

THE INTERCONNECTION BETWEEN EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND SOCIAL STEREOTYPES AMONG EDUCATION PROFESSIONALS

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Abstract

The article presents the results of a psychological study conducted with professionals working in the Lebanese educational system, with a particular emphasis on the interaction between social stereotypes and emotional intelligence. It sheds light on the importance of social skills in building relationships within classrooms and improving the quality of the teaching and learning process. The study highlights the negative impact of social stereotypes encountered in pedagogical institutions, which adversely affect the quality, equity, and effectiveness of education. The connection between emotional intelligence and social stereotypes has been identified among both educators working in educational institutions and students.

This study explores in depth how stereotypes—particularly those related to age and professional roles—undermine educational equity and quality. Findings reveal a significant inverse correlation between emotional intelligence and the tendency to rely on such stereotypes. Educators with higher emotional intelligence are more likely to recognise individual differences, manage their own biases, and foster inclusive, empathetic classroom environments. The research underscores the critical role of emotional intelligence in reducing stereotype-based thinking and enhancing pedagogical effectiveness.

Based on a thorough analysis of the research findings, the article provides practical recommendations and guidelines for educational institutions and educators to combat social stereotypes within pedagogical environments. These recommendations focus on teacher training and institutional reforms aimed at cultivating emotionally intelligent educators, thereby promoting more equitable and socially just educational practices.

Keywords: Social stereotypes, social skills, emotional intelligence, pedagogue, educational system.

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Համառոտագիր

Հոդվածում ներկայացվում է Լիբանանի կրթական համակարգում գործող մասնագետների հետ իրականացրած հոգեբանական հետազոտության արդյունքները, որտեղ մասնավորապես շեշտադրվում է սոցիալական կարծրատիպերի և հուզական ինտելեկտի փոխազդեցության խնդիրը: Վերջինս լուսաբանում է մանկավարժական հաստատություններում հանդիպող սոցիալական կարծրատիպերի բացասական ազդեցությունը, որոնք ազդում են կրթության որակի և արդյունավետության վրա: Հուզական ինտելեկտի և սոցիալական կարծրատիպերի միջև կա-

պը բացահայտվել է ինչպես կրթական հաստատություններում գործող մանկավարժների, այնպես էլ սովորողների շրջանում: Հետազոտության արդյունքները բացահայտում են հուզական ինտելեկտի և սոցիալական կարծրատիպերի միջև նշանակալի հակադարձ կապ: Ավելի բարձր հուզական ինտելեկտ ունեցող մանկավարժներն ավելի հակված են ճանաչելու անհատական տարբերությունները, կառավարելու իրենց սեփական կողմնակալությունները և խթանելու ներառական, կարեկցող դասարանային միջավայրեր: Հետազոտությունն ընդգծում է հուզական ինտելեկտի կարևոր դերը կարծրատիպերի վրա հիմնված մտածողության նվազեցման և մանկավարժական արդյունավետության բարձրացման գործում: Հետազոտության արդյունքների վերլուծության հիման վրա հողվածում ներկայացվում են առաջարկություններ և ուղեցույցներ կրթական հաստատությունների և մանկավարժների համար, որոնք նպատակ են հետապնդում պայքարել սոցիալական կարծրատիպերի դեմ մանկավարժական հաստատություններում:

Բանալի բառեր՝ սոցիալական կարծրատիպեր, հուզական ինտելեկտ, սոցիալական հմտություններ, մանկավարժ, կրթական համակարգ:

Introduction

The world pre- and post-COVID-19 pandemic won't be the same. People around the world fought the challenge in different ways, some with perseverance and survival mode, while others in hopelessness and demotivation. The United Nations has set 17 sustainable development goals to make the world a better place in the coming decade, until 2030. It placed high importance on improving the quality of current lives of societies and communities, whether through various approaches such as removing poverty and eliminating hunger, offering health services, clean water and a better life on land and in seas, and offering equal chances to all underprivileged members of the society. It placed great importance on the quality of education, hand in hand with eradicating inequalities between genders, in such a way that all societies can offer a better quality of life to their members and make the world a better place.

