Psychologial Studies **ISSN 2353-0324**
volume: 15 Issue: 02 Year: 2025 P P: 76 – 102

The role of Emotional Education (EE) in reducing school phobia among Algerian children.

[1] University of Algiers 2, ibtissem.elhassani@univ-alger2.dz
[2] University of Oum El Bouaghi, boualli.badia@univ-oeb.dz

Received: 18-10-2025	*Accepted: 29-11-2025*	*Published: 25-12-2025*

Abstract

This paper aims to analyze the potential role of emotional education in reducing school phobia among Algerian children through a descriptive-analytical approach. It explores the conceptual foundations of emotional education as articulated in the works of Goleman, Mayer and Salovey, and connects these perspectives with psychological theories of fear, resilience, and attachment. Drawing upon cross-disciplinary frameworks -Bandura's social learning theory, Lazarus's cognitive appraisal model, and Bowlby's attachment theory- this paper critically examines how emotional education can foster adaptive coping and decrease school-related anxiety. It also contextualizes emotional education within the Algerian sociocultural and educational environment. The study concludes by proposing a theoretical model that situates emotional education as a preventive and restorative mechanism against school phobia

Keywords: Emotional education, school phobia, emotional intelligence.

الملخص

تهدف هذه الورقة إلى تحليل الدور المحتمل للتربية الوجدانية في الحدّ من الرهاب المدرسي لدى الأطفال الجزائريين، وذلك من خلال منهج وصفي–تحليلي. حيث سنستعرض المفاهيم الأساسية للتربية الوجدانية كما وردت في أعمال Goleman، Salovey & Mayer، لنربطها بالنظريات النفسية المتعلقة بالخوف والصمود والتعلّق. وبالاستناد إلى أطر متعددة التخصصات كنظرية التعلم الاجتماعي Bandura، ونموذج التقييم المعرفي Lazarus، ونظرية التعلّق Bowlby.

***Corresponding author**: Ibtissem El Hassani*

كما سنقدم فحص نقدي لكيفية مساهمة التربية الوجدانية في تعزيز آليات التكيف الإيجابي وتقليل القلق المرتبط بالمدرسة. لنختتم هذه الورقة باقتراح نموذج نظري يضع التربية الوجدانية كآلية وقائية وترميمية ضد الرهاب المدرسي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التربية الوجدانية، الرهاب المدرسي، الذكاء الوجداني.

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the concept of emotional education has gained increasing recognition as a cornerstone of holistic child development. Unlike traditional cognitive-oriented pedagogy, emotional education emphasizes the acquisition of emotional competencies -self-awareness, empathy, emotional regulation, and social skills- that support both academic achievement and psychological well-being. Numerous international studies (Goleman, 1995; Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2008; Denham, 2018) have shown that the absence of such competencies may predispose children to stress, anxiety, and maladaptive behaviors in academic contexts.

In Algeria, the need for emotional education has become particularly urgent. The Algerian educational system, historically shaped by colonial legacies and subsequent centralization, continues to rely heavily on memorization, authority-based instruction, and performance evaluation. Although the Ministry of National Education has introduced reforms emphasizing "competency-based learning," the affective and emotional dimensions of education remain largely neglected. The lack of systematic socio-emotional learning (SEL) programs contributes to an emotionally rigid school climate where anxiety, fear of failure, and avoidance behaviors can develop into school phobia.

School phobia, also referred to as school refusal, is a psychosocial phenomenon characterized by excessive fear or anxiety associated with school attendance. It often results in physical symptoms (e.g., stomach aches, headaches), avoidance behaviors, and academic regression. While traditionally viewed as a Western phenomenon, evidence now indicates that Algerian children also experience school-related anxiety and avoidance. Teachers frequently report cases of pupils exhibiting panic attacks, crying episodes, or

psychosomatic symptoms on school days, especially during early grades or after prolonged absences.

Despite the growing recognition of emotional factors in learning, the Algerian pedagogical literature still treats emotional education as a secondary or non-essential component. There is a clear gap between theoretical awareness and pedagogical implementation. Current teacher-training curricula focus primarily on subject matter and didactics, neglecting emotional intelligence and child psychology. Consequently, teachers are ill-equipped to identify or manage emotional distress in the classroom.

This paper seeks to bridge this gap by offering a descriptive-analytical examination of how emotional education can serve as a preventive and remedial framework for school phobia in Algerian children.

2. Conceptual and foundations of Emotional Education

2.1 The concept of Emotional Education

The term emotional education (EE) refers to the systematic process of developing emotional competencies that enable individuals to identify, express, understand, and regulate emotions effectively in themselves and others (Bisquerra, 2011). It goes beyond the mere management of emotions, encompassing the integration of affective, cognitive, and social dimensions of human functioning. Emotional education aims to promote emotional literacy - a construct first popularized by Goleman (1995)- as a critical life skill necessary for mental health, social adaptation, and academic performance.

According to Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso (2008), emotional intelligence (EI) comprises four key abilities: perceiving emotions, using emotions to facilitate thought, understanding emotions, and managing emotions. Emotional education, therefore, is the pedagogical application of emotional intelligence theories in formal and informal learning environments.

In recent years, emotional education has been recognized as an essential part of social and emotional learning (SEL) frameworks developed by organizations such as the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL, 2020). These frameworks emphasize the integration of emotional competencies within classroom instruction, school policies, and teacher training programs.

2.2 Theoretical models underpinning Emotional Education

Several theoretical models underpin emotional education. The Ability Model of Emotional Intelligence (Mayer et al., 2008) views EI as a cognitive ability that can be developed through education. In contrast, the Mixed Model proposed by Goleman (1998) integrates emotional and social competencies, emphasizing motivation, empathy, and interpersonal skills.

