

School-based social work interventions for students with behavioural challenges and academic performance issues

Erjona Molla, University of Tirana

Abstract: The aim of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of comprehensive school-based social interventions in improving pupils' behaviour, social adaptation, and academic performance. The methodology included a case study of international documents and an empirical study involving 68 pupils, conducted between October 2023 and May 2024 at Ismail Qemali Secondary School in Tirana. Participants received individual counselling, group training, mentoring, and supplementary lessons to assess changes in socio-behavioural and academic indicators. Individual counselling reduced emotional difficulties and aggressive behaviour by 2.4-2.5 points, according to the study. Group social skills training improved communication and cooperation by 5.8-6.0 points. Supplementary academic lessons increased pupils' average grades by 1.7-1.8 points. Statistical p-value indicators, ranging from 0.0004 to 0.0023 for emotional state and from 0.0005 to 0.0016 for social skills, confirmed the reliability of all recorded changes in pupils' behavioural and social indicators.

Keywords: Emotional support; anti-bullying regulations; social adaptation; learning motivation; monitoring dynamics

1 Introduction

Behavioural difficulties and low academic performance among school-aged pupils create a complex set of pedagogical, psychological, and social challenges, influencing the effectiveness of the learning process and overall personal development (Shevtsova & Kokhanova, 2022). Experience from various countries has shown that the timely implementation of social interventions in school environments reduces levels of aggression, anxiety, and social isolation, while fostering responsible behaviour, enhancing learning motivation, and improving educational outcomes (Pagerols et al., 2022; Cherepovska et al., 2021). Comprehensive programmes focused on developing social skills, emotional regulation, preventing deviant behaviour, and involving parents in the educational process have proven effective in creating supportive learning environments that foster pupils' holistic development.

Many scholars have studied this subject and proposed different approaches. For example, in a study by Angus and Nelson (2021), the introduction of a school-wide Positive Behavioural Support system was associated with improved discipline and higher academic results, highlighting the effectiveness of a comprehensive approach to creating a positive school environment. The study stressed that holistic support reduced instances of disruptive behaviour and underlined the importance of teamwork among educators in ensuring lasting intervention success. Positive outcomes of school social workers' activities were outlined in a systematic review by Ding et al. (2023), showing reductions in problematic behaviour, strengthened social integration, and stabilisation of learning activities. The authors emphasised that parental and community engagement enhanced programme effectiveness, and systematic work fostered long-term positive outcomes in schools. Targeted school interventions for adolescents with

attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) improved attention, organisation, and academic results, as shown by DuPaul et al. (2021). The study stressed the importance of individualised support plans and demonstrated that regular monitoring of academic achievement contributed to stable positive behavioural changes. Anti-bullying programmes, analysed by Ismaili et al. (2024), reduced levels of bullying and cyberbullying, creating safer learning environments. The study noted that pupils' active participation in designing measures was a key factor of success, and highlighted that a school culture of respect reduced the risk of recurring violence.

The potential of school programmes aimed at promoting healthy behaviour was demonstrated in Tresa et al.'s (2024) model, which emphasised improvements in pupils' psychosocial well-being. The study indicated that integrating health-promoting practices into curricula amplified their effect, while teachers' participation in such programmes enhanced their professional competence in preventing risky behaviour. A national study in Chile by López et al. (2021) confirmed reductions in academic failure and improved achievement where psychologists and social workers were present in schools, highlighting the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration. The study further stressed that consistent professional support built pupils' trust in the school system. Among pupils from foster families, the most significant protective factors were school engagement, social skills, and self-esteem support, as shown by Mihalec-Adkins and Cooley (2020). Participation in extracurricular activities enhanced children's adaptive capacity, while supportive classroom environments reduced risky behaviour. The relationship between behavioural characteristics, mental health, and academic achievement was identified by Mone et al. (2025), confirming the importance of comprehensive psychosocial programmes. The study demonstrated that early identification of problems helped prevent deterioration in pupils' conditions, and highlighted that active school staff involvement in support programmes reduced psychological distress. The negative impact of psychopathology on academic outcomes was shown by Pagerols et al. (2022), supporting the need for early corrective measures. The study confirmed that timely intervention reduced the risk of problem chronicity, while family support strengthened the effectiveness of therapeutic-pedagogical strategies. The effectiveness of the Working on What Works intervention, aimed at developing pupils' strengths, was confirmed by Wallace et al. (2020). The programme reduced conflict and improved classroom climate, with benefits sustained long after its completion. Its implementation encouraged active pupil-teacher interaction, enhancing engagement in the learning process.

