

Emotion Awareness, School Climate and Academic Achievement among Higher Secondary Students: An Integrative Literature Review

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Abstract

This paper examined how emotion awareness and school climate relate to the academic achievement of higher secondary students and how the two factors interact in students' everyday school experience. Using an integrative literature review design, the study drew on peer-reviewed journal articles, books, reports, and dissertations on emotional competence, school environment, and academic outcomes among adolescent learners. The reviewed evidence indicates that emotion awareness supports students' emotional regulation, resilience, motivation, and classroom engagement, and that a school climate marked by positive teacher-student and peer relationships, safety, inclusiveness, and institutional support is associated with stronger emotional regulation and better academic outcomes. Taken together, the findings point to emotion awareness and school climate as interconnected influences on students' overall development, mental health, and long-term learning, with implications for teachers, school administrators, counsellors, and policymakers seeking to build supportive learning environments.

Keywords: Emotion Awareness, School Climate, Academic Achievement, Higher Secondary Students.

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INTRODUCTION

Emotion awareness and school climate are two factors that shape both the academic achievement and the overall development of higher secondary students. Emotion awareness refers to a student's capacity to recognize, understand, express, and manage emotions, an ability that affects how they handle academic pressure, interpersonal relationships, and personal setbacks (Van Pham, 2024). School climate refers to the quality of relationships, safety, inclusiveness, discipline, institutional support, and opportunities for participation that together define the school environment. A positive climate is linked to emotional security, motivation and engagement, and supports the development of resilience, confidence and effective learning strategies (Gkintoni *et al.*, 2023). Examining students' lived experiences and perceptions of school life can clarify how emotion awareness and school context interact to shape performance, offering evidence that schools, and the policies that govern them, can use to build environments that serve students who are socially, emotionally, or institutionally vulnerable (Martinez & Gomez, 2024).

Conceptualization of the Major Concepts:

Emotion Awareness:

Emotional awareness is one of the core psychological skills that supports adolescents' adjustment to school and their overall development: the ability to recognize, understand, differentiate, and respond appropriately to one's own feelings and those of others. Because the higher secondary stage brings substantial emotional, cognitive, and social change, often under demanding conditions, emotional understanding and regulation become central to psychological functioning, relationships, decision-making, and academic achievement (Lane & Smith, 2021).

School Climate:

School climate is the totality of the physical, academic, social, emotional, and organizational conditions within which students experience schooling. Wang and Degol's (2016) review organised the construct around four broad dimensions: academic, community, safety and institutional environment. School environment, then, is not reducible to buildings, classrooms or physical resources; two schools with identical infrastructure can offer substantially different

educational experiences depending on relationships, teaching practice, safety and emotional support.

Academic Achievement:

Academic achievement is a basic construct in educational psychology, indexing a student's learning outcomes, intellectual development and educational progress: the extent to which a learner meets the outcomes prescribed by a school in formal learning, classwork, independent study and assessment, typically measured through test results, grades, classwork, projects and other evaluations. It is not reducible to examination results alone, but also reflects students' knowledge, understanding, critical thinking, and practical ability (Steinmayr *et al.*, 2014).

Rationale of the Study:

Emotional awareness can help students manage academic stress, sustain motivation, and remain engaged in learning, while a school climate built on supportive teacher-student and peer relationships, safety, inclusiveness, and institutional support can further their academic and emotional well-being. Research on school environment, well-being and achievement has grown substantially, but these constructs are usually examined apart: school-climate studies tend to focus on achievement or mental health, while studies of emotional or psychological awareness tend to focus on individual-level outcomes, leaving little qualitative work on how the two interact through students' everyday experience. A systematic review of Indian school-going adolescents, synthesising eleven studies published between 2000 and 2023, found that positive school-climate characteristics, including teacher-student relationships, peer support, connectedness and belongingness, were associated with reduced depression and stress, improved self-esteem and better academic performance (Podiya *et al.*, 2025). What remains missing is an integrated account of how the school environment and students' internal emotional awareness interact in shaping academic performance, which this review addresses through the following questions.

Research Questions

1. How do higher secondary students perceive and experience emotional awareness in their academic lives?
2. How do higher secondary students perceive the influence of school climate on their academic learning, engagement, and achievement?

Objectives of the Study:

1. To examine how emotion awareness is understood and reported to relate to higher secondary students' academic engagement and achievement.
2. To examine how school climate is reported to shape higher secondary students' academic learning, engagement, and achievement.

