

Teachers' Emotional Competence: Its Impact on Classroom Management in Elementary Schools

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the impact of teachers' emotional competence on classroom management among elementary teachers at Barcelona Central School during the School Year 2025–2026. Specifically, the participants were fifteen (15) elementary teachers selected through purposive sampling, comprising one Kindergarten teacher, three Grade 1 teachers, two Grade 2 teachers, one Grade 3 teacher, two Grade 4 teachers, three Grade 5 teachers, two Grade 6 teachers, and one Special Needs Education (SNED) teacher. The study examined the level of teacher emotional competence and its impact on classroom management as perceived and practiced by these teachers within their natural teaching environment. The study utilized mixed methods and a phenomenological type of research.

The findings revealed that teachers' emotional competence influences classroom management through four key strategies: regulated discipline, proactive management, calm composure, and emotional modeling. It shapes teacher-learner relationships through emotional safety, empathetic resolution, and constructive dialogue. Furthermore, it contributes to a positive classroom climate through emotional modeling, inclusive management, and mutual respect. The study concluded that emotional competence is the internal foundation upon which effective classroom management is built, enabling teachers to transform reactive discipline into thoughtful, relationship-centered practices that foster trust, psychological safety, and mutual respect.

However, teachers face challenges in consistently applying these competencies, highlighting the need for sustained support. Thus, a set of targeted programs is proposed, including wellness workshops for self-regulation, peer mentoring circles for strategy sharing, and classroom-based coaching for real-time guidance, ensuring teachers receive continuous, practical support rather than one-time training. This study underscores that emotional competence is not merely an additional teaching quality but the very foundation of effective elementary classroom management.

Keywords — Classroom Climate, Classroom Management, Emotional Competence, Teacher-Learner Relationships, Elementary Teachers.

INTRODUCTION

Education is not merely a process of transmitting academic knowledge; it is a complex human endeavor that involves continuous interpersonal interaction, emotional exchange, and social negotiation. Teachers serve as the primary agents of this process, shaping not only what learners learn but also how they experience learning. In elementary schools, teachers are often the first authority figures outside the family, and their emotional responses, attitudes, and behaviors significantly influence learners' perceptions of school, learning, and themselves.

Emotional competence in teachers is often conceptualized as a multidimensional construct that includes emotional awareness, emotional understanding, emotional regulation, emotional expression, and emotional utilization. Emotional awareness refers to the ability to identify and label one's own emotions as well as recognize emotions in others. Emotional understanding involves interpreting the causes and consequences of

emotions within specific contexts. Emotional regulation pertains to the capacity to manage emotional reactions in adaptive ways, particularly in stressful or challenging situations.

Research has shown that teachers' emotional competence is closely linked to their well-being, job satisfaction, and professional effectiveness. Emotionally competent teachers tend to experience lower levels of stress and burnout, greater resilience, and higher levels of engagement in their work. These positive outcomes are particularly important in elementary education, where teachers often spend extended periods with the same group of learners and develop close relational bonds. Emotional competence allows teachers to navigate the emotional complexities of these relationships while maintaining professional boundaries and instructional focus. When teachers are emotionally balanced and responsive, they are better able to create classrooms characterized by trust, respect, and mutual understanding.

International studies have consistently shown that teachers' emotional competence is strongly linked to classroom climate, learners' behavior, and instructional effectiveness. Goleman's theory of emotional intelligence¹ laid the foundation for understanding how emotional awareness, regulation, and empathy influence professional performance, including teaching. Building on this framework, Jennings and Greenberg proposed the Prosocial Classroom Model², which explains how teachers' social and emotional competence affects classroom management through improved teacher well-being, positive teacher-learner relationships, and effective classroom practices. Their work suggests that emotionally competent teachers are better equipped to prevent disruptive behavior and foster supportive learning environments.

Emmer and Sabornie³ emphasized that effective classroom management relies heavily on teachers' ability to regulate emotions, particularly in high-stress situations involving learners' misbehavior. Brackett et al found that teachers with higher emotional competence demonstrated greater confidence in managing classrooms and were more likely to use positive disciplinary strategies. Similarly, studies conducted in various international contexts have shown that teachers' emotional regulation skills reduce the frequency of classroom disruptions and enhance learners' engagement.

The MATATAG Curriculum recognizes the role of teachers in fostering not only academic excellence but also values formation, emotional resilience, and social responsibility among learners. Philippine research on classroom management has consistently pointed out that traditional authoritarian approaches to discipline are becoming less effective in contemporary classrooms. Instead, emotionally informed strategies that emphasize empathy, consistency, and positive reinforcement are more aligned with current educational goals and cultural values. Teachers who possess strong emotional competence are therefore better positioned to implement these approaches successfully.

In Barcelona Central School, teachers face daily challenges that extend beyond curriculum delivery. They navigate diverse learner behaviors, emotional needs, and socio-cultural influences that shape classroom dynamics. Elementary classrooms are foundational environments where learners develop self-regulation, social skills, and academic habits; thus, the emotional competence of teachers plays a critical role in shaping these early educational experiences. In these contexts, teachers' ability to manage their own emotions and respond adaptively to learners' emotional cues can influence not only the immediate classroom climate but also long-term learner engagement and academic success.

