is through such professional development opportunities that the effective framework would be complemented and implemented, so that emotional intelligence and empathy, through education, can create equity in society. Here, self-aware and confident individuals aim to be motivated to build and maintain healthy relationships, tolerate those who are different, accept those with special needs, and create more inclusive and sustainable societies with lifelong learners.

Readiness at the level of policymakers is crucial when discussing the concept of emotional intelligence and social skills. It is vital to ensure that leaders in education systems, organizations, and schools understand the long-term benefits of developing Social-emotional Learning (SEL) programs and experience their competencies in emotional intelligence. This understanding enables them to effectively communicate the purpose and importance of such programs.

School leaders and national educators at the ministry level need to monitor, evaluate, and provide ongoing feedback on the development of competencies within their personal development plans, as well as the impact of these programs within schools. This comprehensive approach ensures that SEL

initiatives are effectively implemented and supported at all levels of the education system.

Educational leaders need to conduct a clear needs assessment of their own strengths and limitations as a first step to initiating and advancing such programs inside schools. This allows them to enhance their capabilities before becoming change catalysts within their organizations. These leaders should prioritize both their self-development and the development of teachers in these vital skills. Providing evidence from science, psychology, and education can help teachers understand the importance of these initiatives and encourage their participation.

When organizations plan such changes within the spirit and culture of schools, clear, objective, honest, and scientific communication is crucial. Educational leaders can effectively convey the rationale behind these programs and garner support from all stakeholders when they exhibit open communication and transparency

It is vital, therefore, to examine how these skills can become part of the culture of organizations and impact the lives of various stakeholders. Goleman (1995) emphasizes that emotional intelligence skills are teachable and learnable. Research indicates that emotional intelligence is initially influenced by genetics and then further developed during childhood. It grows and increases through healthy and meaningful experiences and interactions, including those between parent and child, child to child, child to school, and child to society. Aligned with Goleman's perspective, Qualter and Gardner assert that social and emotional learning curricula implemented in schools can assist children in enhancing their emotional intelligence. These programs have the potential to improve children's self-worth and self-regard from the early stages of life (Qualter & Gardner, 2007).

If personal and social competencies such as self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, motivation, and emotional coaching can indeed be learned and acquired, as affirmed by Mathew, Deary and Goleman, then the next question arises: where should these skills ideally be taught? According to Mayer and Salovey, schools are considered the optimal environment for introducing social skills at early ages. They argue that human beings should ideally be introduced to emotional intelligence as early as they begin school, and these skills should be taught through educational institutions and curricula, much like any other skill. (Mathew, Deary, 2009; Goleman, 1995;1998; Mayer, Salovey, 1997).

Specific policies, actions, and steps need to be taken to plan to introduce these skills into the academic world. More specifically, Petrides, K. V., Frederickson, N., & Furnham, A. (2004) conducted a study involving 650 pupils in British secondary education to assess the potential role of emotional intelligence in academic performance and deviant behavior at school. Their findings indicated that the trait-emotional intelligence was significantly correlated with scholastic achievement, particularly in language subjects. Additionally, the trait-emotional intelligence showed a negative association with unauthorized absences and expulsion from school. According to Petrides et al., emotional intelligence

is an aspect that warrants investigation, particularly for vulnerable learners. This suggests that understanding and nurturing emotional intelligence may play a crucial role in supporting the academic success and well-being of students, especially those facing challenges or adversity (Petrides, K. V., Frederickson N., & Furnham, A., 2004).

Teacher preparation partnered with content development is a vital step in this process. Brackett and Katulak emphasize that the introduction of any new change to school curricula should ideally begin with the education of teachers, followed by administrative support before the desired results can be observed at the learner level. They advocate for teachers to receive training that equips them with both theoretical knowledge and practical tools to integrate new concepts and skills into education effectively (Brackett & Katulak, 2006).

Professional Development of teachers is crucial to start this approach. According to Brackett and Katulak, teachers need to attend workshops and training sessions before entering the classroom. These preparatory courses should provide teachers with a solid theoretical background as well as practical tools to implement innovative approaches and create a safe, caring, satisfying, and productive school environment. By adequately preparing teachers, educational institutions can ensure that they are equipped to meet the diverse needs of their students and effectively promote their social, emotional, and academic development (Brackett & Katulak, 2006). Therefore, realistically initiating advocacy through pre-service and in-service teacher training should be prioritized, followed by the establishment of a national framework and curricula for universities and schools.

8. Limitations

The current research primarily conducted online may have introduced variability in how teachers interpreted the given questions, serving as a potential limitation. Additionally, using a questionnaire in the English language could have posed challenges for teachers from French background schools who may have had difficulty understanding the questions.

To mitigate these limitations, it would have been beneficial to gather all teachers together and have the researcher read and explain all the questions simultaneously to ensure a consistent understanding aligned with the research aims. Furthermore, conducting the pre- and post-training surveys in person, along with the training, could have improved accuracy and reliability. A longer follow-up period post-training may also be necessary to provide more robust evidence of the effectiveness of the intervention.

Moreover, offering teachers training without adequate follow-up could present a challenge in assessing the sustained impact of the intervention. These limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings of the research.

9. Conclusion

World Health Organization appreciates the importance of mental health and emotional well-being in schools and urges active steps to be taken to cater to this need. Research shows that such a transformative approach can benefit teachers, schools, learners, and society at large.

