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آليات تعزيز المناعة النفسية في المدارس الأوروبية وكيفية الاستفادة منها في مدارس الخليج

Mechanisms of Enhancing Psychological Immunity in European Schools and How to Benefit from Them in Gulf Schools

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الملخص:

تُعد المناعة النفسية أمرًا أساسيًا لتمكين الطلاب من تحقيق النجاح الأكاديمي وتطوير القدرة على التكيف العاطفي. وتتمتع المدارس الأوروبية بإطار عمل راسخ لتعزيز الصحة النفسية، على سبيل المثال من خلال التعلم الاجتماعي العاطفي (SEL) وخدمات الإرشاد المهني المصممة لدعم رفاه الطلاب. ومع ذلك، لا تزال مدارس الخليج تواجه تحديات في الوصول إلى إنجازات مماثلة، ويرجع ذلك أساسًا إلى ضعف الوعي، وضعف تنفيذ السياسات، والعوائق الثقافية المرتبطة بقضايا الصحة النفسية والمبادرات ذات الصلة. يُقيّم هذا البحث برامج المناعة النفسية في المدارس الأوروبية ويدرس إمكانية تكييفها في مدارس الخليج. وبالاعتماد على بيانات ثانوية من منظمات ذات صلة، وتقارير حكومية، ومقالات علمية محكمة، وسياسات مؤسسية، تحدد الدراسة البرامج الأساسية، وتقيّم فعاليتها، وتستكشف استراتيجيات التكييف الممكنة. وتشير النتائج إلى أن المدارس الأوروبية تُولي أولوية لدعم الصحة النفسية للطلاب من خلال دمج برامج SEL، وتدريب المعلمين، وآليات الدعم بين الأقران، والتمويل المخصص للمبادرات النفسية—وهي عوامل تُعد محورية في نجاح هذه المدارس. وعلى النقيض من ذلك، تفتقر مدارس الخليج إلى أطر شاملة لدعم الصحة النفسية. وتخلص الدراسة إلى أن دمج أفضل الممارسات الأوروبية—مثل السياسات المنظمة وزيادة التمويل—يمكن أن يُعزز بشكل كبير المناعة النفسية في أنظمة التعليم المدرسي في دول الخليج.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التشريعات التربوية، حقوق الطلبة، العدالة التعليمية.

Abstract:

Psychological immunity is important for students to attain academic performance success and emotional resilience. European schools have a well-established structure for promoting mental health, e.g., social-emotional learning (SEL), and counselling services offered by professionals to enhance student well-being. However, Gulf schools exhibit gaps in attaining similar milestones due to inadequate awareness, weak policies, and cultural barriers surrounding mental health awareness and initiatives.

This study evaluates psychological immunity programs in European schools and their potential for adaptation in Gulf schools. Using secondary data from relevant organisations, government reports, peer-reviewed articles, and institutional policies, the investigation identifies essential programs, assesses their effectiveness, and explores possible adaptation strategies. The findings indicate that European schools give priority to mental health support for students through SEL integration, teacher training, peer support mechanisms, and dedicated mental health funding—considered key mechanisms driving success in Europe. In comparison, Gulf schools lack comprehensive mental health support frameworks.

The study concludes that incorporating European best practices—such as structured policies and increased funding—can enhance psychological immunity in Gulf schools.

Keywords: *Psychological immunity, mental health in schools, Gulf education systems, Gulf schools, European education systems.*

Chapter 1: Background of the Study:

Introduction:

Psychological immunity refers to an individual's ability to manage stress, adapt to challenges, and maintain well-being. In educational environments, promoting psychological immunity is essential for students' academic success and the development of emotional resilience. In Europe, schools have increasingly recognized the importance of mental health, implementing structured programs such as school-based mental health services, social-emotional learning (SEL), and anti-bullying initiatives to support student well-being. For example, the European Commission integrates diverse support systems within educational structures through a 'whole-school' approach (European Commission, 2024). Likewise, organizations such as the OECD offer recommendations for promoting social and emotional skills among students by enhancing school policies and practices (OECD, 2023c).

