



Pedagogical Love Through the Lens of Parents: Insights from Arab Schools in Israel

Dr. Diana Daaboul*

*The David Yellin Academic College of Education, Jerusalem, Israel; e-mail: dianad@dyellin.ac.il

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ARTICLE INFO ABSTRACT

This study examines parental perspectives on implementing pedagogical love in Arab schools in Israel. By gathering insights from 42 parents across various focus groups, the research investigates how emotional care, compassionate teaching practices, and love-based pedagogy influence student engagement and academic performance. The findings reveal that while only 29% of parents were familiar with the "pedagogy of love," many acknowledged its principles in teacher-student interactions. Parents emphasized the significance of emotional care, such as personalized encouragement and fostering a sense of belonging, as crucial components of student success. Furthermore, the study identifies systemic challenges, including cultural sensitivities and institutional barriers, that impede the consistent application of love-based approaches. This research highlights the transformative potential of pedagogical love in building trust, resilience, and academic growth, providing actionable recommendations for educators to integrate these principles into their practices effectively.

Keywords: Pedagogical love, Arab schools, emotional care, parental perspectives, compassionate teaching, teacher-student relationships, academic engagement, holistic education.

Theoretical Background

Introduction

Pedagogical love is increasingly recognized as a critical element in effective teaching, particularly in environments where traditional educational methods have failed. It integrates emotional and relational aspects into education, fostering compassionate relationships between educators and students while promoting a more humane approach to teaching (Daaboul, 2024). Teaching and the educational process is an act of love. This love is a fleeting emotion and a conscious action that demonstrates care, respect, honesty, listening, and solidarity.

This type of pedagogy is based on the principle that education should nurture not only the intellectual but also the emotional and social growth of students. The movement away from rigid, authoritarian models towards a more care-centered pedagogy is supported by theorists such as Paulo Freire, bell hooks, and Nel Noddings, who argue for the integration of love into teaching as a way to enhance mutual respect, compassion, and emotional well-being (Daaboul, 2024; Wang, Derakhshan & Pan, 2022).

In their conceptual analysis, Wang, Derakhshan, and Pan (2022) note that second and foreign language teaching is among the most emotionally intense professions globally. They argue that emotions, particularly love, are integral to generating optimal academic outcomes. The concept of "loving pedagogy" has started gaining ground in second language acquisition (SLA), aiming to create environments prioritizing care, student engagement, and positive educational outcomes. The authors also emphasize that, despite the challenges of cultural and religious sensitivities surrounding the concept of love, it is a fundamental aspect of successful pedagogy that enhances students' motivation, engagement, and social competence (Wang, Derakhshan & Pan, 2022).

Literature review

Pedagogical Love and Its Impact

The application of pedagogical love is evident in various educational contexts, particularly within nurturing environments for marginalized groups, such as refugees. A study conducted by Kaukko, Wilkinson, and Kohli (2022) in Finland and Australia focuses on refugee children, demonstrating how pedagogical love can foster a sense of safety, belonging, and success among these students. Teachers who went beyond their professional duties to engage deeply with the students' backgrounds and personal stories were able to create learning environments conducive to overcoming linguistic and cultural barriers. This nurturing approach helped refugee children adjust to their new surroundings, build trusting relationships, and eventually achieve success both academically and socially (Kaukko, Wilkinson & Kohli, 2022).

In this context, pedagogical love is not only about ensuring academic performance; it is also about creating a stable and welcoming environment where students feel emotionally secure. This sense of security allows students to engage fully in learning activities, enabling them to overcome trauma and cultural displacement. The authors highlight that the role of pedagogical love is particularly crucial for refugee children, who often experience disrupted pre-settlement education and may struggle to adapt to new, unfamiliar school environments (Kaukko et al., 2022).

Gorman (2015) emphasizes that love, along with methods for developing and nurturing emotional and social intelligence, should be at the core of educational curricula. She points out that current educational systems tend to focus more on measurable outcomes and grades, often neglecting humanistic aspects. Gorman proposes that education should prioritize love, compassion, and emotional intelligence as fundamental skills. She outlines 12 principles that should form the foundation of educational processes and curricula, including promoting human rights through education, fostering well-rounded individuals who respect human rights and interactions, and emphasizing the importance of values, ethics, and spiritual principles to create conscientious citizens grounded in empathy, compassion, and respect for diversity. Additionally, she highlights the need to teach the concepts of peace and non-violent conflict resolution methods. Gorman advocates for education as a transformative process aimed at shifting the system from one that perpetuates pain and dysfunction to one that fosters a love of learning, self-love, and love for others.

