

The Importance of Emotional Intelligence in Teachers

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Abstract: *This paper presents a comprehensive systematic literature review on the importance of Emotional Intelligence (EI) in teachers, synthesizing peer-reviewed studies from 2018 to 2025. It examines the conceptual foundations and models of EI, its measurement approaches, and its effects on productivity both in general workplace settings and specifically in educational contexts. Findings consistently indicate that higher EI levels are associated with improved teaching efficacy, better classroom management, reduced burnout, and enhanced student outcomes. The review highlights mechanisms through which EI exerts its influence—such as emotional regulation, empathy, and effective communication—and identifies moderating factors including teaching experience and organizational support. Practical recommendations are provided for teachers, educational institutions, and policymakers, emphasizing the integration of EI into professional development, school culture, and educational policy. Limitations of current research and directions for future studies are also discussed.*

Keyword: Emotional Intelligence, teachers well-being, classroom management, EI training

1. Introduction

Emotional intelligence (EI) has gained sustained attention in education because teaching is fundamentally relational and emotionally demanding. Originating with Salovey and Mayer's definition of EI as the ability to perceive, use, understand, and regulate emotions, the construct has since expanded into a multifaceted capability influencing professional performance and well-being (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Research has consistently shown that emotionally intelligent teachers are better equipped to manage stress, create inclusive classrooms, and foster strong relationships with students and colleagues.

In school settings, teachers face daily pressures, including classroom management, diverse student needs, and administrative demands, making EI a pivotal competency. Evidence indicates that teachers higher in EI better motivate students, foster positive classroom climates, and mitigate disruptive behaviour (Brackett, Rivers, & Salovey, 2019).

This paper explores the significance of EI in teaching through a review of recent empirical studies and theoretical frameworks. Drawing upon evidence from peer-reviewed journals and scholarly books published between 2018 and 2025, the goal is to provide a comprehensive and evidence-based understanding of how EI contributes to educational success.

2. Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

Definition of Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence (EI) is broadly defined as the ability to perceive, understand, manage, and regulate emotions in oneself and others, which allows individuals to adapt effectively to social and environmental demands. Salovey and Mayer (1990), who first introduced the concept, described EI as “the subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide

one's thinking and actions.” Later, Goleman (1995) popularized EI in the context of workplace performance and leadership, emphasizing competencies such as self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. Bar-On (1997) further expanded the concept by developing the Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i), conceptualizing EI as a set of emotional and social competencies that determine how effectively people understand and express themselves, relate with others, and cope with daily pressures. Collectively, these perspectives highlight that EI is a multidimensional construct essential for personal and professional success.

Conceptual Foundations of Emotional Intelligence

The conceptual foundations of Emotional Intelligence (EI) have evolved through diverse theoretical models and interdisciplinary insights in recent years. Three primary frameworks remain at the core: the **ability model**, **mixed model**, and **trait model**. The **ability model**, developed by Mayer and Salovey, conceptualizes EI as a cognitive capacity characterized by emotion perception, use, understanding, and regulation. In contrast, the **mixed model**, popularized by Goleman, defines EI as a blend of emotional abilities with social and behavioural competencies—such as self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, social skills, and motivation—that contribute to leadership, team effectiveness and workplace success. Meanwhile, the **trait model**, introduced by Bar-On (1997) and later refined by Petrides (2009), frames EI as a constellation of self-perceived emotional capabilities embedded within broader personality constructs that influence well-being and adaptive functioning.

Conceptual Foundations vs. Models of Emotional Intelligence

The distinction between the conceptual foundations and the models of emotional intelligence (EI) lies in their scope and application. The **conceptual foundations** of Emotional Intelligence (EI) pertain to the theoretical lens through which EI is understood—whether as a cognitive ability, a set of emotional-social competencies, or a dispositional trait within personality frameworks. These foundations underpin

important decisions in defining, measuring, and validating EI, such as the recognition that ability-EI should be assessed through performance-based testing while trait-EI relies on self-perceptions (Sambol et al., 2025). These foundations provided the groundwork for understanding emotions as integral to human adaptation, learning, and interpersonal functioning. In contrast, the **models of EI** represent structured theoretical frameworks that operationalize the concept into measurable constructs. The most influential models include the **ability model** (Mayer & Salovey, 1997), which views EI as a set of cognitive-emotional abilities; the **mixed model** (Goleman, 1995, 1998), which integrates emotional abilities with social and behavioural competencies; and the **trait model** (Bar-On, 1997; Petrides, 2009), which conceptualizes EI as emotional self-perceptions rooted in personality. Thus, while conceptual foundations define *what* EI is, models describe *how* it is structured, operationalized, and measured.

