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Research Article

THE ROLE OF EMOTIONAL REGULATION IN CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Abstract

Emotional regulation has emerged as a critical component of students' socio-emotional development, particularly in primary school settings where behavioral adjustment and academic engagement are essential for effective learning. In classroom contexts, students are required to manage emotions such as frustration, anxiety, and excitement while responding to instructional demands and social interactions. Understanding the role of emotional regulation is therefore fundamental to explaining variations in classroom behavior and academic performance among young learners. This study aims to examine the role of emotional regulation in predicting classroom behavior and academic performance in primary school students. A quantitative correlational research design was employed involving primary school students from upper elementary grades. Data were collected using standardized emotional regulation scales, teacher-rated classroom behavior instruments, and documented academic performance records. Statistical analyses included descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and regression testing. The results indicate that emotional regulation is significantly associated with adaptive classroom behavior and positively related to academic performance. Emotional regulation also emerged as a significant predictor of classroom behavior and learning outcomes, highlighting its central role in supporting effective learning processes. The study concludes that emotional regulation is a foundational skill that influences how students behave and perform academically in primary school. These findings emphasize the importance of integrating emotional regulation development into instructional practices and educational frameworks to foster both behavioral adjustment and academic success.

Keywords: academic performance, classroom behavior, emotional regulation, learning engagement, primary school students

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INTRODUCTION

Emotional regulation has increasingly been recognized as a foundational component of children's socio-emotional development, particularly within formal educational settings. In primary school classrooms, students are required to manage a wide range of emotional experiences, including frustration, excitement, anxiety, and disappointment, while simultaneously engaging in structured academic tasks (Ackermans et al., 2025). These emotional demands are not peripheral to learning but are deeply embedded in daily classroom interactions, shaping how students respond to instructions, peers, and learning challenges. Understanding emotional regulation as a developmental capacity allows educators and researchers to better appreciate its role in shaping children's behavioral adjustment and learning trajectories.

Primary school represents a critical developmental stage in which emotional competencies are rapidly evolving and becoming more stable (Oddleifson et al., 2025). At this level of education, children are transitioning from largely external regulation provided by adults toward more autonomous forms of self-regulation. Classroom environments often function as social laboratories where emotional skills are tested through peer collaboration, teacher expectations, and performance-based evaluations. Emotional dysregulation during this stage may manifest as disruptive behavior, withdrawal, or difficulties in sustaining attention, all of which can interfere with effective learning and classroom harmony.

Academic performance in primary education is not solely determined by cognitive ability or instructional quality. Emotional processes play a substantial role in shaping how students engage with learning materials, persist through difficulties, and respond to feedback. Students who can regulate their emotions effectively tend to demonstrate greater classroom engagement, adaptive coping strategies, and resilience in the face of academic challenges (Pozsonyi et al., 2025). Situating emotional regulation within the broader context of classroom behavior and academic outcomes provides a comprehensive lens for examining early educational success.

Despite growing acknowledgment of emotional regulation as an essential developmental skill, many primary school classrooms continue to face persistent behavioral challenges that disrupt learning processes (Le et al., 2025). Teachers frequently report difficulties managing students who exhibit impulsivity, emotional outbursts, or disengagement during instructional activities. These behavioral patterns often coexist with lower academic achievement, suggesting a complex interaction between emotional regulation and learning outcomes that is not yet fully understood.

Educational practices in primary schools often prioritize cognitive instruction while implicitly assuming that emotional regulation will develop naturally over time. This assumption overlooks the variability in children's emotional development and the influence of classroom contexts on regulatory skills. Students who struggle to manage emotions may be disproportionately affected by academic demands, leading to negative feedback loops in which behavioral difficulties and academic underperformance reinforce one another (Xu et al., 2025). The lack of systematic integration of emotional regulation into classroom practices contributes to this unresolved problem.

Research addressing classroom behavior and academic performance has frequently treated these domains as separate constructs (Villegas Arenas et al., 2025). Behavioral studies tend to focus on compliance and discipline, while academic research emphasizes achievement metrics such as grades and test scores. This separation limits a holistic understanding of how emotional regulation functions as a mediating or foundational factor linking behavior and academic outcomes. Clarifying this relationship represents a pressing problem for both educational research and classroom practice.

The primary purpose of this study is to examine the role of emotional regulation in shaping classroom behavior and academic performance among primary school students. By analyzing emotional regulation as a core psychological construct, the study seeks to clarify

how students' ability to manage emotions influences their behavioral adjustment and learning outcomes in everyday classroom contexts (Dang et al., 2025). This focus allows for a more integrated understanding of emotional, behavioral, and academic dimensions of early education.