Brooks (2017) offers an in-depth exploration of love as a liberatory tool, particularly its impact in educational settings that cater to historically marginalized groups. He starts by addressing the current inadequacies in understanding love, which is often confined to romantic or familial relationships, thereby undermining its potential as a central element for achieving social justice. Brooks reflects on his personal experiences in higher education, where he faced "pedagogical violence" from educators who were supposed to promote social justice but instead reproduced systems of oppression through teaching methods devoid of love and compassion. The absence of love in education, he argues, not only creates a harsh learning environment but also exacerbates the traumas faced by marginalized students, hindering their ability to learn and grow.

Brooks calls for a redefinition of love, transforming it into a political and personal project that addresses systemic oppression and empowers individuals and communities. He emphasizes that love should be a fundamental element in educational pedagogy—not merely an emotion or abstract concept, but a practical and embodied approach manifested through actions and teaching practices that aim to enhance humanity and resist oppression. Brooks presents a critical theory of love grounded in acknowledging students' cultural and social identities, understanding their historical contexts, and implementing pedagogical practices designed to restore dignity and promote healing. He stresses the importance of embedding love in education in a way that reconstructs educational environments to be more equitable, welcoming, and humane, thereby fostering the capacity to resist injustice and work toward collective liberation. This vision of love is not simply a teaching tool but a comprehensive project aimed at reshaping societies and institutions for a more just and humane world (Brooks, 2017).

In his article "Love and Despair in Teaching," Liston highlights that teaching goes beyond being a purely intellectual activity; it encompasses profound emotional dimensions where feelings of love and passion are fundamental to the educational process's success. Liston argues that the absence of these positive emotions can lead to what he terms "educational despair," a state that arises when teachers feel powerless or frustrated due to their inability to establish emotional and intellectual connections with their students or achieve their educational objectives.

Teacher-Student Relationships and Engagement

Teacher-student relationships are essential for fostering student engagement, particularly for those with special educational needs (SEN). A study by Pérez-Salas et al. (2021) focused on SEN students and found that positive relationships with teachers significantly enhance engagement in emotional, cognitive, and behavioral aspects. The study suggests that when SEN students receive genuine emotional support from teachers, they are more likely to participate in classroom activities and exhibit fewer behavioral problems. These supportive relationships help students feel understood and valued, which is crucial for their academic and social development.

Furthermore, teacher-student relationships have a notable impact on both engagement and disengagement. SEN students rated their relationships with teachers more positively than their typically developing peers, indicating that these relationships are vital for meeting their unique educational needs. The emotional support

from teachers helps reduce disengagement and fosters a sense of belonging and purpose within the school environment (Pérez-Salas et al., 2021).

Wanders et al. (2020) concluded that positive teacher-student relationships play a fundamental role in enhancing students' involvement in society. The findings showed that students who perceive their teachers as caring, understanding, and attentive are more likely to participate in classroom activities. The study highlighted that a safe classroom environment boosts students' participation in discussions and increases their willingness to engage in societal issues. Additionally, positive relationships among students contribute to their sense of security and willingness to participate, promoting a sense of belonging and concern for societal matters.

At the school level, the study found that an open classroom climate—where students have the opportunity to express their opinions freely and discuss social issues from various perspectives—helps develop their civic skills and societal involvement. However, the effects of these relationships and the classroom climate may vary based on students' socioeconomic backgrounds, with students from higher-educated families benefiting more than their peers from less-educated backgrounds (Wanders et al., 2020). The "pedagogy of love" emphasizes the importance of fostering positive and safe relationships between teachers and students. Research shows that this is a fundamental factor in enhancing students' societal engagement and developing their civic skills. Through love and care, teachers can help their students grow not only academically but also socially and civically.

Ansari et al. (2020) emphasize the significance of teacher-student relationships during the early years of education (from kindergarten through sixth grade) and their long-term impact on students' academic achievement, social-behavioral development, and educational aspirations by ninth grade. The findings reveal that close teacher-student relationships lead to positive outcomes in academic performance and social behavior, while conflictual relationships are linked to negative outcomes, especially when they occur in later school years. The study also highlights that stability in relationship quality over time enhances students' sense of security and trust, promoting their long-term development. In contrast, variability in relationship quality disrupts students' expectations and trust in teachers. These findings underscore that building positive and stable relationships with students in early education not only supports their academic and social success but also provides protective factors that help them navigate challenges during adolescence and enhance their future success. The study reinforces the idea that continuous high-quality teacher-student relationships—aligned with the concept of "continuous care" in the pedagogy of love—foster long-term growth in students, both academically and socially. Thus, the findings confirm that the pedagogy of love is not merely a theoretical concept but a practical necessity for achieving holistic and successful education.

