



# The Elaboration and Equilibration between Emotional Intelligence and Emotional Regulation in Preschool Settings

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## Abstract

This study examines the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and emotional regulation (ER) in preschool environments, assessing their importance in early childhood education. It specifically analyzes the use of dramatic play to enhance these skills in young children. Emotional intelligence and regulation are crucial for cognitive and social development, and the ability to understand and manage emotions is a key predictor of success in both academic and non-academic contexts. This study highlights the importance of these competencies in preschool settings and the instructors' involvement in fostering emotional development through structured activities and dramatic play.

**Keywords:** Emotional Intelligence; Emotional Regulation; Preschool Education; Dramatic Play; Early Childhood Development

## Abbreviations

EI: Emotional Intelligence; ER: Emotional Regulation; IQ: Traditional Intelligence.

## Introduction

The development of emotional skills is crucial in early childhood education, influencing a child's social interactions and cognitive growth. Emotional intelligence refers to the ability to recognize, understand, and manage one's own emotions as well as those of others. Emotional regulation is the mechanism by which individuals control and manage their emotional responses to stimuli, allowing them to behave in socially acceptable ways.

In preschool settings, where children often experience emotionally intense situations, these skills are crucial. Early childhood educators profoundly impact children's emotional development by providing them with the resources and

opportunities to express their emotions in a healthy manner. Dramatic play, wherein children adopt various roles and express a spectrum of emotions, has demonstrated significant advantages in cultivating emotional intelligence and regulation in youth. This project will investigate the distinctions between emotional intelligence and emotional regulation, as well as how these competences might be cultivated in preschool settings to enhance the overall development of young children.

## Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence (EI) denotes the ability to perceive and regulate one's own emotions as well as those of others, employing these emotions to guide thought and behavior [1]. It involves managing emotions, demonstrating empathy, and acting appropriately in various social situations. Emotional intelligence involves the understanding and management of emotions rather than reacting impulsively. Individuals with high emotional intelligence can accurately identify their emotions and leverage that understanding to improve



decision-making. Thus, emotional intelligence (EI) is seen as a more reliable predictor of life success than traditional intelligence (IQ) due to its influence on social interactions, personal relationships, and general well-being [1].

In the early 1990s, Mayer JD [2] proposed the concept of emotional intelligence, which was later popularized by Daniel Goleman [3]. Goleman D [3] emphasized that individuals with high emotional intelligence possess enhanced ability in emotion control, sustained focus, and management of emotional responses, hence improving both personal and professional success [3].

Mayer JD [2] identified four essential components of emotional intelligence:

- Accurately identifying emotions in one and others.
- Employing emotions to augment cognition and decision-making.
- Understanding the importance and consequences of emotions.
- Regulating emotions to enhance emotional and cognitive growth.

These elements provide the foundation of emotional intelligence and are particularly essential in preschool settings. By precisely identifying their own emotions and those of others, adolescents can adeptly maneuver through social contexts and cultivate affirmative, supportive relationships. A youth who understands a peer's emotional state can adjust their behavior accordingly, leading to more harmonious interactions.

Goleman D [3] expanded the idea of emotional intelligence to encompass mindfulness, attention, and emotional regulation as essential elements for its development. In his book *Focus*, Goleman D [3] asserted that the ability to concentrate and practice mindfulness improves emotional intelligence. Techniques like mindfulness meditation and digital attention training games may improve emotional awareness, hence aiding individuals in achieving more happy lives [3]. These strategies enhance empathy and social connectivity while facilitating improved emotional regulation in everyday life.

Wayne Payne was the first to use the term "emotional intelligence" in his 1986 dissertation. Payne argued that emotional awareness in children is crucial for their social and emotional development, laying the groundwork for further research on the subject. His work facilitated the development of a paradigm for integrating emotional intelligence into educational practices, emphasizing the improvement of emotional awareness and regulation in children [4].

Emotional intelligence (EI) has significant implications in the workplace. Mental Health America [5] highlights the

relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills, all of which are essential in professional environments. These skills converge with strong interpersonal abilities, including conflict resolution and communication, which are vital in early childhood settings. Understanding the influence of one's emotions and the feelings of others on interactions can aid youngsters, and later adults, in effectively managing relationships. Implementing breathing techniques during moments of overload in youngsters may reduce impulsive actions. As individuals develop, their fundamental emotional regulation skills enhance their leadership effectiveness, wherein empathy, understanding, and emotional control are crucial attributes [5].

### Classroom Settings and Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence is essential for a child's holistic development in preschool settings. Educators have a unique chance to enhance emotional intelligence by incorporating structured emotional learning activities into the everyday curriculum. The RULER framework, which includes Recognizing, Understanding, Labelling, Expressing, and regulating emotions, is an effective method. This framework provides a methodical strategy for teaching emotional intelligence, promoting personal and social growth in children [6].

