

Impact of Emotional Support on Preschool Children's Learning and Development: A Study at EuroKids-Doddabele

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Abstract: *Preschool is a time when children learn not only early academic skills but also how to communicate, manage feelings and build relationships. The adults around them play an important part in this process. This study explored the association between emotional support and preschool children's learning and social-emotional development at EuroKids Preschool, Doddabele. A quantitative, cross-sectional design was used, and data were collected from 79 respondents through a structured questionnaire on emotional support, learning, social-emotional development and perceived impact. Descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation were used to analyse the responses. Emotional support received the highest mean score ($M = 3.65/4$), followed by overall perceived impact ($M = 3.51$), learning ($M = 3.35$) and social-emotional development ($M = 3.00$). The highest-rated support indicator was helping children feel loved, accepted and valued ($M = 3.81$). Children's enjoyment of learning through play and activities was the highest-rated learning indicator ($M = 3.58$). Sharing toys and materials received the lowest mean in the social-emotional domain ($M = 2.58$). Emotional support was strongly and positively associated with learning ($r = .753, p < .001$) and moderately associated with social-emotional development ($r = .587, p < .001$). These results suggest that respondents who reported greater emotional support also tended to report more positive learning and developmental outcomes. Since the study was cross-sectional and relied on caregiver-reported information, the findings show associations and do not establish cause and effect.*

Keywords: emotional support, preschool children, learning, social-emotional development, early childhood education, teacher-child relationship

1. Introduction

Early childhood is a period of rapid growth in thinking, language, behaviour, emotions and social understanding. During these years, children learn by playing, watching others, asking questions, communicating and trying things with adult guidance. Emotional support is part of these everyday experiences. It can be seen when adults show warmth and patience, encourage children, listen to them, accept their feelings and offer reassurance when something goes wrong. It also means setting suitable boundaries without embarrassing or humiliating a child.

A preschool classroom is more than a place where children learn letters, numbers and other early skills. It is also where they begin to follow routines, spend time away from their caregivers, make friends, express their needs and cope with frustration. These experiences can be challenging, especially when children are still learning how to understand and manage their feelings. When adults respond calmly and sensitively, children may feel more comfortable exploring activities, asking for help and trying again after a mistake. For this reason, learning, classroom participation, confidence, behaviour and social-emotional development are closely connected in the preschool years.

This study was carried out at EuroKids Preschool, Doddabele, to examine whether reported emotional support was associated with children's learning and developmental experiences. The topic is relevant to preschool teachers, parents and school administrators because everyday interactions can shape how children participate in classroom activities and relate to others. Understanding these connections may help adults identify practices that support children's adjustment and involvement in preschool.

2. Conceptual and Theoretical Background

The study is informed by several perspectives on child development, including Attachment Theory, Vygotsky's sociocultural perspective, emotional regulation, social learning and the ecological perspective. Attachment Theory, associated with Bowlby, highlights the importance of dependable and responsive relationships. When children feel secure with the adults around them, they may be more willing to explore their surroundings. Vygotsky's perspective draws attention to the role of social interaction and adult guidance in learning. From this viewpoint, children develop skills through shared activities and support that is appropriate to their level of understanding. Emotional regulation is also important: young children often need adults to help them identify feelings, respond calmly and choose constructive ways to deal with difficult situations.

Children's development also takes place across several connected settings, including the home, preschool, peer group and wider community. The support children receive in these settings may reinforce or differ from one another. Communication between parents and teachers can therefore help adults understand a child's needs and provide more consistent guidance. In this study's conceptual framework, emotional support from parents and teachers is considered alongside learning engagement, classroom participation, confidence, social competence, behavioural adjustment and school readiness. These areas are examined as related outcomes, not as results that can be attributed to emotional support alone.

3. Review of Literature

The literature reviewed for the project points to a connection between emotionally supportive relationships and several

aspects of early childhood development, including children's engagement in learning, emotional regulation, social competence and readiness for school. The research considered in the project includes different approaches, such as systematic reviews, longitudinal and correlational studies, intervention research and qualitative work. Although these methods answer different questions, the literature broadly highlights the role of supportive teacher-child relationships and responsive classroom environments in children's participation and adjustment. The reviewed studies also discuss how social-emotional learning activities may help children practise managing feelings and interacting with peers. Teacher responsiveness and empathy are relevant because they can influence the quality of everyday relationships in the classroom. The project literature further draws attention to teacher training and teacher well-being as factors worth considering when looking at the support children receive. Together, these themes provide a basis for studying emotional support alongside learning and social-emotional development in a preschool setting.

