

Research Paper

Emotional Intelligence and Job Satisfaction of School Teachers: An Ability-Based Approach

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ABSTRACT

Teaching is an emotionally demanding profession, and teachers' job satisfaction is strongly influenced by how well they manage everyday emotional challenges at school. Although previous research has established a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction, most studies have relied on self-report measures of emotional intelligence, leaving the role of ability-based emotional intelligence relatively underexplored. Addressing this gap, the present study investigated the research question: *How does ability-based emotional intelligence influence job satisfaction among school teachers?* The sample consisted of 150 school teachers (92 males and 58 females) selected from government and private schools of Begusarai district of Bihar using purposive and snowball sampling techniques. Ability-based emotional intelligence was measured using the Mayer–Salovey–Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT), and job satisfaction was assessed using a standardized Job Satisfaction Scale. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation, and linear as well as multiple regression analyses. The results indicated that overall ability-based emotional intelligence significantly predicted teachers' job satisfaction, explaining 31% of the variance. Further, the four branches of emotional intelligence jointly accounted for 40% of the variance in job satisfaction. Among these, managing emotions emerged as the strongest predictor, followed by understanding emotions and facilitating thought, whereas perceiving emotions did not make a significant contribution. The findings suggest that actual emotional abilities, particularly emotion regulation, play a crucial role in shaping teachers' professional well-being. The study highlights the importance of incorporating emotional skills training into teacher education and professional development programmes in order to enhance job satisfaction and reduce emotional strain in school settings.

Keywords: *School Teachers, Emotional Intelligence, Job Satisfaction, Well-Being*

Teaching is not only a cognitive job, it is deeply an emotional one. Every day teachers deal with students' moods, parents' expectations, administrative pressure, and their own personal struggles. A teacher may be required to stay calm in a noisy class, supportive to a child who is failing, and respectful even when feeling exhausted or upset. Because of this emotional labour, job satisfaction in teaching is shaped not only by salary or

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workload, but also by how well teachers can understand and manage emotions in themselves and in others. This makes **emotional intelligence (EI)** an especially important psychological factor in the teaching profession (Goleman, 1995; Brackett, Palomera, Mojsa-Kaja, Reyes, & Salovey, 2010).

Job satisfaction refers to the degree to which a person feels positively about his or her job. For teachers, it includes satisfaction with teaching itself, relationships with students and colleagues, administrative support, recognition, and overall sense of meaning in their work (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011). Many teachers leave the profession not only because of workload, but because they feel emotionally drained, unappreciated, or disconnected from their work. Therefore, understanding what psychological resources help teachers remain satisfied is very important, both for individual well-being and for school systems.

Concept of Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence was formally introduced by Salovey and Mayer (1990), who defined it as the ability to perceive, understand, manage, and use emotions in oneself and others. Later, Mayer and Salovey (1997) refined this into four main branches: (i) perceiving emotions, (ii) using emotions to facilitate thinking, (iii) understanding emotions, and (iv) managing emotions. This model views EI as a form of intelligence, similar to cognitive ability, but focused on emotional information.

In contrast, Goleman (1995) proposed a broader, mixed model of emotional intelligence that includes motivation, empathy, social skills, and self-regulation. Although this model is popular in applied settings like education and leadership training, researchers often debate whether it overlaps too much with personality traits. Still, both perspectives agree on one thing: emotionally intelligent people tend to cope better with stress, communicate more effectively, and maintain healthier relationships at work.

For teachers, these skills are particularly important. A teacher who can recognize a student's frustration, regulate their own anger, and respond with empathy is more likely to maintain a positive classroom climate. Over time, this can reduce emotional conflicts and increase feelings of effectiveness and satisfaction.

Emotional Intelligence and Job Satisfaction: Theoretical Link

The relationship between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction can be understood through several psychological processes. First, EI helps individuals regulate their emotions during stressful situations. Teaching is full of such situations—discipline problems, examination pressure, administrative demands—and poor emotional regulation can lead to burnout and dissatisfaction. Teachers with high EI are better able to manage anxiety, frustration, and disappointment, which helps them maintain a more stable emotional state at work (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2004).

Second, EI supports better interpersonal relationships. Schools are social organisations, and teachers interact constantly with students, parents, colleagues, and principals. High emotional intelligence allows teachers to communicate more clearly, handle conflicts more constructively, and build trust. Positive relationships at school are known to be strongly linked with job satisfaction (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011).

Third, emotionally intelligent teachers may experience more positive emotions at work, such as enjoyment, pride, and enthusiasm. According to affective theories of job satisfaction,

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repeated positive emotions in daily work gradually build a positive overall evaluation of one's job (Brief & Weiss, 2002). Thus, EI can influence job satisfaction indirectly by shaping teachers' emotional experiences.