Stereotypes are one of the social problems that may come to the surface when investigating lives inside communities and relations among members. Oxford English Dictionary defines a stereotype as “a widely held, but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person or thing”. Stereotypes can be generalisations about racial groups, political groups, genders, demographic groups, activities or even subgroups among broad populations.

To date, the evidence overwhelmingly suggests that stereotypes

influence the manner in which information is sought, perceived, remembered, and judged (Fiske, S. T., 1998). When we talk about stereotypes, it is the common belief that categorises people, in exaggerated matters that may also not be true. This categorisation, which identifies people based on physical, social, or cultural characteristics, assumes that all people in a given category or subgroup will manifest all the given traits. Stereotyping always focuses on differences and offers an extra edge to a group of people, as if giving less rights to another (Pickering, M., 2015). When people endorse stereotypes, it leads to prejudice and discrimination towards members of minority groups.

Frederic Bartlett (1932) examined what happened to information as it was repeatedly passed from person to person down a chain of individuals in a lab (a method akin to the children's game often called 'telephone' or 'Chinese whispers') (Bartlett, F. C., 1932).

Schools represent a model of community; they are a miniature version of a group of people living together with diverse ages and backgrounds, governed by a set of rules, policies, and procedures. The same stereotypes can be observed on school grounds and within classrooms. Schools, in general, and Armenian schools in particular, were founded in Lebanon with a common goal of transferring knowledge and experience, history and legacy, passing on values, and preparing the youth for the future with core values that are important to the Armenian nation and the identity of every Armenian. The Armenian community in Lebanon, in its turn, established social pedagogical organisations that represented the mission of the founders and are still working to transmit knowledge and experience to the new generations.

Social stereotypes were present in the lives of the first Armenians who reached the lands of Lebanon a century or more ago. These stereotypes continue to affect the lives of Armenians, even in the 21st century. In Lebanon, Armenians are sometimes accepted as equal nationals in the country, whereas in other cases, they form groups that support each other and choose Armenian schools, products, and services, and sometimes opt for options with an Armenian touch. The mission and the vision of the Armenian parties and organisations in Lebanon may differ, yet they all have a similar mission: improving the lives of the Armenians in the community, preparing citizens who serve the motherland as well as the nation they are born in. An interview with five Armenian school principals set the basis for some common stereotypes observed inside schools in Lebanon. Racial, gender and religious stereotypes are the most discriminating and harmful discrimination, and even violence may result in frequent cases in society.

Stereotypes are mostly simple and superficial overgeneralizations in terms of cultural stereotypes: people from this specific area are lazy, individuals from villages are warm and welcoming, and different social

stereotypes in terms of specific group characteristics, economic class, age, skills, etc. Reasons may change, yet according to these principles, stereotypes give rise to creating an unwelcoming atmosphere for some groups and give ownership of school facilities or specific “rights” to some chosen, privileged groups. While stereotypes are rarely correct and certainly not always accurate, they are not always negative. In fact, some cast a positive light on a certain group or type of people. However, they are still over-generalisations and ultimately not helpful because individuals and groups cannot be limited to a few stereotypical traits.

Stereotypes, therefore, in teaching are the fixed images or ideas, whether behavioural, cognitive or affective criteria, to which a teacher views the self or is seen by others, since they are in the professional educational activities. The same definition applies to stereotypes for learners. It is how different learners see themselves and others because they belong to a specific group and thus are placed in a specific category.