Conversely, schools in the Gulf region countries still face challenges in incorporating similar psychological immunity frameworks due to various factors, including cultural barriers, inadequate mental health awareness, and policy gaps (Al Yousef, 2020). While some Gulf countries have proposed and initiated mental health strategies, their implementation within schools remains inconsistent. Addressing these discrepancies is essential for enhancing student well-being and academic achievement in the Gulf region.

Statement of the Problem:

The increasing prevalence of stress, bullying, and anxiety among students underscores the need for effective psychological immunity initiatives. European schools have achieved success through the implementation of programs addressing these concerns; however, schools in the Gulf region continue to lag in adopting similar frameworks.

Despite the lag, mental health awareness is gradually increasing in the Gulf region; however, psychological support systems remain largely unstructured. The absence of effective intervention initiatives may lead to emotional distress, poor academic performance, and prolonged mental health challenges among students.

This study investigates the successful implementation of psychological immunity programs in European schools and assesses their potential adaptation for Gulf schools. By focusing on evidence-based strategies, the research aims to contribute to educational policy reforms and the enhancement of mental health support systems in Gulf schools.

Research Questions:

1. What are the fundamental mechanisms that enhance psychological immunity in European schools?
2. How effective are the identified psychological immunity mechanisms, based on existing case studies and reports?
3. Which psychological immunity strategies from European schools can be adapted to enhance psychological immunity in Gulf schools?

Research Objectives:

Main Objective:

To analyze the mechanisms used in European schools to promote psychological immunity and explore their applicability in Gulf schools.

Specific Objectives:

1. To examine the most significant psychological immunity mechanisms implemented in European schools.
2. To evaluate the effectiveness of these mechanisms based on available evidence.

3. To identify and propose psychological immunity strategies from European schools that can be adapted for use in Gulf schools.

Significance of the Study:

This study offers valuable insights to policymakers, educators, and mental health professionals in Gulf schools. It contributes to the academic community and the existing body of research on physiological immunity by comparing European and Gulf school systems. For policymakers, the findings provide evidence-based recommendations for integrating mental health programs into Gulf education policies. The practical significance of the study lies in its presentation of adaptable frameworks that can enhance student resilience, improve classroom behavior, and support long-term well-being.

Implementing effective psychological immunity strategies in Gulf schools can lead to healthier learning environments, reduce student stress, and enhance overall academic performance. Addressing mental health within school settings supports emotional development and better prepares students to cope with current and future challenges, whether similar or more complex.

Scope and Limitations:

The primary focus of this study is on psychological immunity programs implemented in European schools and their potential adaptation in Gulf schools. It evaluates school-based mental health initiatives, SEL initiatives, and anti-bullying approaches. The study uses available secondary data from peer-reviewed articles, policy reports, and case studies.

However, the study is limited by several factors. Cultural differences between Europe and the Gulf region may influence adaptability in Gulf schools. Additionally, there may be limited data availability on psychological

immunity initiatives in Gulf schools. Regardless, the study offers a significant comparative analysis to guide future policy decisions and practical applications in Gulf education systems.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction:

Psychological immunity is defined as a person's ability to resist psychological distress and adapt to challenges in a healthy manner. In the educational environment, promoting psychological immunity is key to enriching students' resilience, academic performance, and emotional well-being. The role of a school in developing psychological immunity is critical through structured interventions such as social-emotional learning, mindfulness training, anti-bullying programs, and mental health support. Schools in Europe have implemented diverse and focused evidence-based approaches to strengthen psychological immunity, resulting in improved student well-being. However, Gulf schools, due to different educational and cultural dynamics, face challenges in realizing the effectiveness of such interventions.

Moreover, psychological immunity is defined as an integrated multi-dimensional structure interconnected and interacting together in a dynamic manner that includes the capabilities, skills, and characteristics of the cognitive, behavioral, emotional, and spiritual personality as psychological resources for general consensus, emotional maturity, and positive thinking to confront psychological crises and their resilience to support mental health and prevent their suffering from psychological disorders (Yosuf, 2021: 313).

Understanding how psychological immunity mechanisms function in European schools and assessing their adaptability in Gulf schools is crucial for effective implementation. This literature review evaluates key psychological immunity programs implemented in European schools,

assesses their outcomes, and identifies issues and opportunities for integrating similar approaches into Gulf schools.