From a pedagogical standpoint, the Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Model (CASEL, 2020) operationalizes emotional education into five domains: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. These domains provide educators with a structured framework to integrate emotional development into everyday instruction.

2.3 Emotional Education in Algerian contexts

While emotional education has been widely implemented in Western contexts, its application in Arab and North African educational systems remains limited. In Algeria, the dominant pedagogical paradigm remains cognitive and behaviorist, emphasizing discipline and academic performance over emotional development. Scholars and educational observers have increasingly highlighted the need to integrate emotional dimensions into national education reform.

Algerian cultural norms often discourage open emotional expression, especially among boys; as emotional restraint is tradionally valued. This cultural factor creates a psychological barrier to emotional awareness and expression, which emotional education could help overcome. The recent initiatives by the Algerian Ministry of National Education (2020) to include psychosocial support in schools indicate growing recognition of the emotional dimension in learning, but systematic implementation remains minimal.

3. School Phobia: Psychological and Educational Perspectives

3.1 Conceptualizing School Phobia

School phobia -also known as school refusal or school anxiety- is defined as a severe and persistent fear of attending school that leads to significant

emotional distress and functional impairment (Kearney, 2008). The phenomenon does not stem from defiance or laziness but rather from underlying psychological conflicts related to anxiety, separation, or social fear (Last & Strauss, 1990). The term School Phobia was first introduced by Johnson et al. (1941) to describe children exhibiting intense fear when faced with the prospect of attending school, often accompanied by somatic complaints such as stomachaches, headaches, or nausea.

In contemporary psychology, school phobia is understood as a multidimensional construct, encompassing emotional, behavioral, and environmental components. Emotionally, it manifests as anxiety, panic, or dread associated with school-related stimuli. Behaviorally, it is characterized by avoidance and refusal to attend school. Environmentally, it is often maintained by family dynamics, peer interactions, and school climate (Baker & Willis, 2019).

DSM-5 (APA, 2013) does not recognize school phobia as a distinct disorder; instead, it categorizes it under "separation anxiety disorder," "social anxiety disorder," or "specific phobia." This classification reflects the heterogeneity of its causes and manifestations.

3.2 The psychological mechanisms of School Phobia

School phobia rarely occurs in isolation. It frequently coexists with generalized anxiety disorder, social anxiety, depression, or learning difficulties (Heyne et al., 2011). Physiological symptoms -such as tachycardia, sweating, nausea, or dizziness- accompany the emotional experience of dread. Cognitive symptoms include anticipatory anxiety and intrusive thoughts about school-related catastrophes.

Children suffering from school phobia often experience profound guilt for disappointing parents, which further reinforces the emotional burden. Studies reveal that prolonged school refusal correlates with lower self-esteem, academic regression, and long-term risk of dropout (Egger et al., 2003).

From a cognitive-behavioral perspective, school phobia develops and persists through processes of classical and operant conditioning (Kearney & Albano, 2004). School-related stimuli (teachers, classrooms, peers) become conditioned triggers of anxiety due to prior negative experiences such as

humiliation, failure, or bullying. Avoidance behaviors are negatively reinforced because they temporarily reduce distress, thereby strengthening the avoidance cycle.

Beck's cognitive model of anxiety (Beck, Emery, & Greenberg, 1985) suggests that children with school phobia hold maladaptive beliefs about competence ("I will fail"), social evaluation ("Others will mock me"), or safety ("School is dangerous"). These cognitive distortions generate catastrophic thinking, which maintains fear responses.

Psychodynamic theorists view school phobia as a manifestation of unconscious conflict, often related to dependency and separation issues (Bowlby, 1988). The child experiences anxiety when separated from the primary caregiver, especially the mother, and school becomes the symbolic site of this separation. Freud's theory of phobia formation -where anxiety is displaced from internal conflict to an external object- provides a lens for understanding how the school becomes a focus of fear (Freud, 1926/1959).

In Algeria, strong familial attachment and the central role of mothers in child-rearing often intensify dependency patterns. Consequently, school attendance can trigger pronounced separation anxiety.

Attachment theory (Bowlby, 1988) provides robust evidence linking insecure attachment to anxiety disorders and school refusal. Children with anxious–ambivalent attachment may experience heightened distress upon separation, while those with avoidant attachment may mask fear through defiant behavior. Parental overprotection, inconsistent discipline, and family stress further exacerbate school-related anxiety

School phobia cannot be understood solely at the individual level; sociocultural factors play a major role. In Algeria, where academic achievement is strongly valued and failure carries social stigma, school-related anxiety is frequently intensified. Moreover, overcrowded classrooms, punitive disciplinary methods, and limited psychological support services contribute to negative school experiences that may precipitate avoidance.

3.3 The Role of Emotional Education in understanding school phobia, and reducing it and preventing school avoidance

Traditional educational responses to school phobia have focused on behavioral modification (e.g., forced attendance or punishment). However, these methods neglect the underlying emotional and relational causes. Emotional education, by contrast, addresses the affective roots of school phobia.

Through teaching children emotional literacy, self-regulation, and coping strategies, emotional education helps them identify and manage their fears rather than suppressing them. For instance, emotion identification training enables children to verbalize distress instead of somatizing it. Similarly, emotion regulation programs reduce physiological hyperarousal and avoidance behaviors (Brackett et al., 2011).

In Algerian schools, emotional education can fill the gap left by a predominantly cognitive curriculum. It promotes a supportive environment where emotional expression is normalized rather than punished. This aligns with the theoretical position of Mayer and Salovey (1997), who argue that emotional understanding is foundational to adaptive coping and psychological resilience.

