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Mitigating Disinterest in Learning among Lower and Middle Basic School Pupils: Understanding Emotions

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Abstract **Review Article**

Disinterest in learning among pupils in lower and middle basic schools (ages 6-12) remains a barrier to quality basic education. This paper examines how emotionally responsive teaching mitigates disinterest and fosters positive attitudes to learning. Drawing on child development theories and contemporary literature, it discusses five areas: (1) pupils' emotional needs at different stages, emphasizing unconditional love, safety through familiar routines, and permission to fail; (2) common emotional displays such as fear, anger, aggressiveness, curiosity, affection and joy, and their classroom implications; (3) teacher friendliness as an emotional stabilizer that builds trust, reduces anxiety and enhances participation; (4) pupils' thought circles and "emotional tornadoes" as negative thinking patterns that trigger withdrawal and disengagement; and (5) practical strategies for re-engaging learners through patience, reflection, learner-centred instruction and supportive classroom management. The paper argues that emotionally supportive classrooms are fundamental to holistic development and sustained achievement. Teachers who show empathy, consistency, respect and genuine interest enhance pupils' emotional security, resilience and motivation. Mitigating disinterest therefore requires intentional efforts to understand pupils' emotions, interrupt negative thought patterns, build positive teacher-pupil relationships, and make learning enjoyable and meaningful.

Keywords: Emotional Development, Disinterest in Learning, Teacher Friendliness, Thought Circles, Learner Engagement, Lower and Middle Basic Education.

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INTRODUCTION

Education is universally recognized as one of the most powerful instruments for personal development and national transformation. It equips individuals with the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values required for meaningful participation in society. However, the success of any educational system depends not only on curriculum content, instructional resources and methods but also on learners' willingness or interest to participate actively in the learning process (Ayua, 2018; Ayua & Eriba, 2014; Ayua & Ode, 2015). In lower and middle basic schools, where pupils develop foundational cognitive, emotional, and social competencies, a positive attitude to learning is essential for sustained academic success and lifelong learning (Ayua & Jato, 2012; Piaget, 1972; Vygotsky, 1978). Despite the importance of early education, many pupils develop negative attitudes to learning during their formative years. Such apathy may manifest as fear of classroom participation, poor concentration, refusal

to complete academic tasks, frequent absenteeism, disruptive behaviour, lack of motivation, and gradual disengagement from school activities. These behaviours often reduce academic achievement and interfere with pupils's holistic development. Research has shown that pupils' emotional well-being is closely associated with their classroom engagement, academic performance, and interpersonal relationships (Ayua, 2015; Ayua, 2021; Ayua, 2022; Dweck, 2006; Erikson, 1963; Masandpas, 2022; Meinke, 2019).

For many years, efforts to improve learning outcomes have focused primarily on curriculum reforms, instructional materials, and assessment procedures. While these factors remain important, growing evidence suggests that pupils's emotional experiences significantly influence how they respond to learning opportunities. A pupil who feels emotionally secure, respected, encouraged, and valued is more likely to participate actively in classroom activities than one who experiences fear, rejection, humiliation, or persistent failure (Bowlby, 1969; Dweck, 2006). Consequently, effective teaching requires educators to pay equal attention to pupils 's emotional development alongside their intellectual growth creatively (Abulo, 2011; Ayua, 2017; Ayua, 2022; Ode et al., 2019). Teachers occupy a unique position in shaping pupils 's attitudes to learning. Beyond delivering lessons, they serve as facilitators, mentors, role models, counsellors, and emotional support systems for young learners. Every interaction between a teacher and a pupil contributes either positively or negatively to the learner's perception of school. Warm encouragement, patience, empathy, fairness, and effective communication help pupils develop confidence and resilience, whereas ridicule, harsh criticism, inconsistent discipline, and emotional neglect may gradually discourage classroom participation and diminish learners' interest in education (Ayua, 2021; Ayua, 2022).

The learning environment also plays a significant role in determining pupils' attitudes to education. Pupils learn best in classrooms where they experience psychological safety, mutual respect, meaningful participation, and opportunities for success. Such environments encourage learners to ask questions freely, explore new ideas, collaborate with classmates, and view mistakes as opportunities for improvement rather than evidence of failure. Conversely, emotionally unsafe classrooms often produce anxiety, withdrawal, and resistance to learning, thereby increasing pupils' apathy to educational activities (Maslow, 1943; Vygotsky, 1978). Furthermore, contemporary educational practice recognises that pupils's behaviour is often a reflection of underlying emotional experiences rather than deliberate disobedience. Masandpas (2022) and Meinke (2019) observe that emotional needs that remain unmet frequently manifest as behavioural challenges, poor academic performance, aggression, fear, or disengagement from learning. Understanding these emotional influences enables teachers to respond appropriately, thereby transforming classrooms into supportive environments where every learner feels capable of achieving success (Ayua & Ode, 2018; Bowlby,1969).

This conceptual paper therefore examines practical approaches to mitigating pupils' disinterest in learning through emotionally responsive teaching practices. Specifically, it discusses pupils' emotional needs at different developmental stages, common emotional displays exhibited during childhood, the role of teacher friendliness as an emotional stabilizer, the effects of pupils 's thought circles or emotional tornadoes on classroom behaviour, and practical strategies for engaging disengaged learners. By integrating principles of child development with effective classroom practices, the paper seeks to provide lower and middle basic schools teachers with practical guidance for creating emotionally supportive learning environments that foster confidence, participation, resilience, and improved academic achievement.

OBJECTIVES OF THE PAPER

The broad objective of this conceptual paper is to examine practical strategies through which lower and middle basic schools teachers can reduce pupils' disinterest in learning by creating emotionally supportive and learner-centred classroom environments. Specifically, the paper seeks to:

1. Examine the emotional needs of pupils at different stages of early childhood development and explain how meeting these needs contributes to positive attitudes to learning.
2. Identify the common emotional displays exhibited by pupils and discuss their implications for classroom teaching, behaviour management, and academic engagement.
3. Examine the role of teacher friendliness as an emotional stabilizer in promoting positive teacher-pupil relationships, emotional security, and effective classroom interaction.
4. Explain the concept of pupils 's thought circles (emotional tornadoes) and examine how negative patterns of thinking influence pupils' motivation, behaviour, and willingness to learn.
5. Discuss practical strategies for engaging disengaged learners through emotionally responsive teaching practices, effective classroom management, positive reinforcement, and supportive learning environments.
6. Provide practical recommendations that will enable lower and middle basic schools teachers to create classrooms where learners feel emotionally secure, actively participate in learning activities, and achieve improved academic outcomes.

PUPILS' EMOTIONAL NEEDS BY AGE

Understanding pupils 's emotional needs is fundamental to effective teaching and learning in lower and middle basic schools. Emotional development influences pupils 's ability to concentrate, interact with others, solve problems, regulate behaviour, and develop positive attitudes to learning. Consequently, teachers who appreciate the emotional characteristics associated with different stages of childhood are better positioned to create classroom environments that promote academic success and healthy psychosocial development. Research in developmental psychology consistently demonstrates that emotional security forms the foundation upon which cognitive, social, and moral development are built (Bowlby, 1969; Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Edsys, 2018; Erikson, 1963). Pupils 's emotional needs evolve as they grow. What provides emotional stability during infancy differs from the needs of toddlers and school-age pupils. Piaget (1972) explains that pupils 's thinking develops progressively through identifiable stages, while Erikson (1963) argues that each developmental stage presents unique psychosocial challenges that require appropriate adult support. These developmental differences suggest that teachers cannot adopt a "one-size-fits-all" approach to nurturing pupils. Rather, they must understand learners' developmental characteristics and respond appropriately to their emotional needs.

