

CHILDRENS' SOCIO-RELIGIOUS AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH THE LENS OF TEACHER AT EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

Early childhood period indicates the drastic changes in an individual's social and personal development. Teachers devise different pedagogical practice to enhance students' social and personal development at early childhood education. The objective of the study is to explore students' socio-religious and personal development at Early Childhood Education (ECE) in Pakistan. Researchers used qualitative method and case study research used for the study. The researchers chose 20 primary schools in the Pakpattan district with ECE rooms and one trained primary school teacher from each school. In interviews and observations, themes are identified. Then they interpret and describe the recorded observation sheet to meet the study's objectives. The study concluded that the students in the ECE room where they make the fullest use of greetings according to the situation show their socio-religious and extrovert nature. The study also concluded that students have developed their listening skills that are part of their personal development, whereas it also concluded that students are conscious about cleanliness that is an integral part of Islamic teachings. The study concluded that the students in the ECE room where they make the fullest use of greetings according to the situation show their socio-religious and extrovert nature. The study also concluded that students have developed their listening skills that are part of their personal development, whereas it also concluded that students are conscious about cleanliness that is an integral part of Islamic teachings. The study's pedagogical implications suggest that early childhood educators should be taught new methods to address current socio-religious requirements and that ECE classrooms should be outfitted with modern technology to facilitate better and foster student learning.

Keywords: early childhood education, teaching practices, socio-religious development, personal development

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood (EC) period indicates drastic changes in an individual's social and personal development. The period described above started from birth to eight years, and it is crucial for cognitive, socio-religious and emotional development and physical growth. According to Denham and Brown (2010), cognitive developments in children's brains start in the pre-natal stage and continue. The Ministry of Federal Education of Pakistan (2017) highlights how important it is for children to develop their abilities; to identify and express emotions and learn skills; to initiate, maintain and enjoy relationships with others. Teachers devise different

pedagogical practices to enhance students' social and personal development in early childhood education (ECE) and understand the various aspects of social and personal development. Zada (2014) identifies several strategies that would raise the profession's status and argue that action is required for progress at ECE level.

Religion has a significant impact on all societies and numerous civilizations around the world. It has proved to be the binding force for social change throughout history, inspiring people to cultivate moral qualities and encourage them to contribute for their fellow humans and contribute to their societies' betterment. Tolerance, kindness, love, fairness, modesty, sacrifice, trustworthiness, devotion to the well-being of all, and solidarity — these fundamental moral values that lay at the core of religion — are the pillars of a progressive society. So, the socio-religious and personal skills include; skills to establish safe and secure relationships, positive interactions with others, to persist, problem-solving, develop understanding, identifying, expression of emotions and resolve grouping conflicts as well as to awaken the dormant faculties for adverse circumstances (Hyson, 2004; Goodman et al., 2015). Children use their social and personal skills in everyday interactions and activities. They required a socially enriched environment within educational settings, where socio-religious and personal skills allow children to participate actively with confidence.

Children with practical social and personal skills can form and maintain friendships, have positive attitudes towards social experiences, are readily accepted by their peers and are more likely to succeed academically (Denham & Brown, 2003). Young children with good social and personal skills will likely grow up developing and maintaining lasting friendships and intimate relationships. Ali et al. (2018) supports the idea of friendship and intimate relationship while ICT is a tool that enhances students' communication efficiency and students' academic intimacy rapidly. Information communication technology has impacted students' lives negatively, but it also has the potential to change their social and religious lives to a great extent. We should implement information communication technologies in our schools and colleges daily, keeping in mind the needs of the new era. Because these institutions are responsible for the personal development and socialization of children, and from there, our social and religious cultures are sprout out. The use of ICT will brighten the future of early childhood education. It will also help to become effective parents, have a job, work well with others, make positive contributions to their communities, and have a good experience. Physical and mental health enhances satisfaction with life (Goodman et al., 2015).

Socio-religious and personal competence is composed of a combination of skills, knowledge, opportunity and motivation. The teacher may play a significant role in the promotion of socio-religious and personal competence. Therefore, teachers must have to know the essential skills that they want to teach children. In addition, children need significant opportunities, motivation and the inclination to practice their developing skills. Teachers can support children in every aspect of this process of learning. Most early childhood emerging researches show that social and personal skills learned in the first years of life have the most significant impact on lifelong outcomes (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). The study's objective is to explore students' socio-religious and personal development at ECE level.