Supportive Classroom Environments Through Effective Feedback

Effective feedback is another crucial tool for creating supportive classroom environments. Monteiro, Carvalho, and Santos (2021) highlight that students who perceive their teachers as providing effective feedback demonstrate higher levels of behavioral engagement and a stronger identification with their school. Feedback should be viewed not only as an instructional tool but also as a form of emotional communication that supports students in their learning journey. It helps students understand their current performance, what they need to improve, and how they can achieve their goals. This type of supportive interaction can significantly enhance the learning experience.

The Role of Verbal Encouragement in Loving Pedagogy

Verbal encouragement is a crucial element of loving pedagogy that educators employ to create positive learning environments. A study by Sahli et al. (2022) examined the effects of verbal encouragement in physical education and found that students who received regular encouragement demonstrated higher levels of motivation and performance. This type of encouragement acts as both an emotional and cognitive boost, helping students persist in challenging tasks and believe in their abilities. Verbal encouragement proved particularly effective in physical education settings, where students require both physical and psychological motivation to perform at their best.

In the context of loving pedagogy, verbal encouragement goes beyond simple praise; it embodies an expression of care that reinforces the teacher's belief in each student's potential. By providing consistent, supportive verbal feedback, teachers cultivate a nurturing environment where students feel emotionally supported and encouraged to take risks in their learning. This approach aligns with the principles of loving pedagogy, which prioritize fostering a growth mindset and resilience within the student-teacher relationship.

Effective use of verbal encouragement allows teachers to create environments where students feel genuinely cared for, increasing their willingness to engage actively and meaningfully in their learning processes. This, in turn, contributes to a positive classroom climate, reinforcing the central role of love in education (Sahli et al., 2022).

Furthermore, a study by Lie demonstrated that both verbal and non-verbal immediacy behaviors of teachers are essential for enhancing student motivation and engagement. Verbal immediacy—like calling students by their names and providing immediate feedback—along with non-verbal immediacy—such as smiling and making eye contact—helps reduce the psychological distance between teachers and students, fostering a sense

of safety and belonging. These behaviors not only enhance students' motivation to participate but also positively impact their academic performance and social development.

This approach is closely aligned with the principles of the pedagogy of love, which emphasizes building relationships based on care, respect, and positive interactions between teachers and students. When teachers adopt immediacy behaviors that reflect love and attentiveness, they not only support academic achievement but also create a humane learning environment that addresses students' emotional and social needs, thereby enhancing the overall success of the educational process (Liu, 2021).

Parental Involvement in Early Childhood Development and Its Connection to Loving Pedagogy

Parental involvement plays a crucial role in early childhood development and is closely linked to the concept of pedagogical love. Liu et al. (2020) examine how parental engagement during infancy significantly impacts children's later academic achievements and emotional well-being. The study highlights that parents, as primary caregivers, shape their children's early learning experiences. Their collaboration with educators fosters a holistic developmental approach. This involvement not only addresses children's educational needs but also bridges the gap between home and school, contributing to a supportive and nurturing educational experience (Liu et al., 2020).

A critical factor influencing parental involvement is the perception parents have of the relationships teachers maintain with their children. When parents see that teachers provide a loving, caring, and supportive environment, they are more likely to engage actively in their child's education. This trust in the teacher-student relationship encourages parents to collaborate with teachers, share insights about their child's needs, and participate in school activities. Parents who are confident that their children are in a nurturing, emotionally supportive environment tend to adopt a more positive and proactive role in supporting both the school and their child's learning journey (Liu et al., 2020).

Thus, the principles of loving pedagogy extend beyond the classroom, influencing how parents interact with the school system. When teachers demonstrate genuine care and compassion, they foster student engagement and create a community of support that includes parents as active partners in the educational process. This partnership is vital for creating a holistic, emotionally secure, and intellectually stimulating environment that benefits students at all stages of their development (Liu et al., 2020).

Taggart (2022) discusses the significance of love and care as fundamental values in early childhood education and their impact on children's growth and social relationships. He emphasizes that early childhood education relies heavily on nurturing interactions and consistent care, which enhances children's sense of trust and belonging, contributing to their overall well-being and balanced development. Taggart underscores the role of parents as the cornerstone of providing love and care for their children, highlighting the importance of a triangular relationship among parents, educators, and children in fostering a supportive educational environment built on mutual trust.

The article also explores the concept of "alloparenting," which reflects community solidarity by involving multiple adults in caregiving, thereby enhancing children's emotional and psychological development. Taggart critiques neoliberal models that focus on school readiness and marginalize the human aspects of care and love. He argues that education based on love and care transcends mere emotional interaction; it serves as a foundation for building sustainable and cooperative communities. Love, he posits, is not just an educational model but a core human value that fosters a more compassionate and collaborative society.

