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Article

Humour as a Mediator of Academic Anxiety among Students with Learning Disabilities: A Thematic Analysis

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Abstract:

Elevated academic anxiety is common among students with learning difficulties (LD), which negatively affects their learning outcomes, involvement, and confidence. Although therapies have traditionally focused on cognitive rehabilitation, emotional aspects have received insufficient attention. To explore whether Humour may serve as a mediating mechanism in reducing academic anxiety among students with LD, this study employs a thematic literature analysis of 26 national and international studies published between 2011 and 2025. The review summarises findings from experimental, qualitative, and intervention-based research using a purposeful, concept-driven selection method. Three interconnected themes emerged through inductive thematic analysis: (1) Humour as a mechanism for social facilitation; (2) Humour as a facilitator of engagement and self-confidence; and (3) Humour as an emotional regulator. According to the research, Humour functions as a multifaceted mediating tool that lowers emotional barriers, encourages inclusive participation, and redefines challenging academic situations. In practice, the study highlights Humour-informed interventions as accessible strategies for improving emotional well-being, engagement, and inclusive classroom environments. Conceptually, it positions Humour as a bridge linking learning difficulties with academic anxiety.

Keywords: Learning Disabilities, Humour, Academic Anxiety, Emotional Regulation, Inclusive Education, Thematic Literature Review

1. INTRODUCTION

Students with learning impairments (LD), such as dyslexia, dysgraphia, and dyscalculia, have ongoing scholastic obstacles that go beyond cognitive issues to include serious emotional and psychological issues. Among them, academic anxiety has come to light as a significant obstacle influencing classroom engagement, learning processes, and overall academic results. According to research, individuals with learning disabilities often suffer anxiety due to recurring academic difficulties, fear of failing, and unfavourable classroom experiences. These factors all work together to lower confidence and participation (Feng et al., 2024; Tsukawaki & Imura, 2025). Such encounters may eventually strengthen avoidance habits and ultimately restrict meaningful engagement in the classroom.

Academic anxiety and learning difficulties have a complicated and multifaceted interaction. In addition to being a result of persistent academic difficulties, anxiety can exacerbate these obstacles by erecting emotional barriers that impair focus, perseverance, and cognitive flexibility. According to experimental research, increased anxiety limits information processing and hinders efficient learning (Zheng & Wang, 2023). Additionally, compared to their counterparts without learning problems, students with learning disabilities frequently internalize repeated academic defeats, which may lead to lower self-esteem and greater susceptibility to emotional distress (Livingston et al., 2018). These results demonstrate that academic anxiety

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serves as both a cause and an effect of learning difficulties.

Even though the emotional aspects of learning are becoming more widely acknowledged, cognitive remediation remains the main emphasis of many educational treatments for kids with learning disabilities. While skill-related challenges are addressed by organized instructional techniques and assistive technology, emotional barriers like anxiety and fear of appraisal are frequently ignored. As a result, current research has highlighted how crucial it is to incorporate psychological and emotional tactics within inclusive education frameworks. It has been demonstrated that strategies that address emotional well-being enhance diverse learners' involvement, engagement, and overall learning experiences (Wang et al., 2022).

Humour has become a potentially useful psychological and educational tool in this situation. According to earlier studies, Humour can improve cognitive flexibility, foster good emotional states, and lessen stress reactions in educational settings (Zheng & Wang, 2023; Tsukawaki & Imura, 2025). Humour has also been linked to better involvement, higher motivation, and more favorable teacher-student relationships in school settings (Zhou et al., 2025). Furthermore, Humour may serve as a coping strategy that enables people to reframe stressful circumstances in ways that are less dangerous, hence lowering emotional discomfort (Siminone et al., 2023). These traits imply that Humour might be crucial in helping kids who feel anxious about academic.

Nonetheless, the majority of the material currently in publication has focused on Humour, academic anxiety, and learning difficulties as distinct concepts. Though the positive effects of adapting one's Humour style have been well-established in both the fields of education and psychology, relatively few studies have explored Humour as a potential mediator in bridging the divide between students with learning disabilitiesand their psycho-educational goals, including increased participation and lowered anxiety levels. Furthermore, it is uncommon for results from many methodological traditions such as experimental, qualitative, and cultural studies, to be combined into a unified conceptual framework. This disparity emphasizes the necessity of a thorough synthesis that looks at the emotional, cognitive, and social aspects of Humour in relation to learning impairments.

The current study is to investigate the function of Humour as a mediation mechanism in lowering academic anxiety among students with learning difficulties in order to close this gap. The project specifically aims to combine current national and international literature to investigate the ways in which Humour supports social interaction, academic engagement, and emotional regulation in inclusive educational settings. The study offers a conceptual understanding of how Humour might change unfavorable academic situations into more favorable learning outcomes by using a theme literature review approach.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The limited amount of research available on learning difficulties (LD) necessitated that some articles from a more general pool of students be considered for review. Extrapolating findings from a wider range of educational or psychological areas to learning difficulties should be done with care. Yet, since learners with learning difficulties might be facing cognitive or emotional issues specific to them, thus making the findings less relevant, such extrapolation is treated with caution.

2.1. Academic Anxiety among Students with Learning Disabilities

One of the main psychological obstacles that students with learning difficulties (LD) face is academic anxiety. Recent study indicates that anxiety among students with LD arises from a complex combination of cognitive, emotional, and social elements, contrary to early ideas that tended to assign academic worry exclusively to cognitive impairments. According to empirical research, recurrent instances of academic difficulty, performance pressure, and unfavorable comments can lead to the development of chronic anxiety, which can impair motivation and engagement in educational activities (Tsukawaki & Imura, 2025).