Literature Review

Child development experts in various disciplines, such as education, medicine, child protection, recognize the importance of positive social and personal development for the general well-being of the child and the question continues to gain prominence in public

discourse (Cooper et al., 2009; Isakson et al., 2009). Research and practice to understand and support social and personal development in the early years of childhood have explored for decades. Social and personal skills recognized as critical to children's success, both in school and in other contexts, and later in adult life (Thompson & Lagattuta, 2006). Social and emotional experiences with critical caregivers and interactions with other children and adults at an early stage of life, open the door to future academic and personal outcomes and encompass other development areas (Denham & Brown, 2010; Konold & Pianta, 2005).

When social and emotional skills development among children, they gain confidence and skills to build relationships, solve problems, cope with others and maintain their emotions (Parlakian, 2003). Social and emotional skills related to school readiness have received a great deal of attention. Research indicates that the social skills and process skills that accompany them, such as attention and obvious learning methods at school entry, that is, about five years, are the better indicators of subsequent social and emotional skills.

When teachers develop receptive and useful relationships with students, they create an environment that unites people and engenders feelings of belonging, security, and sense of responsibility for each person in the group. This relational environment provides the platform for intentional teaching in which teachers help students expand their ideas and actions through sensitive, informed and complementary information (Ministry of Education, 1996). However, stable and accessible relationships are not enough in themselves to teach students personal and social skills; teachers must also use well-informed and intentional strategies (Epstein, 2014). Research has shown how teachers can intentionally support and teach young children's personal and social skills, create motivational opportunities for learning and practice, and respect children's rights for appropriate and rewarding learning experiences (Phillips, 2000). The most effective learning is neither granted nor left to chance; this occurs when teachers use "naturalistic experiential learning opportunities, moment by moment" (Evans & Harvey, 2012).

Teachers' teaching practices support them in their work with young children. It is common to recognize that the identification and appointment of specific instructional practices can help teachers understand the tools and strategies they could use daily to support their teaching-learning process for early childhood education. This work recognizes the importance of professional knowledge, experience and teacher education to inform intentionality in teaching and the use of evidence-based practise models (Bourke & Loveridge, 2013) to guide the educational decision on human development. The results presented here provide information on research conducted in teacher-run kindergartens, which generally attended by children aged 3 to 5, focusing on practices associated with socio-emotional education. It is essential to keep in mind that current research focuses on intentional teaching practices for infants and young children (McLaughlin et al., 2016). Social and emotional skills also predict academic achievement uniquely, even when other factors are considered, such as previous academic success (Denham, 2006). Also, better-controlled children are more likely to become healthier adults; thus, they will have less addictive.

Conversely, social and emotional maladjustment may prevent children from functioning in the family, school, or other contexts (Campbell, 2006). Failure to develop safe links with caregivers can lead to further difficulties in communicating or managing emotions or developing positive relationships with peers (Sroufe, 2005). Emotional or behavioural problems in young children are related to adolescent health and behavioural problems, including early school leaving and juvenile delinquency (Brauner & Stephens, 2006). Finally, some social and emotional problems, such as anxiety and depression, also negatively predict

subsequent educational outcomes. Social and emotional development measures reflect the diversity of children's developmental skills. Research and professional knowledge have long-established the importance of relationships (Hamre & Pianta, 2001).

In today's world, the social aspect is characteristic of most work in religious education today, but only a few individuals have precisely and consistently presented a profession's social and religious component. In this field, George Albert Coe's work is fundamental to creating a new socio-religious theory. Coe's *Social Philosophy of Moral Instruction* (1917) is one of the religious socio-ethics first attempts. This focus was a passion of his life, which influenced much of his later work and classroom teaching. It will guide how it can affect today's efforts to develop an amalgamation of socio-religious development of students in early childhood education. Coe's works of life focus on creating a greater society than in the past and the current, regenerating the educational, social framework and creating a modern world community, revising existing values of faith and morality, and educational policy reforming religious, ethical standards. In his social values, he became more than rhetorical and actively interested in issues of peace and fairness, the well-being of oppressed and racially disadvantaged movements, labour rights and economic justice.

Coe's social theory about religious education is that changing the individual through education will restore society (Moore, 1987). Coe shared with his peers the conviction that all are worthy and social change is the product of individuals who recognize their inherent goodness. He differed from the conversions because, like marbles in a set, he did not think it would be an individual to make the transition; instead, he assumed that realizing one's worth would require a group of people growing together in a world where people can truly learn to live as neighbours and appreciate care's essence. Healthy people lead to a good society where everyone knows their strengths. In religious education, Coe's social theory, on the one hand, stressed the restoration of civilization by influencing and nurturing each person's individuality. The more one accepts one's uniqueness as being, the more one can meet the desires of humanity. He says personality enriches culture. Social ends of education are not hampered by high individuality among students, but are welcomed (Coe, 1917).