Challenges in Implementing Love Pedagogy

Despite its numerous benefits, implementing love pedagogy faces several challenges. Daaboul (2024) points out that many teachers lack formal training in emotional and love-based teaching approaches, which hinders the consistent application of this pedagogical model. The research found that 83.61% of teachers in the study had no formal training in love pedagogy, resulting in inconsistent application and challenges in effectively managing classroom behaviors. Teachers also reported difficulties related to personal stress and unsupportive institutional policies, limiting their ability to engage with students compassionately (Daaboul, 2024).

Additionally, cultural and contextual barriers surrounding the term "love" in education have made it challenging for some teachers to adopt this approach openly. In certain contexts, love is often perceived as a romantic or inappropriate emotion, causing educators to hesitate in using the term concerning their students. Overcoming these cultural barriers requires a broader shift in the perception of what constitutes effective, compassionate teaching (Wang et al., 2022).

Case Studies: Examples of Pedagogical Love in Practice

A compelling example of pedagogical love in action is seen in the study of punk pedagogy within a high school choir conducted by Austina Frances Lee and Gareth Dylan Smith (2023). This research demonstrates how a love-based approach can effectively challenge the rigid expectations of standardization and conformity that often define traditional education. By emphasizing compassion, community, and creativity, the teacher created an environment where students felt empowered and engaged.

The theoretical background presented here demonstrates that pedagogical love, effective teacher-student relationships, supportive feedback, verbal encouragement, and parental involvement are all crucial components in fostering student engagement and academic success. The concept of pedagogical love transcends traditional, authoritative educational models, positioning emotional care and relational engagement as foundational to effective teaching. Despite challenges such as cultural sensitivities and a lack of formal training, the integration of love-based approaches in education has been shown to significantly enhance student motivation, engagement, and overall well-being. Future teacher education programs should prioritize emotional and relational training to prepare educators for implementing love pedagogy effectively, thereby creating more holistic and supportive educational environments.

In my previous study, I examined teachers' perspectives and opinions on the love-based educational approach or pedagogical love. In this article, I aim to investigate whether parents feel that their children are being educated through this approach, as expressed by the majority of teachers. Specifically, I want to explore how parents perceive this and what indicators suggest to them that their children are receiving education with love and care. Moreover, I seek examples from parents that can illustrate this perception.

The goal of this investigation is to formulate recommendations for educational staff regarding how to convey the message of love not only to students but also to parents. Educators need to learn what behaviors and responses may signal to parents, through their children's feedback, that the teacher is distancing themselves from love-based education and pedagogical love. Understanding these dynamics will help educators maintain strong, trust-based relationships with both students and their families, ultimately fostering a more supportive and effective educational environment.

Research Issue

This study explores Arab parents' perceptions of the "pedagogy of love" in their children's schools. The primary focus is to determine whether and how parents view teachers as cultivating emotionally supportive, compassionate, and nurturing environments that prioritize both academic achievement and overall well-being. Key questions include:

- Do parents acknowledge and appreciate the principles of pedagogical love in their children's educational experiences?
- What specific behaviors and practices of teachers indicate the presence (or absence) of love-based pedagogy?
- How do parents' observations align with or differ from the theoretical framework of pedagogical love, particularly concerning its emotional and relational aspects?
- What barriers exist in effectively communicating and implementing pedagogical love from both the parents' and the institution's perspectives?

By addressing these questions, the research aims to provide actionable insights for enhancing the teacher-parent relationship and creating a more emotionally supportive and inclusive educational environment.

Research Methodology:

To explore the perceptions of parents regarding the relationship between teachers and their children, as well as to determine whether they feel that teachers employ a pedagogy of love, a qualitative study involving focus groups will be conducted. This study aims to delve into how parents perceive the emotional and relational aspects of their children's learning experiences and to gather detailed insights that can ultimately lead to more informed recommendations for educators.

Pedagogy of Love: Introducing the Concept to Parents

The concept of pedagogy of love will be introduced to parents during the focus groups to ensure a common understanding. Pedagogy of love refers to an educational approach that prioritizes the emotional, social, and relational well-being of students alongside academic outcomes. It emphasizes compassion, care, and nurturing within the teacher-student relationship. Examples that will be provided to parents include a teacher offering personalized encouragement to a struggling student, actively listening to the needs of the students, and ensuring every child feels included and valued in the classroom environment. Additionally, the discussion will explore how teachers can exhibit genuine empathy and commitment to students' overall growth, which, in turn, helps build an emotionally supportive and inclusive learning atmosphere.