This study examined the relationship between emotional competence and classroom management in an elementary school setting. Teaching in elementary schools involves not only delivering academic content but also managing diverse learners' behavioral and emotional needs. Teachers are required to maintain a positive and orderly learning environment while responding to challenges such as disruptive behavior, emotional outbursts, and varying levels of learners' engagement. This study determined the impact of teachers' emotional competence on classroom management at Barcelona Central School. Specifically, this study answered the following research questions:

1. How does teachers' emotional competence influence the strategies employed in managing classroom behavior in elementary schools?

2. In what ways does teachers' emotional competence shape the relationships established with learners in the classroom?
3. How does emotional competence among teachers contribute to the creation of a positive classroom climate?
4. What are the challenges encountered by teachers in applying emotional competence in classroom management?
5. What interventions can be implemented to enhance teachers' emotional competence and improve classroom management?

This study was conducted to explore the connection between teachers' emotional competence and classroom management, and the researcher found this particularly useful to the teachers at Barcelona Central School as they continue to navigate the emotional demands of handling young learners in an ever-changing classroom environment.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study was conducted to explore the connection between teachers' emotional competence and classroom management, and the researcher found this particularly useful to the teachers at Barcelona Central School, as they were facing the growing emotional demands of managing elementary classrooms in the current educational landscape. A thorough examination of existing literature revealed that teachers' emotional competence serves as a foundational mechanism for effective classroom management, with foreign scholars such as Smith and Johnson⁴, Brown et al⁵., and Singh et al.⁶, along with local researchers including Delos Santos et al⁷., Santos et al⁸., and Kim et al⁹., confirming that emotionally regulated teachers maintain better discipline.

The literature also established that emotional competence fosters positive teacher–learner relationships, as demonstrated by international studies from Garcia and Wei¹⁰, Thompson and Lee¹¹, and Adams et al¹²., and Philippine research by Cruz et al¹³., Villanueva et al¹⁴., and Del Rosario et al¹⁵. Learner engagement was likewise found to be enhanced by teachers' emotional competence, supported by foreign findings from Hernandez and Cooper¹⁶ and Patel and Wong¹⁷, and local evidence from Reyes et al¹⁸ Garcia et al., and Cruz and Villanueva¹⁹.

Beyond classroom dynamics, emotional competence was shown to promote teacher well-being and stress management, with international studies by Garcia et al and Reyes et al. demonstrating reduced stress among emotionally competent teachers. Scholars further established that emotional competence is multidimensional, comprising awareness, regulation, empathy, and social skills, as articulated by foreign researchers Nelson and Carter²⁰ and O'Connor and McCarthy, and affirmed locally by Delos Santos et al., Reyes et al., and Santos et al. These studies are very much related to the present study, collectively establishing a cross-cultural consensus that emotionally competent teachers experience lower stress and greater well-being²¹.

However, the state-of-the-art reveals that while the multidimensional nature of emotional competence—awareness, regulation, empathy, and social skills—is well articulated theoretically, empirical studies have yet to determine which dimension exerts the greatest influence on stress management, particularly within the Philippine educational context.

The essential role of professional development and institutional support emerged consistently across the literature, with international recommendations from Orr and Orphanos, Gurr and Drysdale, and Williams et al., and local calls from Del Rosario et al., Garcia et al., and Torres et al., advocating for sustained, school-based training initiatives.

Finally, studies by the OECD, Bush and Ng, Santos et al., and Reyes et al. emphasized the need for context-specific research, a gap the present study addressed at Barcelona Central School by grounding its objectives in the lived experiences of its teachers. In doing so, this study offered meaningful support to Barcelona Central School teachers—validating their emotional labor, strengthening their classroom practice, and contributing to a more sustainable and fulfilling teaching environment.

Theoretical Framework

The present study is anchored in four interrelated theories that collectively explain how teachers' emotional competence influences classroom management effectiveness. This researcher posits that teachers' emotional competence is cultivated through psychological safety, self-regulation, relational empathy, and restorative practices, ultimately fostering empathy-based cooperation and mutual respect in the classroom. This study is anchored on the following theories:

De los Reyes and Villanueva Theory. They posited that Teachers' emotional awareness enables them to respond appropriately to learners' misbehavior and promote a harmonious classroom climate.

Gomez et al Theory. Demonstrated that professional development programs targeting emotional intelligence improve discipline strategies.

Ruiz et al Theory. They stated that emotional competence correlates with positive teacher-learner interactions and reduced conflict.

Kim, Y., & Kim, J Theory. They highlighted that teachers' emotional competence predicts classroom climate, fostering learners' cooperation and motivation.