The role of external influences, biological maturity, and infant representations of the social environment and self contributes to childhood's social and personality formation. An example of this interaction is the effect of meaningful interactions, social knowledge acquisition, personality growth, and adolescent social and emotional maturity development. Indeed, personality shaping starts on the biological grounds of temperament and proceeds toward further growth, extension, and perfection. Therefore, the boy who drew parents' interest became an adult with a complex, demanding personality. For some of psychology's most prominent thinkers, personality evolution was a significant area of concern and asked the questions; how does personality evolve? Do our personalities distinguish each other? How did we become humans today? Several renowned scholars have developed theories to explain the different phases and processes along the personality growth course to address this problem (Thompson, 2021) and the following theories involve different facets of personality growth, including physiological, social, emotional and moral creation i.e. Piaget's cognitive development, Freud's structural model of personality, Erickson's psychosocial development, Kohlberg's moral development.

Early childhood education is the most ignored area in the first decade of the current century because we cannot emphasize early childhood education, and due to this, our children's identities tarnished. Whereas Preschool education is an essential early learning experience, and

it is viewed as the essential phase in child development since proper preschool education contributes to its overall development. While preschool education is an essential early learning experience, it is viewed as the essential phase in child development since proper preschool education contributes to its overall development (Wai Leng et al., 2021). Thus, children usually should not mature in society; often, weaknesses cling to their hearts and minds, leading to feelings of inferiority and other psychological problems. Here, we need to explore and develop children's social, religious, and personality traits at the grassroots level. Consequently, in our early childhood institutions, we must have a coherent grassroots structure to enable children's social, moral and personal development to nurture fertile minds in modern and technological environments. These are the children who will be our future leaders in various fields, who will be able to use their mental creative and artistic skills to help to improve their community and religion. Current research will help us understand what our teachers think about children's social, religious and personality's growth at the ECE level and how these can be modified and developed better. The objective of the study is to explore teachers' perceptions about students' socio-religious and personal development at ECE level.

METHODOLOGY

The study determined the views of teachers about students' socio-religious and personal development at Early Childhood Education. Researchers used qualitative research method for the study because according to Best and Kahn (2006) it describes persons, events, and so forth scientifically without the use of numerical data. The study explored the perceptions of teachers about students' socio-religious and personal development at ECE level in Pakistan, according to the need and objective of the study, it was a case study. A case study refers to a unique example of real people in a real situation in which multiple sources of evidence is used (David, 1993), enabling readers to understand ideas more clearly than by merely presenting them with abstract theories or principles (Cohen et al., 2005). According to Carol and Carol (2003) case study involves the detailed description and analysis of an entity from whom observations and interviews took. Purposive sampling used to choose the case to be included in the study sample, based on its judgment regarding its typical nature (Cohen et al., 2005). Researchers conveniently selected 20 primary schools where ECE rooms existed in Pakpattan district and then one trained primary school teacher related to ECE function and procedures was selected from each school. In this way, the total sample of the study was 20 trained primary school teachers.

Oral testimony is spoken account of witness or participant in an event. This evidence is obtained in a personal interview and may be recorded or transcribed as the witness relates his/her experiences (Best & Kahn, 2006). Researchers used two research tools; interview and observation sheet. For the preparation of interview and observation sheet, the researcher reviewed the government documents mostly the national curriculum of ECE (GoP, 2002) and curriculum for early childhood care and education (GoP, 2017). Sub-scales for interview were drawn from the documents mentioned earlier about teaching practices for students' socio-religious and personal development. The interview was prepared with concise and comprehensive nine open-ended questions and the observation sheet having some demographic information with 08 items and these 08 observations are prepared on the parameter of dichotomous options, "Yes" or "No". Their average ages were 4 to 6 years approx. However, they belong to different socio-economic family background and having affiliation with different ethnic groups.

Thematic analysis is used for the interpretation and description of interview and observation sheet. At first, researchers put the whole data for the online word cloud analysis and secondly, recoded observation sheet is interpreted and described according to the need of the study's objectives. The head of concerned school is already informed about researchers' visit to the school. The name of the teacher and school is not disclosed for specific issues.

FINDINGS

Interview

Question 1: Do you use role play method in your class? If yes ... How?

