STUDIA UNIVERSITATIS MOLDAVIAE
Revista științifică a Universității de Stat din Moldova, 2025, nr. 9(189)

CZU: 37.091.212:159.942 **https://doi.org/10.59295/sum9(189)2025_17**

THE ROLE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN STUDENTS' PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT

Monica VLAD,

Moldova State University

Emotional intelligence (EI) represents the ability to recognize, understand, manage, and use one's own emotions and those of others, being essential for students' personal, social, and academic development. It includes competencies such as emotional regulation, intrinsic motivation, empathy, resilience, and decision-making, which influence engagement in learning, academic performance, and interpersonal relationships. Theoretical models of EI Mayer J.D., Salovey P., Goleman D., Bar-On R. emphasize the importance of integrating emotions and cognition in the educational process. Studies show that the emotional environment of schools affects students' motivation, engagement, and learning strategies, while the development of EI can be cultivated through teaching practices adapted to individual learning styles and transversal activities within the curriculum. Consistent implementation of these approaches supports the formation of emotionally balanced students, capable of facing academic and social challenges, contributing to their well-being, autonomy, and life success.

Keywords: *emotional intelligence, student development, emotion regulation, intrinsic motivation, empathy, resilience, learning styles.*

ROLUL INTELIGENȚEI EMOȚIONALE ÎN DEZVOLTAREA PERSONALĂ, SOCIALĂ ȘI ACADEMICĂ A ELEVILOR

Lucrarea analizează rolul inteligenței emoționale (IE) în dezvoltarea elevilor, evidențiind modul în care competențele emoționale – reglarea emoțiilor, motivația intrinsecă, empatia, reziliența și luarea deciziilor – influențează implicarea în învățare, performanța academică și relațiile interpersonale. Scopul principal al studiului este de a investiga cum integrarea inteligenței emoționale în procesul educațional poate sprijini dezvoltarea personală, socială și academică a elevilor. Metodologia se bazează pe analiza literaturii de specialitate, incluzând contribuțiile autorilor Mayer J.D., Salovey P., Goleman D., Bar-On R. și cercetări recente privind impactul mediului emoțional asupra învățării. Rezultatele subliniază că dezvoltarea IE poate fi susținută prin practici didactice adaptate stilurilor individuale de învățare și prin activități transversale în curriculum, creând un mediu sigur și incluziv. Concluzia principală afirmă că abordările educaționale centrate pe dezvoltarea emoțională contribuie la formarea unor elevi echilibrați, autonomi și capabili să facă față provocărilor academice și sociale.

Cuvinte-cheie: *inteligență emoțională, dezvoltare elevi, reglarea emoțiilor, motivație intrinsecă, empatie, reziliență, stiluri de învățare, mediu educațional.*

Introduction

Emotional intelligence is a relatively new concept in psychology, grounded in traditional understandings of intelligence. Emotional intelligence refers to the knowledge, awareness, and capacity of an individual to manage emotional and cognitive states, both within themselves and in others [2]. It encompasses various traits or competencies, such as emotional awareness and regulation, empathy, and motivation, which are fundamental to emotional intelligence models [7]. There are different theories and models of emotional intelligence, including trait-based models that comprise emotion-related competencies, such as the MBC model and the Mayer J.D. and Salovey P. model [18; 23].

The latter distinguishes between an emotional and a cognitive aspect of intelligence. Emotional intelligence, as a trait, competes with and diminishes cognitive abilities such as intelligence, and due to this distinctiveness, it cannot coexist with nor have a direct influence on grades or academic performance. However, these outcomes may be influenced by complex cognitive abilities involving emotional competence [7].

It has been demonstrated that emotions have a relevant impact on individual behavior and actions [15]. It is not controversial to state that learning is natural and develops throughout life. Being part of a learning

context represents a general everyday dynamic that involves emotions at different levels during an individual's presence in an educational setting, due to multiple factors. Each experience contextualized within a specific educational action can evoke different emotions in the student, generating particular or diverse feelings toward that educational context, thereby creating a pedagogical relationship not only with the teacher, but also with knowledge, peers, professionals, and the broader environment.

