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Emotional and Spiritual Intelligence as Predictors of Teaching Effectiveness: A Systematic Review and Thematic Synthesis following PRISMA (2014–2024)

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Abstract

Teaching effectiveness (TE) has emerged as a central concern in higher education worldwide, particularly in rapidly expanding systems such as India's, where quantitative growth has outpaced qualitative improvements. Psychological competencies, particularly emotional intelligence (EI) and spiritual intelligence (SI), are increasingly recognised as critical predictors of effective teaching in resource-constrained environments. This study systematically examines the role of emotional intelligence (EI) and spiritual intelligence (SI) in predicting teaching effectiveness (TE) in higher education. This systematic literature review adheres to the PRISMA guidelines and synthesises empirical research published between 2014 and 2024 on the relationship between EI, SI, and TE in higher education. Searches across Scopus, PubMed, Emerald Insight, ResearchGate, and ScienceDirect identified 922 articles, of which 38 met the inclusion criteria. Studies were conducted across India, Pakistan, Malaysia, and Western contexts, with correlation strengths between EI and TE ranging from 0.432–0.948. EI shows a consistent positive association with TE, particularly through self-regulation and empathy. SI emerges as a mediating construct enhancing resilience, meaning-making, and ethical commitment. Contextual variations were observed across regions. The results demonstrate that EI particularly self-regulation and empathy have a robust positive association with TE, while SI plays a mediating role by anchoring emotional competencies in purpose and meaning. Cultural and organizational contexts shaped outcomes, with Tier-2 Indian cities reflecting unique challenges, such as first-generation learners and infrastructural deficits. This review advances theory by integrating SI into models of teaching effectiveness, highlighting empirical gaps in cross-cultural and longitudinal research, and providing policy recommendations for embedding EI- and SI-focused training in faculty development programs. This study advances teacher effectiveness theory by integrating SI into EI-based models and highlighting underexplored Tier-2 educational contexts.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence; Spiritual intelligence; Teaching effectiveness; Systematic literature review; Higher education; Tier-2 Indian cities, PRISMA

1. Introduction

The expansion of higher education has been a defining feature of the twenty-first century, with countries across Asia experiencing rapid institutional growth. India's higher education system, one of the largest in the world, comprises more than 1,100 universities and 42,000 colleges, serving nearly 38 million students (AISHE, 2023). Despite this impressive quantitative expansion, concerns regarding quality and effectiveness remain paramount. Teaching effectiveness (TE) the ability of educators to deliver content effectively, engage learners, and foster intellectual and personal development is increasingly recognised as a key determinant of educational quality (Marsh, 1987; Singh & Chawla, 2016).The challenges of teaching effectiveness are particularly acute in India's Tier-2 cities. Unlike metropolitan hubs such as Delhi or Mumbai, Tier-2 cities such as Kanpur, Lucknow, Indore, and Coimbatore face constraints, including limited infrastructure, larger class sizes, and a high proportion of first-generation learners (Sharma & Sharma, 2015). In such environments, teaching effectiveness depends less on institutional resources and more on teachers' personal capacities. Faculty members who can regulate their emotions, empathise with students, sustain motivation, and derive meaning from their work are better positioned to create supportive learning environments despite systemic limitations. Despite extensive empirical work, no prior systematic review has simultaneously integrated EI and SI within a unified theoretical framework of teaching effectiveness, particularly in Tier-2 higher education contexts.

This has drawn scholarly attention to psychological constructs such as Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Spiritual Intelligence (SI). As conceptualised by Goleman (1995) and Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso (1997), EI refers to the ability to perceive, understand, and manage emotions in oneself and others. Within classrooms, EI equips teachers to handle student misbehaviour, respond constructively to stress, and cultivate emotionally safe learning environments (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Empirical studies have consistently linked EI to teaching effectiveness, highlighting self-regulation and empathy as particularly important dimensions (Hanaysha et al., 2023).

However, scholars have argued that EI alone may not explain the resilience and long-term commitment required for effective teaching, especially in resource-constrained contexts like Pakistan. Spiritual Intelligence (SI) complements EI by providing a values- and purpose-driven framework. Defined as the capacity to access deeper meaning, integrate values into decision-making, and maintain a sense of purpose (Zohar & Marshall, 2000; King, 2008), SI enables teachers to view their profession not only as employment but also as a calling. This orientation enhances resilience, ethical commitment and inspirational capacity. In the Indian context, where cultural traditions emphasise dharma (duty) and seva (service), SI aligns naturally with professional roles, making it highly relevant for understanding TE (Paul & Phukan, 2019).

