

Psychoanalytic Therapies in the Algerian Educational Context: Challenges and Opportunities

Benkhalifa Smail^{1*}, khemmad Mohammed², djalab mohammed salah ³

¹ University Of El Oued (Algeria), benkhalifa-smail@univ-eloued.dz

² University Of El Oued (Algeria), khemmad-mohammed@univ-eloued.dz

³ University Of El Oued (Algeria); djalab-mohammedsalah@univ-eloued.dz

Receipt date : 10/08/2025 ; Acceptance Date: 06/12/2025

Abstract: This article explores the feasibility of applying psychoanalytic therapies in the Algerian educational system, emphasizing both challenges and opportunities. These therapies, grounded in Freud's psychoanalytic theory, aim to understand unconscious conflicts that influence students' behavior and development. In Algeria, recent statistics show that approximately 30% of students suffer from psychological issues such as anxiety and depression, which significantly hinder their academic performance. Major challenges include a lack of qualified professionals and insufficient financial resources. However, increased awareness of mental health issues and growing government support represent substantial opportunities. The article recommends training teachers in psychoanalytic principles and adapting therapeutic models to align with local cultural norms to enhance student mental well-being.

Keywords: Psychoanalytic Therapies – Algerian Educational System – Student Mental Health – Challenges and Opportunities.

* Benkhalifa Smail.

1 – Introduction

Psychoanalytic therapies have significantly contributed to understanding human behavior and internal psychological conflicts. In educational settings, these therapies support students in overcoming psychological difficulties that may obstruct academic and social development. Given Algeria's current educational challenges, there is a growing need to apply psychoanalytic frameworks to improve mental health for both students and teachers.

Official statistics from the Ministry of National Education (2022) indicate that a considerable proportion of Algerian students suffer from disorders such as anxiety and depression, adversely affecting their school outcomes. Therefore, this paper aims to examine the potential application of psychoanalytic therapies in Algerian schools, with a focus on related challenges and emerging opportunities.

Theoretical Framework

2.1 Overview of Psychoanalytic Therapies

Psychoanalytic therapy, originally developed by Sigmund Freud (1915), posits that unconscious conflicts influence behavior and emotional symptoms. These ideas were later expanded by theorists such as Carl Jung and Alfred Adler, who incorporated sociocultural dimensions into the theory. In the Algerian context, Boukhelifa (2020) emphasized the relevance of psychoanalytic approaches for understanding students' inner conflicts, especially given prevailing social and economic challenges. Ould Ahmed (2017) also affirmed the potential utility of psychoanalysis in educational environments.

2.2 The Relationship Between Psychoanalysis and Education

According to Erikson (1963), psychosocial development stages are shaped by environmental experiences, making educational settings crucial for addressing psychological issues. Schools can act as therapeutic spaces, where psychoanalytic interventions can promote personality development and emotional regulation. Smith et al. (2020) and Durand (2019) underscore the role of such therapies in improving mental health and academic performance, particularly in under-resourced contexts like Algeria.

3. Applications of Psychoanalytic Therapies in Algerian Schools

3.1 Analyzing Student Behavior

The Algerian Ministry of Health (2021) reported that 30% of secondary school students experience anxiety-related symptoms affecting their academic performance. Psychoanalytic interventions can identify underlying causes, such as family conflict or social pressure. Bouaziz (2021) and Touati (2021) found that implementing psychoanalytic techniques led to notable improvements in students with learning difficulties.

3.2 The Teacher as a Psychoanalytic Figure

Ben Aissa (2019) found that teachers trained in basic psychoanalytic concepts showed greater effectiveness in interacting with students with psychological issues. Similarly, Zitouni (2018) posited that teachers could act as "mirrors" through which students express repressed emotions, facilitating emotional regulation and academic resilience.