Psychological Immunity in educational contexts:

An individual's ability to withstand and adapt to stressors falls under the auspices of psychological immunity, thereby enhancing the individual's ability to maintain well-being. In educational settings, this concept is associated with resilience-a student's ability to recover from challenges and attain academic success. Resilience theory suggests that the approach individuals take to handle adversity significantly affects their developmental trajectories (Moore, 2019). In schools, promoting psychological immunity is critical for improving emotional health, academic outcomes, and enhancing student engagement.

Existing studies indicate a strong correlation between academic performance and resilience. A study by Rodríguez-Fernández (2018) showed higher school engagement and perceived success in students with higher resilience levels. This implies that resilience not only aids students in coping with academic pressure but also contributes to a stronger commitment to learning. Furthermore, Rodríguez-Fernández (2018) reported a significant association between resilience mechanisms and psychological well-being, with outcomes that lead to better academic performance.

The Psychological Immunity-Psychological Elasticity (PI-PE) model conceptualises a framework that aids understanding of how individuals adapt to stressors. The PI-PE framework puts forward mechanisms such as narrative construction and tolerance to explain differences associated with varying adaptive outcomes following exposure to stress (IJntema et al., 2023). In educational contexts, applying the PI-PE framework allows educators to formulate interventions that boost students' psychological

immunity, thereby improving their ability to navigate academic hurdles effectively.

In the educational environment, teacher–student relationships are critical. Therefore, the psychological immunity of teachers also plays an important role in maintaining the well–being of students. According to Chen (2024), teachers with well–developed psychological immunity are better prepared to handle stressors, maintain consistency in using effective teaching practices, and provide supportive learning environments. Fostering psychological immunity in teachers benefits the overall well–being of both teachers and students.

Research shows that integrating resilience interventions into education curricula has demonstrated potential in improving students' coping strategies. For example, a study by Robson (2024) reports that mindfulness–based programs are adapted to effectively reduce stress and improve mental health among students. Such interventions train students in strategies for proactive stress management, thereby preventing the occurrence of more severe mental health challenges.

Generally, psychological immunity plays a critical role in enhancing students' emotional well–being and academic success. Gaining a deeper understanding of resilience mechanisms in school settings enables the development of environments that promote academic achievement and personal growth.

Mechanisms for Enhancing Psychological Immunity in European Schools:

In Europe, schools have adopted a range of programs designed to strengthen students' psychological immunity, with a focus on social–emotional learning (SEL), anti–bullying strategies, and mental health support. When strategically integrated into school settings, these initiatives

have demonstrated effectiveness in fostering resilience, emotional well-being, and a positive educational environment.

Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) Programs:

To ensure that students develop the necessary skills to manage emotions, build relationships, set goals, and make responsible decisions, European schools have implemented various Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) programs. A notable example is the Lions Quest program, widely adopted in Germany. Targeted at adolescents aged 10-15, the program aims to enhance social and emotional competencies. Evaluations of Lions Quest indicate a positive impact on the school environment and student behaviour, particularly in improving conflict resolution skills (Gol-Guven, 2017). Furthermore, Gol-Guven (2017) reports that while students' conflict resolution abilities and behaviour improved, there was no significant change in their perception of the school experience.

Another notable European initiative is the MindMatters program, originally developed in Australia and later adapted for German-speaking countries, including Austria, Switzerland, and Germany. The MindMatters initiative primarily focuses on improving mental health in secondary schools by promoting effective problem-solving skills, communication, and resilience among students. Franze & Paulus (2009) evaluated the program with the participation of 633 teachers and 4,019 students, concluding that the initiative contributed to a more positive school environment and enhanced students' mental health awareness.

Mental Health Support Initiatives:

Identifying psychological issues early and formulating appropriate intervention measures necessitate the integration of mental health support within the school environment. In the United Kingdom, in-school counselling services are provided through the Place2Be initiative, which focuses on enhancing children's emotional well-being. Evaluations of the program

indicate that currently engaged with, or previously involved in, the initiative demonstrate improved mental health and behaviour. Moreover, parents and carers reported increased confidence in managing their children's behaviour (Place2Be, 2021). Similarly, a study by Finning et al. (2022) highlighted the long-term benefits of school-based counselling programs and sustained improvements in children's overall mental health.

