

Online Coaching as a Space for Developing Teachers' Social-Emotional Skills: A Reexamination of the Media Naturalness Theory (Poster)

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**אימון מקוון כמרחב לפיתוח מיומנויות חברתיות-רגשיות של מורים:
 בחינה מחודשת של תיאוריית טבעיות המדיה
 (פוסטר)**

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Abstract

This study explores the contribution of online personal coaching to the development of social-emotional learning (SEL) skills among teachers, their perceptions of these skills, and the implementation of SEL principles in classroom teaching. The research is framed within the Media Naturalness Theory (MNT; Kock, 2005), which posits that technology-mediated communication is inherently less natural and thus potentially less effective than face-to-face interactions. This study investigates whether this theoretical prediction holds true in the context of online coaching for teachers' SEL skill development in the post-pandemic era.

SEL skills, encompassing self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (Durlak et al., 2011), have become a cornerstone of educational systems worldwide, particularly after changes introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic (Lapidot-Lefler, 2022; Williamson, 2021). Teachers' mastery of SEL skills is recognized as pivotal to fostering student success (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). While online personal coaching has emerged as an effective professional development tool (Knight, 2019), its compatibility with the principles of MNT in educational contexts remains understudied.

The study employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating data triangulation from 17 teacher interviews, 18 coach interviews, 12 teacher-written reflections, and 8 classroom observations. The thematic analysis revealed three primary themes: professional and personal growth, transformative shifts in educational practices, and the distinctive benefits of the virtual coaching space. Contrary to MNT predictions, findings indicated that the online environment created a safe, supportive setting that encouraged openness and vulnerability—key elements for developing SEL skills. Teachers reported notable improvements in self-awareness, emotional regulation, and conflict-resolution skills. Rather than hindering communication, the virtual distance fostered deeper sharing and reflective dialogue.

Moreover, participants successfully transferred these enhanced SEL skills to their classroom practices, enriching the learning environment for their students. These results challenge traditional assumptions about the limitations of technology-mediated communication and call for a reevaluation of the MNT's applicability to contemporary educational practices. The study underscores the significant potential of online coaching as a tool for professional development, particularly in advancing SEL competencies among educators.

This research offers valuable insights for teacher education programs and professional development initiatives, highlighting the unique advantages of online coaching in cultivating social-emotional skills within educational systems. As education systems continue to navigate the post-pandemic landscape, the findings emphasize the importance of leveraging online coaching as a sustainable and effective approach to fostering teacher and student success.

Keywords: Social-emotional learning, online coaching, teacher training, Media Naturalness.

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