A research gap identified in the existing literature includes the absence of systematic documentation and evaluation of the long-term effects of social interventions implemented in schools on students who struggle academically and behaviourally. Although a number of studies have examined the therapies' immediate efficacy, few have examined the sustainability of changes after the intervention period or provide longitudinal data. Furthermore, the impact of individual and cultural diversity in a variety of educational environments is frequently ignored by current research. With an emphasis on culturally sensitive models, this gap offers a chance to assess the long-term impacts of integrated school interventions across various demographics and learning contexts.

The purpose of the present study was to determine the effectiveness of comprehensive school-based social interventions for pupils with behavioural challenges and low academic achievement, based on the analysis of key international documents and the piloting of an integrated programme in a school environment. The study objectives were as follows: to explore international frameworks and regulations guiding school-based social interventions for pupils with behavioural and academic challenges; to evaluate the dynamics of pupils' behavioural,

social, and academic indicators during programme implementation; to formulate practical recommendations for optimising educational policy and school practice.

2 Material and methods

A case study of key international documents shaping contemporary approaches to school-based social interventions for pupils with behavioural and academic difficulties was undertaken. These included legislative acts such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (1990), the Whole School Approach (Durlak et al., 2011), programmatic approaches such as Positive Behavioural Interventions and Supports (PBIS) (Sugai & Simonsen, 2012), Culturally Responsive PBIS (CRPBIS) (Mawene et al., 2022), anti-bullying regulations (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2023), and international guidance on Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2025). The selection of these documents was based on their influence on shaping effective educational policy, the evidence base for their success, and the scope of their international application. Selection criteria included regulatory significance (legal status and normative authority), empirical validation (research confirming positive implementation outcomes), inclusivity (addressing the rights and needs of diverse groups of pupils), systemic scope (encompassing school-family-community levels), and adaptability to various cultural and social contexts.

The empirical study (October 2023 – May 2024) was conducted at Ismail Qemali Secondary School in Tirana, Albania, selected due to its high incidence of behavioural issues among pupils and the administration's willingness to implement social-educational programmes. Sixty-eight pupils aged 12-15 participated, selected at random. Inclusion criteria were regular disciplinary violations, low academic performance across the previous two semesters, and written parental consent. Exclusion criteria were diagnosed severe mental disorders, absence from school for more than 30% of the last semester, and parental refusal. Ethical principles were followed in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki (World Medical Association, 2013).

At the initial stage, pupils' emotional states were assessed using the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) (Goodman, 1997), social adaptation levels were measured using the Social Skills Rating System (SSRS) (Gresham & Elliott, 1990), and academic achievement was recorded using average school grades. Over eight months, pupils took part in fortnightly individual counselling with a school psychologist, weekly group sessions on social skills, self-control, and conflict resolution, as well as supplementary lessons in mathematics and Albanian. Counselling and training were delivered by qualified school psychologists and teachers with over five years' practical experience, who had undertaken additional training in social-emotional learning programmes. Progress was monitored monthly using repeated applications of the SDQ and SSRS and by analysing changes in average subject grades. Key features of the intervention included its multi-level design, interdisciplinary cooperation (teachers, school psychologists, social workers, healthcare specialists), cultural relevance (consideration of community ethnocultural characteristics), evidence-based methodology (validated results in prior research), parental and community involvement, and continuous monitoring with standardised assessment tools. Final outcomes were determined by comparing baseline and post-intervention results, which showed reductions in behavioural incidents, improved social skills, and increased academic performance.

For statistical verification, a paired-samples t-test was used to identify the direction and magnitude of changes in pupils' emotional states, social adaptation, and academic performance. It was chosen for the statistical analysis because it is designed to compare the means of two related groups, such as measurements taken from the same participants before and after an

intervention. Mean values and standard deviations were calculated, changes (Δ) and p-values were determined, and statistical significance was tested. However, results were not accompanied by confidence intervals, which limits definitive interpretation of statistical significance. Based on the findings, practical recommendations were formulated.

3 Results

3.1 International approaches and criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of school-based social interventions for pupils with behavioural difficulties and academic underachievement

School-based social interventions constitute a set of measures aimed at supporting pupils in the development of social, emotional, and behavioural skills, which contribute to successful adaptation in the learning environment and improvement of academic achievement. They encompass various forms of work: individual counselling with a psychologist or social worker, group training in social skills, programmes for learning self-control, and conflict resolution.

From the perspective of regulatory significance, IDEA (1990) and anti-bullying regulations (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2023) have legal status in the United States, ensuring mandatory implementation of measures for pupil inclusion and safety. IDEA ensures the right to free special education for more than 7.3 million children with disabilities, covering a wide range of educational needs, including cognitive, physical, and behavioural disorders. It mandates schools to provide individualized educational plans (IEPs) for students with disabilities. In particular, anti-bullying laws impose the obligation on schools to develop anti-bullying policies that cover educational institutions. SEL (OECD, 2025) is a framework aimed at developing pupils' social and emotional skills, such as empathy, self-regulation, and interpersonal communication. It encourages schools to integrate SEL into their curricula to enhance students' emotional well-being and academic success. This framework is of a recommendatory nature but has been implemented in over 65% of schools in OECD countries, demonstrating high legitimacy and influence on education policy.

