

SECURE ATTACHMENT IN TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS: IMPLICATIONS FOR EMOTIONAL REGULATION AND STUDENT WELL- BEING

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Abstract: *This article is a direct continuation of a previous paper that presented the growing problem of emotional dysregulation among students in Israel, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing war following October 7, 2023. While the previous article described the scope of the problem and the existing knowledge gap, this article proposes a theoretical framework for understanding a mechanism that may help address it: secure attachment between teacher and student. Drawing on Bowlby's (1969, 1980) attachment theory and Ainsworth et al.'s (1978) work, the article examines how teacher-student relationships characterized by warmth, sensitivity, and trust, known as a 'secure base', contribute to emotional regulation, academic achievement, and students' psychological well-being. Special attention is given to the rehabilitative potential of such relationships as a corrective factor for children with insecure attachment histories, and to the role of teachers as protective figures during the ongoing Israeli security crisis. The review highlights consistent findings in the international literature, alongside a substantial research gap in the Israeli context: no systematic study has been conducted in Israel examining the relationship between attachment style (secure vs. insecure) between teacher and student and emotional regulation capacities among elementary school students.*

Keywords: *secure attachment, teacher-student, emotional regulation, academic achievement, well-being, elementary school, secure base, Israel*

INTRODUCTION

The previous article presented the growing problem of emotional dysregulation among students in Israel, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and the war following October 7, 2023. It highlighted a critical knowledge gap in the Israeli context, the absence of systematic research examining the psychological mechanisms through which significant adult figures in school influence students' emotional regulation.

This article proposes attachment theory as a theoretical framework in response. As children enter school, the teacher becomes a central figure in their lives, often the most

significant adult outside the home. The central question is: to what extent can this figure serve as a 'secure base', and what are the implications for emotional regulation, academic achievement, and psychological well-being?

This article reviews the relevant literature along three main axes: first, the principles of attachment theory and its extension from the parent-child context to the teacher-student relationship; second, the relationship between secure attachment to the teacher and emotional regulation, academic achievement, and well-being; and third, the specific knowledge gap in the Israeli context that current research seeks to fill.

1. ATTACHMENT THEORY: CONCEPT AND PRINCIPLES

Understanding the teacher-student relationship as an attachment relationship requires first returning to the original theory, developed for the bond between parent and child. Only once these foundations are established is it possible to ask how, and under what conditions, they extend to the classroom.

1.1 Theoretical Foundations

Attachment Theory, developed by Bowlby (1969, 1980) and Ainsworth et al. (1978), emphasizes the importance of early attachment relationships and their lasting influence on psychological development throughout life. Bowlby (1969) was the first to develop this comprehensive theory, premised on the understanding that early emotional bonds between the child and the caregiver figure constitute the foundation for normal emotional and social development. When this figure responds to the child's emotional and physical needs, a basic sense of security is built within the child that affects their development throughout life.

Ainsworth et al. (1978) identified three primary attachment styles based on the Strange Situation. Secure attachment is characterized by the child feeling safe exploring the environment when the attachment figure is present, showing distress at separation, and being comforted upon reunion. In contrast, insecure attachment manifests in two primary patterns: avoidant attachment, in which the child suppresses emotional expression and appears indifferent to the caregiver's presence or absence; and anxious-ambivalent attachment, in which the child experiences high anxiety at separation and has difficulty calming down, even upon the caregiver's return. Later research added a fourth style, disorganized attachment, which is characterized by contradictory and inconsistent responses toward the caregiver figure, often associated with experiences of fear or trauma (Main & Solomon, 1990). While the present

study acknowledges all four attachment patterns, it focuses specifically on the distinction between secure and insecure attachment and its implications for emotional regulation and well-being in the school context.

Bowlby (1973) presents that secure attachment creates a 'secure base' for the child, meaning a feeling that the caregiver figure is available and accessible when needed, which enables the child to explore the environment confidently. The caregiver figure serves as a 'safe haven', a place to which the child can return in times of distress to receive comfort and reassurance. Repeated attachment experiences create 'internal working models', which are cognitive and emotional representations of self and others that guide behaviour and perceptions in future interactions.

