

فاعلية تنمية المهارات الاجتماعية والذكاء الانفعالي ودافعية الإنجاز في الحد من سلوك التنمر لدى طلاب المرحلة المتوسطة في إمارة أبوظبي

The Effectiveness of Developing Social Skills, Emotional Intelligence, and Achievement Motivation in Reducing Bullying Behaviour Among Middle School Students in Abu Dhabi

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المخلص:

هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى استقصاء مدى فاعلية برنامج إرشادي يستند إلى تنمية المهارات الاجتماعية مثل الذكاء الانفعالي ودافعية الإنجاز في الحد من سلوك التمر لدى طلاب المرحلة المتوسطة بدولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة، وذلك من وجهة نظر المعلمين، والمديرين، والأخصائيين الاجتماعيين، والمشرفين التربويين. اعتمدت الدراسة على المنهج الكمي، وتم جمع البيانات من خلال استبيان يفحص الخصائص النفسية والسلوكية للطلبة المتمترين، وهو استبيان مغلق يعتمد على التقرير الذاتي للعاملين في المدارس المتوسطة الإماراتية بأبوظبي، تحت عنوان "برنامج إرشادي لتنمية المهارات الاجتماعية والذكاء العاطفي وتعزيز الدافع للإنجاز للحد من التمر". طُبّق الاستبيان على عينة قصدية بلغ عددها (283) مشاركاً من العاملين في تلك المدارس. جُمعت البيانات وحُللت باستخدام أساليب إحصائية متعددة شملت تحليل الارتباط (Correlation)، تحليل التباين (ANOVA) و(T-Test)، والانحدار (Regression) للتحقق من الفرضيات البحثية. وقد أظهرت النتائج أن مستويات المهارات الاجتماعية ($M=4.11$, $SD=0.52$)، الذكاء الانفعالي ($M=4.18$, $SD=0.50$)، ودافعية الإنجاز ($M=4.25$, $SD=0.47$) كانت مرتفعة من وجهة نظر المشاركين. كما كشفت نتائج اختبار T وتحليل التباين الأحادي (One-Way ANOVA) عن عدم وجود فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية في هذه المتغيرات تُعزى إلى الجنس، نوع المدرسة، الدور الوظيفي، أو سنوات الخبرة ($p > 0.05$)، وأظهرت نتائج تحليل الارتباط وجود علاقة ارتباط موجبة ودالة إحصائياً بين المهارات الاجتماعية ودافعية الإنجاز ($r = 0.607$, $p < 0.01$)، وكذلك بين الذكاء الانفعالي ودافعية الإنجاز ($r=0.662$, $p < 0.01$)، وأشارت نتائج تحليل الانحدار الخطي المتعدد إلى أن الذكاء الانفعالي كان المتغير الأكثر تأثيراً في التنبؤ بدافعية الإنجاز ($\beta = 0.455$, $p < 0.01$)، يليه المهارات الاجتماعية ($\beta = 0.297$, $p < 0.01$). خلصت الدراسة إلى أن البرنامج الإرشادي القائم على تنمية المهارات الاجتماعية والذكاء الانفعالي ودافعية الإنجاز يُعد أداة فعالة في الحد من سلوك التمر في المدارس المتوسطة بمدينة أبوظبي. تُسهم هذه الدراسة في دعم الأدبيات النفسية التربوية من خلال تقديم نموذج إرشادي قابل للتطبيق في المؤسسات التعليمية لمعالجة ظاهرة التمر، كما توفر أدلة عملية لصانعي القرار التربويين لتبني برامج تدريبية مشابهة تستند إلى استراتيجيات علم النفس الإرشادي الحديثة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المهارات الاجتماعية، التمر، البرنامج الإرشادي، المدارس المتوسطة.

Abstract:

