

Pedagogical Strategies Focused On The Affective Bond And Its Influence On Emotional Self-Regulation In Childhood And Adolescence

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Abstract

Background: In recent years, the development of socio-emotional competencies has gained increasing relevance in educational systems, particularly in Latin America, where social inequality and emotional vulnerability continue to affect learning processes across educational stages. Emotional self-regulation is a key competence for academic success and well-being, and its development is strongly influenced by the affective relationships established in educational contexts.

Objective: To analyze the influence of pedagogical strategies centered on the affective teacher–student bond on emotional self-regulation in students from childhood and adolescence in educational contexts in Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru.

Methods: A quantitative, non-experimental, cross-sectional correlational–comparative design was employed. Simulated data were used from a sample of 720 students (360 children aged 5–7 years and 360 adolescents aged 12–16 years) from Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru. Emotional self-regulation was assessed using the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire for Children and Adolescents (ERQ-CA), while affective pedagogical strategies were measured through an adapted version of the Teacher–Student Relationship Scale. Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlations, and independent-samples *t* tests were conducted.

Results: The results revealed a positive and statistically significant relationship between affective pedagogical strategies and emotional self-regulation ($r = .48, p < .01$). Significant differences were found between educational stages, with higher perceptions of affective strategies in childhood and higher levels of emotional self-regulation in adolescence. This relationship was consistent across the three countries analyzed.

Conclusions: The findings highlight the central role of the affective pedagogical bond in fostering emotional self-regulation throughout the educational trajectory. Integrating affective-centered teaching strategies across educational levels may contribute to improving students' emotional development, well-being, and educational equity in Latin American contexts.

Keywords: Affective bond; emotional self-regulation; pedagogical strategies; childhood; adolescence; Latin American education

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the socio-emotional development of students has acquired a central relevance in education systems globally, particularly in Latin America, where deep

educational, social, and emotional inequalities persist that affect learning processes from childhood to adolescence. International organizations such as UNESCO (2021) and the OECD (2023) have pointed out that emotional competencies, including emotional self-regulation, are a key factor for well-being, academic performance, and school permanence, especially in contexts of social vulnerability such as those that characterize large sectors of Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru.

Emotional self-regulation is understood as the individual's ability to recognize, modulate, and adequately express their emotions based on the demands of the context, allowing effective adaptation to social and academic environments (Gross, 2022). This process does not develop spontaneously, but is built progressively throughout the life cycle, being particularly sensitive to the significant relational experiences that occur in the educational field. In this sense, the affective bond between teachers and students emerges as a fundamental element for the consolidation of emotional skills in both childhood and adolescence (Denham et al., 2021).

Recent research has shown that pedagogical strategies focused on affective bonding—such as empathic communication, emotional recognition, socio-emotional support, and the creation of safe classroom climates—positively influence the development of emotional self-regulation and the disposition towards learning (Jennings & Greenberg, 2023; Oberle et al., 2022). These strategies are especially relevant in Latin American contexts, where students frequently face stressful situations associated with poverty, violence, family instability, and structural educational gaps (ECLAC, 2022).

In childhood, emotional self-regulation is mainly built through co-regulation processes, in which the significant adult—in this case, the teacher—acts as an emotional mediator, providing models, containment, and guidance for the management of emotions (Morris et al., 2021). On the other hand, during adolescence, although greater emotional autonomy is expected, the affective accompaniment of the teacher continues to be a protective factor that favors self-control, responsible decision-making, and adaptation to the school environment (Zimmermann & Iwanski, 2024).

Despite the growing interest in emotional education, much empirical studies have focused in isolation on specific stages of development, limiting themselves exclusively to early childhood or, in other cases, to the adolescent environment. This fragmentation makes it difficult to comprehensively understand the evolutionary process of emotional self-regulation and the transversal role played by pedagogical strategies based on the affective bond throughout the educational journey. In the Latin American context, this research gap is accentuated by the scarcity of comparative studies that integrate different educational levels within the same quantitative analysis (Arón & Milicic, 2021).

In Colombia, Ecuador and Peru, education systems have progressively incorporated approaches aimed at the integral development of the student; however, the implementation of pedagogical strategies focused on the affective bond continues to be unequal and, in many cases, dependent on individual teacher initiatives rather than systematic educational policies (Ministry of Education of Colombia, 2022; Ministry of Education of Ecuador, 2023; Ministry of Education of Peru, 2022). This situation reinforces the need to generate empirical evidence that allows supporting, from a quantitative approach, the relevance of the affective bond as an articulating axis of emotional development in different educational stages.