When the question “what are some stereotypes related to teachers and learners” was asked to 50 teachers in Armenian schools in Lebanon, here are a few answers from educators. The different members of the educational system have different sets of definitions, for example, in relation to teachers, “teachers are mainly females”, “teachers are talkative”, “female teachers are emotionally more intelligent than male teachers.” “Males manage stress better than females” When the questions in relation to learners were gathered, some were “boys are better in math”, “boys don’t cry”, or “girls choose humanities and linguistic majors while boys choose scientific”.

In these educational institutions, the stakeholders, including students and their parents, employees, teachers, the principal and administration, and owners such as board members, national parties, or church entities, organise the work and relationships based on their internal bylaws.

Group dynamics and behaviour are important points to examine to better understand the relationships and the expression of stereotypes between staff members. Commitment and compliance with group norms foster positive relationships among members and create a shared vision essential for the success of the institution. (Gencer, H., 2019).

Organisations that are built on the culture of globalisation, accepting cross-cultural differences and demographic diversities, minimise intergroup conflicts. Intergroup interactions are present in every moment of life, especially in schools, where the primary focus of work is on human-human relationships. The quality of relationships between members depends on the minimal conflicts present. The personal characteristics and intergroup relationships need to be examined to understand groups within organisations.

Individuals define and label themselves based on which groups they

belong to and what are accepted behaviours, as well as reward and punishment systems placed. Common shared goal setting of individuals in a team format allows individuals to accept each other based on the spirit of the organisation and encourages group work. When organisations focus on the importance of groups among the institutions and the quality of relationships, workload performance increases, creativity and open communication are channelled. Effective decision-making opportunities are offered to all teams and team members, enabling individuals to experience higher job satisfaction and reduced problems.

Individuals contribute to group wellness, and the group's progress is reflected in the organisation. This mood is translated into the relationships and conflicts among members, whether in terms of constant competitiveness or cooperation. When organisations are aware of individual characteristics and group dynamics, using correct methods and techniques, effective communication, collaboration, job satisfaction and motivation are created (Gencer, H., 2019).

The environment that encourages acceptance, minimises conflicts and between-group stereotypes. These organisations that invest in the individual and the team profile gain improvement in the quality of relationships. Gender biased workforce catches attention in terms of equal pay, equal opportunities, and the debate continues, yet in educational institutions, stereotypes impair the professional performance of educators and the academic performance of learners.

When stereotypes remain unattended, they alter the potential and chance of educators and female learners at schools. Educational psychology can be the area to investigate which kind of policies should be implemented to alleviate the effects of gender stereotypes and in general stereotypes, to yield fair and just venues for all learners to feel safe, develop, grow and learn and reach their maximum potential (Carlana, M., 2019).

Gender stereotypes affect learners' classroom experiences, academic performance and even subject choice. The assumptions learners make, whether consciously or unconsciously, affect their future forever, regardless of whether they are boys or girls. Unconscious bias may be the case in some instances where the society's images and occurrences communicate in terms of body language or even choice of words. It may also be evident in classrooms where teachers praise girls for being well-behaved, while boys are praised for their hard work and ideas. Some actions that are "accepted" behaviour for boys may be major disruptions for girls.

Challenging gender stereotypes: a whole school approach, Optimus Education published a list of recommendations and guidelines for schools that would actively combat gender stereotypes. Their recommendation started with

the curriculum. Auditing books allows teachers to maintain a balance between male and female authors, paying attention to illustrations of roles and careers in relation to gender, which is vital in offering learners opportunities to see male nurses and female firefighters. They explained that even non-human characters need to maintain a balance in terms of gender. The next guide was for teachers to consider the language they use, as it had a huge effect on young children. Examples such as, dad will be picking up, my husband cooked dinner, my dad's favourite colour is pink, may create a general mood of acceptance for certain roles (Dickinson, O., 2021).

