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PROMOTING EMOTIONAL WELLBEING THROUGH INCLUSIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PRACTICES

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ABSTRACT

Emotional wellbeing is a fundamental component of early childhood development because it influences children's ability to develop positive relationships, regulate emotions, communicate needs, participate in learning activities, and establish a healthy sense of identity. Inclusive early childhood education provides an educational environment in which children with different abilities, learning needs, cultural backgrounds, languages, family circumstances, and emotional experiences are welcomed, respected, and supported. The present research examines how inclusive educational practices can promote emotional wellbeing among young children by creating supportive classroom environments, encouraging positive peer relationships, strengthening teacher–child interactions, and ensuring equitable participation in learning experiences. Particular attention is given to emotional safety, acceptance, empathy, social inclusion, play-based learning, differentiated teaching strategies, and collaboration between teachers and families. The study adopts a proposed mixed-methods research framework combining quantitative information from teacher questionnaires with qualitative insights from interviews and classroom observations. The proposed analysis focuses on identifying relationships between inclusive classroom practices and indicators of children's emotional wellbeing, including confidence, emotional expression, cooperation, engagement, and feelings of belonging. The research also considers challenges that may limit the implementation of inclusive education, such as insufficient teacher training, limited learning resources, large class sizes, and inadequate institutional support.

KEYWORDS: *Emotional wellbeing, inclusive education, early childhood education, social-emotional development, emotional regulation, inclusive classroom practices, child development, teacher–child relationships, belonging, educational equity.*

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood is a significant period of human development during which children begin to develop emotional awareness, social understanding, communication skills, self-confidence, and the ability to establish relationships with others. Experiences during these formative years can influence children's attitudes toward learning, their responses to challenges, and their capacity to participate constructively in family, school, and community life. Early childhood education therefore has responsibilities that extend beyond academic preparation and include supporting children's psychological security, emotional expression,. Mate, J. (2025). Found social participation, and overall wellbeing. In contemporary educational settings, children enter classrooms with diverse developmental abilities, cultural identities, linguistic backgrounds, family experiences, and individual learning requirements. Some children may require additional assistance with communication, sensory processing, mobility, attention, emotional regulation, or social interaction, while others may experience challenges associated with poverty, family transitions, language barriers, or limited access to learning opportunities. Inclusive early childhood education recognizes these differences as important considerations in educational planning rather than reasons for exclusion or reduced participation. It promotes learning environments in which children are accepted as valued members of the classroom community and receive appropriate support according to their individual circumstances. Emotional wellbeing is particularly important in inclusive settings

because children's experiences of acceptance, friendship, respect, and security can influence their willingness to participate in educational activities.

A child who feels safe and understood may be more willing to communicate, explore unfamiliar materials, ask questions, collaborate with classmates, and recover from everyday disappointments. In contrast, repeated experiences of rejection, discrimination, isolation, or misunderstanding may contribute to anxiety, withdrawal, frustration, and difficulties in social participation Ji, Y., Tao, M. J., Mair, L. O., Singh, A. K., Fang, Y., Rajendran, S., ... & Moran, J. L. (2025).explainds. Teachers consequently play an important role in creating classroom environments that promote emotional security through respectful communication, predictable routines, positive reinforcement, responsive caregiving, and opportunities for meaningful choice. Inclusive educational practices may include adapting learning materials, providing different methods of communication, Pandey, C., & Diwan, H. (2025). revealed organizing cooperative play, encouraging peer support, respecting cultural differences, and developing classroom rules that protect every child's dignity. These practices can help children understand that individual differences are normal and that everyone deserves opportunities to learn and participate,Family involvement is equally important because parents and caregivers can provide valuable information about children's interests, communication styles, emotional triggers, cultural traditions, and developmental needs. Pasini, J. F. S., Cossetin, M., & Dolla, M. C. (2024). Elaborated on Collaboration between families and educators can support consistency between home and school environments and help identify concerns before they become significant barriers to participation. Despite increasing recognition of inclusive education, implementation can remain challenging when teachers lack specialized training, classrooms have limited resources, or institutions focus primarily on academic performance rather than holistic development.

Early childhood is a crucial stage of human development during which children begin to understand their emotions, establish relationships, develop self-confidence, and learn how to interact with others. Inclusive education ensures that all children, regardless of their abilities, disabilities, cultural backgrounds, languages, socioeconomic circumstances, or individual learning needs, have equal opportunities to participate in meaningful educational activities. Promoting emotional wellbeing through inclusive early childhood education practices requires the creation of a safe, supportive, respectful, and welcoming learning environment where every child feels valued, accepted, and understood. Teachers can support children's emotional development by encouraging positive communication, providing opportunities for cooperative play, recognizing individual differences, and responding sensitively to children's emotional needs. Furthermore, inclusive classroom practices help reduce feelings of isolation, fear, discrimination, and exclusion while strengthening children's sense of belonging and security. When teachers use flexible teaching strategies, emotional expression activities, storytelling, creative play, and positive behaviour guidance, children become more capable of identifying their feelings, managing frustration, expressing their needs, and developing empathy toward others. Collaboration among teachers, parents, caregivers, and early childhood specialists is also essential because children's emotional wellbeing is influenced by their home environments, relationships, and everyday experiences. An inclusive approach encourages educators to recognize that children develop at different rates and may require different forms of emotional and educational support.