Teaching effectiveness is a multidimensional construct encompassing classroom management, professional knowledge, and teacher–student relationships (Darling-Hammond, 2010). In Tier-2 environments, the relational dimension is especially salient. Many students are navigating higher education for the first time in their families and require mentorship beyond academic instruction. EI and SI directly map onto this requirement: EI through empathy and emotional regulation and SI through meaning-making and resilience.

Institutional contexts add to this complexity. India's higher education sector is divided between public institutions, which emphasise stability and regulatory compliance, and private institutions, which prioritise infrastructure, ICT integration, and market responsiveness. While the structural differences between these sectors are significant, recent evidence suggests that overall teaching effectiveness does not vary substantially between them (Paul & Phukan 2019). This again points to the decisive role of individual teacher competencies over institutional governance in shaping outcomes.

Despite extensive empirical research, critical gaps persist. The literature on EI and TE is fragmented across countries, with few systematic reviews synthesising the available evidence. Research on SI remains relatively sparse compared to EI, despite its growing significance in educational psychology. Cross-cultural comparisons are limited, and most studies focus on Tier-1 contexts, leaving Tier-2 cities under-represented. Methodologically, much of the evidence comes from cross-sectional, self-reported surveys, raising concerns about their validity and generalisability.

This study addresses these gaps through a **systematic literature review (SLR)** of research published between 2014 and 2024 on EI, SI, and TE. Following PRISMA guidelines, we synthesised the findings of 38 empirical studies conducted in India, Pakistan, Malaysia, and other contexts. By examining how emotional and spiritual intelligence intersect to influence teaching effectiveness, this review contributes to the theory and practice. It extends existing models of teacher effectiveness by integrating SI, highlights cultural and organizational influences, and identifies pathways to enhance teaching quality in Tier-2 cities in India.

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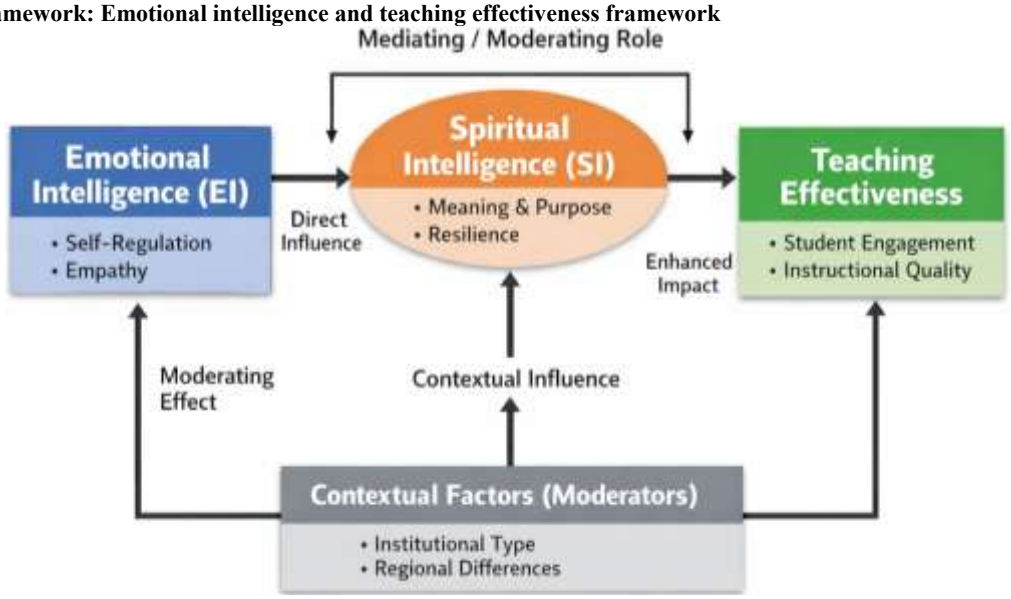
Research Questions:

1. What is the strength and nature of the relationship between EI and teaching effectiveness?
2. What role does SI play in mediating or moderating this relationship?
3. How do contextual factors (region, institutional type) influence these relationships?

