

Exploring the Views of Teachers about the Role of Restorative Approach at Secondary School Level

Sadia Munawar^{1*}, Munaza Nausheen², Azhar Majeed Qureshi³

Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Research and Evaluation, Lahore College for Women University,

Lahore ²Associate Professor, Institute of Education and Research University of the Punjab, Lahore,

Pakistan ³Assistant Professor, University of Education, Lahore, Pakistan

*sdiamunawar929@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study explored the views of teachers about the role of restorative approach at secondary school level. A cross-sectional survey research design was used. Three hundred and fifty-nine secondary school teachers (196 male and 163 female) from two districts of Punjab were selected as a sample by using multistage random sampling technique. Data was collected through a questionnaire developed by the researchers. Findings showed that the secondary school teachers use restorative approach for maintaining discipline in schools. They also agreed about the effectiveness of restorative approach. Significant differences in views of male and female teachers were found.

Keywords: Restorative approach, Conflict resolution, Gender differences

Introduction

School discipline is important for creating a safe and successful learning environment for all students. This study is about role of restorative approach used in schools to prevent conflicts and build relationships among students. According to Khan (2000) the term discipline is an essential component in the teaching and learning process in schools. Much of the current literature discusses teaching opportunities that enable children to learn how to develop self-discipline, and to handle discipline problems that arise within the school system. Today's educators have moved away from trying to control student's behaviour, and focus on the teaching process to create, implement and maintain positive relationship between students and teachers in an environment that support learning. However, there is a general perception that in an average rural area of Pakistan, a five or six-year-old child walks to the school be frightened of what he or she would face. Children fear the teacher as de facto corporal punishment exists in all provinces, although Punjab has managed some interesting measures Muhammad 2007).

According to Kane et al., (2007), the terms „Restorative Justice“, Restorative Practices“ and „Restorative Approach“ have come to be used in education to mean restoring good relationships where there has been conflict or harm; and developing school ethos, policies and procedures that reduce the possibilities of such conflict and harm occurring. Restorative approaches are,

therefore, characterized by its emphasis on repair and restoration rather than punishment. This is not to say that agreements are never part of a restorative approach, but rather, that they are usually used only when agreed by all involved to be a helpful part of the repair or restoration of relationships between students and teachers.

Recent studies have shown the vast importance of the school discipline. Previous research have also proved that school discipline and climate have great influence on teaching learning process. Every school whether its government or private cannot accomplish its aims without maintaining school discipline. The purpose of the study was to explore the views of teachers about role of restorative approach at secondary school level. Teachers play vital role in managing and resolving different type of student conflicts. Therefore, their perspective and views, are very important for the decision making and in maintaining school discipline. This study highlights the views of teachers about the use of restorative approach in schools and the major challenges faced by them in managing discipline through restorative approach of repair and restoration rather than punishment.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were to:

1. explore the views of secondary school teachers about the role of restorative approach.

2. compare the views of male and female teachers about the role of restorative approach at secondary school level.

Research Questions

Based on the objectives mentioned above, the present study focused on following research question.

1. What are the views of secondary school teachers about role of restorative approach at secondary school level?
2. Are there any significant differences in the views of male and female teachers about the role of restorative approach?

Research Hypothesis

Following hypothesis was tested.

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the views of male and female teachers about the role of restorative approach at secondary school level.

Literature Review

Restorative approaches were introduced by Wachtel and McCold (2004) and has roots in the restorative justice philosophy of the 1970s (Zehr, 2002). Restorative approaches originally developed as restorative justice, an approach to crime that focused on repairing harm and giving a voice to „victims“ (Bazemore & Umbreit 2001; Barton 2000).

Kane et al., (2007); Morrison (2007) defines the terms „Restorative Justice“, Restorative Practices“ and „Restorative Approach“ have come to be used in education to mean restoring good relationships where there has been conflict or harm; and developing school ethos, policies and procedures that reduce the possibilities of such conflict and harm occurring. Restorative approaches are, therefore, characterized by its emphasis on repair and restoration rather than punishment. This is not to say that agreements are never part of a restorative approach, but rather, that they are usually used only when agreed by all involved to be a helpful part of the repair or restoration of relationships between students and teachers.

Previously Related Studies Related to Restorative Approach

Many schools in the United States have implemented restorative practices, and many of these schools have demonstrated a positive school climate that promotes safety, inclusion, positive relationships, and respect. Restorative approaches can be referred to as whole school change because it is a new approach to addressing negative

behaviours and student infractions. (Wachtel, 2013).