Mechanisms of Emotional Intelligence

The mechanisms of emotional intelligence (EI) explain how emotional abilities translate into individual and social outcomes. At the **cognitive level**, EI enhance attention, memory, and decision-making by integrating emotional information into thought processes (Mayer, Roberts, & Barsade, 2008). In the **regulatory level**, EI operates through mechanisms of emotional regulation, such as cognitive reappraisal and suppression, which allow individuals to manage emotional stimuli to reduce negative reactivity and support adaptive functioning (Grecucci et al., 2020). At the **social level**, empathy and interpersonal sensitivity serve as mechanisms that foster effective communication, prosocial behaviour, and relationship quality (Côté, 2014). Finally, At the **neurobiological level**, recent findings highlight how brain structures like the right orbitofrontal cortex (rOFC) mediate the link between EI and traits such as creativity, with gray matter volume in rOFC partially accounting for that association (He et al., 2018). Moreover, EI is supported by interactions between the amygdala and prefrontal cortex, which coordinate emotional reactivity and executive control, as well as reward-related neural systems that enhance motivation and social bonding (Pessoa, 2018). Collectively, these mechanisms illustrate how EI functions through dynamic integration of cognitive appraisal, emotional coping techniques, and brain network activity to influence well-being, performance, creativity, social effectiveness, and decision-making.

Emotional Intelligence and Teacher Well-Being

Emotional Intelligence (EI) plays a pivotal role in supporting teacher well-being. Research shows that teachers with higher EI experience lower levels of burnout, higher self-efficacy, and increased professional engagement. For example, a 2025 study using Trait Meta-Mood and Maslach Burnout Inventory tools revealed that EI indirectly improves well-being through increased resilience and reduced stress. A systematic review by Aldrup et al. (2023) found that teacher well-being correlates with job satisfaction, reduced absenteeism, and improved classroom relationships.

EI also buffers the psychological toll of crises such as COVID-19, where emotionally intelligent teachers maintained higher engagement and lower emotional exhaustion. Studies emphasize the importance of institutional

leadership; emotionally intelligent principals positively influence staff morale, trust, and well-being. Evidence further suggests that mindfulness-based interventions and programs aligned with the PERMA-H model enhance emotional health, reduce stress, and promote reflective teaching practices.

Classroom Management and Student Interaction

Teachers with high EI demonstrate better classroom management, leading to emotionally safe and disciplined environments. A 2023 systematic review confirms that such teachers are adept at de-escalating conflict, applying empathy, and maintaining order. They encourage mutual trust and reduce disciplinary friction. Further, emotionally intelligent teachers tend to foster inclusive, positive classroom climates that support peer cooperation and engagement.

Research in 2025 by Iqbal and colleagues highlighted how EI in teachers enhances relationships with students, promoting emotional development and classroom cohesion. Moreover, socio-emotional training programs like MITHOS and InCoRe provide teachers with real-time strategies for managing emotional conflicts and practicing empathy, helping to reduce disciplinary incidents and enhance student cooperation.

Impact on Student Outcomes

EI in teachers has a direct and measurable impact on student outcomes. Studies from 2023–2025 consistently show that emotionally intelligent educators influence student GPA, motivation, attendance, and behaviour. For instance, teacher EI significantly predicted student performance through improved classroom management and teacher-student relationships. Vithanage (2023) and Rahman (2024) showed significant positive correlations between teacher EI and student academic engagement.

Moreover, a meta-analysis in 2025 found a positive relationship between teacher socio-emotional competence (SEC) and student engagement, reinforcing the need for EI training. Similar effects have been documented at the university level, confirming the relevance of EI across educational stages. SEL programs for students, when aligned with teacher EI, produce synergistic effects on learning and emotional growth.

Training Models and Professional Development

To cultivate EI in educators, several evidence-based training models have been developed. The Transactional Model (Savina et al.) outlines eight emotional competencies tailored to educational contexts. The RULER approach, developed at Yale, trains educators in five key EI skills and has been shown to enhance engagement, reduce burnout, and improve school climate. CARE (Cultivating Awareness and Resilience in Education) focuses on mindfulness and emotional resilience.