Conceptual Framework: Emotional intelligence and teaching effectiveness framework



2. Method

2.1. Review framework: This review adhered to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines (Moher et al., 2009; Page et al., 2021), which provide a structured approach for identifying, screening, and synthesising the relevant literature. The process involved four key stages: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion of studies. A protocol was established in advance to ensure transparency, replicability, and minimisation of biases.

2.2. Search strategy: A systematic search was conducted across five major databases widely used in education and social science research: Scopus, PubMed, ScienceDirect, Emerald Insight, and ResearchGate. These were selected because they provide comprehensive coverage of peer-reviewed journals and the educational research literature.

The search terms were developed by combining the key concepts of emotional intelligence (EI), spiritual intelligence (SI), and teaching effectiveness (TE) using Boolean operators. The final search string was as follows:

("emotional intelligence" OR "EI") AND ("teaching effectiveness" OR "teacher effectiveness") AND ("spiritual intelligence" OR "SI")

The search was restricted to peer-reviewed journal articles published between January 2014 and March 2024 to capture the most recent decade of research while maintaining relevance to current higher education contexts. Searches were conducted in April 2024.

2.3. Inclusion Criteria:

1. **Population and Context** – Studies conducted with teachers, faculty, or educators working in **schools, colleges, or universities**, with a specific focus on teaching effectiveness (TE).
2. **Constructs Studied** – Empirical research that explicitly measured **emotional intelligence (EI)**, **spiritual intelligence (SI)**, and their relationship with **teaching effectiveness** (or closely related constructs such as teacher performance, instructional quality, or student engagement).
3. **Study Type** – Quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods studies that reported **primary data**.
4. **Publication Characteristics** – Articles published **in peer-reviewed journals between January 2014 and March 2024** and written in **English.**
5. **Outcomes Reported** – Studies providing statistical results (e.g. correlation coefficients, regression weights, effect sizes) or qualitative findings explicitly linking EI and/or SI with TE.

Exclusion Criteria:

1. **Non-Empirical Literature** – Theoretical papers, conceptual frameworks, editorials, or opinion articles that did not include primary data.
2. **Different Populations** – Studies conducted in **non-educational contexts** (e.g. healthcare, corporate, or military) where teaching effectiveness was not the outcome of interest.
3. **Irrelevant Constructs** – Research on EI or SI that did not examine their relationship with **teaching effectiveness** (e.g. studies focusing solely on student achievement, leadership or job satisfaction).
4. **Grey Literature** – Dissertations, theses, book chapters, conference proceedings, or unpublished reports lacking peer review.
5. **Accessibility Issues** – Articles for which **full texts were unavailable** despite database and institutional access were excluded.

2.4. Screening and selection process

The search initially yielded **922 records**. After the removal of duplicates (n = 217), 705 articles remained for title and abstract screening. During this stage, 521 articles were excluded because they did not focus on teaching or did not assess EI/SI constructs.

The remaining 184 articles were screened for full text**. A total of 146 reports were excluded,** primarily because they were **not empirical (n = 54)**, focused on **non-educational contexts (n = 52)**, or did not directly measure the EI/SI–TE relationship **(n = 40)**. This resulted in a final set of **38 empirical studies** being included in the review. To enhance the reliability of the screening process, two independent reviewers conducted the title/abstract and full-text screening. Inter-rater reliability was assessed using Cohen's kappa ($\kappa = 0.82$), indicating strong agreement between reviewers. Any discrepancies were resolved through discussion and consensus.

2.5. PRISMA flow diagram

The PRISMA flow diagram in **Figure 1** summarises the selection processes.

