GAS Journal of Education and Literature (GASJEL)

Volume 3 | Issue 11, 2026 Homepage: https://gaspublishers.com/gasjel-home/ ISSN: 3048-6777

Reducing Negativity to Learning among Children in Early Childhood Education: Emotional Basis

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Received: *10.10.2026* | ***Accepted:*** *01.11.2026* | ***Published:*** *07.11.2026*

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DOI: *10.5281/zenodo.24028873*

Abstract **Review Article**

Reducing children's negativity to learning remains a major concern in early childhood education because learners' emotional experiences significantly influence their motivation, participation, and academic achievement. This paper examines practical strategies that early childhood education teachers can adopt to promote positive attitudes to learning by addressing children's emotional and developmental needs. The paper discusses the emotional needs of children at different developmental stages, common emotional displays exhibited by children, the role of teacher friendliness as an emotional stabilizer, the influence of children's thought circles and emotional tornadoes on learning behaviour, and effective strategies for engaging disengaged learners. Drawing on established theories of child development and contemporary literature on effective teaching, the paper argues that emotionally supportive classroom environments are fundamental to meaningful learning and holistic child development. Teachers who demonstrate empathy, patience, teacher friendliness, consistency, and respect while creating opportunities for learner participation contribute significantly to children's emotional well-being and learner engagement. The paper concludes that reducing negativity to learning requires intentional efforts to understand children's emotions, establish positive teacher-pupil relationships, encourage healthy thinking patterns, and implement learner-centred instructional strategies. These practices not only improve classroom participation and academic performance but also foster emotionally healthy, confident, and resilient learners capable of achieving their full potential.

Keywords: Emotional Needs, Thought Circles, Emotional Tornadoes, Learning, Learner Engagement, Teacher Friendliness, Early childhood education.

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INTRODUCTION

The role of education in shaping individuals and societies cannot be overstated. 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 teaching methods, but also on learners' willingness to engage actively in the learning process (Ayua, 2018; Ayua & Eriba, 2014; Ayua & Ode, 2015). In early childhood education, where children 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 this, many children develop negative attitudes to

learning during their formative years. Such negativity 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 children's holistic development. Research has shown that children's 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).

Traditionally, efforts to improve learning outcomes have centred on curriculum reforms, instructional materials, and assessment procedures. While these factors remain important, growing evidence suggests that children's emotional experiences significantly influence how they respond to learning opportunities. A child 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 children's emotional development alongside their intellectual growth (Abulo, 2011; Ayua, 2017; Ayua, 2022; Ode et al., 2019). Teachers occupy a unique position in shaping children'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 child contributes either positively or negatively to the learner's perception of school. Warm encouragement, patience, empathy, fairness, and effective communication help children develop confidence and resilience, whereas ridicule, harsh criticism, inconsistent discipline, and emotional neglect may gradually discourage participation and diminish interest in education (Ayua, 2021; Ayua, 2022).

Beyond the teacher, the classroom environment is critical in shaping children's disposition toward learning. Children 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 children's negativity toward educational activities (Maslow, 1943; Vygotsky, 1978). Furthermore, contemporary educational practice recognises that children's behaviour is often a reflection of underlying emotional experiences rather than deliberate disobedience. Masandpas (2022) and Meinke (2019) observe that unmet emotional needs 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).

Against this background, this conceptual paper examines practical approaches to reducing children's negativity to learning through emotionally responsive teaching practices. Specifically, it discusses children's emotional needs at different developmental stages, common emotional displays exhibited during childhood, the role of teacher friendliness as an emotional stabilizer, the effects of children'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 early childhood education teachers with practical guidance for creating emotionally supportive learning environments that foster confidence, participation, resilience, and improved academic achievement.

