

# **A Shelter in the Storm**

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My years of teaching in underprivileged areas have been full of lessons—both bitter and sweet. However, one experience remains etched in my memory.

During my first year of teaching, one day during recess, the school's intercom buzzed. A father, whom I recognized as a parent of one of my students, entered the office. He had been summoned to discuss his daughter's poor academic performance. She sat quietly beside him, her head lowered.

The father, however, launched into a speech—not to support his daughter, but to accuse her. He praised himself for all he had done: the expensive phone he had bought her, the clothes, the financial support. Yet, behind his words was nothing but blame. He called her a disgrace, insisting she was ungrateful and careless about her studies.

But I knew the truth. At home, she endured a different reality—verbal abuse, shattered glass, and the heavy burden of fear. She was not failing because of negligence; she was struggling in an environment that offered her no peace.

As I watched her break into silent tears, too afraid to defend herself, my heart ached. She could not reveal what truly happened at home—she had to protect her family's honor.

I could not remain silent. Gently, I put my arm around her, hoping she would feel less alone. Turning to the principal, I said, "This student performs well when she is mentally at peace. She does not deserve to be humiliated like this. I assure you, she will pass by the end of the year—she just needs a chance."

Eventually, she was given an opportunity to improve. But I knew that what she needed most was a safe space. From that day on, I made my classroom her refuge—a place filled with warmth, encouragement, and brief escapes from the chaos of home. And in the end, she passed all but one subject.

That experience taught me that teaching is not just about delivering lessons. Sometimes, it means becoming a shelter, recognizing unseen pain, and offering a hand to a child who silently pleads for help.

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## **The Role of Emotional Support in Student Performance: A Case Study**

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### **Introduction**

Education is widely recognized as a fundamental right and a key driver of personal and societal development. However, academic success is influenced not only by cognitive abilities but also by students' emotional and psychological well-being. Research has shown that adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), including emotional neglect and family conflict, significantly impact students' academic performance, self-esteem, and motivation. This paper explores the relationship between emotional distress and academic outcomes through a real-life case study of a student struggling in a challenging home environment.

### **Discussion**

The case study presents a female student whose academic performance was labeled as poor by her father, who saw her struggles as a personal failure rather than a reflection of her circumstances. The father's emphasis on material provision—such as expensive clothing and technology—demonstrates a misunderstanding of educational success, which extends beyond

financial support to include emotional and psychological stability. In this case, the student's home environment was characterized by verbal abuse, fear, and instability, factors that have been widely linked to decreased academic performance.

Psychologists argue that Maslow's hierarchy of needs provides a useful framework for understanding this phenomenon. If a child's basic psychological and safety needs are unmet, their ability to focus on higher-order tasks, such as learning, is severely compromised. The teacher's intervention in the case study—providing emotional reassurance, creating a supportive classroom environment, and advocating for the student—demonstrates the critical role educators play in addressing non-academic barriers to learning. Studies have indicated that positive teacher-student relationships improve academic resilience, particularly for students experiencing adversity.

Moreover, the response of the broader school environment highlights another significant issue: the reinforcement of a deficit perspective. Some teachers aligned with the father's criticisms rather than recognizing the student's distress, a reaction that may stem from traditional educational attitudes that prioritize discipline over emotional support. This underscores the need for teacher training programs to incorporate social-emotional learning (SEL) strategies, equipping educators with the skills to identify and address students' psychological needs.

## Conclusion

This case study reinforces the argument that academic performance is deeply intertwined with students' emotional and social environments. A purely academic approach to education—focused solely on grades and discipline—fails to account for the complexities of students' lives. Instead, a holistic perspective that integrates emotional support and social-emotional learning is essential for fostering true academic success. Schools must move beyond punitive measures and adopt strategies that nurture student well-being, ensuring that education becomes a source of empowerment rather than another site of distress.

By acknowledging and addressing the hidden struggles of students, educators can create inclusive learning environments where every child has the opportunity to thrive. This case study

is a testament to the power of empathy in education, highlighting the profound impact a single teacher's intervention can have on a student's academic journey and overall well-being.