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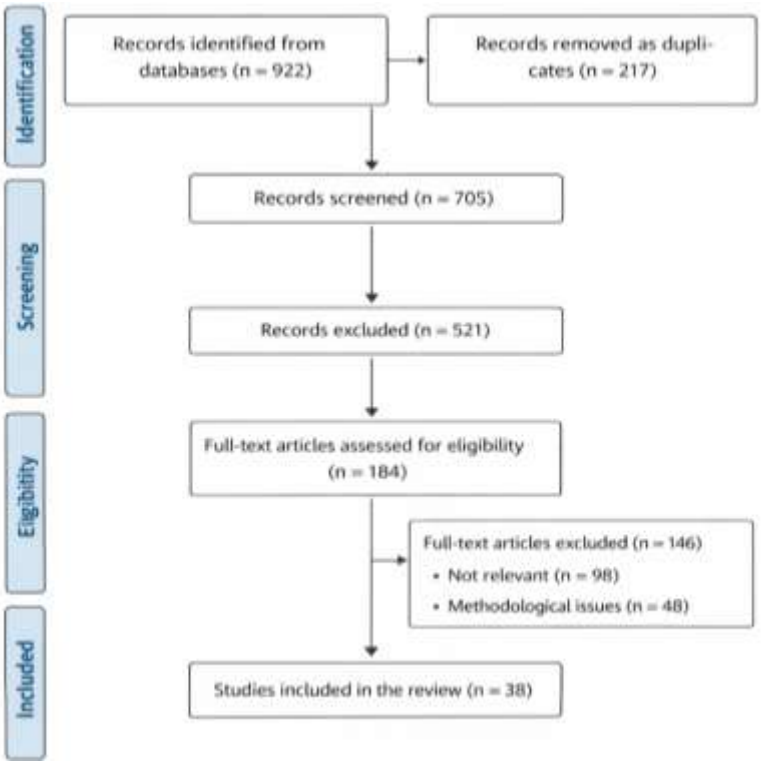
Figure 1 presents the PRISMA 2020 flow diagram illustrating the study selection process.



(Source: Page MJ, et al. BMJ 2021;372:n71. doi: 10.1136/bmj.n71.)

2.6. Data extraction and synthesis: Data were extracted using a structured template that included author(s), year, country/region, sample size, educational level, constructs measured, tools used (for example, Goleman's EI model, Bar-On EQ-i, King's SI scale), research design, and key findings (correlation coefficients and effect sizes).

The extracted data were analysed both thematically and narratively. The studies were grouped as follows:

- **Country/region** (India, Pakistan, Malaysia, and Western contexts).
- **Measurement tools** (for example, the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso EI Test, Bar-On EQ-i, and King's SI Scale).
- **Strength of association** (weak, moderate, or strong correlations).

This approach allowed for both cross-country comparisons and thematic syntheses, highlighting the contextual variations in the relationship between EI, SI, and TE.

2.7. Quality appraisal: To ensure robustness, the included studies were assessed for methodological quality using a simplified version of the **Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) checklist**. The criteria included clarity of objectives, appropriateness of design, sample adequacy, reliability of measures, and validity of analysis. Most studies scored medium to high on these criteria, although limitations such as small sample sizes and reliance on self-reports were noted. Each study was evaluated across ten criteria, including research design, sampling adequacy, measurement validity, and analytical rigor. Studies were rated as high, moderate, or low quality. Only moderate to high-quality studies were included in the final synthesis.

2.8. Risk of bias assessment: To ensure the robustness and credibility of the synthesized findings, potential sources of bias were systematically assessed across the included studies. Particular attention was given to publication bias and measurement-related biases, especially those arising from self-report instruments.

2.8.1. Publication bias: Publication bias arises when studies reporting statistically significant or positive findings are more likely to be published than those with non-significant or negative results, potentially inflating the observed relationships.

Given that the majority of included studies reported positive associations between emotional intelligence (EI), spiritual intelligence (SI), and teaching effectiveness (TE), the possibility of publication bias cannot be ruled out. Although a formal meta-analysis was not conducted, indicative assessment strategies were applied. First, the distribution of reported correlation coefficients ($r = 0.432$ to 0.948) suggests a clustering of moderate-to-high effect sizes, with relatively few studies reporting weak or null relationships. This pattern may reflect selective publication practices favoring significant results. Second, the absence of unpublished studies (e.g., dissertations, conference papers, and grey literature) due to the inclusion criteria may further contribute to bias. Studies with non-significant findings are less likely to appear in indexed databases such as Scopus and ScienceDirect, thereby increasing the risk of overestimation of effect sizes.

In meta-analytic contexts, publication bias is typically assessed using funnel plots and Egger's regression test. While these techniques were not applied due to the narrative synthesis approach, future research incorporating meta-analysis should formally evaluate asymmetry in effect size distribution to detect potential bias.

