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Teacher's emotional intelligence as a catalyst for stronger student-teacher relationship: a systematic literature review

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Abstract

Emotional intelligence (EI) is a key factor influencing teacher effectiveness in fostering positive student-teacher bonds. The objective of this systematic literature review was to examine the influence of teacher EI on student-teacher relationship and highlight gaps in the existing literature. To make sure a thorough review process, Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses guidelines were followed. Articles published between 2021 and 2025 were retrieved from ERIC, ScienceDirect, and JSTOR, resulting in a total of 11 articles reviewed in this paper. The journals were reviewed following an inclusion and exclusion criteria. The findings reveal that key teacher EI indeed play a crucial role in building trust, improving student motivation, and managing classroom dynamics effectively. Teachers with high EI foster a positive learning environment, enhance student participation, and reduce behavioral issues. The review identifies gaps in the literature, including a lack of longitudinal studies, limited research in diverse cultural contexts, and insufficient focus on intervention-based approaches to develop EI in teachers. The study's implications emphasize the need for teacher training programs to integrate EI development to enhance student-teacher relationship. Future research should explore cross-cultural comparisons and intervention strategies to further understand the long-term impact of teacher EI on education.

Keywords:

Emotional intelligence;
Academic performance;
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Teacher effectiveness ;
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1. Introduction

The student-teacher relationship is the foundation of effective education, deeply influencing students' academic performance, emotional well-being, and classroom behaviour. In today's increasingly complex and emotionally demanding school environments, the interpersonal dynamics between teachers and students are of significant importance. Teachers are not only facilitators of knowledge but also emotional role models and key social figures in their students' lives. Consequently, there is a growing recognition of the need for teachers to possess emotional competencies that enable them to interact effectively and empathetically with students. This has drawn attention to the concept of Emotional Intelligence (EI), broadly defined as an individual's ability to recognise, understand, and manage their own emotions and those of others (Mohzana et al., 2025). Understanding how teacher EI shapes student-teacher relationships is of both

theoretical and practical relevance, particularly in efforts to foster inclusive, supportive, and high-performing learning environments.

A growing body of research highlights the positive correlation between teachers EI and student-teacher relationships. Teachers with high EI are more likely to create emotionally secure environments, promote student trust, and model empathetic behaviours, leading to stronger and more effective teacher-student bonds (Macaday-Quioco, 2024; Saleh & Hibatullah, 2023). These emotionally rich relationships not only support students' academic engagement and achievement but also reduce classroom anxiety and behavioural issues (Alam & Ahmad, 2018). Furthermore, EI has been linked to teacher self-efficacy and job performance, emphasizing its value in sustaining professional resilience and enhancing teaching quality (Valente et al., 2020). Foundational studies and recent developments consistently demonstrate that emotionally intelligent teaching plays a pivotal role in shaping positive school experiences and long-term student success.

Despite the increasing recognition of EI as a key factor in student-teacher relationships, significant research gaps persist. Existing literature often examines EI in relation to teacher well-being or classroom management, with limited focus on how specific EI components such as empathy, self-regulation, and social awareness directly shape relational dynamics with students (Chamizo-Nieto et al., 2021; Xiang et al., 2022). Additionally, contextual variables such as school environment, grade level, and culture remain underexplored as mediators of this relationship. There is also insufficient empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of targeted EI training for teachers and its direct impact on students' academic outcomes (Pattiasina et al., 2024). Furthermore, the mechanisms linking teacher EI to children's empathy development and the moderating role of student-teacher relationships in this process require greater clarity.

Therefore, by systematically reviewing the existing literature on the topic, this systematic literature aims to identify the role of teacher EI in student-teacher relationship along with specific EI skills and research gaps. Such an investigation will provide a holistic idea of current studies on teacher EI and student-teacher relationships and areas that need to be researched in the future. The insights gained from this synthesis will inform teacher-training programs, school policy development, and future research agendas. In doing so, this review not only contributes to the growing literature on EI in education but also supports the development of emotionally responsive teaching practices that can enhance student learning and well-being. This review is driven by two main research questions which are presented below.

- RQ1: What is the role of teachers' emotional intelligence in fostering positive student-teacher relationships?
- RQ2: What are the gaps in the existing literature regarding teacher EI and student-teacher relationships?

2. Emotional intelligence

Since EI is a multidimensional concept, there are many definitions and models which suit different contexts. Rooted in the concept of social intelligence (Chaidi & Drigas, 2022), EI involves understanding emotions in oneself and others to navigate social contexts effectively. In a hybrid literature review on EI, Coronado-Maldonado and Benítez-Márquez (2023) summarised the definitions according to the main EI models. According to this review, Salovey and Mayer (1990), who introduced the specific definition of EI, later simplified it as the ability to identify and express emotions, synthesise emotional states with cognitive processes, understand and evaluate emotions, and regulate emotional reactions in oneself and others.