Mikulincer & Shaver (2007) developed a comprehensive integrative model explaining the dynamics of emotion regulation strategies linked to different attachment patterns. Individuals with secure attachment demonstrate the ability to inhibit the spread of negative affect. In a later elaboration of this model, Mikulincer & Shaver (2019) specified that those with anxious attachment display hyperactivation of the attachment system, meaning a tendency to intensify and amplify emotional responses to distress as a strategy to attract the attention of the attachment figure and ensure their availability. Those with avoidant attachment, by contrast, are characterized by emotional suppression and 'defensive exclusion', a process in which attachment-related thoughts and emotions are blocked from conscious awareness, as a strategy developed in response to the unavailability of the attachment figure, aimed at maintaining a sense of self-sufficiency and avoiding disappointment.

1.2 From Parents to Teachers: The Secondary Attachment Figure

Attachment is not limited to connections with parents alone. Verschueren and Koomen (2012) proposed that teachers function as 'ad hoc' attachment figures — that is, figures who fulfill attachment functions within a specific context and time frame, rather than serving as primary attachment figures — providing students with both a secure base and a safe haven within the school environment. They emphasized that this attachment function is especially critical for younger and more vulnerable children, whose attachment system is more easily activated and whose self-regulatory capacity is relatively limited, making the teacher's emotional availability particularly vital for their development.

A decade later, Spilt & Koomen (2022) confirmed this framework through a comprehensive review of three decades of research, finding that teachers consistently serve as significant secondary attachment figures, particularly for children who have experienced a

history of insecure attachment with their parents, suggesting that meaningful relationships with teachers may partly compensate for early attachment difficulties.

A systematic review by García-Rodríguez et al. (2023) further supports this notion, finding that teacher-student relationships contain a genuine attachment component that fulfills attachment-based functions, such as providing a secure base and safe haven at school. The findings support the notion that children can build new mental representations based on school experiences, in addition to their earlier attachment foundations. For children who have experienced a history of insecure attachment, a sensitive and supportive teacher may serve as a 'corrective experience', a new and safer relationship model that enables the child to rebuild their internal representations.

The breadth of this impact has been confirmed in a comprehensive second-order meta-analysis by Emslander et al. (2025), synthesizing over 70 years of educational research across 26 meta-analyses and approximately 2.64 million students, which found significant associations between teacher-student relationships and a wide range of student outcomes, including academic achievement, motivation, well-being, and appropriate behavior.

This understanding is also reflected in Israeli educational policy. Israel's Ministry of Education, in a 2023 Director General's circular, implicitly acknowledged this role by stating that 'the teacher shall serve as a figure to whom the student can turn for assistance, protection, or reassurance'. This recognition, even if not framed in attachment theory terms, aligns with its core principles (Ministry of Education, Director-General's Directives Database, 2023).

Together, these theoretical and empirical contributions establish that teachers can meaningfully function as attachment figures for their students, extending Bowlby and Ainsworth's caregiver-child framework beyond the family into the classroom. This convergence resonates with my own experience in the education system: over years of working directly with students, I have observed how a meaningful relationship with a teacher can support children's emotional regulation, academic achievement, and psychological well-being at school, an observation that shaped the research question this study investigates.

2. SECURE ATTACHMENT AND EMOTIONAL REGULATION

If teachers can indeed function as attachment figures, as the previous section suggested, the natural next question is what this means for a child's emotional regulation. The link runs first through general attachment theory, and only then through findings specific to the school context.

2.1 The Theoretical Link

Bowlby (1969) argued that the sensitive caregiver serves as an 'external regulator' of emotional states before the child is capable of self-regulation. Over time, interactions with the attachment figure are internalized and form the basis for increasingly independent regulation strategies. Zimmermann (1999) demonstrated how internal working models of secure attachment include representations of emotions as manageable and resolvable, while models of insecure attachment include representations of emotions as threatening or to be avoided.