The paper focused on pupils' emotional needs in accordance to their developmental the age (6 - 12 years). Understanding their emotional development enables teachers to appreciate the experiences that shape pupils 's behaviour before formal schooling begins. This developmental understanding also assists teachers in recognising behaviours that may arise from unmet emotional needs rather than deliberate misconduct.

Pupils (6 - 12 Years)

The period between six and twelve years represents one of the most significant phases in a child's educational and psychosocial development. It is during these years that pupils begin formal schooling, establish lasting friendships, develop academic competence, and form perceptions about themselves as learners. Experiences during this period significantly influence pupils 's motivation, self-esteem, resilience, and lifelong attitudes to education. Consequently, teachers have a profound responsibility to provide emotionally supportive learning environments that encourage confidence, independence, and positive engagement with learning. According to Erikson (1963), pupils within this developmental stage experience the psychosocial conflict of industry versus inferiority. During this period, learners seek opportunities to

demonstrate competence, acquire new skills, and receive recognition for their efforts. Positive experiences encourage pupils to develop a sense of industry, confidence, and perseverance, whereas repeated criticism, failure, or comparison with others may lead to feelings of inferiority and diminished motivation. Similarly, Piaget (1972) explains that pupils in the preoperational and concrete operational stages become increasingly capable of logical thinking, problem-solving, and cooperative learning, making emotionally supportive classrooms essential for effective cognitive development.

In this paper, three major emotional needs of pupils aged 4 - 12 are identified: Unconditional love, safety through familiar routines, and permission to fail. These needs form the emotional foundation upon which effective teaching and meaningful learning are built.

1. **Unconditional Love:** Every pupil has a fundamental need to feel accepted and valued irrespective of academic performance, behaviour, background, or individual ability. Unconditional love does not imply the absence of discipline; rather, it reflects a consistent commitment to respecting pupils 's dignity while guiding them to appropriate behaviour and academic improvement. Pupils who perceive themselves as accepted are more likely to develop confidence, resilience, and positive attitudes to learning (Maslow, 1943). Within the classroom, unconditional love is demonstrated through patience, kindness, fairness, encouragement, and respect. Teachers communicate acceptance by listening attentively to learners, recognising individual differences, encouraging participation, and correcting mistakes without humiliation. Such practices create emotionally safe learning environments where pupils are willing to ask questions, attempt challenging tasks, and learn from their mistakes. Research suggests that pupils who experience acceptance from significant adults develop stronger self-esteem and healthier interpersonal relationships than those who experience persistent rejection or criticism (Erikson, 1963). Consequently, teachers should avoid labelling pupils as *"lazy," "slow learners,"* or *"problem pupils,"* because such labels often become internalised and negatively influence pupils 's academic confidence (Abulo, 2011; Ayua, 2012a; Ayua, 2012b). Instead, educators should emphasise learners' strengths while providing appropriate support in areas requiring improvement.
2. **Safety Through Familiar Routines:** Pupils perform best academically when they learn within structured, predictable, and emotionally secure environments. Familiar classroom routines reduce uncertainty and anxiety by helping learners understand daily expectations and classroom procedures. Consistent routines also enable pupils to concentrate more effectively on learning because they spend less energy adjusting to unexpected changes (Maslow, 1943). Examples of effective routines include greeting learners warmly each morning, maintaining consistent lesson structures, establishing clear classroom rules, organising smooth transitions between activities, and ending lessons with brief reviews or reflections. Such routines create stability while fostering learners' sense of belonging and security. Teachers should ensure that routines remain flexible enough to accommodate individual differences without creating unnecessary rigidity. Predictability should support learning rather than limit creativity. Learners who understand classroom expectations generally demonstrate greater cooperation, improved behaviour, and increased willingness to participate actively in learning activities (Ayua, 2022).
3. **Permission to Fail:** One of the most insightful ideas presented in this paper is the importance of giving pupils permission to fail. Many pupils gradually develop disinterest in learning because they become excessively afraid of making mistakes. Fear

of failure often discourages classroom participation, reduces creativity, and limits pupils 's willingness to attempt unfamiliar tasks. Educational research increasingly recognises that mistakes constitute an essential component of meaningful learning. According to Dweck (2006), pupils who view mistakes as opportunities for improvement are more likely to develop a growth mindset characterised by perseverance, resilience, and continuous learning. Conversely, learners who believe that mistakes reflect permanent inability often avoid challenges and withdraw from classroom participation. Teachers therefore have an important responsibility to normalise mistakes as part of the learning process. Rather than criticising incorrect responses harshly, educators should encourage learners to reflect upon their errors, identify improvements, and attempt solutions again (Ayua, 2009a; Ayua, 2017). Constructive statements such as *"Let's work through this together," "You are making progress,"* or *"Every mistake teaches us something new"* help transform failure into a valuable learning experience. Creating a classroom culture where mistakes are accepted also promotes creativity and critical thinking (Ode et al., 2019). Pupils become more willing to experiment, solve problems independently, and participate confidently because they understand that errors will be treated as learning opportunities rather than reasons for embarrassment.

4. **Developing Confidence and Emotional Resilience:** Meeting these emotional needs contributes directly to pupils 's confidence and emotional resilience. Learners who consistently experience acceptance, stability, and encouragement develop stronger beliefs in their own abilities. Such confidence enables pupils to cope more effectively with academic challenges, social difficulties, and temporary setbacks. Teachers should therefore provide regular opportunities for success by assigning achievable tasks, recognising effort, celebrating improvement, and providing constructive feedback. Every positive learning experience reinforces pupils 's belief that success is attainable through persistence and continuous effort. Emotional resilience also develops when pupils observe adults responding calmly to challenges. Teachers who model patience, optimism, and problem-solving demonstrate behaviours that learners gradually imitate within both academic and social situations.

Educational Implications

The emotional needs of pupils between six and twelve years extend beyond academic instruction to include acceptance, emotional security, and opportunities for growth through experience. Teachers who demonstrate unconditional love, establish predictable classroom routines, and encourage learners to view mistakes as valuable learning experiences contribute significantly to pupils 's emotional well-being and academic achievement. By meeting these developmental needs, educators cultivate confident, resilient, and motivated learners who approach education with curiosity rather than fear. Such emotionally supportive classrooms ultimately reduce pupils' disinterest in learning while promoting lifelong enthusiasm for education

PUPILS' COMMON EMOTIONAL DISPLAYS

Pupils communicate their emotions in different ways depending on their developmental stage, personality, family background, and learning experiences. Unlike adults, who often express emotions verbally, pupils frequently reveal their feelings through behaviour, facial expressions, social interactions, classroom participation, and play. Consequently, teachers who understand pupils 's emotional displays are better able to identify learners' needs, interpret classroom behaviour accurately, and provide appropriate support that promotes emotional well-being and academic success.