Goleman (1995) defined EI as the ability to recognise one's own feelings and those of others, to motivate oneself, and to handle one's own emotions well. Bar-On's definition complements this perspective by emphasising intrapersonal and interpersonal skills, adaptability, and stress

management (Chaidi & Drigas, 2022). These competencies are particularly relevant for teachers navigating emotionally demanding classroom environments. Several models and theories have attempted to explain the structure and nature of EI. These can be broadly classified into ability, mixed or trait, and performance models (Chaidi & Drigas, 2022; Coronado-Maldonado & Benítez-Márquez, 2023). Mayer et al. (2016) proposed an ability model that views EI as a form of intelligence with specific cognitive abilities related to emotions, organised into a four-branch hierarchy. Their model is often measured using the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT).

In contrast, mixed models, such as those proposed by Goleman and Bar-On, integrate emotional abilities with personality traits and competencies (Chaidi & Drigas, 2022; Coronado-Maldonado & Benítez-Márquez, 2023). Goleman's model emphasises competencies like self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management (Cherniss & Goleman, 2001), while Bar-On's model includes five main areas: intrapersonal abilities, interpersonal skills, adaptability, stress management, and general mood, assessed by the Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i) (Mishar & Bangun, 2014). Petrides and Furnham developed the trait EI concept, viewing EI as a constellation of emotional self-perceptions measured using self-report questionnaires (Petrides et al., 2018). Drigas et al.,(2023) proposed a nine-layer pyramid model suggesting EI develops progressively, with foundational emotional awareness at the base and advanced competencies like empathy and social responsibility at higher levels, offering a holistic framework for teacher EI development. Table 1 summarises the major EI models. The table shows some of the instruments used to measure EI and competencies and how each model is relevant to this topic.

Table 1 Summary of EI models

EI Models	Instrument	Competencies	Relevance to student teacher relationship
Ability model (Mayer et al., 2001)	Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT)	Perceiving Emotions Using Emotions Understanding Emotions Managing Emotions	Focuses on how teachers' emotional skills directly improve classroom interactions and student rapport
Mixed model (Goleman, 1995)	Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i 2.0)	Self-awareness Self-regulation Motivation Empathy Social Skills	Highlights how teachers' emotional self-awareness, social skills, and resilience foster trust and communication with students.
Trait model (Petrides et al., 2018)	Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (TEIQue)	Emotional Stability Sociability Optimism Empathy	Emphasizes innate or habitual emotional traits that influence teachers' relational styles and student perceptions.

2.1 Importance of EI in teacher effectiveness

EI significantly influences various aspects of teacher effectiveness and the dynamics of the classroom. Teachers with higher EI tend to be more effective in their teaching, as they are better equipped to foster engagement and satisfaction among students (Lyanda & Owidi, 2025). In addition, teachers with high EI are more likely to be organised and systematic in keeping students active in learning (Chukwudi, 2014). They can recognise and effectively manage collective emotions, ensuring an inclusive classroom environment in which every student feels recognised and respected (Sun et al., 2024). Emotionally intelligent teachers are also better at managing disruptive behaviours (Pattiasina et al., 2024) and classroom conflicts (Shahab et al., 2025). Furthermore, a teacher's capacity to perceive, express, and manage emotions has been linked to higher levels of classroom management effectiveness (Valente et al., 2020).

Emotionally intelligent teachers can connect with students, provide emotional support, and manage diverse emotional needs in the classroom (Lyanda & Owidi, 2025). They employ strategies such as personalised feedback and empathetic communication to build rapport with their students. Empathy, a core competency of EI, helps actively engage with students' concerns and offer emotional support (Trad et al., 2022). Moreover, students of emotionally intelligent teachers may show increased motivation and engagement (Pattiasina et al., 2024; Sun et al., 2024).

The impact of EI on teachers is also related to their well-being and job satisfaction. Teachers with high EI experience less burnout and higher job satisfaction (Kant & Shanker, 2021; Murturi, 2024; Nikolova & Mancheva, 2022). Hence, EI is considered a protective factor for teachers. Effective emotional management is essential for teaching efficacy, given the emotional demands (Valente et al., 2020). Teachers are exposed to emotionally demanding situations, such as dealing with difficult student behaviours or managing classroom dynamics. These situations require teachers to regulate their emotions and can contribute to emotional exhaustion if not effectively managed (Stark & Koslouski, 2021; Tuxford & Bradley, 2015).

One major concern regarding teacher EI is the lack of standardised EI training available for teachers. Despite the recognised importance of EI, there is a significant gap in EI training programs for teachers and more emphasis should be placed on development of EI programs to prepare teachers to challenge modern education (Mészáros & Szalóki, 2023; Shahab et al., 2025). Additionally, the effectiveness of EI training may vary depending on cultural and contextual factors, which require tailored approaches for training and development (Arias-Pastor et al., 2023).