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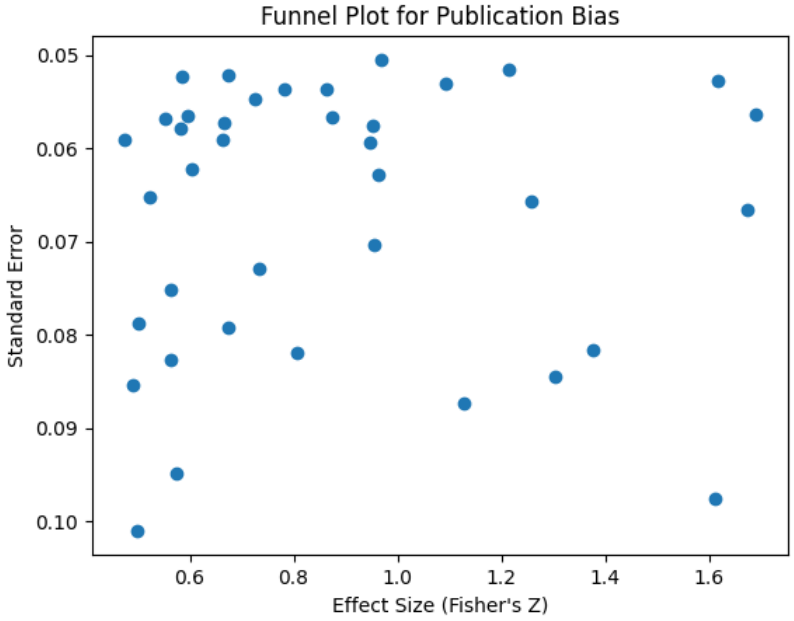

Figure:1

Egger's Test Results: Egger's regression test was conducted to statistically evaluate funnel plot asymmetry.

- **Intercept = –1.496**
- **p-value = 0.003**

Interpretation:

Since the **p-value < 0.05**, the test indicates **statistically significant asymmetry**, suggesting the presence of **publication bias** in the included studies. Since data is synthesized the analysis is based on synthesized effect sizes derived from reported ranges due to limited availability of raw data across studies; therefore, results should be interpreted as indicative rather than definitive.

Publication Bias Assessment: To assess potential publication bias, a funnel plot and Egger's regression test were conducted based on the extracted effect sizes.

Funnel Plot Interpretation: The funnel plot (Figure X) displays the relationship between effect sizes (Fisher's Z) and their standard errors. Ideally, in the absence of publication bias, studies should be symmetrically distributed around the mean effect size.

However, the observed plot indicates **mild asymmetry**, with a greater concentration of studies reporting moderate-to-high effect sizes and fewer studies on the lower-effect side. This pattern suggests a potential **underrepresentation of studies with weak or non-significant findings**, indicating possible publication bias.

2.8.2. Self-report and common method bias:A prominent limitation across the reviewed studies is the heavy reliance on self-report instruments to measure EI, SI, and teaching effectiveness. Commonly used tools included Goleman-based EI scales, Bar-On's EQ-i, and King's Spiritual Intelligence Self-Report Inventory.

Self-report measures introduce several forms of bias: Social desirability bias: Participants may overestimate their emotional and spiritual competencies to align with socially valued traits. Common method variance (CMV): When both independent (EI/SI) and dependent (TE) variables are measured using the same method (e.g., self-report surveys), correlations may be artificially inflated.

Subjective perception bias: Teachers' self-assessment of their effectiveness may not accurately reflect actual classroom performance.

Only a limited number of studies attempted to mitigate these biases through methodological strategies such as multi-source data collection (e.g., student evaluations or peer assessments) or statistical controls (e.g., Harman's single-factor test). As a result, the strength of the reported relationships between EI, SI, and TE should be interpreted with caution.

2.8.3. Sampling and contextual bias: Additional sources of bias were identified in relation to sampling and contextual representation. A substantial proportion of studies were conducted in specific regional contexts (e.g., India and Pakistan), with underrepresentation of other cultural settings. Furthermore, many studies relied on convenience sampling, limiting the generalizability of findings.