Research Methodology and Approach

To develop an in-depth understanding of how emotion awareness and school climate influence the academic achievement of higher secondary students, the review was situated within an interpretive, qualitative research paradigm (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2012). Literature was assessed, organised and synthesised using an Integrative Literature Review (ILR) design (Brome, 1993; Whitemore & Knafl, 2005; Torraco, 2000), chosen for its capacity to draw evidence from diverse methodological traditions into an integrated understanding of the relationships among the constructs under study, and for its suitability in interpreting prior knowledge, concepts and contextual factors bearing on students' emotional experience and educational environments. A descriptive and explanatory approach was used to identify and describe the key concepts and to synthesise existing evidence on how emotion awareness and school climate may shape academic achievement. The review drew only on secondary data, peer-reviewed journal articles, books, research reports, dissertations, conference proceedings and other credible academic publications, which were examined, analysed and synthesised to identify common themes and patterns bearing on emotional competencies, school climate and their effect on students' academic outcomes.

Literature Search:

Relevant literature was drawn from major academic databases and scholarly sources commonly used in education, psychology and the social sciences.

Inclusion Criteria:

Studies were included when they involved higher secondary or adolescent students; addressed emotion awareness, mental awareness, self-awareness, or a closely related construct; addressed school environment or school climate; addressed academic performance, achievement, engagement, or a related outcome; drew on conceptual, theoretical, qualitative, quantitative, or review-based evidence; and contributed to understanding the relationship among these concepts.

Exclusion Criteria:

Studies were excluded when they focused exclusively on adult populations with no relevance to education, did not address any of the major concepts, fell outside educational contexts, or lacked sufficient information for conceptual interpretation.

Method of Synthesis:

The literature was synthesised thematically rather than statistically, around six themes: emotion awareness, emotional regulation and student development; emotion awareness and spiritual comfort among higher secondary students; emotion awareness and academic achievement; school climate and student well-being; school climate, happiness and academic achievement; and the resulting research gap.

Review and Synthesis of Literature

Emotion Awareness and Emotional Regulation among HSS:

Emotion awareness helps students interpret their feelings accurately and respond appropriately to academic and social situations (Rubab *et al.*, 2024): students who are more aware of their emotions manage stress and examination pressure better and build more positive relationships with peers and teachers. Emotional regulation, the appropriate management and expression of emotion, curbs impulsive responses and anxiety, and underlies the self-confidence, resilience and psychological health that support effective learning (Jääskeläinen *et al.*, 2023). Both capacities shape students' motivation, classroom engagement and performance: students who manage their emotions well stay on task, engage meaningfully in class and work through difficult academic tasks, with better problem-solving, focus and self-discipline (Lin *et al.*, 2025). Where emotional awareness and regulation are lacking, students are more prone to stress, frustration, behavioural problems, loss of motivation and underachievement. Qualitative accounts of students' emotional experience can clarify these effects and inform how educators, counsellors and parents support students' emotional competence, academic achievement and well-being (Ruiz-Ortega & Berrios-Martos, 2025).

Emotion Awareness and Spiritual Comfort among Higher Secondary Students

Bahadori Khosroshahi and Samimi (2025) tested the effect of self-awareness skills training on the academic emotions and social competence of science-stream high school students, using a quasi-experimental pre-test/post-test design with experimental and control groups ($N = 50$) and standardised questionnaires analysed through multivariate analysis of covariance. Social competence and positive academic emotions improved significantly after training, while negative academic emotions declined, indicating that self-awareness training strengthens students' emotional well-being, social competence and learning experience. Collie *et al.* (2024) examined social-emotional competence (SEC) and autonomy-supportive teaching in relation to well-being, social-emotional skills and behaviour among 501 Australian students and their parents, using structural equation modelling. Autonomy-supportive teaching significantly predicted SEC, and higher perceived SEC was associated with greater emotional well-being, emotion regulation, self-reflection and prosocial behaviour and fewer conduct problems; tolerance, emotion regulation and emotional awareness specifically predicted these outcomes. Raza *et al.* (2023) studied the relationship between burnout and psychological well-being among 207 English-as-a-Second-Language students in Karachi, Pakistan, using the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Student Survey and the Psychological Well-Being Scale, analysed in SPSS 25; burnout was a significant negative predictor of psychological well-being, pointing to a need for

supportive learning environments that address student burnout. Atalay and Kağan (2022) tested a psychoeducation programme's effect on emotion regulation and mindfulness among 30 high school students in Erzincan during the 2018-2019 school year, using an experimental pre-test/post-test design with a 12-session intervention group and a no-treatment control group, analysed by two-way ANOVA; emotion regulation and mindfulness improved significantly after the programme, and the gains held at follow-up.