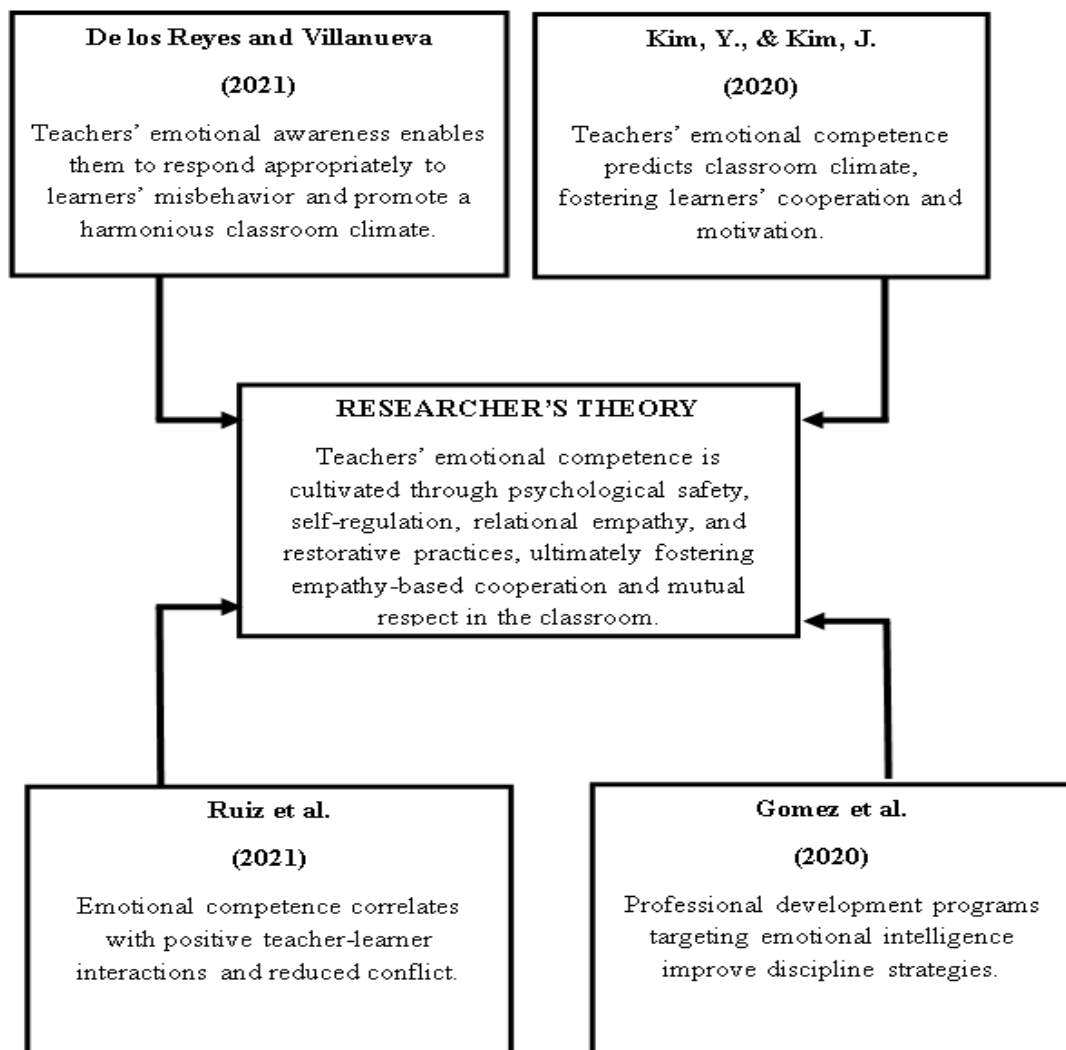


Figure 1. Theoretical Paradigm

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study illustrates how teachers' emotional competence influences classroom management practices in elementary schools, particularly at Barcelona Central School.

The **Input Phase** outlines the study's foundational variables, which include three main categories: teachers' emotional competence dimensions, personal teacher attributes, and classroom conditions. This phase is critical because it establishes the comprehensive baseline needed to assess how emotional competence influences classroom management practices accurately.

The **Process Phase** examines the practical application of emotional competence by linking it to specific classroom strategies, including behavior management, relationship-building, climate-building, and problem-solving.

The **Output Phase** captures the immediate results of the process, revealing specific patterns in management strategies, discipline levels, relationship quality, and overall classroom climate. It also empirically identifies the practical challenges and skill gaps teachers face, providing concrete evidence that serves as a basis for proposing targeted programs or interventions.

The **Outcome Phase** addresses the long-term implications, projecting that enhanced emotional competence will lead to sustained improvements in classroom management, student behavior, engagement, and relationships, while also boosting teacher effectiveness, well-being, and the overall school climate at Barcelona Central School and similar elementary schools.