2.2 Understanding student-teacher relationship

Various models have been proposed to understand student-teacher relationships, including attachment, motivation, and sociocultural perspectives. These models highlight the importance of emotional connections, power dynamics, and the social context of education in shaping relationships (Davis, 2003). In higher education, a multidimensional model encompassing affection, attachment, and assertion has been developed to better understand these relationships (Tormey, 2021).

Moreover, a comparative synthesis of attachment theory, Self-Determination Theory (SDT), and sociocultural theory provides a multidimensional perspective on student-teacher relationships and learning. Attachment theory emphasises the emotional bond between students and teachers, viewing secure relationships as the foundation for students' exploration and academic engagement (Krstic, 2015; Spilt et al., 2011). In contrast, SDT focuses on the role of intrinsic motivation and the fulfilment of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in fostering student well-being and performance (Luo & Derakhshan, 2024). Sociocultural theory adds a contextual lens, highlighting the importance of social interactions, cultural tools, and guidance from more knowledgeable people in cognitive development (Mercer & Howe, 2012). While each theory prioritises different mechanisms, emotional security in attachment theory, motivational needs in SDT, and mediated learning in sociocultural theory cover the importance of supportive teacher roles, relational quality, and student engagement. This synthesis reveals that emotionally strong, motivationally supportive, and socially interactive educational practices are essential for promoting holistic student development.

Likewise, social skills and proactive personality in students are strong predictors of positive student-teacher relationships. Traits such as agreeableness and conscientiousness in teachers also contribute positively to strengthening their relationships with students (Mammadov & Avci, 2024). In addition, trust and respect are two other key characteristics of effective student-teacher relationships. Students from diverse backgrounds thrive in environments where they feel respected and trusted. This is crucial for the emotional and psychological development of

students, as supportive teachers can help reduce the challenges faced by students (Khalfaoui et al., 2021).

Thus, many factors can influence the dynamics of EI, impacting the quality of the student-teacher relationship. Teachers' ability to recognise and understand their own emotions can significantly affect their interactions with students (Saleh & Hibatullah, 2023). Thus, EI training should be a part of professional development and teacher training programs (Chamizo-Nieto et al., 2021). When teachers demonstrate high EI skills in the classroom, students' perception of teachers becomes positive (Gkintoni et al., 2023). Furthermore, teachers' self-efficacy and mindfulness are other factors that make teachers perform better in improving the classroom atmosphere (Brackett et al., 2011).

2.3 Conceptual framework

Figure 1 illustrates how key components of teacher EI, including self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills, positively influence classroom dynamics and student outcomes. By fostering supportive teacher-student relationships, effective communication, and overall classroom management, emotionally intelligent teachers create environments that enhance student engagement, motivation, academic performance, and emotional well-being, and reduce behavioural issues. The model highlights the critical role of teacher EI in shaping both the social-emotional climate of the classroom and student's success.

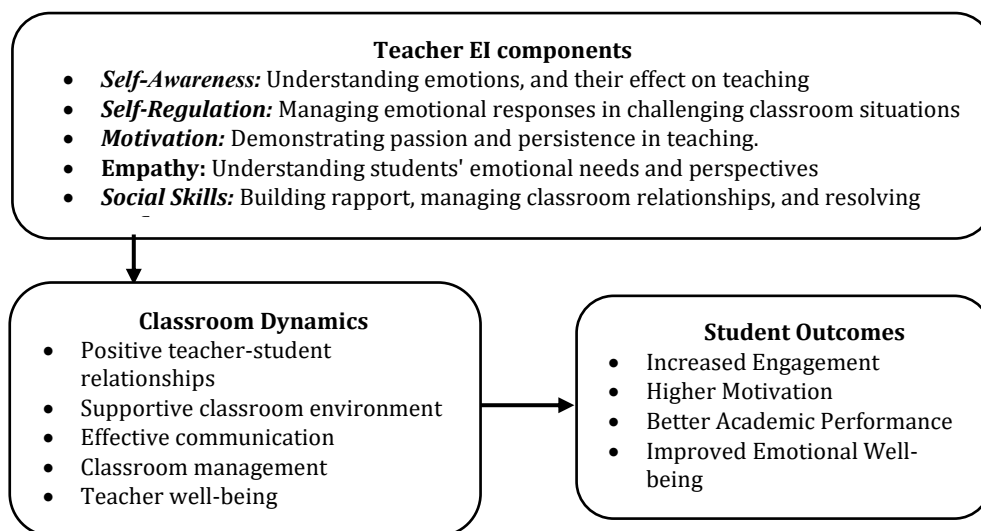


Figure 1 Conceptual framework

3. Methodology

This systematic literature review followed a structured approach to ensure the comprehensive and unbiased selection of relevant studies on teacher EI and its impact on student-teacher relationships. The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) framework was applied to enhance transparency and reliability in the selection process. The methodology involves identification, screening, and eligibility assessment.