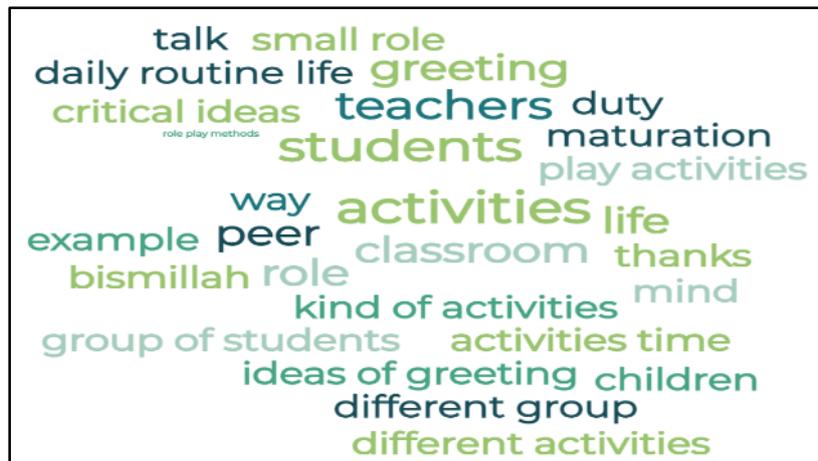


Figure 1. Role play method in the class.

Yes, the teacher instructs and guide the students related to performing their duty within the classroom. The teacher responded that students feel excited when they play or perform with their peer for an activity, so, they make a group of students within the classroom and assigns different activities to different groups. For example, before starting each activity, all the students will say, “Bismillah, بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ”. For every kind of activities, they will say, “Thanks you, شکره” to their peers. When students perform such activities time, they will be accustomed to such greetings in their daily routine life. So, in this way, they will perform all such roles in their routine life. Teacher’s talk revealed that small role-play activities are essential for maturation the critical ideas of greetings in a child’s mind for their socio-religious and personal development.

Question 2: Do you use students centered method of teaching?

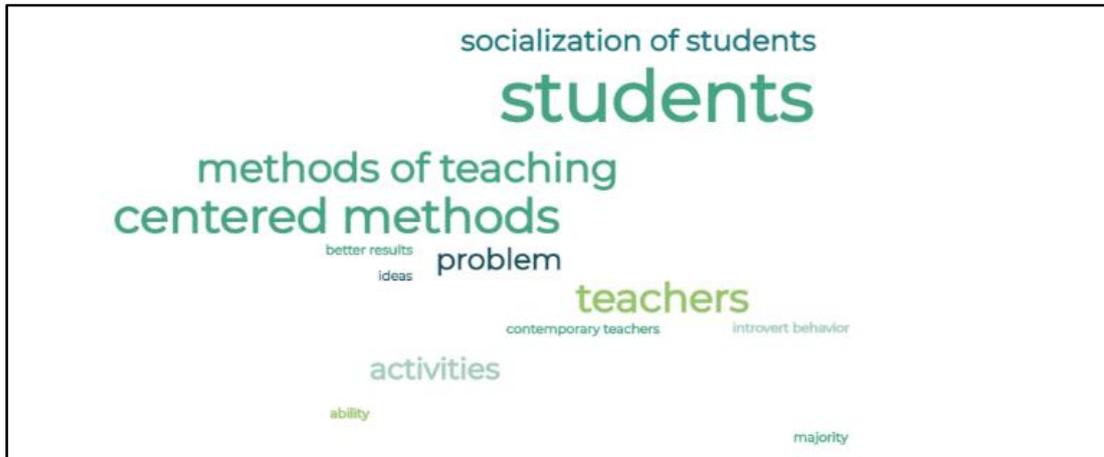


Figure 2. Students Centered Method

At this level, teachers are well aware about the method of teaching that required for such little angels because they use the techniques of intimacy with students frequently. While the teachers responded that they used students' centered method of teaching for their students. They invites the students for activities or to perform an activity and through different activities enhance the socialization of students and it also boost their introvert behavior. Therefore, students get the idea to solve the problem. It is concluded that majority of the contemporary teachers are intended toward student centered method of teaching for better results at early childhood education level. It is also revealed that the socialization of student and students' problem-solving ability improved by the student-centered method.

Question 3: How do you motivate students for positive relations with peers and adults?