The study aims to identify patterns and associations between emotional regulation skills and observable classroom behaviors such as attention, cooperation, persistence, and rule compliance (Abdigapbarova et al., 2025). Investigating these behavioral indicators provides insight into how emotional regulation operates in real instructional settings rather than in isolated laboratory conditions. This objective aligns with the need for ecologically valid research that reflects the complexity of classroom life.

Another key objective is to explore the relationship between emotional regulation and academic performance indicators, including task completion, academic engagement, and achievement outcomes. By examining emotional regulation as a predictor or contributing factor to academic success, the study intends to inform educational strategies that support both emotional development and learning effectiveness (Vakolia et al., 2025). The findings are expected to offer evidence-based guidance for educators seeking to foster supportive and productive classroom environments.

Existing literature on emotional regulation has predominantly focused on early childhood or adolescence, leaving primary school students relatively underrepresented in empirical research (Fonseca et al., 2025). Studies that do address this age group often emphasize emotional regulation as a general developmental outcome rather than examining its functional role within classroom behavior and academic performance. This imbalance limits the applicability of current findings to primary education contexts.

Research on classroom behavior has traditionally emphasized external management strategies, disciplinary frameworks, and teacher-centered interventions. Emotional regulation is frequently mentioned as a background variable but rarely examined as a central explanatory construct (Zhou & Fan, 2025). As a result, the internal emotional processes that drive behavioral responses in classrooms remain insufficiently explored, particularly in relation to academic learning demands.

Studies investigating academic performance in primary education have largely prioritized cognitive, instructional, and socio-economic variables (Qi, 2025). Emotional regulation is often treated as a secondary factor or excluded altogether from analytical models. This omission creates a conceptual gap in understanding how emotional self-management contributes to learning processes and outcomes. Addressing this gap requires integrative research that bridges emotional, behavioral, and academic perspectives.

The novelty of this study lies in its integrative approach to emotional regulation, classroom behavior, and academic performance within a single analytical framework. Rather than treating these constructs as independent domains, the study conceptualizes emotional regulation as a foundational mechanism influencing both behavioral adjustment and academic outcomes (Trani et al., 2025). This perspective offers a more comprehensive understanding of student functioning in primary school classrooms.

Another innovative aspect of the study is its focus on everyday classroom contexts as the primary setting for examining emotional regulation (Sini et al., 2025). By grounding the analysis in real instructional environments, the research moves beyond abstract assessments of emotional skills and captures their practical implications for teaching and learning. This contextualized approach enhances the ecological validity and practical relevance of the findings.

The justification for this research is rooted in its potential contribution to educational theory and practice. Understanding how emotional regulation shapes classroom behavior and academic performance can inform the development of more holistic educational interventions that address both emotional and cognitive needs (Fredriksen et al., 2025). The study provides

empirical support for integrating emotional regulation into primary education frameworks, reinforcing its importance as a core component of effective and inclusive schooling.

RESEARCH METHOD

The following sections detail the systematic approach used to investigate how emotional control relates to student conduct and achievement in primary education.

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research design using a correlational approach to examine the relationship between emotional regulation, classroom behavior, and academic performance (Mwandondwa, 2025). The design was selected to allow for the systematic measurement of these variables and the statistical analysis of their associations within a natural school setting. Emotional regulation was treated as the independent variable, while classroom behavior and academic performance functioned as dependent variables (Jiabin et al., 2025). This design enabled the identification of relational patterns without manipulating instructional conditions, ensuring the findings reflect authentic classroom dynamics.

Research Target/Subject

The primary objective of this research is to identify the relational patterns between a student's ability to manage their emotions and their resulting behavioral and academic outcomes. The study targets an understanding of how specific self-regulatory abilities—such as managing frustration or excitement—predict teacher-rated cooperation and objective academic grades. By analyzing these associations, the research aims to provide empirical evidence to support the integration of social-emotional learning into the primary school curriculum.

The population for this study consisted of primary school students in grades three to five. Children at this developmental stage were selected because they are experiencing a critical period for the emergence of self-regulatory abilities. Using stratified random sampling, a sample was drawn to ensure proportional representation across grade levels and gender. The final sample size was determined based on statistical power considerations to ensure sufficient variability and reliability for the correlational analysis.

