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INPLASY

Teachers' emotional competencies and educational outcomes in primary and secondary education: a systematic review protocol

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ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

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Review stage at the time of initial registration - Data analysis.

Conflicts of interest - None declared.

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Amendments - This protocol was registered with the International Platform of Registered Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis Protocols (INPLASY) on 9 November 2026 and was last updated on 9 November 2026.

INTRODUCTION

Review question / Objective General question: What is the relationship between teachers' emotional competencies and the outcomes of their students in primary and secondary education?
Specific questions: (1) Which emotional competencies of teachers have been studied, and how were they measured? (2) Which of them have shown greater effectiveness for students? (3) How are they related to students' psychological and/or cognitive variables?
General objective: To examine the relationship between teachers' emotional competencies and the outcomes of their students in primary and secondary education.
Specific objectives: (1) To analyse the empirical evidence on the teacher emotional competencies studied and the instruments used to measure them. (2) To identify the teacher emotional competencies that are most effective for students. (3) To analyse the relationship between teachers' emotional competencies and students' psychological and/or cognitive variables.
P: In-service teachers working in compulsory education (pre-school, primary and secondary) and the students they teach, in whom the outcomes are measured. University teachers, pre-service teachers and school principals are excluded.
I: Teachers' emotional competencies, however named (emotional intelligence, emotional competence or socio-emotional competence), assessed through self-report, student-report or observation instruments, or developed through a training programme in intervention studies.
C: No comparator is required, as most designs are correlational. When available, comparisons between teachers with different levels of competence, between groups, or between a training group and a control group are recorded.
O: Students' psychological and socio-emotional outcomes (e.g., autonomous motivation, engagement, social skills, anxiety), behavioural

outcomes (e.g., bullying, teacher-student interpersonal behaviour) and cognitive outcomes (academic achievement and grades).
S: Empirical studies published in peer-reviewed journals with a quantitative or predominantly quantitative mixed-methods design: cross-sectional or correlational, quasi-experimental, experimental and exploratory mixed-methods studies. Excluded: systematic reviews, books, book chapters, theses and other non-journal material.

Rationale Teachers' emotional competencies are relevant for the quality of the educational process. Every day teachers manage their own emotions and those of their students, and the way they do it may shape the classroom climate, the teacher-student relationship and student learning (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Frenzel et al., 2021). Their effects are expected to reach students' engagement, academic achievement, perceived academic competence and happiness (Meyer & Anderland, 2024; Li et al., 2020). The problem is also practical: in Chile, system overload, the lack of reflective spaces and institutional tensions make it hard to build affective pedagogical relationships and to develop emotional competencies in the classroom (Valenzuela & Zambrano, 2021; Lozano-Peña et al., 2023), and the 2025 National Teacher Well-being Index reports signs of emotional distress in more than 60% of Chilean teachers.
The gap we identified lies in the interrelation between teachers' emotional competencies and their effects on students. Part of the research has examined how these competencies affect teachers themselves, such as their motivation, resilience and professional commitment (Kostiv et al., 2022; Frenzel & Goelz, 2024; Meyer & Anderland, 2024), and previous syntheses have focused on teacher training (see below). Evidence-based findings of educational psychology have also been slow to reach teacher education, and emotions in the classroom and student-teacher relationships are among the areas not yet consolidated (Meyer et al., 2023). The field is also conceptually fragmented: emotional intelligence, emotional competence and socio-emotional competence are used with different models and instruments, which makes findings hard to compare (Lozano-Peña et al., 2022). As a result, an integrated analysis of which teacher emotional competencies are associated with which student outcomes has remained partial. This matters because, without it, training programmes and policies cannot focus on the competencies that make a difference for students.
Earlier reviews approached the topic mainly from the teachers' side. Lozano-Peña et al. (2022) described the theories, models and instruments used to study teachers' socio-emotional competencies, Quiroz Bravo et al. (2025) focused on initial teacher education, and Aldrup et al. (2024) examined teachers' emotion regulation and teaching effectiveness. More recent reviews are closer to our question but differ in scope: Olayiwola-Adedoja and Naidoo (2026) synthesised English-language studies from 2015 to 2025 on teachers' emotional competence and learners' psychosocial well-being, Gebre et al. (2025) meta-analysed teachers' socio-emotional competence and student engagement, and Nguyen (2026) reviewed the association between teachers' and students' socio-emotional competence. This review differs in covering three related concepts (emotional intelligence, emotional competence and socio-emotional competence), psychological, behavioural and cognitive outcomes together, studies in English and Spanish, and in-service teachers only.
This review was conceived from that gap. Our starting point is that teachers' emotional competence and their students' school experience are part of the same phenomenon, so describing the competencies, or the programmes that train them, is not enough: it is necessary to establish which competencies are linked to favourable psychological, behavioural and cognitive outcomes in students. The question is also relevant for Chile and Latin America, where evidence on this relationship is scarce. A synthesis can inform initial and in-service training and show where evidence is still lacking.