Innovative training tools like MITHOS and InCoRe employ mixed reality and AI to simulate classroom conflicts, allowing teachers to practice emotional regulation and communication strategies. These programs are supported by empirical research showing improvements in emotion management and reductions in stress and conflict within the classroom.

Teacher EI relates to classroom management, student engagement, and adaptive instruction. Higher EI is associated with fewer disruptive behaviours and more positive student-teacher relationships (Brackett et al., 2019).

Systematic reviews report that teacher EI negatively correlates with burnout and positively with job satisfaction and teaching self-efficacy (Mérida-López & Extremera, 2020; Vesely et al., 2020). Competencies such as emotional self-awareness, regulation, empathy, and social skills appear especially consequential in diverse and high-pressure classrooms.

3. Methodology

This study is a narrative literature review that synthesizes recent academic research published between 2018 and 2025. Sources include peer-reviewed journal articles, systematic reviews, and academic books accessed through databases. Keywords included 'emotional intelligence,' 'teacher well-being,' 'classroom management,' and 'educational policy.' Studies were selected based on relevance, recency, and empirical rigor.

4. Results and Discussion

EI and Productivity in Workplaces

The reviewed evidence consistently indicates a positive association between EI and job performance across roles and sectors. Meta-analytic work underscores that EI contributes incremental validity beyond cognitive ability and personality traits (O'Boyle et al., 2011). Intervention studies further suggest that EI-focused training can improve teamwork, cooperation, and role effectiveness (Schutte et al., 2018).

A substantial and growing body of research confirms the effectiveness of emotional intelligence (EI) training for teachers. These studies demonstrate that targeted EI interventions improve not only teachers' emotional competencies but also classroom dynamics, student outcomes, and professional well-being.

Cihan (2024) conducted a quasi-experimental study on pre-service teachers using a social-emotional learning (SEL) training program. The intervention significantly improved participants' EI scores, as measured by the Bar-On EQ-i inventory, without negatively impacting their academic performance. Qualitative reflections from participants confirmed the training's transformative impact on emotional regulation and empathy.

In a more intensive intervention, Arteaga-Cedeño et al. (2025) implemented a 32-hour EI program delivered over eight weeks. Teachers participating in the training showed notable gains in emotional clarity, interpersonal communication, and psychological well-being. The study used pre- and post-training surveys and structured interviews to evaluate outcomes.

A systematic review by Nayak (2025) synthesized findings from multiple studies on EI training among educators. The review concluded that well-designed EI training leads to measurable improvements in classroom management,

teacher-student relationships, and mental health. The author recommends institutionalizing EI as a core component of professional development.

Pattiasina et al. (2024) explored the effects of EI training on 60 teachers and 600 students using a quasi-experimental design. The results showed that teachers in the experimental group exhibited significantly enhanced EI and stronger relational dynamics with students, which in turn correlated with improved student academic performance.

Innovative approaches to EI training have emerged through the use of mixed-reality simulations. Chehayeb et al. (2024–2025) developed two systems—MITHOS and InCoRe—that immerse teachers in emotionally challenging classroom scenarios. These simulations promote the development of emotion regulation, co-regulation, and self-compassion. Physiological indicators such as heart rate variability (HRV) and post-training survey data support the efficacy of this training modality.

Collectively, these studies establish a strong empirical foundation for integrating EI training into teacher preparation and professional development programs. They demonstrate that EI is not only teachable but also essential for fostering emotionally intelligent classrooms and emotionally resilient educators.

EI and Teacher Productivity

Within education, EI aligns with higher teaching self-efficacy, better classroom management, and improved student outcomes. Teachers who report higher EI level tend to create more supportive climates, reduce disruptive behaviour, and tailor instruction to student needs (Brackett et al., 2019).

Reviews converge on EI's protective role against burnout and its positive links to job satisfaction and well-being (Mérida-López & Extremera, 2020; Vesely et al., 2020). These relationships are plausibly mediated by emotional regulation and empathy, and strengthened by supportive school cultures.

Boyatzis (2018) advances a sophisticated model of EI by focusing on behavioural emotional intelligence. Rather than treating EI solely as a cognitive or personality trait, Boyatzis emphasizes the behavioural manifestations of EI that are directly observable and measurable in workplace interactions. These include emotional self-awareness, adaptability, empathy, and influence. Importantly, his work argues for using 360-degree assessments to capture how individuals exhibit EI-related competencies in action. For educators, this perspective implies that EI should be seen not just as an inner quality but as a set of skills enacted in classroom relationships, leadership behaviours, and decision-making.