Students with LD frequently have higher levels of academic anxiety than their counterparts without impairments, according to comparative data from experimental and longitudinal studies. This discrepancy is often linked to lower academic self-efficacy and increased failure sensitivity. For instance, longitudinal analyses indicate that the use of Humour by teachers in the classroom is linked to improved student well-being, a stronger sense of school belonging, and higher affective engagement. These factors collectively support social-emotional learning outcomes such as emotional regulation and relationship skills (St-Amand et al., 2023). On the other hand, psychological studies that concentrate on emotional processes show that anxiety is a cognitive-affective response influenced by students' sense of competence and belonging as well as a response to academic challenges (Tsukawaki & Imura, 2025).

Further qualitative and intervention-focused research shows that internalized views of disability and social stigma greatly exacerbate academic anxiety. Academic failures are frequently seen by LD students as signs of personal inadequacy, which causes them to stop participating in class and become less engaged with learning activities. Further understanding of this dynamic is provided by cultural analyses carried out in the Indian context, which show how social comparison, academic expectations, and disability stigma combine to influence students' emotional experiences in learning environments (Sarkar & Dhiman Roy, 2024).

Even while academic anxiety among students with learning disabilities has been extensively documented, much of the study still focuses on diagnosing the issue rather than investigating ways to lessen its effects. As a result, researchers are highlighting the necessity of strategies that

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address the emotional and social aspects of learning in addition to cognitive rehabilitation

2.2. Emotional Regulation and Affective Interventions in LD

Researchers are emphasizing the need of emotional regulation in academic achievement as a result of growing understanding of the emotional difficulties experienced by students with LD. The ability to control and alter emotional reactions in ways that promote adaptive functioning is known as emotional regulation. According to empirical data, students with learning disabilities frequently have trouble controlling their emotions as a result of recurrent academic dissatisfaction and poor performance experiences, which can exacerbate feelings of helplessness and worry.

Affective techniques targeted at enhancing emotional control can dramatically lower anxiety and enhance psychological well-being, according to intervention-based studies. Emotional involvement can serve as a protective factor against academic anxiety, according to experimental investigations looking at Humour-based and laughter-based therapies that show quantifiable decreases in stress levels (Akimbekov & Razzaque, 2021; Kalanlar & Kuru Alıcı, 2024). These results are consistent with psychological theories that contend that pleasant emotional experiences increase coping ability and expand cognitive resources.

The literature does, however, also include divergent viewpoints on the application of emotive methods in educational contexts. Many traditional educational systems continue to focus the development of cognitive skills while ignoring emotional well-being, despite intervention research highlighting the advantages of emotional support mechanisms. Because they ignore the emotional environment in which learning takes place, integrative assessments of educational treatments contend that these strategies are inadequate for meeting the multifaceted requirements of kids with LD (Savage, 2017).

Further evidence that larger social settings have an impact on emotional regulation comes from family-based studies. Humour in family interactions can lower parental stress and establish supportive emotional settings for children with learning impairments, according to studies looking at caregiver coping techniques (Sharma et al., 2024; Tavakolizadeh & Jokar Ghochani, 2018). However, current research mostly looks at Humour and emotional regulation independently, leaving little knowledge of how Humour particularly supports emotional regulation in educational settings.

2.3. Humour in Educational Contexts

Humour is becoming more widely acknowledged in educational psychology as a teaching technique that may affect students' emotional experiences and classroom dynamics. Humour improves student engagement, lowers stress levels, and fosters a happy learning environment, according to several systematic and experimental research. When utilized properly, instructional Humour can improve focus, promote involvement, and lessen anxiety related to academic achievement (Zhou et al., 2025).

Further empirical research indicates that Humour helps children develop cognitive flexibility by allowing them to reframe stressful events in ways that are less frightening. Humourous cues can lower anticipatory anxiety and boost motivation, especially in students who struggle academically, according to experimental investigations (Zheng & Wang, 2023; Wang et al., 2022). In a similar vein, classroom-based treatments that include Humour into teaching methods have been linked to better classroom emotional environment and more student involvement (Erdoğdu & Çakıroğlu, 2021).

Despite these positive aspects, it is essential to emphasize the significance of moderating variables. Scholars believe that situational appropriateness, temporal relevance, and cultural congruency can be considered primary determinants of successful Humourous interventions in educational settings. Students with disabilities may feel more uncomfortable or have unfavorable preconceptions reinforced by inappropriate or stigmatizing Humour (Venkatesan & Joshi, 2022). As a result, academics contend that Humour needs to be utilized cautiously to ensure that it encourages inclusion rather than exclusion.

According to research done in educational settings, Humour used by teachers is positively correlated with students' emotional involvement and sense of belonging, encouraging social interaction and the development of relationships. Humour may improve peer relationships and emotional support by creating a laid-back and encouraging classroom environment, which is in line with social-emotional learning objectives (St-Amand et al., 2023). However, while many research look at Humour in educational settings, very few specifically look at how it helps learners with learning difficulties cope with their academic anxieties.

2.4. Adaptive Humour Styles and Psychological Outcomes

Adaptive and maladaptive Humour styles are distinguished by psychological research, which emphasizes how they have different impacts on emotional health. Positive psychological effects, such as decreased anxiety, enhanced coping, and increased resilience, are linked to adaptive Humour types, especially affiliative and self-enhancing Humour. These types of Humour help people stay upbeat under pressure and improve their interpersonal connections.

Self-enhancing Humour is especially beneficial in lowering state anxiety and fostering long-term psychological well-being, according to longitudinal and cross-sectional research (Tsukawaki & Imura, 2025; Menéndez-Aller et al., 2020). Humour can also mitigate the link between stressful events and unfavorable emotional consequences, according to moderation studies that look at stress and coping mechanisms (Siminone et al., 2023). Significant gains in coping abilities and decreases in stress and anxiety are also reported in experimental therapies utilizing Humour training programs (Tagalidou et al., 2018; Crawford &

Caltabiano, 2011).