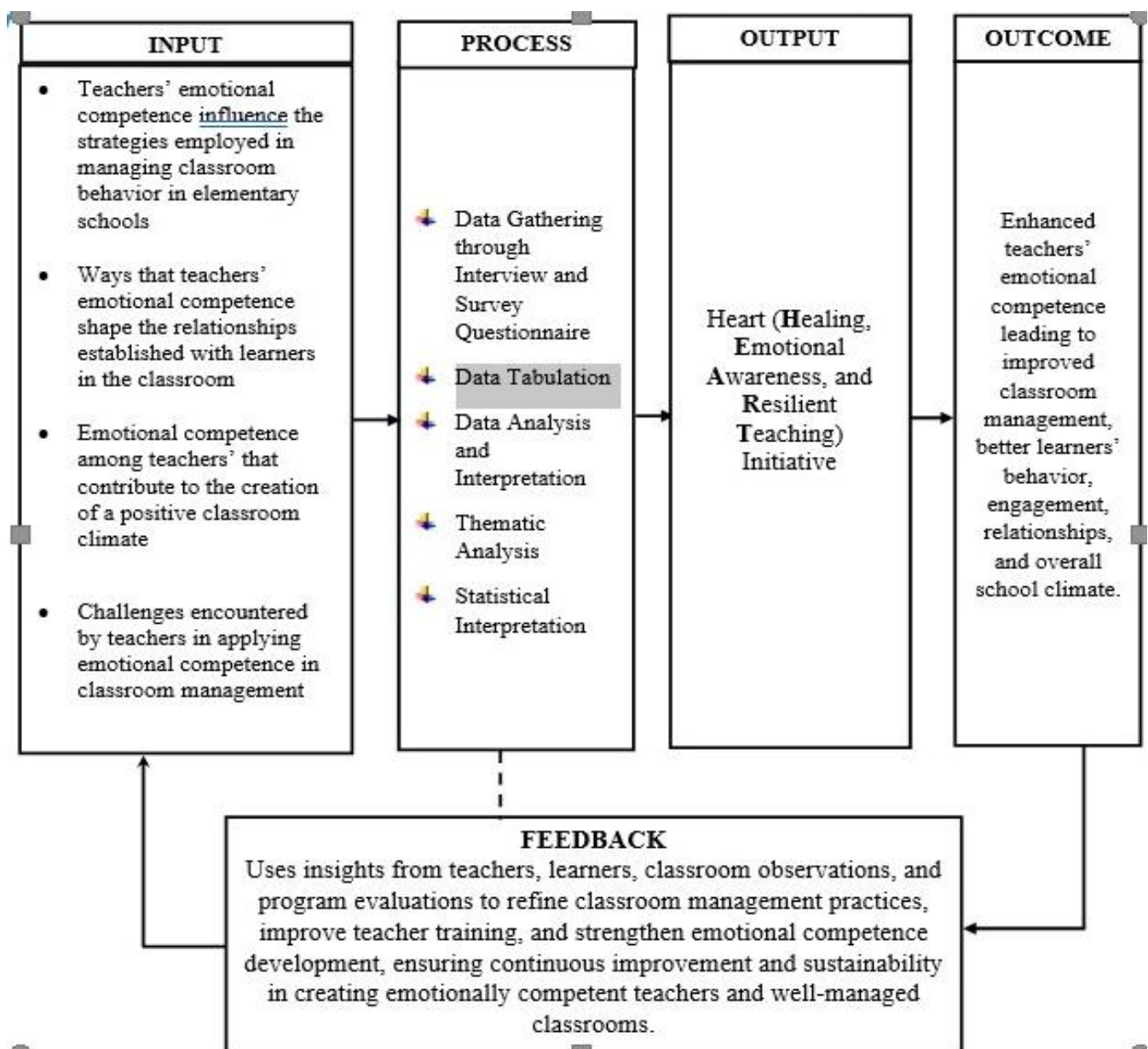


Figure 2. Conceptual Framework

METHOD AND PROCEDURES

Method

This study employed a mixed-methods research design to comprehensively investigate the core relationship presented in this study. The integrated approach was deliberately chosen to address both components of the research aim with appropriate methodological rigor.

To deeply understand the lived experience and subjective dimensions of teacher emotional competence, a qualitative strand was implemented using semi-structured interviews and classroom observations with selected elementary teachers, with data analyzed through thematic analysis

Participants

The participants of this study were the elementary school teachers at Barcelona Central School who are directly involved in classroom instruction and daily classroom management. These teachers were selected because they regularly interact with learners and are in the best position to demonstrate and apply emotional competence in managing classroom behavior, establishing teacher–learner relationships, and creating a positive classroom climate.

Research Instruments

This study utilized a semi-structured interview guide as the primary research instrument to gather in-depth qualitative data on the lived experiences of master teachers in relation to classroom instruction and instructional leadership. The semi-structured interview guide consisted of open-ended questions that explored key domains of classroom instruction, including lesson planning, instructional delivery, classroom management, discipline, assessment practices, and the provision of technical assistance to co-teachers.

Statistical Treatment

This study provided a comprehensive understanding of teachers' emotional competence and its impact on classroom management. Data collected from semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and classroom observations were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns, categories, and themes related to emotional awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, social awareness, and classroom management practices. The qualitative data were transcribed verbatim, coded systematically, and organized into themes that reflected teachers' experiences, strategies, challenges, and perceptions regarding the application of emotional competence in managing classroom behavior.

Presentation, Analysis, And Interpretation of Data

The presentation and analysis of data are based on the following research problem: 1. How does teacher emotional competence influence the strategies employed in managing classroom behavior in elementary schools?; 2. In what ways does teacher emotional competence shape the relationships established with learners in the classroom?; 3. How does emotional competence among teachers contribute to the creation of a positive classroom climate?; 4. What are the challenges encountered by teachers in applying emotional competence in classroom management?; 5. What interventions can be implemented to enhance teachers' emotional competence and improve classroom management?.