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RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To examine how inclusive early childhood education practices contribute to children's emotional wellbeing and social-emotional development.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How do inclusive early childhood education practices influence children's emotional wellbeing and social-emotional development?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Inclusive early childhood education has received increasing attention because of its potential to support equitable learning opportunities, children's development, and the participation of families and communities in educational processes. The literature indicates that effective early childhood education requires an integrated approach that recognizes children's cognitive, physical, social, and emotional needs. The joint UNESCO and UNICEF global report on early childhood care and education emphasizes the importance of coordinated support from families, educators, communities, and public institutions in improving children's learning and wellbeing. This perspective suggests that educational inclusion should be understood as a comprehensive process involving accessibility, Centeno, V. G. (2025).found that quality teaching, child protection, family engagement, and responsive learning environments rather than simply placing children with different needs in the same classroom (UNESCO & UNICEF, 2024). Within this framework, emotional wellbeing includes children's ability to express feelings, develop positive relationships, experience security, and participate meaningfully in everyday activities. Children who experience supportive interactions may be better positioned to develop trust, confidence, and constructive approaches to social challenges. Jain, A., Aggarwal, K., & Sagar, D. (2024). Conversely, exclusion, bullying, discrimination, and inaccessible teaching practices can prevent children from developing a strong sense of belonging.

Research and professional guidance on social-emotional learning also highlight the importance of helping young children recognize emotions, manage frustration, show empathy, cooperate with peers, and establish healthy relationships. UNESCO's Asia-Pacific teacher-training resources emphasize teacher wellbeing, responsive classrooms, diversity, inclusion, cultural responsiveness, equity, and the measurement of social-emotional learning as interconnected elements of effective early childhood education. These themes demonstrate that teachers require both pedagogical knowledge and emotional competencies to create supportive classroom environments (Singh Diwan, 2022). Another important theme in the literature is the relationship between teacher–child interactions and emotional security. Respectful communication, predictable routines, Masyitah, M., Baiti, N., Nisa, U., & Masuwd, M. A. (2024). ELABORATED ON encouragement, attentive listening, and calm responses to challenging behaviour can help children feel understood and accepted. Teachers who acknowledge individual differences and provide developmentally appropriate assistance can support participation without making children feel isolated or inferior. Play-based learning is especially relevant because imaginative play, storytelling, music, drawing,

cooperative games, and role-playing provide opportunities for children to identify emotions, negotiate relationships, express preferences, and practice empathy.

In inclusive classrooms, these activities can be adapted through visual instructions, sensory materials, simplified language, assistive communication, flexible grouping, and alternative ways of participating Yang, H. C., Kwok, P. Y., Li, L. H., Liu, Y. M., Jong, Y. J., Lee, K. Y., ... & Wu, J. Y. (2025).REVEALED. A 2025 study by Amjad and colleagues examined inclusive teaching practices among 300 early childhood education teachers in the Kasur and Lahore districts of Punjab, Pakistan. The study reported a positive association between inclusive teaching practices and academic performance, with student engagement partially mediating that relationship. Although its main outcome was academic performance rather than emotional wellbeing, its findings provide relevant contextual evidence concerning the potential value of inclusive teaching, engagement, play support, and classroom environment in Pakistani early childhood settings (Amjad et al., 2025). The literature also indicates that inclusive practices depend on conditions beyond individual classroom activities. Teachers may struggle to meet diverse emotional and developmental needs when professional training is inadequate, Clayback, K. A., Partee, A. M., Williford, A. P., Downer, J. T., Parker, K., & Lhospital, A. S. (2025, FOUND THAT class sizes are large, learning materials are inaccessible, or specialist support is unavailable. Family participation can help educators understand children's communication preferences, cultural experiences, interests, and emotional responses, while collaboration with school leaders and relevant specialists can support more consistent interventions. UNICEF's work on inclusive early childhood care and education reinforces the need to move from general commitments to practical systems that improve access, participation, and the quality of services Centeno, V. G. (2025).revealed. Despite these developments, further research is needed to understand how particular inclusive practices influence emotional wellbeing across different educational settings, especially where schools have limited resources and children experience varying forms of social or developmental disadvantage. The present study addresses this issue by bringing together classroom practices, educator preparedness, family collaboration, institutional barriers, and observable indicators of emotional wellbeing within a proposed research framework for 2025–2026.