As children grow, they continue to observe biases in their everyday lives. Therefore, it is crucial to address this issue in schools and tackle it through both direct and indirect approaches to combat stereotypes through Education. “Teachers have a duty to have a gender-transformative approach so that we can explain to learners all of their capabilities and enable them all to fulfil their potential as people and not as boys or girls separately”, Amelia Fernandez, Advisor of the Government of Navarre, and laureate of the 2019 UNESCO Prize for Girls’ and Women’s Education, summarised. Alvarez Teresa, commission of citizenship and gender equality, presented at the Helsinki conference “Combating gender stereotypes in the education system”, the present obstacles to combating gender stereotypes in schools and proposed a few guidelines to address such stereotypes through the education system and schools (Alvarez, T., 2014).

Social stereotypes are everywhere in society, and targeting schools alone as a means of solution may not be sufficient. The relationships that children build and maintain with their parents, relatives, neighbours, community, and friends have a significant impact on the definition they form about men and women. The structural gender stereotypes envision the role of education for girls as preparing them to be caring individuals for others and proper mothers. While the same education system is planned to help boys become dominant figures, non-affective individuals and competitive elements are also considered in building self-identity. The differing expectations within the same education system create an imbalance that is evident in classrooms. The teachers who manage these classrooms need to be aware of these presumptions, neutralise them and move forward to rebuild new images and meanings for children.

This study examines the complex relationship between teachers’ awareness of stereotypes and their actual classroom behaviour. While many educators may consciously recognise the existence of stereotypes—such as beliefs about boys being naturally better at math or girls being more suited for caregiving roles—this awareness does not always translate into bias-free interactions. In fact, the research reveals a paradox: even when teachers are aware of these stereotypes and intend to avoid them, they can unintentionally

reinforce them through subtle, often unconscious behaviours (Gajda, A., Bójkó, A., & Stoecker, E., 2022).

Bingler (2000) emphasises the multifaceted role of schools as central hubs in fostering healthy communities. Beyond their primary function of education, schools serve as accessible venues for public health initiatives, community engagement, and social cohesion. He elaborates on how schools can collaborate with various sectors to strengthen community ties, address public health challenges, and support the overall well-being of residents. This perspective underscores the importance of viewing schools not just as educational institutions but as integral components of community development and resilience (Bingler, S., 2000).

Nurturing cultural diversity, tolerance, and accepting others are the promised hopes to target social stereotypes and aim to elevate acceptance of the other. Intersubjectivity refers to the shared understanding or mutual awareness that people develop when they engage with one another. It's the process through which individuals connect, align, and make sense of each other's thoughts, emotions, and perspectives. (Sheng, F., & Han, S., 2012).

In a social context, it involves recognising that others have their own subjective experiences and viewpoints, and being able to relate to or understand them. Intersubjectivity facilitates empathy, communication, and cooperation by creating a shared understanding between individuals. When learners start to hear the other person, communicate, co-create and build bridges together, putting themselves in other people's shoes, then empathy and social skills are revealed.

Empathy is 'the ability to experience affective and cognitive states of another person, whilst maintaining a distinct self, to understand the other'. This is consistent with the understanding that empathy includes at least two key dimensions: cognition and affect (Decety, J., 2011).

If cognitive empathy can be conceptualised as 'I understand how you feel', affective empathy is conceptualised as 'I feel what you feel' (Hein, G., & Singer, T., 2008).

In research like that of, intersubjectivity is often used to describe situations where group members, despite differences in race, gender, or background, begin to see each other as part of a shared experience or goal. This mutual understanding can reduce biases and enhance empathic responses to others (Sheng, F., & Han, S., 2012).

Empathy is not a cure for all stereotypes in the social content, yet it allows individuals to put themselves in others' shoes, feel with them and understand their feelings, thus leading to less prejudice and discrimination (Guthridge, M., Penovic, T., Kirkman, M., et al., 2023).

Empathy is a promise to create more sustainable communities based

on equality, tolerance and acceptance, thus minimising the manifestation of stereotypes in these societies.