OBJECTIVES OF THE PAPER

The paper discussed practical strategies through which early childhood education teachers can reduce children's negativity to learning by creating

emotionally supportive and learner-centred classroom environments with the specific objectives to:

1. Analyse the emotional needs of children across early childhood stages and their influence on attitudes to learning.
2. Identify common emotional displays in young children and their implications for teaching, behaviour management, and academic engagement.
3. Evaluate the role of teacher friendliness as an emotional stabilizer in building secure teacher-pupil relationships and effective classroom interaction.
4. Explain the concept of children's thought circles, or "emotional tornadoes," and their impact on motivation, behaviour, and willingness to learn.
5. Propose practical strategies for engaging disengaged learners through emotionally responsive teaching, positive reinforcement, and supportive classroom management.
6. Recommend evidence-based practices for creating emotionally secure classrooms that promote active participation and improved academic outcomes.

CHILDREN'S EMOTIONAL NEEDS BY AGE

Understanding children's emotional needs is fundamental to effective teaching and learning in early childhood education. Emotional development influences children'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). Children's emotional needs evolve as they grow. What provides emotional stability during infancy differs from the needs of young children and school-age children. Piaget (1972) explains that children'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 children. Rather, they must understand learners' developmental characteristics and respond appropriately to their emotional needs.

The paper categorises children's emotional needs into two broad developmental stages: Babies (0 - 1+ year), young children (2+ - 5 years). Although children within the first category are generally cared for in homes or early childhood centres, understanding their emotional development enables teachers to appreciate the experiences that shape children'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.

Babies (0 - 1+ Year)

The first year of life is widely recognised as one of the most critical periods of human development. During this stage, infants depend entirely on adults for survival, protection, emotional security, and social interaction. According to Bowlby's (1969) Attachment Theory, consistent love and responsive caregiving enable infants to develop secure attachment, which subsequently influences confidence, emotional regulation, and healthy interpersonal relationships throughout life. Similarly, Erikson (1963) identifies the major developmental task during infancy as the establishment of basic trust versus mistrust, emphasising that children who experience consistent love and care develop confidence in both themselves and the people around them.

The paper identifies six major emotional needs of

babies during this developmental stage: love, care, safety, someone to turn to, touch and cuddling, and attention as stated underneath:

1. **Love:** Represents the foundation of healthy emotional development. Every infant requires consistent expressions of affection through smiling, gentle communication, cuddling, comforting, and responsive caregiving. Love provides children with a sense of belonging and security while strengthening emotional attachment to trusted caregivers. Infants who consistently experience warmth and affection are more likely to develop confidence, emotional resilience, and healthy social relationships later in childhood (Bowlby, 1969). Within nursery education, teachers who demonstrate patience, warmth, and genuine concern contribute significantly to children's emotional adjustment and readiness for learning (Abulo, 2011; Ayua, 2015; Ayua, 2021).
2. **Care:** Beyond affection, infants require consistent physical and emotional care to support healthy development. Care includes meeting children's nutritional needs, maintaining hygiene, protecting their health, providing adequate rest, and responding promptly to signs of discomfort or distress. Emotional care also involves speaking calmly to children, comforting them when frightened, and providing reassurance during unfamiliar situations. Such responsive caregiving enables infants to perceive their environment as safe and predictable, thereby supporting healthy emotional development (Erikson, 1963).
3. **Safety:** Children cannot learn effectively in environments where they feel unsafe. During infancy, safety extends beyond protection from physical harm to include emotional security and stability. Consistent daily routines, familiar caregivers, and predictable interactions provide infants with reassurance that their needs will be met. This sense of security encourages exploration, curiosity, and confidence—qualities that later support active participation in learning activities (Maslow, 1943).
4. **Someone to turn To:** The presentation further emphasises the importance of every infant having someone to turn to during periods of discomfort, fear, or uncertainty (Ayua, 2021). A trusted caregiver becomes a source of emotional reassurance whenever the child experiences distress. Such dependable relationships help children regulate emotions and gradually develop confidence in exploring new experiences. Teachers working in early childhood settings therefore have a responsibility to establish trusting relationships that reassure young learners whenever they encounter unfamiliar situations.
5. **Touch and Cuddling:** Appropriate physical affection remains an important component of emotional development during infancy. Positive touch (including holding, comforting, and cuddling) communicates acceptance, protection, and love. Research indicates that affectionate physical interaction contributes to healthy neurological, emotional, and social development during the earliest years of life (Bowlby, 1969; Masandpas, 2022; Meinke, 2019). Within educational settings, all physical interactions must remain appropriate, respectful, and consistent with child safeguarding policies.
6. **Attention:** Infants naturally seek attention because attention confirms that they are valued and understood. Responding to babies' attempts to communicate through crying, smiling, babbling, or gestures promotes language development, emotional security, and early social interaction. Teachers and caregivers should therefore remain attentive to children's verbal and non-verbal communication, recognising that consistent attention strengthens children's confidence and emotional well-being (Ayua, 2019; Ayua, 2021).