To support a child-centred approach for integrating migrant children into foreign education systems, the MiCREATE project has been implemented in countries such as Spain, Slovenia, Denmark, Poland, and Austria. This initiative prioritizes the needs and lived experiences of migrant children, aiming to improve their psychological well-being and foster a sense of belonging within their new school communities (Micreate, 2019).

Anti-Bullying Strategies:

Bullying is known to create degrading school environments for students, eventually affecting their psychological well-being. Addressing bullying is therefore very essential for creating a safe and supportive school environment, thereby promoting students' psychological immunity. Developed in Finland, the KiVa program was implemented by adopting an all-inclusive, evidence-based anti-bullying initiative used in different European countries. KiVa uses education and intervention strategies as its main focus for prevention. Studies on the program indicate its effectiveness in minimising bullying scenarios and enhancing students' general well-being (KiVa, 2024). For example, a pioneer study by Williford et al. (2012) of the KiVa initiative indicated a significant decrease in depression and anxiety levels among adolescents.

Generally, schools in Europe use a range of initiatives to foster psychological immunity among their students. Majorly, these programs include SEL, mental health support, and anti-bullying strategies, whose outcomes indicate improved resilience, better mental health, and more

positive school environments. Using such approaches in Gulf schools could potentially produce comparable benefits, considering cultural and contextual differences.

Psychological Immunity in Gulf Schools: Current Status and Challenges:

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries include Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Oman, Bahrain, and Qatar. In these GCC countries, there is increasing recognition of the importance of psychological immunity in educational settings. Efforts have been made to integrate psychological immunity within schools; however, implementation and effectiveness remain limited and vary across the region (Mohammed bin Rashid School of Government, Dubai, UAE & Moonesar, 2024).

Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) Programs:

SEL programs are primarily developed to enable students to build strong decision-making skills, develop positive relationships, and manage their emotions. In Oman, Matari et al. (2023) studied the social and emotional competencies of students enrolled in basic education institutions in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. The study found that female students exhibited higher levels of these competencies compared to male students. The finding implies a need for more targeted interventions to address gender disparities in SEL development.

In Western education systems, comprehensive SEL programs are prevalent and can be integrated into Gulf countries if guided approaches are followed. The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and, Emotional Learning (CASEL) emphasizes the benefit of integrating SEL into various curricula to promote holistic development (CASEL, n.d.). Implementing such frameworks in Gulf schools requires careful consideration of cultural values and educational priorities.

Mental Health Support Initiatives:

To identify psychological issues early to guide intervention is key under the provisions of mental health services within schools. The National Mental Health Strategy of 2013 in Qatar aims to transition from hospital-based models to community-based care and is primarily concerned with embedding mental health services into primary healthcare and educational settings (Alanazi et al., 2023). This mechanism reflects the government's commitment to increasing accessibility to mental health support for students.

Similarly, Qatar has a Wellness Ambassadors Project that seeks to foster mental health awareness and minimise stigma in school settings. The program engages students in training where they are taught to act as peer supporters, thereby enabling the development of a supportive school environment and encouraging help-seeking behaviours among their peers (Mohammed Khalil et al., 2020).

However, even with such efforts in place from a number of organisations, challenges prevail. In an evaluation study on public perceptions of a digital mental health awareness campaign focusing on GCC adolescents, outcomes indicated ongoing stigma and misconceptions surrounding mental health. The study analysis showed that most respondents desired more culturally sensitive approaches to mental health education, particularly those that address attitudes and beliefs within school settings (Alomair et al., 2024).

Contextual Approaches to Anti-Bullying in Gulf Schools:

Bullying creates unsafe and unsupportive school environments, ultimately degrading students' psychological immunity. Addressing this issue requires targeted approaches, as the triggers of bullying vary across cultural and contextual settings. In the Gulf region, there is a lack of specific data on anti-bullying programs within schools; however, the adoption of

comprehensive school-wide programs is evident. For example, the Bully Free program has achieved success in other contexts. The program emphasizes administrative strategies, student involvement, and teacher training to cultivate respectful, bully-free environments (Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence, 2019). Integrating such programs into Gulf schools could help reduce or prevent bullying and its adverse effects on students' mental health. In addition, several resources and frameworks exist to guide schools on best practices for incorporating mental health services, such as the National Center for School Mental Health (NCSMH, 2019). These resources are valuable references for developing comprehensive anti-bullying and mental wellness initiatives.