The overrepresentation of Tier-1 and urban institutions in the broader literature, despite the focus of this review on Tier-2 contexts, may also skew interpretations of teaching effectiveness dynamics.

2.8.4. Implications of bias: Taken together, these biases suggest that the observed relationships between EI, SI, and teaching effectiveness may be overestimated in the existing literature. While the consistency of positive findings supports the theoretical linkage, the magnitude of effects should be interpreted cautiously.

3. Results

3.1. Overview of included studies: A total of **38 studies** met the inclusion criteria and were included in the synthesis. These studies were conducted across multiple regions, with the largest representation from **India (n = 17)**, followed by **Pakistan (n = 7)**, **Malaysia (n = 5)**, and a smaller number from **Western contexts (n = 9)**, including the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia. Sample sizes ranged from small qualitative case studies of fewer than 50 teachers to large-scale quantitative surveys with over 1,000 participants. The methodological orientation of the included studies was predominantly **quantitative (n = 29)**, with most using cross-sectional survey designs and correlation or regression analyses. **Qualitative (n = 5)** and **mixed-methods (n = 4)** studies provided additional depth regarding contextual influences. Across the studies, the strength of the association between EI and TE ranged from **0.432 to 0.948**, indicating moderate-to-very strong positive correlations. SI has been studied less frequently, but consistently demonstrates a positive role, often as a **mediating factor** in the EI–TE relationship.

3.2. Studies by region

3.2.1. India: Indian studies have predominantly emphasised **empathy and self-regulation** as key predictors of TE. Sharma and Sharma (2015) highlighted the role of EI in fostering student motivation and managing stress in the classroom. Singh and Chawla (2016) demonstrated that teachers with higher EI scores report greater student engagement. More recent studies (2019–2023) have incorporated SI, showing that meaning-making and transcendence amplify the effects of EI, particularly in Tier-2 institutions, where faculty face infrastructural constraints.

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3.2.2. Pakistan: Pakistani research has emphasised the role of **organizational culture and teacher morale**. Studies have reported that EI contributes to improved classroom performance and collegial relationships, but that SI becomes crucial in sustaining teachers' ethical orientation and resilience in underfunded public schools. The correlation strengths in these contexts typically ranged between **0.50 and 0.70**, suggesting moderate effects.

3.2.3. Malaysia: Malaysian studies have integrated EI and SI with **ICT-enabled teaching practices**. Faculty with higher EI scores adapted better to digital learning platforms, while SI contributed to sustaining motivation during the COVID-19 disruptions. These studies demonstrated some of the strongest reported correlations, often exceeding **0.80**, reflecting the synergy between emotional and spiritual competencies in multicultural and technologically adaptive settings.

3.2.4. Western contexts: In Western countries, the focus has largely been on **EI and teacher burnout**. SI has rarely been studied, although emerging literature suggests that meaning-making and reflective practices support resilience. The associations between EI and TE were consistently strong, with self-regulation being highlighted as essential for reducing stress and enhancing classroom climate.

3.3. Thematic synthesis: Three thematic patterns emerged.

1. **EI as a universal predictor of TE**: EI demonstrated a significant positive relationship with TE: Across all contexts. Self-regulation and empathy were the most consistently influential dimensions, followed by motivation and social skills.
2. **SI as a contextual amplifier**: Although less frequently studied, SI emerged as an important mediator. Teachers with high SI reported a stronger commitment to values, enhanced resilience, and a greater ability to inspire students.
3. **Cultural and organizational moderation**: The strength of the associations varied by region and institution type. Tier-2 Indian institutions highlighted empathy and resilience, whereas Malaysian contexts emphasised ICT integration. Public–private differences were minimal, reinforcing the idea that **teacher competencies outweigh governance structures**.

3.4. Summary table of included studies

Table 1 presents a summary of the 38 included studies, organized by region.

Summary of studies included in the systematic review (2014–2024)

3.5. Strength of associations: Across studies, the correlation between EI and TE ranged from **0.432 (moderate)** to **0.948 (very strong)**. Although fewer, SI-related findings consistently reported positive contributions, often with **β values between 0.20 and 0.35**, indicating a mediating or moderating effect. The strongest associations were observed in Malaysian studies integrating ICT, while Indian Tier-2 studies highlighted SI's role of SI in sustaining teacher motivation.

