

The Role of Emotional Intelligence in Academic Performance, Teacher Effectiveness, and Mental Health: A Systematic Review

Dr. Tulika Bansal^{1*}

ABSTRACT

This study presents a systematic review of empirical literature on emotional intelligence (EI) and its relationship with academic performance, teacher effectiveness, mental health, and intervention outcomes. Using the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) methodology, 27 peer-reviewed studies were identified, screened, and synthesised into a thematic evidence table. The review highlights consistent findings that higher EI levels are associated with improved academic achievement, greater teaching efficacy, enhanced well-being, and reduced stress. Additionally, interventions designed to develop EI competencies demonstrate positive impacts on both student and teacher outcomes. The analysis also integrates theoretical contributions from seminal works to provide a conceptual foundation for understanding EI's multidimensional role in education. Limitations across studies include small sample sizes, cultural specificity, and varying measurement tools, suggesting the need for more cross-cultural longitudinal research. Overall, the review underscores EI as a significant factor in educational and psychological success, advocating for its integration into curricula and teacher training programs.

Keywords: *Emotional Intelligence, PRISMA, Systematic Review, Academic Performance, Teacher Effectiveness, Mental Health, Educational Psychology*

We all have experienced a range of emotions, including joy, anger, happiness, jealousy, love, and sadness. Some people go shopping and feel contented, spend time with loved ones, and feel loved; all these are common emotions. The word ‘emotion’ is derived from the Latin word “motere” or “movere”, which means to move, to excite, or to agitate. “Emotions are a complex chain of loosely connected events that begins with a stimulus and includes feelings, psychological changes, impulses to action, and specific goal-directed behaviour” (Plutchik, 2001). Therefore, emotions are experienced in response to a specific internal or external event.

Emotions are not the same as ‘feelings’ or ‘moods’. The term ‘feeling’ refers to a person’s inner (private) emotional experience. When a situation occurs, a person first responds at a physical level without awareness, i.e. emotion, and then evaluates it, i.e. feeling. Emotions arise in response to a specific situation and last for a short period, whereas moods generally last for an extended time.

¹ Assistant Professor, University School of Education, Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University, Delhi, India
^{*} [Corresponding Author](#)

The Role of Emotional Intelligence in Academic Performance, Teacher Effectiveness, and Mental Health: A Systematic Review

In today's times, one thing that is essential but unfortunately people don't take as necessary is Emotional Intelligence. We all have days where our passion clouds our judgment, fear can dominate our decision-making, and resentment can lead us to situations where we can have nothing but regret. Each person's emotional intelligence level differs from that of other.

The term Emotional Intelligence contains two concepts, i.e. Emotion and Intelligence. Many educators, philosophers, and psychologists say that it also refers to the mental achievement of the individual. Emotion has been used since ancient times by many philosophers, such as Parmenides, Heraclitus, Anaxagoras, etc. Plato also discussed it in his famous first comprehensive theory.

The term Emotional Intelligence was first defined by Mayer and Salovey (1993, p.433) as “a type of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one's thinking and action”. People started showing interest in the domain of emotional Intelligence when Daniel Goleman (1995) published his book *Emotional Intelligence*.

Mayer and Salovey emphasised five areas of emotional intelligence: motivation, empathy, self-awareness, social skills, and self-regulation. These areas can help create a space where an individual can be productive and cooperative. The more emotionally intelligent a person is, the more unity can be fostered. Daniel Goleman defines emotional intelligence as: “The capacity for recognising our feelings and those in others, for motivating ourselves, for managing emotions well in ourselves and our relationships (Goleman, 1998, p. 16). Emotionally intelligent teachers show their care for the students and create an emotional climate in the classroom to foster a student learning environment.

Education is a tri-polar process of intertwining teacher, learner, and curriculum. The curriculum and the school should align with the society, which is ‘dynamic’. Repeating or keeping an outdated curriculum will not benefit the students; therefore, schools need to update their curriculum according to the changing needs of society.

Emotional Intelligence (EI), as initially explained by Salovey and Mayer (1990) as part of Gardner's social intelligence, is conceptualised through three key models: Goleman's EI Performance Model, Bar-On's EI Competencies Model, and Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso's EI Ability Model. Goleman's model focuses on competencies in self-awareness, social awareness, and relationship management, comprising 12 subskills such as adaptability, empathy, conflict management, and teamwork, emphasising EI's role in enhancing workplace performance and problem-solving. Bar-On's mixed model defines EI as an integration of emotional and social competencies across five domains—interpersonal, intrapersonal, adaptability, stress management, and general mood—with 15 related subscales influencing behaviour and relationships. Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso's ability model views EI as a set of skills in perceiving, using, understanding, and managing emotions, highlighting its impact on decision-making, problem-solving, and social interaction. Collectively, these models underscore that high EI supports stress management, effective leadership, teamwork, conflict resolution, strong relationships, and improved learning outcomes, making it as valuable as IQ in personal, academic, and organisational success.