3.3 Psychoanalytically-Informed Intervention Programs

Some Algerian schools have introduced psychoanalytically-based guidance programs involving emotional catharsis sessions. According to the Ministry of National Education (2020), such programs significantly improved student performance. These findings are supported by WHO (2021), which advocates for resource-sensitive mental health initiatives in schools.

4. The Impact of Psychoanalytic Therapies on School Environment

Psychoanalytic therapies are among the most prominent approaches capable of positively influencing the school environment. According to Freud (1915), unconscious psychological conflicts can lead to behavioral and emotional disturbances that impede students' academic and social development. Previous studies have shown that the application of such therapies in schools can lead to the following outcomes:

4.1 Improving Students' Mental Health

Fonagy and Target (1996) demonstrated that psychoanalytic treatment helped reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression among students, resulting in better academic performance.

4.2 Enhancing the Social Environment

Midgley et al. (2017) found that psychoanalytic therapy improved peer relationships by fostering a deeper understanding of behavioral motives.

4.3 Supporting Teachers

Barlow et al. (2016) revealed that training teachers in the basics of psychoanalytic therapy enabled them to better understand student behaviors and provide preliminary psychological support.

5. The Role of Family in Supporting Psychoanalytic Therapies

The family plays a critical role in the success of psychoanalytic therapies, especially when working with children and adolescents. Winnicott (1965) stressed that a supportive family environment enhances therapeutic effectiveness by providing a safe space for emotional expression and resolution of internal conflicts.

5.1 Providing a Supportive Environment

Sharf (2015) found that families encouraging children to express their emotions can significantly increase therapy effectiveness.

5.2 Participation in Therapy

Carr (2016) reported that family participation in therapy sessions or consultations helps caregivers better understand children's psychological needs.

5.3 Awareness and Education

Kazdin (2017) showed that psychoeducational programs for parents improve their understanding of therapy and how to support their children effectively.

6. International Experiences with Psychoanalytic Therapies in Schools

International research shows varying degrees of success in implementing psychoanalytic therapies in educational settings.

6.1 United Kingdom

Fonagy and Target (1996) found that psychoanalytic school programs in primary schools improved social behavior and reduced student anxiety.

6.2 United States

Weisz et al. (2017) reported that some private schools and psychological centers achieved positive results in applying psychoanalytic therapies, despite challenges related to funding and training.

6.3 Sweden

Løvgren et al. (2019) demonstrated that school-based psychoanalytic therapy improved academic and social outcomes for students with psychological difficulties.

7. Ethical Considerations in Applying Psychoanalytic Therapies in Schools

Applying psychoanalytic therapies in schools raises several ethical challenges:

7.1 Privacy and Confidentiality of Student Information

Koocher and Keith-Spiegel (2016) stressed the importance of maintaining strict confidentiality of psychological information and obtaining prior consent from parents or guardians.

7.2 Informed Consent and Capacity

Fisher (2017) highlighted the complexity of ensuring that children understand the therapy process and can meaningfully consent, alongside obtaining guardian approval.

7.3 Training and Competence

Wampold and Norcross (2018) argued that these therapies should only be conducted by adequately trained professionals to prevent any potential psychological harm.

8. Challenges and Opportunities

8.1 Challenges

8.1.1 Shortage of Qualified Personnel

Current Situation: The Algerian education system suffers from a shortage of trained psychologists capable of delivering psychoanalytic therapy. According to the Ministry of National Education (2022), school psychologists constitute only 10% of the actual need.

Impact: This shortage limits schools' ability to provide adequate psychological support, worsening mental health issues such as anxiety and depression.

Proposed Actions:

Teacher Training: Implement training programs on psychoanalytic basics in collaboration with universities and specialized centers.

Promoting Psychological Specializations: Encourage students to specialize in educational and school psychology through scholarships and guaranteed employment.

8.1.2 Cultural Challenges

Current Situation: Some psychoanalytic concepts, such as sexuality, may conflict with conservative Algerian cultural values (Zitouni, 2018).

Impact: This cultural mismatch can lead to resistance from parents and the community.