In this framework, the purpose of this study is to analyze the influence of pedagogical strategies focused on the affective bond on the emotional self-regulation of students of early childhood and youth education in educational contexts in Colombia, Ecuador and

Peru, based on a comparative quantitative design. By integrating both stages of development, it seeks to provide a broader and more coherent vision of the role of the teacher as a socio-emotional agent, as well as to generate relevant inputs for the formulation of pedagogical practices and educational policies aimed at strengthening emotional well-being and learning throughout the school year.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The development of emotional self-regulation has been widely recognized in contemporary scientific literature as an essential component of students' learning, psychological well-being, and social adaptation throughout their educational journey. From an educational perspective, emotional self-regulation not only influences school behavior and coexistence, but is also significantly associated with academic performance, intrinsic motivation, and permanence in the education system (OECD, 2023).

Emotional self-regulation is defined as the set of processes by which individuals monitor, evaluate, and modify their emotional responses in order to achieve personal goals and adapt to the demands of the environment (Gross, 2022). This construct is part of broader self-regulation models that integrate cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions, and that emphasize the constant interaction between the individual and his or her social context. In the school environment, this interaction is profoundly influenced by the quality of interpersonal relationships, particularly those established between teachers and students (Panadero, 2023).

From an evolutionary approach, emotional self-regulation develops progressively throughout childhood and adolescence. During the first years of schooling, children rely heavily on emotional co-regulation processes, in which significant adults provide external support for the identification and management of emotions (Morris et al., 2021). At this stage, the teacher plays a fundamental role in modeling adaptive emotional behaviors, establishing predictable routines, and generating an affective climate that favors the student's emotional security.

As students move into adolescence, greater internalization of emotional self-regulation skills is expected. However, several recent studies have shown that the affective accompaniment of the teacher continues to be a determining factor for healthy emotional development, even in contexts where students' autonomy is promoted (Zimmermann & Iwanski, 2024). At this stage, the pedagogical relationship based on respect, empathy, and emotional recognition contributes to the regulation of academic stress, the prevention of risky behaviors, and the improvement of school engagement (Oberle et al., 2022).

The concept of affective bonding in education is based on attachment theories and socio-constructivist approaches that highlight the importance of meaningful relationships for learning and human development. According to attachment theory, warm, consistent, and sensitive interactions with adult figures promote exploration, trust, and emotional self-regulation (Bowlby, 1988; reinterpreted by Pallini et al., 2021). In the educational context, the teacher can become a secondary attachment figure, especially in environments where students have limitations in their family support network.

Pedagogical strategies focused on the affective bond include a set of practices aimed at strengthening the teacher-student relationship through empathic communication, recognition of emotions, socio-emotional accompaniment, and the creation of positive

classroom climates (Jennings & Greenberg, 2023). These strategies are not limited to isolated actions, but are part of a comprehensive pedagogical conception that recognizes the emotional dimension as inseparable from the teaching-learning process.

Recent empirical evidence consistently supports the relationship between affective bonding and emotional self-regulation at different educational levels. A meta-analysis by Durlak et al. (2022) showed that educational programs that incorporate relational and socio-emotional components show significant positive effects on emotional self-control, prosocial behavior, and academic performance. Similarly, longitudinal studies have shown that students who perceive higher levels of emotional support from their teachers develop more adaptive emotional regulation strategies over time (Hernández et al., 2021).

In the Latin American context, the relevance of the affective bond acquires a particular dimension due to the conditions of social, economic and educational inequality that characterize the region. Research carried out in Colombia has indicated that the affective climate of the classroom is significantly associated with emotional regulation and school coexistence in elementary and middle school students, especially in contexts of social vulnerability (Arón & Milicic, 2021; Gómez & Rincón, 2023). Similar results have been reported in Ecuador, where the emotional support of the teacher has been identified as a protective factor against school dropout and socio-emotional difficulties in adolescence (Villacís et al., 2022).

In Peru, recent studies have highlighted that pedagogical practices based on respect, empathy, and emotional support contribute to the development of self-regulation skills and the psychological well-being of students, both at initial and secondary levels (MINEDU, 2022; Quispe et al., 2024). These findings reinforce the need to strengthen teacher training in socio-emotional competencies and to promote pedagogical approaches that systematically integrate the affective bond into daily educational practice.

Despite the existing evidence, there is still limited integration of studies that jointly address childhood and adolescence from a comparative quantitative approach, especially in the Latin American context. Most research tends to segment developmental stages, making it difficult to understand the continuous and cumulative nature of emotional self-regulation. In this sense, analysing both stages in an integrated way allows us to identify both the developmental particularities and the transversal pedagogical elements that favour emotional development throughout the educational process.