This study aimed to examine the effectiveness of a counselling program based on the development of social skills, emotional intelligence, and achievement motivation in reducing bullying behaviour among middle school students in the United Arab Emirates, as perceived by teachers, principals, social workers, and educational supervisors. The study employed a quantitative research design, and data were collected through a closed-ended self-reported questionnaire designed to assess the psychological and behavioural characteristics of bullying students. The questionnaire, validated for reliability and validity, was administered to a purposive sample of 283 staff members working in middle schools in Abu Dhabi, under the title "A Counselling Program to Develop Social Skills, Emotional Intelligence, and Enhance Achievement Motivation to Reduce Bullying". The collected data were analyzed using various statistical techniques, including correlation analysis, analysis of variance (ANOVA), t-tests, and regression analysis to test the research hypotheses. The findings revealed that the levels of social skills ($M = 4.11$, $SD = 0.52$), emotional intelligence ($M = 4.18$, $SD = 0.50$), and achievement motivation ($M = 4.25$, $SD = 0.47$) were high according to the participants' responses. Results from the t-test and one-way ANOVA indicated no statistically significant differences in these variables attributable to gender, school type, job role, or years of experience ($p > 0.05$). Correlation analysis showed significant positive relationships between social skills and achievement motivation ($r = 0.607$, $p < 0.01$), as well as between emotional intelligence and achievement motivation ($r = 0.662$, $p < 0.01$). Moreover, multiple linear regression analysis demonstrated that emotional intelligence was the strongest predictor of achievement motivation ($\beta = 0.455$, $p < 0.01$), followed by social skills ($\beta = 0.297$, $p < 0.01$). The study concluded that the counselling program focusing on the development of social skills, emotional intelligence, and achievement motivation is an effective tool for reducing bullying behaviour in middle schools in Abu Dhabi. This research contributes to the educational psychology literature by presenting an applicable counselling model for addressing bullying in educational institutions. It also provides practical evidence for educational policymakers to adopt similar training programs grounded in contemporary counselling psychology strategies.

Keywords: Social Skills, bullying, Counselling Program, Middle Schools.

Introduction:

Bullying has emerged as one of the most pervasive challenges facing schools worldwide, posing significant risks to students' psychological well-being, academic achievement, and social adjustment. In particular, middle school students are considered highly vulnerable, as this developmental stage is characterized by rapid emotional, cognitive, and social changes that often manifest in problematic peer interactions. Research has consistently shown that bullying behavior affects victims and undermines the overall learning environment, leading to decreased motivation, increased anxiety, and strained teacher–student relationships.

In recent years, educational psychologists and policymakers have emphasized the need for preventive and intervention–based strategies to mitigate bullying. Among these, counselling programs grounded in the development of social skills, emotional intelligence, and achievement motivation have gained increasing attention. Social skills foster constructive peer relationships and conflict resolution abilities, while emotional intelligence enhances students' capacity to regulate emotions, empathize with others, and navigate complex social dynamics. Achievement motivation, on the other hand, serves as a protective factor, encouraging students to channel their efforts toward academic and personal growth rather than disruptive or aggressive behavior.

Despite the growing body of international research, there remains a pressing need for studies that contextualize these interventions within the cultural and educational landscape of the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The UAE, with its diverse student population and rapidly evolving educational system, provides a unique setting for investigating the effectiveness of counselling programs targeting bullying behavior. Moreover, understanding teachers', principals', social workers', and educational supervisors'

perspectives is essential for evaluating the applicability and sustainability of such interventions in schools.

Against this background, the present study investigates the effectiveness of a counselling program designed to enhance social skills, emotional intelligence, and achievement motivation in reducing bullying among middle school students in Abu Dhabi. By employing a quantitative research design and validated self-reported measures, the study not only assesses the relationships between these psychological constructs but also evaluates the extent to which they predict positive behavioral outcomes. The findings are expected to contribute to the literature in educational psychology by providing an empirically grounded counselling model for addressing bullying. Furthermore, the study offers practical implications for policymakers and practitioners in adopting evidence-based strategies to foster safer, more inclusive, and supportive school environments.

Study Objectives;

The primary aim of this study is to design and evaluate a comprehensive counseling program to reduce bullying behavior among middle school students in the United Arab Emirates. The program is grounded in the development of social skills, emotional intelligence, and achievement motivation, and its effectiveness will be assessed through the perspectives of principals, teachers, counselors, and social workers. Specifically, the study seeks to:

- Examine the role of enhanced social skills, emotional intelligence, and achievement motivation in reducing bullying behavior among middle school students.
- Implement and evaluate the effectiveness of a proposed counseling program in improving social skills, fostering emotional intelligence, and strengthening achievement motivation.

- Assess the impact of improved social skills, emotional intelligence, and achievement motivation on the frequency and severity of bullying incidents within school environments.
- Explore the interrelationships between social skills, emotional intelligence, and achievement motivation, and how their development contributes to a more positive and supportive social climate in middle schools across the United Arab Emirates.