From this perspective, individuals are biologically predisposed to experience multiple emotions throughout their lives, and such experiences affect cognition and learning. However, it is important not to consider emotions solely as mediators of cognition, but rather as integral to cognitive activity. Emotion regulation is a crucial factor of intellectual-emotional processes linked to cognitive abilities that influence individuals' behavior, performance, and academic learning.

Moreover, emotions have increasingly been considered inseparable from cognitive processes. This is because new educational perspectives in planning and carrying out teaching activities focus on the person, recognizing the importance of emotions and responding to the demands of contemporary society. Students are, first and foremost, citizens equipped with intellectual and emotional skills to interpret situations, think, act, and make decisions in life, assuming a variety of roles—some of them not yet envisioned. This aligns with the definition of "emotional intelligence," which highlights the role of emotions in the development of intellectual capacities. The concept emerges as a new way of understanding and cultivating cognitive abilities alongside an affective dimension involving positive emotions and personal competencies, such as social skills, empathy, self-regulation, motivation, self-awareness, and self-actualization.

In the educational context, emotional intelligence enhances the personality development of both students and educators to ensure a favorable and effective learning environment. The awareness of emotional intelligence as an integral component of well-being has continued to grow, being considered essential for overall academic excellence and interpersonal relationships in schools and other educational institutions. Schools can enable students to develop emotional intelligence in various ways, promoting better communication, conflict management, stress regulation, positive and successful relationships between students and teachers, and more.

The first work on the modern concept of emotional intelligence was carried out in 1990 by Mayer J. D. and Salovey P. Their cognitive model of emotional intelligence focused on an individual's ability to use emotions to reason and to employ them further to improve cognitive processes. According to the same authors, four key components were proposed: perceiving emotions, using emotions to facilitate thinking, understanding emotions, and managing emotions. This model highlighted the importance of emotional competence in education, noting that the ability to self-regulate and to perceive others' emotions can significantly influence academic performance and social interactions [19]. Studies have shown that individuals with high emotional intelligence possess advanced skills in stress management, effective problem-solving, and maintaining social interactions. These characteristics cumulatively create a favorable and productive educational environment. Emotional intelligence (EI) is one of the most important factors that can be used to create an effective and supportive learning environment. This allows teachers to meet and manage students' emotional needs, while enabling students to self-regulate their emotions and respond empathetically to one another [22, pp. 711-729].

Emotional intelligence is generally divided into two major categories: as an innate quality and as a learned ability. Some definitions in the literature include both aspects [14, pp. 45–62].

Emotional intelligence has recently gained importance in educational research, most likely because conventional theories of intelligence are not entirely adequate. As Bar-On argued, education has long attempted to strengthen cognitive abilities involved in acquiring, memorizing, and applying information [3].

Nevertheless, despite this emphasis on knowledge, and despite being cognitively intelligent, some individuals still fail to achieve effective learning outcomes, which suggests the absence of another determining factor in education. Ameriks, M., Wranik, T. and Salovey, P. argued that emotional intelligence is a psychological characteristic associated with the identification, understanding, and effective regulation of emotions, and with applying them to problem-solving and decision-making [2, pp.120-126].

Goleman D. defined emotional intelligence as "skills such as the ability to motivate oneself and persist in

the face of frustration; to control impulses and delay gratification; to regulate mood and prevent stress from overwhelming; and the capacity to think, to empathize, and to hope" [10]. Neopaytou L. demonstrated that emotional intelligence helps in recognizing, controlling, and regulating feelings; furthermore, it requires consistent emotional expression, which translates into satisfactory performance [21, pp. 1-9].

