

# Emotional Intelligence in Adolescents: The Teacher's Role as a Catalyst for Change

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## Abstract


Emotional intelligence (EI) refers to the capacity to regulate one's own emotions and comprehend the feelings of others. This capability enhances our achievement in both personal and professional spheres. Research indicates that elevated emotional intelligence in adolescents correlates with many benefits, including improved mental health, relationships, and academic performance. Teachers are vital in addressing the emotional needs of their students, and their emotional intelligence can strengthen the entire school community. Teachers' emotional intelligence significantly affects the teaching and learning process, influencing student learning behaviours, engagement, and academic success. This study explores the role of teachers as catalysts in adolescents' emotional intelligence, which can be achieved through effective teacher-student interaction and establishing an emotionally intelligent classroom environment. The paper also highlights how integrating EI within the curriculum, like socio-emotional learning (SEL), will contribute to adolescents being able to use and manage their emotions effectively.


**Keywords:** emotional intelligence, adolescents, teachers, student-teacher interaction, classroom environment


## Article Publication

 Published Online: 30-June-2024

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## Introduction

Emotional intelligence (EI) refers to a person's capacity to regulate and control his or her own emotions as well as the feelings of others and adolescence is a period of crucial emotional and social transformation. Therefore, these changes require the acquisition of emotional intelligence. According to Sekhri and Sandhu (2017), emotional intelligence in adolescents encompasses their ability to use emotions successfully and productively in an adaptable manner. Adolescence is a pivotal period in which many elements influencing long-term well-being are either established or not (Ross et al., 2020). That is, the experiences throughout the difficult years of adolescence have a direct impact on adulthood and the later phases of life (Mancini et al., 2024). Adolescent adjustment relies heavily on emotional intelligence, particularly throughout the fleeting adolescent years (Tejada-Gallardo et al., 2022).

Teachers play an important role in this developmental process by fostering a supportive environment and acting as role models for emotional management (Wang, 2023). Durlak et al. (2011) elucidated how schools recognise the importance of teachers in promoting emotional intelligence through social-emotional learning programs. Educators facilitate psychological development more efficiently by offering guidance, exemplifying emotional management, and fostering supportive learning environments (Brackett & Katulak 2007). Teachers influence the learning process and promote emotional growth (Valente et al., 2020b). Given that adolescence is a critical developmental time during which indices of long-term well-being undergo significant change, it is critical to examine concepts that can improve adolescents' psychological well-being, such as EI (Ross et al., 2020).

Consequently, this article investigates teachers' roles as catalysts for fostering EI in adolescents, with an overview of emotional intelligence highlighting the impact of EI on adolescent development as well as strategies for integrating EI, such as SEL, in classroom practices. From this viewpoint, this study seeks to contribute to the expanding body of research that acknowledges emotional intelligence as a critical component of adolescent development, with teachers serving as key individuals in this transformation process.

### **A. Objectives of the Article**

1. To highlight the importance of emotional intelligence for adolescents and teachers' role in fostering emotional intelligence.
2. To conceptualise how teachers can act as catalysts for developing EI among adolescents in promoting and enhancing EI skills.

### **An Overview of Emotional Intelligence**

The capacity to perceive, comprehend, and use emotions constructively to manage anxiety, communicate successfully, empathise, overcome challenges, solve problems, and handle conflicts is emotional intelligence. The Ability EI model defines it as recognising, assessing, and managing emotions in yourself and others (Mayer et al., 2007). According to Goleman (1995), emotional intelligence/quotient refers to the capacity to identify one's own emotions and those of others, be self-motivated, and effectively manage emotions for personal and relational benefits. Valente and colleagues (2020) define a structured model of intelligence consisting of four elements: the ability to perceive, use, understand and manage emotions. These capabilities are critical in facilitating the provisions of the emotional regulation in the classroom, and are critically important functions for the development of emotional intelligence among the students.

#### ***Perceiving Emotions***

The first ability to perceive emotions is the skill of identifying emotions in oneself and others, using facial expressions, voice tones, or body language as indicators of emotion awareness (Kafetsios & Hess, 2023). People who possess a good perception of emotion also demonstrate their ability to communicate or speak in an appropriate and coherent manner, expressing their emotions and needs.