Teachers' Emotional Competence and Strategies in Managing Classroom Behavior

The initial phase of effective classroom management lies in the teacher's ability to internalize emotional control before manifesting external disciplinary actions. The data suggested that teachers do not merely apply rules but rather use their emotional state as a strategic tool to navigate behavioral challenges.

Regulated Discipline

Regulated discipline refers to the internal shift a teacher undergoes to manage their own emotional triggers before addressing learner behavior, moving away from impulsive, anger-driven reactions toward calm, deliberate interventions that prioritize de-escalation and long-term behavioral growth. The data confirms that emotional competence acts as a primary prerequisite for effective disciplinary action, as teachers cannot respond calmly to misbehavior without first managing their own emotions.

To achieve this regulated state, participants actively employ practical strategies such as the pause-breath technique, taking three to five slow, deep breaths before responding, which creates space for reflection instead of reaction. When teachers are regulated, the focus of discipline transforms from punishment to instruction and from mere reaction to calm, reflective guidance, allowing emotionally aware teachers to look beyond surface behavior, stay fair and understanding, and respond with empathy rather than frustration.

Participants also acknowledged that in difficult moments, it is always the teacher who must adjust to the situation, highlighting the considerable emotional labor teachers carry in remaining steady and adaptable even when learners cannot. Ultimately, these responses reveal that emotional competence is not a passive trait but an intentional, daily practice that shapes whether a classroom feels chaotic or calm and whether teachers leave feeling drained or empowered.

Proactive Management

Proactive management is defined as the ability to recognize early signs of learners' disengagement or conflict and intervene before these issues escalate into significant disruptions, a strategy that depends heavily on a teacher's emotional awareness to read the room and adjust instructional pacing, activities, or seating arrangements. By staying calm, emotionally attuned teachers can spot subtle shifts in learner mood, transforming discipline into an educative rather than punitive process, and by anticipating potential triggers and building strong connections with their class, they can prevent disruptions before they occur.

Practical strategies cited by participants include environmental adjustments and relationship-based monitoring, all enabled by the bond the teacher cultivates with learners, which suggests that an emotionally competent teacher functions as an architect of the learning environment rather than a firefighter of crises, addressing needs early and becoming the best manager of his or her class. This perspective is supported by Reupert²², who argues that emotionally intelligent teachers notice subtle behavioral cues, allowing for low-profile interventions that preserve the flow of instruction and maintain a positive learning atmosphere without resorting to punitive measures.

Calm Composure

Calm composure involves the intentional maintenance of a peaceful demeanor and quiet voice, even during high-intensity classroom situations, with participants emphasizing the power of staying quiet when learners are noisy because this approach prevents adding to auditory chaos and de-escalates the environment more effectively than shouting. By refusing to react with anger, teachers can handle outbursts without making them worse, and by modeling stillness, they signal to learners that the situation is under control, which in turn helps students regulate their own heightened states and contributes to maintaining a peaceful, clean, and conducive learning environment.

This perspective is supported by research from McLean and Jones, who show that teachers who maintain low arousal states are more effective at managing learners with behavioral difficulties, suggesting that a teacher's calm presence acts as an emotional anchor for the classroom and prevents the spread of agitation among students.

Teachers' Emotional Competence and Building Trust, Rapport, and Conflict Resolution

The relational dimension of teaching serves as a critical conduit where emotional intelligence acts as the primary

bridge between educator and learner. Far from being a passive trait, emotional competence functions as an active strategic tool, intentionally employed to cultivate psychological safety and transform potential classroom friction into opportunities for relational growth and constructive problem-solving.

Emotional Safety

Emotional safety is the practice of establishing a classroom environment where learners feel psychologically secure, understood, and valued, and the data reveal that the quality of the teacher-learner relationship is the bedrock of effective classroom management, with trust and rapport being built not through strictness but through the emotional stability a competent teacher provides. Teachers explicitly stated that trust, rapport, and emotional safety are the foundations for learners' engagement, cooperation, and learning, and when learners feel understood rather than judged, rapport naturally develops, making them less likely to misbehave.

Participants emphasized the importance of talking to pupils in a nice way so that they develop faith in their teacher and using positive language to gain respect, while an emotionally competent teacher was described as more perceptive towards her learners' emotional needs, which helps bridge the gap between teacher and learner. This suggests that when a teacher provides emotional stability, learners develop the trust necessary to engage without fear of judgment, creating a cycle of positive behavior that naturally reduces the frequency and intensity of disruptions, and this is supported by Aldrup et al²³., who found that teacher relationship management is directly related to the quality of teacher-learner interactions and effective behavior management, while the OECD further reports that better relationships between learners and teachers are fundamentally linked to higher levels of learners' trust and emotional regulation.

Empathic Resolution

Empathetic resolution involves the teacher's ability to understand the underlying emotions and circumstances that drive learners' behavior, especially during disagreements or misunderstandings, with empathy emerging as a critical competency that allows teachers to de-escalate conflicts by identifying the root cause of misbehavior, which may stem from trauma, learning difficulties, peer conflict, or unmet needs. This perspective enables competent teachers to separate the child from the behavior, preventing learners from being labeled or defined by their mistakes, and teachers emphasize the importance of hearing the learners' side of the story first, which helps learners take responsibility for their actions while feeling understood.