Research Procedure

The procedures were conducted in structured stages, beginning with obtaining permission from administrators and securing informed consent from parents. Teachers were then briefed on the study's purpose and trained in using the behavioral assessment instruments to maintain inter-rater reliability. Data collection was carried out during school hours to minimize disruption (E Melo et al., 2025). Finally, all collected data were anonymized and coded before being entered into statistical software for processing, ensuring participant confidentiality throughout the analytical phase.

Instruments, and Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected using standardized and validated instruments tailored for children. Emotional regulation was measured using a child-adapted scale assessing the management of learning-related emotions (Martinsone et al., 2025). Classroom behavior was evaluated via a teacher-report behavior rating scale focusing on attention, cooperation, and rule compliance. Academic performance data were obtained directly from objective school records, including semester grades. This multi-method data collection technique—combining self-reports, teacher evaluations, and administrative records—ensured a holistic and objective view of each student's development.

Data Analysis Technique

The study utilized descriptive and inferential statistical analysis to interpret the associations between variables (Geven & Zwier, 2025). The primary analytical tool was Pearson correlation or multiple regression to identify the strength and direction of the relationships between emotional regulation and the two dependent variables. Data screening was performed to ensure the assumptions of normality and linearity were met (Lourenço et al., 2025). By applying these statistical techniques, the researcher was able to accurately determine how much variance in classroom behavior and academic success can be explained by a student's emotional regulatory skills.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The descriptive statistics provide an overview of students' emotional regulation, classroom behavior, and academic performance. Emotional regulation scores indicated moderate to high levels across the sample, suggesting that most primary school students demonstrated functional emotional self-management abilities. Classroom behavior scores showed greater variability, particularly in indicators related to sustained attention and task persistence. Academic performance scores were moderately distributed, reflecting differences in learning outcomes across students.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Emotional Regulation, Classroom Behavior, and Academic Performance

Variable	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Emotional Regulation	120	3.87	0.54	2.45	4.85
Classroom Behavior	120	3.65	0.62	2.10	4.78
Academic Performance	120	78.42	8.96	60.00	95.00

The data in Table 1 indicate that emotional regulation obtained the highest mean score among the measured variables, followed by classroom behavior. The standard deviation values suggest moderate variability, indicating meaningful individual differences within the sample. The range of scores confirms that the instruments captured sufficient dispersion to support further inferential analysis.

A closer examination of the descriptive results reveals that students with higher emotional regulation scores tended to demonstrate more adaptive classroom behaviors. Academic performance scores showed alignment with behavioral patterns, where students exhibiting stronger behavioral regulation achieved higher academic outcomes. These descriptive patterns provide an empirical foundation for subsequent inferential and relational analyses.

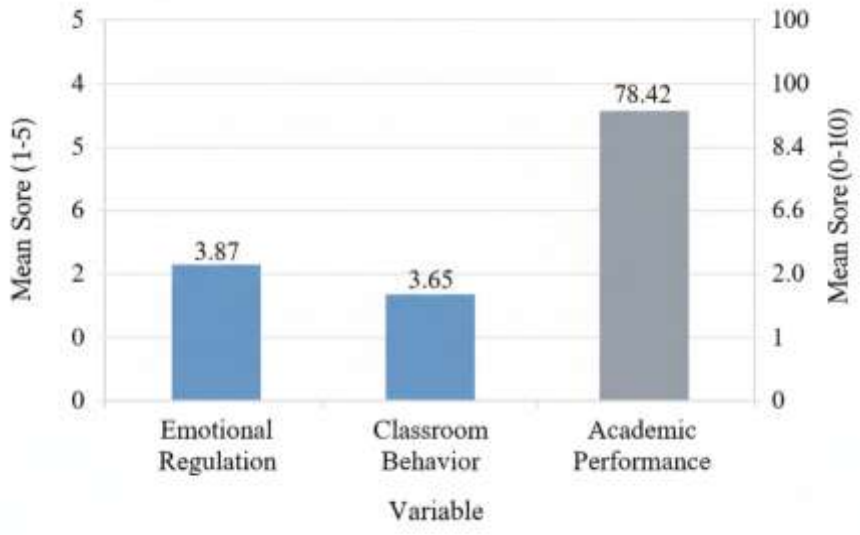

Figure 1. Mean Scores of Student Variables

The data distribution suggests that most students demonstrated functional emotional regulation skills, though a smaller proportion exhibited lower regulation scores. Classroom behavior indicators showed that attentional control and cooperative behavior were more stable than persistence during challenging tasks. Academic performance outcomes aligned with classroom behavior trends, with students showing stronger behavioral regulation generally achieving higher academic scores.