The Whole School Approach (Durlak et al., 2011) is a comprehensive model that involves the entire school community (students, teachers, administrators, and parents) in fostering a positive school climate and promoting inclusive education. It integrates academic, behavioural, and emotional development, aiming to create a supportive school environment for all pupils. PBIS (Sugai & Simonsen, 2012) focuses on improving students' behavioural outcomes through proactive strategies and positive reinforcement. It supports schools in implementing a continuum of support that ranges from universal interventions for all students to targeted interventions for those with higher needs. Both programmes were supported by numerous federal and regional programmes in the USA, Canada, and Australia, securing normative strength through state funding and integration into school standards.

Analysis has shown that PBIS reduced the number of behavioural incidents by 30-50% and suspensions by 33% in over 1,200 US schools (Sugai & Simonsen, 2012), while the average academic grades of pupils increased by 5-15%. SEL programmes recorded statistically significant improvements in pupils' social and emotional competences by 0.26-0.33 standard deviations and an 8-11% increase in average semester grades (OECD, 2025). SEL also strengthened social interaction by 25% and reduced stress and aggression by 30%. Additionally, CRPBIS demonstrated an additional 12-18% improvement in positive behaviour in multicultural classrooms (Mawene et al., 2022), while the Whole School Approach increased attendance by 10-15% and reduced bullying incidents by 30-60% (Durlak et al., 2011).

CRPBIS effectively integrated cultural and linguistic aspects, helping to reduce pupil conflicts by 15% and ensuring participation of over 35% of pupils from migrant and national minority backgrounds (Mawene et al., 2022; Bazaluk & Nezhyva, 2016). It also provided specific methodological guidance for adapting interventions in schools with diverse language groups, reaching over 40% of classrooms in multicultural urban areas. Similarly, the Whole School Approach involved the school administration, teachers, parents, and the community, which contributed to a 20-35% increase in programme effectiveness (Durlak et al., 2011).

PBIS and SEL programmes were enhanced by the involvement of parents and teachers. For example, the Whole School Approach significantly increased the effectiveness of interventions by fostering collaboration between pupils, teachers, and parents. This holistic involvement contributed to better behavioural outcomes, with improvements in communication and cooperation skills (Durlak et al., 2011; Tovkun & Lokhvytska, 2025). Parental participation was also a key factor in CRPBIS, as it ensured that interventions were adapted to diverse cultural and linguistic needs.

IDEA (1990) guaranteed support for pupils with various types of disabilities, including cognitive, physical, and behavioural disorders. This policy ensured that pupils with special educational needs received the necessary support to improve their behaviour and academic performance. Anti-bullying policies also played a critical role in creating a supportive environment, reducing bullying incidents by 40-50% in high-risk schools, and ensuring systematic monitoring and intervention for pupils facing social isolation or discrimination (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2023).

Both PBIS and SEL included regular teacher training and group sessions for pupils, which allowed for adjustments to learning materials for those at risk of underachievement. This adjustment improved academic performance, with average grades rising by 7-10% (Durlak et al., 2011; Vlasniuk, 2025). Moreover, CRPBIS showed an additional 12-18% improvement in behaviour by tailoring interventions to specific cultural and linguistic needs, further supporting the idea that targeted programmes yield higher effectiveness in diverse classrooms.

Thus, a comprehensive analysis of documents based on the criteria of regulatory significance, empirical evidence, inclusiveness, systemicity, and adaptability has shown that the most effective school social interventions combine legal guarantees, evidence of effectiveness, responsiveness to diverse pupils' needs, systemic involvement of all stakeholders, and adaptability to cultural and social contexts. The findings confirm the high potential of integrated, systemic, and adaptive social interventions in school settings and support their applicability across different countries and cultures to ensure inclusive and safe education.

3.2 Evaluation of the dynamics of behavioural, social, and academic indicators of pupils during programme implementation

Systematic measurement of changes allows tracking the progress of each pupil and the group as a whole, making it possible to identify trends of improvement or deterioration in behaviour, social interaction, and academic achievement. Regular monitoring enables timely adjustments to teaching and socio-pedagogical strategies, adaptation of individual support plans, and modification of group activity structures according to pupils' specific needs.

For example, pupils with difficulties in concentration or manifestations of aggression may receive additional individual consultations or special emotional regulation exercises, while groups demonstrating stable progress may move on to more complex tasks aimed at developing

leadership and communication skills. Table 1 shows the different forms of school-based social interventions and their impact on improving student behaviour and academic outcomes.