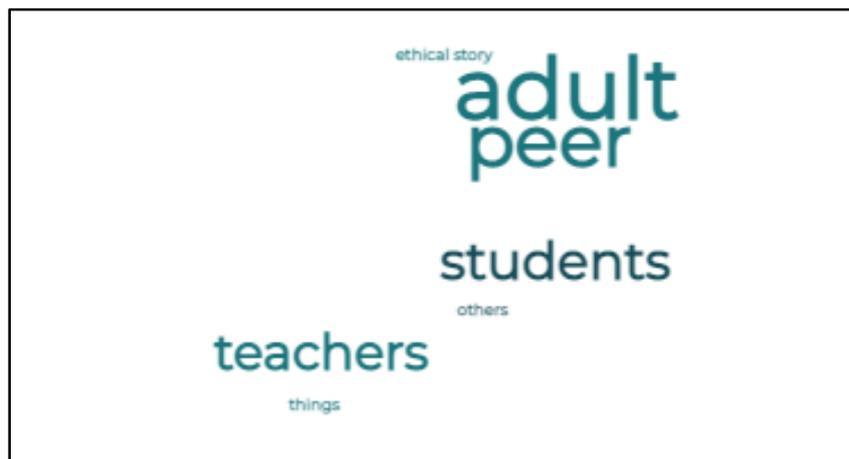


Figure 3. Teachers, Students and Peers Relations

The teachers responded that they told students different moral and ethical stories for positive relations with peers and adults. They motivate the students to respect their adults and care for their peers and adults' things. When they learn to care for each other, they will have to develop

positive relations with each other. It is discovered that the teacher motivates the students for positive relations with their peer and adults. It is possible by respecting and caring for others.

Question 4: How do you teach the idea of respect others' opinion among students?

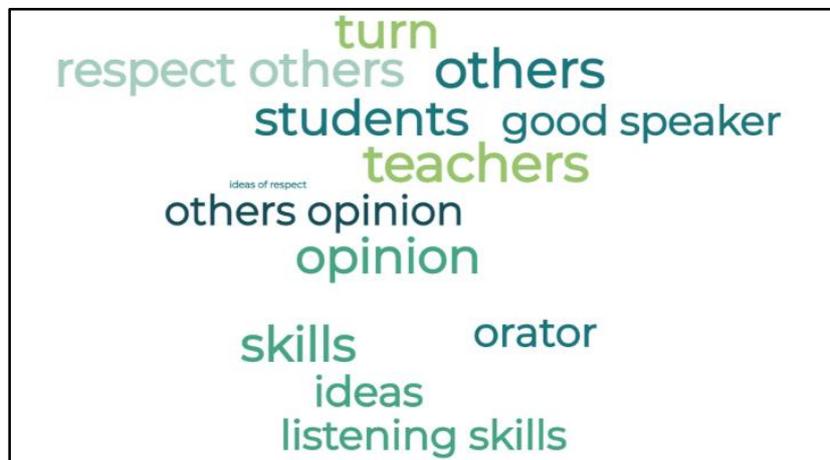


Figure 4. Idea of respect others' opinion among students.

At this level, teachers focus the listening skills among students about the idea of respect others' opinion. If the students concentrate listening skills then it would be expected that they will become good speakers and orators. The teacher teaches them to wait until their turn; thus, they will respect others' opinions. It is concluded that the teacher focused on students' listening skills, and due to this skill; they will wait for their turn and understand what the others are saying. Consequently, they will respect others opinion.

Question 5: How do you create sense of responsibility among students?

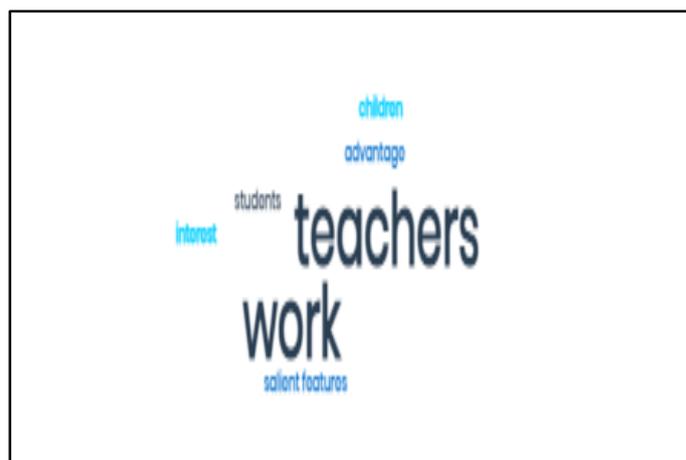


Figure 5. Sense of responsibility among students.

The teacher responded that teachers described the salient features of a sense of responsibility. He also describes the advantages of a sense of responsibility. So, students are much committed

to doing their work keenly. It is revealed that due to a sense of responsibility, children work with interest and keenly.

Question 6: How do you inculcate the idea of cooperation in students?