Proposed Actions:

Localization of Theories: Adapt psychoanalytic theories to align with Algerian cultural norms, focusing on socially acceptable aspects.

Awareness Campaigns: Organize workshops and campaigns for parents highlighting the importance of mental health for academic achievement.

8.1.3 Lack of Financial Resources

Current Situation: Many schools face funding shortages that prevent them from implementing specialized guidance programs.

Impact: This limits the ability to provide effective psychoanalytic therapy.

Proposed Actions:

International Partnerships: Collaborate with organizations such as UNICEF to finance school mental-health programs.

Government Support: Increase budgets allocated to school mental-health services.

8.2 Opportunities

8.2.1 Increasing Awareness of Mental Health

Current Situation: Awareness of the importance of mental health in education has grown, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic (Ministry of Health of Algeria, 2021).

Impact: This awareness creates opportunities for integrating psychoanalytic programs into schools.

Proposed Actions:

Media Campaigns: Use mass media to promote psychoanalytic therapy.

Collaboration with Health Institutions: Create networks between schools and hospitals for comprehensive psychological services.

8.2.2 Technological Development

Current Situation: Technology, such as online platforms, can be used to deliver remote mental-health services.

Impact: This can provide psychological support to students in remote areas.

Proposed Actions:

Online Platforms: Develop secure platforms offering counseling and psychoanalytic sessions.

Teacher Training: Train teachers to use technology for mental-health support.

8.2.3 Government Support

Current Situation: The Algerian government has included mental health in its 2020–2025 national strategy.

Impact: This governmental backing can help establish psychoanalytic programs in schools.

Proposed Actions:

Supportive Legislation: Pass laws supporting the application of psychoanalytic therapy in schools.

Research Funding: Finance studies assessing the effectiveness of psychoanalytic therapy in education.

9. Case Study

9.1 Real-World Application

An Algerian case study reported by Bouaziz (2021) documented the application of psychoanalytic techniques with a student who presented learning difficulties attributable to family conflict. Over a six-month therapeutic period, the student demonstrated notable improvements in academic performance and emotional regulation.

9.2 Practical Implications

Empirical work (e.g., Smith et al., 2020) suggests that psychoanalytic approaches can be particularly effective in low-resource educational environments where relational and emotional factors substantially influence learning. These findings underscore the potential added value of integrating psychodynamically informed interventions into a school mental-health continuum that includes prevention, early intervention, and referral.

10. Conclusion

Psychoanalytic therapies offer a promising avenue for improving student mental health in Algerian schools. However, their effective implementation requires further research, cultural adaptation, and systematic teacher training.

11. Recommendations

1. **Workforce Development:** Provide systematic training for teachers and school psychologists in psychoanalytic principles and psychodynamic techniques, together with ongoing supervision.
2. **Cultural Adaptation:** Adapt psychoanalytic theories and clinical language to the sociocultural context of Algeria to enhance acceptability and effectiveness.
3. **Financial Investment:** Increase funding for school mental-health programs, including dedicated budgets for counseling services and staff positions.
4. **Research Promotion:** Support and fund rigorous research (quantitative and qualitative) to evaluate the short- and long-term outcomes of psychoanalytic interventions in Algerian schools.