3.1 Identification

A well-defined keyword selection and search strategy are essential for conducting a systematic literature review to ensure the retrieval of relevant and high-quality studies. The purpose of this search strategy is to identify existing research that examines the influence of teacher EI on student-teacher relationship, highlighting key EI competencies that strengthen their relationship while also identifying the gaps in the literature. Carefully selected keywords were used to refine the search process and improve the accuracy of the retrieved studies.

The literature search was conducted using ERIC, ScienceDirect, and JSTOR, as these databases provide access to a wide range of journal articles. During the first phase of the search in these databases, 1,842 articles were derived from ERIC, 12,093 from ScienceDirect, and 30,008 from JSTOR, resulting in 43,943 articles in total. The identification phase involved a comprehensive search for journal articles focusing on the primary keywords “teacher emotional intelligence”, and “student-teacher relationship”. The Boolean operator AND (e.g. ‘teacher emotional intelligence’ AND ‘student-teacher relationship’) was applied to combine key concepts.

3.2 Screening

The screening phase began by defining the inclusion and exclusion criteria (see Table 2) which were applied to the results identified in the first phase (identification). The inclusion and exclusion criteria were carefully selected to ensure the relevance, quality, and accessibility of the sources used in this systematic literature review. Limiting the language to English ensures consistency in interpretation and avoids potential translation biases. Focusing on peer-reviewed journal articles within education, psychology, and social sciences guarantees disciplinary relevance and scholarly rigor, while the 2021–2025 publication window ensures the inclusion of up-to-date research reflecting current educational contexts. Emphasising content directly related to teacher EI and its influence on student-teacher relationships, engagement, and academic success allows for a focused and meaningful synthesis and restricting to open-access articles ensures that all reviewed studies were fully accessible for thorough evaluation.

After filtration, 43,837 articles that did not meet the inclusion and exclusion criteria were excluded, resulting in 106 articles. That is, 4 articles from ERIC, 92 articles from ScienceDirect, and 10 articles from JSTOR. The next step was to look for duplicates among the 106 articles. Duplicate detection was performed using Zotero, version 6.0.36 and no duplicate records were found.

Table 2 Article inclusion criteria

Criterion	Inclusion criteria
Language	Journal articles written in English
Subject area	Journal articles that are related to the field of education, social science, psychology
Publication date	Journal articles published between 2021-2025
Relevance of content	Journal articles that discuss about teacher EI and its influence on student-teacher relationship, student engagement and academic success
Access	Available access to full article

3.3 Criteria for eligibility

The eligibility of the 106 articles filtered through the screening phase was checked. In the eligibility phase, all publication titles and abstracts were thoroughly checked to determine whether they met the set criteria. Apart from the title and abstract, the results were checked to determine whether the study contained any data that could be relevant to achieve the research objectives. During this stage, key terms such as emotional intelligence,” “students,” “relationships”, and “teacher” were still searched throughout using the text search function. This method is effective and saves time when skimming through the entire result/discussion section of articles.

Consequently, 95 articles were excluded from the analysis. Of these, 70 articles did not fit the title, and 25 articles did not align with the research purpose. Figure 2 shows the steps in the PRISMA flowchart and a description of the records in each step.

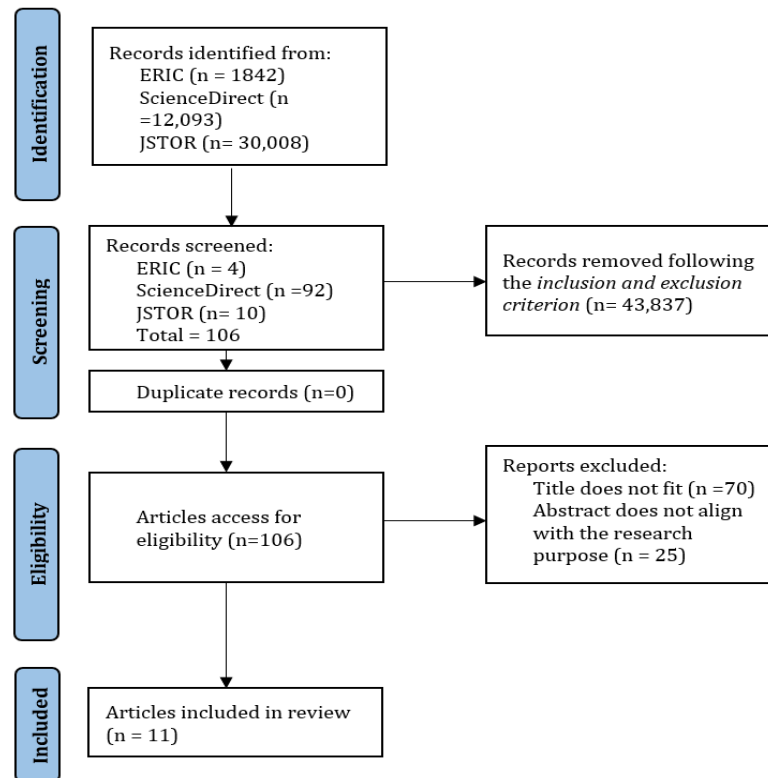


Figure 2 PRISMA flowchart

Table 3 provides an overview of the 11 studies included in this review. It summarises the key details of each study, including the authors and year of publication, the title of the article, and the database from which each article was sourced. This summary offers a clear reference point for understanding the origin and scope of the selected literature, ensuring transparency in the selection process, and highlighting the academic sources that informed the review.