Adaptive Humour may be a helpful coping strategy in the setting of learning impairments, enabling kids to reframe academic difficulties in ways that are less frightening. Humour may also serve as a method for identity reconstruction, allowing people with disabilities to confront stigma and regain agency in social settings, according to cultural and narrative studies from India (Deb, 2022).

Although there is ample evidence of the psychological advantages of adaptive Humour, little study specifically looks at how certain types of Humour function in educational environments with children with learning disabilities. This discrepancy highlights the need for further conceptual integration between studies on academic anxiety in inclusive education settings and research on Humour styles.

2.5. Conceptual Integration

According to a summary of the studied literature, Humour, emotional control, and academic anxiety are all strongly related concepts. Students with learning difficulties have substantial emotional issues that impact their academic experiences, according to research from psychological, pedagogical, and cultural perspectives. Positive emotional techniques have the ability to reduce stress and enhance wellbeing, according to research on Humour and affective therapies.

Humour appears as a mechanism functioning at several levels in a variety of approaches, such as experimental research, qualitative studies, and cultural assessments. Humour has a favorable emotional impact and lowers physiological stress. Cognitively, it promotes reinterpretation of difficult situations and increases adaptability. Humour improves peer connections and encourages social interaction.

Despite these realizations, it is unusual for current research to include these characteristics into a single conceptual framework. Without specifically addressing how Humour may moderate the link between learning challenges and emotional consequences, the majority of research either concentrate on academic anxiety among students with LD or on the advantages of Humour in educational situations. There is a big vacuum in the literature because of this lack of integration.

A conceptual approach that acknowledges Humour as a process connecting emotional control, social interaction, and academic experience is necessary to close this gap. A more thorough grasp of how inclusive educational approaches may promote both cognitive and emotional development is provided by such an approach.

3. THEORETICAL ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

The current study, which builds on the literature review, uses an integrative theoretical framework that views Humour as a multifaceted mechanism impacting the social, emotional, and cognitive experiences of students with learning difficulties. According to this perspective, academic anxiety is viewed as a complicated phenomenon that is influenced by the interplay between a person's psychological reactions and the larger educational setting.

From a cognitive-affective standpoint, Humour serves as an adaptive coping mechanism that helps students reframe difficult academic circumstances, which lessens emotional discomfort and promotes more flexible thinking. Humour can help students control their anxiety and stay engaged in academic pursuits by reframing difficult learning tasks in a less intimidating way. This perspective is supported by empirical research, which shows that Humour promotes emotional control, cognitive flexibility, and decreased psychological stress (Zheng & Wang, 2023). Constructive Humour can also improve resilience and general psychological well-being, according to research on adaptive Humour styles (Tsukawaki & Imura, 2025; Siminone et al., 2023).

In educational contexts, Humour serves as a social and cultural strategy in addition to its cognitive and affective purposes. According to research on disability narratives, Humour may help people with disabilities establish their identities, confront stigmatizing beliefs, and feel like they belong (Deb, 2022; Chadwick and Platt, 2018). Therefore, Humour may help foster pleasant school environments and encouraging social interactions that reduce fear and encourage engagement in inclusive classrooms.

Combining these viewpoints, the study suggests that Humour serves as a mediation mechanism between students' levels of academic anxiety and their experiences with learning difficulties, as seen in Fig. 1. In particular, Humour has the potential to impact emotional control, improve learning task engagement, and foster positive social connection, all of which can impact students' academic experiences. The current study uses a theme analytical method to consolidate previous research and investigate how Humour functions across these interrelated aspects, guided by this theoretical viewpoint. The study intends to contribute to a more thorough knowledge of inclusive educational processes by elucidating the mediating function of Humour in managing academic anxiety among students with learning difficulties.

A mediation process in learning disability (LD) is illustrated in Figure 1 below:

- Learning Disabilities cause Academic Struggles and Stressors (Mediator 1).
- Adaptive Humour (Affiliative/Self-Enhancing) is an important intervention strategy that enhances emotional regulation, cognitive reframing, and social support.
- The adaptive Humour-mediated pathway results in enhanced engagement and positive psychological outcomes (Mediator 2), which lead to lower levels of academic anxiety.
- Solid arrows denote indirect mediated relationships, whereas dashed lines denote direct relationships between variables.

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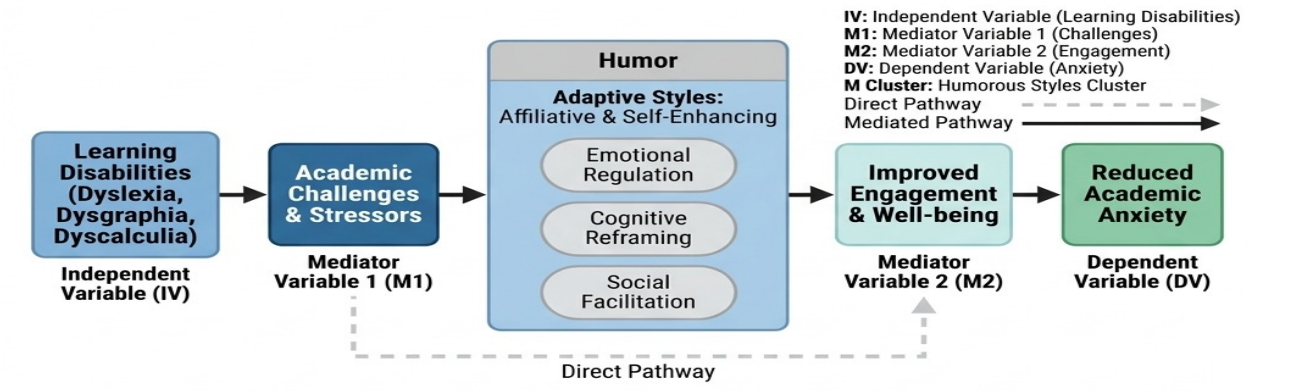