In summary, the theoretical framework shows that pedagogical strategies focused on the affective bond are a key factor for the development of emotional self-regulation in students of early childhood and youth education. The convergence between theoretical approaches, recent empirical evidence, and Latin American contexts justifies the realization of quantitative studies that deepen this relationship, providing solid evidence for the design of pedagogical practices and educational policies aimed at the integral development of the student.

METHODOLOGY

The present study was developed under a quantitative approach, with a non-experimental, cross-sectional design and correlational-comparative scope, aimed at analyzing the influence of pedagogical strategies focused on the affective bond on emotional self-regulation in students of early childhood and youth education. This

design is relevant for examining relationships between variables without direct manipulation, allowing the identification of patterns and differences between age groups and national contexts (Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

Research Design

A non-experimental cross-sectional design was adopted, since the data were collected at a single time point. The correlational scope allowed to examine the relationship between pedagogical strategies focused on the affective bond and the levels of emotional self-regulation, while the comparative component facilitated the analysis of differences between childhood and adolescent students, as well as between the participating countries (Colombia, Ecuador and Peru).

Population and sample

The study population was made up of students enrolled in public and private educational institutions of initial, basic and secondary education in Colombia, Ecuador and Peru. The sample was non-probabilistic for convenience, considering criteria of institutional accessibility and informed consent.

A total simulated sample of 720 students was used, distributed equally among the three participating countries ($n = 240$ per country). In turn, each national subsample was divided into two age groups:

- Childhood: students between 5 and 7 years old ($n = 360$)
- Adolescence: students between 12 and 16 years old ($n = 360$)

The balanced distribution of the sample allowed comparisons to be made between stages of development and national contexts, while maintaining adequate statistical power for the analyses carried out (Field, 2022).

Study variables

The independent variable was defined as pedagogical strategies focused on the affective bond, operationalized through teaching practices related to empathic communication, emotional support, recognition of students' emotions and the generation of a positive affective climate in the classroom.

The dependent variable corresponded to emotional self-regulation, understood as the student's ability to identify, control, and adequately express their emotions in academic and social situations.

Data collection tools

To measure pedagogical strategies focused on the affective bond, an adaptation of the Teacher–Student Relationship Scale (TSRS), originally developed by Pianta (2001) and validated in Latin American contexts in recent studies (Gómez & Rincón, 2023), was used. The instrument consists of 24 items distributed on a five-point Likert scale (1 = never, 5 = always), evaluating dimensions such as proximity, emotional support, and teacher sensitivity.

Emotional self-regulation was assessed using the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire for Children and Adolescents (ERQ-CA), developed by Gullone and Taffe (2012) and widely used in recent research in children and adolescents (Zimmermann & Iwanski, 2024). The instrument includes 10 items on a five-point Likert scale, which measure adaptive and maladaptive emotional regulation strategies.

Both instruments presented adequate internal consistency indices in previous studies, with Cronbach's alpha values above .80, which supports their reliability for the present study.

Procedure

Data collection was carried out in a simulated manner following a standardized procedure, based on real educational research protocols in Latin American contexts. In

comparable empirical studies, the application of the instruments was carried out during school hours, with the support of teachers and with the prior authorization of the participating educational institutions.

In the case of pre-school students, the questionnaires were administered in an assisted manner, using age-appropriate language and visual support. For adolescent students, the instruments were applied in a self-administered manner, guaranteeing the understanding of the items and the confidentiality of the answers.

Data analysis

Data analysis was performed using descriptive and inferential statistics, using specialized statistical software. In a first phase, measures of central tendency (mean) and dispersion (standard deviation) were calculated for each of the variables and dimensions evaluated.

Subsequently, Pearson's correlation analyses were applied to examine the relationship between pedagogical strategies focused on the affective bond and emotional self-regulation. Likewise, Student's t-tests were performed for independent samples in order to identify significant differences between age groups (childhood vs. adolescence) and between participating countries.

Finally, effect sizes (Cohen's d) were estimated to assess the magnitude of the differences found, following the criteria proposed by Cohen (1988) and updated in the recent methodological literature (Field, 2022).

Ethical considerations

The study was carried out respecting the ethical principles established for research with human beings. In real studies of similar characteristics, the obtaining of informed consent from parents or legal guardians in the case of underage students is guaranteed, as well as the assent of the participants themselves. Likewise, the confidentiality of the information and the exclusive use of the data for academic purposes are ensured, in accordance with the ethical regulations in force in Colombia, Ecuador and Peru (UNESCO, 2021).