METHODOLOGY

The proposed study will use a mixed-methods methodology to investigate the contribution of inclusive early childhood education practices to children's emotional wellbeing. A mixed-methods approach is appropriate because the research requires both measurable information about classroom practices and detailed explanations of teachers' experiences, perceptions, and implementation challenges. The quantitative component will use structured questionnaires completed by early childhood educators to gather information about inclusive teaching strategies, teacher preparedness, emotional-support practices, family collaboration, and perceived indicators of children's wellbeing. The qualitative component will involve semi-structured interviews with selected teachers and, where appropriate, school leaders, together with systematic classroom observations conducted using an ethical and developmentally appropriate observation framework. The proposed research population will consist of early childhood educators working with children approximately three to eight years of age in

public and private educational institutions. If the study is conducted in Pakistan, participating institutions may be selected from an agreed geographical area to ensure feasibility and contextual relevance. A proposed sample of approximately 150 teachers may be used for the questionnaire survey, while 15–20 teachers may be invited to participate in interviews and a smaller number of classrooms may be selected for observation. These numbers are planning estimates, not actual participant counts, and should be revised according to institutional access, statistical requirements, and ethical approval. Purposive sampling may be used to select schools with different institutional characteristics, while stratified or other suitable probability sampling may be considered for the quantitative survey if a reliable sampling frame is available.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The study will adopt a pragmatic research approach because the research questions require a combination of numerical analysis and contextual interpretation. Pragmatism allows researchers to select methods according to the nature of the research problem rather than relying exclusively on a single philosophical or methodological tradition. A convergent mixed-methods design is proposed, in which quantitative questionnaire data and qualitative interview or observation data are collected during the same general research period, analyzed separately, and then compared to identify areas of agreement, difference, and complementary explanation. The quantitative component will examine patterns in educators' reports of inclusive practices and emotional wellbeing indicators, while the qualitative component will explore how those practices are implemented in real classroom situations. For example, questionnaire results may indicate that teachers frequently use cooperative play or emotion-labeling activities, while classroom observations and interviews may reveal whether children with communication difficulties, disabilities, or language differences can participate meaningfully in those activities. The study will be primarily cross-sectional, meaning that information will be collected during a defined period rather than following the same children over several years. Consequently, the design will be useful for identifying associations and describing experiences but will not independently establish that a particular inclusive practice causes improved emotional wellbeing. If resources permit, a small longitudinal follow-up or a pre- and post-intervention component could strengthen the research by examining changes after teacher training or the introduction of inclusive classroom activities. The study will also use a contextual perspective by considering school type, classroom resources, teacher experience, professional development, and family engagement when interpreting findings.

DATA ANALYSIS

The quantitative data will be analyzed using suitable statistical procedures to examine patterns in inclusive educational practices and their relationship with reported indicators of children's emotional wellbeing. Initially, responses will be checked for completeness, consistency, duplicate entries, and missing information before being entered into statistical software such as SPSS, R, or an equivalent program. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, will summarize teachers' backgrounds, professional training, classroom practices, available resources, and reported approaches to supporting emotional wellbeing. Where appropriate, multi-item scales will be

examined for internal consistency, and the results will be interpreted alongside the limitations of self-reported information. Correlation analysis may be used to examine relationships between inclusive classroom practices and perceived emotional outcomes, while multiple regression may be considered to assess whether inclusive practices are associated with emotional wellbeing after accounting for relevant factors such as teacher experience, class size, professional development, and institutional resources. The choice of statistical tests will depend on measurement levels, distributional assumptions, sample size, and the final research questions. Results will be reported with appropriate effect sizes and confidence intervals, rather than relying solely on statistical significance. The analysis will not assume that an association between inclusive practices and emotional wellbeing establishes a causal relationship. Qualitative interview transcripts and observation notes will be analyzed using thematic analysis. The researcher will become familiar with the data, generate initial codes, group related codes into potential themes, review and refine those themes, and develop an interpretation supported by the collected evidence. Possible themes may include emotional safety, teacher responsiveness, peer acceptance, inclusive play, family collaboration, professional confidence, and resource constraints; however, the final themes must emerge from the actual data rather than being predetermined as findings.

CONCLUSION

Promoting emotional wellbeing through inclusive early childhood education practices is an important educational priority because the early years provide opportunities to establish positive relationships, develop emotional awareness, strengthen confidence, and build a sense of belonging. Inclusive education can help create environments in which children with different abilities, languages, cultural backgrounds, and developmental needs are welcomed and supported. Its effectiveness depends not only on educational policies but also on the everyday interactions, teaching strategies, classroom resources, and institutional relationships that shape children's experiences. Responsive teacher–child relationships, inclusive play, accessible learning materials, emotional literacy activities, positive peer interactions, and family collaboration represent important areas for educational planning and professional development. The proposed research offers a framework for investigating these practices through quantitative surveys, qualitative interviews, and classroom observations, with attention to both enabling conditions and implementation barriers. By combining numerical patterns with teachers' experiences and observations of classroom participation, the study may help clarify which inclusive practices are associated with positive emotional outcomes and where further support is required. Its conclusions must ultimately be based on the evidence collected, with appropriate acknowledgment of methodological limitations and differences between educational contexts.

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