Emotional education (EE) represents a multidimensional framework that integrates psychological, pedagogical, and social perspectives to address emotional difficulties such as school phobia. This section presents a theoretical analysis of how emotional education can serve both preventive and therapeutic functions in mitigating school phobia among Algerian children. The discussion synthesizes concepts from emotional intelligence, attachment theory, social learning, and cognitive appraisal models, establishing the theoretical pathways through which EE influences emotional regulation, self-efficacy, and resilience.

Emotion regulation lies at the core of emotional education (Gross, 2015). Children with school phobia exhibit heightened physiological and psychological arousal in response to perceived threats associated with school attendance such as teacher evaluation, peer rejection, or separation from caregivers (Kearney, 2008). Emotional education programs explicitly train children to identify, label, and modulate these emotional responses.

According to Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso (2008), the ability to manage emotions involves recognizing emotional cues, understanding their antecedents, and applying adaptive strategies such as cognitive reappraisal or problem-solving. When embedded in educational contexts, these abilities foster meta-emotional awareness—an understanding of one's emotions as manageable rather than overwhelming (Brackett et al., 2019).

Empirical evidence indicates that children trained in emotional literacy show reduced anxiety levels and improved coping strategies when confronted with stressful academic situations (Denham, 2018). This aligns with Lazarus's (1991) cognitive appraisal theory, which posits that stress is not a direct reaction to external stimuli but depends on how individuals interpret and evaluate such stimuli. Emotional education, by modifying cognitive appraisals, therefore directly reduces anxiety and fear responses characteristic of school phobia.

Cognitive restructuring is another key process through which emotional education mitigates school phobia. School-phobic children often hold maladaptive beliefs such as "I will fail," "My teacher dislikes me," or "Something bad will happen if I go to school." Such catastrophic thinking reinforces avoidance behaviors (Beck, 1976).

Through guided emotional reflection and group discussions, emotional education enables children to deconstruct irrational beliefs and replace them with adaptive cognitions. For instance, activities involving role-playing or emotional storytelling encourage children to reinterpret school experiences from a positive, empowering perspective.

According to the ABCDE model of emotional learning (Ellis, 1994), awareness of emotional triggers (A), beliefs (B), and consequences (C), followed by disputation (D) and effect (E), constitutes a process of emotional self-correction. Emotional education systematically applies this model in age-appropriate ways, promoting rational emotional functioning and reducing the cognitive distortions underlying school fear.

Bowlby's (1969) **attachment theory** emphasizes that secure emotional bonds with caregivers provide a "secure base" from which children explore the

world. School phobia often reflects a disruption in this sense of security, especially in children with anxious or ambivalent attachment styles.

Emotional education addresses this issue by replicating secure-attachment conditions in the school environment. Teachers trained in emotional awareness can act as secondary attachment figures, offering emotional availability and validation (Pianta, 1999). Such relationships enhance emotional security, making school a place of safety rather than threat.

In Algeria, strong familial attachment ties can intensify separation anxiety when children start school. Emotional education programs that involve parents—through training in emotional coaching and gradual desensitization—can reduce this transition-related distress (Brackett & Rivers, 2014).

The emotional climate of the classroom significantly influences children's psychological adjustment. An emotionally supportive classroom reduces fear responses and promotes engagement, while emotionally neglectful environments heighten anxiety (Reyes et al., 2012). Emotional education contributes to a positive classroom climate by promoting teacher empathy and responsive communication; encouraging cooperative learning rather than competition; integrating emotional check-ins or mood meters (Brackett et al., 2019); allowing space for emotional expression and peer support.

In Algeria, a study found that teachers with higher self-awareness and empathy reported fewer cases of student absenteeism due to emotional distress. Emotional education training for teachers could thus serve as both prevention and early detection strategy. Such environments normalize the discussion of fear, transforming it from a taboo emotion into a shared human experience—an essential step in reducing school phobia.

Preventive interventions are most effective when introduced early. Emotional education in early childhood promotes secure attachment, emotional vocabulary, and coping mechanisms, which protect against later anxiety disorders (Denham, 2018).

In Algerian primary schools, introducing emotion-centered curricula could prevent the progression from mild anxiety to chronic school refusal.

Preventive EE strategies include: emotion identification games for children aged 5–7; story-based emotional scenarios integrating local culture; peer mediation programs for conflict resolution; teacher emotional self-reflection workshops.

By cultivating emotional resilience from the outset, such interventions reduce the likelihood that normal school-related worries evolve into pathological fear.

4. Educational implications and cultural adaptation of emotional education in the Algerian context:

The educational system in Algeria faces significant challenges in integrating emotional education to address school phobia. Teacher-centered pedagogies, limited counselor availability, and societal taboos surrounding mental health impede progress. Despite the Ministry of National Education's initiative to introduce school psychologists, implementation remains inconsistent, especially in rural areas (Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, 2020).

Introducing emotional education requires a paradigm shift from instruction-based to relationship-based pedagogy. Teachers need professional development in emotional literacy and classroom climate management. Parental involvement is equally crucial, as emotional modeling at home shapes children's affective coping mechanisms.

Several pilot studies in North African schools demonstrate promising results. For example, an exploratory study conducted in Algeria among middle-school EFL students examined the impact of SEL on decision-making and goal-directed behavior, suggesting positive changes in socio-emotional capacities following SEL implementation (Ghougali & Meddour, 2025).