4. Result and discussion

The results section is organised according to the research questions. RQ1 pertains to the roles of teacher EI in fostering positive student-teacher relationships, and RQ2 aims to identify the gaps in the existing literature.

4.1 Teacher emotional intelligence and student-teacher relationship

Based on the published literature, three main roles of EI in the student-teacher relationship have been identified. Empathy and trust strengthen teacher–student relationships by helping students feel understood, respected and emotionally supported. A positive classroom climate and social-emotional learning promote open communication, cooperation, and emotional safety, which improve the interactions between teachers and students. Additionally, motivational messaging and positive teacher disposition increase students’ confidence, engagement, and sense of belonging, leading to stronger and more meaningful relationships.

4.1.1 Empathy and trust in student-teacher relationships

The reviewed literature emphasises the pivotal role of teachers' EI and social-emotional competencies in shaping the quality of student-teacher relationships. Teachers with higher emotional competence tend to foster supportive and trusting relationships with their students (Bjereld et al., 2024). These relationships are particularly significant in sensitive contexts, such as instances of bullying, where students are more likely to confide in teachers who exhibit warmth, care, respect, and emotional sensitivity. The presence of empathy in teachers' behaviour promotes classroom harmony and provides emotional security for students, which not only mitigates negative experiences but also encourages positive student disclosure and engagement. From the student's perspective, trust in the teacher plays a central role in navigating social challenges within the school environment.

Table 3: Reviewed studies

	Author	Title	Database
1	Bjereld et al. (2024)	Why don't all victims tell teachers about being bullied? A mixed methods study on how direct and indirect bullying and student-teacher relationship quality are linked with bullying disclosure	ScienceDirect
2	Ritchie et al. (2023)	Exploring teachers' emotions in eastern Canada: understanding positive, neutral and negative experiences	ScienceDirect
3	Alqassab and León (2024)	Motivational messages from teachers before exams: links to intrinsic motivation, engagement, and academic performance	ScienceDirect
4	Caires et al. (2023)	Promoting socio-emotional skills in initial teacher training: an emotional educational programme	ERIC
5	Braun and Hooper (2024)	Social and emotional competencies predict pre-service teachers' occupational health and personal well-being	ScienceDirect
6	Morales-Verdejo (2025)	Students' and teachers' social representations of the student-teacher relationships at disadvantaged secondary schools in Chile	ScienceDirect
7	Falcon et al. (2023)	Teachers' engaging messages, students' motivation to learn and academic performance: the moderating role of emotional intensity in speech	ScienceDirect
8	Luque-Reca et al. (2022)	Teachers' life satisfaction: a structural equation model analysing the role of trait emotion regulation, intrinsic job satisfaction and affect	ScienceDirect
9	Belay and Dejene (2024)	Testing and validating the collaborative for academic, social, and emotional learning (CASEL) model in the context of Ethiopian secondary schools: Factorial analysis	ScienceDirect
10	Berastegui-Martínez et al. (2023)	The impact of the Sentituz programmes on emotional competence and social climate in the classroom	ERIC
11	Hamer et al. (2024)	The whole thing needs a shake-up: A mixed method study examining teachers' perspectives on social and emotional skills in schools	ScienceDirect

4.1.2 Classroom climate and social-emotional learning

Teacher EI is instrumental in shaping a classroom climate that supports learning and emotional development. Social-emotional competence is closely linked to effective classroom management and broader relational dynamics within schools (Caires et al., 2023). Teachers who maintain positive emotional dispositions and foster emotionally safe environments contribute to the success of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) initiatives (Hamer et al., 2024). Morales-Verdejo (2025) characterizes emotionally stronger teachers as “teacher-friends” who build personal connections, provide constructive feedback, and design inclusive, engaging tasks that cater to individual student needs. These educators help create a nurturing and motivating classroom atmosphere in which students feel secure, respected, and ready to learn.

4.1.3 Motivational messaging and teacher disposition

Teachers' emotional skills also significantly affect students' motivation and academic engagement. Motivational messaging, especially emotionally supportive and reassuring communication, has been shown to enhance student performance and engagement, particularly during high-stress periods like exams (Alqassab & León, 2024; Bjereld et al., 2024). EI enables teachers to calibrate their emotional expressions to effectively capture students' attention and reinforce their intrinsic motivation.