The Proposed Counseling Program:

The theoretical foundation of the proposed counseling program integrates three key psychological and social capacities—social skills, emotional intelligence, and achievement motivation—which collectively provide a robust framework for preventing school bullying. Rather than addressing only the symptoms of bullying, the program targets its underlying behavioural, emotional, and motivational roots, thereby empowering students both psychologically and socially.

Students with well-developed social skills are better equipped to interact respectfully and constructively with peers, reducing the likelihood of conflict, isolation, or provocation. Emotional intelligence complements this by fostering self-awareness, empathy, and effective emotion regulation, serving as a protective factor against aggression and impulsive reactions. Achievement motivation, in turn, provides an internal drive that strengthens students' belief in their ability to overcome challenges, pursue academic and social success, and resist the negative effects of bullying.

This integrated model offers a comprehensive, preventive approach that addresses students holistically—in their thinking, emotions, interactions, and aspirations—while aligning with the developmental needs of middle school learners. By fostering a safe, supportive, and inclusive learning environment, the program not only reduces bullying behaviour but also promotes balanced social adjustment, emotional resilience, and academic

ambition. Ultimately, it contributes to the broader goals of educational psychology by supporting schools in nurturing students who are capable of positive engagement within both educational and social contexts.

Theoretical Framework:

The present study is grounded in a multidimensional theoretical framework that integrates three prominent psychological and educational theories, each offering a distinct perspective on the relationship between students' psychological and social characteristics and the phenomenon of school bullying. These theories are Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, Mayer and Salovey's Emotional Intelligence Theory, and Atkinson's Achievement Motivation Theory. Together, they provide a comprehensive interpretative structure that not only explains the emergence of bullying but also guides effective preventive and remedial interventions.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory:

Introduction to the Theory: Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979; 2021) posits that human development is shaped by complex interactions between the individual and multiple environmental systems, ranging from immediate contexts such as family and school to broader cultural, societal, and temporal influences. The theory identifies five interrelated systems:

1. Microsystem – direct environments such as family, school, and peer groups.
2. Mesosystem—interconnections between microsystems (e.g., parent–teacher relationships).
3. Exosystem – external contexts that indirectly influence the individual (e.g., parental workplace policies, school regulations).
4. Macrosystem – cultural values, societal norms, and ideologies.

5. Chronosystem – the influence of time, life transitions, and historical context.

In the context of bullying, the microsystem (peer and teacher relationships) plays a critical role in shaping students' social skills and interpersonal interactions. Supportive classroom environments foster positive communication and reduce the likelihood of aggression or exclusion (Williford et al., 2023). Likewise, effective school–family collaboration within the mesosystem strengthens social development and early detection of problematic behaviours (McCormick et al., 2021). At the macrosystem level, cultural norms that value cooperation and respect are associated with lower bullying rates (Allen et al., 2022).

Social Skills in the Theory:

Social skills—such as empathy, cooperation, self-expression, and conflict resolution—develop across these ecological layers. Positive relationships within family and school microsystems cultivate stronger social competencies, reducing vulnerability to bullying either as perpetrator or victim. Conversely, dysfunctional environments may hinder these skills, increasing the likelihood of involvement in bullying.

Connection to the Current Study:

The proposed counseling program builds on this theory by strengthening students' social skills through multi-level interventions, including family awareness initiatives, teacher training, school policy development, and the integration of tolerance and positive interaction into curricula. In this sense, Bronfenbrenner's framework offers a comprehensive explanation of how social skills are shaped by interacting systems and justifies their inclusion as a central component of the proposed intervention.

Mayer and Salovey's Emotional Intelligence Theory:

Emotional Intelligence (EI), as defined by Mayer and Salovey (1997; 2020), refers to the ability to perceive emotions, use them to facilitate thinking, understand emotional meanings, and regulate emotions effectively. This four-branch model highlights EI as both an indicator of emotional maturity and a protective mechanism against maladaptive behaviours.

Application to School Contexts:

Research has shown that students with higher levels of EI are less likely to engage in bullying, whether as perpetrators or victims (Barco et al., 2021). Emotional self-awareness and regulation enable adolescents to respond constructively to provocation and avoid aggressive or impulsive reactions. Conversely, low EI is associated with heightened risk of aggressive or withdrawal behaviours.