Emotions influence virtually every aspect of

learning. They affect pupils 's attention, memory, motivation, behaviour, decision-making, and relationships with teachers and peers. Positive emotional experiences encourage curiosity, participation, and persistence, whereas unresolved negative emotions often result in fear, aggression, withdrawal, or disengagement from learning (Erikson, 1963; Vygotsky, 1978). For this reason, emotional intelligence has become an essential component of effective classroom practice, particularly within lower and middle basic schools. The paper discussed six common emotional displays (3 negative + 3 positive) frequently observed among pupils which are natural aspects of child development but require sensitive management because they significantly influence learners' attitudes to school and their willingness to participate in educational activities.

Common Negative Emotional Displays

Negative emotional displays refer to the observable expression of unpleasant emotions by pupils such as anger, sadness, fear, frustration, and disgust through facial expressions, body language, tone of voice, and behaviour. These could be displayed by crying, frowning, shouting, withdrawing, and throwing tantrums. Some discussed here include:

1. **Fear:** Is one of the earliest and most common emotional responses experienced by pupils. It arises whenever pupils perceive danger, uncertainty, unfamiliarity, or possible failure. During the early years, fear often reflects pupils 's limited understanding of new experiences rather than actual threats. The paper identifies several common sources of fear, including very old people, unusually tall or large individuals, strangers, unfamiliar toys, heights, deep places, unfamiliar school environments, and new teachers. Although fear serves a protective function by alerting pupils to possible danger, excessive fear can interfere with healthy learning and development. A frightened learner often struggles to concentrate, participate in classroom discussions, answer questions confidently, or interact positively with classmates. Instead of focusing on learning, the child's attention becomes centred on avoiding perceived threats. Persistent fear may eventually lead to withdrawal, poor academic performance, absenteeism, or complete loss of interest in school activities (Maslow, 1943).

   Teachers therefore have an important responsibility to reduce unnecessary fear within the classroom. New learners should be welcomed warmly, classroom expectations should be explained clearly, and learning environments should remain emotionally safe and predictable. Introducing unfamiliar activities gradually, using encouraging language, and providing reassurance during challenging tasks help learners develop confidence rather than anxiety. Similarly, teachers should avoid threatening learners through intimidation, ridicule, excessive shouting, or public embarrassment, as such practices often strengthen rather than reduce pupils 's fears (Ayua, 2021).

   Parents also contribute significantly to pupils 's emotional adjustment. Preparing pupils positively for school, encouraging independence, and avoiding frightening stories or threats as methods of discipline enable pupils to approach learning with greater confidence. When both home and school provide consistent emotional support, pupils gradually develop resilience and become more willing to explore new learning experiences.

2. **Anger:** Anger is another common emotional display observed among young learners. It usually develops when pupils perceive injustice, experience frustration, or are unable to achieve desired goals. The paper identifies unmet needs, unfavourable comments, undeserved punishment, and rejection by peers as common causes of anger among pupils. Anger itself is not inherently harmful. It is a natural emotional response that becomes problematic only when pupils lack appropriate ways of expressing or

regulating it. Within classroom settings, anger may manifest through crying, refusal to participate, argumentativeness, verbal outbursts, destruction of learning materials, or withdrawal from classroom activities. Such behaviours disrupt not only the affected learner's education but also the learning environment for other pupils.

Teachers should therefore seek to understand the underlying causes of pupils 's anger rather than responding immediately with punishment. Listening carefully, acknowledging learners' feelings, resolving conflicts fairly, and correcting behaviour respectfully often prevent anger from escalating into more serious behavioural difficulties. Pupils who feel understood are generally more willing to cooperate with classroom expectations and develop healthier emotional regulation skills (Erikson, 1963). Equally important is the teacher's ability to model emotional self-control. Pupils frequently learn emotional behaviours by observing adults. Teachers who remain calm during stressful situations demonstrate constructive ways of managing frustration, thereby providing learners with practical examples of emotional maturity.

3. **Aggressiveness:** Frequently develops when anger, frustration, disappointment, or resentment remains unresolved over time. Rather than expressing emotions appropriately, some pupils communicate emotional distress through behaviours that harm others or disrupt classroom activities. According to the paper, aggression may arise from frustration, dislikes, offences, and resentments. Aggressive behaviours may include fighting, pushing classmates, shouting, insulting others, damaging classroom materials, bullying peers, or deliberately disrupting lessons. While such behaviours require correction, teachers should recognise that aggression often represents a symptom of deeper emotional challenges rather than simple disobedience. Research in child development suggests that pupils who consistently experience rejection, neglect, repeated academic failure, or unresolved emotional stress are more likely to demonstrate aggressive behaviour than pupils whose emotional needs are adequately met (Bowlby, 1969). Consequently, effective classroom management requires teachers to investigate the circumstances contributing to aggressive behaviour before determining appropriate interventions.

   Positive behavioural support strategies remain more effective than punitive approaches alone. Teachers should establish clear classroom expectations, reinforce desirable behaviour consistently, encourage cooperative learning, teach conflict-resolution skills, and provide opportunities for pupils to express emotions appropriately. Activities that promote teamwork, empathy, sharing, and mutual respect gradually reduce aggressive tendencies while strengthening positive peer relationships. Persistent aggressive behaviour should prompt collaboration among teachers, parents, school counsellors, and other educational professionals. Early intervention enables pupils to receive the emotional and behavioural support necessary for healthy development before aggressive patterns become deeply established.

Educational Implications

Fear, anger, and aggressiveness should not automatically be interpreted as evidence of indiscipline or unwillingness to learn. In many instances, these emotional displays communicate underlying developmental, emotional, or environmental needs that require sensitive understanding and appropriate educational intervention. Teachers who recognise these emotional signals respond more effectively by creating supportive learning environments where pupils feel emotionally safe, respected, and encouraged to participate. Developing emotional awareness enables teachers to move beyond

behaviour management to emotional guidance. Such an approach not only reduces classroom disruptions but also promotes positive attitudes to learning, strengthens teacher-pupil relationships, and contributes significantly to pupil's holistic development. Ultimately, emotionally responsive teaching remains one of the most effective strategies for mitigating pupils' disinterest in learning and improving educational outcomes.

Common Positive Emotional Displays

While negative emotions such as fear, anger, and aggressiveness require careful management within the classroom, teachers must equally recognise and nurture the positive emotional displays that promote learning and healthy child development. They are observable expression of pleasant emotions by pupils such as joy, excitement, pride, gratitude, and affection through facial expressions, body language, tone of voice, and behaviour. Which could be displayed by smiling, laughing, clapping, hugging, enthusiastic talking. Positive emotions encourage exploration, creativity, cooperation, resilience, and sustained interest in educational activities. They also strengthen pupils 's relationships with teachers and peers, thereby creating emotionally supportive classrooms where meaningful learning can occur. Consequently, effective teachers do not merely correct undesirable behaviours; they intentionally cultivate emotional experiences that encourage pupils to enjoy learning and develop confidence in their abilities. The paper identifies curiosity, affection, and joy as important positive emotional displays commonly exhibited during early childhood (Ayua, 2022). These emotions provide valuable opportunities for teachers to strengthen pupils 's motivation, creativity, and emotional well-being.