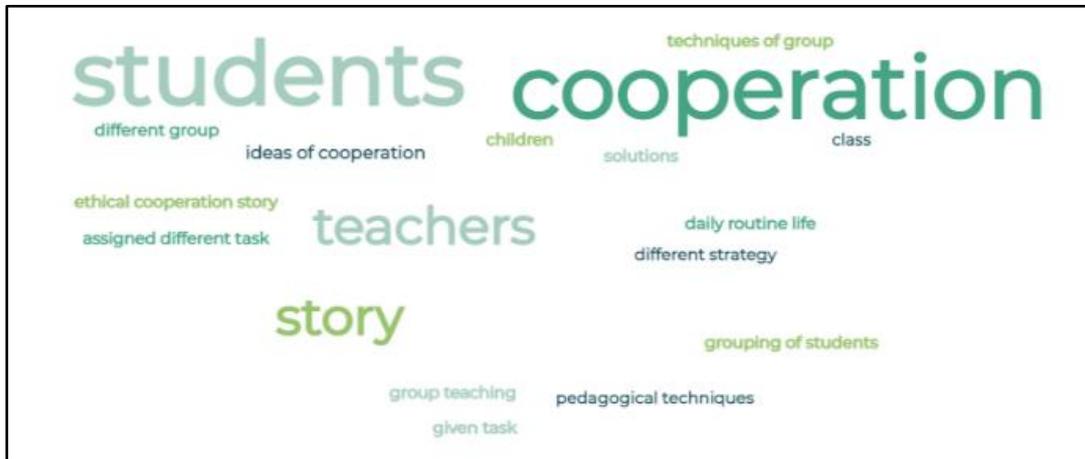


Figure 6. Ideas of cooperation among students.

At this level students are inspired by stories. The teachers responded they inculcated cooperation among students through Islamic and ethical cooperation stories. They used different strategies to enhance cooperation among students, i.e. grouping of students. They also use the pedagogical technique of group teaching. It is discovered that the teachers made groups within the class and assigned different tasks to different groups. So, students cooperate for the solutions of the given task. The ideas of cooperation will also help them in daily routine life for developing socio-religious and personal developments among students.

Question 7: How do you enhance self-confidence among students?

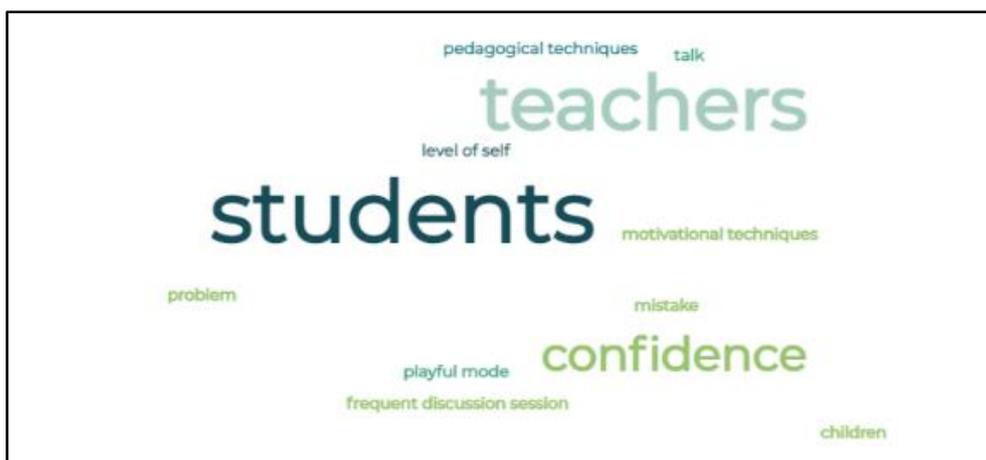


Figure 7. Self-confidence among students.

The teachers responded that motivational techniques used by teachers enhanced the level of self among students. Students feel calm in their talks. Teachers encouraged their students and

mended their mistakes in playful mode. Teacher makes frequent discussion sessions with students. Through these pedagogical techniques, students feel confidence among them. It is concluded that teachers diminish students' shy and make them confident enough to solve their problems.

Question 8: How do you inculcate religious ethics in students?