Educational Implications

The emotional experiences children encounter during infancy establish the foundation for later learning and behaviour. Infants who consistently receive love, care, safety, affection, and responsive attention are more likely to develop confidence, trust, and curiosity. These qualities support successful participation in formal education. Teachers should therefore recognise that many behaviours observed in nursery classrooms originate from experiences acquired long before children begin school. Understanding these developmental foundations enables educators to respond to learners with greater empathy, patience, and professionalism.

Young children (2+ - 5 Years)

Toddlerhood represents a transitional stage in child development during which children begin to demonstrate increasing independence while remaining emotionally dependent on adults for guidance, reassurance, and security. Between the ages of one and three years, children experience rapid growth in language acquisition, motor development, curiosity, and social interaction. During this period, they actively explore their environment, imitate adult behaviour, and gradually develop a sense of autonomy (Ayua, 2009a; Meinke, 2019). According to Erikson (1963), the major psychosocial challenge during this stage is autonomy versus shame and doubt, whereby children strive to become independent while still relying on adults for support and encouragement. Consequently, teachers and caregivers play a vital role in nurturing confidence by responding appropriately to children's emotional needs (Abulo, 2011; Ayua, 2009b).

The paper identifies three major emotional needs of young children: praise, safe boundaries, and empathy. Although these needs appear simple, they significantly influence children's confidence, behaviour, and willingness to participate in learning activities.

1. **Praise:** Is one of the most effective ways of encouraging positive behaviour and building children's self-confidence during the toddler years. At this stage, children eagerly attempt new tasks such as walking independently, feeding themselves, drawing, speaking, and interacting with peers. These attempts are often imperfect, yet they represent important developmental milestones that deserve recognition and encouragement. Appropriate praise reinforces desirable behaviours and motivates children to continue learning through exploration and practice (Dweck, 2006). Teachers should ensure that praise is sincere, specific, and directed to effort rather than innate ability. For example, instead of saying, *"You are very smart,"* a teacher might say, *"You worked very hard to complete that puzzle,"* or *"I like how you shared your toys with your classmates."* Such responses encourage persistence and resilience while helping children understand that improvement results from continuous effort rather than natural talent alone (Dweck, 2006). Within nursery classrooms, praise should also be distributed fairly among all learners. Excessive praise directed to only a few children may discourage others and contribute to feelings of inadequacy. Every child should have opportunities to experience success and receive positive reinforcement for age-appropriate achievements.
2. **Safe Boundaries:** While young children desire increasing independence, they also require clear, consistent, and loving boundaries that provide guidance and security. Contrary to popular belief, children often feel safer when adults establish reasonable expectations because predictable rules help them understand acceptable behaviour and reduce uncertainty. Abulo (2011), Ayua (2015), Ayua (2017) and Erikson (1963), maintain that consistent guidance during this developmental stage enables children to develop self-control without experiencing unnecessary shame or fear. Safe boundaries include establishing simple classroom rules, maintaining consistent daily routines, supervising children's activities, and applying discipline fairly and respectfully. Teachers should

explain classroom expectations in language that children can easily understand while modelling appropriate behaviour through their own actions (Ayua, 2009a: Ayua, 2009b). When boundaries are consistent, children gradually learn responsibility, cooperation, and self-regulation. However, boundaries should never be enforced through intimidation or harsh punishment. Excessive criticism, ridicule, or physical punishment may undermine children's confidence and discourage them from participating actively in classroom activities. Instead, discipline should be corrective, educational, and supportive, helping learners understand both the reasons for classroom rules and the consequences of their actions.