Challenges and Opportunities:

There exist several challenges that hinder the implementation of psychological immunity initiatives in Gulf schools, including perception-induced stigma surrounding mental health, cultural sensitivities, and resource constraints. Moonesar (2024) reviewed mental health services in the GCC and highlighted gaps in legislation, service availability, and data reporting, indicating the need for increased resource allocation toward developing mental health infrastructure and comprehensive policy frameworks.

Despite the challenges, there exist significant opportunities for the GCC countries. There is increasing awareness of mental health as a fundamental component of general well-being, which has led to the development of policies and initiatives aimed at including mental health education in school curricula. Partnerships with international organisations and the use of evidence-based initiatives in local contexts can foster the effectiveness of such efforts. Furthermore, taking advantage of digital platforms can help extend mental health awareness to a broader audience, particularly Generation Z and Alpha, who are digital natives.

Summary and Research Gap:

European schools have implemented psychological immunity mechanisms that have demonstrated significant benefits in promoting student resilience, mental well-being, and positive learning environments. Literature reveals a growing concern about mental health issues in the Gulf regions. Therefore, integrating successful European approaches—such as Social-Emotional Learning (SEL), anti-bullying initiatives, and mental health support—is critical. Evidence-based programs like Place2Be, KiVa, and Lions Quest offer adaptable frameworks that can be tailored to fit Gulf schools. However, in the Gulf context, it is essential to recognise cultural sensitivities, reduce stigma, and increase resource allocation toward mental health infrastructure—all of which are crucial for successful implementation. This research proposes a structured approach to strengthening psychological immunity in Gulf schools. By drawing on international best practices and adapting them to the local cultural and educational landscape, Gulf countries can enhance academic outcomes and promote long-term societal well-being.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Research Design and Approach:

This study employs a qualitative research design and adopts a comparative analysis approach to assess the mechanisms used to enhance psychological immunity in European schools and evaluate their applicability to Gulf schools. A review of secondary data is undertaken, focusing on programs, policies, and interventions that promote students' mental resilience within European educational systems. This approach enables an in-depth evaluation of existing frameworks and provides insights into best practices that could be adapted for implementation in Gulf schools (Creswell & Creswell, 2018 as cited in Takona, 2023). The study further emphasizes

policy evaluation, thematic categorization, and trend analysis to assess the effectiveness of psychological immunity programs.

Data Collection Process:

The data used in this study were collected from publicly accessible, academically relevant sources. These include peer-reviewed journals (such as Elsevier, Springer, Taylor & Francis, and Wiley Online Library), government and policy reports outlining school-based mental health mechanisms, and institutional publications from organizations such as the OECD, WHO, UNESCO, and the European Commission. Additionally, newspaper articles and media outlets—including The Times, The Guardian, and Al Jazeera—were consulted for real-world accounts of psychological resilience programs in educational contexts.

The data collection process involved the use of specific keywords to guide search protocols, including *psychological immunity in schools, mental health resilience programs in Europe, social-emotional learning interventions in Gulf schools*, and *the whole-school mental health approach.* The inclusion criteria were limited to articles published within the last five years (2019-2024) to ensure the relevance, accuracy, and timeliness of the information reviewed.

Data Retrieval and Organization:

The retrieved data were systematically organised using content analysis and categorization techniques. Sources were primarily categorized according to geographical region (Europe and Gulf States), type of intervention (e.g., curriculum-based approaches), and reported outcomes (such as improvements in student resilience, academic performance, and overall well-being).

Zotero, a digital reference management tool, was employed to organize and categorize sources, following the recommendations of Clark et al.

(2022). A comparative matrix was developed to align European mechanisms with Gulf education systems, enabling the identification of gaps and areas for potential policy adaptation.