According to Drewery (2013) Restorative approach shows a possibility that could help to educate our children for citizenship in diverse communities. Teachers told me that they have noticed a major change in the tone of the school: students are quieter and the whole school feels calmer. Appointments to the disciplinary system have gone down significantly (which means that the bulk of the Deputy Principal's time which used to be spent dealing with recalcitrant students is now invested in classroom meetings instead).

Another study examined the relationship between student behaviours and student suspensions and found that suspensions not only affect academics but also the whole school environment. Previous studies show that the most common outcomes with the use of restorative practices included: reduced suspension rates, reduced behavioural appointments out of the classroom, improved attendance, decreased expulsions, decreased student fights and a decrease in general student misbehavior (Byer, 2016).

According to Balfanz, Byrnes, & Fox, (2013); Chin et al.,(2012). A 2-year study into teachers' views of disruptive behaviours and the interventions used to address these problems found that administrators and teachers should be provided with professional development on addressing five challenging student behaviours in the classroom. Students that exhibit negative behaviours are too often immediately removed from the learning environment, which results in academic underachievement. Consequently, when a student is removed from the learning environment, this begins to have an unfavorable effect on the student's chances and ability to learn.

Restorative approach and discipline

Carter (2013) states that restorative approach differs from traditional school discipline in that in its accurate forms it does not rely merely on exclusionary consequences, but, rather, focuses on the harm done and repairing relationships. Conversion of restorative approach from a discipline paradigm to a culture of care is an urgent refinement of the informal curriculum for peace within and beyond the school. This paradigm shift does present a challenge for teachers who are incorporating restorative approach. The climate of a school can has profound effects on its students.

Thapa et al.,(2013) states that, in order to realize the benefits of a positive school climate, one must understand its components. In addition, it is beneficial to fully grasp strategies, such as restorative approach, that can address aspects of school climate to improve the overall climate of a school (Gregory et al., 2016; Smith et al. 2015).

The term restorative practices came into being because many people perceived the term restorative justice negatively, as overemphasizing “offenders” and post-incident redress in education (Morrison, 2007).

The Role of Restorative approach in schools

In this competitive world it is very important to manage school discipline. According to many researchers, it is very difficult to manage school environment without using punitive approaches. Teachers are looking for new and better ways to interact with students within schools, and those responsible for disciplinary systems are looking to restorative practice for new ways to resolve the increasing range and number of difficulties between teachers and students, students and other students, and between the school and parents. Restorative approach is currently seen as a way of achieving all this, so they carry a huge burden of hope (Drewery & Kecskemeti, 2010).

Bitel (2005); Hull Centre for Restorative Practices (2008); Kane et al., (2007); Lloyd & McCluskey (2008); Skinnis, Du Rose, Hough (2009); Transforming Conflict (2009), states that restorative approach plays its role in maintain discipline in schools without using punitive approach as conduct peace-making circles and relationship building. Traditionally conflict resolution in school discipline related to what happened?” “who’s to blame?” “what rule has been broken?” “what punishment is appropriate to the rule that has been broken?” And in this way accountability to resolve conflict means a student who broke the rule is punished.

While maintaining discipline according to restorative approach, it is related to what happened?”, “what harm has resulted?” “who has been affected?” “what needs to happen next?” what support do you need for this to happen? what will it look like when it improves? As a result, in restorative approach accountability means a student who caused harm to come to understand the harm caused and has the duty to repair the damage to relationship. Findings from recent evaluation studies indicate that restorative approaches have a positive and sustained impact on most schools where it has been introduced in the UK and internationally (Bazemore, 2005; Burssens & Vettenburg, 2006; Karp & Breslin, 2001; Marshall, Shaw & Freeman., 2002; Reistenburg, 2005; Wong, 2008).

Methodology

The nature of this study was quantitative. A cross-sectional survey research design was used to explore the views of secondary school teachers about role of restorative approach at secondary school level.

Population and Sample

The population of the study comprised of teachers of all government secondary schools of two districts (Lahore and Gujranwala) of Punjab. Sample was selected in two stages by using proportionate stratified random sampling technique. At first stage 20% (n=31) of the total boys and 20% (n=36) of total girls schools from Lahore district, and from 20% (n=25) boys and 20% (n=29) girls schools from Gujranwala were selected through proportionate stratified random sampling. There was total 1,195 male (652) and female (543) secondary schools’ teachers in 20% sampled schools from Lahore and Gujranwala districts. At second stage 30% (196) male and 30% (163) female secondary school teachers from both districts, were selected as sample of the study. Therefore, the sample of the study comprised of 359 (196 males, 163 females) schoolteachers with an age range of 23 to 55 years.