However, the specific context of EuroKids Preschool, Doddabele, provides a local setting in which these relationships can be explored. The present study contributes a site-specific account of reported emotional support and selected learning and developmental indicators. Its findings should be understood in relation to this setting and sample.

4. Methodology

Component	Description
Research design	Quantitative, cross-sectional, descriptive-correlational design
Setting	EuroKids Preschool, Doddabele
Participants	79 respondents associated with preschool children
Sampling	Convenience sampling
Instrument	Structured questionnaire covering emotional support, learning, social-emotional development and perceived impact
Response format	Five-point response scale, summarized as 0–4 domain scores in the analysis
Analysis	Frequencies/percentages, means, standard deviations and Pearson correlations
Ethical considerations	Voluntary participation, confidentiality, participant coding and academic use of data

The study used a quantitative, cross-sectional, descriptive-correlational design. Data were collected at EuroKids Preschool, Doddabele, from 79 respondents associated with preschool children. Convenience sampling was used, and a structured questionnaire covered emotional support, learning, social-emotional development and perceived impact. Responses were summarised as domain scores, and the analysis included frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations and Pearson correlations. Participation was voluntary; confidentiality was maintained through participant coding, and the data were used for academic purposes. The analyses in this publication version include 79 respondents overall. Some composite scores had fewer valid responses because a small number of questionnaire cells were missing, so the number of observations differs slightly across analyses. The results are therefore interpreted as associations rather than evidence that emotional support caused a particular outcome.

5. Results

5.1 Descriptive Statistics

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Emotional support	78	3.65	0.61	1.29	4.00
Learning	78	3.35	0.69	1.20	4.00
Social-emotional development	78	3.00	0.79	0.70	4.00
Overall perceived impact	79	3.51	0.69	1.00	4.00

Emotional support had the highest mean score ($M = 3.65$), suggesting that respondents generally reported supportive interactions with children. The mean for overall perceived impact was 3.51, while learning scored 3.35 and social-emotional development scored 3.00. Social-emotional development also had the largest standard deviation ($SD = 0.79$). This indicates that responses in this area varied more than responses in the other domains; children may not have been reported as showing the same level of social-emotional skills.