Condition being studied This review does not address a health condition. The phenomenon of interest is teachers' emotional competencies, understood as the knowledge, capacities, skills and attitudes needed to understand, express and regulate emotional phenomena appropriately (Bisquerra & Mateo, 2019). Studies describe them with three related concepts, all of them included: emotional intelligence (e.g., the ability model of Mayer and Salovey), emotional competence, and socio-emotional competence (e.g., the CASEL framework).
The outcomes are measured in primary and secondary school students: psychological and socio-emotional variables (e.g., motivation, engagement, anxiety, social skills), behavioural variables (e.g., bullying, teacher-student interaction) and cognitive variables (e.g., academic achievement).
To organise the synthesis, the competencies assessed in each study are grouped into the five dimensions of the pentagonal model of Bisquerra and Pérez-Escoda (2007): emotional awareness,

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emotional regulation, emotional autonomy, social competence, and life and well-being competencies.

METHODS

Search strategy Databases: Web of Science (Preprint Citation Index excluded), Scopus, ERIC and PubMed. The search ran in two stages: Web of Science and Scopus between March and June 2026, and ERIC and PubMed in July and August 2026. The string was refined through repeated test searches and then finalised; the figures reported come from the final, updated search in the four databases. Terms were searched in English, in the title field. No language filter was applied in the searches; the language criterion (English or Spanish) was applied at full-text screening.
Web of Science (as run):
"Emotional Competence" OR "Emotional Intelligence" OR "emotional skills" OR "soft skill" (Title) AND "Primary School" OR "Middle School" OR "High School" OR "College School" OR school (Title) AND "prospective teacher*" OR "teacher*" OR "professor" OR "teacher education" OR tutor OR educator OR "instructor" (Title)
Scopus, ERIC and PubMed (adapted from the Web of Science string):
Scopus:
TITLE ("Emotional Competence" OR "Emotional Intelligence" OR "emotional skills" OR "soft skill") AND TITLE ("Primary School" OR "Middle School" OR "High School" OR "College School" OR school) AND TITLE ("prospective teacher*" OR teacher* OR professor OR "teacher education" OR tutor OR educator OR instructor)
ERIC:
title:("Emotional Competence" OR "Emotional Intelligence" OR "emotional skills" OR "soft skill") AND title:("Primary School" OR "Middle School" OR "High School" OR "College School" OR school) AND title:("prospective teacher*" OR teacher* OR professor OR "teacher education" OR tutor OR educator OR instructor)
PubMed:
("Emotional Competence"[Title] OR "Emotional Intelligence"[Title] OR "emotional skills"[Title] OR "soft skill"[Title]) AND ("Primary School"[Title] OR "Middle School"[Title] OR "High School"[Title] OR "College School"[Title] OR school[Title]) AND ("prospective teacher*"[Title] OR teacher*[Title] OR professor[Title] OR "teacher education"[Title] OR tutor[Title] OR educator[Title] OR instructor[Title])
Records identified: 1,759 (Web of Science 366, Scopus 392, PubMed 17, ERIC 984).

Participant or population In-service teachers working in compulsory education (pre-school, primary and secondary) and the students they teach, in whom the outcomes are measured. Excluded: university teachers, pre-service teachers and school principals.

Intervention Not applicable in most studies, as the designs are mainly correlational. When available, comparisons between teachers with different levels of competence, between groups, or between a training group and a control group are recorded.

Comparator Not applicable in most studies, as the designs are mainly correlational. When available, comparisons between teachers with different levels of competence, between groups, or between a training group and a control group are recorded.