Research shows that teachers in Lebanon have not encountered courses on Social-emotional Learning in their preservice training and diplomas and some of these teachers have not yet even attended professional development on these skills. The analysis showed that teachers are not yet ready to cater to their own well-being and mental health and survey noted and highlighted the need for a training for teachers so that after that they can cater to learner wellbeing. During these harsh times, learners need relationships, self-awareness, emotion regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills.

When schools are able to train teachers on these skills then we can equip them with tools to cater to their well-being and also tailor their teaching-learning processes to match the needs of the 21st century.

It is safe to conclude that teachers need these pedagogical pieces of training on emotional intelligence to become educators equipped to teach 21st-century learners.

Nevertheless, it is important to appreciate that this is a transversal effort where teacher training will be complemented by teaching-learning resources and curricula for learners. These curricula will be matched with learner textbooks and workbooks.

10. Recommendations and Future Research Directions

Teachers and school curricula are the first agenda. Brackett and Katulak assert that the introduction of any new change to school curricula should commence with teacher education, followed by administrative support, before noticeable results can be observed at the learner level. They argue that before teachers enter the classroom, they must undergo proper workshops and training to effectively create a "safe, caring, satisfying, and productive school environment." According to their research, these preparatory courses should offer teachers both theoretical knowledge and practical tools to implement innovations in their daily classrooms (Bracket & Katulak, 2006).

Preservice and in-service teachers felt the need to integrate technology into education, thus digital citizenships and information communication technology were introduced in the teacher preparatory courses. To facilitate this integration, numerous seminars, conferences, workshops, and courses were offered to ensure that teachers were equipped to utilize technology for enhanced teaching and learning methodologies suitable for 21st-century classrooms. Nevertheless, for the changing world and the conflicts in the region, it is vital to prepare teachers with knowledge and skills to support learners nationwide. The need for Social-emotional learning (SEL) is more pressing than ever, and Lebanon requires a curriculum in teacher preparatory courses to equip them with these skills as they prepare

to enter classrooms. Pre-service teachers and teaching diploma programs need to offer courses on effective ways to introduce emotional intelligence and social skills inside classrooms.

Therefore, in-service teachers need workshops, seminars, and other forms of learning, that are required to allow them to acquire knowledge about these skills and how to integrate them into their teaching methods while aligning them with their academic objectives.

Next, Schools need to integrate SEL into their culture, utilizing both top-down and bottom-up approaches, simultaneously, to ensure that teachers' efforts are supported by a nurturing environment that promotes these skills. Unique SEL sessions may enhance this process, and providing explicit sessions for learners on self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, motivation, and social skills can empower them to become better decision-makers and problem-solvers. Here also, the Ministry of Education needs to offer beyond a general framework, which is theoretical, rather detailed curricula. Teachers need to have clear guidelines to follow, along with teaching resources to support this transformative journey.

Finally, policy-makers play a crucial role in creating general policies and roadmaps to address teacher-administrator-learner-parent mental health, ensuring that all their stakeholders, especially learners have access to quality education that enhances the emotional well-being of citizens, especially children and teachers.

Parental awareness and involvement are essential for this journey and partnership. This path of self-discovery enables communities to invest in each other's strengths, and support and develop one another, fostering growth, service, and prosperity. By moving beyond despair and loss towards a hopeful future filled with passion and self-fulfillment, communities can thrive and flourish.

Social-emotional Learning curricula offer hope for the nations, to equip learners with these life skills at times of peace, nourishing them with self-awareness and confidence, allowing them to discover their passion, dreams, fears, and goals to draw roadmaps of life success. These skills allow individuals to build and maintain healthy relationships with empathy and kindness as their foundation. At times of conflict, these "ready" and resilient individuals can cope with stress and fear, support each other, and help create sustainable societies, despite the chaos and destructions.

It is through hope and compassion that future leaders are built and it is through these leaders, that the future of the nation is reconstructed with the foundation of openness, tolerance, and acceptance.

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Appendix 1 presents a syllabus for a teacher training course on Social-emotional Learning (SEL). The course aims to equip teachers with the knowledge and skills necessary to address their own emotional intelligence and well-being, as well as to implement effective classroom activities that promote SEL within schools. Ultimately, the goal is to contribute to the cultivation of a kinder future, fostering the development of more empathetic leaders who are self-aware and adept at managing their emotions.

Appendix 1: The 12 hours training contained 6 modules:

1. Introduction to Emotional Intelligence.

2. Self-awareness.

3. Self-Regulation.

4. Motivation.

5. Empathy.

6. Social Skills.

Course Outline

MODULE 1: Introduction to Emotional Intelligence

- What is Emotional Intelligence?

- Effects of Emotions in Our Lives.

- Why is Emotional Intelligence Needed?

- Benefits of Emotional Intelligence at the Workplace.

MODULE 2: Self-awareness

- Know Yourself.

- Identify Dreams, Passion, Values, and Beliefs.

- Perform a SWOT Analysis to Identify Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats.

MODULE 3: Self-regulation

- Science of Emotions and How They Work.

- Understanding Emotions in the Self and Others.

- Self-control.

- Managing Emotions.

- Meditation and Other Techniques.

MODULE 4: Motivation

- Self-motivation.

- Understanding Optimism and Pessimism.

- How to motivate others as a teacher-leader?

MODULE 5- Empathy

- Empathy vs Sympathy.

- Importance of Empathy as a Teacher.

- Developing Your Empathy.

- Developing Empathy in Your Classroom.

- Developing the Empathy of the Learners.

- Creating Lessons that Foster Empathy in Learners.

MODULE 6- Social Skills

- What are Social Skills?

- Making a Powerful Impact.