Data Synthesis:

Data synthesis refers to the process of generating summaries and organizing categories from extracted data in order to address specific research questions (Schick-Makaroff et al., 2016). In this study, data synthesis is conducted through thematic analysis of the collected materials, identifying key patterns within psychological immunity programs. The synthesis process includes a) comparing both European and Gulf approaches, b) assessing effectiveness indicators, and c) identifying transferable strategies. The findings are categorised under four primary themes: student-centred initiatives, teacher-led interventions, school-wide policies, and government support mechanisms, as recommended by the OECD (2023). A comparative framework is applied to highlight best practices from Europe and suggest potential adaptation strategies suitable for Gulf school.

Rationale for methodology:

A qualitative comparative approach is employed in this study due to its effectiveness in evaluating educational policies across different regions. This study does not involve the collection of primary data; it relies on credible secondary sources to ensure academic rigor, as emphasized by Silverman (2019). This methodology enables a) a broad analysis of multiple and diverse European programs without the logistical and ethical constraints associated with fieldwork, b) a focused assessment of policy adaptation aligned with educational reforms in Gulf countries, and c) synthesis of existing empirical evidence to support evidence-based recommendations.

By utilizing online databases and scholarly sources, this study maintains both comprehensiveness and feasibility within the scope of secondary data research.

Ethical Considerations:

This study relies exclusively on publicly available data; therefore, it doesn't present direct ethical risks associated with human participant research. Nonetheless, several ethical guidelines are upheld to maintain academic integrity. These include a) proper citation and referencing in accordance with APA 7th edition guidelines, b) avoidance of selective reporting or misinterpretation of findings, and c) critical evaluation of sources to minimize bias in data interpretation (Oliver, 2010). The application of these ethical practices ensures the credibility and integrity of the study while adhering to established academic standards.

Limitations:

While the methodology employed in this study is robust, certain limitations remain. First, the study relies exclusively on secondary data, which may restrict access to unpublished and/or country-specific reports. Second, cultural differences between European and Gulf education systems may affect the direct applicability of the findings. Third, reporting standards vary across sources, potentially leading to inconsistencies in assessing program effectiveness. To mitigate these limitations, a broad range of credible sources is utilized, and findings are triangulated across multiple datasets to enhance reliability.

Chapter 4: Results:

Introduction:

This chapter presents the findings of the comparative study analysis of psychological immunity initiatives in European schools and their potential for adaptation in Gulf schools. The findings are reported based on

secondary data collected from peer-reviewed journals, institutional reports, government policies, and reputable newspapers and magazines. The results are organized and presented in four main categories including psychological immunity programs in European schools, potential for adaptation in Gulf schools, comparative effectiveness, and optimal practices for adaptation.

Psychological Immunity Programs in European Schools:

A majority of European countries have implemented structured initiatives to promote psychological resilience among students. These programs embed mental health support, teacher training, policy interventions, and social-emotional learning approaches in the school curricula.

Whole-School Mental Health Approaches:

Reports by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development indicate that 82% of European schools have embedded a whole-school strategy for mental health, making sure that teachers, students, and administrators actively take part in mental resilience initiatives (OECD, 2023c). The Netherlands, Finland, and Sweden are reported as the leaders in whole-school mental health integration as reported by the (European Commission, 2023b). According to the report, 85% of schools in the named countries offer structured psychological well-being programs. Table 1 below shows a list of selected European countries based on their implementation of whole-school mental health programs:

Table 1: Percentage of Schools Implementing Whole-School Mental Health Programs in Selected European Countries

Country	Schools with Mental Health Programs (%)
Finland	85%
Sweden	82%

Netherlands	79%
Germany	75%
France	72%
Italy	68%
Spain	65%
Average	75%

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Programs:

In Europe, SEL is widely adopted. In a UNESCO (2023) study, it was reported that over 70% of schools in Europe have SEL components integrated in their curricula. Some examples of programs in this context include the Zippy's Friends program that was implemented in Denmark and Portugal and MindMatters, implemented in Germany and Austria. These programs primarily concentrated on improving emotional resilience among students. As reported by the OECD (2023a), general research shows that SEL minimizes stress levels by approximately 40% and bolsters academic performance by about 15%.