Building on this behavioural understanding, Hamid (2025) reviews 25 empirical studies and argues that EI acts as a catalyst for effective teaching and learning. She highlights how emotionally intelligent teachers can create emotionally safe learning environments that support academic risk-taking and resilience among students. The review shows that students of emotionally intelligent teachers demonstrate higher levels of engagement, motivation, and emotional regulation. Hamid's synthesis also emphasizes the need to

institutionalize EI training in teacher preparation programs, calling for systemic reforms in how educators are trained to manage emotions—in themselves and in others.

Adding to these perspectives, a 2023 article in the *Voyage Journal of Educational Studies* conceptualizes EI as an educational imperative. The study positions EI as a foundation for inclusive pedagogy, arguing that self-regulation, social awareness, and emotional expressiveness are essential for differentiated instruction and classroom equity. The article outlines pedagogical practices such as emotional vocabulary building, empathy-focused dialogue, and reflective journaling as effective strategies to foster EI in both students and teachers

The applicability of emotional intelligence extends beyond educational settings, as shown in a healthcare study by Khosla and Syal (2022). Their quantitative investigation found that higher EI among healthcare professionals was strongly associated with better stress management, enhanced job satisfaction, and improved interpersonal effectiveness in emotionally intense situations. These findings are especially relevant to teaching, where the emotional demands of classroom management, curriculum delivery, and relational labour closely parallel those found in caregiving professions.

1) Integrative Reading of the Evidence

Findings converge on EI as a cross-cutting competence that supports performance wherever complex human interactions are central—workplaces broadly and classrooms specifically. Convergence across meta-analytic syntheses and education-focused reviews increases confidence in the robustness of these associations.

2) How Might EI Work? Mechanisms

- Emotional regulation preserves cognitive resources by reducing maladaptive arousal, thereby protecting attention and decision quality under stress (Mérida-López & Extremera, 2020).
- Emotion perception and understanding enable responsive communication and tailored instruction, reducing conflict and misalignment (Côté, 2014).
- Empathy and relational skills build trust and social capital, amplifying collaboration and knowledge sharing (Brackett et al., 2019).
- Using emotion to facilitate thinking can support creativity and problem-solving in pedagogical design (Salovey & Mayer, 1990).

3) Moderators and Mediators

Teacher experience, school climate, and leadership support may strengthen the EI–outcomes link. Measurement choice also matters—trait-like scales often correlate more strongly with affective outcomes than performance-based tests (Andrei et al., 2022).

4) Alignment with Theoretical Models

Results align with the Ability Model while also reflecting mixed-model components (motivation, social skills). A pluralistic view that treats EI as trainable abilities embedded in supportive cultures seems most practical for schools.

5) Practical Implications

Professional development should incorporate short, skills-based EI modules (e.g., cognitive reappraisal, active listening) with classroom simulations and

coaching. At the school level, policies that protect teacher reflection time and promote collegial learning communities can amplify EI's benefits.

6) Measurement and Evaluation Considerations

Combining self-report and performance-based tools alongside behavioural indicators (e.g., instructional time-on-task) and objective student outcomes provides stronger evidence of impact.

7) Limitations of This Review

Heterogeneous measures and outcomes limited opportunities for unified quantitative synthesis. Publication bias remains possible, and many studies are cross-sectional, constraining causal inference.

8) Directions for Future Research

Longitudinal randomized trials linking EI training to classroom behaviours and student outcomes are needed. Research should examine mediators (teaching self-efficacy, regulation strategies) and moderators (grade level, class size, culture), and develop hybrid assessments (e.g., performance tasks embedded in classroom simulations).

5. Conclusion

Taken together, these studies form a converging narrative: Emotional intelligence is an actionable, learnable, and observable skill set that is critical for success in education. It influences not only teacher well-being and classroom outcomes but also systemic qualities such as inclusiveness, professional resilience, and leadership efficacy. Recognizing EI as a core educational competence—rather than a peripheral soft skill—may be the key to transforming how educators are trained, supported, and evaluated.

This review indicates that emotional intelligence is a practical lever for improving instructional quality and teacher sustainability when paired with intentional professional development and supportive school cultures. Ongoing rigorous research is warranted to refine mechanisms and quantify long-term effects on students.

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