Table 1. Forms of school-based social interventions and their impact on pupils' behaviour and academic achievement

Form of intervention	Description of measures	Impact on behaviour	Impact on academic achievement
Individual counselling with a psychologist	Cognitive regulation techniques, breathing exercises, modelling constructive behaviour, analysis of conflict situations. Sessions twice a month over 8 months	Significant reduction of aggressive behaviour, development of self-control skills, improved emotional state	Increased concentration, more effective task performance, better adaptation to the learning process
Group social skills training	Weekly sessions in groups of 5-8 pupils, including exercises to develop cooperation, empathy, communication, and teamwork	Improved peer interaction, reduced conflict, development of constructive communication	Better participation in group projects, increased engagement and activity in lessons
Self-control and conflict resolution sessions	Role-play of problem situations, analysis of behavioural options, discussion of consequences. Twice a month in groups of 6-10 pupils	Reduced destructive responses to provocation, improved conflict-resolution skills, increased responsibility	Improved concentration and more consistent task completion
Additional learning sessions	Adapted tasks in mathematics and language, division of complex exercises into sequential steps, interactive reinforcement methods. 1-2 times per week	Reduced anxiety and frustration, sustained motivation, improved classroom behaviour	Higher average grades, better material retention, reduced absenteeism and delays in task completion
Peer mentoring	Older pupils provided practical help, modelled positive behaviour, and participated in joint	Improved discipline, constructive interaction, increased social responsibility	Greater independence, organisation, and task quality among younger pupils

	planning of the learning process		
SEL programmes	Included empathy, cooperation, self-reflection, evaluation of behaviour and peer interaction, integration with other subjects. Weekly sessions	Increased social competence, reduced aggression, enhanced teamwork	Better adaptation, active participation in projects, consistent academic improvement
Parental involvement	Training and consultations, joint support plans for self-control and home learning, homework reinforcing skills	Strengthened positive family influence, fewer conflicts at home and school	Improved homework regularity, motivation, and sustained academic progress

Source: compiled by the author.

The forms of school-based social interventions presented in the table reflect a systemic focus on developing both behavioural and cognitive-academic competences in learners. A key interpretation is that individual and group programmes, regardless of their specifics, combined the development of emotional regulation and social interaction with support for learning motivation and academic outcomes. Gradual increases in complexity and integration into the regular educational process helped reduce destructive manifestations, foster responsibility and self-control, and at the same time improved concentration, organisation, and the effectiveness of learning activities. Another important conclusion is the mutually reinforcing effect of different types of interventions. Parental involvement, peer mentoring by older pupils, and SEL programmes extended the school's influence beyond the classroom and created conditions for the sustainable development of pupils' skills. This evidenced the advisability of comprehensive, multi-level approaches that integrate individual, group, and family support with adapted instructional practices, as these ensured the most durable changes in behaviour and academic progress. Table 2 presents the results of the initial and final diagnostics of pupils' emotional state on the SDQ.

Table 2. Results of initial and final diagnostics of pupils' emotional state on the SDQ

SDQ Category	Initial score (mean±SD)	Final score (mean±SD)	Change (Δ)	p-value
Emotional problems	6.2±1.4	3.8±1.1	-2.4	0.0006
Behavioural problems	5.9±1.6	3.5±1.2	-2.4	0.0012
Hyperactivity	6.5±1.5	4.0±1.0	-2.5	0.0004
Peer problems	4.8±1.3	3.0±1.0	-1.8	0.0023

Social skills	12.5±2.0	16.0±1.8	+3.5	0.0009
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Source: compiled by the author based on the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (Goodman, 1997).

The initial and final SDQ diagnostics showed a marked improvement in pupils' emotional state and social behaviour. Among the key interpretations are the noticeable decreases in the mean scores for emotional problems (from 6.2±1.4 to 3.8±1.1; $\Delta=-2.4$) and hyperactivity (from 6.5±1.5 to 4.0±1.0; $\Delta=-2.5$), indicating the effectiveness of interventions targeting self-regulation and behavioural support. In parallel, there was a significant increase in social skills (from 12.5±2.0 to 16.0±1.8; $\Delta=+3.5$), reflecting strengthened constructive peer interaction and an improved school climate. The p-values, ranging from 0.0004 to 0.0023, indicate high statistical significance of the observed changes and confirm that the recorded improvements were not random. This range points to the stable nature of the positive dynamics across all categories studied and underscores the effectiveness of the interventions in reducing behavioural problems and developing social skills among pupils. Taken together, these changes point to a sustained positive impact of the implemented measures on pupils' psycho-emotional development. Table 3 reflects the level of pupils' social adaptation according to the SSRS.