Qualitative Approach and Focus Group Design

A qualitative approach is particularly well-suited to this study as it allows for the in-depth exploration of parents' thoughts, experiences, and emotions, which are key to understanding the impact of pedagogical love. To achieve this, focus groups will be conducted with six different groups of parents, each comprising 6-8 parents from different schools. This diversity aims to capture various perspectives, reflecting the differences in

school cultures, environments, and individual teacher-student relationships. Here is the academic translation of your requested paragraph:

(Before conducting the focus groups and selecting them as a tool, a pilot study was conducted using an online form containing open-ended questions on this topic. However, it became evident that face-to-face meetings through focus groups would provide more comprehensive and clearer information, allowing parents to express their opinions clearly)

Focus groups will allow for an open discussion, where parents can share their insights, concerns, and experiences in a dynamic and interactive setting. The group setting encourages participants to build on each other's responses, often revealing deeper insights that might not emerge during one-on-one interviews. The diversity in participants across groups will enable a comprehensive understanding of parental perceptions and expectations regarding pedagogical love.

Trustworthiness and Benefits of the Qualitative Approach

Creswell (2013) emphasized that qualitative research is ideal for exploring complex, nuanced human experiences, which aligns well with the objectives of this study. It allows for a deeper understanding of the parents' perceptions, offering insights that may not emerge from quantitative. Bryman (2016) further supports the use of qualitative methods for their ability to capture social phenomena in detail, ensuring that the diverse viewpoints of participants are effectively understood.

This approach is particularly beneficial in understanding parents' attitudes because it captures not only what parents think but also how they express their feelings about the relationships their children have with their teachers. This depth of understanding can reveal key elements that influence parents' beliefs regarding pedagogical love—whether they see their children experiencing nurturing relationships at school and how they interpret specific actions by teachers as either positive or lacking in emotional support.

Expected Outcomes and Recommendations for Educators:

The insights gained from these focus groups will serve as the foundation for developing actionable recommendations for teachers. By understanding how parents perceive the presence (or absence) of pedagogical love, educators can make informed adjustments to their practices to better communicate love and care, not only to students but also to their families. These recommendations will emphasize the importance of explicit actions that convey emotional support, such as individualized attention, frequent positive reinforcement, and open communication channels with parents.

The overall objective is to ensure that the message of love, which teachers have expressed in previous research, is effectively conveyed not just to the students but also to their families. This will help strengthen the school-home connection, ultimately fostering an educational environment that supports both academic and emotional growth. Parents who feel confident that their children are in a loving and supportive learning environment are more likely to engage positively with the school, enhancing collaboration between educators and families to support students' holistic development.

Participants:

The study engaged 42 parents organized into six focus groups, each comprised of seven participants, during the latter half of 2025. These focus groups convened in person in quiet and comfortable rooms at an educational center, promoting a safe and trusting environment. However, one group participated via Zoom due to work-related conflicts that prevented in-person attendance. The structure of the focus groups was intentionally crafted to encourage open dialogue and foster a sense of security and confidence among the participants.

Participant Demographics

Number of Children per Family:

37 families reported having 2 to 4 children.
5 families reported having one child.

Educational Stages of the Children:

23 families had children enrolled in elementary, middle, and high school stages.
7 families had children solely in elementary school.
12 families had children exclusively in middle or high school.

Type of School:

28 families had children attending private or community-based schools.
14 families had children attending municipal (public) schools.

Results

This study uncovers profound insights into how Arab parents perceive the critical role of pedagogical love in their children's education. Through the voices of 42 parents, the findings illuminate the dual impact of this approach on academic achievement and emotional well-being, presenting a compelling case for its integration into educational practices. Anchored in robust theoretical frameworks and supported by real-life examples, these results offer a nuanced understanding of how love-based pedagogy fosters trust, motivation, and resilience among students. This section unpacks these findings, weaving together parental observations with prior academic research to substantiate its conclusions.

The results will be organized and presented through the central themes that emerged from the focus groups. Within each theme, quotes from parents will be included, providing direct insight. These findings will also be connected to previous studies, offering an expanded and detailed analysis of the results:

1. Emotional Care Beyond Academics

Parents in the study highlighted the critical role of emotional care in fostering a positive learning environment for their children. Several parents reported instances where teachers went beyond their academic duties to address the emotional and personal development needs of students. For example, one parent noted:

"The teacher always tells my daughter she is a strong and good girl. These words have greatly boosted her confidence."

Another parent shared:

"My daughter's teacher encouraged her to overcome her shyness by participating in front of her classmates. This support made her more confident and helped her enjoy school."

Similarly, one participant said:

"Some teachers show genuine care by addressing students' feelings and guiding them emotionally, which makes my child feel valued and motivated to improve."

A more specific example shared by a parent stated:

"When my son struggled with anxiety about school, his teacher arranged weekly one-on-one meetings to check in on his emotional well-being. This personal attention made him feel safe and supported."