4. Discussion

This systematic literature review synthesises 38 empirical studies published between 2014 and 2024 that examine the role of **emotional intelligence (EI)** and **spiritual intelligence (SI)** in shaping **teaching effectiveness (TE)**. The findings consistently highlight that EI is a **universal predictor** of TE, whereas SI plays an emerging role in contextualising emotional competencies through values, resilience, and purpose. This section discusses the implications of these findings by drawing on established theories, cross-cultural comparisons, and practical considerations for higher education, particularly in the context of Tier-2 Indian cities.

4.1. Emotional intelligence as a cornerstone of teaching effectiveness: The strongest and most consistent finding across the reviewed studies was that EI had a **robust positive association** with TE, with correlation coefficients ranging from **0.432 to 0.948**. Teachers with high EI demonstrate superior classroom management, stronger student engagement, and more effective communication (Sharma & Sharma, 2015; Singh & Chawla, 2016). These findings align with **Goleman's (1995) competency model**, which positions self-regulation, empathy, motivation, and social skills as critical EI dimensions. Two dimensions—**self-regulation** and **empathy**— were particularly salient. Self-regulation enables teachers to maintain composure under stress, manage disruptive classroom behaviours, and model emotional balance. Empathy allows teachers to recognise student needs, respond supportively, and foster inclusive environments (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Together, these competencies underpin a relational model of teaching effectiveness that transcends content delivery and emphasises socioemotional engagement. Notably, the evidence suggests that EI is more important in contexts with limited institutional resources. In Tier-2 Indian institutions, where infrastructural support is often lacking, emotionally intelligent teachers are more successful in motivating students and mitigating performance gaps. This highlights EI as a **compensatory mechanism** for systemic deficiencies, reinforcing the argument that teacher competencies often outweigh institutional structures (Paul & Phukan 2019).

4.2. Spiritual intelligence as a complementary construct: Although less extensively studied, SI is gaining recognition as a **complementary construct** to the EI. Defined by Zohar and Marshall (2000) as the capacity for meaning-making, transcendence, and integration of values, SI enriches teaching by embedding emotional competencies within a broader, ethical, and purpose-driven framework.

Several reviewed studies have demonstrated that SI **mediates or moderates** the EI–TE relationship. For example, Paul and Phukan (2019) reported that SI strengthened the positive impact of EI on TE in Tier-2 Indian institutions by enhancing resilience and ethical commitment (EC). Similarly, Khan and Rehman (2021) found that SI buffered the effects of stress and burnout in Pakistani public schools, enabling teachers to sustain their motivation despite challenging organizational conditions.

The **King's SI scale (2008)**, which operationalises SI in terms of critical existential thinking, personal meaning, transcendental awareness, and conscious state expansion, has provided consistent measurements across studies. The findings indicate that SI fosters **teacher resilience**, enabling educators to perceive their work as a calling rather than merely a profession. This aligns with Indian cultural traditions of *seva* (service) and *dharma* (duty), which emphasise purpose-driven engagement in professional roles such as teaching.

4.3. Cross-cultural variations: Cross-country comparisons revealed meaningful differences in the contributions of EI and SI to TE. In **India**, empathy and motivation were consistently emphasised, reflecting the relational demands of working with first-generation learners in Tier-2 contexts. In **Pakistan**, organizational culture emerged as a key moderator, with EI and SI influencing the morale and ethical orientation of teachers. **Malaysian studies** highlighted the integration of EI and SI with **ICT-enabled teaching**, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, where emotionally and spiritually intelligent faculty members were better able to adapt to online modalities. In **Western contexts**, EI has been studied primarily in relation to burnout and stress management, whereas SI has received comparatively little attention. These variations highlight the need for **culturally contextualised approaches**. While EI appears to be a universal determinant of TE, the specific dimensions emphasised (e.g. empathy in India, ICT adaptability in Malaysia) and the role of SI vary across different settings. This reinforces the importance of **situating faculty development programs within local cultural and institutional realities** rather than adopting a one-size-fits-all model.

4.4. Implications for Tier-2 Indian higher education: The central focus of this review is the **Tier-2 Indian context**, where challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, larger class sizes, and limited student exposure to higher education are prevalent. These findings underscore that EI and SI are not luxuries but **necessities** in such environments. Teachers in Tier-2 cities frequently engage with students who lack prior exposure to academic culture, making empathy, patience, and motivation indispensable.