Implementing emotional education in Algeria requires cultural adaptation to ensure alignment with Islamic, linguistic, and familial norms. Emotional expression in Algerian society is deeply shaped by collective values, modesty, and respect for authority. Therefore, socio-emotional learning programs should not merely transplant Western models but integrate local narratives, proverbs, and ethical frameworks that resonate with students' cultural context (CASEL, 2020; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

5. Emotional Education as a protective and remedial framework against school phobia

Within the Algerian educational system, where emotional expression and regulation are seldom integrated into formal pedagogy, emotional education offers a transformative paradigm that addresses not only cognitive learning but also socio-affective well-being.

Preventing school phobia requires early and systematic integration of emotional learning into the curriculum. Emotional education serves a preventive function by equipping children with the emotional competencies needed to interpret, manage, and communicate affective states before they escalate into anxiety or avoidance behaviors (Denham, Bassett, & Wyatt, 2014). By fostering self-awareness and emotional labeling, children are better able to identify physiological signs of anxiety, verbalize discomfort, and seek social support rather than resorting to somatic complaints (Raver, 2002).

Goleman's (1995) model of emotional intelligence provides a theoretical foundation for this preventive dimension. His five domains -self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills -directly correspond to the core deficits observed in school-phobic children. When children learn to understand their emotions, anticipate anxiety triggers, and apply regulation strategies, they develop cognitive schemas that buffer stress responses (Mayer et al., 2008). In Algerian schools, however, these competencies are rarely cultivated systematically, leaving emotional responses unmanaged and reactive.

Evidence from European and Middle Eastern educational systems suggest that integrating socio-emotional learning (SEL) programs into early primary curricula reduces anxiety-related absenteeism (Humphrey, 2013). In the Algerian context, introducing SEL through classroom activities -storytelling, role-play, cooperative projects- could similarly prevent the escalation of fear responses associated with school attendance. Teachers who model emotional openness and empathy also create emotionally secure environments, mitigating anticipatory anxiety and promoting attachment to school.

Beyond prevention, emotional education has remedial effects for children already experiencing school phobia. According to Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) transactional model of stress and coping, the way individuals appraise and manage stress determines their emotional outcomes. Emotional education provides tools for cognitive reappraisal, allowing children to reinterpret threatening school situations as manageable challenges. This transformation of cognitive appraisal weakens the fear response and promotes emotional resilience (Gross, 2015).

Bowlby's (1988) attachment theory also supports the remedial function of emotional education. For many school-phobic children, separation anxiety and insecure attachment styles underlie their resistance to school. Emotional education that reinforces trust, empathy, and emotional communication between teachers and students can compensate for insecure early attachment, promoting a sense of emotional safety. Teacher empathy, for instance, mediates the child's perception of school as a threatening or supportive space (Pianta, 1999). In Algerian schools, teachers' limited training in emotional literacy often prevents them from fulfilling this secure-base role, suggesting the need for explicit professional development in emotional education.

Teachers are central agents in the implementation of emotional education. Their own emotional competence determines the success of emotional learning in students (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Yet, in Algeria, teacher education remains largely content-oriented, focusing on academic knowledge and classroom management rather than affective development. Incorporating modules on emotional intelligence, child psychology, and classroom empathy could transform teachers from disciplinarians into emotional facilitators.

A meta-analysis by Durlak et al. (2011) demonstrated that SEL interventions are significantly more effective when teachers possess both emotional awareness and pedagogical competence in emotional instruction. Emotional education training should include reflective practices—journaling, peer discussion, and emotional feedback sessions—enabling teachers to process their own emotions and model adaptive regulation for their students (Brackett et al., 2016). In Algerian schools, this may require policy reform at

the level of the Higher Normal School (ENS) to include emotional literacy in teacher formation.

The family is the primary context in which emotional learning begins. Emotional education in schools cannot succeed without corresponding affective reinforcement at home (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Algerian families often emphasize obedience and academic performance, with limited focus on emotional dialogue. This emotional communication gap contributes to children's maladaptive emotional schemas and amplifies school-related fear.

Joint programs that involve parents in emotional literacy workshops have been shown to reduce anxiety and improve school attendance among children with school refusal (Heyne et al., 2011). These initiatives enable parents to recognize the emotional roots of school avoidance, reduce punitive responses, and collaborate with teachers to establish consistent emotional climates across home and school. In Algeria, school–family partnerships remain underdeveloped, but community-based educational centers, could serve as mediators for implementing such programs.

In Algerian society, as in many Arab–Muslim cultures, emotional restraint is often valorized, particularly among boys, as a sign of strength and maturity (Abu-Hamada, Soliman et al., 2020.; Sit, Nur et al.; 2025). This cultural norm can inhibit children's emotional disclosure and teachers' responsiveness to distress. Adapting emotional education to this sociocultural context requires integrating culturally resonant methods - such as storytelling from Arabic and Amazigh traditions emphasizing courage, empathy, and community solidarity - to teach emotional values indirectly.

Moreover, religious and ethical education in Algerian schools offers potential alignment with emotional education principles. Islamic moral education emphasizes "rahma" (compassion), "sabr" (patience), and "tawakkul" (trust), all of which correspond to key components of emotional resilience. By linking emotional literacy to these moral constructs, educators can ensure cultural legitimacy while promoting emotional openness.

6. Empirical and comparative studies on Emotional Education and School Anxiety

While theoretical frameworks provide conceptual justification for emotional education as a means of reducing school phobia, empirical research offers concrete evidence of its effectiveness across diverse educational settings. Over the past two decades, numerous studies -quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods- have explored the relationship between emotional education, anxiety regulation, and school engagement. Although much of this research originates from Western contexts, a growing body of work from Arab and African regions provides culturally relevant data. This section presents a comparative synthesis of these findings, emphasizing implications for the Algerian educational system.