Figure 1: *Conceptual Mediation Model of Humour in LD Contexts*

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In the research, a thematic review of literature is carried out following the criteria for evidence synthesis. Instead of relying only on purposive sampling, the study adopts the PRISMA-influenced process for increased transparency, replicability, and methodological rigors. The main objective of the process will be to combine empirical and theoretical literature on the effect of Humour on academic anxiety among students suffering from learning problems. The thematic analysis process will follow the framework recommended by Braun & Clarke, (2006).

4.1. Search Strategy

A comprehensive search strategy was implemented to identify relevant literature.

- Databases: The key databases that were searched for include ERIC, Web of Science, and Scopus. To ensure that a more thorough search was conducted, further searches were done on Google Scholar.
- Timeline: Publications ranging from 2000 to 2024 were used to ensure thoroughness and relevance.
- Keywords: Boolean keywords were used in this process, including: "Humour in education" AND "academic anxiety"
  - "Humour" AND "learning disabilities"
  - "Humour styles" AND "students with learning disabilities"
  - "Humour" AND "emotional regulation" AND "academic anxiety"

These search strings were adapted slightly across databases according to indexing requirements.

4.2. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Explicit criteria were applied to ensure transparency and consistency.

1. Inclusion Criteria
   - Articles from peer-reviewed journals.
   - Studies on Humour, Humour styles, and use of Humour as a coping mechanism
   - Studies on students suffering from learning disabilities or related learning issues.
   - Studies on academic anxiety, emotional regulation, and class-room psychology.
   - English-language sources published between 2000 and 2024.
2. Exclusion Criteria
   - Research not related to education or learning settings.
   - Articles dealing with therapeutic Humour therapy but not associated with education.
   - Non-peer-reviewed references would be articles like blogs, editorials, opinions, etc.
   - There is no apparent relevance in the concept of Humour and anxiety in learning settings.

4.3. Screening and Study Selection

- The selection process followed a staged screening procedure consistent with PRISMA-informed review practices.
- Identification: Sources were collected from selected databases.
- Screening: Titles and abstracts were assessed to see whether they had something to do with comedy, learning disabilities, and academic anxiety.
- The process of checking the conceptual compatibility of the articles was part of the eligibility criteria.
- Once duplicate and unrelated sources were removed, 26 papers remained.

The PRISMA flow chart was developed to explain the identification, screening, eligibility and inclusion processes, thereby enhancing the transparency and reproducibility of the review process.