Empirical Evidence on EI and Job Satisfaction

A large body of research in organisational psychology has shown that emotional intelligence is positively related to job satisfaction across different occupations. In a meta-analysis, Miao, Humphrey, and Qian (2017) reported that employees with higher EI tend to report greater job satisfaction, although the strength of the relationship varies depending on how EI is measured. Ability-based EI measures and self-report EI scales do not always show identical results, which suggests that perceived emotional skills and actual emotional abilities may operate somewhat differently.

In the field of education, similar patterns have been observed. Brackett et al. (2010) found that teachers with higher emotional intelligence reported better classroom relationships and higher job satisfaction. They also showed that EI was linked with lower levels of burnout. Likewise, Wong and Law (2002) demonstrated that emotionally intelligent employees experience more positive work attitudes, including job satisfaction, because they are better able to regulate their emotions at work.

Specific studies on school teachers have also reported positive associations between EI and job satisfaction. Research conducted in Indian school settings, for example, has found that teachers with higher emotional intelligence tend to be more satisfied with their jobs, especially in terms of interpersonal relationships and emotional well-being (Kumar & Muniandy, 2012). Although working conditions may differ across countries, the emotional demands of teaching remain similar, making these findings quite meaningful.

Mediating Factors: How EI Influences Satisfaction

Recent research suggests that emotional intelligence does not influence job satisfaction directly only, but also through several mediating factors. One important mediator is **work-related affect**. Brackett et al. (2010) showed that teachers with higher EI experience more positive emotions and fewer negative emotions during the school day, which in turn increases job satisfaction.

Another important pathway is **stress and burnout**. Teaching is widely recognised as a high-stress profession. Teachers with low emotional regulation skills are more likely to feel overwhelmed, emotionally exhausted, and detached from their work. In contrast, emotionally intelligent teachers can recover more quickly from stressful events, which protects their sense of satisfaction (Mérida-López & Extremera, 2017).

EI also plays a role in **emotional labour**, that is, the effort teachers make to display appropriate emotions even when they do not feel them. Teachers who rely too much on "fake" emotions may feel emotionally drained over time. However, teachers with high EI are better able to express genuine, naturally felt emotions, which reduces emotional strain and supports job satisfaction (Yin, Huang, & Wang, 2016).

Measurement Issues and Research Gaps

Although the literature supports a positive relationship between EI and job satisfaction, there are some limitations. One major issue is the heavy use of self-report measures for both EI and job satisfaction. When teachers rate both their emotional intelligence and their job

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satisfaction, the correlation may be inflated because of common-method bias (Mayer et al., 2004). Ability-based measures of EI are still less frequently used in teacher research.

Also, cultural and institutional factors are often ignored. The emotional demands of teaching in government schools, private schools, or rural schools may differ, and EI may function differently across these contexts. More context-sensitive research is therefore needed.

Overall, the literature clearly indicates that emotional intelligence is an important psychological resource for school teachers. Teachers with higher EI tend to manage stress better, build healthier relationships, experience more positive emotions at work, and ultimately feel more satisfied with their jobs (Brackett et al., 2010; Mérida-López & Extremera, 2017). While some methodological issues remain, the general pattern is consistent: emotional intelligence supports not only effective teaching, but also the emotional well-being and job satisfaction of teachers. In today's emotionally demanding school environments, this makes EI not just a useful trait, but a necessary one.

Although a substantial body of research has established a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and teachers' job satisfaction, most of this evidence is based on self-reported measures of emotional intelligence. Such measures reflect how emotionally skilled teachers believe they are, but they do not necessarily capture their actual ability to perceive, understand, and manage emotions in real situations. This creates an important gap in the literature, as ability-based emotional intelligence—conceptualized as a form of cognitive–emotional ability—may function differently from self-perceived emotional competence in influencing workplace experiences. Given the emotionally demanding nature of teaching, it is essential to examine whether objectively measured emotional abilities contribute uniquely to teachers' job satisfaction beyond self-reported traits. Addressing this gap can provide a more accurate understanding of how emotional intelligence operates in educational settings and can inform more effective teacher development programs. Therefore, the present study seeks to investigate the role of ability-based emotional intelligence in shaping job satisfaction among school teachers, leading to the formulation of the following research question and hypothesis.

Research Question

To what extent does ability-based emotional intelligence predict job satisfaction among school teachers, beyond self-reported emotional skills?

Hypothesis

Main Hypothesis (H₁)

Ability-based emotional intelligence will significantly and positively predict job satisfaction among school teachers, even after controlling for self-reported emotional intelligence.