Empirical research has consistently supported this theoretical framework. Zimmer-Gembeck et al. (2017) showed that children with secure attachment demonstrated better abilities in emotional regulation and coping with stress, including a tendency to seek help from the environment and integration between parental support and self-regulation strategies. Brenning & Braet (2013) further found that children with a secure attachment style exhibit higher emotional regulation ability than children with other attachment styles.

Beyond general regulation abilities, research has also examined the specific strategies associated with each attachment style. Messina et al. (2024) found that secure attachment predicts the use of adaptive regulation strategies, such as seeking emotional support and the ability to accept help, as opposed to anxious attachment, which is linked to hyperactivation, and avoidant attachment which is linked to emotional suppression.

2.2 Findings in the School Context

Huang (2019) examined the association between early mother-child attachment and teacher-child relationships in children's emotion regulation, and found that the teacher-child relationship moderates the link between early attachment patterns and later emotional regulation, particularly for children with disorganized attachment. This finding suggests that positive relationships with teachers can compensate for the negative effects of a history of insecure attachment to parents.

Further research has identified additional pathways through which teacher-student relationship quality shapes emotion regulation in the school context. The emotional tone of the relationship, whether characterized by warmth or conflict, directly influences students' regulatory capacity; students who experience warmth from their teacher manage emotions more effectively, while conflictual relationships are associated with greater emotional instability and reduced emotional awareness (Pallini et al., 2019). Attachment representation

also shapes the strategies students employ; securely attached children tend to use adaptive strategies such as refocusing attention and seeking support, whereas children with avoidant representations rely on less effective strategies (Valle et al., 2019). Notably, children with secure attachment also perceive their own regulation efforts as more likely to succeed, a belief that itself functions as an independent protective factor (Waters & Thompson, 2016).

Messina et al. (2024) and Valle et al. (2019) reach nearly identical conclusions from different angles, general attachment style versus specific representations of the teacher relationship, a convergence that strengthens the finding while also reflecting some overlap in the literature. Relationship quality, more than any single attachment style, appears to determine which emotion-regulation strategies a child actually uses. From my own experience as a teacher, I repeatedly observed the same student behave in a regulated manner with one teacher and in a dysregulated manner with another. In my observation, students who struggled to regulate were often met with judgment and coldness rather than legitimization of their underlying feelings, the near-inverse of the adaptive, support-seeking strategies these studies associate with secure relationships.

These findings establish a consistent empirical link between teacher-student attachment security and students' regulatory capacities. The question that follows is whether this regulatory advantage translates into observable academic outcomes, an association examined in the next section.

3. INDIRECT EFFECTS: EMOTIONAL REGULATION AS A BRIDGE TO ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

Emotional regulation, established in the previous section as an outcome of secure attachment, does not stand on its own. A growing body of research has examined whether it also shapes a further outcome: academic achievement.

3.1 Theoretical and International Evidence

Academic achievement is not a direct outcome of attachment, but rather a derivative of improved emotional regulation and higher psychological well-being, both of which are influenced by the quality of the teacher-student relationship. In other words, emotional regulation and well-being are the mechanism, while academic achievement is the resulting outcome. The link between secure attachment and academic achievement is grounded in the 'secure base' mechanism. When children feel they have an available and responsive caregiving

figure, they are free to explore, experiment, and cope with academic challenges. Teacher-student interactions characterized by support, sensitivity, and trust can provide a 'secure base' that enables children to explore their learning environment and cope with academic and social challenges (Spilt & Koomen, 2022; García-Rodríguez et al., 2023).

Empirical research consistently supports this theoretical premise. Lei et al. (2023) conducted a meta-analysis of 74 studies and found a consistent positive association between teacher-student relationships and academic achievement, an association found to be stronger in cultures where students attribute high importance to teacher authority. Wong et al. (2023) found in a longitudinal study that higher emotional regulation predicts better academic outcomes, both directly and through positive mental health and stronger school engagement. This finding suggests that emotional regulation mediates the link between secure attachment to the teacher and academic outcomes.

