INNOVATIVE TEACHER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES FOR EFFECTIVE ENGAGEMENT IN THE ERA OF COVID-19 IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN RIVERS STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated innovative teacher development programmes for effective engagement in the era of covid-19 in public secondary schools in Rivers State. The population of the study consisted of all the 290 public secondary schools in Rivers State with a population of 6,893 teachers in these schools. That is 5733 teachers and1160 HODs and 870 Principal, Vice Principals academic and administration. Therefore, the total was 776 teachers and management staff (i.e., 573 Teachers, 116 HODs and 87 Principals), representing 10% of the population was used as study participants. The multi stage sampling technique was employed. The instrument that was used for data collection a 12-item questionnaire titled: Innovative Teacher Development Programmes for Teachers' Effective Engagement in the Era Of COVID-19 Questionnaire (ITDPTEEQ). The 4- points modified likert rating scale was used. Cronbach alpha statistics was used to obtain 0.86 reliability. Mean scores and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while the z-test statistics was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The result amongst others revealed that, teachers who have received professional development in the area of mental health are better able to maintain their own mental health and their students and when educators work to improve their own socio-emotional competencies, they are better able to assist their students learn to control their emotions in stressful situations. It was recommended that, Teachers who have mental health knowledge are should encouraged by school administrators and government through seminar programmes to rekindle their knowledge to stand in the gap to give first aid advice on academic effect of mental health difficulties to students and parent alike.
KEYWORDS: *Mental Health, Socio-Emotional Competencies, Innovation, Teacher Development Programmes.*

INTRODUCTION

Teaching is an on-going professional activity, designed rationally for knowledge and skills acquisition which needs to be refreshed and developed with the passage of time, as new ideas and approaches towards developmental teaching and learning are discovered. This emphasizes the need for innovative teacher development programmes and activities for staff to update and enhance their professional skills in order to build and increase teachers' continuing engagement. Innovative teacher development programmes are much more than attending course like conferences, workshops, seminars, but activities done to help the teacher transform their classroom and world. This enhances strong pedagogical content knowledge, possess effective classroom management skills and rapidly adapt to new technologies (Lay-Cheng 2017). Meanwhile, the overwhelming consequences of COVID-19 pandemic as a health crisis that have ravaged the world in its entirety have also been an extraordinary time for teaching and learning. COVID-19 is a public health crisis that was announced by the World Health Organization (WHO) in January 2020 as a new coronavirus disease outbreak and was reported as a pandemic in March 2020.

Teachers in the recent fast transforming technological era are required to regularly upgrade their knowledge, skills and attitudes to meet the needs of the 21st century learners and learning and the process of executing this starts from exploring individual teachers' needs to provide them with avenues to upgrade their teaching with timely support and monitoring. Therefore, to enhance students' learning at the period of COVID-19, it

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is imperative that, the teachers are well trained and equipped to facilitate students' learning and assist them cope with the pandemic situation in preparing for the future. It is truism that, COVID-19 pandemic restricted many individuals to stay at home and doing less in terms of social interactions and exercise. This condition may have developed negative effects on individuals' physical and mental health condition. The Covid-19 emergency has not only resulted in school closures, it has also left millions of children and adolescents without support services such as mental health services and access to school counselors which are critical especially in times of crisis and uncertainty (Aperriba, Cortabarria, Aguirre, Verche, & Borges, 2020).

According Aperriba et al. (2020) the most sustainable methods of keeping school programmes going is to use teachers as strategic interventions inside the school and as resource workers to deal with mental health related difficulties in the current year of covid-19. Hidalgo-Andrade and Hermosa-Bosano (2021) in response to the mental health issues concerning the education of children during the covid-19, they revealed that, for the system to move in a direction that attract the continuity of education, provision of personnel and materials resource for the improvement of digital skills of teachers and students and make further preparation of the educational community, psychologically and emotionally with resources, create policies to guarantee socio-emotional stability and strengthening of teaching.