Nowadays, Emotional Intelligence (EI) is the need of the hour, be it for students, teachers, parents, or any other individual. Emotional intelligence is demanded in every workplace.

The Role of Emotional Intelligence in Academic Performance, Teacher Effectiveness, and Mental Health: A Systematic Review

Generational differences and new challenges are in every field. Today's generation needs to understand the concept of emotional intelligence. They should be taught to read the emotions of others, value and respect others' feelings, and cultivate compassion rather than selfishness. These are some of the qualities which should be appreciated in society. It is essential to understand that an individual who knows how to control emotions would be able to take another person's perspective, which will lead to acceptance of individual differences. It is crucial to train teachers in emotional intelligence to help students acquire emotional competency skills. Teachers just knowing is not enough in today's world. The education system, schools, and teachers need to be vigilant in imparting knowledge and skills to the students. Therefore, a teacher must possess knowledge and skills such as optimism, self-control, flexibility, empathy, and other essential qualities. The present research differs in that it is the first to study the emotional intelligence of Pre-service teacher educators. The main aim of the research is to prove that emotional intelligence is an important life skill that should be included in the curriculum for a student's personal and professional development. The study will contribute to the existing literature by exploring this new area.

Objective

To synthesise research on emotional intelligence (EI) with a focus on gender differences, academic performance, teacher training, and cross-cultural perspectives in educational settings.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

For this study, the review of related literature is done thematically. All the literature is divided into four themes, which are elaborated below.

Emotional Intelligence and Gender Differences

Research on emotional intelligence (EI) frequently addresses gender-based variations in emotional awareness and regulation. Studies have shown that women often report higher levels of emotional awareness, empathy, and relationship management, while men may score higher in stress tolerance and adaptability (Bar-On, 2000; Brackett et al., 2004). For instance, Singh and Sharma (2012) investigated gender differences among college students and found that female participants demonstrated greater interpersonal skills and empathy, whereas males exhibited higher stress tolerance. Such findings suggest that EI development strategies in educational settings may benefit from gender-sensitive approaches.

Emotional Intelligence and Academic Performance

Numerous studies have linked EI to academic success. Parker et al. (2004) found that students with higher EI scores achieved better academic results and demonstrated greater adaptability in learning environments. Similarly, Qualter et al. (2012) identified EI as a predictor of academic persistence and problem-solving skills. These findings imply that cultivating EI may contribute to improved learning outcomes, as students with strong emotional regulation tend to cope more effectively with academic challenges.

Emotional Intelligence in Teacher Training and Educational Contexts

Teacher training programs increasingly recognise EI as a critical component of professional competence. Jennings and Greenberg (2009) emphasised that emotionally intelligent teachers foster supportive classroom climates, which in turn enhance student engagement and achievement. Research by Vesely, Saklofske, and Leschied (2013) further indicated that pre-service teachers with high EI exhibited better classroom management and interpersonal

The Role of Emotional Intelligence in Academic Performance, Teacher Effectiveness, and Mental Health: A Systematic Review

communication skills. These findings underscore the role of EI in both teacher preparation and ongoing professional development.

Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Emotional Intelligence

EI has also been examined across cultural contexts, revealing both universal and culture-specific patterns. Schutte et al. (2001) found that while the core components of EI—such as self-awareness, self-regulation, and empathy—are consistent across cultures, the expression and valuation of these traits vary. For example, collectivist cultures may place greater emphasis on interpersonal harmony, affecting the way EI skills are applied and developed.

METHODOLOGY

This study used a systematic review methodology following the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines (Moher et al., 2009). In the review process, the investigator began by searching multiple databases, which yielded a total of 612 articles on Emotional Intelligence. After carefully removing 138 duplicates, 474 unique studies remained. Then, the studies were screened by their titles and abstracts, and 389 were set aside because they did not align with our focus—many were unrelated to education, lacked empirical evidence, or explored entirely different constructs. This left the investigator with 85 articles that we read in full. During this deeper review, 58 were excluded for reasons such as insufficient methodological detail, limited relevance to review themes, and inadequate quality of data. Ultimately, 27 well-aligned, high-quality studies formed the foundation of our systematic review, providing the evidence base for our thematic analysis and conclusions.