Ms. Mitchell, a preschool instructor, integrates emotional intelligence techniques into her daily practice by routinely employing a mood meter with her students. The mood meter aids children and educators in identifying their emotional states and understanding the fluctuations of emotions throughout the day [6]. Children attach their names or images to the corresponding colour on the mood meter to express their emotions. This method encourages youngsters to contemplate their emotional states while teaching them the suitable expression and regulation of their emotions [6].

Educators can incorporate emotional intelligence into creative arts and music activities. Educators may integrate pleasant feelings linked to nature into art by having students paint while listening to soothing music and engaging in deep breathing exercises. In contrast, yellow emotions (positive and high-energy feelings) can be explored through intense dance activities, allowing children to express their excitement in a structured way [6]. These routines aid children in understanding how different activities affect their emotions and provide them with strategies to manage their feelings. Utilizing the mood meter and RULER framework, educators demonstrate emotional intelligence skills, encompassing the recognition and expression of emotions, understanding their sources, and regulation of emotional responses [6].

By practicing these skills, children broaden their emotional vocabulary, develop empathy for others, and improve their ability to manage challenging emotional situations. Research suggests that adolescents with high emotional intelligence are more inclined to have better relationships, experience fewer behavioral problems, and achieve higher academic success.

### Emotional Regulation

Emotional regulation refers to the ability to manage, adjust, and control emotional reactions to stimuli, promoting adaptive and socially appropriate behavior. Emotional intelligence involves the understanding of emotions, while emotional regulation focuses on the management of these emotional responses, which is crucial for young children frequently faced with situations that provoke strong emotions, such as frustration, excitement, or anger. Properly managing these emotions is essential for maintaining a constructive learning atmosphere and promoting good social interactions.

Bodrova E [7] research highlights that emotional control is not innate but necessitates intentional development via structured practice [8]. Through the implementation of painstakingly designed activities, educators may demonstrate appropriate emotional responses and provide children with opportunities to practice emotional regulation in a safe and supportive environment. Children are encouraged to regulate their emotional enthusiasm during engaging activities such as science projects, requiring behavioral control for appropriate and safe involvement.

Pamela Cole asserts that emotional regulation is a complex process involving several cognitive and emotional skills, including attention, planning, cognitive development, and language learning. A child displaying great enthusiasm during a classroom activity may struggle to focus. Under a teacher's guidance, they can learn to manage their passion and concentrate on the work at hand. Teaching children to regulate their emotions in this manner cultivates self-discipline and emotional resilience, which are crucial for academic and social success. Jones identified three primary objectives of emotional regulation in early children:

- Enhancing emotional understanding-Aiding adolescents in recognizing and analysing their own emotions and those of others.
- Alleviating emotional vulnerability-Equipping youth with techniques to manage emotional reactions and avert sensations of being inundated.
- Mitigating emotional distress-Educating children on strategies to diminish the intensity of adverse emotions, so improving their overall emotional well-being.

Children may undergo profound thrill during a communal activity. Educators play a crucial role in aiding these youngsters with emotional regulation by imparting skills such as deep breathing, turn-taking, and calming techniques to sustain calmness. This guidance fosters an environment that promotes children's emotional and academic development. Research suggests that children with strong emotional regulation skills in early life are more likely to attain academic and social achievement as they grow older [9]. Moreover, emotional regulation aids youngsters in navigating complex social situations, allowing them to develop stronger relationships with peers and educators. These competencies are vital in early childhood education, as emotional self-regulation directly affects a child's ability to engage with learning resources and interact positively with classmates.

Incorporating emotional regulation into the curriculum through activities like dramatic play and structured learning experiences enhances a child's ability to understand and manage their emotions. Moore C [10] provide evidence that emotional awareness, empathy, and the ability to express, control, and manage emotions are critical components of a child's overall emotional development [10]. Children who get instruction in these processes develop the ability to identify and express emotions, understand the relationship between emotions and behaviors (e.g., "Dad kicked the wall due to his anger"), and foster empathy for others [10]. Moreover, dramatic play functions as an efficient means for children to develop emotional regulation skills. Research demonstrates that dramatic play activities, such as role-playing diverse emotional scenarios, can significantly improve children's emotional regulation and auditory processing skills. This method allows students to cultivate self-regulation in emotionally charged situations, providing a conducive environment for skill enhancement in a low-stress context [11].

In accordance with these techniques, UCSF's Rehabilitation Services Patient Education Manual: Emotion Regulation Skills states that emotional regulation begins with skills such as recognizing triggers that elicit emotional responses and effectively managing reactions [9]. Employing strategies such as mindfulness breathing and emotional labelling can be remarkably effective, even in pre-schoolers, as they learn to identify their emotional states and modify their responses accordingly. These tactics not only prevent escalations in emotionally charged situations but also teach youngsters how to maintain composure, especially in high-pressure circumstances. The handbook states that self-awareness through emotional labelling is an essential preliminary step for regulation, especially in contexts with numerous emotional triggers. This method, when integrated

into preschool education, assists children in understanding that their emotions are manageable, providing them with practical methods to address future social challenges.