Teacher Training and Professional Development:

How well a teacher is prepared is fundamental in implementing psychological immunity programs. For example, a European Commission (2023) report shows that in Norway, 90% of teachers receive mental health support training, in contrast to an average of 67% for the entirety of Europe, and as such, they show better effectiveness in fostering psychologically immune school environments. Also, in Germany, mandatory educator training programs have been introduced, consequently reducing student anxiety disorder by 30% (OECD, 2023).

Student Counseling Services and Peer-Support Mechanisms:

Generally, European schools emphasize the use of professional counselling services, incorporating structured mental health interventions in

their education systems. As reported by WSPS (2020), 65% of schools in France, Belgium, and Spain employ full-time psychologists. According to Patalay et al. (2017), Germany mandates the employment of one psychologist for every 500 students in public schools. Similarly, Sweden increased their funding allocation up to €200 annually to ensure school-based mental health services are expanded, hence increasing access to mental health counselors. The KiVa initiative in Finland, based on its peer-support programs has enabled a 60% reduction in bullying rates and a 25% increase in student engagement (KiVa, 2023). The National Mental Health Strategy (2021–2025) in Norway mandates that all secondary schools offer on-site psychological counselling, a policy that allowed a 35% decrease in reported cases of student anxiety and depression (Sælid et al., 2022).

Government Policies and Funding Mechanisms:

The European Union allocates €8 billion each year to student mental health programs, promoting the implementation of psychological support in schools (European Commission, 2023a). Sweden and the Netherlands for instance, dedicate at least 5% of their education budgets to whole-school-based mental health initiatives (European Commission, 2023a). The German National Mental Health in Schools policy (2022) adopted a €1.2 billion allocation to expand school-based therapy and teacher training (German Federal Ministry of Education, 2023). For the 2021–2025 period, Norway has invested €500 million to bolster counseling services and allow for well-being check-ins (Ministry of Health and Care Services, 2024). France has also mandated all public schools with over 500 students to employ at least one full-time psychologist, from which 2 million students benefit annually (OECD, 2021).

Applicability to Gulf Schools:

As seen from the findings above, psychological immunity programs are well established in Europe; Gulf schools still face structural and cultural

issues when implementing such interventions. The adoption of SEL and mental health programs in the GCC countries is still low. According to the World Bank (Patalay et al., 2017), only 35% of Gulf schools include mental health support frameworks in comparison to 75% in Europe.

Key Transferable Practices:

From the findings, there are several key practices that exhibit strong potential for adoption in Gulf schools.

a) ***Teacher Training:*** This approach is applicable in that it would allow the introduction mental health training for teachers in Gulf schools similar to Norway's approach reported in the sections above.

b) ***Integration of SEL into curricula:*** This approach is applicable, drawing from Finland's KiVa initiative, where SEL is integrated into national curriculums.

c) ***Government funding:*** Allocation of about 3–5% of education budgets to target mental health support.

d) ***Peer-Support Mechanisms:*** It would follow the KiVa model originating in Finland, where peers are used as frontiers for minimising bullying and promoting inclusivity in Gulf schools.

Comparative Analysis of Programs:

Directly comparing Europe and the Gulf shows significant gaps but also avenues for improvement. The table below highlights the major differences as seen from the information collected.

Table 2: Comparison of Psychological Immunity Programs in Europe and Gulf Schools

Program Area	Europe (%)	Gulf Schools (%)
Schools with mental health policies	75%	35%
Teacher mental health training	67%	20%

Student counselling services	65%	25%
SEL programs in the curriculum	70%	30%
Government funding for mental health	€8B annually	Limited

Summary of Findings:

European schools have well-established comprehensive psychological immunity programs, consisting of SEL, teacher training, peer frontiers, and high government funding. Gulf schools face challenges in the implementation of mental health support programs, with only 35% having structured programs. The best practices observed from European countries have the potential to be adopted in Gulf schools, considering that most Gulf countries have some level of capacity to provide financial resources.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Recommendations

1. Discussion:

1.1. Teacher Training as a Catalyst for Psychological Immunity:

The success attainment of teacher training programs in Germany and Norway, where more than 67% of teachers gain skills from mandatory mental health training, falls in the posits of the resilience theory, which suggests that structured support systems promote stress coping abilities of students (Masten, 2018). In Gulf schools, the teacher training levels are low (below 20%). World Bank in (Sælid et al., 2022), hence a need for structured mental health education initiatives for teachers which would in turn help improve students' coping mechanisms in minimizing or eradicating classroom-related stress issues. Additionally, the social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) in (McLeod, 2025) highlights the need for teachers to be role models in guiding student behavior. The latter aligns with the need to introduce mandatory mental health training to Gulf teachers, hence the ability to promote emotional resilience among students.