Evidence from a longitudinal study conducted in Slovenian elementary and secondary schools further enriches this picture, demonstrating that the relationship between teacher acceptance and academic achievement operates bidirectionally: not only does teacher support predict students' academic outcomes, but students' academic achievement in turn shapes the quality of their relationship with their teacher (Košir & Tement, 2014). This reciprocal dynamic suggests that investing in teacher-student relationship quality may initiate a virtuous cycle that reinforces both relational and academic growth over time. It also points, to me, that when students thrive, teachers may gain a stronger sense of professional efficacy, which could help protect against the burnout increasingly common among educators.

A further contribution from a longitudinal Belgian study offers a more nuanced picture. Sankalaite et al. (2023), using a three-wave cross-lagged design with primary school children in Flanders, found that teacher-student relationship quality (closeness and conflict) was not directly and bidirectionally linked to academic achievement; rather, closeness and conflict predicted children's working-memory-related problem behaviour in the classroom over time, which in turn was bidirectionally associated with arithmetic performance. This finding suggests that the pathway from TSR to academic achievement may not always be direct, as proposed by Košir and Tement (2014), but can instead be mediated by cognitive-behavioural mechanisms such as working memory regulation in the classroom.

A particularly relevant contribution comes from Krstić (2015), whose teacher-student relationship questionnaire was adopted to assess attachment in the present study's empirical component. Krstić (2015) developed a questionnaire measuring seven components of the student-teacher emotional relationship: closeness, protest at separation, uniqueness, safe haven,

secure base, open communication, and proximity, and found that high-quality emotional relationship with the teacher, instructional support, and positive relationships influence both students' attitudes toward school and their grades.

3.2 The Israeli Context

These international findings are further echoed in the Israeli context. Ben-Gal Dahan & Mikulincer (2021) found that perception of the teacher as responsive and supportive neutralized the negative effects of attachment anxiety on persistence in academic tasks. Sharabi & Roth (2025), in a recent Israeli study, found that an integrative emotion regulation style is associated with a greater tendency to learn from academic failures, suggesting that a teacher who fosters secure attachment may help students develop regulation patterns that enable them to benefit from experiences of failure. This connects directly to the regulation processes discussed in Section 2: the capacity to tolerate an unpleasant experience, and the emotion it provokes, is itself a marker of successful emotional regulation.

Not all the international and Israeli studies reviewed here agree on how relationship quality translates into achievement. Lei et al. (2023) and Krstić (2015) report a direct association without specifying a mechanism, while Wong et al. (2023) and Sankalaite et al. (2023) each propose a specific mediating pathway, emotional engagement and working memory, respectively. This inconsistency is not necessarily a contradiction; it may simply reflect that different studies measured different things. What the mediated findings share, in my view, is a broader intuition: when a student feels secure in the relationship with a teacher, they are freed to invest elsewhere, including in academic learning, rather than in managing relational uncertainty.

4. SECURE ATTACHMENT AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING

The quality of the teacher-student relationship can be characterized along two dimensions: closeness, reflecting warmth and security in the relationship, and conflict, reflecting negativity and friction. Both dimensions are directly linked to students' psychological well-being, as demonstrated in a Swiss study by Saxer et al. (2024). Examining 709 lower-secondary students across three German-speaking cantons, the study found that closeness and conflict were differentially associated with a multidimensional model of student well-being: closeness predicted higher positive attitudes toward school, enjoyment, and academic self-concept, while conflict predicted lower levels on these same positive dimensions and higher levels of worries, physical complaints, and social problems in school. These findings

demonstrate that the quality of the teacher-student bond shapes multiple, distinct dimensions of students' emotional and physical experience in school, providing direct empirical support for the premise that secure, low-conflict relationships with teachers form a foundation for psychological well-being.