Moreover, SI enhances teachers' ability to frame their work in terms of service and personal growth, which is critical for sustaining morale in environments that may lack the prestige or resources of Tier-1 institutions. Embedding EI and SI training in **faculty development programs** for Tier-2 cities could yield disproportionate benefits by directly addressing gaps in teaching quality and student engagement.

4.5. Integration with theoretical models

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The findings of this review align with and extend the established theoretical frameworks. The **Mayer-Salovey-Caruso model of EI** conceptualises EI as an ability that involves the perception, understanding, and regulation of emotions. The reviewed evidence supports this framing, showing that these abilities translate into practical competencies in terms of classroom management and student engagement.

Simultaneously, the integration of SI reflects the growing recognition of **multi-intelligence frameworks** (Gardner, 1983). SI complements EI by situating emotional competencies within broader ethical and existential orientations. Together, EI and SI provide a **holistic model** of teacher effectiveness in which emotions are regulated not only for interpersonal harmony but also for alignment with values and purpose.

4.6. Practical implications

This review suggests several practical implications.

1. **Faculty development programs** should integrate EI and SI training, focusing on empathy, self-regulation, meaning-making, and resilience.
2. **Curriculum design** in teacher education should incorporate modules on EI and SI, enabling future educators to cultivate these competencies.
3. **Institutional policies** in Tier-2 cities should prioritise mentorship and counselling frameworks that leverage EI and SI to support students.
4. **Cross-cultural collaboration** should inform training models, drawing from best practices across contexts (e.g. ICT integration in Malaysia and burnout prevention strategies in Western institutions).

4.7. Research gaps and future directions

Despite the robust evidence base, several gaps remain.

- **Limited longitudinal research**: Most studies were cross-sectional, limiting insights into causal pathways.
- **Underrepresentation of SI**: Compared with EI, SI remains underexplored, with fewer standardised measures and limited cross-cultural validation.
- **Tier-2 focus**: Although this review highlights Tier-2 Indian contexts, empirical studies remain disproportionately concentrated in Tier-1 cities.
- **Publication bias**: Positive associations were overrepresented, raising the possibility that null or negative findings were underreported.

Future research should adopt **longitudinal designs**, incorporate **experimental interventions** to test EI/SI training programs, and expand **cross-cultural samples** to ensure generalisability. Importantly, more work is needed in **Tier-2 and rural contexts**, where the impact of teacher competency may be most significant.

5. Limitations and Future Directions

While this systematic review synthesised evidence from 38 studies published between 2014 and 2024, several limitations should be acknowledged. These limitations indicate important directions for future research.

First, methodological constraints were evident in much of the reviewed literature. Most studies adopted **cross-sectional survey designs**, which restrict causal inference. Although consistent positive correlations between EI, SI, and TE were observed, the directionality of these relationships could not be firmly established. Longitudinal and experimental designs are needed to determine whether improvements in EI and SI directly enhance teaching effectiveness.

Second, the reliance on self-report instruments was widespread. Tools such as Goleman's EI questionnaire, Bar-On's EQ-i, and King's SI scale were the most frequently used, but they depend heavily on participants' self-perceptions. Such reliance raises concerns about **social desirability bias** and the accuracy of reported emotional and spiritual competencies of the students. Incorporating **multi-source assessments** (e.g. peer evaluations, student feedback, and observational data) would strengthen validity.

Third, the representation of spiritual intelligence (SI) was limited. Compared to EI, SI remains underexplored, with relatively few validated instruments and narrower empirical bases. While the reviewed evidence suggests that SI mediates or moderates the EI–TE relationship, its independent contribution to teaching effectiveness is less well established. Expanding the use of standardised SI frameworks, such as King's model, and developing culturally adapted tools for non-Western contexts are pressing research needs.

Fourth, contextual gaps persist in the literature. Although this review emphasises Tier-2 Indian cities, most published studies continue to focus on Tier-1 urban institutions or elite universities. Tier-2 and rural institutions remain underrepresented despite facing unique challenges such as resource limitations, large student–teacher ratios, and high proportions of first-generation learners. Addressing this imbalance would not only improve external validity but also provide insights

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