Study designs to be included Empirical studies with a quantitative or mixed-methods design (predominantly quantitative), published in peer-reviewed journals: cross-sectional or correlational, quasi-experimental, experimental and exploratory mixed-methods studies. Excluded: systematic reviews, books, book chapters, theses, blogs, web pages and other non-journal material.

Eligibility criteria Inclusion criteria: (1) written in English or Spanish, even if the abstract was in one of these languages and the text in another; (2) article in a peer-reviewed specialist journal; (3) empirical study with a quantitative design, or mixed-methods with a predominantly quantitative component; (4) teachers' emotional competencies as a central variable; (5) teachers working in compulsory education levels (pre-school, primary and secondary).
Rules applied to ambiguous cases during eligibility assessment: studies were excluded when the teacher variable was a behavioural or relational construct (e.g., perceived autonomy support) and not an emotional competence measured with a validated instrument; when the outcome was the teacher's own performance, satisfaction, burnout or well-being, since outcomes had to be measured in students (a study that assessed teaching performance through students' grades was kept); when the variable was the emotional intelligence of principals; when participants were pre-service teachers; and when the report was a doctoral thesis.

Information sources Four electronic databases: Web of Science, Scopus, ERIC and PubMed. Records were exported and managed in Rayyan. No grey literature, trial registers or contact with authors were used.

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Main outcome(s) Students' outcomes associated with teachers' emotional competencies, in three groups: (a) psychological and socio-emotional variables (e.g., autonomous motivation, academic engagement, social skills, anxiety, moral character, school adjustment); (b) behavioural variables (e.g., bullying, teacher-student interpersonal behaviour); and (c) cognitive variables (academic achievement and grades). Timing: as measured in each study, with no restriction on follow-up.

Analysis. The effect statistics are inferential. For each study we record whether at least one statistically significant effect on students was found with inferential measures (e.g., correlation and regression coefficients, F tests, multilevel and structural equation models), its size according to Cohen's (1988) conventions when possible, and its scope (total, partial or none). Descriptive analyses use frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations.

Main result. Nine of the 11 included studies (81.8%; 9 of the 10 with quantified results) reported at least one statistically significant effect on students; one found no significant effect and the exploratory study did not quantify effects. Effects were mostly small: $r = -.224$ for bullying, $r = .19$ for grades, $B = .079$ for social skills, $R^2 = .06$ for moral character; a training programme showed a partial η^2 of .06 on achievement. The largest association was $r = .585$ ($p < .01$) with autonomous motivation, while academic engagement was negatively associated ($r = -.469$). Two of the three studies measuring academic achievement found better grades (one partially). As most designs are correlational, these are associations, not causal effects.

Additional outcome(s) Characteristics of the evidence: country and continent, education level, sample size, design, instruments and publication period. Concept used (emotional intelligence, emotional competence or socio-emotional competence) and theoretical model. Teacher competencies assessed, classified into the five dimensions of the pentagonal model; frequency of each dimension by education level; and proportion of studies with significant effects for each dimension.

Results. The searches returned 1,759 records (Web of Science 366, Scopus 392, ERIC 984, PubMed 17); after removing duplicates and records marked ineligible, 873 were screened and 11 studies were included. Sample sizes ranged from 12 to 832 teachers and from 228 to 2,069 students. Ten studies (90.9%) were quantitative, most of them cross-sectional and correlational (6 of 11; 54.5%); one was quasi-experimental and one an exploratory mixed-methods study. Five studies were carried out in primary and six in secondary education, in 10 countries, and 81.8% were published from 2020 onwards. Emotional intelligence was the most frequent concept. The most repeated theoretical models were CASEL, Mayer and Salovey's ability model and Goleman's mixed model (2 studies each; 18.2%). The most studied teacher dimensions were emotional regulation and social competence (7 studies each; 63.6%). The main result that can be derived is that most studies (81.8%) found significant associations between teachers' emotional competencies and student outcomes, but the evidence is heterogeneous and mostly correlational, so it supports associations and not causal effects.

