

Exploring Social Skills Among Students And Its Effects On Teachers

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Abstract:

Proficient social skills significantly contribute to students' well-being, help them understand the environment around, foster meaningful relationships. This challenge requires a multi-faceted approach with an obvious involvement of teachers; despite of all the tactics being played, some internal and external factors hinder students from honing this skill. Teachers often encounter a myriad of challenges when students lack adequate social skills. This chapter explores the attitude of the students towards social skills, and look into the under lying factors contributing the deficits in students, how this inability of the students is affecting the teachers' mental health.

Keywords: Social Skills, Factors, Challenges, Mental Health

Introduction:

"If a country is to be corruption free and become a nation of beautiful minds, I strongly feel there are three key societal members who can make a difference. They are the father, the mother and the teacher." - Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam

These lines are overwhelming and have the ability to make a teacher feel proud and teachers, without any doubt play a vital role in shaping the future of students. Whenever, the topic of education system is up for discussion, the duties and responsibilities of a teacher are emphasized. Teachers are constantly reminded about their role, their importance and dedication towards the students. Instead of appreciating, thanking and rewarding them for their efforts, they are encouraged to do a better job next time or unwanted tips are showered on them. The following things are expected from teachers: teachers are not allowed to complain, they cannot feel bad, they cannot be upset because they were disrespected, they have no right to be angry with the performance of the students and the list goes on. Does anyone ever try to understand the teacher when he/she says "I am tired of my students", "I cannot keep going", and "They squeeze my energy out" etc. The minute these sentences come out of a teacher, the following conclusions pop up: "this individual is not capable of handling pressure", "lacks confidence and patience", "does not know how to engage students and control the class", etc. The primary problem takes a back seat i.e., students and their lack of social skills. This basic and a mandatory skill of students is happily and very conveniently ignored and labeled as ignorance, innocence and with a reason like, "young minds need time to master these skills" etc. By default, the real problem is shoved under the carpet and as a result, the future of the country (students) is not able to hone their social skills.

Nurturing social skills in students is need of the hour. These skills play a crucial role not only in their academics but also in their personal life. They must navigate through various stages of life and face challenges; students must have the knowledge of the interconnectedness of the world. They must learn to collaborate, communicate effectively, work in team efficiently; by working on their social skills. Students can be empowered by understanding the root cause of poor social skills, and by eliminating it students can thrive in social diverse contexts.

Understanding Social skills

Complexities of the modern world are never ending, the ability to adapt this constant change is highly challenging. Gaining clarity over social dynamics, being emotionally balanced and embracing diversity are essential for an individual. Achieving this, is possible only by focusing on the following: Communication skills (Intra & Inter), Empathy, Team work, Non-verbal Communication, adaptability, collaborative nature, self-awareness and listening skills. Students need these skills to interact with people, they must gain the ability to behave and get along with everyone in a social setup. This is understood as social skill; they encompass wide range of capabilities.

The question here is, are the students able to acquire or work on their social skills? Are they willing to learn them in the first place? Being a responsible teacher, if students are not showing any interest, teachers must put more efforts and make student work.

What if students are extremely reluctant? The following things need to be understood and analyzed:

What option does teachers have? How do they struggle? What measures can they take? What happens to their performance in the class? What about their mental health?

When students lack social skill, it has detrimental effect on teachers. This will stop them from being an active instructor, they start questioning their efficiency, class room management becomes challenging, and this complex teacher-student relationship impacts the mental health of the teacher.

Students who lack social skills, engage in disruptive behavior; they cannot collaborate and also do not let their peers finish the work assigned. Constant interruptions and uncanny behavior of students results in detraction of instructional time, effects the quality of the lecture delivered and becomes a hurdle to meet the objective of the session. In short, teachers spend their time and energy on behavioral issues instead of focusing on academic instructions. Having ineffective communication between teacher and students creates problems for teachers, teachers struggle to understand the mindset of the students, and students show reluctance in expressing their thoughts, emotions and opinions. Since, students left the teacher in a dilemma, teacher cannot design a proper lesson plan and achieve a high success rate, this barrier can impede the academic performance and give raise to the feelings of incompetence, incapable etc.