Teachers who were not prepared for the shift to on line education reported much greater levels of anguish perceived stress and lack of life satisfaction than their counterparts who had expertise in online teaching before the Covid-19 epidemic stuck. The research also shed light on the significance of instructors' background knowledge and experience in online teaching, as well as the relevance of early counseling and mental health development in assisting teachers in being more productive during the current COVID-19. In this regard, Castro (2021) found that school-based mental health services might be most effectively delivered by personnel with backgrounds in both education and health care, as this combination of expertise would better equip workers to navigate the complexities of school life and better serve students' mental and academic health. This tendency may have its roots in the fact that, as with students, instructors' positive attitudes and energy have a multiplicative effect on the quality of education provided in the classroom and the overall climate of the school.

This, however, does not change the reality that, in secondary schools, where effectiveness and efficiency reign supreme, assistance for teachers' mental health does not produce a pleasant teaching and learning environment. That is, secondary school teachers, regardless of their experiences or positions, they must actively seek knowledge in mental health support to enable them to become fully involved and strike a balance in the discharge of their responsibilities in the school and at home during the period of Covid-19. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers have faced unique challenges and tremendous pressure like quickly adapting to remote learning to balancing the impacts of the pandemic on their personal lives. The past year has made teachers particularly overwhelmed with stress, traumatic and experienced burnout.

It is in line with the above that Steiner and Woo (2020) figured out that, in order to ensure that the education system is able to fully recover from the impacts of the pandemic, it is critical that schools and government renew their focus on how to prioritize social and emotional supports for teachers, especially in their social and emotional health. Socio-emotional development programmes aims at increasing teachers' classroom management skills, develop teacher-student relationships and help students to acquire social skills. They also develop students' problem solving and anger-management skills especially when they are faced with difficult times (Jennings and Greenberg, 2019). Moreover, there is need to plan in efforts to establish norms, practices, and resources that support teachers' social and emotional issues to ensure that all teachers' unique needs are being met. In this regard, teachers should also be provided with ongoing professional development opportunities to develop their social emotional learning skills and learn how best they apply those skills to provide supports to their students (Jennings and Greenberg, 2019).

Despite governments' efforts to provide training and resources to support teachers in adapting to this new learning environment, turning from face-to-face to virtual classroom in such a short time has been a challenge as only a few teachers have strong digital and ICT skills. Hanife and Cigdem (2017) found in their study on socio-emotional learning programmes the faculty of education at Canakkale Onsekiz Mart University that most teachers have not heard of training of teachers in socio-emotional learning and therefore cannot give detailed explanation of how it can help to stabilize the emotions of teachers and students, which necessitates that teachers should be trained in socio-emotional learning. Teachers who have received training in social and emotional competence encourage their students to solve conflicts among themselves, help their students collaborate and establish positive communication in the classroom, and ease their emotions despite the trauma associated with the COVID-19 health challenge.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The educational system since 2019 has undergone and still undergoing structural, administrative, academic and political changes and challenges due to the outbreak ofCOVID-19 pandemic. The situation has demanded teachers to be cleverly adaptive in their practices and be creative to keep students engaged as every household has become a classroom where knowledge and skills are conventionally instilled. No matter the urgency of the current trend. It seems teachers have not yet been trained and supported to be digitally, socio-emotionally, technically, mentally and esthetically fit to handle educational programmes at this time.

There seems to be difficulties in organizing and attending development programmes to abreast teachers with requisite scientific knowledge to discharge their professional duties. It seems the government has not taken active steps to provide some of these gargets required to fully embark on online teaching and learning. Meanwhile, when teachers are not upgraded to be able to teach in line with the current trend of COVID-19, the student suffers, and consequently there would be unpleasant outcome. It is on this significant note that, the researcher carried out a study on innovative teacher development programmes for effective engagement in the era of covid-19 in public secondary schools in Rivers State.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The study investigated innovative teacher development programmes for effective engagement in the era of covid-19 in public secondary schools in Rivers State. The objectives of the study are to:
1.   Ascertain the ways provision of mental health support as innovative teacher development programme for teachers' effective engagement in the era of covid-19 in public secondary schools in Rivers State.
2.   Examine the ways provision of socio-emotional skill as innovative innovative teacher development programme for teachers' effective engagement in the era of covid-19 in public secondary schools in Rivers State.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1.   In what ways does the provision of mental health support as innovative teacher development programme enhance teachers' effective engagement in the era of covid-19 in public secondary schools in Rivers State?
2.   In what ways does the provision of socio-emotional skill as innovative teacher development programme enhance teachers' effective engagement in the era of covid-19 in public secondary schools in Rivers State?