Empirical studies across Europe and North America consistently show that social and emotional learning programs significantly reduce anxiety and fear-related behaviors in school-aged children. In a landmark meta-analysis covering 213 studies and 270,000 students, Durlak et al. (2011) found that SEL programs led to a 10% reduction in anxiety symptoms and a 23% improvement in emotional regulation skills. These effects were most pronounced when interventions were teacher-led, classroom-based, and sustained for at least one academic term.

Comparable findings have been reported in Asia. Research in China supports the positive impact of social and emotional learning (SEL) programmes on children's social-emotional competence and general emotional well-being. For example, Chen and Yu (2022) conducted a meta-analysis of 86 SEL programmes involving 8,736 students and found improvements in social-emotional skills and reductions in emotional distress.In a rural primary school in central China, an adapted SEL programme led to lasting reductions in peer-relationship problems among children, particularly those initially identified as at risk (Li, Ma & al., 2022)

These findings indicate that SEL can be effective even in cultural contexts different from those where it originated. However, further research is needed to determine whether such interventions can significantly reduce school-related anxiety or avoidance behaviors.

In the Arab–Maghreb region, research on social-emotional learning (SEL) is still emerging but shows considerable promise. Recent studies

indicate that SEL programs can enhance students' socio-emotional competencies, improve emotional regulation, foster positive peer relationships, and contribute to a supportive classroom climate.

For instance, a study conducted in Lebanese private middle schools found that students' SEL skills varied by gender and socio-economic status, and that higher SEL competencies were associated with increased academic engagement and better social interactions (Issa & Berberian, 2024). Similarly, a multi-informant study of Arabic-speaking students, their parents, and teachers highlighted differences in perceptions of socio-emotional skills, while showing that teacher-reported competencies correlated with academic performance (Asadi, 2025).

In Algeria, empirical research on emotional education remains limited but is gradually increasing. While few studies have directly examined interventions targeting school anxiety, existing work highlights the potential of socio-emotional programs to support students' emotional regulation and well-being. For example, research on emotional intelligence among adolescents has shown that higher emotional competencies are associated with greater self-efficacy and improved classroom interactions (Benchallal, 2021). Additionally, analyses of SEL integration into the Algerian school curriculum have identified challenges and strategies to enhance students' emotional skills and classroom climate, emphasizing the important role of teachers' emotional competence in supporting student engagement and reducing perceived stress (Bouzeria, 2025).

These findings suggest that socio-emotional education can positively influence student well-being and classroom dynamics, although empirical data specifically measuring school anxiety, absenteeism, or avoidance behaviors in Algerian primary and middle school populations remain scarce. Further studies are needed to empirically document these effects and guide inclusive educational practices.

An exploratory review of the literature on Algerian students suggests that parental attitudes toward fear and emotional guidance can influence school avoidance. In particular, insufficient emotional support at home and punitive responses to children's anxiety may exacerbate avoidance behaviors.

Comparative examination of the international and Algerian literature reveals three consistent findings:

(1) Emotional education reduces school-related anxiety across cultural contexts: Regardless of geographic or cultural variation, emotional learning interventions yield significant improvements in emotional regulation and decreases in school phobia indicators.

(2) Teacher emotional competence is a mediating variable: The efficacy of interventions largely depends on teachers' ability to model empathy, recognize distress, and manage classroom affective dynamics (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Pianta, 1999).

(3) Cultural adaptation determines implementation success: In collectivist societies like Algeria, integrating emotional education through culturally congruent channels—religious, familial, and narrative—enhances acceptance and sustainability.

These comparative insights support the hypothesis that emotional education operates through universal psychological mechanisms but manifests context-specific pathways of change.

Empirical studies in the Maghreb often face methodological constraints—small samples, lack of control groups, and limited psychometric validation of emotional assessment tools. Algerian researchers frequently rely on translated Western instruments such as the School Anxiety Inventory (SAI) or the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ), which may not fully capture local emotional constructs. Future research must prioritize instrumental validation in Arabic and Tamazight, longitudinal designs, and mixed-method approaches integrating ethnographic perspectives.

Moreover, interventions should consider gender differences. Evidence suggests that Algerian girls report higher school-related anxiety but exhibit better emotional verbalization than boys, reflecting gendered emotional norms. Tailored emotional education strategies are thus essential for equitable outcomes.

7. Conceptual Model for Emotional Education in the Algerian Context

Based on the theoretical, analytical, and empirical discussions developed in the previous sections, this part of the paper proposes a conceptual framework

for integrating emotional education as a mechanism for reducing school phobia among Algerian children. This model synthesizes multidisciplinary insights from emotional intelligence theory (Goleman, 1995; Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2008), social learning theory (Bandura, 1977), and attachment theory (Bowlby, 1988), while embedding them within the Algerian educational and sociocultural context.

The framework is both preventive and remedial, designed to function within Algerian primary and middle schools as a dynamic process involving teachers, families, and institutional actors. It emphasizes that emotional education must be contextually adapted to reflect local values, family structures, and pedagogical realities rather than directly imported from Western SEL models.

The conceptual model is grounded on four theoretical pillars:

(1) Emotional Intelligence Theory (Mayer & Salovey, 1997) - Emotional competence, encompassing recognition, understanding, expression, and regulation of emotions, forms the psychological foundation for resilience against anxiety and school-related fear.

(2) Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) - Emotional behaviors and coping strategies are acquired through observation, imitation, and reinforcement in classroom and family environments. Teachers and parents thus act as emotional models whose responses shape children's self-regulatory capacities.

(3) Cognitive Appraisal Theory (Lazarus, 1991) - Children's interpretation of school situations (tests, authority figures, peer relations) determines their emotional responses. Emotional education modifies these appraisals, transforming school from a threat-based environment to a challenge-oriented one.