However, emotional labour in teaching can be taxing. Persistent emotional demands may lead to teacher burnout, health issues, and a lack of professional fulfilment (Hamer et al., 2024). Teachers who recognise and manage their emotional states can better support their students and themselves. Positive attitudes toward SEL, coupled with high teacher well-being, have been associated with greater instructional flexibility and improved student outcomes (Luque-Reca et al., 2022).

Furthermore, teachers' emotional disposition directly influences classroom dynamics. Morales-Verdejo (2025) noted that students perceive teachers in negative moods as impatient, disengaged, and unapproachable, leading to uninspiring lessons and reduced student participation. Conversely, teachers who express enthusiasm and have their psychological needs supported tend to adopt a more motivating teaching style, using emotionally resonant messages that energise and inspire their students.

4.2 Gaps in the existing literature

This section summarises the 11 reviewed studies (Table 4), including each study's author, year, research design, key findings, and limitations. Although previous studies have examined empathy and trust, social-emotional learning, and motivational messaging independently, limited research has explored how these factors collectively shape teacher-student relationships, particularly from the perspectives of teachers and student teachers within diverse cultural contexts. Furthermore, the mechanisms through which these factors influence relationship quality and long-term educational outcomes remain unclear. This summary provides a clear overview of the current research and areas that require further study.

4.2.1 Methodological gaps

Four studies highlighted methodological limitations that restricted the robustness and generalisability of the findings. For instance, cross-sectional designs in the study of pre-service teachers' social and emotional competencies impede causal inferences, emphasising the need for longitudinal research to understand how these competencies predict occupational health outcomes (Braun & Hooper, 2024). Similarly, another study on empathy and student-teacher relationships indicates that relationship quality may change over time following events such as students' disclosure of bullying, highlighting the need for longitudinal research to capture these evolving dynamics (Bjereld et al., 2024). The use of convenience and purposive sampling limits representativeness and introduces bias in studies exploring teachers' emotions and perspectives on emotional competencies (Berastegui-Martínez et al., 2023; Ritchie et al., 2023).

Survey-only methodologies, particularly in research on teacher motivational messaging, offer limited insight into student experiences and may benefit from systematic classroom observations and student perception analyses (Alqassab & León, 2024). Moreover, qualitative coding conducted by a single author and the absence of triangulation in several studies reduce data validity, recommending the use of multiple coders and diverse data sources (Bjereld et al., 2024). Finally, traditional coding schemes might overlook non-verbal cues in communication, calling for advanced techniques such as Speech Emotion Recognition (Alqassab & León, 2024). Similarly,

quantitative studies relying on cross-sectional methods fail to capture causal relationships, suggesting the need for longitudinal approaches (Bjereld et al., 2024).

4.2.2 Geographical gaps

Research on emotional competencies, teacher emotions, and teacher–student relationships has predominantly been conducted in Western contexts, such as Canada (Ritchie et al., 2023). Studies on social-emotional learning and teacher training have also been largely concentrated in European countries, such as Portugal and Spain (Berastegui-Martínez et al., 2023; Caires et al., 2023). Likewise, research on pre-service teachers frequently focuses on participants from a single institution, which restricts the ability to draw broader conclusions across educational disciplines and programs (Braun & Hooper, 2024). In the context of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), reliance on Western-developed frameworks and tools has been questioned for their relevance in culturally distinct settings such as Ethiopia. This raises the need for context-sensitive models and validation of SEL measures in diverse educational environments (Belay & Dejene, 2024). For instance, Bjereld et al. (2024) utilised non-probability sampling from a single region, thereby limiting generalisability across diverse student populations and cultural settings.

4.2.3 Conceptual gaps

Conceptually, existing studies often lack clarity or depth in exploring the underlying mechanisms of teacher emotional competency and its impact. Existing studies have examined empathy, social-emotional learning, motivational messaging, classroom climate, and teacher well-being as separate constructs that influence educational outcomes (Falcon et al., 2023; Hamer et al., 2024). However, limited research has conceptually integrated these variables under the broader framework of teachers' emotional intelligence to explain how emotional competencies contribute to stronger student–teacher relationships (Braun & Hooper, 2024). In addition, emotional competence programs remain underexplored in terms of their scale, effectiveness across age groups, and potential mediating or moderating factors (Berastegui-Martínez et al., 2023). Bjereld et al. (2024) provide insufficient detail about to whom students disclose, and challenges in measurement further complicate the interpretation of reported incidents.