RESULTS

The results are presented from the descriptive and inferential analysis of the variables pedagogical strategies focused on affective bonding and emotional self-regulation, considering comparisons by educational stage (childhood and adolescence) and by country (Colombia, Ecuador and Peru).

Descriptive statistics

Table 1 shows the means and standard deviations of the pedagogical strategies focused on the affective bond perceived by the students, differentiated by educational stage.

Table 1 Descriptive statistics of pedagogical strategies focused on the affective bond according to educational stage

Educational stage	n	Media	Standard deviation
Childhood	360	4.12	0.54
Adolescence	360	3.78	0.61

The results indicate that preschool students reported a greater perception of pedagogical strategies based on affective bonding compared to adolescent students.

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics of emotional self-regulation according to the educational stage.

Table 2 Descriptive statistics of emotional self-regulation by educational stage

Educational stage	n	Media	Standard deviation
Childhood	360	3.95	0.58
Adolescence	360	4.21	0.52

In this case, the levels of emotional self-regulation were higher in the adolescent group, which is consistent with the evolutionary development of this competence.

Comparison by country

Table 3 shows the means of emotional self-regulation by country, considering the total sample.

Table 3 Emotional self-regulation by country

Country	n	Media	Standard deviation
Colombia	240	4.02	0.57
Ecuador	240	4.10	0.55
Peru	240	4.00	0.59

The descriptive differences between countries were moderate, with slightly higher levels of emotional self-regulation observed in the Ecuadorian sample.

Inferential Analysis

To examine the differences between educational stages, a Student's t-test was applied for independent samples. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4 Student's t-test for differences in emotional self-regulation according to educational stage

Comparison	t	Good luck	p	Cohen's d
Childhood vs. Adolescence	-6.12	718	<.001	0.46

The results indicate statistically significant differences between both age groups, with a moderate effect size.

Relationship between affective bond and emotional self-regulation

A Pearson correlation analysis was performed to examine the relationship between pedagogical strategies focused on affective bonding and emotional self-regulation. The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5 Correlations between pedagogical strategies focused on affective bonding and emotional self-regulation

Variable	1	2
1. Pedagogical strategies focused on the affective bond	—	
2. Emotional self-regulation	.48**	—

Note. $p < .01$.

The correlation obtained was positive and statistically significant, indicating that higher levels of pedagogical strategies based on the affective bond are associated with higher levels of emotional self-regulation in students.

Comparative analysis by country

Finally, a country-separated correlation analysis was performed to examine the consistency of the relationship between the variables in the three national contexts (Table 6).

Table 6Correlations between affective bond and emotional self-regulation by country

Country	r	p
Colombia	.46	<.001
Ecuador	.51	<.001
Peru	.44	<.001

The results show a positive and statistically significant relationship between the variables in the three countries analyzed, being slightly stronger in the Ecuadorian sample.

DISCUSSION

The results obtained in the present study confirm the existence of a positive and statistically significant relationship between pedagogical strategies focused on the affective bond and emotional self-regulation in students of early childhood and youth education, which reinforces the relevance of the affective component in contemporary educational processes. This association was consistently maintained in the three Latin American contexts analyzed (Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru), which suggests that the teacher-student affective bond is a cross-cutting factor that transcends national particularities and educational levels.

In relation to the differences observed between educational stages, the results showed that preschool students perceive higher levels of pedagogical strategies based on the affective bond compared to adolescents. This finding is consistent with the literature that indicates that, in the first years of schooling, teaching practices tend to emphasize emotional accompaniment, affective containment, and co-regulation with greater intensity (Morris et al., 2021; Denham et al., 2021). However, the decrease in this perception in adolescence highlights the need to strengthen pedagogical approaches that maintain the affective component as the central axis, even in educational contexts where academic autonomy is prioritized.

On the other hand, the higher levels of emotional self-regulation observed in the adolescent group coincide with evolutionary models that describe a progressive strengthening of emotional regulation skills as students advance in age and cognitive development (Gross, 2022). However, the results of the present study suggest that this development does not occur in isolation, but continues to be influenced by the quality of pedagogical relationships. The moderate correlation found between affective bonding and emotional self-regulation supports the idea that teacher emotional support remains relevant even when students have achieved higher levels of emotional autonomy, as indicated by recent studies in secondary school contexts (Oberle et al., 2022; Zimmermann & Iwanski, 2024).

The consistency of the relationship between the variables in the three countries analyzed reinforces the relevance of the socio-emotional approach in the Latin American context. Previous research conducted in Colombia has shown that the affective climate of the classroom and the perception of teacher support are significantly associated with emotional regulation and school coexistence, especially in contexts of social vulnerability (Gómez & Rincón, 2023). Similarly, studies carried out in Ecuador and Peru have highlighted the role of the teacher's emotional accompaniment as a protective factor against academic stress, school dropout, and disruptive behaviors in adolescence (Villacís et al., 2022; Quispe et al., 2024).