Researchers in the field agree that IQ alone is not the only predictor of success and failure; on the contrary, as Goleman D. indicated, IQ contributes approximately 20% to performance, leaving 80% to affective factors. Emotional intelligence is not a reflection of a single attribute; rather, it constitutes a set of discrete emotional abilities [16, p. 7]. They emphasized that "Positive emotions enhance access to existing knowledge, imagination, and creativity, while negative emotions may constrain one's thinking and reduce the ability to access one's own knowledge and skills flexibly." Researchers argue that the adequate management of these emotions is undoubtedly linked to success in both career and education [1, p. 2].

Based on the increasing empirical evidence of its positive influence in various contexts, emotional intelligence has now attained a relatively prominent position in psychology and educational sciences. Considered a multidimensional phenomenon, it encompasses the perception, evaluation, and expression of one's emotions; the use of emotions to facilitate thinking; and the understanding and regulation of emotions in oneself and others [19].

In the field, two main theoretical approaches have been established: (a) Ability-based emotional intelligence, regarded as a set of emotion-related cognitive skills functioning in parallel with other types of intelligence, and thus assessed through objective performance measures [18, pp. 433-442]; (b) Trait-based emotional intelligence, related to personality and traits, theorized as a constellation of emotional perceptions usually assessed through self-report measures [23, pp. 273–289].

In line with this distinction, Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso (2008) emphasize that emotional intelligence should be understood as a specific cognitive ability rather than a collection of eclectic personality traits. They argue that EI involves the accurate perception, use, understanding, and regulation of emotions, functioning in parallel with other forms of intelligence. This perspective strengthens the theoretical foundation of ability-based models and highlights the importance of assessing EI through performance-based measures rather than self-report questionnaires [20].

Research has shown that students' emotional environment and experiences in school can influence learning and progress, not only by undermining specific cognitive learning processes (e.g., attention, perception, memory, or decision-making, as a consequence of negative emotions), but also by affecting their engagement, motivation, and learning strategies.

Indeed, both ability- and trait-based emotional intelligence have been associated with positive learning processes such as motivation, engagement, adjusted academic goals, as well as academic achievement and performance, and with support for intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions related to emotions, such as stress regulation, well-being, positive emotions toward school, lower school refusal behavior, and positive school interactions.

Thus, emotional intelligence has been particularly valued in education, as the ability to control and manage the emotions that arise in everyday school life is considered a relevant competence that helps students cope with challenges and adapt throughout their learning and achievement trajectories [11, p. 15].

Therefore, students' school experiences are filled with strong academic, emotional, and social stimuli. The transition to middle school, in particular, adds challenges and opportunities to students' development. They adapt to increasing autonomy, the change and implementation of new roles in diverse social and family contexts. Consequently, students bear increasing responsibility for their educational trajectories and outcomes [5, p. 23].

As is well recognized in education, emotional and motivational factors affect students' well-being, relationships, adaptation, achievement, and consequently, their development [12, pp. 123-135].

Therefore, students' academic and emotional experiences are likely to influence their future educational and professional trajectories. Moreover, emotional intelligence has been systematically identified as a crucial determinant of students' emotional and academic outcomes, and there is evidence that EI can be cultivated and developed [17, pp. 345–376; 8, pp. 2-5].

Thus, we can assert that the development of emotional intelligence among students represents a fundamental endeavor for their future academic, personal, and social success. A particularly important aspect in achieving this goal is the understanding, development, and implicit valorization of each student's characteristic learning styles. By adapting various teaching methods and strategies to the ways in which they retain and process information, we can foster an optimal environment for the development of different emotional skills.

According to Salovey P. and Mayer J., in the case of students, this can be translated as:

Emotional regulation – the ability of the student to manage frustration, stress, and school-related anxiety; the ability to regulate one's own emotions, observable in stress management, impulse control, and perseverance in overcoming encountered obstacles. Students are taught ways to monitor their academic progress and grades, while also expressing their inner feelings appropriately. When this aspect is poorly developed, students who cannot control their emotions tend to underperform, whereas those exposed to such skills are more likely to succeed and to better manage peer relationships [13, pp. 321-334];

Intrinsic motivation – a clear understanding of one's own goals and values, which can lead to greater involvement in learning. Intrinsic motivation is a powerful force driving individuals to act out of pleasure, interest, or personal satisfaction, without external rewards or pressures. It is the inner drive that motivates us to learn, explore, and grow simply for the joy of the activity itself.