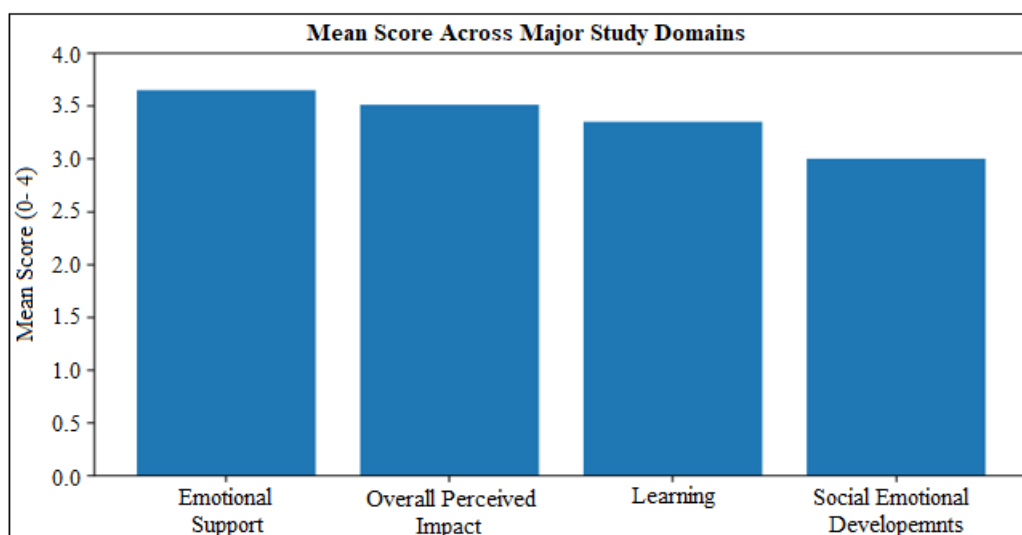


Figure 1: Mean scores across major study domains

Volume 15 Issue 10, October 2026

Fully Refereed | Open Access | Double Blind Peer Reviewed Journal

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5.2 Item-Level Patterns

Domain / indicator	Mean
Loved, accepted and valued	3.81
Enjoyment of learning through play and activities	3.58
Emotional encouragement helps learning performance	3.52
Confidence/social comfort	3.53
Expressing feelings appropriately	3.36
Positive relationships	3.34
Sharing toys/materials	2.58
Managing disappointments	2.75
Communicating with adults	2.75

The item-level results provide a clearer picture of the areas that respondents rated positively and those that may need more attention. Helping children feel loved, accepted and valued received the highest score in the emotional-support domain ($M = 3.81$). In learning, enjoyment of play-based activities was rated highest ($M = 3.58$). Confidence and social comfort also received a relatively high score ($M = 3.53$). By comparison, sharing toys and materials received a lower mean ($M = 2.58$). Managing disappointment and communicating with adults each had a mean of 2.75. These results suggest that, while emotional support was rated positively overall, some everyday social skills may be less consistently developed or observed.

5.3 Correlation Analysis

Variables	N	Pearson r	p-value	Interpretation
Emotional support × Learning	77	.753	< .001	Strong positive association
Emotional support × Social-emotional development	77	.587	< .001	Moderate positive association
Emotional support × Overall perceived impact	78	.376	< .001	Weak positive association

The correlation analysis showed a strong positive association between emotional support and learning ($r = .753$, $p < .001$). Emotional support was also moderately associated with social-emotional development ($r = .587$, $p < .001$). Its association with overall perceived impact was smaller but statistically significant ($r = .376$, $p < .001$). In this sample, respondents who reported higher levels of emotional support also tended to report more positive learning and developmental outcomes. These correlations support the study's hypothesis of positive relationships among the variables, but they do not demonstrate that emotional support alone produced the outcomes.

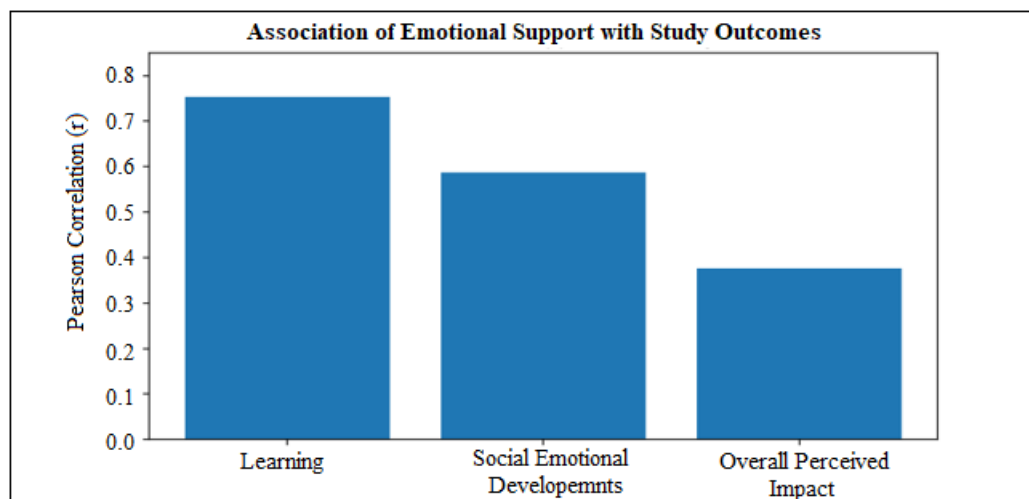


Figure 2: Pearson correlations between emotional support and selected outcomes

6. Discussion

A key finding is that higher reported emotional support tended to occur alongside more positive reports of learning and social-emotional development. The mean score for emotional support was relatively high ($M = 3.65$), and the strongest item was making children feel loved, accepted and valued ($M = 3.81$). This points to the importance respondents placed on children feeling accepted and cared for. In a preschool environment, such everyday experiences may help children feel comfortable enough to take part in activities and seek assistance when they need it.