Data management Search results were exported to Rayyan, where duplicates were removed and screening was carried out. Two reviewers, both postgraduate students (one in Psychology and one in Linguistics), screened all records independently and blinded, against the eligibility criteria. An independent judge, Mabel Urrutia Martínez (Universidad de Concepción), also took part in the process. Full texts were sought for the records that passed screening. Data were extracted with a standardised form, piloted beforehand and kept in a spreadsheet: general information (author, country, year), sample characteristics (size, population, education level), design, instruments, competencies assessed and results. The number of records at each stage is documented in a PRISMA 2020 flow diagram.

Quality assessment / Risk of bias analysis No formal assessment of risk of bias or methodological quality was carried out, and no assessment tool was applied. This is a deviation from the usual standard for systematic reviews and is acknowledged as a limitation. Study design, sample size and sampling procedure were extracted, and the absence of an a priori power analysis in the included studies is noted. These aspects are taken into account when interpreting the findings, which are presented as associations and not as causal effects.

Strategy of data synthesis Narrative, descriptive synthesis. No meta-analysis was performed, given the heterogeneity of designs, constructs, instruments and effect measures. The study is the unit of analysis, and every percentage is reported with its denominator. When a study could fall into more than one category (e.g., continent or competency dimension), the unit of coding is the assignment, and those percentages are not proportions of studies.

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The competencies assessed in each study were classified into the five dimensions of the pentagonal model of Bisquerra and Pérez-Escoda (2007). A study was considered to show significant effects when it reported at least one statistically significant effect on any student variable; this analysis uses the studies with quantified results. Effect sizes are described with Cohen's (1988) conventions when available. Results are presented in tables and summarised by objective, and are interpreted as descriptive trends, not as evidence of causal effects.

Subgroup analysis No formal subgroup analysis was performed. Descriptive comparisons were made by education level (primary and secondary), competency dimension, concept used (studies up to 2021 and from 2022 onwards) and continent. Because there are few studies per group, these comparisons are descriptive only.

Sensitivity analysis No formal sensitivity analysis was performed, because results were not pooled quantitatively. In the analysis of significant effects, the exploratory study without quantified results was left out of the denominator, as stated in the text.

Language restriction English and Spanish only, applied at full-text screening and not in the database searches.

Country(ies) involved Countries of the 11 included studies: Greece, Pakistan, United Kingdom, Nigeria, Spain, Ecuador, China, Ethiopia, Peru and Turkey. Review team: Chile.

Other relevant information Retrospective registration. This protocol was registered after the review was completed: searching, screening, data extraction and descriptive analysis were finished and the manuscript was in preparation. It therefore describes the methods actually used and not a plan fixed in advance, and should not be read as defined before the results were known. The review is reported following PRISMA 2020.
Differences between the original plan and the completed review:
1. The general question and the first specific objective were reworded, from "impact" to "relationship" between teachers' emotional competencies and student outcomes.
2. The search began in Web of Science and Scopus and was later extended to ERIC and PubMed.
3. The rules for ambiguous cases (item 16) were set during the eligibility stage.
4. The pentagonal model of Bisquerra and Pérez-Escoda (2007) was adopted as the organising framework for the synthesis.
5. No risk-of-bias assessment was carried out (item 21).
Search and selection: 1,759 records identified; 873 after removing duplicates and records marked as ineligible by automation tools; 855 excluded at title and abstract screening; 18 reports sought for retrieval, 4 not retrieved; 14 assessed for eligibility; 3 excluded (two doctoral theses and one for language); 11 studies included.

Keywords teachers' emotional competencies; emotional intelligence; socio-emotional competence; educational outcomes; primary education; secondary education; systematic review.

Dissemination plans We intend to submit the results of this review for publication in peer-reviewed journals in education and educational psychology; this is our main dissemination priority, and the target journal will be chosen according to scope and fit. The results will also be shared at academic events and with teacher education and education policy audiences in Chile.

Contributions of each author
Author 1 - Gabriel Enrique Caballero Toro - Conceptualization, Methodology, Project administration, Investigation (screening, final selection of studies, data extraction); Data curation (extraction matrix); Formal analysis (descriptive analysis); Writing – original draft (problem, results, discussion); Writing – review & editing.
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Author 3 - Mabel Alejandra Urrutia Martínez - Supervision; Methodology (methodological guidance); Validation (independent judge in the screening process); Writing – review & editing (critical revision of the manuscript).
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