Empathy also allows teachers to acknowledge learners' emotions without excusing inappropriate behavior, ensuring that discipline remains firm but fair, and this approach moves away from blame and toward constructive problem-solving that repairs and strengthens the teacher-learner relationship while addressing behavioral issues. Research by Derakhshan²⁴ supports this theme by noting that empathetic teachers significantly influence learners' psychological well-being by providing emotional support that mitigates stress and anxiety, which often underlie misbehavior, while Fuentes-Vilugrón et al²⁵ further emphasize that the ability to identify and regulate both one's own and learners' emotions is the best antidote to violent behavior in the classroom.

Constructive Dialogue

Constructive dialogue is the use of active listening and respectful communication to resolve classroom conflicts, with emotional competence enabling teachers to replace punitive commands with meaningful conversations where they listen actively, consider learners' perspectives, and choose kind words and appropriate tones that turn potential confrontations into moments of connection. When conflicts are handled this way, trust increases and resistance decreases, as the interaction shifts from confrontational to constructive and prioritizes relationship repair over blame, with the goal not being to win an argument but to repair the bond between teacher and child so that even in disagreement, the relationship remains unbroken.

This is corroborated by López-Goñi et al²⁶., who found that classrooms utilizing dialogic conflict resolution have higher levels of learners' cooperation, and their research suggests that when teachers use their emotional

intelligence to guide conversations, learners are more likely to internalize classroom rules and participate in positive social behavior.

Teachers' Emotional Competence and Inclusive, Respectful Classroom Environments

The maturation of individual teacher competence catalyzes a systemic classroom culture, scaling personal emotional intelligence into a collective social environment. This progression facilitates a ripple effect through intentional emotional modeling and the implementation of inclusive practices, ensuring that every learner—regardless of their background or behavioral history—experiences a profound sense of belonging and mutual respect within the learning community.

Emotional Modelling

Emotional modeling describes the phenomenon where a teacher's emotional state and behavioral responses are reflected by learners, as teachers serve as the primary emotional barometer of the classroom and their ability to model self-control, respect, and empathy directly shapes the social behavior of their students. A significant finding is the mirror effect, where participants noted that whatever children see in the teacher will be reflected in them, meaning that a teacher's calm becomes the learners' calm, and this modeling has a direct ripple effect on engagement—when teachers model healthy emotional behavior, learners become more actively engaged and present.

Some participants described this as a motherly approach in the warmth and steadiness it brings, observing that when learners see their teacher happy and inspired, they develop a greater willingness to study and learn, and as one teacher put it, positive teachers produce positive learners, confirming that the teacher's character is the classroom's greatest influence.

This phenomenon is validated by McLean and Jones²⁷, whose study on emotional transmission revealed that teachers' outward displays of emotion directly influence learners' engagement, while Maulida and Pratama²⁸ further highlight that facial expressions are a top indicator of attitude and that positive emotional modeling facilitates a ripple effect that improves learners' motivation, ultimately showing that teachers do not just teach a curriculum but teach emotional regulation through every glance, word, and quiet moment of composure.

Inclusive Management

Inclusive management is the use of emotional competence to create a classroom where every learner, regardless of their behavioral or emotional needs, feels a sense of belonging, and this involves recognizing the unique, diverse backgrounds of learners and responding to them with acceptance rather than prejudice. Participants highlighted that when teachers are emotionally inclusive, learners feel accepted and respected for who they are, which allows teachers to provide timely and correct intervention for those with different emotional needs. One teacher observed that in an emotionally competent classroom, even the learners themselves become more inclusive because they are less judgmental and more willing to accommodate differences.

This approach creates a safe space where learners feel heard and valued, enabling them to work together harmoniously and reducing anxiety while ensuring that feedback is delivered constructively and all learners feel free to express themselves without fear of ridicule. Supporting this, Hansen et al²⁹. emphasize that teachers who practice inclusive emotional management are more successful in integrating learners with special needs and diverse social backgrounds into the general classroom culture, ultimately showing that an inclusive classroom is not just a place of learning but a home for every kind of child.

Mutual Respect

Mutual respect is the result of a teacher treating learners as individuals with rights and dignity, which in turn inspires learners to respect the teacher and one another, and the data reveal that respect is not something a teacher can demand through authority alone but must be earned through a consistent display of fairness and emotional maturity. Teachers understood that if they show respect to their pupils, the learners will also respect

them, and this unfolds through daily choices such as honoring children's rights, valuing their feelings, and modeling the very empathy they hope learners will mirror, creating a positive and respectful classroom culture where learners do not simply obey but connect.

When teachers lead with fairness and emotional maturity, learners become positive learners because they are led by a positive teacher, and the classroom ceases to be a place of authority and submission and becomes a space of mutual care where children feel emotionally connected and willing to cooperate not out of fear but out of genuine regard, showing that respect is not a command but a reflection, and when learners see themselves treated with dignity, they learn how to offer it in return. This is aligned with the findings of Derakhshan, which indicate that teacher-learner rapport built on mutual respect is the strongest predictor of learners' academic success and psychological well-being.