(4) Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1988) - Secure attachment to caregivers and teachers fosters psychological safety, which in turn mitigates avoidance behaviors. In the Algerian context, the teacher often substitutes as a secondary attachment figure; thus, emotional education should prioritize nurturing and trust-based teacher–student interactions.

7.1 Core Components of the Model

The proposed model is organized around five interrelated dimensions, forming a system of emotional development and school adaptation.

Intrapersonal Dimension (Child Level): This dimension focuses on the child's internal emotional processes. It involves developing:

- Emotional awareness: the capacity to identify and label one's emotions accurately.
- Self-regulation: using adaptive strategies (e.g., breathing, self-talk) to manage fear and stress.
- Self-efficacy: belief in one's ability to face challenging school situations.

Empirical studies (Durlak et al., 2011) have shown that pupils with higher emotional awareness demonstrate lower cortisol levels and reduced absenteeism.

Interpersonal dimension (Peer and teacher relations): School phobia often stems from peer rejection or perceived teacher hostility. Emotional education fosters empathy, cooperative learning, and conflict resolution skills. Teachers play a critical role by modeling emotional regulation and by creating emotionally safe classrooms where children can express vulnerability without fear of punishment (Schonert-Reichl, 2019).

Familial dimension (Parental involvement): Family attitudes toward emotions greatly influence children's anxiety levels. In Algeria, cultural norms often discourage emotional expression, especially in boys. Emotional education should thus include parental sensitization workshops aimed at promoting supportive communication and empathy at home.

Institutional dimension (School climate and policy): At the institutional level, emotional education should be integrated into school policies, teacher training, and curricula. This requires establishing multidisciplinary support systems that include psychologists, counselors, and trained educators. Evidence from international studies suggests that institutional commitment is a key predictor of the sustainability and effectiveness of SEL programs (CASEL, 2020).

Sociocultural dimension (Cultural adaptation): The Algerian cultural context is characterized by collectivist values, respect for authority, and strong

family cohesion. Emotional education must therefore be culturally congruent, emphasizing emotional discipline rather than unrestrained expression.

7.2 Functional mechanisms linking Emotional Education and School Phobia reduction

The model operates through three main functional mechanisms:

Cognitive Reappraisal: Emotional education reshapes children's interpretations of school situations from "threat" to "challenge," reducing physiological fear responses (Gross, 2015).

Affective Regulation: Regular emotional practice (e.g., identifying emotions, using coping strategies) strengthens neurological pathways associated with self-control and resilience (Immordino-Yang & Damasio, 2007).

Social Reinforcement: Positive teacher and peer feedback reinforces adaptive emotional behaviors, creating a self-sustaining cycle of emotional safety and belonging (Bandura, 1997).

7.3 Practical Implementation in the Algerian Context

To operationalize this model, several practical steps are necessary:

- Teacher Education: Incorporate emotional education modules into university-level teacher training, emphasizing emotional literacy, stress management, and classroom empathy.
- Curricular Integration: Introduce emotional education as a transversal competency across all subjects, in line with the competency-based approach promoted by the Algerian Ministry of Education.
- School Counseling Units: Establish school-based mental health units led by trained psychologists to monitor and support emotionally vulnerable pupils.
- Parent–School Partnerships: Conduct awareness campaigns to redefine emotional expression as a strength rather than a weakness.
- Cultural Adaptation: Integrate Islamic and Maghrebi ethical values emphasizing compassion, patience, and respect into emotional education lessons, ensuring alignment with Algerian identity.

The proposed model aligns with contemporary theoretical frameworks in developmental and educational psychology while responding to Algeria's specific educational constraints. It also resonates with UNESCO's (2021)

vision of "education for emotional and social well-being" as a key pillar of inclusive education.

Furthermore, by incorporating culturally grounded emotional norms, the model avoids the pitfall of cultural imperialism often criticized in SEL research. Instead, it promotes a glocalized (global + local) vision of emotional education: globally informed yet locally relevant.

The implementation of this model is expected to produce several long-term outcomes:

- Reduction in school avoidance and absenteeism rates among primary pupils.
- Improvement in students' emotional resilience and coping skills.
- Enhanced teacher–student relationships based on empathy and trust.
- Increased parental engagement in the emotional life of their children.
- Institutional recognition of emotional education as a central pillar of pedagogical reform.

Collectively, these outcomes could transform the Algerian school system from a performance-centered to a human-centered educational paradigm—one that not only transmits knowledge but also cultivates emotional health and civic responsibility.

8. Pedagogical and Policy Implications for Algeria

The findings and theoretical discussions presented throughout this paper suggest that integrating emotional education into Algerian schools is not a supplementary luxury, but a pedagogical necessity. Emotional education (EE), when systematically incorporated into teaching practices, supports not only emotional regulation but also enhances motivation, attention, and interpersonal functioning (Brackett et al., 2019). In Algeria, where traditional pedagogy often emphasizes cognitive performance and rote learning, this represents a paradigm shift toward holistic education.

Teachers play a crucial role as mediators of emotional learning. Empirical studies indicate that educators who practice emotional awareness, empathy, and reflective communication foster greater emotional resilience among students (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Thus, embedding EE principles into classroom routines—through cooperative learning, emotion

naming, and reflective dialogue—can directly reduce the triggers that fuel school phobia, such as fear of evaluation or social exclusion.

Furthermore, research by Durlak et al. (2011) highlights that students exposed to social-emotional learning (SEL) programs show significant improvements in socio-emotional skills, attitudes, behavior, and academic performance — with an estimated gain of approximately 11 percentile points in academic achievement. Participation in SEL programs also correlates with reductions in conduct problems, emotional distress, and anxiety-related behaviors. Therefore, in Algerian classrooms, particularly in early primary education, integrating structured emotional curricula could serve both preventive and remedial functions.