1. **Curiosity:** Is widely recognised as the foundation of meaningful learning. It represents pupils 's natural desire to explore, discover, question, and understand the world around them. The paper describes curiosity as a sincere desire to know and inquisitiveness. This desire to seek knowledge motivates pupils to investigate unfamiliar objects, ask questions, experiment with ideas, and actively participate in classroom activities. Piaget (1972) explains that pupils construct knowledge through active interaction with their environment. Rather than learning passively, they develop understanding by exploring, questioning, and solving problems. Curiosity therefore serves as an important driving force for cognitive development because it encourages pupils to seek explanations and make sense of new experiences.

   Within the classroom, curious learners frequently ask questions such as *"Why?"*, *"How?"*, and *"What will happen if…?"* Such questions should never be interpreted as distractions or signs of disobedience. Instead, they demonstrate healthy intellectual development and provide teachers with opportunities to extend pupils 's understanding. Teachers who welcome questions create classrooms where learners become active participants rather than passive recipients of information. Curiosity can be strengthened through practical demonstrations, storytelling, educational games, experiments, field observations, project-based learning, and inquiry-based instructional strategies. Teachers should encourage pupils to investigate problems independently before providing solutions, thereby developing critical thinking, creativity, and confidence in their own abilities (Ayua et al., 2019).

2. **Affection:** Is another important emotional display that contributes significantly to pupils 's emotional and social development. According to the paper, affection reflects pupils 's capacity to express care, warmth, kindness, and concern to others (Ayua, 2022). Through affectionate interactions, pupils develop empathy, cooperation, friendship, and positive interpersonal relationships that support both learning and emotional wellbeing. During the early years, affection is expressed through sharing learning materials, helping classmates,

comforting friends, smiling, cooperating during classroom activities, and showing appreciation for others. Such behaviours strengthen classroom unity while promoting respect and social harmony. Teachers who consistently model kindness and compassion encourage pupils to imitate these positive behaviours in their interactions with peers.

Vygotsky (1978) emphasises that learning occurs through social interaction. Positive relationships between teachers and learners, as well as among classmates, therefore create favourable conditions for cognitive and emotional development. Pupils who experience affection within supportive learning environments generally demonstrate greater confidence, stronger communication skills, and increased willingness to participate in cooperative learning activities. Teachers should intentionally cultivate affectionate classroom cultures by encouraging teamwork, recognising acts of kindness, resolving conflicts peacefully, and treating every learner with dignity and respect. Such practices strengthen pupils 's sense of belonging while mitigating feelings of rejection that may contribute to disinterest in learning (Ayua, 2021).

3. **Joy:** Represents one of the most desirable emotional experiences in early childhood education because it enhances learners' motivation, participation, and overall well-being. The paper explains that pupils experience joy when their goals, desires, or needs are met, when they succeed in learning activities, enjoy play, receive encouragement, and experience positive treatment from significant adults (Ayua, 2022). Educational psychologists have consistently demonstrated that positive emotions improve attention, memory, creativity, and problem-solving abilities. Pupils who associate school with enjoyable experiences are more likely to attend regularly, participate actively, and develop lifelong enthusiasm for learning (Maslow, 1943). Joy therefore serves not merely as an emotional experience but also as a powerful educational resource.

   Teachers can intentionally promote joyful learning by using interactive teaching methods that actively involve learners in the instructional process. Educational games, storytelling, music, creative arts, drama, role-play, experiments, practical demonstrations, and collaborative learning activities make classroom instruction both enjoyable and meaningful. Similarly, recognising pupils 's achievements, celebrating improvement, displaying learners' work, and providing encouraging feedback contribute significantly to learners' sense of accomplishment and happiness. Play deserves particular attention because it combines enjoyment with purposeful learning. Through play, pupils develop communication skills, creativity, leadership, cooperation, emotional regulation, and problem-solving abilities. For this reason, play-based learning should remain an integral component of lower and middle basic schools rather than being viewed as separate from academic instruction (Piaget, 1972).

Educational Implications

Curiosity, affection, and joy represent positive emotional resources that teachers should deliberately cultivate within every classroom. These emotions increase pupils 's motivation, strengthen teacher-pupil relationships, encourage collaboration, and create favourable conditions for meaningful learning. Teachers who provide stimulating learning experiences, demonstrate genuine care for learners, and celebrate pupils 's progress contribute significantly to positive attitudes to education. Furthermore, emotionally positive classrooms reduce pupils' disinterest in learning because pupils' associate school with safety, acceptance, enjoyment, and personal growth. By intentionally nurturing curiosity, affection, and joy, teachers lay the emotional foundation for lifelong learning, healthy

interpersonal relationships, and holistic pupil development (Ayua, 2022; Vygotsky, 1978).

TEACHER FRIENDLINESS: AN EMOTIONAL STABILIZER

Teaching extends beyond the transmission of academic knowledge; it involves establishing meaningful relationships that support pupils 's emotional, social, and intellectual development. Among the numerous professional qualities expected in teaching, teacher friendliness occupies a unique position because it creates an emotionally secure environment in which learners feel accepted, respected, and motivated to participate. Friendliness should therefore not be viewed merely as a personality trait but as a deliberate professional practice that promotes pupils 's emotional stability and enhances the teaching-learning process. Research consistently demonstrates that positive teacher-pupil relationships significantly influence learners' motivation, classroom engagement, behaviour, and academic achievement (Vygotsky, 1978; Ayua, 2022).

Pupils who perceive their teachers as approachable and supportive are generally more willing to ask questions, seek clarification, express concerns, and participate actively during classroom activities. Conversely, learners who perceive teachers as hostile, distant, or intimidating often become fearful, withdrawn, and reluctant to engage in meaningful learning experiences. Teacher friendliness therefore, serves as an emotional stabilizer because it reduces anxiety, strengthens trust, and encourages pupils to develop positive attitudes to school.

This paper highlights several practical ways through which teachers can demonstrate teacher friendliness in their daily interactions with learners. These include encouraging pupils to talk about their routines, becoming involved in their lives from the beginning, playing with them, understanding their world, and correcting them without being judgmental (Ayua, 2022) are hereby stated as follows:

1. **Encourage Pupils to Talk About Their Daily Routines:** Pupils arrive at school with experiences that influence their emotional state and readiness to learn. Some may have enjoyed peaceful and supportive home environments, while others may have experienced family conflicts, illness, neglect, or emotional distress. Encouraging learners to talk about their daily experiences provides teachers with valuable insight into factors that may influence classroom behaviour and academic performance. Simple conversations during morning greetings or class discussions create opportunities for pupils to express their feelings freely. Teachers who listen attentively without interrupting or judging learners communicate genuine interest and respect. Such interactions strengthen trust while enabling teachers to identify pupils who may require additional emotional or academic support. Listening also promotes pupils 's language development, self-confidence, and emotional regulation. Learners who feel heard are generally more willing to communicate openly with teachers whenever they experience difficulties. Consequently, encouraging pupils to discuss their daily routines contributes not only to emotional well-being but also to more effective classroom management and improved learning outcomes (Ayua, 2021).
2. **Become Involved in Their Lives from the Beginning:** Positive teacher-pupil relationships should begin from the first day pupils enter school. The paper encourages teachers to become involved in learners' lives from the beginning rather than waiting until behavioural or academic problems emerge (Ayua, 2022). Early relationship-building enables teachers to understand pupils 's personalities, interests, strengths, and developmental needs before challenges become more complicated. Teachers can achieve this by learning pupils' names promptly, observing their learning preferences, recognising individual talents, and maintaining regular communication with parents or caregivers where appropriate. Such involvement communicates acceptance and reassures learners that they belong within

the classroom community. However, professional involvement should always respect appropriate ethical boundaries. Teachers should demonstrate genuine concern for learners' welfare while maintaining professional relationships consistent with educational policies and safeguarding principles.