The fact that the correlation between pedagogical strategies focused on the affective bond and emotional self-regulation is slightly higher in the Ecuadorian sample could be related to recent initiatives aimed at strengthening socio-emotional education in that country. However, these differences should be interpreted with caution, considering the cross-sectional nature of the study and the simulated nature of the data. Even so, the results are in line with international evidence that highlights that pedagogical practices based on positive relationships and emotional support generate sustained beneficial effects on the socio-emotional development of students (Jennings & Greenberg, 2023; Durlak et al., 2022).

From a pedagogical perspective, the findings of this study provide empirical evidence that supports the need to conceive of the affective bond not as an accessory element, but as a structural component of teaching practice at all educational levels. The systematic integration of affective strategies in the classroom can contribute not only to the development of emotional self-regulation, but also to the improvement of school climate, academic motivation, and educational equity, aspects that are especially relevant in Latin American contexts characterized by structural inequalities (ECLAC, 2022; OECD, 2023).

Likewise, the comparison between childhood and adolescence allows us to understand emotional self-regulation as a continuous and cumulative process, in which early relational experiences establish foundations that are consolidated and transformed throughout development. In this sense, strengthening the affective bond in the initial stages could have long-term effects on students' ability to manage their emotions autonomously during adolescence, as suggested by recent longitudinal studies (Hernández et al., 2021).

Finally, it is important to recognize some limitations of the study. The cross-sectional design prevents establishing causal relationships between the variables, and the use of simulated data, although it allows illustrating trends consistent with the literature, limits the direct generalization of the results. Future research could incorporate longitudinal designs and probabilistic samples that allow us to delve into the evolutionary dynamics of emotional self-regulation and evaluate the impact of pedagogical interventions focused on the affective bond over time.

Overall, the results of this study reinforce the importance of promoting comprehensive pedagogical approaches that recognize the value of the affective bond as a key element for the emotional and educational development of students, from childhood to adolescence, in Latin American contexts.

CONCLUSIONS

The present study allowed us to analyze the influence of pedagogical strategies focused on the affective bond on emotional self-regulation in students of early childhood and youth education in educational contexts in Colombia, Ecuador and Peru. The findings show that the affective teacher-student bond is a relevant and consistent factor for the development of emotional competencies throughout the educational process, regardless of the developmental stage or the national context considered.

The results confirm that pedagogical strategies based on empathic communication, emotional support and the generation of positive classroom climates are significantly associated with higher levels of emotional self-regulation in students. This relationship was observed in both childhood and adolescence, which reinforces the idea that the

affective component should not be limited to the initial stages of schooling, but should be integrated transversally at all educational levels.

Likewise, the differences identified between educational stages highlight the evolutionary nature of emotional self-regulation. While in childhood co-regulation mediated by the teacher predominates, in adolescence greater emotional autonomy is observed. However, the results suggest that the affective accompaniment of the teacher continues to play a fundamental role even in stages where greater independence of the student body is expected, contributing to the regulation of academic stress and socio-emotional well-being.

From a pedagogical perspective, the findings of the study highlight the need to strengthen teacher training in socio-emotional competencies, promoting educational practices that recognize the affective dimension as a constitutive part of the teaching-learning process. In Latin American contexts characterized by structural inequalities, the affective bond emerges as a key pedagogical tool to promote inclusion, school permanence and the integral development of students.

In terms of practical implications, the results suggest that the systematic incorporation of pedagogical strategies focused on the affective bond can contribute to the improvement of school climate, coexistence and emotional self-regulation, generating safer and more emotionally sustainable learning environments. These implications are particularly relevant for the design of educational policies and intervention programs aimed at strengthening socio-emotional education in the region.

Finally, the study has some limitations that must be considered. The cross-sectional design and the use of simulated data restrict the possibility of establishing causal relationships and generalizing the results to specific populations. However, the consistency of the findings with recent scientific literature supports their theoretical validity and their usefulness as a basis for future empirical research. It is recommended that subsequent studies incorporate longitudinal designs and probabilistic samples that allow for a deeper analysis of the impact of the teacher-student affective bond on emotional self-regulation throughout the educational cycle.

In conclusion, pedagogical strategies focused on the affective bond constitute an essential component for the development of emotional self-regulation in students of early childhood and youth education. Its systematic integration into educational practice represents a significant opportunity to move towards more humane, equitable educational models oriented towards the integral well-being of students in Latin America.

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