12. References

- Barlow, D. H., Bullis, J. R., Comer, J. S., & Ametaj, A. A. (2016). Evidence-based psychological treatments: An update and a way forward. *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology*, 12, 1–30. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-clinpsy-032814-112821> (Retrieved on June 14, 2025)
- Ben Aissa, K. (2019). The teacher's role in improving students' mental health. *Journal of Educational Sciences*, 12(3), 45–60.
- Bouaziz, F. (2021). Application of psychoanalytic therapies in Algerian schools (Unpublished master's thesis). University of Algiers.
- Boukhelifa, A. (2020). La psychanalyse dans le contexte éducatif algérien. *Revue des Sciences de l'Éducation*, 15(2), 78–92.
- Carr, A. (2016). *Family therapy: Concepts, process and practice* (3rd ed.). Wiley.
- Corey, G. (2017). *Theory and practice of counseling and psychotherapy* (10th ed.). Cengage Learning.
- Durand, M. (2019). Les défis de l'application des thérapies psychanalytiques en milieu scolaire. Paris: Éditions Psyché.
- Erikson, E. H. (1963). *Childhood and society*. W. W. Norton & Company.
- Fisher, C. B. (2017). *Decoding the ethics code: A practical guide for psychologists* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Fonagy, P., & Target, M. (1996). The psychological treatment of child and adolescent psychiatric disorders. In A. Roth & P. Fonagy (Eds.), *What works for whom? A critical review of psychotherapy research* (pp. 263–320). Guilford Press.
- Freud, S. (1915). The unconscious. In *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (Vol. 14, pp. 159–215). Hogarth Press.
- Kazdin, A. E. (2017). Parent management training: Evidence, outcomes, and issues. *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, 56(12), 1047–1055. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaac.2017.09.425> (Retrieved on June 19, 2025)
- Koocher, G. P., & Keith-Spiegel, P. (2016). *Ethics in psychology and the mental health professions: Standards and cases* (4th ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Løvgren, A., Røssberg, J. I., Nilsen, L., Engebretsen, E., & Ulberg, R. (2019). How do adolescents with depression experience improvement in psychodynamic psychotherapy? A qualitative study. *BMC Psychiatry*, 19(1), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12888-019-2295-0> (Retrieved on June 23, 2025)

Midgley, N., O’Keeffe, S., French, L., & Kennedy, E. (2017). Psychodynamic psychotherapy for children and adolescents: An updated narrative review of the evidence base. *Journal of Child Psychotherapy*, 43(3), 307–329. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0075417X.2017.1324501> (Retrieved on June 12, 2025)

Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale Algérien. (2022). Rapport sur la santé mentale dans les écoles. Alger: Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale.

Ministry of Health of Algeria. (2021). Student mental health statistics. Algiers: National Health Department.

Ministry of National Education of Algeria. (2020). Report on guidance programs in schools. Algiers: National Directorate of Education.

Norcross, J. C., & Wampold, B. E. (2018). Evidence-based therapy relationships: Research conclusions and clinical practices. *Psychotherapy*, 55(4), 303–315. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pst0000197> (Retrieved on June 28, 2025)

Ould Ahmed, S. (2017). *Psychanalyse et éducation en Algérie: Enjeux et perspectives*. Alger: Éditions El Maarifa.

Sharf, R. S. (2015). *Theories of psychotherapy and counseling: Concepts and cases* (6th ed.). Cengage Learning.

Smith, J., Brown, T., & Lee, K. (2020). Psychoanalytic approaches in education. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 112(4), 789–801. <https://doi.org/10.1037/edu0000456> (Retrieved on June 9, 2025)

Touati, L. (2021). L’impact des thérapies psychanalytiques sur la réussite scolaire. *Revue Algérienne de Psychologie*, 10(1), 34–49.

Weisz, J. R., Kuppens, S., Ng, M. Y., Eckshtain, D., Ugueto, A. M., Vaughn-Coaxum, R., ... & Fordwood, S. R. (2017). What five decades of research tells us about the effects of youth psychological therapy: A multilevel meta-analysis and implications for science and practice. *American Psychologist*, 72(2), 79–117. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0040360> (Retrieved on June 26, 2025)

Winnicott, D. W. (1965). *The maturational processes and the facilitating environment: Studies in the theory of emotional development*. International Universities Press.

World Health Organization. (2021). *Mental health in schools: A global perspective*. Geneva: WHO Press. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240022339> (Retrieved on June 15, 2025)

Zitouni, M. (2018). Cultural challenges in the application of psychoanalysis. *Journal of Psychology*, 7(2), 112–125.