Role of Social skills in Student- Teacher relationship

Being a teacher is not an easy task, because teaching is a demanding profession and it comes with an immense responsibility. Teachers go beyond delivering academic content; they manage classroom, behavioral issues and try to help students in every possible way by fostering positive learning. Managing all these requires a significant amount of time and energy from teachers, the disruptive behavior of a student leads to stress, emotional exhaustion and this might in turn affect the performance of the teacher and waste the valuable instructional time. Teachers are emotionally invested in their students; they not only work on their academics but also on their personality development by Providing individual support, resolving conflicts, entertaining the tantrums to create a positive and inclusive classroom environment. In spite of all these when students lack in social skills, teachers feel a sense of responsibility and feel like a failure. This emotional toll can lead to burnout, restlessness, detachment and decreased job satisfaction.

Teaching and learning, a continuous process, which will be fruitful only when a student and teacher share a positive relationship. Students with poor social skills cannot establish a meaningful connection with teachers, this can hinder trust and communication. Disturbance between a teacher and student results in felling of frustration, helplessness, wrong attitude and approach towards the curriculum, ending with negative interactions, non- cooperation affecting teachers' mental health severely. Due to this, teachers need to do some additional planning and put extra efforts on these students. Modifying the classroom techniques, making sessions more interactive, involving the students who lack in social skill can be overwhelming and challenging for already overburdened teachers. The fear of being perceived as unproductive, inefficient and ineffective eats teachers from the inside, so they isolate themselves. They reject or hesitate to seek help, the feeling of isolation sets in and this can exacerbate the feeling of stress, anxiety, losing control on emotions, bursting out etc. no professional support can leave teachers feeling unsupportive and undervalued. Constant need for re-direction and discipline has detrimental effect on teachers' mental health and affects their ability to maintain a conducive learning environment.

Need for social skills

Social skills are essential for both teacher and student, this skill set has profound impact on the teaching- learning process. This interplay of social skills between teachers and students is dynamic and reciprocal. The social skills displayed by a teacher will help students to adapt a positive classroom culture where as when students contribute to a productive classroom environment, which makes teaching more effective and enjoyable.

The following are the benefits of having good social skills:

1. LSRW- The four skills listening, speaking, reading and writing. Out of which at least two skills will be enhanced. Effective listening and speaking are fundamental; they enable students to express their ideas and emotions with clarity.
2. Fostering better relationship with teachers and peers.
3. Encourages group dynamics, shared leadership, resolving conflicts with utmost care.
4. Students with good hold on their emotions excel in various domains, they have a perfect balance of their emotions. They can cope better with stress; they are good at managing their emotions and also others magnificently.
5. They never back-out from facing challenges they confront the difficulties rather than escaping and escalating.
6. It boosts the self-confidence, self-esteem, free and healthy interactions with others may be useful and gainful in future.

Lack of social skills in students and its impact

When a student lacks social skills, the repercussions are not only faced by an individual but also by the society. Social integration, family dynamics, friends and relationships all come under this radar. Students disengage themselves from classroom, group works and from the social set up. They avoid participation, discussions; they do not show any interest in contribution and miss out on opportunities. They do the same even at their work place. They cannot work in a team or

collaborate with team members, they sometimes become victims and easy targets at workplaces as their colleagues either make them a scapegoat or flood them with work. They let others take their credit, poor interpersonal skills will definitely affect the present job and also future job prospects. Less involvement in community can give rise to misunderstandings and conflicts causing social divisions. All this result in being alone, the feeling of not able to express oneself properly will lead to anxiety, depression, and loneliness. So, by inculcating the social skills at a young age, we will save our students from all the problems in future.