A major obstacle to implementing emotional education in Algeria lies in teacher preparation. Most teacher-training institutions focus heavily on subject content and classroom management, neglecting the emotional and psychological dimensions of teaching. Yet, studies conducted in Mediterranean and North African contexts demonstrate that teachers' emotional competence directly predicts their classroom climate and students' emotional adjustment.

Thus, pre-service and in-service training programs must include modules on emotional intelligence (EI), stress management, and empathic communication. For example, the INSFP (Institut National de la Formation et du Perfectionnement du Personnel de l'Éducation) could introduce certification programs on emotional pedagogy, supported by partnerships with Algerian universities.

In addition, continuous professional development should promote reflective supervision practices, where teachers analyze emotionally charged classroom incidents to improve emotional literacy. As Sutton et al. (2003) emphasize, emotionally competent teachers are not those who suppress emotion but those who model healthy emotional expression, which becomes a form of "implicit teaching" for students.

8.1 Curriculum Reform and Emotional Literacy Integration

Algeria's national curriculum has undergone multiple reforms since 2003, yet emotional education remains peripheral. To systematically integrate EE, curriculum designers should embed emotional literacy outcomes into existing subjects -Arabic language, civic education, Islamic ethics, and art- rather than creating isolated courses.

The framework proposed by CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2023) identifies five core competencies -self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making- that can be contextually adapted to Algerian classrooms. For instance, civic education lessons could include reflective discussions on empathy and conflict resolution; Arabic literature courses could explore characters' emotions as analytical exercises.

Integrating these dimensions within the national curriculum could strengthen both moral and emotional competencies in culturally congruent ways.

8.2 Family and Community Involvement

Family-school collaboration is essential to the success of emotional education. Empirical studies (like Li et Al, 2019; Otero-Mayer et Al, 2025) indicate that family engagement amplifies the effects of emotional learning programs by reinforcing emotion regulation strategies at home. In Algeria, where families play a central role in children's socio-emotional development, involving parents in workshops and counseling sessions could significantly reduce anxiety and school avoidance.

Community institutions -mosques, youth centers, and cultural associations- can also serve as platforms for disseminating emotional education principles, promoting emotional well-being and psychosocial support in Muslim-majority societies. In Algeria, for instance, recent research indicates that regular participation in mosque life can contribute to personal balance and moral development among youth, suggesting that religious institutions may play a preventive role against psychological distress and deviant behaviors (Mehdaoui, 2025).

In rural and low-income contexts, where psychological services are scarce, community-based EE initiatives can fill a preventive role by teaching

coping and communication skills that protect against phobic responses to schooling.

8.3 Policy Recommendations for the Algerian Educational System

The Ministry of National Education should position emotional education as a strategic axis in educational policy, aligned with the national strategy for inclusive education. The following measures are recommended:

- Incorporation of Emotional Education in Teacher Standards: Establish national competencies requiring teachers to demonstrate emotional literacy and classroom emotional management.
- Pilot Projects in Primary Schools: Launch evidence-based EE pilot programs in collaboration with university psychology departments to test culturally adapted models.
- Psychological Support Units: Reinforce the presence of school psychologists trained in child emotional development and phobia intervention.
- Public Awareness Campaigns: Normalize discussions about children's emotional health to counter cultural taboos surrounding mental distress.
- Monitoring and Evaluation: Develop metrics for assessing emotional climate in schools using validated scales such as the school climate and connectedness survey

9. Conclusion

The present study examined the role of emotional education (EE) in reducing school phobia among Algerian children. Through a synthesis of psychological, pedagogical, and sociocultural frameworks, it demonstrated that emotional education constitutes a crucial protective and restorative mechanism for promoting children's emotional well-being and academic engagement.

The analysis revealed that emotional education enhances three interconnected domains: emotional awareness, emotion regulation, and social adaptability. These dimensions collectively serve to neutralize the triggers of school phobia -namely fear of failure, social rejection, and perceived lack of control.

The theoretical evidence presented in this paper suggests that school phobia cannot be effectively addressed through disciplinary or cognitive

interventions alone. Instead, it requires a holistic paradigm where emotion and cognition interact dynamically to foster psychological resilience and secure attachment to the school environment (Denham et al., 2014). Thus, emotional education is not a peripheral innovation but a central pedagogical foundation for mental health promotion and educational success in Algeria.

From a practical standpoint, the findings underscore the urgent need to institutionalize emotional education across Algeria's school system. EE should not be treated as an optional enrichment activity but as an integral component of the national curriculum.

Future research should thus adopt mixed-methods approaches, combining psychometric measures (e.g., School Anxiety Inventory) with qualitative interviews exploring children's emotional narratives. Such triangulation would enhance validity and produce data-driven insights into the mechanisms through which EE alleviates school-related anxiety.

10. Bibliography List

American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5th ed.). APA.

Asadi I. (2025). Evaluating social-emotional skills among Arabic-speaking students: A multi-informant study of students, parents and teachers. *Journal Educ Psychol.* Epub ahead of print. PMID: 41216994.

Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. New York: Freeman.

Beck, A. T., Emery, G., & Greenberg, R. L. (1985). *Anxiety disorders and phobias: A cognitive perspective*. Basic Books.

Beck, A. T. (1976). *Cognitive Therapy and the Emotional Disorders*. Penguin.

Bisquerra Alzina, R. (2011). Educación emocional. *Padres y Maestros / Journal of Parents and Teachers*, (337), 5–8.