Emotion Awareness and Academic Achievements of HSS:

Emotion awareness, an individual's ability to recognise, understand and accurately identify their own emotional states and how this shapes thought and behavior, plays a meaningful role in students' learning and achievement. Students who are aware of their emotions are better placed to regulate anxiety, frustration, fear and stress, and so sustain attention and engagement during learning. A large meta-analysis by MacCann *et al.* (2020), drawing on 42,529 participants, reported a significant overall relationship between emotional intelligence and academic performance ($p = .20$), and Perera and DiGiacomo (2013) found a modest-to-moderate relationship between trait emotional intelligence and academic performance ($r = .20$). Emotion awareness appears to influence achievement through several pathways, including concentration, emotion regulation, adaptive coping, motivation, and interpersonal adjustment, with coping shown to mediate the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic achievement. Xie *et al.* (2025), in a three-level meta-analysis, found that positive academic emotions were positively related to learning performance while negative emotions were negatively related to it. Emotion awareness can therefore be read as a psychosocial factor that supports academic functioning, though its influence varies with age, context, and how it is measured.

School Climate and School Environment among HSS

Chen *et al.* (2025) evaluated an interactive, flipped-classroom model combining digital teaching aids, laboratory training, video instruction, and peer-and-teacher evaluation in a life sciences course; using pre- and post-tests alongside attitudinal surveys, the study found that the combined strategy significantly improved students' engagement, understanding and confidence in their knowledge and practical skills, supporting self-directed, technology-supported learning environments in science education. Amsalu and Belay (2024) examined how perceived dimensions of school climate, leadership, relationships, the professional teaching-learning climate, safety and the physical environment affect academic performance in upper-primary schools in Ethiopia, using structural equation modelling and mediation analysis with 328 teachers and students; the five dimensions together accounted for 19% of the variance in academic achievement, school leadership and the teaching-learning environment had significant direct effects, and

the teaching-learning environment mediated the effects of the physical environment, safety and leadership on learning outcomes. De Neve et al. (2023) examined emotion regulation, engagement and teacher-peer relationships among 136 secondary school students, finding that difficulties with emotional awareness, clarity and access to regulation strategies were related to emotional and behavioural engagement, mediating the link between relationships and engagement, with implications for curriculum design and teacher training. Kobicheva et al. (2022) examined how gender and level of study affected affective learning outcomes and academic performance in a blended-learning environment with 513 undergraduate and postgraduate students, using an online questionnaire analysed in SPSS and SmartPLS; satisfaction was the strongest predictor of performance across genders, though perceived benefits mattered more for postgraduate performance while satisfaction mattered more for undergraduates.

School Climate and Academic Achievements among HSS:

School climate is the overall quality, culture, and atmosphere of a school as experienced by students, teachers, administrators, and the wider school community: teacher-student relationships, peer interaction, safety, fairness in discipline, inclusiveness, institutional support, leadership, and the physical and psychological learning environment (Lijun & Te, 2024). A positive climate rests on mutual respect, trust, and collaboration, and leaves students feeling valued and encouraged to reach their potential. Strong teacher-student relationships encourage students to seek guidance and emotional support, building confidence and a positive attitude to learning (Delgado-Galindo *et al.*, 2025); positive peer relationships offer cooperation, teamwork, and social support that reduce isolation; and an inclusive, safe environment, free of bullying, discrimination, violence, and harassment, lets students concentrate on schoolwork without fear (Carapeto *et al.*, 2025). A positive school climate is central to student engagement, motivation and academic success, encouraging regular attendance, participation in class discussion, consistent homework completion and commitment to learning goals (Akinubi *et al.*, 2024). Counselling, career guidance, extracurricular activities, mentoring and accessible learning resources extend this institutional support, while effective school leadership and communication among teachers, parents and students build students' confidence and motivation to meet academic challenges (Putri, 2024). By contrast, a climate marked by low trust, peer conflict, weak institutional support, unequal discipline or unsafe conditions is associated with greater stress, absenteeism, lower self-esteem and participation, and weaker academic motivation and performance (Di Lisio *et al.*, 2025). Qualitative accounts of students' experience within these environments can clarify how different dimensions of school climate shape students' emotional states, social interaction, learning behaviour and

achievement, informing evidence-based practice for teachers, administrators, counsellors and policymakers (Almansour & Almoayad, 2024).