Result of over emphasizing of social skills at a young age

Placing excessive emphasis on enhancing social skill can be hazardous, and can lead to negative consequences. Students are under constant reminders of their behavior resulting in performance anxiety, they feel pressurized for unrealistic societal expectations. Natural social development gets effected and harmed due to fear of failure and fear of disappointing parents, peers and teachers. Students will choose to please others rather than confronting and questioning; this is like they undermine their authenticity. They will not even try to express their true self; they do not bother about their self-identity. Excessive focus on structured behavior will restrict students from critical thinking, exploring, it also increases dependency. They wait for validation and approval, limit themselves from making independent decisions, reduce resilience to criticism and rejection, cannot understand constructive criticism or feedback. Both teachers and parents play a crucial role in students overall well-being and success, both academically and personally.

Strategies to enhance Psychological Resilience in Teachers

Crisis management is an essential trait of all the individuals and is a must attribute in teachers. Due to various reasons mentioned above, teachers are slowly failing at this. While facing a unique set of challenges they have to take a test of their resilience on daily basis. Addressing the diverse student needs, disruptions in classroom, administrative meetings and demands, pressure to meet the dead lines, career growth issues, balancing the personal and professional life etc., all these are affecting teachers' psychological resilience. It is crucial for teachers to maintain a proper and healthy mental life style, well-being and sustain their passion for teaching.

Psychological resilience is an ability to mentally or emotionally cope with a crisis or return to pre-crisis status quickly. It does not eliminate or end the problem or the root cause of the stress and erase the difficulties of life, but it gives the strength to deal and tackle the problems of life. Having a strong psychological resilience helps in managing and responding to emotional experiences effectively, develops a positive outlook and nurtures optimism, works on self-efficacy i.e., belief in one's own ability, it also enhances the capacity to find solutions without any dependency and improves decision making ability.

The following strategies can be beneficial for the teachers:

1. The administration can conduct workshops, talks, training sessions or personality development programs on stress management and building resilience. This will help teachers to handle day-to-day risks and challenges of the job.
2. Introducing the teachers to the Self-Care Practices will fetch good results. They must be taught to prioritize their physical health as well as their mental health. Picking up new hobbies like, meditation, relaxing and having a calm time etc.
3. Adaptability must be inculcated in teachers. Change is inevitable, and this must be understood and accepted by the teachers. They must be trained to adapt changes, challenges, new policies, teaching methods etc.
4. Making someone comfortable and welcoming is a part of the strategy. Help teachers build a support system or a strong network. They must be encouraged to establish health and happy relationships with colleagues.
5. Emotional stability comes with good work place relationships. Teachers can maintain a positive and calm demeanor, which will have a positive impact on students.
6. Self-Evaluation, Self- Motivation or let us call it as reflective practice, regularly reflecting on our actions, works, performance, experiences, learning from success, failures and setbacks. This will help in growth of personality teachers.
7. Ensuring teachers have access to mental health resources, setting up counseling rooms, open communication platforms/ groups to help teachers maintain positive outlook, optimism and get rid of the feeling of hopelessness and despair.

By fostering psychological resilience in teachers, we can support teachers and help them in their challenging and demanding profession.

Conclusion

Teachers understand the importance of social skills in the lives of their students, they continue to recognize the integral connection between this skill set and the future or development of the students. They come forward and promote social-

emotional learning, ensuring a harmonious life along with holistic development of the students. The struggle to nurture social skills in students is not an easy task but still teachers work hard to equip students with it. In this process, they face various mental health issues, it underscores the interconnectedness between student behavior and teacher mental health. In order to overcome this problem, management/ administration has to take necessary measures and create a supportive environment for teachers and focus on their psychological resilience. This requires a collaborative effort involving teachers, administrators and parents to make teachers job convenient and to address the diminished job satisfaction. By prioritizing the wellbeing of teachers the entire education community will be benefited.

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