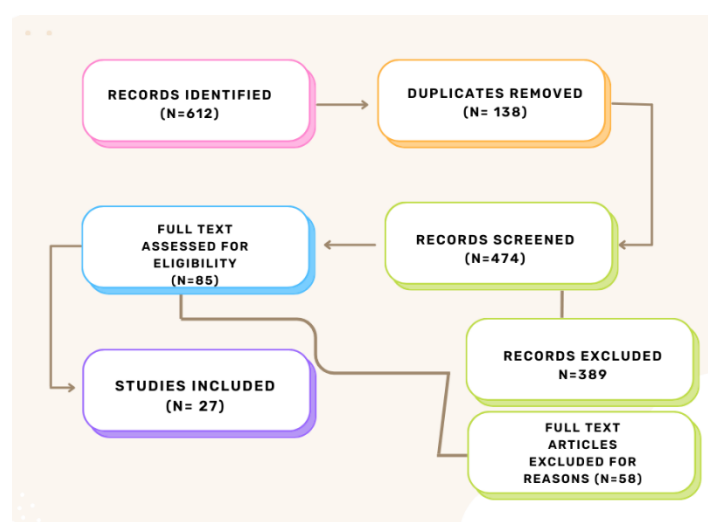


Figure 1: PRISMA Methodology Procedure Used in the Study

FINDINGS

Table 1: PRISMA-Style Evidence Table – Emotional Intelligence (Theme-wise)

Theme	Author(s) & Year	Country / Context	Population & Sample Size	Study Design	Main Findings	Limitations
EI & Academic Performance	Parker et al. (2004)	Canada	372 HS–University students	Longitudinal	Higher EI predicted adaptation & GPA	Self-report bias
	Adeyemo	Nigeria	300	Cross-	EI positively	No causal

The Role of Emotional Intelligence in Academic Performance, Teacher Effectiveness, and Mental Health: A Systematic Review

Theme	Author(s) & Year	Country / Context	Population & Sample Size	Study Design	Main Findings	Limitations
	(2007)		university students	sectional	correlated with achievement	inference
	Katyál & Awasthi (2005)	India	400 adolescents	Cross-sectional	EI associated with academic performance	Self-report
	Rastegar & Memarpour (2009)	Iran	233 EFL students	Correlational	EI positively correlated with success	Context-specific
	Fernández-Berrocal et al. (2004)	Spain	1000 students	Cross-sectional	EI linked to emotional repair and attention	Cultural specificity
	Extremera & Fernández-Berrocal (2006)	Spain	200 university students	Cross-sectional	EI predicted life satisfaction	Cross-sectional
EI & Teacher Effectiveness	Singh & Sharma (2012)	India	Teachers	Cross-sectional	Higher EI linked to lower occupational stress	Regional focus
	Chan (2004)	Hong Kong	125 teachers	Cross-sectional	EI linked to teacher self-efficacy	Small sample
	Vesely et al. (2013)	Canada	432 pre-service teachers	Cross-sectional	Higher EI linked to efficacy & well-being	Correlational
	Jennings & Greenberg (2009)	USA	Teachers & classrooms	Systematic review	Teacher EI linked to classroom climate	No primary data
EI & Mental Health / Well-being	Schutte et al. (2001)	USA	165 students	Cross-sectional	Higher EI linked to better relationships	Self-report
	Salami (2010)	Nigeria	420 undergraduates	Cross-sectional	EI predicted well-being	Self-report
	Bastian et al. (2005)	Australia	302 students	Cross-sectional	Higher EI linked to life satisfaction	Self-report
	Pool & Qualter (2012)	UK	500 students	Cross-sectional	EI predicted employability	Correlational
	Keefer et al. (2012)	Canada	250 adults	Cross-sectional	EI related to stress resilience	Self-report
	Downey et al. (2008)	Australia	513 adolescents	Cross-sectional	Higher EI linked to lower problem behaviors	Correlational
	Mikolajczyk et al. (2007)	Belgium	500 adults	Cross-sectional	EI associated with better coping	Correlational

The Role of Emotional Intelligence in Academic Performance, Teacher Effectiveness, and Mental Health: A Systematic Review