School Climate, happiness and Academic Achievements among HLS

School climate is also a key determinant of students' psychological well-being, engagement and academic development, encompassing teacher support, peer relationships, safety, inclusiveness, fairness and opportunities for participation, and extending beyond physical infrastructure to the quality of interpersonal interaction that shapes emotional adjustment, motivation and achievement (Kutsyuruba *et al.*, 2015). During adolescence, a positive climate is linked to subjective well-being, resilience and educational success (Lombardi *et al.*, 2019). Sakız and Denktaş (2026) found that a positive school climate strengthened students' sense of belonging, which in turn improved psychological well-being and academic performance, while Wikman et al. (2025) found that teacher-coaching interventions improved classroom relationships, participation and social development by making learning environments more emotionally supportive. Wahyuni et al. (2025) similarly found that task-oriented classroom practices, built around collaboration, autonomy and active participation, increased students' emotional well-being and learning motivation. Inclusive environments matter equally for adolescents' social and emotional development: Maratia et al. (2025) found that diversity-sensitive practice improved academic achievement, relationships, engagement, and well-being by reducing exclusion and discrimination. School climate has also extended into digital and emotional competence: Al-Qallaf (2025) found that students with higher digital empathy and emotional intelligence were less likely to engage in cyberbullying and reported greater emotional well-being, reflecting how students' online interactions now form part of the school climate. Cruz et al. (2025) reported that a positive campus climate reduced psychological distress while improving engagement and academic success. Institutional fairness and cultural inclusion round out a healthy school climate: Fleming, Smith and Inglehart (2025) found that equitable treatment, cultural inclusion and institutional respect improved students' satisfaction, motivation, confidence and well-being, and Olsson et al. (2025) found that schools promoting empathy, respectful relationships and effective bullying prevention improved adolescents' emotional adjustment, self-esteem, motivation and engagement.

Across the reviewed literature, emotion awareness and a positive school climate are consistently associated with academic achievement, emotional well-being, motivation, engagement and positive learning experiences. Emotional competencies appear to support students' regulation and well-being directly, while school environments marked by positive teacher-student and peer relationships, safety, inclusiveness and

belongingness contribute independently to better academic outcomes (Collie *et al.*, 2024; Amsalu & Belay, 2024; Podiya *et al.*, 2025). Maheshwari and Sharma (2025) found that explicit SEL skills training built students' emotional competence, classroom engagement and academic success; Wang and Eccles (2024) found that teacher support, belongingness and team-based learning together increased students' involvement and achievement; and Taylor *et al.* (2024) reported lasting gains in achievement, emotional adjustment and behaviour following SEL integration.

These findings treat students' emotional competencies and the quality of their school environment as interconnected rather than separate influences on educational development. The present synthesis adds to this literature by bringing evidence on emotion awareness and school climate together within a single account, and, being qualitative rather than quantitative like most of the studies reviewed, it offers a more detailed picture of how these factors are experienced by students themselves.

When considered together the literature revealed that the multilevel relationship among emotional awareness, school environment, engagement, and achievement are-

At the individual level: Emotion Awareness → Self-understanding → Self-regulation → Learning Engagement → Academic Achievement.

At the contextual level: Supportive School Environment → Safety/Belonging/Teacher Support → Motivation and Engagement → Academic Achievement.

The two pathways can also interact:

Supportive School Environment ↔ Emotion Awareness and Emotional Development → Self-regulation and Engagement → Academic Achievement.

Academic Achievement is therefore better understood as the product of interacting individual, relational, psychological and educational factors than as the outcome of any single variable, a reading consistent with research on metacognition, social-emotional learning, teacher-student relationships, school belonging and school climate more broadly. This should not be read as a causal claim: most of the literature on school climate, awareness and academic outcomes is correlational or review-based, so the evidence supports meaningful associations and plausible explanatory pathways rather than proof that emotional awareness or school environment alone drives differences in academic performance. What it does support is the case for further empirical research examining the three constructs together, particularly among higher secondary students in Indian educational contexts.

CONCLUSION

This review identifies emotion awareness and a positive school climate as two of the central factors shaping the academic achievement of higher secondary students. Students with strong emotional awareness and regulation skills cope better with academic stress, sustain motivation, participate more actively in class, and achieve better outcomes, while a school climate built on strong teacher-student and peer relationships, inclusiveness, safety, and institutional support promotes students' well-being, sense of belonging, and engagement. The two factors are related rather than independent: emotionally supportive school environments help build students' emotional competencies, and emotionally aware students are better placed to make use of the opportunities such environments offer. Read together, these findings make the case for building emotion awareness and a positive school climate into everyday practice, and they offer teachers, school leaders, counsellors and policymakers a basis for designing evidence-based practices that support students' growth, learning and mental health through the higher secondary years.

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