3. **Empathy:** Refers to the ability to recognise, understand, and respond appropriately to another person's feelings. During the toddler years, children are still learning to identify and express their own emotions. They often become frustrated because they cannot fully communicate their needs or control their emotional reactions. As a result, tantrums, crying, and emotional outbursts are relatively common during this developmental stage. The paper identifies empathy as an essential emotional need because children require adults who understand their feelings rather than responding with anger or rejection (Ayua, 2015, Ayua, 2021). Teachers who demonstrate empathy acknowledge children's emotions while helping them develop healthier ways of expressing themselves. Statements such as, *"I know you are upset because your toy broke,"* or *"I understand that you wanted another turn,"* communicate understanding while creating opportunities to teach appropriate emotional regulation. Empathy also contributes to the development of trust between teachers and learners. Children who feel understood are generally more willing to cooperate with classroom expectations, seek help when necessary, and participate confidently in learning activities (Masandpas, 2022; Meinke, 2019). Moreover, empathetic teachers model compassionate behaviour that children gradually imitate during interactions with their peers. Teachers should therefore cultivate classroom environments where kindness, patience, and understanding are consistently demonstrated. Through storytelling, cooperative play, role-playing activities, and guided discussions, children can gradually learn to recognise emotions in themselves and others, thereby strengthening both emotional intelligence and positive social relationships.

Educational Implications

The toddler years represent a critical period for developing confidence, self-control, and positive attitudes to learning. Teachers who provide genuine praise, establish safe and consistent boundaries, and demonstrate empathy create emotionally supportive classrooms where children feel secure enough to explore, ask questions, and participate actively in learning. Such environments not only promote healthy emotional development but also reduce the likelihood of behavioural difficulties that may later contribute to negativity to learning. Consequently, understanding and responding appropriately to young children's emotional needs should remain a fundamental responsibility of every early childhood educator.

CHILDREN'S COMMON EMOTIONAL DISPLAYS

Children communicate their emotions in different ways depending on their developmental stage, personality, family background, and learning experiences. Unlike adults, who often express emotions verbally, children frequently reveal their feelings through behaviour, facial expressions, social interactions, classroom participation, and play. Consequently, teachers who understand children'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 children'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 early childhood education. The paper discussed six common emotional displays (3 negative + 3 positive) frequently observed among children 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.

Early Years' Common Negative Emotional Displays

Negative emotional displays refer to the observable expression of unpleasant emotions by children 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 children. It arises whenever children perceive danger, uncertainty, unfamiliarity, or possible failure. During the early years, fear often reflects children'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 children 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 children's fears (Ayua, 2021).

   Parents also contribute significantly to children's emotional adjustment. Preparing children positively for school, encouraging independence, and avoiding frightening stories or threats as methods of discipline enable children to approach learning with greater confidence. When both home and school provide consistent emotional support, children 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 children 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 children. Anger itself is not inherently harmful. It is a natural emotional response

that becomes problematic only when children 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 children.

Teachers should therefore seek to understand the underlying causes of children'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. Children 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. Children 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 children 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, and 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 children who consistently experience rejection, neglect, repeated academic failure, or unresolved emotional stress are more likely to demonstrate aggressive behaviour than children 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 children 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 children 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

children 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 children's holistic development. Ultimately, emotionally responsive teaching remains one of the most effective strategies for reducing children's negativity to learning and improving educational outcomes.

Early Years' 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 children 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 children'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 children 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 children's motivation, creativity, and emotional well-being.

1. **Curiosity:** Is widely recognised as the foundation of meaningful learning. It represents children'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 children to investigate unfamiliar objects, ask questions, experiment with ideas, and actively participate in classroom activities. Piaget (1972) explains that children 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 children 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 children'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 children 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 children's emotional and social development. According to the paper, affection reflects children's capacity to express care, warmth, kindness, and concern to others (Ayua, 2022). Through affectionate interactions, children develop empathy, cooperation, friendship, and positive interpersonal

relationships that support both learning and emotional well-being. 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 children 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. Children 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 children's sense of belonging while reducing feelings of rejection that may contribute to negativity to 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 children 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. Children 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 children'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, children develop communication skills, creativity, leadership, cooperation, emotional regulation, and problem-solving abilities. For this reason, play-based learning should remain an integral component of early childhood education 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 children'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 children's progress contribute significantly to positive attitudes to education. Furthermore, emotionally positive classrooms reduce children’s negativity to learning because

children 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 child development.