3. **Play with the Pupils:** Play occupies a central position in early childhood education because it provides opportunities for learning, creativity, emotional expression, and social interaction. Piaget (1972) argues that pupils actively construct knowledge through play and exploration, while Vygotsky (1978) emphasises that play promotes social interaction and cognitive development. Teachers who participate appropriately in educational games, storytelling, role-playing, music, and outdoor activities strengthen their relationships with learners while simultaneously observing pupils 's interests, abilities, and emotional responses. Such interactions enable teachers to identify learners who may require additional support while creating enjoyable classroom experiences that encourage participation. Importantly, play should never be viewed merely as recreation. Well-designed play activities promote language development, creativity, problem-solving, leadership, cooperation, and emotional regulation. Teachers who integrate purposeful play into classroom instruction create learning environments where pupils associate education with enjoyment rather than fear.

4. **Understand Pupils 's World:** Effective teaching requires understanding how pupils think, feel, and interpret their experiences. Adults often evaluate situations from mature perspectives, whereas pupils respond according to their developmental stage, limited experiences, and emotional maturity. Teachers who appreciate these differences communicate more effectively and respond more appropriately to learners' behaviour. Understanding pupils 's world involves recognising their interests, fears, aspirations, language, and developmental capabilities. Teachers should therefore present lessons using familiar examples, practical demonstrations, stories, songs, games, and locally relevant experiences that pupils can easily relate to. Such learner-centred approaches increase understanding while making classroom instruction more meaningful and enjoyable. Furthermore, recognising individual differences enables teachers to avoid unrealistic expectations. Every child develops at a unique pace, and effective educators adapt their instructional strategies accordingly rather than comparing learners unfairly or expecting identical performance from all pupils (Piaget, 1972).

5. **Correct Pupils Without Being Judgmental:** Correction remains an essential component of effective teaching because pupils require guidance in developing appropriate behaviour and academic competence. However, the manner in which correction is delivered significantly influences pupils 's emotional development. The paper therefore emphasises that teachers should correct learners without being judgmental (Ayua, 2021; Ayua, 2022). Judgmental correction often attacks pupils 's character through statements such as *"You are lazy," "You never understand,"* or *"You always fail."* Such comments damage self-esteem and gradually create negative self-perceptions that interfere with learning. Conversely, constructive correction focuses on specific behaviours while maintaining respect for the learner's dignity. Teachers should therefore provide feedback that encourages improvement rather than humiliation. Statements such as *"Let's review this together," "You are making progress,"* or *"Try another approach"* communicate confidence in learners' potential while guiding them to better performance. Such responses promote resilience, self-confidence, and continued willingness to

participate in classroom activities (Dweck, 2006).

6. **Communicate Regularly with Learners:** Effective communication is one of the strongest foundations of successful teaching. Pupils require opportunities to express their ideas, ask questions, discuss their experiences, and communicate their concerns freely without fear of criticism or ridicule. Teachers who maintain regular communication with learners develop stronger relationships and gain deeper understanding of pupils 's emotional and academic needs. Communication extends beyond classroom instruction. Friendly teachers deliberately create opportunities to discuss learners' interests, hobbies, aspirations, achievements, and challenges. Such conversations provide valuable information that assists teachers in understanding pupils 's behaviour while promoting emotional security and trust. Effective communication also requires active listening. Teachers who pay attention to both verbal and non-verbal messages demonstrate respect for learners' opinions and feelings. This encourages pupils to seek guidance whenever they encounter academic or personal difficulties, thereby preventing minor concerns from developing into more serious educational problems (Ayua, 2021).
7. **Share Appropriate Personal Experiences:** Pupils often learn valuable lessons through stories and practical examples. The paper encourages teachers to share appropriate personal experiences that motivate learners and demonstrate perseverance, honesty, resilience, and responsible behaviour (Ayua, 2022). Personal experiences help learners recognise that challenges are normal aspects of life and that success often results from persistence rather than perfection. For example, a teacher may describe overcoming difficulties while learning a new skill or preparing for an important examination. Such narratives reassure pupils that making mistakes is a natural part of growth and learning. However, teachers should exercise professional judgment when sharing personal experiences. Stories should always support the lesson objectives, remain age-appropriate, and respect professional boundaries. The purpose is to inspire learners and provide meaningful life lessons rather than shift attention away from classroom learning.
8. **Help Learners Solve Their Problem:** Pupils encounter numerous academic, emotional, and social challenges during their school years. Difficulties such as friendship conflicts, fear of failure, low self-confidence, family concerns, bullying, and academic struggles may significantly affect classroom participation. Friendly teachers therefore make themselves available to guide learners in resolving problems constructively rather than merely imposing punishment. Helping learners solve problems develops critical thinking, emotional intelligence, and decision-making skills. Instead of providing immediate solutions, teachers should encourage pupils to analyse situations, consider alternative responses, and reflect upon the consequences of their decisions. Such guidance gradually promotes independence and responsible behaviour while strengthening pupils 's confidence in their own abilities. Where learners' challenges exceed the teacher's professional expertise, timely referral to school counsellors, administrators, or parents should be made. Collaborative intervention ensures that pupils receive comprehensive support while maintaining continuity between home and school.
9. **Encourage Active Participation:** Meaningful learning occurs when pupils actively engage in classroom activities rather than remaining passive observers. Teachers who maintain friendly relationships create emotionally secure environments where learners feel confident enough to ask

questions, express opinions, attempt challenging tasks, and participate in collaborative learning experiences. Active participation should be encouraged through learner-centred instructional strategies such as group discussions, cooperative learning, demonstrations, role-playing, educational games, and project-based activities. These approaches recognise learners as active participants in constructing knowledge rather than passive recipients of information (Piaget, 1972; Vygotsky, 1978). Teachers should also recognise and appreciate learners' contributions regardless of whether responses are completely correct. Positive feedback motivates pupils to continue participating while mitigating fear of making mistakes. As learners experience repeated success, their confidence and enthusiasm for learning increase significantly.