This aligns with Gorman's (2015) proposition that educational systems should prioritize emotional intelligence alongside measurable academic outcomes. Gorman's emphasis on values such as compassion and emotional nurturing as part of a transformative educational experience reinforces the importance of these behaviors. Teachers who integrate emotional care not only improve student confidence but also foster a sense of belonging that encourages active participation in the classroom.

2. Awareness of Pedagogical Love

The study revealed that only 29% of parents were familiar with the term "pedagogy of love." However, their descriptions of nurturing relationships in the classroom reflect many principles of this pedagogical framework. One parent explained:

"The student must feel that the teacher is like a second family, supporting them emotionally before anything else."

Another parent noted:

"I think pedagogy of love means that a teacher loves their job and their students, providing them with both guidance and emotional security."

One parent elaborated on this idea, saying:

"The teacher's love for teaching is reflected in how they address each student's unique needs and treat them with kindness and patience."

This mirrors Noddings' (2005) ethic of care, which positions the relational aspect of teaching as fundamental. Wang, Derakhshan, and Pan (2022) further highlight that love in education fosters student motivation and social competence. In line with these perspectives, the findings suggest that although parents may not explicitly recognize the term "pedagogy of love," their observations align with its core principles.

3. Examples of Compassionate Teaching Practices

Approximately all parents shared tangible examples of compassionate teaching practices, such as verbal encouragement, active listening, and inclusive behaviors. For instance, one parent shared:

"Some teachers call my son 'dear' or 'sweetheart,' which gives him a sense of comfort and belonging."

Another participant noted:

"The teacher always uses positive reinforcement like saying, 'You are capable, and I believe in you.' It has made my child feel more confident and excited about learning."

One parent emphasized:

"Teachers who smile and listen carefully to students' concerns make a big difference in their emotional stability and classroom engagement."

A parent also mentioned an example:

"During group activities, the teacher ensured that every student's opinion was valued, helping my daughter feel included and respected."

This resonates with the findings of Sahli et al. (2022), who demonstrated that verbal encouragement significantly boosts student motivation and performance. Furthermore, Liu's (2021) work on teacher immediacy behaviors supports the notion that verbal and non-verbal cues—such as using students' names or maintaining eye contact—reduce psychological distance and foster a nurturing environment.

4. Impact on Academic Performance

The majority of parents agreed that emotional care positively impacts their children's academic performance. For instance, one parent observed:

"My daughter's grades were not good, but when she felt comfortable with her teacher, she started to improve significantly."

Another participant explained:

"The emotional support my child receives from their teacher helps them feel confident, which translates into better focus and higher performance in class."

A different parent shared:

"When teachers show kindness and patience, students naturally feel motivated to participate and excel academically."

A concrete example was provided by a parent:

"My son was failing math, but his teacher's consistent encouragement and tailored feedback helped him not only pass but develop a genuine interest in the subject."

Ansari et al. (2020) provide empirical support for this observation, demonstrating that stable and positive teacher-student relationships contribute to long-term academic success and social development. Their concept of "continuous care" aligns with the idea that consistent emotional support fosters trust and resilience, which are critical for navigating academic challenges.

5. Recommendations for Educators

Parental recommendations highlighted three key themes for enhancing teacher-student relationships and fostering an emotionally supportive classroom environment:

- **Effective Communication:** Parents emphasized the importance of teachers actively listening to students, which they believed alleviates stress and builds trust. One parent noted:

"Sometimes, just listening to them can ease their stress."

Another parent shared:

"My daughter's teacher always asks her about her day, which makes her feel seen and valued."

- **Constructive and Nurturing Practices:** Several parents advocated for the use of positive reinforcement over punitive measures. Constructive feedback was described as vital in helping students feel secure and motivated. One parent suggested:

"Constructive words and encouragement help my son feel safe."

A parent added:

"Rewarding small achievements, like praising students for completing a difficult task, motivates them to take on new challenges."

- **Avoiding Authoritarian Methods:** Parents highlighted the detrimental effects of shouting or negative language, which they felt disengaged students. A parent shared:

"Some teachers use punishment, shouting, and negative language, which causes children to withdraw."

Another parent recommended:

"Teachers should replace harsh language with patient explanations to create a more positive learning atmosphere."

These recommendations reflect a collective desire for empathetic teaching practices that prioritize emotional care and respect, aligning with established research on pedagogical love and its benefits for holistic student development. Additionally, one parent emphasized:

"Teachers should make an effort to understand individual differences among students and adapt their approach to meet each child's needs."

Additional Observations from Parents

While many parents highlighted positive examples of emotional care and compassion from teachers, several expressed concerns regarding the lack of focus on emotional and social development in classrooms. Some parents reported:

"There are no supportive conversations or efforts to develop students' personalities; the focus is solely on maintaining rules and academic achievement."