4.1 Protection Against Psychopathology

The research literature consistently demonstrates that secure attachment constitutes a vital protective factor against the development of psychopathology. Groh et al. (2016) analyzed 69 studies and found that secure attachment in infancy predicts fewer emotional-behavioral problems in childhood and adolescence compared to insecure attachment patterns. Mikulincer & Shaver (2012) reviewed the literature and found that insecure attachment patterns are associated with increased risk of depression, anxiety, personality disorders, and additional psychopathology. Pascuzzo et al. (2015) followed participants in a ten-year longitudinal study and found a developmental trajectory in which insecure attachment in adolescence predicts emotional regulation difficulties in adulthood, which in turn predict symptoms of depression and anxiety.

4.2 Belonging, Engagement, and Dropout Prevention

Beyond the individual, emotional dimensions of well-being discussed above, secure teacher-student relationships also shape students' social and institutional experience of school. Thornberg et al. (2022) found that teacher-student relationship quality is associated with classroom climate and bullying dynamics; students with positive relationships with their teachers were less likely to serve as bullies or victims. Vargas-Madriz et al. (2024), in a meta-analysis of 68 studies, found that teacher support is consistently associated with higher school engagement, a central predictor of dropout prevention. Wang et al. (2024) demonstrated that positive reciprocal relationships with teachers lead to a stronger sense of belonging to the educational institution, itself a key protective factor against disengagement and dropout.

Together, these findings position secure teacher-student attachment as relevant across the full spectrum of student well-being, from everyday emotional experience, as Saxer et al.'s multidimensional findings show, to clinical risk and social belonging. It is worth noting, however, that the evidence base is uneven: while the well-being and belonging findings (Saxer et al.; Thornberg et al.; Vargas-Madriz et al.; Wang et al.) examine the teacher-student bond directly, much of the evidence linking secure attachment to protection against psychopathology (Groh et al.; Mikulincer & Shaver; Pascuzzo et al.) comes from the broader attachment

literature, concerned primarily with parental bonds, and extended to teachers by inference rather than direct measurement.

4.3 Resilience During Crisis

Given that Israel has been experiencing an ongoing war since October 7, 2023, the potential of teachers to serve as protective attachment figures has become critical. Katsoty et al. (2024) estimate that approximately 5.3% of Israel's population, an estimated 520,000 people, are expected to develop PTSD following the terrorist events and war. Research conducted in Israel among children exposed to ongoing terrorism in Sderot found that nearly half were diagnosed with PTSD and emotional-behavioral problems (Pat-Horenczyk et al., 2016). Gatenio-Kalush & Cohen (2020) demonstrated that mothers who used cognitive change as an emotion regulation strategy were better able to support their young children during emergencies. Although this finding concerns parents rather than teachers, it is reasonable to extend it cautiously to the classroom, given the secondary attachment role teachers can occupy, as noted earlier; a sensitive, emotion-regulating teacher may function similarly during crisis, though this extrapolation itself warrants direct empirical testing. In many cases, schools serve as the most stable environment available to children during times of crisis.

A notable gap runs through the studies reviewed in this section: while the protective role of secure attachment against psychopathology and its contribution to belonging are well established internationally, direct evidence of teachers functioning as resilience-supporting figures during active war or terrorism, rather than routine stressors, remains sparse even within the Israeli studies cited here.

Some indication of this role comes from a parent survey conducted by the National Council for the Child in November 2024, among 504 parents of children aged 6–17. When asked which professional figures had helped their child cope with difficulties during the war, parents most frequently named the homeroom teacher (36%), more than school counselors (18%) or public or private mental health professionals (11% and 10%, respectively). This is parent-reported survey data, not a validated research finding, and it does not measure attachment security directly; but it does suggest that teachers are, in practice, the adult figure Israeli parents currently see as most present for their children during crisis.

This gap is not merely theoretical to me. In my professional role, which involves regular contact with most elementary and secondary schools across my city, I have observed, and heard consistently echoed among school staff since October 7th, a marked rise in behavioral difficulties, anger outbursts, and visible emotional dysregulation among students. This impression has not been empirically verified, but it is strongly and consistently felt across

school teams. I would add that this dysregulation does not appear confined to students; educational staff themselves often convey a similar sense of tension, strain, and difficulty regulating under the prolonged pressure of the current reality. If teachers are expected to serve as regulating figures for their students, as the literature reviewed above suggests, their own capacity to regulate under sustained crisis conditions is itself a condition for that role, a dimension this article does not measure directly but one that future research would do well to examine.