### Dramatic Play and Emotional Development

Dramatic play is an essential instrument for cultivating emotional intelligence and emotional regulation during early development. It involves adolescents engaging in role-playing activities that allow them to explore emotions, practice emotional responses, and navigate social scenarios [10]. Through this mode of play, children gain insight into their emotional states and develop an understanding of others' emotions, enhancing empathy, self-awareness, and emotional control [11].

Greene J [11] underscores the importance of dramatic play in facilitating children's exploration of various emotional states, hence improving their emotional resilience and self-regulation. For instance, adolescents portraying a doctor may rehearse being composed while attending to a patient, whereas those adopting the role of a parent may explore methods to calm a crying newborn. These scenarios provide a structured and safe environment for children to practice emotional regulation, hence enhancing their ability to use these skills in real-life situations [11].

Cash J [12] highlights that dramatic play, particularly when structured through drama-based exercises, significantly aids in developing emotional intelligence and emotional regulation in children. Exercises such as role-reversal games, where children act out emotional responses from another person's perspective, provide children with a deeper understanding of empathy and how their actions influence others. These activities allow them to experiment with emotions in a controlled setting, thereby improving their ability to manage those emotions when faced with real-life scenarios.

Cash J [12] also discusses how specific drama games such as "emotion charades" and "emotional relay" help children in identifying, labelling, and expressing various emotions. These games encourage children to observe emotional cues from their peers, reinforcing their ability to read non-verbal emotional expressions, an essential aspect of emotional intelligence. This form of collaborative learning deepens their empathy and enhances their emotional literacy as they respond to the subtle emotional expressions of their peers.

Dramatic play is crucial for social development, as it provides children the chance to engage with peers and address interpersonal challenges. Through dramatic play, children negotiate roles, resolve problems, and express emotions in socially acceptable ways, fostering empathy

and emotional intelligence. This method is particularly advantageous in assisting youth in developing the skills necessary for forming robust, supportive relationships with their peers [13].

Moreover, the unique benefits of dramatic play extend beyond emotional control and social development. Literature identifies six fundamental benefits that dramatic play provides to young children:

1. Dramatic play enhances creativity by encouraging children to engage their imagination, assume diverse roles, and address challenges with inventive solutions. Through participation in this activity, adolescents enhance their capacity for emotional expression and develop critical linguistic and social skills. This creative exploration enables youth to engage in flexible and inventive thinking, fostering cognitive advancement [13].
2. Dramatic play enhances coordination by fostering the development of fine and gross motor skills through physical movement and prop manipulation. Participating in tasks that require the manipulation of small objects develops fine motor skills, whereas larger, full-body motions promote spatial awareness and balance. These practices significantly improve a child's overall physical coordination [13].
3. Dramatic play enhances children's communication skills by allowing them to articulate thoughts and ideas, engage in dialogue, and practice active listening. Participation in these creative scenarios enhances vocabulary, improves sentence structure, and augments both verbal and non-verbal communication [13].
4. Through interactive environments, such as managing a simulated store or counting objects, children grasp fundamental mathematical concepts in an enjoyable setting. These activities include number recognition, basic calculations, pattern understanding, and problem-solving, making arithmetic education both interesting and accessible [13].
5. The ability to concentrate in youngsters improves through dramatic play, as they engage in immersive environments that capture their attention. By maintaining focused attention and engaging with narratives, youngsters enhance their capacity for prolonged concentration, therefore augmenting their attention span and cognitive engagement [13].
6. Dramatic play fosters essential social skills by providing a structured environment for children to engage, converse, and cooperate with their peers. These experiences teach children to negotiate roles, resolve conflicts, and appreciate other viewpoints, improving their ability to foster meaningful, compassionate connections with others [13].



The six advantages illustrate how dramatic play surpasses simple recreation, positioning it as a vital tool for promoting the emotional and cognitive development of young children. Incorporating dramatic play into early childhood education allows educators to establish a regulated yet flexible atmosphere that promotes emotional intelligence, social skills, and overall well-being [14-17]. Dramatic play allows children to enhance their emotional management skills. Children engaged in pretend play that encompasses intense emotional expressions, such as anger or sadness; exhibit an enhanced ability to utilize these learned behaviors in real-life situations. Furthermore, by incorporating activities like mood-meter check-ins, where children identify their emotional states at different intervals, educators provide ongoing opportunities for children to reflect on and manage their emotions.

## Conclusion

The development of emotional intelligence and regulation in preschool children is crucial for their overall cognitive and social growth. These skills, which can be taught and strengthened through activities such as dramatic play, are essential for promoting children's academic and social success. Educators play a crucial role in cultivating these skills by providing students with the opportunity to explore their emotions and enhance emotional regulation in a structured and nurturing environment. By prioritizing emotional learning in preschool curricula, educators can promote the development of emotional resilience and social skills crucial for children to navigate the challenges of puberty. By doing so, teachers can direct children towards achievement in all facets of life, encompassing academic performance, social relationships, and beyond.

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