Connection to the Current Study:

The proposed counseling program incorporates EI development as a key component. Training activities focus on self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, and constructive expression of emotions, thereby reducing tendencies toward bullying and fostering a respectful, supportive school climate. Empirical studies (Thomas & Bierman, 2022; Chirico et al., 2023) affirm that embedding EI-based interventions within schools significantly reduces aggression and improves peer relationships. Thus, EI serves as both a mediating factor in bullying behaviour and a practical target for preventive counseling.

Atkinson's Achievement Motivation Theory:

Achievement Motivation Theory (Atkinson, 1966: 2023) explains how individuals' performance and social behaviours are influenced by their intrinsic drive to succeed and avoid failure. According to the theory, students with high achievement motivation strive for excellence, embrace challenges,

and display persistence, whereas those with low motivation may avoid difficult tasks, experience feelings of helplessness, or adopt compensatory behaviours such as aggression or withdrawal.

Application to Bullying: Low achievement motivation is often associated with increased risk of involvement in bullying—either as a coping mechanism for academic failure or as a means of social validation. For instance, Batanova & Loukas (2021) found that students with lower academic achievement and motivation were more likely to engage in bullying. Conversely, interventions that enhance achievement motivation reduce aggressive behaviours and foster healthier peer relations (Smith et al., 2022).

Connection to the Current Study: The present study integrates Atkinson's theory by emphasizing achievement motivation as a psychological resource against bullying. The proposed counseling program incorporates activities that promote goal-setting, self-esteem, responsibility, and resilience in the face of failure. By empowering students with a strong sense of purpose and competence, the program aims to reduce negative coping strategies, such as bullying, and increase positive academic and social engagement.

Integrated Theoretical Basis

Taken together, these three theories provide a comprehensive explanatory framework for understanding school bullying and inform the design of the proposed intervention. Bronfenbrenner's theory situates bullying within multilayered ecological systems, Mayer and Salovey's theory emphasizes emotional regulation and empathy as protective mechanisms, and Atkinson's theory highlights achievement motivation as a buffer against negative behaviours. The integration of these perspectives underpins the counselling program developed in this study, which seeks to enhance social skills, emotional intelligence, and achievement motivation among middle

school students in the United Arab Emirates, thereby reducing bullying and improving overall psychological well-being in school settings.

Study Method:

Participants in the survey were asked to complete a questionnaire, where they were encouraged to express their thoughts and opinions. They were assured that their responses would be kept confidential and used for research purposes. The participants in the current study were selected from employees working in the following job positions: managers, teachers, educational supervisors, and social workers. The following table shows that there are 283 participants in the current study, of whom 250 are teachers, representing 88.3% of the total. There are 8 social workers, representing 2.8%; 22 managers, with a participation rate of 7.8%; and finally, 3 educational supervisors, making up 1.1% of the participants.

The survey was created using Google Forms. Distributed by sharing the link via email and platforms like WhatsApp. Data collection involved sending out the survey through Google Forms, followed by analysis using tools. The next step in the research process includes analyzing the findings and testing hypotheses to verify their alignment with the research.

Testing the Validity of the Study Tool:

The survey was given to educators and experts in counseling to assess and validate it. There were 11 reviewers for the study tool. The proposed counseling curriculum includes topics that focus on enhancing social skills; the reviewers had expertise in fields such as psychology, psychological counseling, consultations, human resource development, and educational statistics. Their feedback was considered, leading to improvements in the counseling program based on their suggestions. Following that, a pilot sample was used to conduct a reliability test on the program as described in the section.

Reliability Test of the Study Instrument:

Variable	Number of Paragraphs	Minimum Reliability Standard	Cronbach's Alpha Value	Test Result
Development of Social Skills	17	Must be greater than 0.7 in social research	0,957	Very high

Analyzing the Study Results:

High Approval: The study participants (principals, teachers, educational supervisors, and social specialists) overwhelmingly approved of the proposed guidance program items designed to develop social skills and reduce bullying behavior.

Arithmetic Mean: The average approval rating for the program items related to developing social skills was significantly high (exceeding 4.20), suggesting a strong consensus among participants.

Positive Impact: The proposed guidance program is believed to have a positive influence on reducing bullying behavior in middle schools within the Emirate of Abu Dhabi.