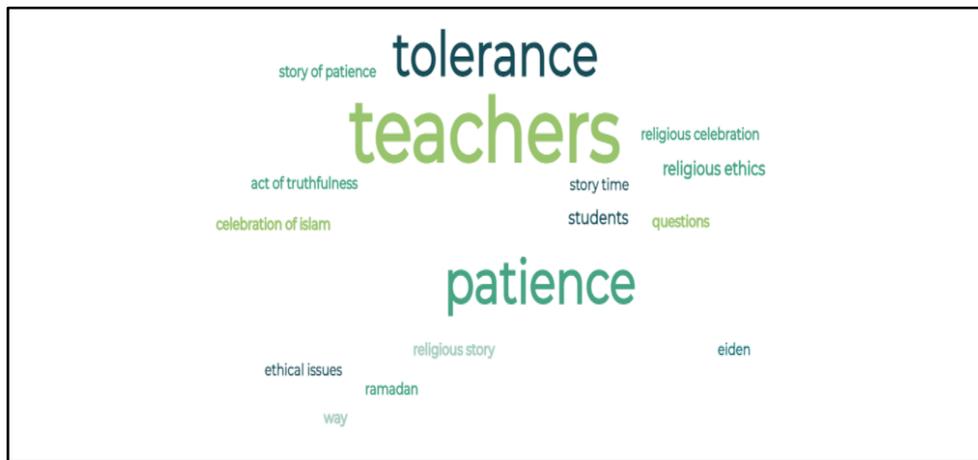


Figure 8. Religious ethics among students.

The teachers taught religious stories of patience, tolerance, Ramadan, and Eiden. The teacher put questions related to these stories again and again. In this way, students learn about religious ethics and religious celebrations of Islam. The above figure informed that the teacher taught moral and ethical issues and performed the acts of truthfulness, tolerance, and patience. When they perform all this, they feel relaxed, satisfy and comfortable. In this way, the students get the opportunity for socio-religious and personal development.

Question 9: How do you create discipline in the class?

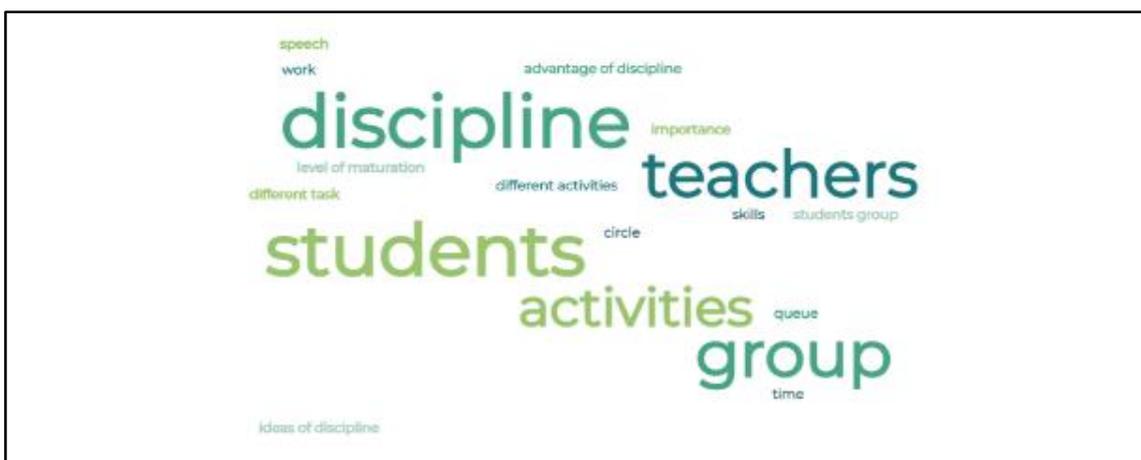


Figure 9. Discipline in the class.

The teachers devised different activities related to discipline, and through these activities, students get the idea of discipline. Through their speech, they prepare students for discipline.

In student groups, they sit in circles or lines (queue). When the teacher assigns some activities to groups, they silently do their work in groups. It revealed that the teachers taught them about the importance and advantages of discipline at first. Teacher makes student groups assign different tasks related to discipline. Then students perform, and the level of maturation in these skills increased over time.

Observation Sheet

Extrovert Behaviour

It was observed that the majority of the students were extrovert and having socialized nature. This salient feature informed us that students could form friends and interactive relations with peers and adult around them.

Listening Skills

It is a pragmatic aspect of students' personal development that they respect the feelings and views of others. When a student is talking about something; other students listen him/her carefully. Students wait for their turn when speaking and respects others' rights in the classroom. Majority of the students would be speaking politely. During an hour, two students cause noise once or twice within the classroom.

Sense of Responsibility

When a teacher assigns some work to students, they feel a sense of responsibility and work within time. It is observed that students feel interested in their work and do eagerly. Students make queues when they feel it necessary. Responsibility senses that they maintain the discipline in the school.

Cooperation and Sharing of Things

Cooperation is one of the primary characteristics of our religious teachings. Cooperation is an observed indicator in the study that informed us that students are cooperative and sensitive with fellows, elders and neighbours who may have learning or physical disabilities. Work and share materials amicably in groups.

Confident

It observed that majority of the students speak politely and be confident in their behavior. When a teacher asks students questions, the majority of the students feel confident and comfortable when they answer something.

Care for Neat and Clean Environment

Recognize and practice their responsibility in keeping the environment, home, classroom and neighbourhood clean. It observed that classrooms are neat, clean inside, and outside.