Further inspection of descriptive data indicated grade-level differences in emotional regulation and classroom behavior. Older primary school students tended to report slightly higher emotional regulation scores than younger students. Classroom behavior scores also increased with grade level, suggesting developmental maturation in self-control and task engagement. Academic performance showed parallel patterns, supporting the consistency of developmental trends across variables.

The inferential analysis was conducted using correlation and regression techniques to examine the predictive role of emotional regulation. Pearson correlation analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between emotional regulation and classroom behavior. A moderate positive correlation was also found between emotional regulation and academic performance, indicating that higher emotional regulation is associated with better learning outcomes.

Regression analysis further demonstrated that emotional regulation significantly predicted classroom behavior after controlling for grade level. Emotional regulation explained a meaningful proportion of variance in classroom behavior scores, confirming its role as a significant behavioral determinant. Academic performance was also significantly predicted by emotional regulation, although the explained variance was lower than that observed for classroom behavior, suggesting indirect or mediated effects.

Relational analysis indicated a strong association between classroom behavior and academic performance. Students who demonstrated higher levels of attentional control, cooperation, and persistence consistently achieved better academic outcomes. Emotional regulation appeared to function as an underlying factor influencing both variables, reinforcing its integrative role in classroom functioning.

The interaction analysis suggested that classroom behavior partially mediated the relationship between emotional regulation and academic performance. Students with high emotional regulation but inconsistent classroom behavior showed less pronounced academic gains. This finding highlights the importance of behavioral expression as a mechanism through which emotional regulation impacts learning outcomes.

A focused case analysis was conducted to illustrate the quantitative findings through classroom-based observations. One case involved a student with high emotional regulation scores who demonstrated consistent attentional focus and adaptive responses to academic challenges. Teacher reports described this student as emotionally resilient, cooperative, and persistent during tasks requiring sustained effort.

Another case involved a student with lower emotional regulation scores who exhibited frequent emotional outbursts and task avoidance. Classroom observations noted difficulties in managing frustration, leading to behavioral disruptions and incomplete academic tasks. This case provided qualitative support for the statistical relationship between emotional regulation, behavior, and academic performance.

Explanatory analysis of the case data highlighted clear contrasts in emotional responses and learning engagement. The emotionally regulated student demonstrated adaptive coping strategies such as seeking help and self-correction, which facilitated positive classroom behavior. These behaviors translated into stable academic performance across subjects.

The emotionally dysregulated student showed limited coping strategies, often responding to academic difficulty with withdrawal or disruptive behavior. These responses negatively

affected classroom participation and academic outcomes. The contrast between cases reinforced the role of emotional regulation as a critical factor in classroom adjustment.

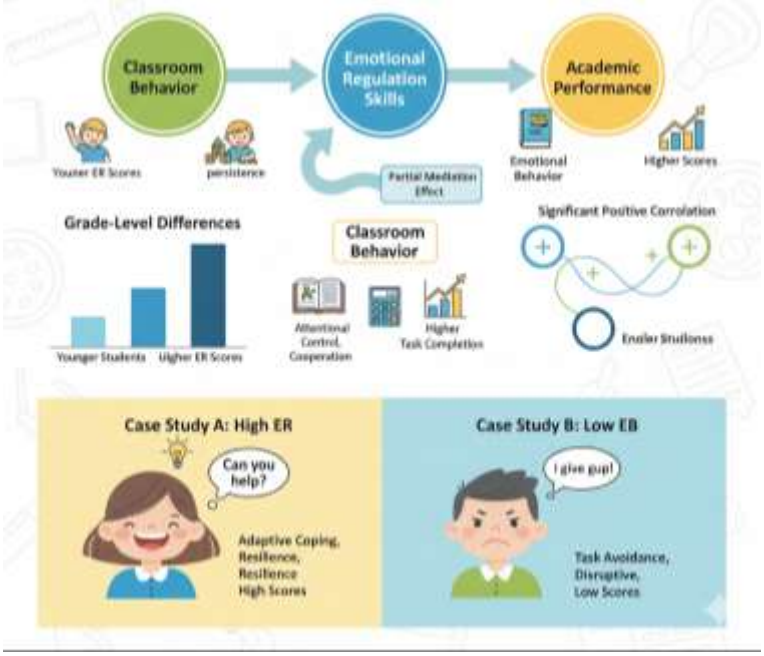

Figure 2. Emotional Intelligence in the Classroom: A Key to Learning Success

The findings collectively suggest that emotional regulation is a foundational skill that shapes both classroom behavior and academic performance. Quantitative and case-based data converge to indicate that emotional regulation supports adaptive behavior patterns essential for learning. Classroom behavior emerges as a key pathway through which emotional regulation influences academic success.