A converging education system, with trained teachers, can help minimise the gap, crystallise the capabilities and opportunities of both genders and consequently, allow further integration, teaming up to solve problems, offering the same experiences and subject content and methods to both genders. Alvarez offers strategies to combat gender stereotypes through education. Curriculum, including content and knowledge, school training and professional development for teachers and all other staff, school culture and administrative leaders, as well as overall community relationships. He places the highest value on knowledge, emphasising the importance of creative, active citizenship and democracy through education. Initial training of teachers in pedagogical and scientific curriculum focusing on work and gender studies, followed by continuous training and support, making resources ready to raise teacher awareness of gender issues and allowing them to confront and speak up any issues inside their classroom as a podium for learners to express, learn, grow and then move to society (Alvarez, T., 2014).

Research Significance

Teachers influence their learners through content knowledge and pedagogical means; yet, their impact is much greater when they address class interaction, issues with understanding, and concerns with compassion. It is vital to shed light on the culture and environment that teachers create in classrooms. A climate that reinforces past presumptions and prevents understanding and equality, or welcomes diversity and celebrates both genders. Educators play a crucial role in creating a learning climate and implementing strategies that aim to foster equity within classrooms.

The twenty-first century focuses on self-aware teachers who are aware of their own thoughts and preconceptions, yet seek to manage them. They enter classrooms with patience and compassion, creating stress-free and productive environments that motivate learners and encourage collaboration, cooperation, and effective communication. Emotionally intelligent teachers spend time and effort training learners on these social-emotional skills that can contribute to life success. They utilise both their personal and professional experiences, as well as their curricula and teaching methodologies, to spread the spirit of acceptance and justice. These teachers teach with their minds and hearts, transforming communities into more compassionate and empathetic societies.

The current research focuses on the emotional intelligence of teachers and empathy levels, seeking a correlation between these social competencies and social stereotypes related to age and profession of teachers.

Research Methodology

The current study, involving 134 educators from Armenian schools in Lebanon, utilised N. Hall's tool that's used for assessing "emotional intelligence" (EQ questionnaire) 09.02.2017Irina Andreeva 9 N. Hall's method for assessing "emotional intelligence" (EQ questionnaire) // E.I. Ilyin. Emotions and feelings. – St. Petersburg: Peter, 2001. – S. 633–634. N. Hall's technique is proposed to identify the ability to understand the relationship of the individual, represented in emotions and manage the emotional sphere on the basis of decision-making. It consists of 30 statements and contains 5 scales: 1) emotional awareness, 2) management of emotions (rather it is emotional outgoing, emotional non-rigidity), 3) self-motivation (rather, it is just arbitrary control of one's emotions, excluding paragraph 14), 4) empathy, 5) recognition of emotions of other people (rather – the ability to influence the emotional state of others).

The second tool used in the Social Skills section was Boyko's test-questionnaire (Boyko's empathy test: Methodology for diagnosing the level of empathic abilities). It allowed them to identify the type and presence of empathy, whether low, medium, or high, in various domains.

The diagnostic methodology of "Empathic ability level" proposed by V. Boyko aims to assess an individual's empathic abilities. Empathy refers to the ability to understand and share the feelings of others, playing a crucial role in human social interactions and relationships.

Boyko's diagnostic methodology involves a comprehensive assessment process that combines self-report measures, behavioural observations, and physiological measurements. The goal is to provide a holistic understanding of an individual's empathic abilities across different dimensions.

It broke down the empathy into more measurable terms, such as rational, emotional, and intuitive. It elaborated on the source, such as the availability of settings that promote empathy, as well as the penetrating power or identification in empathy.

The third tool used in the social skills assessment was D. Lucine's Emotional Intelligence.

The questionnaire of emotional intelligence, Lucine, is a psychodiagnostics technique based on self-report, designed to measure emotional intelligence (EQ) in accordance with the theoretical concepts of the author. To assess the reliability of EmIn, Cronbach's α internal consistency indicators were calculated for all scales and subscales. The internal consistency of the main scales is 0.80 and above, which is quite high for questionnaires. The internal consistency of the subscales is somewhat lower (around 0.7), but it can also be considered satisfactory, except for the VE subscale (0.51).