The strongest relationship in the analysis was between emotional support and learning ($r = .753$). This pattern is consistent with the literature reviewed in the project, which links supportive environments with children's motivation,

engagement and participation. When children feel that adults will listen and help them, they may be more willing to try unfamiliar activities, ask questions and continue when a task is difficult. The relatively high score for enjoying play-based learning ($M = 3.58$) is also relevant because play gives young children opportunities to explore, practise skills and learn with others.

Emotional support was moderately associated with social-emotional development ($r = .587$). At the same time, the item-level results show that not all social skills were rated equally. Confidence and social comfort received a mean of 3.53, whereas sharing toys and materials received a mean of 2.58. Managing disappointment and communicating with adults also received lower scores than several other indicators. These differences are a reminder that social-emotional skills develop gradually and may vary from child to child. Age, temperament, previous peer experiences,

classroom opportunities and family circumstances could also be relevant, although these factors were not tested as explanatory variables in the present analysis.

The findings need to be interpreted with care. Because the study collected information at one point in time, it cannot show whether emotional support preceded the reported outcomes. The data also relied on caregiver reports, which may reflect differences in what respondents notice or how they interpret children's behaviour. Other influences on children's learning and development were not isolated. The results therefore show statistically significant associations within this sample, rather than proving that emotional support directly caused better learning or social-emotional development.

7. Practical Implications

- Teachers can build emotional security through warm, respectful conversations and by acknowledging children's feelings during everyday classroom interactions.
- Recognising children's effort, persistence and willingness to try can encourage learning, rather than focusing only on whether an answer is correct.
- Consistent routines and clear, age-appropriate expectations may help children understand what will happen next and feel more settled during transitions.
- Storytelling, role-play, music, cooperative games and creative activities can give children practical opportunities to identify feelings, take turns and practise interacting with peers.
- At home, parents can invite children to talk about their day and listen patiently. Reassurance and calm discussion may help children feel heard when they describe a worry or disagreement.
- Parent-teacher conversations can include children's strengths as well as areas where they may benefit from additional guidance. Sharing specific observations can help adults respond more consistently.
- Preschools may include emotional responsiveness and social-emotional learning in staff orientation and continuing professional development, so that teachers have opportunities to reflect on and strengthen their everyday practices.
- Teachers can observe children's participation, peer interactions, emotional expression and adjustment over time. These observations should be used to understand support needs, not to label children or draw diagnostic conclusions.

8. Limitations and Future Research

This study was conducted in one preschool and used convenience sampling, so the findings cannot automatically be generalised to all preschool children. Although 79 respondents were included, the cross-sectional design does not show how children's skills change over time or establish cause and effect. The use of caregiver-reported information may also introduce reporting bias. In addition, some questionnaire responses were missing, which meant that the

number of valid observations differed across composite scores and analyses.

Future studies could include children from several preschools and follow them over a longer period to examine how reported emotional support and developmental indicators change. Combining parent reports with teacher ratings and direct observations may provide a fuller picture. Researchers could also examine parent-teacher collaboration, teacher stress and professional development. Where suitable, validated measures with clearly documented reliability and validity would strengthen the quality and comparability of the findings.

9. Conclusion

In this study of respondents associated with EuroKids Preschool, Doddabele, emotional support was significantly associated with children's reported learning and social-emotional development. Emotional support received a high mean score ($M = 3.65$), and its relationship with learning was particularly strong ($r = .753$). The results also point to areas that may deserve further attention: sharing toys and materials, managing disappointment and communicating with adults received comparatively lower mean scores. These findings offer a useful starting point for reflection by teachers and parents, while recognising that the study does not establish cause and effect.

The findings support a broad view of preschool education in which learning and emotional development are considered together. Children's experiences of care, acceptance and encouragement form an important part of the context in which they participate and learn. At the same time, development is shaped by many interacting influences, and emotional support should not be treated as the only explanation for children's outcomes. Further research across different preschool settings can help clarify how these relationships operate in varied contexts.

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