Null Hypothesis (H₀)

Ability-based emotional intelligence will not significantly predict job satisfaction among school teachers when self-reported emotional intelligence is controlled.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The present study adopted a **descriptive correlational research design** to examine the relationship between ability-based emotional intelligence and job satisfaction among school teachers. This design was considered appropriate as it allowed the investigation of naturally

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occurring variations in emotional intelligence and their association with teachers' job satisfaction without manipulating any variable.

Sample

The sample consisted of **150 school teachers** drawn from **private and government schools** located in **Begusarai district, Bihar**. Out of the total sample, **92 were male teachers** and **58 were female teachers**. Teachers belonging to different subject backgrounds and grade levels were included in order to obtain a more representative view of school teaching conditions in the district.

The participants were selected using a combination of **purposive sampling** and **snowball sampling techniques**. In the first stage, schools and teachers were identified purposively based on their willingness to participate and their active engagement in teaching at the school level. In the second stage, some of the initially contacted teachers helped in identifying other eligible teachers, who were then approached through the snowball method. This approach was useful in reaching a wider network of teachers across both government and private institutions.

Tools Used

The following instruments were used for data collection:

1. **Ability-Based Emotional Intelligence Test:** Ability-based emotional intelligence was measured using the **Mayer–Salovey–Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT), Version 2.0** (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2002). This is a widely used performance-based instrument designed to assess emotional intelligence as a set of mental abilities rather than self-perceived traits. The MSCEIT consists of **141 items** and measures four branches of emotional intelligence: **Perceiving Emotions, Facilitating Thought, Understanding Emotions, Managing Emotions**.
2. **Job Satisfaction Scale:** Job satisfaction was measured using the **Job Satisfaction Scale (JSS)** developed by **Muthayya (1973)**, which is widely used in Indian educational research. The scale is suitable for measuring teachers' job satisfaction in school settings. The scale consists of **34 items**, covering various aspects of job satisfaction.

Both tools were selected because of their established reliability and suitability for use with teacher populations.

Procedure

Prior to data collection, permission was obtained from the school authorities, and the purpose of the study was clearly explained to the participants. Teachers were informed that their participation was voluntary and that their responses would be kept confidential and used only for research purposes.

The questionnaires were administered individually or in small groups in the school premises at a time convenient to the teachers. Clear instructions were given before administering the tools, and any doubts raised by the participants were clarified. Teachers were encouraged to respond honestly and were assured that there were no right or wrong answers.

The completed questionnaires were collected and checked for completeness. The data were then coded and prepared for statistical analysis to examine the relationship between ability-based emotional intelligence and job satisfaction among school teachers.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The data obtained from 150 school teachers were analysed using regression techniques to examine the predictive role of ability-based emotional intelligence on job satisfaction. First, a simple regression analysis was conducted to determine whether overall emotional intelligence significantly predicted teachers' job satisfaction. Subsequently, a multiple regression analysis was carried out to assess the unique contribution of each emotional intelligence ability—perceiving, facilitating, understanding, and managing emotions—in explaining variations in job satisfaction. The findings derived from these analyses are presented in the following tables and are discussed in relation to existing theoretical and empirical literature in order to provide a meaningful interpretation of the results.

Table 1 Linear Regression Analysis Predicting Job Satisfaction from Ability-Based Emotional Intelligence (N = 150)

Predictor	B	SE B	β	t	p
Constant	42.36	4.21	—	10.06	< .001
Emotional Intelligence (MSCEIT Total)	0.48	0.07	.56	6.85	< .001

Model Statistics

R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F	p
.56	.31	.30	46.92	< .001

Table 2 Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Job Satisfaction from the Four Branches of Ability-Based Emotional Intelligence (N = 150)

Predictor (MSCEIT Branches)	B	SE B	β	t	p
Constant	38.14	4.62	—	8.25	< .001
Perceiving Emotions	0.12	0.09	.11	1.31	.192
Facilitating Thought	0.21	0.08	.22	2.63	.010
Understanding Emotions	0.18	0.07	.20	2.51	.013
Managing Emotions	0.36	0.08	.41	4.68	< .001

Model Summary

R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F	p
.63	.40	.38	24.39	< .001

The present study examined whether **ability-based emotional intelligence predicts job satisfaction among school teachers**. To test this, a simple regression and a multiple regression analysis using the four emotional intelligence branches were conducted.

The results of the **simple regression analysis** showed that overall ability-based emotional intelligence significantly predicted teachers' job satisfaction ($\beta = .56$, $p < .001$), explaining **31% of the variance** in job satisfaction. This indicates that teachers with higher emotional abilities tend to experience significantly greater satisfaction with their profession. In social and educational research, explaining over thirty percent of variance through a single psychological variable is considered quite strong, suggesting that emotional intelligence plays a central role in how teachers experience their work.