TEACHER FRIENDLINESS: AN EMOTIONAL STABILIZER

Teaching extends beyond the transmission of academic knowledge; it involves establishing meaningful relationships that support children'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 children'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).

Children 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 children to develop positive attitudes to school.

The paper highlights several practical ways through which teachers can demonstrate teacher friendliness in their daily interactions with learners. These include encouraging children 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 Children to Talk about Their Daily Routines:** Children 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 children 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 children who may require additional emotional or academic support. Listening also promotes children'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 children 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 children 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 children's personalities, interests, strengths, and developmental needs before challenges become more complicated. Teachers can achieve this by learning children’s 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 Children:** 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 children 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 children'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 children associate education with enjoyment rather than fear.

4. **Understand Children's World:** Effective teaching requires understanding how children think, feel, and interpret their experiences. Adults often evaluate situations from mature perspectives, whereas children 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 children'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 children 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 children (Piaget, 1972).

5. **Correct Children without Being Judgmental:** Correction remains an essential component of effective teaching because children require guidance in developing appropriate behaviour and academic competence. However, the manner in which correction is delivered significantly influences children's emotional development. The paper therefore emphasises that teachers should correct learners without being judgmental (Ayua, 2021; Ayua, 2022). Judgmental correction often attacks children'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. Children 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 children'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 children'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 children 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:** Children 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 children 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:** Children 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 children to analyse situations, consider alternative responses, and reflect upon the consequences of their decisions. Such guidance gradually promotes independence and responsible behaviour while strengthening children'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 children receive comprehensive support while maintaining continuity between home and school.

9. **Encourage Active Participation:** Meaningful learning occurs when children 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 children to continue participating while reducing 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. Children 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 children'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 children'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 children feel valued, understood, and motivated to participate. Through open communication, involvement in children's activities, empathy in correction, and understanding of learners' developmental needs, teachers reduce children's negativity to 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 children develop into confident, resilient, and socially responsible learners.

CHILDREN'S THOUGHT CIRCLES AND EMOTIONAL TORNADOES

One of the distinctive concepts presented in this paper is Children's Thought Circles, also described as Emotional Tornadoes**.** This concept explains how repeated negative thoughts gradually accumulate until they dominate children'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 children's classroom behaviour is often shaped by internal thoughts that remain unseen but significantly affect learning.

Children 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 children become trapped in thought circles when they are "below the line" emotionally. During such periods, negative thinking becomes dominant, making it increasingly difficult for children 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

Children'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 children. Educational psychologists recognise that repeated negative self-talk gradually influences children'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 children'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 Children's Thought Circles

Generally, thought circles are often illogical, discouraging, unprofitable, uncoordinated, and pessimistic. These characteristics explain why children'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 child who experiences temporary disagreement with classmates may begin to believe that nobody likes them. Such conclusions are usually irrational, yet they strongly influence children's emotions and behaviour because young learners often lack the emotional maturity to evaluate situations objectively. Negative thinking gradually narrows children'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. Children 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 children 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), children 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. Children 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

Children'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 children 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 child believes that improvement is possible through continuous effort. By understanding and addressing children's thought circles, teachers contribute significantly to reducing children’s negativity to 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 children'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 reducing children's negativity to 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 children'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 children 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 children 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. Children 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 children'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. Children 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 children 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:** Children 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 reducing 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 children, reflective teachers ask themselves important questions: Are my teaching methods engaging? Have I considered learners' individual differences? Do my lessons encourage active participation? 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 children'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 children 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:** Children 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 children 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 children 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 children'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 children's 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 children'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, reducing learners' negativity 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 children's confidence, motivation, and classroom participation. Strategies such as reflective teaching, logical consequences, learner choice, family collaboration, and inclusive instruction help re-engage learners by treating behavioural challenges as opportunities for support. When teachers combine professional competence with empathy and consistency, they create classrooms where children feel accepted and experience success, thereby reducing negativity to learning and fostering resilience, academic achievement, and lifelong enthusiasm for learning.