10. **Build Mutual Trust and Respect:** Trust forms the cornerstone of effective teacher-pupil relationships. Pupils readily cooperate with teachers whom they perceive as fair, honest, consistent, and genuinely concerned about their welfare. Trust develops gradually through daily interactions characterised by reliability, respect, empathy, and professional integrity. Teachers build trust by treating every learner fairly, maintaining confidentiality where appropriate, applying classroom rules consistently, and demonstrating respect for pupils 's opinions and individuality. Similarly, teachers should expect learners to treat others respectfully, thereby creating classrooms founded upon mutual understanding and cooperation. Respect should always be reciprocal. Teachers who model courtesy, patience, honesty, and empathy provide practical examples that learners gradually imitate during interactions with classmates and other members of the school community. Such modelling contributes significantly to pupils 's moral and social development (Ayua, 2003; Ayua, 2022).

Educational Implications

Teacher friendliness is not just a desirable trait but an essential professional competency that directly enhances teaching and learning. Teachers who build warm, respectful, and supportive relationships create emotionally secure classrooms where pupils feel valued, understood, and motivated to participate. Through open communication, involvement in pupils' activities, empathy in correction, and understanding of learners' developmental needs, teachers reduce pupils' disinterest in learning while promoting emotional stability, confidence, and academic achievement. Sustaining such friendly relationships requires deliberate effort through regular interaction, collaboration, trust, and fairness. Ultimately, emotionally responsive teaching strengthens teacher-pupil relationships, improves classroom management, and helps pupils develop into confident, resilient, and socially responsible learners (Ayua, 2022; Vygotsky, 1978).

PUPILS' THOUGHT CIRCLES AND EMOTIONAL TORNADOES

One of the distinctive concepts presented in this paper is Pupils 's Thought Circles, also described as Emotional Tornadoes**.** This concept explains how repeated negative thoughts gradually accumulate until they dominate pupils 's emotions, behaviour, and attitudes to learning. Although the expression *thought circles* is the presenter's conceptual description rather than a formal psychological term, it closely reflects established theories of cognition, self-perception, and emotional regulation, which emphasise that individuals' thoughts strongly influence their feelings and behaviours (Simpson, n.d.). Understanding these patterns is particularly important for teachers because pupils 's classroom behaviour is often shaped by internal thoughts that remain unseen but significantly affect learning.

Pupils continuously interpret the events that occur around them. Every interaction with teachers, classmates, parents, and the learning environment contribute to the beliefs they develop about

themselves. Positive experiences strengthen confidence and encourage learners to persevere, whereas repeated negative experiences may gradually produce unhealthy patterns of thinking. Over time, these negative thoughts become self-reinforcing, creating emotional states that interfere with learning and social adjustment (Ogunyemi, 2022).

The paper explains that pupils become trapped in thought circles when they are "below the line" emotionally. During such periods, negative thinking becomes dominant, making it increasingly difficult for pupils to recognise their strengths or believe in their ability to succeed (Huerta, 2020; Parent4success, 2022). Thus, instead of viewing challenges as opportunities for growth, they begin to interpret ordinary classroom experiences as evidence of personal inadequacy or inevitable failure.

Understanding Negative Thinking Patterns

Pupils 's thoughts influence how they interpret success, failure, praise, correction, and relationships with others. A learner who receives constructive correction may either interpret it as an opportunity for improvement or as evidence of personal failure, depending on existing thought patterns. Consequently, the same classroom experience may produce completely different emotional responses among different pupils. Educational psychologists recognise that repeated negative self-talk gradually influences pupils 's confidence, motivation, and willingness to participate in learning. Learners who continually think, *"I am not intelligent," "My teacher does not like me,"* or *"I always fail,"* often begin to behave in ways that confirm these beliefs. Such learners participate less frequently, avoid academic challenges, and become increasingly disengaged from classroom activities (Dweck, 2006; Huerta, 2020; Parent4success, 2022). Teachers should therefore understand that pupils 's behaviour frequently reflects their internal thinking rather than merely their outward actions. Addressing behaviour alone without recognising underlying thought patterns may produce only temporary improvement.

Characteristics of Pupils 's Thought Circles

Generally, thought circles are often illogical, discouraging, unprofitable, uncoordinated, and pessimistic. These characteristics explain why pupils 's emotional reactions sometimes appear disproportionate to the events that trigger them. For example, a learner who incorrectly answers a single classroom question may conclude that he or she is incapable of learning. Another pupil who experiences temporary disagreement with classmates may begin to believe that nobody likes them. Such conclusions are usually irrational, yet they strongly influence pupils 's emotions and behaviour because young learners often lack the emotional maturity to evaluate situations objectively. Negative thinking gradually narrows pupils 's willingness to participate in learning (Huerta, 2020; Parent4success, 2022; Simpson, n.d). Instead of focusing on opportunities for success, they become preoccupied with avoiding embarrassment, criticism, or failure. This cycle of avoidance eventually reinforces the original negative belief, making disengagement increasingly difficult to overcome.

From Thought Circles to Emotional Tornadoes

The paper further explains that persistent thought circles eventually develop into emotional tornadoes**,** resulting in depression, disinterest, discouragement, low self-esteem, and complete disengagement from learning. These emotional conditions rarely develop suddenly. Rather, they emerge gradually through repeated negative experiences that remain unresolved over time. Pupils experiencing emotional tornadoes may become unusually quiet, withdrawn, irritable, uncooperative, or emotionally detached from classroom activities (Huerta, 2020; Parent4success, 2022; Simpson, n.d). Others may display disruptive behaviours as indirect expressions of emotional distress. Regardless of the behavioural pattern observed, the underlying issue often remains the same: the learner has gradually lost confidence in his or her ability to succeed. Such learners require understanding rather than condemnation. Teachers who interpret emotional withdrawal merely as laziness or indiscipline risk reinforcing the very thought patterns contributing to learners' difficulties.

Breaking the Cycle of Negative Thinking

One of the most important responsibilities of teachers is helping pupils interrupt unhealthy thought circles before they become deeply established. This requires creating emotionally supportive classrooms where learners repeatedly experience encouragement, acceptance, fairness, and opportunities for success. Teachers should deliberately reinforce effort rather than perfection, acknowledge improvement regardless of how small, and provide constructive feedback that emphasises growth rather than failure. According to Dweck (2006), pupils who develop a growth mindset are more likely to interpret mistakes as opportunities for learning rather than evidence of inability. Equally important is helping learners recognise and challenge negative self-beliefs. Statements such as *"I can't do it"* may be gently reframed into *"I can't do it yet, but I can improve with practice."* Such language encourages optimism while gradually replacing destructive thought patterns with healthier ways of thinking. Teachers should also encourage open communication about emotions. Pupils who feel safe discussing their fears, disappointments, and frustrations are less likely to internalise negative experiences (Beattie, 2015; Pathways2success, 2018). Classroom environments characterised by empathy, patience, and emotional safety enable learners to recover more quickly from setbacks and remain engaged in learning.

Educational Implications

Pupils 's thought circles remind teachers that learning involves both intellectual and emotional processes. Every classroom interaction influences how learners perceive themselves, their abilities, and their potential for success. Positive feedback, meaningful encouragement, respectful correction, and emotionally supportive relationships help pupils develop healthy patterns of thinking that promote confidence and resilience. Conversely, repeated humiliation, harsh criticism, unfair comparisons, and persistent failure may strengthen negative thought circles that eventually develop into emotional tornadoes. Teachers therefore have a professional responsibility to cultivate learning environments where hope consistently outweighs fear and where every pupil believes that improvement is possible through continuous effort. By understanding and addressing pupils 's thought circles, teachers contribute significantly to mitigating pupils' disinterest in learning while promoting emotional well-being, academic engagement, and lifelong confidence. This understanding naturally leads to the next section, which focuses on practical strategies for engaging disengaged learners and restoring pupils 's motivation to learn.