These findings support the ability model of emotional intelligence proposed by Mayer and Salovey (1997), which views EI as a set of mental abilities that guide how individuals

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process emotional information and regulate emotional responses. Teaching is emotionally demanding, and teachers who are better at understanding and managing emotions may experience fewer unresolved conflicts, less frustration, and more emotional stability in their professional roles. This emotional stability likely contributes to higher job satisfaction, as suggested by affect-based theories of job attitudes (Brief & Weiss, 2002).

The **multiple regression analysis** further clarified which specific emotional abilities were most important. The four branches of emotional intelligence together explained **40% of the variance** in job satisfaction, indicating that emotional abilities as a system strongly influence teachers' satisfaction. Among the four branches, **managing emotions** emerged as the strongest predictor ($\beta = .41, p < .001$). This suggests that teachers who are able to regulate their own emotions and influence others' emotions in a constructive way are more satisfied with their jobs. This finding aligns with earlier research showing that emotional regulation protects teachers from emotional exhaustion and burnout (Brackett et al., 2010; Mérida-López & Extremera, 2017).

The abilities of **facilitating thought** ($\beta = .22, p = .010$) and **understanding emotions** ($\beta = .20, p = .013$) were also significant predictors of job satisfaction. Teachers who can use emotions to guide thinking and who understand how emotions change over time may be better at problem solving, classroom management, and decision making. This could help them feel more competent and effective, which naturally increases satisfaction with their job (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2004). For example, a teacher who understands that a student's anger is actually masking fear or confusion may respond more skillfully, reducing conflict and stress in the classroom.

In contrast, **perceiving emotions** did not significantly predict job satisfaction. While being able to recognize emotions in faces and situations is important, it may not be enough by itself to improve well-being at work. In fact, teachers who are highly sensitive to emotional cues but lack strong regulation skills might even experience more emotional strain. This supports the idea that simply noticing emotions is less protective than being able to manage and use them effectively (Mérida-López & Extremera, 2017).

Overall, these findings contribute to the existing literature by showing that **ability-based emotional intelligence**, rather than only self-perceived emotional skills, plays a meaningful role in teachers' job satisfaction. This addresses an important gap in previous research, which relied heavily on self-report EI measures (Miao, Humphrey, & Qian, 2017). By using an ability-based measure, the present study provides stronger evidence that actual emotional abilities—not just how emotionally competent teachers believe they are—are linked to how satisfied they feel in their profession.

Taken together, the results suggest that strengthening teachers' emotional regulation, emotional understanding, and emotion-based reasoning may be an effective way to improve their job satisfaction. This has practical implications for teacher training and professional development, where emotional skill development is still often overlooked despite its clear relevance to teachers' daily work and well-being.

Implications of the Study

The findings of the present study have important implications for educational practice, teacher training, and school management. Since ability-based emotional intelligence was found to be a strong predictor of job satisfaction, especially the ability to manage emotions,

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it suggests that emotional skills should be treated as essential professional competencies for teachers, not as optional personal traits. Teacher training programmes and in-service workshops can include modules on emotion regulation, understanding emotions, and using emotions constructively in classroom and interpersonal situations. Such training may help teachers handle stress, student behaviour, and workplace conflicts more effectively, thereby increasing their job satisfaction.

At the school level, administrators and principals can use these findings to promote emotionally supportive work environments. Schools that encourage open communication, empathy, and emotional awareness may help teachers apply their emotional abilities more effectively. Since managing emotions emerged as the strongest predictor, school policies that reduce emotional overload—such as fair workload distribution, supportive leadership, and respectful staff relationships—can further strengthen the positive impact of emotional intelligence on teachers' satisfaction.

The study also has implications for teacher selection and counseling. Ability-based emotional intelligence measures can be used, cautiously and ethically, to identify teachers who may need additional emotional support or training. Rather than using EI as a filtering tool, it can be used to design targeted interventions that help teachers grow emotionally and professionally.

CONCLUSION

The present study examined the role of **ability-based emotional intelligence** in predicting **job satisfaction among school teachers**. The results showed that emotional intelligence significantly predicted job satisfaction, explaining a substantial proportion of variance. Among the four emotional abilities, **managing emotions** emerged as the most powerful predictor, followed by understanding and facilitating emotions, while emotion perception alone was not sufficient to enhance job satisfaction.

These findings highlight that it is not just being emotionally aware that matters for teachers, but being able to regulate and use emotions effectively in everyday school situations. By focusing on emotional abilities rather than only self-perceived emotional traits, the study adds a more objective understanding of how emotional intelligence contributes to teachers' professional well-being. Overall, the results support the view that emotionally skilled teachers are more satisfied, more stable, and better equipped to cope with the emotional demands of the teaching profession.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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