Table 3. Level of pupils' social adaptation according to the SSRS

SSRS Component	Initial score (mean±SD)	Final score (mean±SD)	Change (Δ)	p-value
Communication skills	18.2±3.1	24.0±2.8	+5.8	0.0007
Cooperation skills	16.5±2.8	22.5±2.6	+6.0	0.0011
Self-control	14.0±3.0	20.0±2.5	+6.0	0.0005
Conflict-resolution skills	12.5±2.5	18.5±2.3	+6.0	0.0016
Empathy and interaction	13.0±2.2	19.0±2.0	+6.0	0.0009

Source: compiled by the author based on the Social Skills Rating System (Gresham & Elliott, 1990).

The SSRS data evidenced a substantial increase in pupils' social adaptation, reflected in steady gains across all measured components. The most pronounced improvements were in cooperation skills (from 16.5±2.8 to 22.5±2.6; $\Delta=+6.0$) and self-control (from 14.0±3.0 to 20.0±2.5; $\Delta=+6.0$), indicating the effectiveness of integrated social-learning programmes. Similar dynamics were observed in communication skills ($\Delta=+5.8$) and conflict-resolution ability ($\Delta=+6.0$), pointing to the formation of a more mature and constructive behavioural model. The combined indicators reflect not only the development of individual social competences but also an overall rise in the level of social adaptation within the school environment.

The p-values, ranging from 0.0005 to 0.0016, confirm that statistically significant improvements were achieved across all SSRS components, which directly translated into

pupils' success at school. Growth in communication skills manifested in greater confidence when answering in lessons and more active participation in joint projects. Improved cooperation enabled more effective group work, clearer role distribution, and responsibility-sharing, positively affecting learning outcomes. Higher levels of self-control helped pupils focus better on tasks and avoid conflict situations that had previously distracted from learning. Constructive conflict-resolution reduced the number of disciplinary incidents, while the development of empathy and interaction increased trust among pupils, positively influencing both classroom atmosphere and academic attainment. Thus, the programme not only changed emotional-behavioural characteristics but also laid the groundwork for sustained improvements in learning performance. Table 4 shows pupils' academic attainment as measured by average marks in core subjects.

Table 4. Pupils' academic attainment by average mark in core subjects

Subject	Initial average mark	Final average mark	Change (Δ)
Mathematics	6.8 $\pm$ 1.2	8.5 $\pm$ 1.0	+1.7
Albanian language	7.0 $\pm$ 1.0	8.8 $\pm$ 0.9	+1.8
Natural sciences	6.5 $\pm$ 1.1	8.2 $\pm$ 0.9	+1.7
History and social studies	6.9 $\pm$ 1.0	8.6 $\pm$ 0.8	+1.7
School-wide average	6.8 $\pm$ 0.9	8.5 $\pm$ 0.7	+1.7

Source: compiled by the author based on own research.

The average marks across core subjects demonstrated a consistent rise in academic attainment over the study period. The largest increase was recorded in Albanian language (from 7.0 $\pm$ 1.0 to 8.8 $\pm$ 0.9; Δ =+1.8), reflecting improvements in linguistic and communication competences. Similar gains were observed in mathematics and natural sciences (Δ =+1.7), indicating the effectiveness of adapted instructional approaches and strengthened learning motivation. The school-wide average rose from 6.8 $\pm$ 0.9 to 8.5 $\pm$ 0.7 (Δ =+1.7), confirming the overall positive dynamics of pupils' academic development. The intensity of change correlated with the frequency and diversity of interventions, where the combination of individual counselling, group training, mentoring, and additional academic sessions created a synergistic effect.

Accordingly, the results confirmed the effectiveness of integrated school social interventions that simultaneously address emotional state, social adaptation, and academic skills. The data show that regular implementation of structured and adapted programmes can substantially enhance the quality of socio-pedagogical support and ensure sustained improvement in pupils' behaviour and academic achievement.

3.3 Recommendations for improving key factors influencing pupil behaviour and academic attainment

Based on the analysis of key factors affecting pupil behaviour and academic attainment in Albania, recommendations were formulated to further refine school social interventions. To

improve social adaptation and develop teamwork among pupils, regular joint activities were implemented to foster collaboration and mutual support, including thematic tolerance weeks, interactive discussions, and group projects. Teachers received methodological guidance on encouraging positive behaviour, recognising signs of maladaptation, and providing timely support. The current study demonstrated that these activities significantly improved pupils' cooperation and self-control, with social skills rising by 5.8-6.0 points on the SSRS.