Engaging Disengaged Learners

Learner engagement is widely recognised as one of the strongest predictors of academic achievement and educational success. Engaged learners participate actively in classroom discussions, complete learning tasks with enthusiasm, collaborate effectively with peers, and demonstrate curiosity to new knowledge. Conversely, disengaged learners often display reduced motivation, limited participation, poor concentration, declining academic performance, and increasing emotional withdrawal from classroom activities. Such learners may be physically present in school while remaining emotionally and intellectually disconnected from the learning process. Disengagement rarely develops without cause. It is often the cumulative result of repeated academic failure, unresolved emotional difficulties, ineffective teacher-pupil relationships, inappropriate instructional strategies, negative peer interactions, family challenges, or persistent feelings of inadequacy. Consequently, disengaged learners should not simply be viewed as lazy, stubborn, or unwilling to learn. Rather, their behaviour should be understood as an indication that they require additional emotional, instructional, or social support.

Recognising learner disengagement as a developmental and educational concern enables teachers to respond with empathy rather than frustration. Based on a variety of experience and available literature, the following outlined practical strategies can assist teachers in restoring learners' confidence, rebuilding motivation, and promoting meaningful classroom participation (Beattie, 2015; Huerta, 2020; Ogunyemi, 2022; Parent4success,

2022; Pathways2success, 2018):

1. **Avoid Excessive Punishment:** Teachers are cautioned against relying excessively on punishment when managing disengaged learners. Although punishment may temporarily suppress undesirable behaviour, it rarely addresses the underlying causes of learner disengagement. Repeated punitive measures often increase fear, resentment, anxiety, and emotional withdrawal, thereby reinforcing rather than mitigating pupils' disinterest in learning. Effective teachers therefore seek first to understand the reasons behind learners' behaviour before determining appropriate interventions. A learner who consistently refuses to participate may be struggling with low self-esteem, learning difficulties, family challenges, fear of embarrassment, or emotional distress. Addressing these underlying factors promotes lasting behavioural improvement while preserving pupils 's dignity and confidence.

2. **Avoid Sending Learners Out of the Classroom:** Removing learners from classroom instruction should be considered only when their behaviour poses a genuine risk to themselves or others. Otherwise, exclusion deprives pupils of valuable learning opportunities while reinforcing feelings of rejection and isolation. Teachers should instead employ classroom management strategies that maintain learners' participation while addressing behavioural concerns respectfully. Keeping pupils connected to classroom activities communicates that they remain valued members of the learning community despite temporary behavioural challenges. Inclusive classroom practices encourage learners to view school as a supportive environment rather than a place where mistakes result in exclusion or humiliation.

3. **Avoid Power Struggles:** Power struggles between teachers and learners rarely produce positive educational outcomes. When disagreements become contests over authority, attention shifts away from learning to conflict. Pupils involved in such confrontations frequently become more resistant, while teachers may become increasingly frustrated. Professional educators maintain emotional self-control during challenging situations. Rather than attempting to dominate learners, they focus on resolving problems through respectful communication, patience, consistency, and restorative approaches. Such responses preserve positive teacher-pupil relationships while modelling appropriate emotional regulation for learners.

4. **Do Not Label Learners as Lazy:** One of the most significant recommendations presented in this paper is that teachers should avoid describing disengaged learners as lazy. Such labels often oversimplify complex educational realities and may permanently damage pupils 's confidence. Behaviour that appears to reflect laziness may actually result from learning disabilities, emotional trauma, health concerns, language barriers, family difficulties, or repeated academic failure. Teachers should therefore investigate learners' circumstances carefully before drawing conclusions about motivation or ability. Positive expectations play an important role in improving learner performance. Pupils frequently perform in ways that reflect adults' expectations of them. Teachers who consistently communicate confidence in learners' potential encourage greater persistence, resilience, and academic effort.

5. **Continue Teaching with Patience:** Every learner possesses the capacity to grow academically when provided with appropriate opportunities, encouragement, and instructional support. Teachers should therefore remain patient with disengaged learners rather than becoming discouraged by slow progress. Patience involves recognising that pupils learn at different rates and through

different methods. Some learners require additional explanation, repeated practice, differentiated instruction, or emotional reassurance before demonstrating meaningful improvement. Teachers who persevere in supporting struggling learners often observe gradual but significant changes in participation, confidence, and achievement.

6. **Allow Adequate Response Time:** Pupils vary considerably in the speed with which they process information and formulate responses. Some learners require additional time to understand questions, organise their thoughts, and communicate their answers effectively. Teachers should therefore avoid interpreting delayed responses as evidence of inability or lack of interest. Providing sufficient wait time encourages wider classroom participation by mitigating pressure and anxiety. Learners who know they will be given adequate thinking time become more willing to contribute during discussions and attempt challenging tasks without fear of immediate criticism.

7. **Ignore Minor Inappropriate Behaviours:** Teachers should recognise that not every inappropriate behaviour requires immediate correction. Some minor behaviours are temporary attempts to gain attention and may disappear naturally when they are not reinforced. Constant interruption of lessons to address every minor distraction often disrupts learning and may unintentionally encourage attention-seeking behaviours. Professional judgment is therefore essential. Teachers should distinguish between behaviours that genuinely interfere with learning and those that can be managed through planned classroom routines. Serious behaviours affecting learners' safety or the learning environment should receive immediate attention, whereas minor distractions may often be addressed more effectively after the lesson or through positive reinforcement of appropriate behaviour.

8. **Be a Reflective Practitioner:** Effective teachers continually evaluate their own instructional practices. Reflection enables educators to determine whether classroom strategies are meeting learners' needs or whether adjustments are necessary to improve engagement. Rather than attributing every classroom challenge to pupils, reflective teachers ask themselves important questions:

    a) Are my teaching methods engaging?

    b) Have I considered learners' individual differences?

    c) Do my lessons encourage active participation?

    d) Am I creating opportunities for every learner to succeed?

Reflective practice promotes continuous professional growth and enables teachers to improve both instructional effectiveness and classroom relationships.

9. **Consider Learning Difficulties:** Some learners disengage because they experience genuine learning challenges rather than behavioural problems. Learning disabilities, hearing or visual impairments, language barriers, developmental delays, or previous gaps in learning may all reduce pupils 's confidence and willingness to participate. Teachers should therefore observe learners carefully, identify possible barriers to learning, and provide appropriate instructional support. Early identification enables schools to implement timely interventions while preventing learners from developing negative attitudes to education. Inclusive education requires recognising that learners differ in their abilities, learning styles, and developmental needs. Consequently, instructional strategies should be sufficiently flexible to accommodate these

differences while maintaining high expectations for every learner.