Another parent shared:

"Unfortunately, in general, the education system is primarily about progressing through the material and focusing on numbers and grades, while neglecting the human, emotional, and social aspects that students need the most."

Similarly, one parent stated:

"The focus is solely on education and maintaining school rules."

These critical observations emphasize the importance of integrating emotional and social dimensions into teaching practices. Aligning with theoretical frameworks such as Noddings' (2005) ethic of care, these insights suggest that educators must balance academic rigor with relational and emotional support to foster holistic student development.

While most parents recognize the significance of "pedagogical love" and its positive impact on students, one parent's skepticism stands out. This individual asserted that "*love cannot be taught*" and questioned the practicality of training teachers to adopt a love-centered approach. Although this viewpoint may be rare, it warrants thoughtful consideration.

In reality, pedagogical love does not require a radical change in a teacher's personality; rather, it focuses on adapting communication strategies and teaching behaviors to foster students' feelings of safety, trust, comfort, and capability. Essentially, pedagogical love is an "educational act" that can be nurtured by developing skills such as effective communication, empathy, and emotional care.

Professional training programs can equip teachers with the necessary tools to systematically adopt these practices, demonstrating that pedagogical love is not just an innate emotion but a skill that can be cultivated and applied in educational settings. Thus, this singular opinion does not diminish the importance of pedagogical love; instead, it underscores the need to clarify its practical implications and provide adequate support for teachers to implement it effectively.

Summary and Discussion

This section offers a concise overview and analysis of the key points addressed. The findings from this study reveal several interconnected themes regarding the application and impact of pedagogical love. Emotional care, as highlighted by parents, serves as a crucial driver of student engagement and academic success. Numerous parents emphasized the significance of compassionate teacher-student relationships, citing instances such as verbal encouragement that fosters confidence and trust. These insights align with the theories proposed by Noddings (2005), who identifies care as a foundational element in education, and Liu (2021), who connects teacher immediacy behaviors to enhanced student outcomes. The findings underscore the significance of consistently and equitably applying love-based practices in education. The variability in teacher approaches, as observed by parents, highlights both the potential benefits and the challenges associated with integrating such pedagogy. This variability further emphasizes the critical need for professional development to ensure that all educators are well-equipped to implement these practices effectively.

Parental recommendations provide valuable insights for closing the gaps in implementation. Strategies such as open communication and constructive feedback align with previous research that advocates for relational and empathetic teaching methods, which are essential for fostering holistic development. Notably, empirical evidence from Ansari et al. (2020) highlights the long-term advantages of stable teacher-student relationships, reinforcing the necessity of embedding love-based approaches within educational frameworks.

By incorporating these principles into teacher training programs and school policies, educators can cultivate more inclusive, empathetic, and effective learning environments for all students. This approach involves not only prioritizing academic progress but also promoting a holistic perspective that values emotional resilience, social competence, and mutual respect.

In summary, the study reveals the transformative potential of pedagogical love when applied with consistency and empathy. Parental perspectives, backed by solid theoretical and empirical research, illustrate how emotional care and compassionate practices contribute to both the emotional and academic growth of students. Furthermore, the findings stress the importance of systemic support to address the variability in teacher approaches and ensure the consistent application of this pedagogy. By fostering environments that prioritize care, empathy, and trust, educators can create classrooms that support academic achievement as well as emotional resilience and social competence.

Key Takeaways

- 1. Emotional Care Matters:** Teachers who prioritize emotional well-being create environments where students feel valued and motivated.
- 2. Compassionate Practices Enhance Engagement:** Verbal encouragement and inclusive behaviors foster a sense of belonging and improve academic outcomes.
- 3. Parental Trust and Collaboration:** When parents observe nurturing practices, they are more likely to engage actively with the school, strengthening the home-school connection.
- 4. Recommendations for Teachers:** Training in emotional intelligence, constructive feedback, and non-authoritarian methods should be prioritized to ensure consistent implementation of love-based pedagogy.

Conclusion

The integration of pedagogical love within educational practices is not merely an abstract concept but a practical necessity for achieving holistic student development. The findings from this study illustrate that emotional care fosters students' sense of belonging and engagement, as evidenced by parents' accounts of teachers who actively listen and provide verbal encouragement. For instance, one parent shared how their child's confidence flourished after receiving affirming feedback from a teacher. Additionally, theories such as Noddings' (2005) ethic of care emphasize the relational aspects of education, which align closely with the study's observations. Collectively, these examples highlight how pedagogical love bridges emotional and academic growth, making it indispensable in education. The findings underscore the critical role of emotional care, compassionate practices, and positive teacher-student relationships in fostering academic success and personal growth. Notably, parents highlighted examples such as teachers addressing students with endearing terms to create a sense of comfort and belonging and actively listening to students' concerns to build trust. These practices were frequently linked to improved student engagement and confidence, reflecting both immediate and long-term benefits of nurturing educational environments. Furthermore, the empirical support provided by Ansari et al. (2020) and Liu (2021) underscores the necessity of embedding these approaches into daily teaching practices. Supported by theories from Noddings (2005), who emphasizes the relational aspect of teaching, and Brooks (2017), who advocates for love as a liberatory and empowering tool in education, this study highlights the transformative potential of love-based pedagogy. These theories align with the findings by demonstrating how compassionate teaching practices foster emotional security and resilience among students while addressing systemic inequities through relational and empathetic approaches.