HYPOTHESES

1.   There is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female teachers on the ways the provision of mental health support as innovative teacher development programme enhances teachers' effective engagement in the era of covid-19 in public secondary schools in Rivers State.
2.   There is no significant difference between the mean scores of teachers in urban and rural areas on the ways provision of socio-emotional skill as innovative teacher development programme enhances teachers' effective engagement in the era of covid-19 in public secondary schools in Rivers State.

METHODOLOGY

The population of the study consisted of all the 290 public secondary schools in Rivers State with a population of 6,893 teachers in these schools. That is 5733 teachers and1160 HODs and 870 Principal, Vice Principals academic and administration in the public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. Therefore, the total of number of teachers and management staff that made up the population is sum to be 7763 who served as respondents in the study. The sample size of this study was 776 teachers and management staff in these public senior secondary schools in Rivers State (i.e., 573 Teachers, 116 HODs and 87 Principals), representing 10% of the population was used as study participants. The multi stage sampling technique was employed. In doing this, the state was stratified into urban and rural areas and in each of the schools located in the urban and rural areas, 10% of the schools were selected.

Furthermore, in each of the schools selected, 10% of the teachers and management staff were selected as stratum using simple random sampling technique. A 12-item questionnaire titled: Innovative Teacher Development Programmes for Teachers' Effective Engagement in the Era Of COVID-19 Questionnaire (ITDPTEEQ). The 4-points modified likert rating scale of (Strongly Agree (SA) = 4 points; Agree (A) = 3 points; Disagree (D) = 2 points; and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1 point) was used as response options to guide the respondents' opinions on the instrument (questionnaires).

The instrument undergone series of scrutiny by other researchers and scholars who made corrections and comments used to modify the instruments before they were administered to the respondents. Cronbach's alpha was used to ensure internal consistency of the instrument and hence its reliability before administering it to the study's sample of 30 instructors who were not part of the original sample. To determine the degree of similarity between a collection of things. When it comes to the Innovative Teacher Development Programmes for Teacher Continuing Engagement in the Era of COVID-19 Questionnaire (ITDPCSTCEECQ), the average reliability coefficient was 0.80. In contrast, the reliability coefficient for providing mental health assistance as an innovative teacher development programme is 0.86, whereas the reliability coefficient for providing social and emotional skills is just 0.73. 776) copies of the questionnaire inclusive of teachers and management staff of the schools was administered personally to the respondents by the researcher with the help of two research assistants. Mean scores and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while the z-test statistics was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Question 1: In what ways does the provision of mental health support as innovative teacher development programme enhance teachers' effective engagement in the era of covid-19 in public secondary schools in Rivers State?

Table 1: Mean Responses of male and Female Teachers on the ways provision of mental health support as innovative teacher development programme enhance teachers' effective engagement in the era of covid-19 in public secondary schools in Rivers State.

S/N	Ways the provision of mental health support serve as innovative tecacher development programmes	Male Teachers (315)		Female Teacher (342)		$\bar{X}_1\bar{X}_2$	Remark
		$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD		
1	Teachers who have mental health knowledge are unable to give first aid advice on academic effect of mental health difficulties	1.87	1.28	2.13	1.19	2	**Disagreed**
2	Strategic intervention of teachers training as resource personnel to handle mental health related issues at this time of COVID-19 is a sustainable strategies to keep school programmes running	2.89	1.18	3.18	1.31	3.04	**Agreed**
3	The knowledge of mental health trainings received by teachers helps to collaborate with mental health professionals for possible treatments of individuals who are victims of such circumstance	2.99	1.24	3.08	1.26	3.04	**Agreed**
4	Mental health screening of common presentations of mental health issues could be tackled within the school by teachers to keep school programme running	3.00	1.23	2.60	1.22	2.8	**Agreed**
5	Developing teachers on mental health provision is a way to promote student wellbeing to avoid worsening any mental health problems to improve the effectiveness of education.	2.91	1.14	3.60	1.57	3.26	**Agreed**
6	Teachers professional development on mental health promotes the stability of mental state of students in school	3.29	1.37	3.40	1.43	3.35	**Agreed**
Average mean and standard deviation		**2.83**	**1.24**	**3.00**	**1.33**		