The overall interpretation underscores the importance of addressing emotional regulation in primary education. Students who are better able to manage their emotions demonstrate more positive classroom behavior and achieve higher academic outcomes. These results provide empirical support for integrating emotional regulation development into instructional and behavioral support frameworks in primary school settings.

The findings of this study indicate that emotional regulation plays a significant role in shaping both classroom behavior and academic performance among primary school students. Students with higher levels of emotional regulation consistently demonstrated more adaptive behavioral patterns, including sustained attention, cooperation, and task persistence. These behavioral characteristics were closely associated with higher academic achievement, suggesting that emotional regulation functions as a foundational capacity supporting learning processes.

The results further show that classroom behavior serves as an important behavioral expression of emotional regulation. Emotional regulation was strongly associated with observable classroom conduct, which in turn showed a robust relationship with academic outcomes. This pattern highlights the interconnected nature of emotional, behavioral, and academic domains in primary education. Emotional regulation does not operate in isolation but is enacted through daily classroom interactions.

The quantitative and case-based findings collectively reinforce the view that emotional regulation contributes to learning indirectly as well as directly. Students who were able to manage emotional responses to frustration and challenge were more likely to remain engaged in learning tasks. This engagement translated into improved academic performance, indicating that emotional regulation supports the conditions necessary for effective learning.

The overall results confirm that emotional regulation is not merely a supplementary skill but a core component of successful classroom functioning. The consistency across statistical

analysis and classroom cases strengthens the credibility of the findings. These results provide empirical evidence that emotional regulation is integral to both behavioral adjustment and academic success in primary school contexts.

The findings align with prior research emphasizing the role of emotional self-regulation in academic engagement and school adjustment. Studies in educational psychology have consistently reported positive associations between emotional regulation and adaptive classroom behavior. The present study extends these findings by demonstrating that such relationships are evident within everyday classroom settings at the primary school level.

Differences emerge when comparing the present results with studies that emphasize cognitive predictors of academic performance. While cognitive ability remains important, the current findings suggest that emotional regulation contributes uniquely to academic outcomes beyond cognitive factors alone. This divergence highlights the limitation of models that prioritize cognition while underestimating emotional processes.

Some previous research has treated classroom behavior as a disciplinary or management issue rather than an emotional phenomenon. The present findings challenge this perspective by showing that classroom behavior is closely linked to emotional regulation capacities. Behavioral difficulties observed in classrooms may reflect emotional dysregulation rather than intentional noncompliance.

Comparisons with intervention-based studies reveal complementary insights. Research on social-emotional learning programs often reports improvements in behavior and academic performance following emotional skill development. The present study supports these outcomes by identifying emotional regulation as a naturally occurring predictor, thereby strengthening the theoretical basis for such interventions.

The results suggest that emotional regulation functions as an indicator of broader developmental readiness for learning. Students who regulate emotions effectively appear better equipped to navigate academic demands and social expectations within classrooms. Emotional regulation may therefore serve as a developmental marker of school adjustment and learning preparedness.

The observed relationships between emotional regulation and classroom behavior signal the importance of emotional competencies in maintaining productive learning environments. Emotional regulation can be interpreted as a sign of adaptive self-management that enables students to respond constructively to instructional challenges. These patterns reflect underlying developmental processes rather than situational behaviors alone.

Academic performance outcomes further suggest that emotional regulation is indicative of long-term learning potential. Students demonstrating stable emotional regulation showed consistent academic engagement and achievement. This consistency implies that emotional regulation supports sustained learning rather than short-term performance gains.

The findings also indicate that emotional regulation may signal resilience in the face of academic difficulty (Ibañez & Galarraga, 2025). Students with stronger regulation skills were less likely to disengage when confronted with challenging tasks. This pattern reflects an underlying capacity for adaptive coping that extends beyond specific academic contexts.

The implications of these findings underscore the need to integrate emotional regulation into primary education practices. Instructional strategies that acknowledge and support emotional development may enhance classroom behavior and academic outcomes simultaneously (Sainz et al., 2025). Teachers who are equipped to foster emotional regulation can create more supportive and effective learning environments.