These components, used in parallel, were investigated in relation to an authored tool created for this research. The research created and administered

tools to analyse the social stereotypes in the given population.

To investigate the psychological factors associated with the manifestation of social stereotypes in educational settings, this study tested a series of hypotheses examining the relationship between empathy, emotional intelligence, and stereotype endorsement. Specifically, it was hypothesised that (1) higher levels of empathy, as measured by Boyko’s questionnaire, would be negatively associated with social stereotypes related to teachers’ age, and (2) negatively associated with social stereotypes related to the teaching profession. Additionally, it was hypothesised that (3) higher emotional intelligence, as measured by Hall’s and Lucine’s instruments, would be negatively associated with social stereotypes related to teachers’ age, and (4) negatively associated with stereotypes related to the teaching profession. These hypotheses were tested using Pearson’s correlation analysis to assess the strength and direction of the relationships between the psychological constructs and stereotype measures.

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR ASSESSMENT OF EXPRESSION OF AGE STEREOTYPES. The participants assessed the presence or absence of the mentioned characteristics in young, experienced and old teachers.

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR ASSESSMENT OF EXPRESSION OF TEACHING PROFESSION STEREOTYPES. The participants assessed their levels of agreement with statements that presented social stereotypes related to the teaching profession.

Pearson’s correlation test revealed that there was a significant, negative, and small to medium correlation between Boyko’s empathy and social stereotypes related to teachers’ age; $r = -.20$, $p = .042$ (one-tailed). As such, the hypothesis that states that there is a negative association between Boyko’s empathy and social stereotypes related to teachers’ age was supported.

Pearson’s correlation test also revealed a significant, negative, and medium to large correlation between Boyko’s empathy and social stereotypes related to the teachers’ profession; $r = -.46$, $p < .001$ (one-tailed). As such, the hypothesis that there is a negative association between Boyko’s empathy and social stereotypes related to the teaching profession was supported.

Table 1.

Pearson Correlation between Empathy Boyko’s questionnaire and social stereotypes

	Social stereotype age-related	Social stereotype teacher related
Pearson Correlation	-.195	-.456
Empathy Boykos Sig. (1-tailed)	.042	.000
N	134	134

Pearson’s correlation test also revealed that there were significant, negative, and medium to large correlations between emotional intelligence as measured by Hall and social stereotypes related to teachers’ profession; $r = -.41$, $p < .001$ (one-tailed) and $r = -.50$, $p < .001$ (one-tailed), respectively. As such, the hypothesis that there is a negative association between emotional intelligence and social stereotypes related to the teaching profession was supported.

Pearson’s correlation test revealed, however, that there were significant and negative correlations between emotional intelligence as measured by Hall (large effect size) and by Lucine (medium to significant effect) and social stereotypes related to teacher’s age; $r = -.52$, $p < .001$ (one-tailed) and $r = -.35$, $p = .001$ (one-tailed), respectively. As such, the hypothesis that states there is a negative association between emotional intelligence and social stereotypes related to teachers’ age was supported.

Table 2.

Pearson Correlation between Hall’s Emotional Intelligence, Lucine’s Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire and social stereotypes

		Social stereotypes are age-related.	Social stereotype teacher-related
Emotional Intelligence Hall	Pearson Correlation	-.516	-.405
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	.000
	N	134	134
Emotional Intelligence Lucine	Pearson Correlation	-.354	-.495
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.001	.000
	N	134	134

Analysis

The findings of this study indicate a significant negative correlation between emotional intelligence and the presence of social stereotypes, particularly in the contexts of age and the teaching profession. As emotional intelligence increases among teachers, there is a noticeable reduction in the reliance on or endorsement of age-related or profession-based stereotypes. Emotional intelligence involves the ability to recognise, understand, and manage one’s own emotions, as well as to empathise with the feelings of others.