#### ***Using Emotions***

The second skill, using emotion, refers to the ability to interpret emotional information, the origins of feelings, and how emotions blend, progress, and change from one to another (Brackett, et al., 2010)

#### ***Understanding Emotion***

It includes an understanding of the emotional lexicon and how emotions combine, progress, and transition from one to the other (Brackett, et al., 2010)

#### ***Managing Emotions***

The fourth component relates to emotion management, which includes the ability to be receptive to feelings and utilise appropriate ways to encourage personal knowledge and progress (Brackett, et al., 2010)

### **Benefits of Emotional Intelligence in Adolescents**

Numerous studies indicate that emotional intelligence is beneficial as it enhances mental health, social relations, adjustment, reactivity or dealing with issues, anxiety, depression, as well as performance in school among adolescents. Prior studies indicate that enhancing emotional competencies can boost flourishing, psychological adjustment, and interpersonal relationships in adolescents (Martínez-Martínez et al., 2020; Chamizo-Nieto et al., 2021;). Soriano-Sánchez and Jiménez-Vázquez (2023) emphasised EI's importance among young adolescents in school and its connection with various psychological variables. This variable is also viewed as a factor that determines the future prosperity of people in many activities.

Garg (2024) examined how EI develops in adolescents and young adults and revealed that emotional intelligence is of paramount significance in personal and professional realms. This study found that high EI fosters self-awareness and self-regulation, thereby improving emotional resilience and mental well-being. Collado-Soler et al. (2023) revealed a significant correlation between resilience and emotional intelligence as long as both are present in adolescence. They are more likely to have a positive self-concept, secure attachments with family and peers, higher resilience in the face of adversity, as well as greater levels of overall happiness and optimism (Gonzales, 2022). Antonopoulou (2024) highlighted that individuals with an elevated level of emotional intelligence can handle stress better by utilizing different coping mechanisms in difficult situations. Lopez-Zafra et al. (2019) determined that emotional intelligence as well as support received from other people positively affect the well-being of adolescents.

### **A. Emotional Intelligence: A Key to Adolescent Student Success and Well-being**

Emotional intelligence has become increasingly recognised as a critical factor in education. Research has demonstrated its significant impact on students' well-being and academic achievement, emphasising its importance in shaping educational experiences and outcomes. It is well-established that emotional intelligence and the teacher-student relationship enhance psychological well-being and improve academic performance (Chamizo-Nieto et al., 2021). Emotional intelligence is crucial for student motivation, enhancing both academic achievement and the teaching-learning process (Yang & Duan, 2023). In the multiple mediation model by Cortés-Denia et al. (2020), self-concept and academic performance were identified as predictors of emotional intelligence. Conversely, anxiety and depression exert a negative influence. Research conducted by Toscano-Hermoso et al. (2020) demonstrated that the implementation of emotional intelligence enhancement programmes in educational institutions can facilitate both individual development and academic performance. Chamizo-Nieto et al. (2021) found a positive correlation between emotional intelligence and academic performance. Students who work on their emotional intelligence become more self-aware, better able to control their emotions, more empathetic, and better able to get along with others. All of these skills are important for doing well in school. (Sharma, 2023). Consequently, the significance of emotional intelligence emerged as a crucial factor in elucidating the connection between adolescent happiness and optimism (Tejada-Gallardo et al., 2020). Thus, fostering EI in adolescents is essential for their holistic development.

### **The Impact of Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) on Enhancing Emotional Intelligence**

Jones et al. (2019) SEL as the process by which people learn and use a set of social, emotional, behavioural, and character skills essential to succeed in schooling, the workplace, relationships, and citizenship. SEL programmes cultivate essential abilities including self-management, relationship-building, and decision-making, crucial for emotional intelligence. This framework teaches students to comprehend and manage their emotions, set positive goals, exhibit empathy, sustain healthy relationships, and choose responsibly. (SEL) enhances their overall well-being, academic performance, and future success through essential emotional regulation, empathy, and social skills (Martinez & Gomez, 2024). Teachers are seen as the most important people in setting school-based SEL programs into action (Dyson et al., 2019). The impact of social and emotional skills on learning is becoming more recognised, in addition to the core academic abilities (Osher et al., 2016). Through targeted lessons, exercises, and discussions, SEL can be easily introduced to the curriculum. Sharma (2023) determined that the implementation of emotional intelligence development programmes substantially improves the educational experience and well-being of students as well as teachers, influencing educational institutions and policymakers. The study by Megías-Robles et al. (2024) indicates the importance of nurturing the well-being of dynamic adolescent periods through reinforcements in emotional intelligence programmes. Advancing SEL as an effective teaching practice requires teachers to possess the skills, motivation, and support for proper implementation (Gonzales, 2022). Therefore, for students to develop significant life skills and enhance general well-being, academic performance, and future success, SEL is absolutely essential. Successful implementation of SEL programs necessitate capable and enthusiastic teachers, as well as institutional assistance, to incorporate these practices smoothly into the current curriculum and nurture emotional intelligence in students.