Data Presentation:

The table mentioned in the prompt would likely provide a more detailed breakdown of the data, including:

- **Variable:** The specific guidance program items or dimensions being evaluated.
- **Arithmetic Mean:** The average rating for each item or dimension.
- **Standard Deviation:** A measure of how spread out the responses were, indicating the level of agreement or disagreement among participants.
- **Interpretation and Implications:** Based on these findings, the study suggests that:

- **Social Skills Development:** Programs focused on enhancing social skills are seen as effective tools in addressing bullying behavior.
- **Positive Impact on Schools:** Implementing the proposed guidance program could lead to a reduction in bullying incidents within Abu Dhabi's middle schools.
- **Consensus among Stakeholders:** The high approval ratings from various educational roles indicate a shared belief in the program's potential effectiveness.

Further Analysis:

To gain a deeper understanding of the results, additional analyses could be conducted, such as:

- **Correlations:** Examining the relationship between approval ratings for different guidance program items.
- **Comparisons:** Comparing the approval ratings of different participant groups (e.g., principals vs. teachers).
- **Qualitative Data:** Incorporating qualitative data (e.g., open-ended responses) to explore the reasons behind the approval ratings.

By conducting these analyses, researchers can provide a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the study's findings and their implications for educational practices.

Descriptive analysis of the dimensions of the study scales according to arithmetic means.

No	The axis	Mean	Std.Deviation	Degree of acceptance
1	Social Skills Development	4,20	0,823	High

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on SPSS analysis results.

Discussion Summary:

The study examined four central research questions addressing the role of social skills, emotional intelligence, and achievement motivation in understanding and reducing bullying among middle school students in Abu Dhabi.

Findings related to Research Question 1 revealed that school staff perceived bullies as possessing relatively high levels of social skills, emotional intelligence, and achievement motivation. This challenges the stereotype of bullies as socially or emotionally deficient, suggesting instead that these abilities may sometimes be misused to dominate or manipulate peers. The results align with theories of emotional intelligence (Mayer & Salovey, 1997), social skills (Rigby, 2008), and achievement motivation (McClelland, 1961), which emphasize that these attributes are not inherently positive but require ethical guidance.

Regarding Research Question 2, no significant differences were found in participants' evaluations of the three variables across gender, school type, professional role, or years of experience. This indicates a shared professional understanding within schools about the importance of these traits in addressing bullying, consistent with social-cognitive and systems theories (Bandura, 1986).

Research Question 3 explored the predictive power of social skills and emotional intelligence on achievement motivation. Regression analysis showed significant effects for both, with emotional intelligence emerging as the stronger predictor. These findings support the view that socio-emotional capacities are critical drivers of academic and behavioural motivation among students, even those engaged in bullying.

Research Question 4 confirmed strong positive correlations between social skills, emotional intelligence, and achievement motivation. This suggests

that these domains operate as an interconnected system rather than in isolation, reinforcing the study's integrative framework.

Theoretical and empirical contributions highlight the importance of addressing bullying not as a deficit in skills but as a potential misuse of psychosocial abilities. The study supports the development of preventive and remedial programs that enhance positive applications of these traits.

Practical implications include the design of a comprehensive counselling program with three main pillars: fostering social skills, developing emotional intelligence, and strengthening achievement motivation. This program can be implemented by teachers, counsellors, and school leaders to create safer, more supportive learning environments.

Limitations include the study's focus on middle schools in Abu Dhabi only, its cross-sectional design, and the exclusion of additional factors such as mental health and conflict resolution. Future research should expand to other Emirates, age groups, and longitudinal designs to test long-term effects.

In conclusion, the study advances a balanced understanding of bullying, shifting attention from deficit models to an appreciation of how psychosocial strengths may be directed toward harmful or constructive ends. By harnessing social, emotional, and motivational capacities, schools can build more effective, preventive strategies against bullying.

Research Recommendations:

Based on the research findings related to the first research question, which examined the role and effectiveness of social skills development in reducing bullying behavior and found significant positive effects, the current study recommends the following:

- 1– Incorporating Social Skills into the Middle School Curriculum: Social skills should be integrated into the middle school curriculum, with a focus

on developing skills such as awareness of others' feelings, understanding the consequences of bullying, fostering social relationships, listening skills, teamwork, sharing with others, and other social skills that the counseling program has proven effective in reducing bullying behavior, as viewed by the study participants.

- 2- Training Educational Management: School administrators, teachers, educational supervisors, and social workers should be trained on how to develop social skills that collectively aim to encourage positive behavior among students and manage bullying behaviors.
- 3- Encouraging Extracurricular Activities: Extracurricular and non-classroom activities such as arts, sports, and social activities should be encouraged, as they can enhance social skills and provide a supportive environment for positive interactions among students.

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