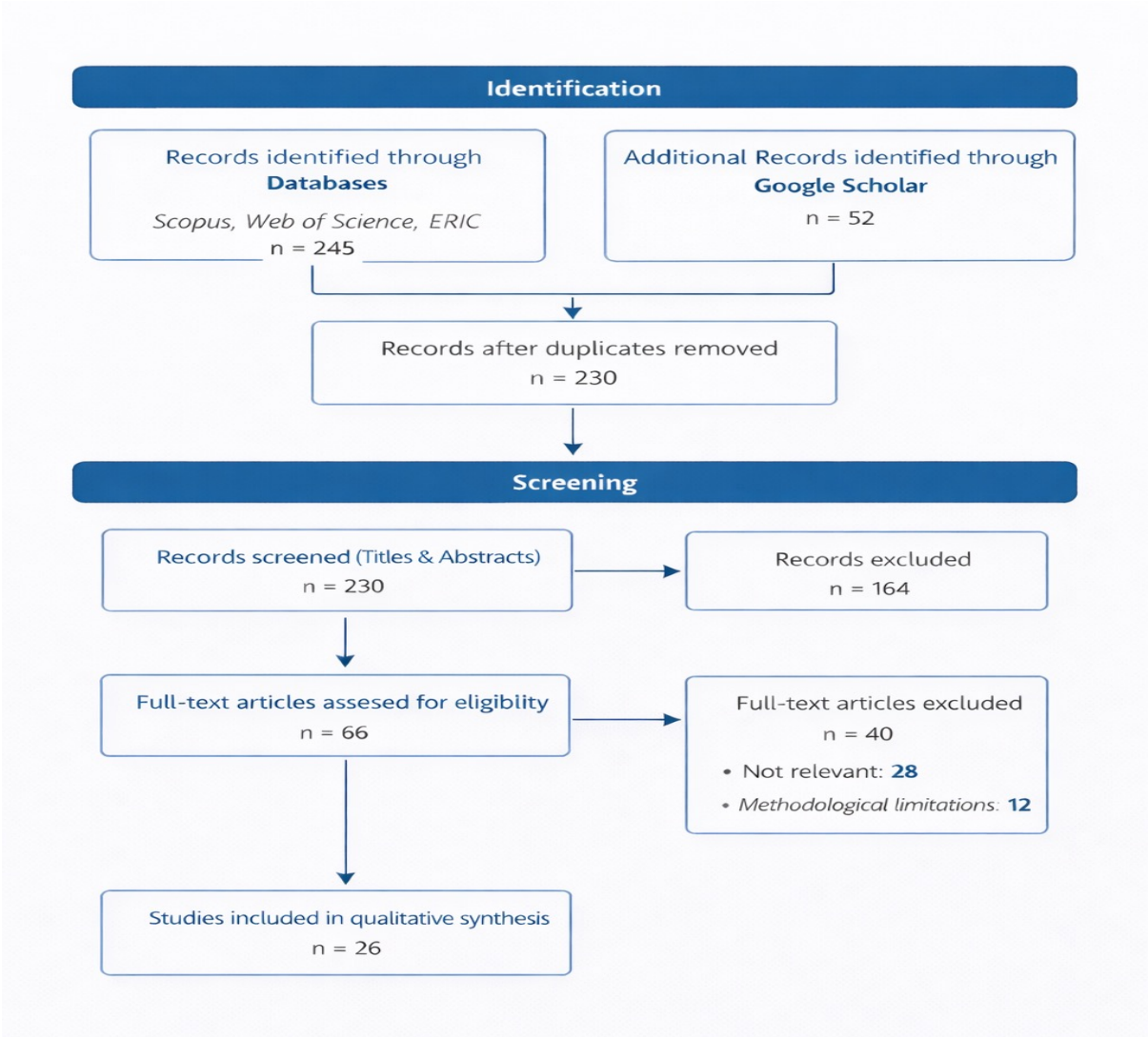


Figure 2: *Prisma Flow Chart*

4.4. Quality Appraisal

- The studies were critically evaluated on the basis of the criteria laid out by the CASP and JBI Checklist for Critical Evaluation.
- The evaluation criteria examined the research methodology, validity, data collection, and analysis.
- The methodological approach to evaluating the research papers was focused on their methodological rigour and credibility.
- In synthesizing our findings, we selected studies that had good methodological rigour and conceptual significance.

4.5. Thematic Analysis:

The selected literature was analyzed using the six-phase thematic analysis framework proposed by Braun & Clarke, (2006).

- Familiarization: In order to grasp the theoretical and empirical contributions of the selected study, it was read multiple times.
- Initial Coding: The recurring themes on coping strategies, Humour, and anxiety management were identified and classified.
- Categorization: Broader conceptual categories were developed through the grouping of codes that were similar to one another.
- Theme Development: Themes such as Humour types, classroom emotionality, coping through comedy, and emotional regulation methods through Humour were generated from the combination of categories.
- Theme Refinement: Conceptual clarity and consistency of analysis were ensured by comparing themes across studies.

4.6. Credibility and Synthesis

- A comparative synthesis method was used to enhance the validity of the findings.
- Patterns from the research projects were carefully analyzed against the literature chosen for analysis.
- There were evident patterns, similarities, and connections between different studies.
- Through this cross-comparison, common themes emerged within the literature base.
- This method enhanced the review's validity.

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5. RESULTS / FINDINGS

Three interconnected themes describing how Humour serves as a multifaceted mechanism in lowering academic anxiety among children with learning difficulties were found through thematic analysis of the chosen national and international literature. A methodical procedure of categorizing, classifying, and synthesizing recurrent ideas from the examined papers produced the themes. Three broad thematic domains are depicted in Fig. 3: (1) Humour as an Emotional Regulator, (2) Humour as a Facilitator of Engagement and Self-Confidence, and (3) Humour as a Tool for Social Interaction. During the analysis, similar patterns pertaining to emotional coping, academic engagement, and social interaction were grouped together. These themes show how Humour affects students with learning disability academic experiences on an emotional, cognitive, and social level.

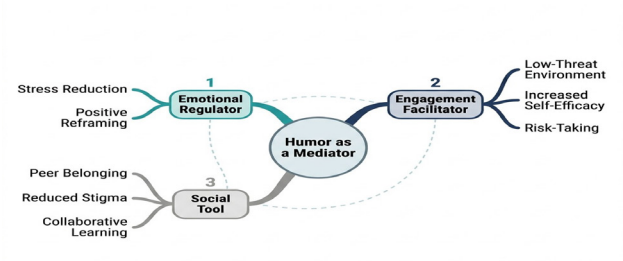


Figure 3: *Thematic Map of Humour as a Multidimensional Mechanism*

5.1. Theme 1: Humour as an Emotional Regulator

Humour frequently appears in the reviewed literature as a strategy that aids students in controlling the negative emotional reactions linked to academic stress. Humour helps students reframe stressful situations through positive emotional reframing, which lowers anxiety, according to a number of empirical and intervention-based research.

Academic assignments can cause frustration, worry, and a fear of failing for children with learning difficulties. According to research, Humour serves as an adaptive coping mechanism that turns difficult circumstances into ones that can be handled. Research on laughter-oriented therapies and Humour-based teaching strategies shows that Humour helps ease psychological stress and foster good affect, both of which increase emotional stability.

From an analytical perspective, Humour functions as an emotional control mechanism that enables pupils to disassociate themselves from unpleasant feelings while still being involved in educational activities. Humour fosters emotional circumstances that allow prolonged engagement in academic pursuits by lowering anxiety-related arousal and promoting a more laid-back classroom environment.

5.2. Theme 2: Humour as a Facilitator of Engagement and Self-Confidence

The second topic emphasizes how Humour may help individuals with learning impairments feel more confident and engaged in their studies. According to the reviewed research, Humour helps foster a low-threat learning atmosphere that motivates students to engage more fully in class activities.

Humourous teaching methods have been shown to boost students' intrinsic desire and readiness to engage with academic material. Humour lowers the perceived difficulty of academic work and makes learning experiences more approachable. Students are therefore more inclined to try difficult tasks and take chances in their academic careers.

From an analytical standpoint, Humour increases involvement by reducing psychological obstacles, especially the fear of making mistakes. Students with learning difficulties can now feel more confident in their academic skills thanks to this change. As a result, higher self-efficacy encourages perseverance in learning assignments and enhances academic engagement.