Table 4 Research design of reviewed studies

	Author	Research design	Variables	Findings	Limitations
1	Bjereld et al., 2024	Mixed method	Migrant background, Family economy, Gender	One key finding indicated that students were more likely to report indirect bullying to a teacher. While teacher responses to bullying influenced the quality of the student-teacher relationship, this effect was not entirely dependent on whether the bullying stopped.	Limitations include its retrospective and cross-sectional design, which limits causal inferences and may be affected by memory decay over time. The use of student-only self-reports introduces potential biases, and the reliance on definition-based bullying measures risks underreporting. Additionally, the non-probability sampling from a single region reduces generalizability, and the qualitative analysis may have benefited from multiple coders.
2	Ritchie et al., 2023	Qualitative method	Emotional experiences, Emotion vernacular, Associated thoughts and actions, Positive/negative events, Demographic variables	Thematic analysis revealed that positive experiences, such as academic success and supportive relationships, enhanced individuals' ability to take others' perspectives. In contrast, negative experiences like misconduct and trauma were associated with a reduced capacity for perspective-taking.	This study relied on two convenience samples of teachers in Nova Scotia, limiting the generalizability of findings, as it is unclear how representative these samples are of the wider teacher population. Without support from the provincial education department, broader participation was not feasible, and those who chose to participate may differ systematically from non-participants. Additionally, while the study prioritized teachers' subjective emotional experiences, this approach carries risks of social desirability bias and reduced validity, particularly in cases where participants may have limited self-awareness.
3	Alqassab & León, 2024	Mixed method	Types of teachers' exam motivational messages, Academic performance, Intrinsic motivation, Engagement, Gender	Reassuring messages had a positive impact on students' intrinsic motivation, engagement, and academic performance, whereas receiving no messages was linked to negative outcomes. Effort and capability messages showed no significant effect on student outcomes, and gender had no influence on how motivational messages related to academic success.	The study was based on self-reported data and lacked longitudinal or multilevel analysis. Future research should include observational methods, assess how students interpret different message types, and explore motivational messages in varied assessment settings.
4	Caires et al., 2023	Qualitative method	Emotional education programme, Emotional skills development,	The study showed that the Emotional Education Programme (EEP) effectively enhanced student teachers' socio-emotional skills, including self-awareness, empathy, and emotional resilience. Activities like "Approach the Line" and "The	The study had several limitations, including voluntary participation, which may have introduced bias, and a small sample size of 56 students from a single university, limiting generalizability. Its qualitative design and short

			Social connectedness and sense of belonging, Cognitive and emotional gains, Number of sessions attended, Context of the study Academic background	Human Library" promoted reflection, connection, and confidence among participants. These outcomes highlight the value of embedding socio-emotional learning into teacher training programs.	two-month duration may not fully capture the depth or long-term sustainability of emotional skill development. Additionally, the absence of follow-up studies makes it difficult to assess lasting impacts.
5	Braun & Hooper, 2024	Quantitative method	Social and emotional competencies, Personal well-being, Occupational health, Covariates	The study revealed that social and emotional competencies (SECs), especially mindfulness, self-compassion, and cognitive reappraisal, are strong predictors of pre-service teachers' occupational health and personal well-being. Emotional competencies had a greater impact than social ones, suggesting that teacher training programs should prioritize developing these emotional regulation skills to enhance well-being and support teacher retention.	The study's cross-sectional design limits causal interpretations, and its focus on pre-service teachers from a single university reduces generalizability to broader or in-service teacher populations. It used limited measures of social and emotional competencies (SECs), potentially overlooking key aspects like empathy and conflict resolution, and did not explore variations across teaching disciplines. Additionally, missing data (4%–9%) and the lesser predictive power of social competencies highlight areas for improvement in future research.
6	Morales-Verdejo, 2025	Exploratory-qualitative method	Social roles, Classroom climate, Ways of treating each other, Ideal relationships, Contextual factors Impact on teaching-learning processes,	The study revealed that students and teachers in disadvantaged Chilean secondary schools hold varied views of student-teacher relationships, ranging from traditional authority and familial roles to more egalitarian, respectful models. While some perceptions reinforce poverty-related stereotypes and systemic inequalities, others promote dignity and mutual respect, which positively influence classroom climate, student motivation, and engagement. These findings underscore the value of nurturing inclusive and emotionally supportive relationships to enhance educational outcomes in underserved settings.	The study was done in just four Chilean schools, so the findings may not apply to other places or student groups. It focused only on first-year students and used qualitative methods, which might bring in researcher bias. Also, teachers were chosen through convenience sampling, and the study didn't fully explore larger issues like education policy or economic conditions.
7	Falcon et al., 2023	Qualitative method	Teachers' engaging messages, Emotional intensity, Students' motivation to learn,	The study found that the emotional intensity of teachers' messages influenced how those messages affected student performance. While most high-intensity messages reduced performance, identified-achievement messages	The study had a small sample size and was limited to Spanish teachers, which may affect how well the findings apply to other contexts. It focused only on emotional intensity, not other vocal features that might impact message effectiveness. The lack of