5. THE REHABILITATIVE POTENTIAL OF TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS

The rehabilitative potential of the teacher-student relationship has been examined directly in one line of research, addressing the repair of insecure attachment patterns formed with parents. A second, related body of work addresses the restoration of regulatory capacity following trauma or sustained crisis, though this evidence comes primarily from parent-child relationships rather than teacher-student ones. Considered together, these two lines of research raise the possibility that the relationship with a teacher, too, can serve as a mechanism through which a child's capacity for emotional regulation is rebuilt, a possibility the findings below explore.

One of the most practically significant findings in the field concerns the corrective potential of teacher-student relationships for insecure attachment patterns. Ben-Gal Dahan & Mikulincer (2021) found that perception of the teacher as responsive and supportive neutralized the negative effects of attachment anxiety, suggesting that positive teacher-student relationships can compensate for insecure attachment patterns. This compensatory potential is further supported by evidence that insecure attachment patterns can be modified through new meaningful relationships. Joseph et al. (2014) showed that adolescents who experienced neglect or maltreatment in childhood succeeded in developing secure attachment patterns with other significant adults, reinforcing the notion that teachers can serve as a 'corrective experience', a new relational experience that supports the gradual restructuring of the child's internal working models and fosters more adaptive regulation patterns. Practical evidence for this corrective potential comes from Kelly et al. (2020), who showed that an attachment-based intervention program in English schools reduced punishments and exclusions, and improved outcomes and well-being for both students and adults alike. Students who participated in the program demonstrated higher self-regulation ability, increased empathy toward others, and

improved behavior. This program illustrates that implementing attachment theory principles in the educational context is not only possible, but also produces measurable impact.

Given the ongoing war in Israel since October 7, 2023, the second line of research, restoring regulatory capacity after trauma, is especially relevant here, even though the evidence for it is still limited, as discussed in Section 4.3.

Taken together, these two lines of research point in the same direction, but the evidence behind them is not equally strong. The findings on attachment repair, Ben-Gal Dahan and Mikulincer's work on teacher responsiveness, and Joseph et al.'s work on new secure attachments, come from research that deals directly with attachment formation. The findings on regulatory capacity during crisis, however, come almost entirely from parent-child relationships, not from teachers. Extending them to teachers is a reasonable assumption, but it is still an assumption, not a tested finding. This does not weaken the case for the teacher's rehabilitative role, but it does mean that this case rests on firmer ground for attachment repair than for crisis-related regulation.

6. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR CLASSROOM PRACTICE

The National Council for the Child's November 2024 parent survey, cited earlier, found that 29% of parents identified a need for emotional treatment for their child following the war, and of these, nearly half did not receive it, most commonly due to a shortage of available appointments or an inability to pay (National Council for the Child, 2024). Teacher sensitivity of the kind discussed throughout this article cannot substitute for professional treatment where it is genuinely needed. But against this backdrop of limited formal care, the everyday attentiveness a teacher can offer takes on particular weight, not as a replacement for treatment, but as a meaningful layer of support many children currently lack.

Several concrete practices reflect the sensitivity and responsiveness that the literature above associates with secure attachment. Greeting each student warmly at the start of the day, and giving full, undivided attention when a student speaks, communicates that the child is seen and heard. Remembering and following up on things a student has previously shared signals sustained interest beyond the moment. Removing a judgmental or critical tone from everyday interaction, and offering legitimacy to a child's thoughts and feelings rather than dismissing them, matters because the alternative carries a cost: in my experience, students who encounter judgment or a lack of legitimization tend to respond with withdrawal and aversion toward the teacher, the opposite of the closeness this article associates with secure attachment. When a student expresses distress, working to understand the underlying trigger, rather than reacting

only to the behavior itself, and helping the child identify alternative coping strategies, extends this responsiveness into an active regulatory role, consistent with the caregiver's function as an external regulator of the child's emotional states. This kind of containment also matters when a student is angry or dysregulated: pausing before reacting, rather than defaulting to an automatic response such as raising one's voice or imposing an immediate sanction, allows judgment rather than impulse to guide the teacher's response. In my experience, raising one's voice is in fact one of the most consistent complaints students raise about teachers, which suggests that this particular impulse, more than others, may be worth deliberate attention.