5.3. Theme 3: Humour as a Tool for Social Interaction

The social aspect of Humour in educational contexts is the subject of the third theme. According to the studies, Humour improves peer interactions in the classroom and fosters healthy interpersonal ties between instructors and students.

Social difficulties, such as feelings of loneliness, stigma, or communication difficulties, are common for students with learning impairments. According to the examined research, Humour fosters inclusivity and a sense of belonging by serving as a social bridge. Humour fosters a more encouraging classroom environment via lighthearted exchanges and shared laughter.

From an analytical perspective, Humour serves as a social integrative mechanism that promotes cooperative learning and lessens interpersonal distance. It lessens social anxiety by encouraging good peer dynamics and identity expression. These social advantages help create a more welcoming and interactive classroom atmosphere in inclusive educational environments.

Table 1: *Summary of Thematic Findings on the Role of Humour in Reducing Academic Anxiety among Students with Learning Disabilities*

Theme	Key Focus	Representative Findings	Supporting Studies
Emotional Regulation through Humour	Humour reduces stress and emotional tension	Humour and laughter-based interventions significantly reduce anxiety and improve emotional well-being among learners	(Akimbekov & Razzaque, 2021 ; Kalanlar & Kuru Alıcı, 2024)
Humour and Academic Engagement	Humour enhances motivation and classroom participation	Humour-integrated teaching increases student engagement and reduces anticipatory anxiety	(Wang et al., 2022; Erdoğdu & Çakıroğlu, 2021)
Humour as a Coping Strategy	Adaptive Humour helps reinterpret academic challenges	Self-enhancing Humour predicts lower anxiety and better coping with stress	(Tsukawaki & Imura, 2025; Menéndez-Aller et al., 2020)
Humour and Social Interaction	Humour supports positive peer interaction and inclusion	Humour-supported peer interactions improve confidence and classroom participation	(St-Amand et al., 2023; Venkatesan & Joshi, 2022)
Humour and Psychological Resilience	Humour strengthens resilience against academic stress	Humour-based interventions improve coping abilities and reduce stress levels	(Tagalidou et al., 2018; Siminone et al., 2023)

5.4. Synthesis of Themes

The results show that Humour does not act as a single teaching approach but rather through interrelated emotional, cognitive, and social processes. Increased academic engagement is made possible by emotional management, which lowers stress and anxiety. Positive social interactions enhance emotions of support and belonging, and more participation boosts self-confidence.

Humour may therefore be viewed as a multifaceted mediation mechanism that concurrently affects social inclusion, learning engagement, and emotional well-being. When combined, these strategies help students with learning difficulties have more pleasant educational experiences and less academic anxiety.

Table 2: *Analytical Synthesis of Themes and Their Impact on Students with Learning Disabilities*

Theme	Analytical Description	Key Contribution of Reviewed Studies	Impact on Students with Learning Disabilities
Humour as Emotional Regulator	Humour helps students cognitively reframe stressful academic situations and reduce emotional tension	Intervention and psychological studies demonstrate reduced anxiety and improved emotional well-being	Greater emotional stability and reduced academic anxiety
Humour as Facilitator of Engagement & Self-Confidence	Humour creates a low-threat learning environment that encourages participation and risk-taking	Classroom-based studies report increased motivation and active engagement	Higher self-efficacy and willingness to participate in learning tasks
Humour as Tool for Social Interaction	Humour strengthens teacher–student relationships and peer communication	Qualitative and cultural studies highlight improved classroom climate and inclusion	Reduced social anxiety and stronger peer relationships

6. DISCUSSION

This present literature review highlights the significance of Humour as a complex process that can play an important role in helping learners with disabilities overcome academic anxiety. Humour is not just a means for engaging students in class; rather, it seems to work through a network of emotional, cognitive, and social processes that improve the experience of students academically.

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First, Humour is important for emotional regulation. Learners with disabilities usually encounter greater frustration and a feeling of threat because of continuous academic difficulties. Based on the literature analysis, Humour can be considered as an adaptive strategy that would transform the experience of a threatening situation in academics into something less threatening. Humour helps learners achieve emotional equilibrium while working through academic tasks by triggering positive emotions and decreasing tension levels. Evidence from research on laughter therapy and Humour interventions reveals that Humour decreases the level of anxiety and increases the emotional wellbeing of learners (Akimbekov & Razzaque, 2021). Studies on Humour styles confirm the connection between adaptive styles of Humour, especially self-enhancing Humour, and low anxiety levels (Tsukawaki & Imura, 2025). These results support theoretical perspectives suggesting that Humour facilitates cognitive-affective regulation by giving individuals the ability to reframe challenging events in less threatening terms.

Secondly, it proposes that Humour facilitates academic interest and confidence. Those students who have difficulties learning tend to encounter many academic failures, leading to a lack of confidence and interest in academics. According to the literature, Humour has the potential to create a psychological environment where errors are seen as an integral component of learning and not a sign of academic failure. By incorporating Humour in teaching methods, educators can minimize pressure while participating in classroom learning. Research on the use of Humour in educational psychology shows that there exists a connection between learning with Humour and motivation and engagement in the classroom (Wang et al., 2022).

Third, the conclusions indicate the importance of Humour in relation to social issues within inclusive education contexts. For instance, students with difficulties in learning might experience a number of social restrictions such as discrimination or insufficient peer interactions. By using Humour, one could act as a link that would help to establish social relationships between educators and learners and encourage positive interactions between peers. The use of common laughter may result in creating a more positive and socially inclusive climate in schools. As stated in previous research on classroom communication, the use of Humour increases students' engagement and inclusion in interactions (St-Amand et al., 2023).