Educational policy implications arise from the demonstrated importance of emotional regulation (Utsumi, 2025). Curricular frameworks that incorporate social-emotional competencies alongside academic content may better address the holistic needs of students. Emotional regulation should be viewed as a core educational outcome rather than an auxiliary skill.

Teacher training programs may benefit from incorporating emotional regulation awareness and classroom strategies. Educators who understand emotional processes are better positioned to interpret student behavior accurately and respond constructively (Auci et al., 2025). Such understanding can reduce punitive approaches and promote supportive interventions.

School-level interventions aimed at improving academic performance may achieve greater effectiveness when emotional regulation is explicitly addressed (Diaz Lema et al., 2025). The findings suggest that efforts to improve learning outcomes without considering emotional factors may be limited. Emotional regulation represents a leverage point for enhancing both behavior and achievement.

The observed results raise important questions regarding the mechanisms underlying emotional regulation in classroom settings. Emotional regulation likely influences attention, motivation, and persistence, all of which are critical for learning (López-Cassá et al., 2025). These mechanisms operate continuously during classroom activities, shaping students' responses to instructional demands.

Developmental factors may explain why emotional regulation exerts a strong influence at the primary school level (Carpendale et al., 2025). During this stage, children are still developing executive functions and self-regulatory capacities. Emotional regulation may therefore play a compensatory role, supporting behavioral control when cognitive regulation is still maturing.

Environmental influences such as classroom climate and teacher-student relationships may also contribute to the observed outcomes. Supportive classroom environments may reinforce emotional regulation skills, while emotionally dysregulated contexts may exacerbate behavioral challenges (Osser et al., 2025). The interaction between individual regulation and contextual factors likely shapes the observed patterns.

The variability in academic outcomes among students with similar cognitive abilities further supports the explanatory role of emotional regulation (Rashidi et al., 2025). Differences in emotional self-management may account for why some students perform better academically despite comparable intellectual capacity. Emotional regulation thus provides an explanatory layer beyond traditional academic predictors.

The findings point toward several directions for future research and practice. Longitudinal studies could examine how emotional regulation trajectories influence academic outcomes over time (Taha et al., 2025). Such research would clarify whether early emotional regulation predicts long-term educational success.

Intervention studies are needed to determine how emotional regulation can be effectively supported within classroom settings (Seidlitz & Zierow, 2025). Research examining specific instructional strategies or social-emotional programs would provide practical guidance for educators. Experimental designs could strengthen causal inferences suggested by the present findings.

Further research should explore mediating and moderating variables such as classroom climate, teacher practices, and peer relationships. Understanding these factors would refine theoretical models linking emotional regulation, behavior, and academic performance (Kouakou & Yeo, 2025). Such insights could inform more targeted educational interventions.

The present study encourages a shift toward holistic educational models that recognize emotional regulation as central to learning (Banerjee & Bharati, 2025). Future work should continue integrating emotional, behavioral, and academic perspectives. Advancing this integrated approach has the potential to improve both educational theory and classroom practice in primary education.

CONCLUSION

The most important finding of this study is that emotional regulation emerges as a central factor influencing both classroom behavior and academic performance among primary school students. Students with higher emotional regulation consistently displayed more adaptive behavioral patterns, including sustained attention, cooperative interaction, and persistence during learning tasks, which were closely associated with stronger academic outcomes. The findings demonstrate that emotional regulation operates not merely as a complementary skill but as a foundational capacity that shapes how students engage with learning and classroom expectations.

The primary contribution of this research lies in its conceptual integration of emotional regulation, classroom behavior, and academic performance within a unified empirical framework. By positioning emotional regulation as a core explanatory variable rather than a peripheral construct, the study advances existing educational models that often prioritize cognitive factors alone. Methodologically, the combined use of standardized measurement and classroom-based analysis strengthens the ecological validity of the findings and provides a robust basis for understanding emotional regulation as an essential component of effective primary education.

The study is subject to several limitations that suggest directions for future research. The correlational design limits causal inference, and the reliance on teacher-reported behavioral measures may introduce subjective bias. Future studies should employ longitudinal or experimental designs to examine developmental trajectories and causal mechanisms linking emotional regulation to academic outcomes. Expanding the sample across diverse educational contexts and incorporating multiple informants, such as parents and students, would further enhance the generalizability and depth of understanding in this area of research.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Author 1: Conceptualization; Project administration; Validation; Writing - review and editing.
Author 2: Conceptualization; Data curation; In-vestigation.
Author 3: Data curation; Investigation.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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