Beyond individual interactions, structural classroom practices can also support secure attachment. Dividing the class into small groups and rotating a brief daily session, conversation combined with shared play or activity, with a different group each day allows every student to experience, roughly once a week, a session that functions almost as individual time, during which the teacher's attention is close to fully focused, responsive, and empathetic.

These practices do not require additional resources or formal training. They can be integrated into existing classroom routines, translating the theoretical principles reviewed in this article into steps any teacher can begin applying immediately.

7. THE ISRAELI KNOWLEDGE GAP

While international research has examined the connection between teacher-student bond quality and emotional regulation (Huang, 2019; Pallini et al., 2019; Valle et al., 2019), and a single Israeli study has examined the perception of the teacher as a secure base (Al-Yagon & Mikulincer, 2006), no research has yet been conducted in Israel that focuses specifically on attachment style (secure versus insecure) between teacher and student and its effect on emotional regulation abilities among primary school students in regular education. Similarly, no research was found that combines methodology allowing deep understanding of the psychological mechanisms underlying this connection.

Additional gaps include the absence of research examining this association against the unique backdrop of COVID-19 and the ongoing war, which may significantly influence teacher-student bonds and students' emotional regulation abilities, as well as the absence of a culturally adapted research tool validated in Hebrew for measuring teacher-student attachment patterns in the Israeli context.

Current research being conducted in an elementary school in Eilat (grades 3-6) aims to fill these gaps. The research uses the teacher-student attachment questionnaire based on the work of Krstić (2015), translated and validated into Hebrew, and the Emotion Regulation Checklist (ERC;

Shields & Cicchetti, 1997) completed by homeroom teachers. Findings from such research may serve as a basis for developing practical teacher training programs, formulating policy recommendations, and providing tools for fostering emotional regulation and psychological resilience in Israeli classrooms. These questions will be examined empirically in a subsequent article presenting the research methodology and preliminary findings.

CONCLUSION

This article presented a rich theoretical framework for understanding the link between secure attachment to the teacher and three central areas of functioning, namely emotional regulation, academic achievement, and psychological well-being. The international literature points to consistent findings, showing that teachers who provide their students with warmth, sensitivity, and responsiveness, the qualities that Bowlby (1969) and Ainsworth et al. (1978) identified as defining a 'secure base', contribute demonstrably to positive outcomes in all three areas.

The international literature reviewed in this article establishes that teacher-student relationship quality is linked to students' emotional regulation, but almost none of this evidence comes from Israel, and none examines attachment style specifically, secure versus insecure, as the explanatory variable. What this review adds is the theoretical grounding for closing that gap: it situates emotional regulation, academic achievement, and psychological well-being within the same secure base mechanism, and extends that mechanism to a population under sustained security stress, where its rehabilitative function may be especially consequential. This is particularly significant given that data indicate a 31% increase in new diagnoses of anxiety and a 9% increase in new diagnoses of depression among children aged 12–17 in the second year of the war alone (National Council for the Child, 2026), and that teachers increasingly serve as the most stable adult figures in students' lives, at a time when routine sources of support are themselves under strain. This conceptual link between attachment security and resilience under chronic stress provides the theoretical foundation for the empirical study that follows, which examines directly, in an Israeli elementary school population, whether teacher-student attachment style is associated with students' emotional regulation.

Findings from the empirical study this article lays the groundwork for may serve as a basis for developing practical teacher training programs, informing policy recommendations, and providing tools for fostering emotional regulation and psychological resilience in Israeli classrooms.

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