Theme	Author(s) & Year	Country / Context	Population & Sample Size	Study Design	Main Findings	Limitations
	Ciarrochi et al. (2002)	Australia	302 HS students	Cross-sectional	EI linked to better social functioning	Self-report
EI Development / Interventions	Nelis et al. (2009)	Belgium	37 adults	Experimental	Training improved EI scores	Small sample
Theoretical & Review Papers	Bar-On (2000)	International	Adult & student samples	Validation study	Gender differences in EI subscales	Not education-specific
	Goleman (1998)	International	Various	Theoretical	Defined EI competencies	Not empirical
	Martins et al. (2010)	UK	Meta-analysis (20 studies)	Quantitative synthesis	EI positively related to mental health	Publication bias
	O'Connor et al. (2017)	Australia	1000 students	Longitudinal	EI predicted school engagement	Attrition bias
	Marquez et al. (2006)	Spain	358 adolescents	Cross-sectional	EI linked to peer-rated competence	Cross-sectional
	Petrides et al. (2004)	UK	650 adults	Cross-sectional	Gender differences in trait EI	Not education-focused
	Brackett et al. (2006)	USA	330 undergraduates	Cross-sectional	Higher EI linked to interpersonal relationship	

Across multiple studies, higher emotional intelligence (EI) is consistently associated with better academic outcomes — including higher grades, better adjustment to transitions (e.g., high-school to university), persistence in study, and superior study-related coping. Results come from diverse settings (secondary, higher-education, and EFL contexts) and different EI instruments (Bar-On, Schutte, TEIQue, TMMS), which strengthens the conclusion that EI and academic performance are positively linked. However, most studies are correlational and rely on self-report measures, so causality cannot be assumed. A few studies used longitudinal designs and provided stronger evidence that EI predicts later adaptation and performance, but experimental intervention evidence remains limited in the academic domain.

The evidence indicates that teacher EI is positively associated with professional outcomes: reduced occupational stress, higher self-efficacy, better classroom climate, and greater teaching effectiveness and well-being. Pre-service and in-service teacher samples show similar patterns. Systematic reviews and cross-sectional studies converge on the idea that teachers' social-emotional competence shapes the classroom environment and student engagement. Again, many studies are cross-sectional and regionally focused, so generalisability and direction of effect should be interpreted cautiously.

Multiple studies show EI relates to mental health and well-being indicators (life satisfaction, psychological well-being, stress resilience, and lower problem behaviours). These

The Role of Emotional Intelligence in Academic Performance, Teacher Effectiveness, and Mental Health: A Systematic Review

associations are robust across age groups (adolescents, university students, adults) and cultures. EI appears to act as a resource for adaptive coping and social functioning. Meta-analytic evidence (included in the table) supports this positive relationship, although concerns about publication bias and heterogeneity of measures are noted.

Experimental and training studies (fewer in number) indicate EI can be improved with targeted interventions and that such improvement translates into better EI scores and, in some cases, enhanced psychosocial outcomes. However, intervention literature is still small in sample size and heterogeneous in design, limiting firm conclusions about the optimal content, duration, and transfer effects of EI training.

The theoretical and review works (e.g., Bar-On, Goleman, meta-analyses) provide a conceptual scaffold for understanding EI's components and practical significance. They highlight both trait and ability models and draw attention to measurement differences that complicate cross-study comparisons. Reviews and syntheses point to consistent positive relationships between EI and desirable outcomes but stress the need for higher-quality longitudinal and intervention studies.

DISCUSSION

This systematic review highlights that emotional intelligence (EI) is a significant predictor of academic achievement, teacher effectiveness, and mental well-being across diverse educational contexts. Studies consistently show that higher EI is associated with better grades, adaptability, and persistence among students (Parker et al., 2004; Katyal & Awasthi, 2005; Qualter et al., 2012), as well as reduced occupational stress, stronger self-efficacy, and more positive classroom climates among teachers (Singh & Sharma, 2012; Chan, 2004; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Vesely, Saklofske, & Leschied, 2013). Moreover, EI appears to act as a protective factor for mental health, being linked to greater life satisfaction, stress resilience, and healthier relationships (Schutte et al., 2001; Salami, 2010; Keefer et al., 2012; Bastian et al., 2005). Intervention studies, such as Nelis et al. (2009), indicate that EI can be enhanced through targeted training, further underscoring its developmental potential. However, most studies employ cross-sectional designs and diverse measurement tools, which limit causal inferences and comparability (Petrides et al., 2004; O'Connor et al., 2017). Future research should prioritise longitudinal, cross-cultural studies with standardised instruments to better understand EI's role in education. Overall, the evidence supports integrating EI into curricula and teacher training programs as a strategic approach to fostering academic success, professional competence, and psychological resilience.

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The Role of Emotional Intelligence in Academic Performance, Teacher Effectiveness, and Mental Health: A Systematic Review

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The Role of Emotional Intelligence in Academic Performance, Teacher Effectiveness, and Mental Health: A Systematic Review

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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