Empathy and interpersonal relationships – the development of various skills for effective communication, collaboration, and conflict resolution with peers and even with teachers. It refers to the ability to read others' cues and to understand and appropriately respond to their feelings. Simply put, it involves an individual's capacity to appreciate diversity in context and culture and to empathize with others. This includes sharing emotions with friends and acquiring better ways of relating to them [16, pp. 3-23].

Resilience – the ability of the student to overcome setbacks and to learn from mistakes. In the context of modern life, full of uncertainties and challenges, resilience is more important than ever. Resilient individuals are better equipped to manage stress, face daily pressures and unexpected situations more effectively, overcome failures, and adapt to change.

Decision-making – enhanced student awareness of the impact of emotions on decision-making. It refers to the ability to make ethically sound and safe choices, decisions that benefit not only the individual but also take into account the well-being of society. This approach may allow students to focus on their academic excellence while also considering social situations that contribute to the well-being of society and the school community [6, pp. 670-685].

Therefore, it is essential that teachers and educators at all levels of education help students acquire the ability to understand others' perspectives, attitudes, and perceptions on certain issues and to appreciate their levels and experiences. Such an approach, for instance, helps students interpret others' thoughts and feelings, demonstrating sensitivity to their problems even in complex situations. It also helps to clarify ambiguities and challenging situations related to the use of harmonious and peaceful means. Children predisposed to this aspect of socio-emotional development tend to exhibit sensitivity, maturity in problem management, and inhibitory control [4].

Educators should deliberately include activities and strategies that promote self-regulation, empathy, resilience, and reflective thinking across all subjects. Differentiated instruction helps students manage emotions effectively, sustain intrinsic motivation, and remain engaged in learning tasks. Creating a safe and inclusive classroom environment by fostering collaboration, respect, and positive peer interactions enhances students' socio-emotional development and strengthens their capacity for empathy and conflict resolution. Role-playing, group discussions, mindfulness practices, and scenario-based decision-making activities can help students develop problem-solving, stress management, and ethical reasoning skills. Teachers should guide students in monitoring their own emotional responses, evaluating interpersonal interactions, and learning from successes and setbacks to build resilience and self-awareness. Teachers themselves should cultivate emotional intelligence to model appropriate emotional regulation, empathy, and decision-making, ensuring that pedagogical practices align with the socio-emotional needs of their students.

In light of these findings, educators are encouraged to: include activities and strategies that promote

self-regulation, empathy, resilience, and reflective thinking across all subjects; use differentiated instruction to help students manage emotions effectively, sustain intrinsic motivation, and remain engaged in learning tasks; foster collaboration, respect, and positive peer interactions to enhance socio-emotional development and strengthen empathy and conflict resolution skills; employ role-playing, group discussions, mindfulness practices, and scenario-based decision-making activities to develop problem-solving, stress management, and ethical reasoning skills; guide students in monitoring their emotional responses, evaluating interpersonal interactions, and learning from successes and setbacks to build resilience and self-awareness; cultivate emotional intelligence among teachers to model appropriate emotional regulation, empathy, and decision-making, ensuring pedagogical practices meet students' socio-emotional needs.

Conclusion

Emotional intelligence is a fundamental component of students' academic, social, and personal development. Its key competencies—emotional regulation, intrinsic motivation, empathy, resilience, and decision-making—directly influence learning outcomes, engagement, interpersonal relationships, and adaptability to new challenges. Developing these skills within educational settings fosters supportive environments where students can manage both cognitive and socio-emotional demands, enhance self-awareness, and build constructive relationships with peers and educators. Therefore, integrating emotional intelligence into everyday teaching is essential, ensuring that students are not only academically competent but also emotionally resilient, socially responsible, and capable of making informed and ethical decisions throughout their lives.