Summary

This conceptual paper has examined the critical role of children's emotional development in promoting positive attitudes to learning among early childhood education children. Throughout the discussion, it has become evident that effective teaching extends far beyond the delivery of academic content. Teachers who understand children's emotional needs and deliberately create supportive learning environments contribute significantly to learners' cognitive, emotional, social, and behavioural development. Consequently, reducing children's negativity to learning requires a holistic approach that recognises emotional well-being as an indispensable component of quality education. The paper has demonstrated that children's emotional needs vary according to their developmental stages. Infants require love, care, safety, responsive attention, and secure attachment to establish trust and emotional security. Young children benefit from praise, empathy, and consistent boundaries that encourage autonomy and confidence. Similarly, children between the ages of four and twelve years require unconditional acceptance, predictable classroom routines, and opportunities to learn from mistakes without fear of ridicule or rejection. When these emotional needs are consistently met, learners develop greater confidence, resilience, curiosity, and willingness to participate actively in classroom activities.

The discussion further revealed that children communicate their emotional experiences through both negative and positive emotional displays. Fear, anger, and aggressiveness often signal underlying emotional difficulties requiring sensitive intervention rather than immediate punishment. Conversely, curiosity, affection, and joy create favourable conditions for exploration, creativity, collaboration, and meaningful learning. Teachers who recognise these emotional expressions and respond appropriately strengthen children's emotional security while fostering positive attitudes to education. An important contribution of this paper

has been the emphasis on teacher friendliness as an emotional stabilizer. Positive teacher-pupil relationships characterised by empathy, effective communication, fairness, patience, encouragement, and mutual respect create emotionally secure classrooms where learners feel accepted and valued. Such relationships reduce classroom anxiety, increase participation, and encourage children to approach learning with confidence rather than fear. Teacher friendliness therefore represents not merely a desirable personal quality but an essential professional competency for effective teaching.

The paper has also highlighted the significance of children's thought circles (emotional tornadoes) in shaping classroom behaviour and learner engagement. Negative thought patterns that develop through repeated experiences of failure, rejection, criticism, or discouragement may gradually produce emotional withdrawal and disengagement from learning. Teachers therefore have a responsibility to interrupt these destructive patterns by providing consistent encouragement, constructive feedback, meaningful opportunities for success, and emotionally supportive classroom environments. By promoting healthy ways of thinking, teachers enable learners to develop resilience, perseverance, and confidence in their academic abilities. Furthermore, the practical strategies discussed for engaging disengaged learners demonstrate that positive behavioural change is achieved more effectively through understanding, patience, reflection, collaboration, and learner-centred instructional practices than through excessive punishment or exclusion. Teachers who investigate the underlying causes of disengagement, maintain positive expectations, involve families, provide appropriate accommodations, and create opportunities for meaningful participation contribute significantly to restoring learners' motivation and improving educational outcomes.

Ultimately, the central message of this paper is that children's emotions and learning cannot be separated. Every interaction between teachers and learners has the potential either to strengthen or weaken children's attitudes to education. Words of encouragement, acts of kindness, respectful correction, genuine interest in learners' welfare, and emotionally responsive teaching practices may appear simple, yet they profoundly influence children's confidence, motivation, and promotes positivity to meaningful learning.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, reducing children’s negativity to learning cannot be achieved through curriculum reform alone, but through teachers who understand the emotional lives of children and respond with empathy, professionalism, and pedagogical competence. When children’s 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 academically successful, emotionally resilient, socially responsible, and prepared to contribute meaningfully to society. It is therefore recommended that Early Childhood Education teachers intentionally cultivate emotionally supportive classrooms where every child feels safe, respected, accepted, and capable of succeeding; that school administrators provide continuous professional development programmes to strengthen teachers’ understanding of child psychology, emotional development, inclusive education, and learner-centred instructional practices; and that parents and teachers collaborate closely to ensure consistency in meeting children’s emotional and developmental needs both at home and in school.

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