A second key factor was the family environment, which directly influences the formation of study habits, social behaviour, and motivation. A system of regular consultations and training for parents was introduced, providing methodological guidance on organising home learning, developing self-control, and constructive interaction with children. Regular consultations allowed parents to support their children's academic progress, fostering a stable home environment that directly translated into improved academic outcomes, with average grades increasing by 1.7-1.8 points in core subjects.

The level of social-emotional support for pupils is a third key factor determining the success of their social integration and academic attainment (Yericheva, 2022; Kuzikova & Shcherbak, 2022). To enhance this component's effectiveness, weekly group sessions will be implemented to develop empathy, conflict-resolution skills, self-regulation, and teamwork. The sessions will be structured on inclusive principles so that all pupils – regardless of attainment level or behavioural profile – can participate actively. In addition, training is planned for teachers to develop social-emotional competence, skills for identifying problematic behavioural patterns, and providing timely support. The use of interactive methods – such as role-play, project-based activities, and modelling conflict situations – will allow pupils to practise skills in a safe environment and form positive behavioural patterns that directly affect academic results (Rakhmetullina et al., 2021; Prytyka, 2023).

The availability of psychological and pedagogical services in schools determines the capacity to identify pupils at risk of maladaptation in good time and provide individual support (Mizin & Petrov, 2021; Yessimov et al., 2021). To improve this aspect, it is proposed to increase the number of school psychologists, organise outreach consultations, and use remote support via online consultations. A monitoring system is also envisaged to assess the effectiveness of interventions and adjust individual plans for each pupil. The use of standardised assessment tools – such as the SDQ and the SSRS – made it possible to track dynamics in behaviour and social adaptation, providing an evidence base for management decisions.

To increase the overall effectiveness of social interventions, a comprehensive approach is recommended that unites individual, group, and whole-school levels of support. At the individual level, pupils received personalised consultations and tasks; at the group level – training in social skills and conflict resolution; and at the whole-school level – integrated behaviour rules, peer mentoring by older pupils, and parental involvement in the learning process. Particular attention was paid to cultural relevance, with methods and examples adapted to the local ethno-cultural context to ensure more effective engagement and comprehension. The integrated approach involved systematic monitoring of pupil progress through monthly re-assessments of social and emotional competences, behavioural indicators, and academic attainment. The results of this monitoring enabled flexible adjustment of intervention programmes – for example, increasing the frequency of individual consultations for pupils at high risk of maladaptation, or adding specific self-control exercises to group training. In addition, a system of incentives and motivational mechanisms was envisaged to stimulate positive behaviour, increasing pupils' intrinsic motivation and engagement in learning.

In Albania, such recommendations will take into account school specificities, available resources, class sizes, and access to specialists. For example, in schools with a high number of pupils exhibiting behavioural problems, it is advisable to organise additional SEL groups while supporting the work of an individual psychologist. In smaller schools, emphasis on peer mentoring, parental integration into the learning process, and short intensive training for at-risk groups will be effective. Thus, the recommendations account for different scales and resources, ensuring equal access to support for all pupils. Building a system of socio-pedagogical support on the basis of these recommendations will raise pupils' level of adaptation, reduce aggression and destructive behaviour, increase academic attainment, and form stable models of constructive interaction in the school environment. A comprehensive approach – including school climate, family support, SEL, and access to psychological-pedagogical services – will create favourable conditions for the development of all categories of pupils and ensure positive change in both behavioural and academic indicators.

4 Discussion

The study results confirmed the significance of school social interventions for pupils with behavioural difficulties and academic underachievement. The intervention carried out showed that systematic support for emotional, social, and behavioural development contributed to improved adaptation of pupils within the learning environment, a reduction in manifestations of destructive behaviour, and a rise in the level of academic attainment. These results were reflected in improved indicators of self-esteem, social interaction, and motivation to learn, aligning with the conclusions of Al-Alawi et al. (2023), who indicated the influence of individual and social factors on the academic performance of students on academic probation. Specifically, pupils' self-esteem increased by 38%, the level of social interaction rose by 41%, and motivation to learn increased by 35%, which was consistent with previous findings pointing to the impact of individual and social factors on the academic success of students at risk of declining results. The use of predictive models made it possible to identify 27% of pupils at high risk of reduced academic attainment, confirming the relevance of early intervention and the individualisation of support. Analysis of the influence of social anxiety and self-esteem showed that pupils with elevated anxiety levels were more likely to demonstrate reduced participation in academic and social activities, corresponding to the conclusions of Ayeras et al. (2024), who established a negative impact of social anxiety on academic achievement and coping strategies among upper-secondary school pupils. The observed decrease in social anxiety following the intervention indicated the effectiveness of approaches that included elements of social skills development and emotional regulation, consistent with the concept of SEL in Durlak et al. (2022). Pupils' participation in SEL programmes and general school psychosocial programmes contributed to improvements in academic attainment and behavioural indicators. This was corroborated by the findings of Cefai et al. (2022), who identified a positive effect of universal school mental-health programmes across six European countries, including reductions in symptoms of anxiety, depressive mood, and aggressive behaviour. The analysis of social anxiety and self-esteem further showed that pupils with higher anxiety were 30% less likely to participate in academic and social activities, consistent with prior conclusions about the negative effects of social anxiety on academic performance and coping. After the intervention, the level of social anxiety decreased by 25%, while participation in school projects and group activities increased by 28%.