Nonetheless, it appears that the effect of Humour in instruction is contingent upon how it is employed and what type of Humour is being used. Poorly chosen Humour can distract from learning goals or unintentionally cultivate bad attitudes. For this reason, Humour should be applied consciously in a way that encourages respect and inclusivity within the classroom environment (Venkatesan & Joshi, 2022).

It seems that Humour acts as a mediator between academic challenges and emotional outcomes. Humour might assist students facing academic difficulties in managing their academic stress and creating fun learning environments by influencing both emotional control, cognitive appraisal, and interpersonal communication simultaneously.

Table 3: *Role of Humour Across Emotional, Academic, and Social Domains in Learning Contexts*

Theme	Role of Humour	Key Psychological Process	Outcome for Students with Learning Disabilities
Emotional Regulation	Humour helps students reinterpret stressful academic experiences	Emotional regulation and cognitive reframing	Reduced academic anxiety and improved emotional stability
Academic Engagement	Humour creates a supportive learning environment	Increased motivation and reduced fear of mistakes	Higher participation and self-confidence
Social Interaction	Humour strengthens peer and teacher relationships	Positive social communication and belonging	Greater classroom inclusion and engagement

7. THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

By conceiving Humour as a multifaceted mechanism that affects emotional, cognitive, and social processes in learning contexts, this work advances the theory of inclusive education and educational psychology. The current study places Humour within wider theoretical perspectives on emotional regulation and academic adjustment, in contrast to earlier studies that frequently looked at Humour merely as a teaching method or a general coping mechanism. The study emphasizes Humour as a mediating factor that influences how students perceive and react to academic difficulties by looking at its connection to learning deficits and academic anxiety.

From a cognitive-affective standpoint, Humour may be viewed as a type of cognitive reappraisal that helps pupils reframe stressful academic situations. The relationship between cognitive processing and emotional regulation has a significant impact on learning, according to research in educational psychology. According to empirical research, Humour promotes more adaptable engagement with academic work by increasing cognitive flexibility and lowering negative emotional reactions (Zheng & Wang, 2023; Tsukawaki & Imura, 2025). Humour functions as a cognitive-emotional regulating technique in this way, which

is consistent with theoretical frameworks that highlight the dynamic interaction between affect and cognition in learning processes.

Additionally, the work advances theoretical conversations on psychological resilience and adaptive coping. According to coping theory, techniques that help people reframe stresses and preserve emotional equilibrium are crucial defense mechanisms. By encouraging healthy emotional regulation and psychological resilience, adaptive Humour styles may lessen the negative impacts of academic stress and anxiety, according to data from experimental and intervention-based research (Siminone et al., 2023; Tagalidou et al., 2018). The study broadens current theoretical perspectives on coping by placing Humour in the context of students with learning difficulties and highlighting context-sensitive methods that might be created in educational settings.

The results also support inclusive pedagogy and social-emotional learning theories. In order to promote students' growth, social-emotional learning frameworks place a strong emphasis on integrating academic engagement, interpersonal interactions, and emotional control. According to research on inclusive classrooms, Humour may improve kids' feeling of belonging, foster good peer interaction, and fortify classroom connections (Chadwick and Platt, 2018). The study presents Humour as a socially embedded process that facilitates both individual emotional adjustment and group learning experiences by emphasizing these social components.

Additionally, the theoretical knowledge of Humour in educational situations is expanded by including cultural viewpoints. According to research on disability discourse, Humour may serve as a sociocultural tool that helps people with disabilities negotiate their identities and combat stigma (Deb, 2022). Theoretical models of Humour, emotion, and learning can transcend general presumptions and recognize the contextual elements that influence students' experiences in inclusive learning settings by taking these cultural characteristics into account.

Overall, by integrating knowledge from social-emotional learning, coping theory, and emotional regulation to explain how humour influences academic anxiety in individuals with learning difficulties, the study enhances theoretical understanding. The research provides a conceptual foundation for future models that explore the relationship between emotional processes, cognitive engagement, and inclusive educational strategies by synthesising data from multiple studies.

8. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The study's conclusions have significant ramifications for educational practice, especially when it comes to creating inclusive classrooms that assist kids with learning difficulties. First, the findings show that Humour may be used as a deliberate teaching tactic to lessen academic anxiety and foster emotional comfort in the classroom. Adaptive kinds of Humour, such self-enhancing and affiliative Humour, can boost student engagement and reduce perceived academic pressure when employed purposefully (Martin, 2007; Banas et al., 2011). Teachers might use Humour in their lessons through lighthearted storytelling, quick jokes about the subject, amusing examples used to teach challenging concepts, or entertaining analogies that make tough academic material easier to understand. These methods contribute to the development of a classroom environment that is helpful and less intimidating for students with learning impairments.

Second, the results emphasize how crucial it is to improve professional development and teacher preparation when it comes to using Humour as a teaching tool. Training modules that assist teachers in comprehending how Humour affects students' emotions, motivation, and classroom relationships have to be a part of teacher education programs (Garner, 2006). Workshops for professional development may showcase useful strategies including the use of amusing visual aids, the inclusion of cartoons or comic strips that are relevant to the lesson's subject matter, and the use of Humour to promote discussion participation. Teachers should also get training on how to differentiate between maladaptive Humour, which might shame or reject pupils, and adaptive Humour, which encourages inclusion (Martin et al., 2003). These skills are especially crucial in inclusive classrooms because children' emotional sensitivity and learning requirements may vary.

Third, the results indicate that among kids with learning difficulties, Humour can improve social connections and foster a feeling of community. Teachers and students can improve classroom communication, ease social tension, and foster collaborative learning experiences by sharing positive Humour (Banas et al., 2011). To promote engagement and lessen social anxiety, teachers might use Humour into group activities, peer conversations, and cooperative problem-solving assignments. These methods are consistent with social-emotional learning techniques, which highlight good classroom settings and supportive relationships as crucial elements of successful inclusive education.