			Students' academic performance	with strong emotion improved it. However, these messages did not significantly impact students' motivation to learn.	significant links to student motivation and the use of manual message analysis suggest future studies should explore broader methods and technologies.
8	Luque-Reca et al., 2022	Quantitative method	Trait emotion regulation, Positive affect, Negative affect, Intrinsic job satisfaction, Life satisfaction	Trait Emotion Regulation (Trait ER) positively influences teachers' life satisfaction both directly and through factors like positive and negative emotions. Teachers with better Trait ER tend to experience more positive feelings, higher intrinsic job satisfaction, and ultimately greater overall life satisfaction. This highlights the important role of emotional self-management in enhancing teacher well-being, with the model explaining 29% of the variation in life satisfaction.	The study's cross-sectional design limits the ability to draw causal conclusions or understand the timing of effects. Additionally, the affect measurement focused on high-arousal emotions, potentially missing other important emotional states, and the use of convenience sampling restricts generalizability. Important factors such as resilience, social support, and burnout were also not included, and alternative models were not tested, which could offer further insights.
9	Belay & Dejene, 2024	Correlational research method	Self-awareness, Social awareness, Relationship skills, Responsible decision-making	The study confirmed a four-factor model of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) in Ethiopian secondary schools, with social awareness being the most influential component. Self-awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making also played important roles. These results emphasize the need to adapt SEL programs to fit cultural and contextual differences for better educational outcomes.	The findings may not apply to other regions or countries because of cultural and educational differences. Additionally, the model excluded emotion regulation/self-management, indicating that it may not fully represent all key aspects of Social and Emotional Learning and needs further investigation.
10	Berastegui-Martínez et al., 2023	Quasi-experimental design	Emotional competence, Social climate in the classroom	The study showed that the "Sentituz 12-14" program significantly boosted emotional autonomy and overall emotional competence in Year 2 secondary students. Meanwhile, the "Sentituz 10-12" program improved social competence and teacher-student relationships for Year 6 primary students but was linked to declines in emotional awareness, life skills, wellbeing, and overall emotional competence. Positive changes in social support were seen in Year 6 primary students, while secondary students showed no significant improvements, highlighting the need for further research to confirm these results.	The study design had some weaknesses, like using non-random groups, which could cause bias. Also, the different effects seen between younger and older students might be because of their ages, and the program's focus on self-awareness may explain some decreases in skills for younger students. More thorough research with larger groups is needed to confirm these findings.

11	Hamer et al., 2024	Mixed method	Teacher SEL beliefs, Relational capacity, Self-compassion, Schooling stage	The study showed that teachers with stronger relational skills felt more comfortable teaching SEL, while those with higher self-compassion were more committed to it. Primary teachers felt slightly more at ease teaching SEL than secondary teachers, though both groups were equally committed. However, teachers were frustrated by limited training, systemic barriers, and the inconsistent, often reactive, way SEL is implemented in schools.	The study's use of purposive sampling likely attracted teachers already interested in SEL, which limits how well the results apply to the broader teaching population. Measurement tools and sampling methods may have introduced bias, particularly around relational capacity and commitment. Additionally, the focus on individual traits overlooks systemic factors, and inconsistencies between qualitative and quantitative findings highlight the need for more balanced data interpretation.
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5. Practical implications

EI training has considerable potential to enhance teacher education by equipping educators with the socio-emotional skills crucial for effective classroom management and student well-being. Programs such as the Recognise, Understand, Label, Express and Regulate (RULER) approach (Hagelskamp et al., 2013) and the teacher-focused EI training by Hen and Sharabi-Nov (2014) that experiential methods like role-playing and reflection can strengthen teachers' emotional regulation, empathy, and conflict-resolution abilities. Similarly, the online Emotional Intelligence Training (EIT) program validated by Durham et al. (2023) proved to be scalable, effective across various schedules, and capable of improving both ability-based and self-reported EI, with sustained cognitive benefits and protective effects on mental health. Despite these promising models, there remains a clear lack of systematic EI integration in teacher education curricula, particularly in countries like Portugal, where only two private universities offer such courses (Cristóvão et al., 2023). Even in Spain, where progress is more visible, EI training remains non-universal. These findings underline the urgent need for structured, evidence-based EI modules in teacher preparation programs, aligned with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 3 and 4), to promote educator well-being and inclusive, emotionally supportive learning environments.

6. Conclusion

This review underscores the vital role of teachers' EI in fostering strong student-teacher relationships and positive classroom environments. Key insights highlight that emotionally skilled teachers are better equipped to motivate students, manage classroom dynamics and support student well-being. This review contributes to the current knowledge by consolidating evidence on the practical benefits of EI in education and highlighting its value as a core teaching competency. To advance practice, teacher education programs should embed structured EI training to build skills such as emotion regulation, empathy, and effective communication in their curricula. Policymakers and school leaders should prioritise EI in professional development and teacher evaluation frameworks. While this review focused on the general impacts of EI, future studies should explore how specific EI competencies influence student relationships and outcomes, particularly across different educational contexts. This will guide targeted interventions and help refine the training approaches.

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