Items 2 and 3 both had mean ratings of 3.04, while item 4 received a mean score of 2.8. Item 6 received the highest mean score (3.35), followed by item 5 (3.26), and then item 2. All of the results in the analysis are higher than the criteria mean of 2.50. Teaching professionals who have received training in mental health are better able to work with mental health professionals to ensure their students' emotional and mental well-being and to prevent the escalation of existing mental health issues.

This has clear implications for the quality of education provided in the post-covid era. COVID-19 is a long-term plan for maintaining educational programs, and it allows for mental health screening for typical manifestations of mental health problems to be handled on campus by trained educators. However, the item 1 mean score of 2 is lower than the 2.50 criteria mean, suggesting that instructors with expertise of mental health may provide first aid guidance on the academic impact of mental health concerns.

Research Question 2: In what ways does the provision of socio-emotional skill as innovative teacher development programme enhance teachers' effective engagement in the era of covid-19 in public secondary schools in Rivers State?

Table .2: Mean Responses of Teachers in Urban and Teachers in Rural areas on the provision of socio-emotional skill as innovative teacher development programme enhance teachers' effective engagement in the era of covid-19 in public secondary schools in Rivers State.

S/N	Ways Provision of Socio-Emotional Skill serve as Innovative Teacher Development Programme	Teachers in Rural Schools(434)		Teacher in Urban Schools (223)		$\bar{X}_1\bar{X}_2$	Remark
		$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD		
1	Socio-emotional skills help teachers to be smart enough to make modifications in their operation to ensure that sanitation services are made accessible to students	3.22	1.33	3.72	1.25	3.47	**Agreed**
2	Socio-emotional skills of teachers help to develop students' anger-management skills especially when they are faced with difficult times	3.60	1.57	3.46	1.39	3.53	**Agreed**
3	Teachers who have well-developed socio-emotional competence develop student's positive communication skills in the classrooms to solve conflicts among themselves	3.57	1.55	3.49	1.52	3.53	**Agreed**
4	Teachers' knowledge of socio-emotional skills help to establish clear sensitization mechanisms with families on the need to prevent the spread of the virus	3.42	1.45	3.38	1.43	3.4	**Agreed**
5	Socio-emotional skills of teachers increase their classroom management skills which help students to acquire social skills.	3.32	1.38	3.39	1.43	3.36	**Agreed**
6	Socio-emotional skills of teachers help to incorporate the inclusion of additional supports for children's protection on mental and psychosocial health support	2.91	1.14	2.13	1.19	2.52	**Agreed**
	Average mean and standard deviation	**3.34**	**1.40**	**3.26**	**1.37**		

The highest mean ratings, 3.53, were given to items 2 and 3, followed by 3.47 for item 1, 3.4 for item 4, 3.36 for item 6, and 2.52 for item 5. The average criteria score was higher than 2.50. Teachers with strong socio-emotional competence help students learn to control their emotions, particularly anger, in the face of adversity; they also foster in their students the ability to constructively communicate with one another in the classroom and use

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these skills to resolve conflicts; and finally, teachers with developed socio-emotional competence are savvy enough to adjust their methods to guarantee that students have access to adequate hygienic facilities in the classroom.

Test of Hypotheses

Ho$_1$: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female teachers on the ways the provision of mental health support as innovative teacher development programme enhances teachers' effective engagement in the era of covid-19 in public secondary schools in Rivers State.

Table 3: z-test Analysis of the Difference between the mean ratings of Male and Female Teachers on the ways provision of mental health support as innovative teacher development programme enhances teachers' effective engagement in the era of covid-19 in public secondary schools in Rivers State.