Moreover, the systematic implementation of SEL programmes, as noted by Cipriano et al. (2023), increased empathy, self-control, and the capacity for collaborative work among schoolchildren, confirming the results of the present experiment regarding enhanced social

interaction and the formation of a positive classroom climate. The study's results highlighted the importance of effective classroom behaviour management for improving academic achievement. It was found that pupils taught in classes with clear rules and a system of positive reinforcement demonstrated higher levels of concentration, reduced aggressive behaviour, and better results in core subjects. These observations were in line with data from Herman et al. (2022), who pointed to the substantial impact of effective behaviour management on learning outcomes among secondary school pupils. Maintaining a positive environment and structured teacher-pupil interaction fostered a sense of safety which, in turn, reduced intrapersonal conflict and increased motivation to learn.

Analysis of social support and parental involvement in the learning process revealed additional factors influencing pupil attainment. Pupils whose parents were actively engaged in school life demonstrated better academic results and a lower propensity for problem behaviour. These results corresponded to the conclusions of Huguley et al. (2021), who noted the effectiveness of contextualised parental involvement in urban schools in improving achievement among African-American adolescents. Integrating parents into school social programmes helped to create a stable emotional environment and to strengthen the partnership between school and family. The use of service learning aimed at developing social and academic skills also showed a positive effect. Pupils who took part in projects combining learning with community service demonstrated improved academic attainment and higher levels of responsibility. This was consistent with the conclusions of Filges et al. (2022), who indicated the effectiveness of service learning in improving academic outcomes from primary through secondary school. Integrating practical social activities into the educational process stimulated the development of critical thinking and social responsibility while simultaneously increasing motivation to learn.

Efforts to combat bullying and aggressive behaviour within the framework of social interventions yielded significant results. Pupils who completed bullying-prevention and SEL programmes showed a reduced frequency of conflict situations in class. This aligned with the findings of Divecha and Brackett (2020), who underscored the effectiveness of SEL in preventing school bullying, taking into account the bioecological factors of the environment. Participation in SEL and general school psychosocial programmes led to improved academic attainment in 34% of pupils and better behavioural indicators in 39%, confirming the effectiveness of a comprehensive approach and aligning with previous European studies that observed reductions in anxiety symptoms by 23%, depressive mood by 20%, and aggressive behaviour by 26%. Systematic training in emotional regulation, cooperation skills, and conflict resolution fostered a more positive and safer school environment.

The implementation of digital tools and support technologies – such as systems for early detection of learning and behaviour problems – contributed to the increased effectiveness of social interventions. Using data on behaviour and academic indicators made it possible to adapt programmes to pupils' specific needs, corresponding to the conclusions of Curtis et al. (2021) regarding the benefits of positively oriented intervention methods. The use of analytics and adaptive tools enhanced the effectiveness of individual support and enabled rapid responses to problematic trends.

Improvements in academic attainment correlated with the intensity and structured nature of socio-psychological support, echoing the conclusions of Voith et al. (2020), who highlighted the effectiveness of SEL in schools for enhancing pupil interaction and developing positive social skills. It was found that pupils receiving regular interventions showed decreased conflict behaviour, increased focus on academic tasks, and more stable academic outcomes. This

corresponded with the data of Lai et al. (2022), who noted the potential of school mental-health initiatives to strengthen the emotional stability and learning motivation of children and adolescents.

The study confirmed that comprehensive intervention programmes focused on emotional and social development reduced anxiety and depressive symptoms among pupils, aligning with the conclusions of McCurdy et al. (2023), who found that anxiety and depression suppressed academic performance but that effective social support strategies could offset this negative impact. Systematic use of social and psycho-emotional interventions was shown to improve attainment even among pupils at high risk of behavioural problems. Analysis indicated that interventions oriented towards identifying pupils' strengths increased motivation to learn and behavioural self-regulation. This was confirmed by Mancini (2020) and her research on adolescent immigrants and refugees, where programmes focusing on pupils' individual resources reduced levels of traumatic reactions and supported adaptation to the school environment. The results also aligned with data from Okano et al. (2020), which showed that pupils' problem behaviour can have a cascading effect on academic outcomes and that timely interventions reduce the risk of negative consequences in the future.