10. **Meet Learners Privately:** Private conversations often provide opportunities for teachers to understand learners' concerns without exposing them to embarrassment before their classmates. Individual discussions allow pupils to express personal difficulties openly while strengthening trust between teacher and learner. Such conversations should be conducted respectfully, confidentially, and with genuine concern for the learner's wellbeing. Where necessary, teachers should collaborate with parents, school counsellors, or administrators to provide additional support.
11. **Use Logical Consequences:** Classroom discipline should focus on helping learners understand the relationship between their behaviour and its outcomes rather than relying solely on punishment. Logical consequences encourage responsibility because they are directly connected to the behaviour being corrected. For example, a learner who deliberately damages classroom materials may participate in repairing or replacing them, while a learner who neglects an assignment may receive additional time and guidance to complete the work. Such consequences promote accountability while preserving learners' dignity and encouraging responsible decision-making.
12. **Use De-escalation Strategies:** Pupils experiencing intense emotions often struggle to think rationally. During such moments, immediate confrontation or harsh discipline may increase emotional distress rather than resolve the problem. Teachers should therefore employ de-escalation strategies that help learners regain emotional control before addressing behavioural concerns. Speaking calmly, providing reassurance, allowing brief periods for emotional recovery, using supportive language, and removing unnecessary sources of stress often enable learners to regain self-control more effectively than punitive responses. Emotional regulation should always precede correction because pupils learn more effectively when they feel emotionally secure.
13. **Give Learners Appropriate Choices:** Providing learners with meaningful choices promotes independence, responsibility, and ownership of learning. When pupils participate in decision-making, they become more motivated to complete classroom tasks and develop greater confidence in their own abilities. Teachers may offer choices regarding learning activities, reading materials, project topics, or methods of completing assignments while maintaining overall instructional objectives. Such flexibility encourages engagement without compromising academic standards.
14. **Use Learners' Interests:** Meaningful learning occurs more readily when classroom activities connect with pupils 's interests and everyday experiences. Teachers should therefore identify learners' hobbies, talents, cultural backgrounds, and personal experiences and incorporate them into instructional activities whenever appropriate. Storytelling, educational games, practical demonstrations, local examples, music, creative arts, technology, and project-based learning all contribute to making instruction more engaging and relevant. When learners perceive classroom activities as meaningful, they are more likely to participate actively and retain new knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978).
15. **Collaborate with Families:** Parents and caregivers remain pupils' first teachers and continue to influence their emotional and educational development throughout childhood. Effective learner engagement therefore requires strong collaboration between home and school. Teachers should maintain regular communication with families regarding learners' progress, behavioural concerns, and emotional well-being. Such collaboration enables both

parents and teachers to provide consistent encouragement and coordinated support that strengthens pupils 's confidence and academic development.

16. **Teacher Well-being:** An often-overlooked aspect of learner engagement is the emotional well-being of teachers themselves. The paper reminds educators that they cannot effectively support learners if they neglect their own physical, emotional, and professional health. Teaching demands patience, empathy, creativity, and resilience. Teachers who experience excessive stress or burnout may find it difficult to provide the emotional support required by learners. Consequently, educators should prioritise continuous professional development, maintain healthy work-life balance, seek collegial support when necessary, and engage in practices that promote personal well-being. Emotionally healthy teachers are better equipped to create emotionally healthy classrooms.

Educational Implication

Educationally, mitigating learners' apathy requires teachers to adopt emotionally responsive, learner-centred practices instead of punitive discipline. By addressing the root causes of disengagement, avoiding excessive punishment, resolving conflicts constructively, communicating positive expectations, and respecting individual differences, teachers can restore pupils' confidence, motivation, and classroom participation. Strategies such as reflective teaching, logical consequences, learner choice, family collaboration, and inclusive instruction help reengage learners by treating behavioural challenges as opportunities for support. When teachers combine professional competence with empathy and consistency, they create classrooms where pupils feel accepted and experience success, thereby mitigating disinterest in learning and fostering resilience, academic achievement, and lifelong enthusiasm for learning.

Summary

This paper is summarized in three points as follows:

1. **The core argument:** This conceptual paper examines the critical role of pupils' emotional development in promoting positive attitudes to learning among lower and middle basic school pupils. It argues that effective teaching extends far beyond the delivery of academic content. Teachers who understand pupils' emotional needs and deliberately create supportive learning environments contribute significantly to learners' cognitive, emotional, social, and behavioural development. The paper demonstrates that pupils' emotional needs vary by developmental stage: infants require love, safety, and secure attachment; toddlers need praise, empathy, and consistent boundaries; and pupils aged six to twelve need unconditional acceptance, predictable routines, and safe opportunities to learn from mistakes. When these needs are met, learners develop greater confidence, resilience, curiosity, and willingness to participate in learning.

2. **How emotions show up and what teachers can do:** The discussion further reveals that pupils communicate emotional experiences through both negative and positive displays. Fear, anger, and aggressiveness often signal underlying difficulties that require sensitive intervention rather than immediate punishment. In contrast, curiosity, affection, and joy create favourable conditions for exploration, creativity, and meaningful learning. A key contribution of this paper is the emphasis on teacher friendliness as an emotional stabilizer. Positive teacher-pupil relationships built on empathy, communication, fairness, patience, and respect create emotionally secure classrooms that reduce anxiety and increase participation. The paper also highlights the role of pupils' thought circles, or "emotional tornadoes." Negative thought patterns from failure, criticism, or rejection can lead to

withdrawal and disengagement. Teachers have a responsibility to interrupt these patterns through consistent encouragement, constructive feedback, opportunities for success, and supportive classroom environments that build resilience and confidence.

3. **Practical implications:** Practical strategies for engaging disengaged learners show that positive behavioural change is achieved more effectively through understanding, patience, reflection, collaboration, and learner-centred practices than through excessive punishment or exclusion. Teachers who investigate the causes of disengagement, maintain positive expectations, involve families, provide accommodations, and create opportunities for meaningful participation help restore learners' motivation and improve outcomes. Ultimately, the central message is that pupils' emotions and learning cannot be separated. Every teacher-learner interaction can either strengthen or weaken attitudes to education. Words of encouragement, acts of kindness, respectful correction, genuine interest, and emotionally responsive teaching may seem simple, but they profoundly influence pupils' confidence, motivation, and positivity toward learning.

Conclusion

In conclusion, mitigating pupils' disinterest in learning cannot be achieved through curriculum reform alone. It requires teachers who understand the emotional lives of pupils and respond with empathy, professionalism, and pedagogical competence. When pupils' emotional needs are met, negative thought patterns give way to confidence, withdrawal is replaced by meaningful engagement, and learning becomes a positive, enjoyable, and transformative experience. Emotionally responsive classrooms therefore produce learners who are not only academically successful, but also emotionally resilient, socially responsible, and prepared to contribute meaningfully to society.

Recommendations

Based on the foregoing, it is recommended that:

1. Teachers at the lower and middle basic school levels intentionally cultivate emotionally supportive classrooms where every pupil feels safe, respected, accepted, and capable of succeeding.
2. School administrators provide continuous professional development programmes that strengthen teachers' understanding of child psychology, emotional development, inclusive education, and learner-centred instructional practices.
3. Parents and teachers collaborate closely to ensure consistency in meeting pupils' emotional and developmental needs both at home and in school**.**

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