Subject	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	Df	z-cal.	z-crit.	Level of Sig	Remark
Male Teachers	315	2.83	1.24	2				
				655	-1.69	±1.96	0.05	Accepted
Female Teachers	342	3.00	1.33					

According to the data in Table 7, a z-score of -1.69 is smaller than a z-score of -1.96 at a 0.05 level of significance and a 655-degrees-of-freedom sample size. As a result, we reject the null hypothesis and maintain that there is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female teachers on the ways the provision of mental health support as innovative teacher development programme enhances teachers' effective engagement in the era of covid-19 in public secondary schools in Rivers State.

Ho$_2$: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of teachers in urban and rural areas on the ways provision of socio-emotional skill as innovative teacher development programme enhances teachers' effective engagement in the era of covid-19 in public secondary schools in Rivers State.

Table 4: z-test Analysis of the Difference between the mean ratings of Teachers in Rural and Urban areas on the ways provision of socio-emotional skill as innovative teacher development programme enhances teachers' effective engagement in the era of covid-19 in public secondary schools in Rivers State.

Subject	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	Df	z-cal.	z-crit.	Level of Sig	Remark
Teachers in Rural Area	434	3.34	1.40	2				
				655	0.70	±1.96	0.05	Accepted
Teachers in Urban Area	223	3.26	1.37					

Table 8 shows that at the 0.05 level of significance, the computed value of z (0.70) is less than the critical value of z (1.96) for a sample size of 654. As a result, we accept the null hypothesis and maintain that no significant difference between the mean scores of teachers in urban and rural areas on the ways provision of socio-emotional skill as innovative teacher development programme enhances teachers' effective engagement in the era of covid-19 in public secondary schools in Rivers State.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The first discovery was that, in the age of covid-19, teachers who have received professional development in the area of mental health are better able to maintain their own mental health and the mental health of their students, thereby increasing the efficacy of their teaching.

The second discovery was that when educators work to improve their own socio-emotional competencies, they are better able to assist their students learn to control their emotions in stressful situations and to use constructive dialogue to work out classroom disagreements. Teachers with strong socio-emotional competencies are better able to make the necessary adjustments to their operations to increase the availability of sanitation services for students, create clear sensitization mechanisms with families on the importance of preventing the spread of the virus, improve classroom management so that students can learn social skills, and incorporate additional supports for children's mental and psychosocial health.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Provision of Mental Health Support as Innovative Teacher Development Programme for Enhanced Teachers' Engagement in the Era of Covid-19

The result of this study found that educators can help students maintain a healthy mental state and prevent mental health issues from getting worse by working with mental health professionals to find and implement solutions, according to a new study on the benefits of mental health education for students and teachers. Teachers' integration as strategic interventions as resource personnel to handle mental health related issues at the time of covid-19 is probably one of the most sustainable strategies to keep school programs running, as shown by the research of Jakubowski and Sitko-Dominik (2021), which is consistent with this work. It also found that schools whose instructors actively worked to enhance students' mental health through COVID-19 had higher test scores and less behavioral and academic issues.

The findings of Hidalgo-Andrade, et al. (2021), who studied teachers' mental health and self-reported coping strategies during the covid-19 pandemic in Ecuador, are consistent with thesobservations. These include the provision of personal and material resources, the improvement of digital skills of teachers and students, the preparation of the educational community psychologically and emotionally with resources, the creation of policies to guarantee socio-emotional stability, and the strengthening of teaching. Teachers who were not prepared for the shift to online education reported much greater levels of anguish, perceived stress, and lack of life satisfaction than their counterparts who had experience teaching online before the COVID-19 epidemic hit. The research also shed light on the significance of instructors' background knowledge and experience in online teaching, as well as the relevance of early counseling and mental health development in assisting teachers in being more productive during the current COVID-19.

This research is in line with the findings of Castro (2021), who found that school-based mental health services might be most effectively delivered by personnel with backgrounds in both education and health care, as this combination of expertise would better equip workers to navigate the complexities of school life and better serve students' mental and academic health. This tendency may have its roots in the fact that, as with students, instructors' positive attitudes and energy have a multiplicative effect on the quality of education provided in the classroom and the overall climate of the school. There was no statistically significant difference in the mean scores of male and female teachers on the ways in which mental health support was provided as part of teacher development programmes for enhanced teacher engagement in the era of Covid -19 in secondary schools in Rivers State.