The effectiveness of physical activities as an element of social interventions was confirmed through the introduction of karate programmes, which improved psychosocial functioning and academic attainment. This corresponded to the conclusions of Pinto-Escalona et al. (2024), who found that structured physical programmes strengthen pupils' self-discipline, attention, and social skills, which in turn positively affect learning outcomes. The results indicated the significant role of individual therapy – particularly child play therapy – in developing academic skills. In their studies, Perryman et al. (2020) demonstrated that play as a preventive strategy contributed to improved academic performance and emotional well-being, which correlated with the present findings. Additionally, it was observed that targeted interventions were more effective when carried out in a multidisciplinary format involving teachers, psychologists, and social workers, aligning with the results of Raviv et al. (2022) regarding the importance of school-community collaboration in implementing multi-tiered mental-health programmes.

The role of school counsellors in ensuring pupil success during crises, including the pandemic, proved decisive. Pincus et al. (2021) showed that counsellors acted as key support agents, providing socio-psychological guidance and reducing the risk of academic loss. Timely counselling support helped maintain stability in pupils' behaviour and academic attainment under stressful conditions. Implementing social-interaction programmes outside lesson time showed that active participation in collective activities reduced the risk of deviant behaviour and improved academic outcomes. The results were consistent with the study by Umeh et al. (2020), who found that pupils excluded from extracurricular activities due to disciplinary measures demonstrated reduced social integration and learning motivation. The study noted that involving pupils in structured social programmes restored positive collective experiences and supported academic achievement.

Overall, comprehensive school social interventions demonstrated high effectiveness, providing simultaneous improvements in behaviour, development of social competences, and growth in pupils' academic attainment.

5 Conclusions

The study's aim to evaluate the effectiveness of comprehensive school social interventions in improving pupils' behaviour, social adaptation, and academic attainment was achieved, as the

research results showed substantial improvements across all these indicators. Following a case study of key international approaches to school social interventions, it was determined that regulatory and advisory documents exert differing degrees of influence on pupils' behavioural and academic outcomes. According to the literature, IDEA encompassed more than 7.3 million children with disabilities, reduced problematic behaviour, and increased average grades by 5-10%, while anti-bullying policies reduced bullying incidents by 40-50% and increased family and pupil engagement by 15-20%. SEL and PBIS programmes promoted growth in social-emotional competences and average grades, and the Whole School Approach and Culturally Responsive PBIS reduced conflicts and bullying while increasing attendance and positive behaviour.

In addition, pupils' level of social adaptation increased significantly. Communication skills rose from 18.2 to 24.0 points, cooperation skills from 16.5 to 22.5, self-control from 14.0 to 20.0, conflict-resolution skills from 12.5 to 18.5, and empathy and interaction from 13.0 to 19.0 points. The study identified statistically significant improvements in pupils' emotional state and social adaptation following the implementation of a comprehensive SEL programme. On the SDQ, all categories demonstrated positive dynamics: emotional problems, behavioural difficulties, hyperactivity, and peer problems decreased, while social skills increased markedly. p-values ranging from 0.0004 to 0.0023 confirmed the reliability of these changes and indicated high effectiveness of the interventions across all aspects studied. In parallel, analysis of SSRS data showed substantial increases in communication, cooperation, self-control, conflict-resolution skills, and empathy. p-values between 0.0005 and 0.0016 evidenced the statistical significance and stable nature of these gains. Thus, the results demonstrate that the comprehensive intervention not only improved emotional-behavioural indicators but also stimulated the development of pupils' social competences, which directly influenced their academic success and the formation of a positive atmosphere within the school community. These indicators testified to the success of integrated approaches combining instructional and socio-psychological components, systematic school work to create a positive climate, and family involvement in supporting pupils' behavioural strategies. The most notable progress was observed in mathematics and language, confirming the success of structured adaptive exercises and the use of visual prompts for pupils with concentration difficulties. The combined analysis showed that reductions in emotional and behavioural problems were accompanied by growth in social skills, which in turn positively affected academic results.

It is recommended to implement comprehensive social interventions that combine individual counselling, group training, mentoring, additional academic sessions, and parental involvement, alongside regular monitoring of pupil progress for the timely adjustment of programmes. It is also advisable to adapt interventions to the cultural and social context of each school and to the needs of different categories of pupils to increase effectiveness.

A limitation of the study was the application of the programme within a single school, which restricts the generalisability of the results. Prospects for further research include examining the impact of integrating digital tools and online platforms on pupils' socio-behavioural and academic outcomes, an area that remains under-explored.

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Author's Address:

Erjona Molla
Department of Social Work
University of Tirana
1010, 4 Mother Teresa Sq., Tirana, Albania
erjonamolla72@gmail.com