Bibliographical references:

1. AFSHAR, H., TOFIGHI, S., HAMAZAVI, R. The impact of emotional intelligence on students' academic achievement. *Journal of Education and Learning*, 2016, 5(2), 1–8.
2. AMERIKS, M., WRANIK, T., SALOVEY, P. Emotional intelligence and problem solving. *Emotion Review*, 2009, 1(2), 120–126.
3. BAR-ON, R. *The Bar-On model of emotional-social intelligence (ESI)*. Toronto: Multi-Health Systems, 2007.
4. BAR-ON, R. *Emotional intelligence: An integral part of positive psychology*. Springer, 2014.
5. BENNER, A. D. The transition to middle school: Psychosocial challenges and opportunities. *Educational Psychology Review*, 2011, 23, 199–218.
6. BASKIN, C., & SIPA, J. Decision-making and emotional competence in adolescents. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 2014, 17(5), 670–684.
7. BRU-LUNA, I., et al. Emotional intelligence and cognitive skills: A systematic review. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 2021, 12, 1234.
8. COSTA, A., FARIA, L. Developing emotional intelligence in students: A contemporary review. *Educational Research Review*, 2025, 38, 1–10.
9. DREISBACH, A. Emotional intelligence and cognitive development: Implications for education. *Psychology in Education Journal*, 2023, 15(3), 45–62.
10. GOLEMAN, D. *Emotional intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ*. New York: Bantam Books, 1996.
11. GOETZ, T., BIEG, S. Emotional intelligence in educational settings. *Frontiers in Education*, 2016, 1, 15.
12. GOGOL, K., et al. Motivation and emotional factors in student achievement. *Learning and Individual Differences*, 2017, 57, 123–135.
13. GÜLCAN FAIKA ÜLVAY, A. Emotional regulation and academic performance. *Journal of Educational Research*, 2018, 111(4), 321–334.
14. IQBAL, H., et al. Emotional intelligence in education: Trait and ability perspectives. *International Journal of Educational Psychology*, 2021, 10(2), 45–62.
15. ISOHÄTÄLÄ, J., NÄYKKI, P., & JÄRVELÄ, S. Emotional regulation and cognition in learning contexts. *Educational Psychology Review*, 2019, 31, 555–576.
16. LEITHWOOD, K., BEATTY, B. Emotional intelligence and leadership in schools. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 2008, 7, 3–23.

17. MATTINGLY, P., KRAIGER, K. Developing emotional intelligence in education: A meta-analysis. *Review of Educational Research*, 2019, 89(2), 345–376.
18. MAYER, J. D., SALOVEY, P. The intelligence of emotional intelligence. *Intelligence*, 1993, 17(4), 433–442.
19. MAYER, J. D., SALOVEY, P. *Emotional development and emotional intelligence: Educational implications*. New York: Basic Books, 1997.
20. MAYER, J. D., SALOVEY, P., CARUSO, D. R. Emotional intelligence: New ability or eclectic traits? *American Psychologist*, 2008, 63(6), 503–517.
21. NEOPHYTOU, L. Emotional intelligence and academic success: A review. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 2013, 58, 1–9.
22. POZO-RICO, T., SANDOVAL, J. Emotional intelligence and learning in inclusive classrooms. *Educational Psychology*, 2020, 40(6), 711–729.
23. PETRIDES, K. V., PITA, R., KOKKINAKI, F. The location of trait emotional intelligence in personality factor space. *British Journal of Psychology*, 2007, 98(2), 273–289.

Data about author:
Monica VLAD, Romania, PhD student, Doctoral School of Humanities and Education, Moldova State University.
ORCID: 0009-0001-9742-3215
E-mail: vladmona02@yahoo.com

Presented: 15.09.2025