Teachers with higher EI are likely better equipped to overcome biases and engage with students and colleagues in a more open-minded and

empathetic manner, reducing the tendency to categorise or stereotype based on superficial characteristics, such as age or professional role.

This relationship suggests that emotional intelligence may play a key role in mitigating the harmful effects of stereotypes in educational environments. Teachers with higher EI may be more attuned to the individuality of their students and peers, thus fostering a more inclusive and less judgmental atmosphere. Moreover, the ability to regulate emotions and recognise emotional cues could lead to a heightened awareness of how stereotypes influence behaviour, prompting teachers to act with greater fairness and objectivity. The negative correlation between emotional intelligence and social stereotypes underscores the potential of EI training programs for educators as a means of addressing and reducing biases, promoting more equitable teaching practices.

Conclusion

The results of this research indicate a significant inverse relationship between emotional intelligence and the presence of social stereotypes, particularly those related to age and the teaching profession. As teachers' emotional intelligence increases, the frequency of relying on or supporting stereotypes based on age or professional role decreases.

Emotional intelligence is defined as the ability to recognise and manage one's emotions, as well as to empathise with others. Teachers with higher emotional intelligence are better equipped to challenge their biases and connect with students and colleagues in an open and empathetic manner, thereby reducing the inclination to stereotype based on superficial traits such as age or job title.

These findings suggest that emotional intelligence could be a key factor in reducing the impact of stereotypes in educational environments. Teachers with greater emotional intelligence are more likely to recognise the individuality of those around them, which helps create a more inclusive and less biased atmosphere. Additionally, the ability to regulate emotions and recognise emotional cues can help teachers understand how stereotypes shape behaviour, prompting more objective and fair decision-making. The negative correlation between emotional intelligence and stereotypes highlights the importance of incorporating emotional intelligence training for educators to combat biases and foster more equitable teaching practices.

Brown and Dearing (2019) emphasise the critical role of school leaders in recognising and actively challenging social stereotypes and implicit biases within educational settings. They recommend implementing professional development programs that focus on cultural competence and emotional intelligence, fostering inclusive school climates, and promoting policies that reduce bias and encourage equity. The study underscores that school leaders

must model equitable practices and support teachers through ongoing training and reflective practices to dismantle stereotypes and create fair learning environments for all students (Brown, E. F., & Dearing, E., 2019).

The future can be changed through education, and as classrooms and education systems improve, the future will also be transformed, helping to create leaders who are kinder, more compassionate, and empathetic. Combatting social stereotypes within classrooms starts through teacher training and offering them support and resources that can help create a slightly fairer future.

To leverage social skills and empathy in combating stereotypes and promoting equity, the paper suggests the following strategies:

- Professional Development: Implement training programs that enhance educators' emotional intelligence, focusing on social skills and empathy.
- Inclusive Policies: Develop and enforce policies that promote diversity and inclusion within the school community.
- Supportive Environment: Create a school culture that encourages open dialogue, mutual respect, and understanding among students and staff.

Research suggests that social stereotypes and cultural biases impact teaching and learning in diverse classrooms. It is important to acknowledge the importance of multicultural pedagogy as a strategy to challenge stereotypes and promote equity in education. Ample research exists that provides educators with frameworks and practical approaches to develop culturally responsive teaching practices that recognise and value students' diverse backgrounds, thereby reducing stereotype-driven biases and fostering inclusive learning environments. (Banks, J. A., 2015).

Schools have the power to transform communities by creating an inclusive safe haven, implementing teaching strategies that cultivate self-awareness, effective emotional regulation, empathy, and strong social skills. These approaches serve as proactive measures in building inclusive, respectful, and connected communities where all stakeholders feel heard and safe.

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