Provision of Socio-Emotional Skills as Innovative Teacher Development Programme for Enhanced Teacher Engagement in the Era of Covid-19

It was found that students' anger-management abilities, particularly in the face of tough situations, and good communication skills in the classrooms to settle disputes among themselves were developed in part due to instructors' own growth in their own socio-emotional competence. Teachers with strong socio-emotional competencies are better able to make the necessary adjustments to their operations to increase the availability of sanitation services for students, create clear sensitization mechanisms with families on the importance of preventing the spread of the virus, improve classroom management so that students can learn social skills, and incorporate additional supports for children's mental and psychosocial health.

This is consistent with the research conducted by Elias (2021), who looked at   the factors   that influence the quality of CPD for teachers in the   area of social   and   emotional   learning, with   the   goal   of

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improving their students' ability to cope with the current COVID-19 pandemic in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. Teachers' participation in good socio-emotional development programs was shown to foster more caring classroom communities, reduce behavioral issues, and make learning more enjoyable for all children. It was also determined that when educators get training in social and emotional competencies, they are better equipped to meet the children's social and emotional needs by coordinating the provision of resources and referrals in the areas of child protection, mental health, and psychosocial support. The research also highlighted the significance of providing teachers with opportunities to strengthen their social and emotional capacities to better assist students in coping with COVID-19 crises in the classroom through ongoing professional development activities like seminars, workshops, and service training.

The academic success of pupils may be improved by the development of their social and emotional abilities, as shown by the research of Portela-Pino (2021). In addition, the study's results suggest that instructors' use of emotional skills promotes efforts to set standards, practices, and provide resources that support teachers' and students' social and emotional concerns, which is crucial for catering to each student's individual requirements. High levels of self-awareness, relationship management, social awareness, and decision-making were found among the teenagers studied.

On the other hand, Hanife and Cigdem (2017) found in their study of teachers' perspectives on socio-emotional learning programmes at the faculty of education at Canakkale Onsekiz Mart University that most teachers have not heard of training of teachers in socio-emotional learning and therefore cannot give detailed explanation of how it can help to stabilize the emotions of teachers and students, which necessitates that teachers should be trained in socio-emotional learning.

Teachers who have received training in social and emotional competence encourage their students to solve conflicts among themselves, help their students collaborate and establish positive communication in the classroom, and ease their emotions despite the trauma associated with the COVID-19 pandemonium. The importance of instructors having strong social and emotional abilities in reestablishing positive relationships with their students may help to explain this view. To rephrase, it is the tie that tightens and fosters confidence between the educator and the taught. This was further supported by the results of hypothesis testing, which showed that there was no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of teachers in rural and urban areas regarding the ways in which the provision of socio-emotional skills as innovative teacher development programmes for teacher continuing engagement in the era of Covid -19 in secondary schools across Rivers State. As this result both implies and cannot deny, it is safe to assume that teachers and students both see students' and instructors' social and emotional competence as a third leg of the educational tripod.

CONCLUSION

In the light of the findings of this study, it is very clear that, the overwhelming consequences of COVID-19 pandemic as a health crisis have been an extraordinary time for schooling, with the introduction of new ideas and approaches towards teaching and learning. This situation facilitated online distance electronic learning (e-learning) in schools on the basis of planning for recovery. This emphasizes the need for the development of teachers to update and enhance their professional skills to be able to cope with the current situation. However, to achieve this purpose, teachers must be trained to gain knowledge on mental health support; socio-emotional skill to enhance their continuing engagement in the era of covid-19 in secondary schools in Rivers State.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the researchers recommended that:
1. Development training on socio-emotional skills to help teachers provide empathy to students on how to cope with situations should be encouraged by government and schools administrators.
2. Teachers who have mental health knowledge are should encouraged by school administrators and government through seminar programmes to rekindle their knowledge to stand in the gap to give first aid advice on academic effect of mental health difficulties to students and parent alike.

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