Recommendations

To address the insights and barriers identified in this study, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance the consistent implementation of pedagogical love and its principles:

Develop Comprehensive Teacher Training Programs

Establish targeted professional development initiatives centered on emotional intelligence, relational pedagogy, and love-based teaching practices. These programs should equip educators with the tools to cultivate trust, empathy, and compassion within the classroom. Incorporating case studies and experiential role-playing activities can effectively simulate real-life scenarios.

Embed Emotional Care in School Policies and Standards

Institutionalize emotional care by integrating love-based pedagogy into teacher evaluation frameworks and school standards. Policies should prioritize the relational dimensions of teaching in conjunction with academic performance metrics, thereby promoting a balanced and holistic educational approach.

Foster a Culture of Empathy and Collaboration

Schools ought to create platforms for open dialogue among educators, parents, and students to share experiences and set expectations regarding compassionate teaching. Building a supportive community will strengthen the home-school connection and align efforts aimed at addressing students' emotional and academic needs.

Provide Ongoing Support for Teachers

Acknowledge the emotional labor inherent in love-based pedagogy by implementing support mechanisms such as peer mentoring, mental health resources, and regular check-ins with school administrators. Addressing teacher stress and burnout is crucial for the sustainable application of these approaches.

Address Cultural Sensitivities Through Awareness Programs

Conduct workshops for educators and parents to bridge cultural gaps and clarify misconceptions regarding the notion of love in education. Such programs should emphasize that love-based pedagogy fosters mutual respect, resilience, and personal growth without infringing on professional boundaries.

Standardize Best Practices Across Classrooms

Develop and disseminate a toolkit of best practices for the implementation of pedagogical love to ensure consistency in its application. This toolkit may include strategies such as verbal encouragement, active listening, and the facilitation of inclusive group activities.

Prioritize Research and Continuous Feedback

Establish feedback mechanisms involving parents, students, and teachers to assess the effectiveness of love-based approaches. Regular surveys and focus groups can provide valuable insights for refining practices and addressing emerging challenges.

By implementing these recommendations, educational institutions can foster emotionally supportive and academically enriching environments that nurture holistic student development while addressing the barriers highlighted in this study.

Implementation Barriers

While this study underscores the transformative potential of pedagogical love, it also identifies several barriers to its effective implementation:

Lack of Training

A significant number of educators lack formal training in emotional intelligence and love-based pedagogical methods. According to Daaboul (2024), approximately 83.61% of educators in a related study reported insufficient preparation in this area, resulting in inconsistent application of compassionate practices.

Cultural Sensitivities

In various contexts, the term 'love' in education is often misinterpreted or deemed inappropriate, which may lead to reluctance among educators to adopt and apply these principles openly (Wang et al., 2022).

Institutional Challenges

Teachers frequently cite stress and the absence of supportive policies as barriers to fully engaging with students emotionally. Such constraints hinder educators' capacities to implement relational and empathetic practices effectively.

Variability in Application

As noted by parents participating in this study, the inconsistent use of pedagogical love across different educators and classrooms results in disparities in student experiences. This underscores the necessity for standardized training and systemic support.

These barriers emphasize the need to address both cultural misunderstandings and structural challenges to ensure the consistent and effective integration of love-based approaches within educational settings.

In our quest to create compassionate and transformative educational environments, I am reminded of Mother Teresa's profound words: "We cannot do great things; only small things with great love" This quote beautifully captures the essence of pedagogical love, emphasizing that it is not the size of our actions that matters, but rather the depth of our care and commitment that truly makes a difference.

In education, this distinction separates a teacher who merely instructs from one who meaningfully influences their students' lives. Small, consistent acts of love—such as offering words of encouragement, providing a listening ear, or extending gestures of understanding—can create a lasting ripple effect on both the emotional and academic growth of students.

As an educator and researcher, I firmly believe in the power of pedagogical love to transform classrooms into spaces of holistic development, emotional security, and academic success. I urge all teachers and educators to embrace this approach, for it is through these small acts of great love that we can genuinely educate and inspire. Let us remember that the most significant changes often begin with the simplest gestures, infused with authentic care and compassion.

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