Research Instrument

A questionnaire was developed on the basis of relevant literature (Hunts, 2018). This questionnaire consisted of two parts. Part A required the demographic information while the second part (B) comprised of 12 statements about role of restorative approach. The participants were required to indicate their level of agreement with these statements on five point Likert scale with these categories:

(1) Strongly Disagree (2) Disagree (3) Neutral (4) Agree (5) Strongly Agree.

The questionnaire was pilot-tested with 20 teacher and was also reviewed by three experts from the relevant field of educational research to ensure the validity and reliability. The Cronbach alpha value for questionnaire was 0.894.

Data Collection

After getting formal permission from the administration and fulfilling the ethical requirements of privacy and confidentiality, the researchers personally visited the sampled secondary schools of Lahore and Gujranwal districts for the collection of data from secondary school teachers.

Data Analysis and Results

Data was analysed by using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version- 21. Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) was calculated to know the views of teachers. Inferential statistics

(independent sample t-test) was used to explore gender differences in views of teachers.

Views of Teachers about the Role of Restorative Approach

Table 1 Role of restorative approach

Sr. No	Statements	Mean	S. D
1	Students help each other to solve problems without violence when I use Restorative approach	4.17	.781
2	Students work more cooperatively in groups	3.99	.819
3	Restorative approach helps students to do better in their work at School	4.06	.779
4	I ask students to take a specific action to repair the harm with Restorative approach	3.88	.837
5	I believe that restorative approach improves student's behaviour	4.09	.840
6	With this approach students have a better understanding of why the problem happened and what other students were thinking.	3.97	.843
7	I use affective statements informally throughout the day	3.77	.951
8	Restorative approach is used for students' verbal conflict.	3.87	.883
9	Restorative approach is used for students' physical conflict.	3.65	1.06
10	Individual class difficulties are more effectively resolved using restorative approach	4.9	.853
11	To forgive the aggressor and commitment to take the necessary steps to change their behavior is done due to this approach.	4.2	.868
12	Restorative approach helps in identifying healthy replacement behaviors for the unhealthy behavior.	4.09	.870
	Average Mean	3.97	

Table 1 shows the mean, standard deviation of the views of teachers about the role of restorative approach in this scale. The mean values for all statements are greater than 3.0 which shows that the teachers favoured the statements about the positive role of restorative approach. Statement no 1 has highest mean value which was (4.17). It shows that after using restorative approach students better understand each other's and solve the problems of each other without any violence or laughing at each other and it shows that restorative approach helps in identifying the healthy

relationships instead of unhealthy and disruptive behaviours. Statement no 9 has lowest mean value (3.65) and teachers agreed that by using restorative approach teachers finish students' physical conflicts.

Gender Difference in Views of Teachers about the Role of Restorative Approach

To test the hypothesis that there are no significant differences in the views of male and female teachers about the role of restorative approach an independent sample t-test was used.

Table 3 Gender difference in views of secondary school teachers

Factor	Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	Significance
Role of Restorative Approach	Male	19	3.9	.4	35	-	.0
	Female	6	2	.47	7	2.48	.13

Table 3 shows that there is no statistically difference between in views of male and female teachers. This table shows that in factor one mean value of female teachers was (M=4.03) and mean value of male teachers was (M=3.92) and t-test value for this factor was -2.48. p=.013 which shows that there is a significant difference in the views of male and female teachers and the null hypothesis of the study is rejected.

Conclusion

The results of the study showed that secondary school teachers agreed that restorative approach plays a vital role in maintaining school discipline and teachers were motivated and interested in using restorative approach. The views of teachers suggested that schools can provide relationship building opportunities that will enable students to address and resolve their conflicts in constructive ways through restorative approaches. This study also showed that significant differences exist between the views of male and female secondary school teachers about the role of restorative approach and thereby suggested that the male and female teachers used this approach in different manners in schools to maintain the discipline inside or outside the classrooms.

Recommendations

Based on the results of this study it is recommended that

1. Teachers may be encouraged and facilitate the use of restorative approach for conflict resolution and discipline among students.
2. Training courses may be organised in schools for the effective use and implementation of restorative approach.
3. Future research may be conducted on a larger sample for better generalization of results at different levels of schools.

4. Future researchers can investigate the need and effectiveness of restorative approach for various types of disciplinary and behavioural problems.

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