Fourth, the study shows that Humour-based teaching methods might be a useful and affordable way to promote inclusive education. Humour may be included into regular classroom education with little planning, in contrast to many specialized therapies that call for substantial resources or technology. Teachers can build a self-reinforcing instructional loop that preserves attention and lessens learning stress by using short, funny prompts, instructive cartoons, or amusing analogies (Fig. 4) (Garner, 2006). These techniques make Humour an accessible and scalable intervention, especially in educational contexts where specialist support resources may be scarce.

Lastly, the results have consequences for curriculum creation and educational policy. In addition to academic access, inclusive education frameworks increasingly prioritize students' emotional health and engagement in the classroom (UNESCO, 2020). Therefore, policies and curricular standards should support instructional strategies that take into account both the cognitive and emotional aspects of learning. Acknowledging Humour as a pedagogical

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tool within inclusive education policy may help school-wide methods, classroom practices, and teacher training programs that provide supportive learning environments for children with learning difficulties. Education systems may encourage both academic engagement and emotional resilience among diverse learners by including Humour-based tactics into inclusive education policy and instructor standards.

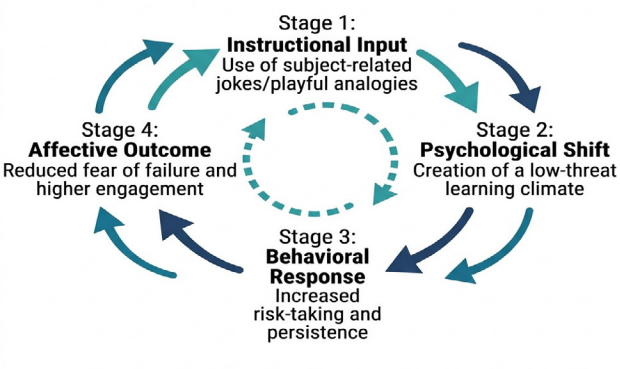


Figure 4: *The Adaptive Humour Instructional Cycle*

9. DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

There are still a number of areas that need more research, even if the current study offers a conceptual understanding of Humour may function as a potential mediating mechanism in lowering academic anxiety among students with learning challenges. First, the suggested mediation model should be empirically tested. In order to investigate how Humour affects the relationship between learning disabilities and academic anxiety through emotional, cognitive, and social pathways, future research should use quantitative and mixed-method research designs utilizing sophisticated analytical techniques like mediation analysis and structural equation modeling. The theoretical claims would be strengthened and the framework's robustness would be improved by such empirical confirmation.

Second, future studies should look at how Humour-based therapies work for other learning disorders, such as dyslexia, dysgraphia, and dyscalculia. It is possible to determine if Humour acts differently depending on the type of learning difficulty and instructional setting by conducting comparative research utilizing experimental or quasi-experimental approaches.

Third, to evaluate the long-term impacts of Humour-based techniques on academic anxiety, engagement, and learning outcomes, longitudinal studies are required. It would be possible to determine if Humour helps kids with learning challenges maintain emotional resilience and enhance their academic adjustment by keeping track of them over long periods of time

Lastly, future research should examine the integration of Humour into technology-enhanced learning settings, such as gamified learning systems, digital platforms, and assistive technologies. Experiments conducted in virtual or hybrid learning environments may shed light on how Humour-driven teaching methods might enhance students' emotional health and engagement.

10. CONCLUSION

Through a qualitative thematic synthesis of national and international literature, this study investigated the effect of Humour in lowering academic anxiety among students with learning difficulties. According to the research, Humour functions as a multifaceted process affecting the social, emotional, and cognitive facets of learning. Humour promotes participation, self-assurance, and constructive classroom interactions that create inclusive learning settings while also supporting emotional regulation by lowering stress and anxiety.

The results demonstrate that cognitive or instructional therapies alone are unable to reduce academic anxiety in children with learning impairments. Students' learning experiences are greatly influenced by emotional and social dynamics, and Humour is a helpful method to reframe academic difficulties and lessen failure-related anxiety.

The creation of a conceptual framework that views Humour as a mediating factor between learning challenges and emotional consequences is one of the study's main contributions. By highlighting Humour as a significant component of inclusive educational practice rather than just as a teaching strategy, this viewpoint expands on previous studies.

The study indicates that including considerate and appropriate Humour into instructional strategies, teacher development courses, and inclusive education policies may improve students with learning difficulties' academic engagement and emotional health. This paradigm may be expanded upon by future studies to improve knowledge of Humour-informed tactics that promote inclusive and equitable education.

DECLARATIONS

Author(s) Contribution

Conceptualization: Abhishek Panigrahi; Data curation: Abhishek Panigrahi; Formal analysis: Abhishek Panigrahi; Funding acquisition: Abhishek Panigrahi; Investigation: Dr. Mohd Faijullah Khan; Methodology: Abhishek Panigrahi; Project administration: Dr. Mohd Faijullah Khan; Resources: Abhishek Panigrahi; Software: Mohd Shazad; Supervision: Dr. Mohd Faijullah Khan; Validation: Abhishek Panigrahi; Visualization: Abhishek Panigrahi , Dr. Mohd Faijullah Khan; Writing – original draft: Abhishek Panigrahi; Writing – review & editing: Abhishek Panigrahi , Mohd Shazad. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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Competing Interests

The author(s) declare no competing interest.

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Human Ethics and Consent to Participate

The study didn't involve any clinical interventions or experiments requiring formal ethical approval.

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