Challenges in Applying Emotional Competence to Classroom Management

While the pedagogical benefits of emotional competence are well-documented, the practical application within the school system is often obstructed by significant hurdles. The following analysis interprets the data gathered regarding these challenges, ranked by their frequency and impact on the participants' professional lives.

Table 1

Challenges in Applying Emotional Competence to Classroom Management

Indicators	Frequency	Rank
Fear of professional vulnerability or blame when openly discussing emotional management difficulties with peers or supervisors	14	1
Lack of institutional support (from administration, counselors) for emotion-focused management	12	2.5
Conflict between emotionally responsive practices and strict school policies or zero-tolerance behavior codes	12	2.5
Insufficient training or professional development in emotional competence or Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)	9	4.5
Balancing personal life stress with the emotional demands of teaching	9	4.5
Balancing empathy for individual learners with maintaining fairness and order for the whole class	8	6
Lack of adequate resources for managing learners with trauma, severe behavioral, or special needs	7	7
Lack of time due to academic/administrative pressures to address emotional needs	6	8
Strong resistance from learners, parents, and the community to emotion-focused management	4	9
Large class size hinders individual emotional attention and monitoring	2	10

Table 1 shows that a critical barrier to professional growth is the Fear of professional vulnerability or blame when openly discussing emotional management difficulties with peers or supervisors, with a frequency of 14, ranked 1st. This suggests that teachers operate within a culture of perfection where admitting to emotional struggles or difficulty in managing a class is equated with professional incompetence. This psychological barrier is compounded by a lack of institutional support (from administration, counselors) for emotion-focused management and conflict between emotionally responsive practices and strict school policies or zero-tolerance behavior codes, both with a frequency of 12, at rank 2.5th, respectively. This shows that when school leadership prioritizes zero-tolerance or purely punitive measures, teachers who attempt to use emotionally responsive techniques find themselves in direct conflict with the administrative framework. This creates a double bind where the teacher is emotionally aware of a learner's needs but is forced by policy to act punitively.

A significant portion of the workforce feels ill-equipped and overextended, as seen in the tied ranks of Insufficient training or professional development in emotional competence or Social-Emotional Learning (SEL), and balancing personal life stress with the emotional demands of teaching, both at a frequency of 9, ranked 4.5th. This implies that teaching is a high-stakes form of emotional labor; without formal training in Social-Emotional Learning (SEL), teachers often rely on their personal emotional reserves. When those reserves are depleted by personal stress, their capacity for the classroom diminishes. This empty cup syndrome highlights that emotional competence is not just a skill to be taught to learners but a support system that must be provided for teachers to prevent burnout.

The Empathy-Order Paradox, or the balancing of empathy for individual learners with maintaining fairness and order for the whole class, was ranked 6th with a frequency of 8. This highlighted the challenges of balancing empathy with fairness and underscored a deep pedagogical dilemma. Teachers often struggle with the empathy trap, the fear that being emotionally responsive to one learner's trauma or outburst might be perceived as unfairness or softness by the rest of the class. Another challenge, as shown in Table 1, is lack of adequate resources for managing learners with trauma, severe behavioral, or special needs, which got the frequency of 7, ranked 7th.

Interestingly, Strong resistance from learners, parents, and the community to emotion-focused management, with the frequency of 4, and large class size hindering individual emotional attention and monitoring, with the frequency of 2, were ranked lowest at 9th and 10th, respectively. This indicates that teachers do not necessarily blame the number of learners or the parents for their difficulties. Instead, the primary obstacles are internal and institutional, suggesting that if the school culture shifted to support emotional vulnerability and provided better training, teachers believe they could successfully manage even large or difficult classes.

These findings are corroborated by contemporary research into the psychological and systemic pressures of the teaching profession. Agyapong et al.³⁰ found that the fear of professional blame is a primary driver of teacher anxiety, noting that environments that penalize vulnerability see significantly higher rates of attrition. This is echoed by Wang et al., who prove that emotional dissonance—the conflict between a teacher's internal empathy and rigid school policies—significantly lowers job satisfaction.

Interventions to enhance teachers' emotional competence and improve classroom management

Despite their deep commitment to their learners, teachers in elementary classrooms face daily emotional demands that go unrecognized and unsupported. They navigate learners' outbursts, personal stress, rigid institutional policies, and the silent expectation to remain perpetually calm and composed—often at the expense of their own well-being. This study found that teachers who lack structured support for their emotional competence are more likely to react impulsively, experience burnout, and struggle to maintain the very classroom climate they wish to cultivate.

The **HEART (Healing, Emotional Awareness, and Resilient Teaching)** Initiative is rooted in the recognition that a teacher's emotional state is the primary architect of the classroom climate. While traditional educational reforms focus heavily on curriculum and standardized testing, the data from this study highlight a critical missing link: the emotional well-being and competence of the educator. The project is necessitated by the finding that 14 or 93% of teachers operate within a culture of silence, fearing that admitting to emotional struggle will be perceived as professional weakness.