## The Teacher as a Catalyst for Change

Teachers are mentors and role models who shape pupils' cognitive and emotional development. Teachers must develop emotional intelligence (EI) to create a positive teaching environment and encourage active student learning, which requires intellectual and emotional knowledge. According to Sun et al. (2024), teachers with high EI create positive classroom atmospheres, fostering engagement and participation among students and academic success. Research on teachers' emotional intelligence (EI) indicates that EI is crucial for fostering positive relationships and efficient functioning within the school environment. They help students learn about emotions and make students better at understanding their own feelings and the feelings of others. Teachers possessing high emotional intelligence may successfully navigate classroom dynamics, cultivate positive relationships with students, and foster a conducive learning atmosphere (Sharma, 2023). Teachers' emotional intelligence then greatly influences the emotional intelligence of their students. Their capacity to sense, utilise, comprehend, and regulate emotions enhances their engagement with students, facilitating a supportive learning atmosphere and fostering adolescents' emotional development.

### A. Enhancing Adolescent Emotional Intelligence Through Quality Teacher-Student Interactions.

The student-teacher relationship is a significant interpersonal interaction between children and adults that shapes children's self-ability development. Several studies show that the way a teacher interacts with a student affects the adolescent's emotional intelligence (Oh, 2021). Certain research indicates that positive teacher-student relationships enhance the development of adolescent's emotional intelligence (Wang et al., 2020). Practitioners should especially focus on enhancing emotional intelligence in students with poor teacher relationships (Chamizo-Nieto et al., 2021). In 2022 Xiang et al. investigated the impact of student-teacher interaction on school-age children's empathy as well as the unique mediation effect of emotional intelligence. The study found that positive teacher-student relationships foster the development of students' emotional intelligence. Conversely, when these relationships are poor, the link between emotional intelligence and flourishing intensifies (Chamizo-Nieto et al., 2021). The teacher-student relationship quality is vital for adolescent development and mental health (Wang, 2023). Positive relationships with teachers foster the growth of adolescents' emotional intelligence (Wan et al., 2023). During school interactions, teacher feedback helps students express and manage emotions, fostering emotional intelligence development (Xiang et al., 2022). Teachers play a critical role in developing social citizenship and fostering empathy and social skills in students. High emotional intelligence allows teachers to address students' emotional requirements, thereby improving motivation and engagement (Džafić & Ilić, 2024). According to Xiang et al. (2022), better teacher-student interactions enhance emotional intelligence in students. Recent research has underscored the significance of emotional intelligence in education, highlighting its vital contribution to fostering positive relationships between teachers and students, as well as its effectiveness in conflict resolution. Emotions not only affect teacher-student dynamics but also contribute to the overall classroom climate (Valente & Lourenco, 2020).

### B. Creating an Emotionally Intelligent Classroom Environment

To foster emotional intelligence in their pupils, teachers should exemplify it through their own conduct and interpersonal exchanges. Teachers can enhance an emotionally intelligent environment by encouraging collaboration, maintaining a culture of respect, and offering chances for students to express emotions. Helper (2024) states that teachers with high emotional intelligence are better able to handle the complexities of the classroom and build good relationships with their students.

To facilitate the development of emotional intelligence in adolescents, teachers can establish an emotionally supportive learning environment by implementing the following strategies:

#### 1. *Ensure a safe and inclusive environment*

To create a helpful and happy classroom environment, it is necessary to effectively manage the classroom's social, emotional, and behavioural dynamics.

## 2. Model emotional intelligence.

Teachers serve as exemplars for their students. Through the demonstration of empathy, emotional regulation, and adept conflict resolution, students may observe and subsequently emulate these behaviours (Keller & Becker, 2020).

## 3. Promote self-awareness and social awareness.

To promote self-awareness and social awareness, it is important for teachers to manage their own emotions through self-reflection. By teaching the students to comprehend and empathize with the emotions of others, teachers not only nurture a strong classroom culture but also help build skills for adolescents as they learn how to interact more effectively. (*Emotional Intelligence in Education: Exploring and Applying EQ Strategies in the Classroom—Social Emotional Learning Activities & Lessons | SEL Power Pack*, 2024).

## 4. Facilitate the development of emotional regulation skills.

Teaching the students self-regulation skills is important in order to create awareness on emotional intelligence. This entails identifying the signs, the impact of emotion on behavior as well as practicing healthy ways to address these signs with teachers and students.

## Conclusion

Emotional intelligence for adolescents has gained significant attention. It is a critical component of a complete education. Developing emotional intelligence necessitates a supportive environment, skill-building, and curriculum integration. Emotionally intelligent classrooms and SEL integration might enhance adolescents' use and management of emotions. Teacher's modelling of emotional intelligence and good teacher-student relationships have a significant role in fostering emotional intelligence in early adolescents for their enhanced future.

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