Greetings: “Asalaam Alaikum”, “Please”, and “Thank You”

Students look accustomed to the daily routine life greetings. It observed that when a student comes into the class, he says, “Asalaam Alaikum”. On the other hand, they say, “Thanks You” to their peer for every helping act.

Religious Practices

Students Know When to Say, “Bismillah”, Recite “Kalama”, “Prayers”, “Ramadan & Eiden”. When researchers took observations and discussed with the students, it observed that all the students know that for the beginning of each work, they shall have to say “Bismillah”, it also observed that they began every task with “Bismillah”. They recited the “Kalama” appropriately and knew about the five prayers with its names. They have little knowledge of Ramadan. However, they are fully aware of the Eiden and their unique characteristics.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATION

The current study explores different pedagogical practices that teachers used for students’ socio-religious and personal development at early childhood education in Pakistan. An interview and observation tool used for data collection. Whereas the major findings of the study show that children focused the pedagogical practices i.e. experiential learning, cooperative learning, learning by doing, problem-solving and brain-based learning, furthermore it is also found that children having extrovert nature and like socialization in their surroundings. It is found that teacher teaches greetings to the students and then students practice them through role play method within the classroom as well as in school. Teacher used student-centered method, and, in this way, students get maximum opportunities to learn. Results show that primary schools in Nigeria do not have trained quality teachers for E.C.E., teaching and learning resources were inadequate whereas many schools have not the recommended national curriculum (Ouludele et al., 2015). The observation showed that students were extroverts and having socialized nature. Teacher’s pedagogical practices enhanced students’ socialization and improved their problem-solving abilities. The students in E.C.E. room were making the fullest use of greetings according to the situation. It shows their socialized and extrovert nature. So, the children of present world concentrate more on the use of technology due to their socialized nature and the study of Baharudin et al. (2020) supported the idea that the use of technologies in teaching is an added value in improving the quality of existing teaching to make it more effective for early childhood education.

It also found that teachers motivated students to respect and care for adults and peers through their teaching practices. It observed that students have learned themselves the listening skill. Therefore, they listen to others and wait for their turn because it is communication ethics. The E.C.E. students respect others’ opinion because they have developed the good listening skills. Study concluded that students have developed listen skills; it is the part of their personal

development in a larger context. English speaking as a foreign language play a role in personal development and most tertiary level students are still struggling with their English language use even after years of learning English in schools and even majority of Malaysian students were still unable to gain a good mastery of the language (Jain et al., 2012; Padmanathan et al., 2021). Whereas it is observed that during an hour, two students cause noise once or twice within the classroom. On the other hand, Hunzai (2007) describes when teacher checks students' work, it takes her an hour, during this time, and the children who have finished their work are making a noise and fighting with each other.

Students demonstrate a sense of responsibility in doing their work. It is observed that students do their work timely and with full devotion. Students also maintain discipline in classes and the whole school, i.e. making queues, making circles. Through his polite and attractive speech, he motivates the students to make discipline in the class. Cleanliness is half faith. The neat and clean environment becomes a source of their personal development. It is concluded that students are conscious of cleanliness. So, their classroom was neat and clean.

The study found that the teacher used different teaching practices (grouping and discussion) for developing cooperation among students. Students cooperate for the solution of group tasks and get success. So, the teacher tries to inculcate the idea of teamwork among students for success through such activities. It is concluded that students work and share things cordially within groups. Students are confident in their talk as they feel calmness. Teacher diminishes students' shy nature and makes them confident enough to resolve their difficulties. Provision of monetary benefits for teachers at E.C.E. level would enhance their morale and motivation and attract brilliant people to enter the profession (Zada, 2014).

It is also found that teacher introduced students to different religious stories regarding patience, tolerance, Ramadan, Eiden Etc. They are aware of religious and cultural festivals. All the characteristics as mentioned earlier of teaching practices and E.C.E. classroom-focused and enhanced students' socio-religious and personal development.

CONCLUSION

According to the study's conclusion, a beneficial edge in growing their personality as extroverts and socialized nature people. Teachers should engage children in immersive, cooperative, hands-on, and problem-solving activities. According to the study, this quality makes them orators or instils the qualities of a good communicator in them. Using teaching skills, teachers establish a sense of responsibility. A religious story about patience, tolerance, Ramdan or Eiden was also included in the study for students' socio-religious awareness and personality development.

The study may recommend that teachers may train on modern lines for students' socio-religious and personal development at early childhood education; further, it may also be recommended that ECE rooms may furnished with latest gadgets for students' better growth and development.

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