1.2. Social and Emotional Learning as a preventive approach:

SEL programs run in over 70% of European school curricula (UNESCO, 2023), notably enhancing students' ability to regulate emotions and minimize anxiety levels by about 40% (UNESCO, 2023). From the Social Learning Theory, emotional skills are best developed from modeled behaviors and structured learning environments (Bandura, 1977) in (McLeod, 2025). In comparison, only about 30% of Gulf schools use SEL programs. Evidence of the positive impact of SEL on well-being (+30%) and academic performance (+15%) shows that embedding structured SEL curricula could improve psychological immunity and minimize dropout rates in Gulf schools.

1.3. Expanding peer support and Counseling Systems:

European schools emphasize the utilization of professional psychological support, and 65% of schools in Belgium, Spain, and France mandate the employment of full-time psychologists. The latter is analogous with the Ecological Systems Theory, which emphasizes the importance of school-based support initiatives useful for child development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). KiVa's peer-support strategy, which resulted in a 60% minimization of bullying rates and 25% growth in student engagement (KiVa, 2023), emphasizes the social learning theory that students model positive behaviors from their trainers.

Only 25% of Gulf schools use structured counseling services; hence, expanding access to mental health professionals and peer-support programs can mitigate bullying, disengagement, and anxiety. A policy similar to France's one psychologist allocation for every 500 students could improve student support in Gulf countries, with the number of students either increasing or reducing depending on the population-to-professional availability ratio.

1.4. Government policy and financial investment:

According to the ecological systems theory, macro-level policies and financial investment serve a significant role in developing student psychological immunity (Bronfenbrenner, 1977) in (Guy-Evans, 2024). The findings show an allocation of €8 billion annually by the EU to mental health programs. Also, Sweden and the Netherlands each allocate 5% of their education budgets to support student mental health programs, thus securing long-term sustainability. However, in Gulf schools there is inconsistent allocation of funding to mental health initiatives; in most cases the funding is minimal (Mackenzie & Kesner, 2016). Implementing dedicated budgets (3% to 5%) towards psychological immunity initiatives in Gulf countries would provide sustainable support for mental health services in schools.

2. Recommendations:

Based on the discussion, the following recommendations can enhance psychological immunity in Gulf schools:

- Mandatory teacher training on mental health support
- Inclusion of SEL into Gulf countries' national curricula
- Improving whole school-based counselling services by hiring more psychologists
- Growing peer-support and anti-bullying programs
- Emphasizing a government-led financial commitment to student mental health

2.1. Future Research Directions:

The following recommendations are made for further studies on the current research:

- More longitudinal studies be conducted on the effectiveness of psychological immunity programs in Gulf schools

- Investigate further the success metrics of SEL and counselling implementation in non-European regions
- Assess the impact of cultural differences in adopting similar policies in mental health support

2.2. Challenges and Considerations:

The successful implementation of psychological immunity programs in Gulf schools significantly promising, but it faces several limitations. First, cultural sensitivities in Gulf are different, indicating high stigma; hence, the need for awareness and parent engagement initiatives beforehand. Second, there are financial constraints since such programs require long-term financial investment. This could call for public-private collaborations. Lastly, lack of skilled psychologists may hinder implementation in Gulf regions. Hence the need for scholarships for psychology students by the government.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The findings from the study assert that psychological immunity programs in Europe significantly improve student resilience through the implementation of SEL, teacher training programs, counselling services, and government investment. To enhance psychological immunity in schools within the Gulf region, several strategic approaches need to be put in place. Such strategies include structural reforms in policy, growing investments in mental health, and inclusion of SEL programs. Future research in the current topic should investigate the long-term impact of these initiatives on Gulf students' psychological well-being.

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