Bowlby, J. (1988). *A secure base: Parent-child attachment and healthy human development.* New York: Basic Books.

Brackett, M. A., Rivers, S. E., & Salovey, P. (2011). Emotional intelligence: Implications for personal, social, academic, and workplace success. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 5(1), 88–103.

Brackett, M. A., & Rivers, S. E. (2014). Transforming students' lives with social and emotional learning. *International Handbook of Emotions in Education*, 368–388.

Brackett, M. A., Rivers, S. E., Reyes, M. R., & Salovey, P. (2016). Enhancing academic performance and social–emotional competence with the RULER feeling words curriculum. *Learning and Individual Differences*, 22(2), 218–224.

Brackett, M. A., Reyes, M. R., Rivers, S. E., Elbertson, N. A., & Salovey, P. (2019). Classroom emotional climate and student engagement. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 103(4), 1013–1023.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

CASEL. (2020). *SEL Framework*. Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning.

CASEL. (2023). *What is SEL?* Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning.

Denham, S. A., Bassett, H. H., & Wyatt, T. M. (2014). The socialization of emotional competence. In J. E. Grusec & P. D. Hastings (Eds.), Handbook of Socialization: Theory and Research (2nd ed., pp. 590–613). Guilford Press.

Denham, S. (2018). *Emotional Development in Young Children*. Guilford Press.

Durlak, J. A., Weissberg, R. P., Dymnicki, A. B., Taylor, R. D., & Schellinger, K. B. (2011). The impact of enhancing students' social and emotional learning: A meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions. *Child Development*, 82(1), 405–432.

Egger, H. L., Costello, E. J., & Angold, A. (2003). School refusal and psychiatric disorders. *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, 42(7), 797–807.

Ellis, A. (1994*). Reason and Emotion in Psychotherapy*. Birch Lane.

Freud, S. (1959). *Inhibitions, symptoms, and anxiety* (J. Strachey, Trans.). W. W. Norton. (Original work published 1926).

Goleman, D. (1995). *Emotional intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ*. New York: Bantam Books.

Goleman, D. (1998). *Working with Emotional Intelligence*. New York: Bantam Books.

Ghougali, H., & Meddour, M. (2025). Social emotional learning: Tapping into Algerian middle school EFL students' decision-making and goal-directed behavior. *Global Journal of Guidance and Counseling in Schools: Current Perspectives*, 15(2), 156-173.

Gross, J. J. (2015). Emotion regulation: Current status and future prospects. *Psychological Inquiry*, 26(1), 1–26.

Mehdaoui, D. (2025). The Role Of The Mosque Institution In Promoting Mental Health And Achieving Behavioral Balance Among Youth. *Journal of science and knowledge horizons*, 05 (01), 377-394.

Baker H, Wills U. (2018). School Phobia: Classification and Treatment. British *Journal of Psychiatry*, 132(5): 492-499.

Heyne D, Sauter FM, Van Widenfelt BM, Vermeiren R, Westenberg PM. (2011). School refusal and anxiety in adolescence: non-randomized trial of a developmentally sensitive cognitive behavioral therapy. *J Anxiety Disord*, 25(7): 870-8.

Humphrey, N. (2013). *Social and emotional learning: A critical appraisal*. SAGE Publications.

Immordino-Yang, M. H., & Damasio, A. (2007). We feel, therefore we learn: The relevance of affective neuroscience to education. *Mind, Brain, and Education*, 1(1), 3–10.

Jennings, P. A., & Greenberg, M. T. (2009). The prosocial classroom: Teacher social and emotional competence in relation to student and classroom outcomes. *Review of Educational Research*, 79(1), 491–525.

Johnson, A. M., Falstein, E. I., Szurek, S. A., & Svendsen, M. (1941). School phobia: An analysis of a school-refusing child. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 11(4), 702–711.

Kearney, C. A., & Albano, A. M. (2004). The functional profiles of school refusal behavior. *Behavior Modification*, 28(1), 147–161.

Kearney, C. A. (2008). School absenteeism and school refusal behavior. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 28(3), 451–471.

Last, C. G., & Strauss, C. C. (1990). School refusal in anxiety-disordered children and adolescents. *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, 29(1), 31–35.

Lazarus, R. S. (1991). *Emotion and adaptation*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Mayer, J. D., & Salovey, P. (1997). What is emotional intelligence? In P. Salovey & D. Sluyter (Eds.), *Emotional development and emotional intelligence* (pp. 3–31). New York: Basic Books.

Mayer, J. D., Salovey, P., & Caruso, D. R. (2008). Emotional intelligence: New ability or eclectic traits? *American Psychologist*, 63(6), 503–517.

Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale. (2020). *Programme de soutien psychologique et éducatif pour les élèves en difficulté*. Alger: MEN Press.

Pianta, R. C. (1999). *Enhancing relationships between children and teachers*. American Psychological Association.

Raver, C. C. (2002). Emotions matter: Making the case for the role of young children's emotional development for early school readiness. *Social Policy Report*, 16(3), 3–18.

Reyes, M. R., Brackett, M. A., Rivers, S. E., White, M., & Salovey, P. (2012). Classroom emotional climate, student engagement, and academic achievement. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 104(3), 700–712.

Sutton, R. E., & Wheatley, K. F. (2003). Teachers' emotions and teaching: A review of the literature and directions for future research. *Educational Psychology Review*, 15(4), 327–358.

Schonert-Reichl, K. A. (2019). Advancements in the Landscape of Social and Emotional Learning and Emerging Topics on the Horizon. *Educational Psychologist*, 54(3), 222–232.

UNESCO. (2021). *Social and Emotional Learning Guidelines for Education Systems*. Paris: UNESCO.