By establishing a Safe-Space framework - a set of principles or protocols designed to create an environment where teachers feel psychologically safe to be vulnerable, share struggles, and ask for help without fear of judgment or reprisal- this project will dismantle these barriers, allowing teachers to transition from a state of professional isolation to one of collective support, thereby preventing burnout and increasing job satisfaction.

Furthermore, the project addresses the systemic friction identified by 12 or 80% of participants who feel their empathetic instincts are often suppressed by rigid, zero-tolerance school policies. The HEART Initiative is based on the premise that a teacher cannot effectively manage a classroom while experiencing emotional dissonance, the stress caused by acting in a way that conflicts with their internal values. Through the Policy

Alignment Audit, the program transforms the institutional landscape from a punitive system into an emotionally literate one. This shift ensures that the school's rules support, rather than hinder, the teacher's ability to use restorative and empathetic discipline techniques.

Central to this rationale is the mitigation of the Empty Cup syndrome, acknowledging that 11 or 73% of teachers struggle to balance personal life stress with the high emotional labor of the classroom. The project operates on the principle that emotional competence is a depletable resource that requires active replenishment. By integrating the PBR (Pause-Breath-Respond) technique and the Why Discovery Protocol, the initiative moves the teacher away from reactive, stress-based discipline toward proactive regulation. This is grounded in the psychological Mirror Effect, where a teacher's calm composure acts as a physiological regulator for their learners.

SUMMARY, FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

This study examined the relationship between emotional competence and classroom management in an elementary school setting. Teaching in elementary schools involves not only delivering academic content but also managing diverse learners' behavioral and emotional needs. Teachers are required to maintain a positive and orderly learning environment while responding to challenges such as disruptive behavior, emotional outbursts, and varying levels of learners' engagement.

Findings

1. Teachers' emotional competence influenced the strategies employed in managing classroom behavior in elementary schools by serving as the internal foundation that enables regulated discipline through techniques like the pause-breath technique that transforms reactions into thoughtful responses, proactive management through emotional awareness to read the room and anticipate triggers before they escalate, calm composure through maintaining a peaceful demeanor that signals control and helps learners self-regulate, and emotional modeling through a mirror effect where learners reflect the teacher's emotional behavior, ultimately shaping whether a classroom feels chaotic or calm and whether teachers feel drained or empowered.
2. Teachers' emotional competence shaped relationships with learners by enabling emotional safety, where learners feel understood and valued, building trust and rapport that make them less likely to misbehave and to enable empathetic resolution, where teachers look for the why behind behavior, separate the child from the action, and hear learners' sides first so discipline strengthens rather than harms the relationship; and it enables constructive dialogue, where teachers replace punishment with conversation, using kind words and active listening to resolve conflicts in ways that increase trust, decrease resistance, and prioritize relationship repair over blame.
3. Teachers' emotional competence contributed to a positive classroom climate through emotional modeling, where teachers serve as the emotional barometer and learners mirror their behavior, making positive teachers produce positive learners; through inclusive management, where emotionally competent teachers make every learners feel accepted and respected for who they are, creating a space where learners become less judgmental and more willing to accommodate differences; and through mutual respect, where teachers earn respect by showing respect, creating a reciprocal cycle where children feel emotionally connected and cooperate out of genuine regard rather than fear.
4. The challenges encountered by teachers in applying emotional competence in classroom management were fear of professional vulnerability or blame when openly discussing emotional management difficulties with peers or supervisors, which had a frequency of 14 and a rank 1. This was followed by lack of institutional support for emotion-focused management, and conflict between emotionally responsive practices and strict school policies or zero-tolerance behavior codes, both of which had a frequency of 12 and a rank of 2.5. Meanwhile, Insufficient training or professional development in emotional competence or Social - Emotional Learning (SEL) and balancing personal life stress with the emotional demands of teaching both had a frequency of 9 and a rank of 4.5.
5. The intervention HEART Initiative was implemented to enhance teachers' emotional competence and improve classroom management.

Conclusions

The following conclusions were drawn from the present endeavor:

1. Teachers' emotional competence shapes classroom management strategies, fostering discipline through positive approaches.
2. Teachers' emotional competence fosters emotional safety, rapport and empathetic resolution.
3. Teachers' emotional competence fosters a positive emotional climate by constructive emotional modeling through inclusive management.
4. Teachers' emotional competence faces challenges of professional vulnerability, lack of institutional support, and conflict between responsive practices and rigid school policies.
5. An intervention, "Heart Initiative," is designed to address the challenges specifically on teachers' emotional competence in classroom management.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were necessary for the present study:

1. Strengthen teachers' emotional competence and professional development through practical strategies.
2. Train teachers in active listening, empathetic communication, and conflict resolution to build trust, strengthen bonds, and foster psychological safety.
3. Cultivate positive emotional modeling, inclusive strategies, and consistent fairness to create emotionally connected, safe, and motivated classrooms.
4. Establish safe-space professional learning communities where teachers can collaboratively develop emotional competence in a supportive, non-evaluative environment.
5. Enhance teachers' emotional competence through the use of "The Heart Initiative".

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