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REVIEW ARTICLE

Emotional intelligence as a protective factor against teacher burnout: A systematic review without meta-analysis

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ABSTRACT

Teacher burnout is main concern globally and is identified by emotional fatigue and depersonalization, while emotional intelligence (EI) has been recognized as a key shielding factor against burnout. Research findings on this remain fragmented that vary in contexts and methods. This study presents a systematic review without meta-analysis, examining a total of 73 peer-reviewed empirical articles published between 2015 and 2025, recognized through extensive searches in Web of Science (WoS) and Scopus in line with PRISMA 2020 guidelines. Included studies explored EI and related constructs, such as emotion regulation and socio-emotional competence, in connection with teacher burnout among in-service educators. Data were organized using a structured coding framework and synthesized thematically, taking into account individual, organizational, and contextual factors. Most studies identified that higher EI was related to lesser emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, and superior personal achievement. Four ways elucidated this effect: adaptive emotion regulation, resilience and coping efficacy, supportive work climates, and reflective emotional learning. Mindfulness, empathy, and trust improved EI's benefits, while workload, low peer support, and obstructive norms deteriorated them. Outcomes varied by education level, context, and EI measures. Overall, EI arises as a multidimensional resilience resource formed by personal, relational, and cultural factors. Strengthening educators' emotion handling skills by training, reflection, and caring surroundings can lessen burnout and endorse well-being. Future research streamline EI–burnout dynamics and advance cross-cultural validity.

Keywords: emotional intelligence; teacher burnout; emotion regulation; resilience; mindfulness; systematic review; PRISMA

1. Introduction

Teaching is amid the most emotionally and intellectually demanding professions, with sustained exposure to workload pressures and emotional demands rising burnout risk and adversely affecting teacher well-being and instructional quality[1,2]. Two primary factors are the focus of research on teacher burnout: internal factors like coping, emotional intelligence (EI), and resilience, and external factors like leadership, fairness, role ambiguity, and workload[3,4]. Among these, EI or capacity to notice, understand, regulate, and use emotions, is a key stress-reduction tool that helps teachers manage stress, maintain composure, relate to students, and cultivate compassionate relationships[5]. There is substantial evidence that teachers with high

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self-awareness and emotional control experience greater work engagement and lower levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization[6,7]. Beyond stress protection, EI fosters adaptive coping, empathy, effective communication, and trust, thereby enhancing professional efficacy, and fulfilment. However, despite growing scholarly interest, research on EI and teacher burnout remains fragmented, characterized by diverse theoretical models, heterogeneous samples, and varying contextual settings. Findings differ across age, gender, educational level, and culture, and many studies assess isolated relationships without integrating mediating mechanisms such as organizational climate, workload or social support. As a result, a coherent understanding of how, when, and under what conditions EI protects teachers from burnout is still lacking, particularly in light of the heightened emotional demands emerging in the post-pandemic educational context[8-10]. Although earlier reviews, such as[11], established the relevance of EI in relation to teacher burnout, the evidence base has expanded substantially in recent years. Since 2017, a growing body of research has examined specific EI components, mediating mechanisms such as emotion regulation, mindfulness, and resilience, as well as organizational and cultural moderators, including leadership, school climate, and post-pandemic emotional demands. However, these findings remain dispersed across educational levels, regions, and methodological approaches, with limited integrative synthesis. As a result, an updated and comprehensive review is needed to consolidate recent evidence and clarify how, when, and under what conditions EI functions as a protective resource against teacher burnout.

To address these gaps, the present study systematically reviews quantitative empirical research published between 2015 and 2025, following PRISMA 2020 guidelines, to examine the relationship between EI and teacher burnout across educational levels. Specifically, it synthesizes evidence on key EI dimensions such as self-awareness, regulation, empathy, and social skills, in relation to burnout dimensions like emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment, while considering mediating and moderating factors such as organizational climate, social support, and cultural context [12]. By integrating dispersed findings within a unified framework, this review clarifies theoretical and operational gaps in the literature and informs targeted interventions aimed at strengthening teachers' emotional competence, resilience, and well-being. In line with the objectives of a systematic review, the present study is guided by the subsequent research questions (RQs): (i) What is the nature and strength of the relationship between EI and different dimensions of teacher burnout? (ii) What psychological, organizational, and contextual mechanisms mediate or moderate this relationship? (iii) How do cultural and educational contexts shape the role of EI as a protective factor against teacher burnout? These questions provide a structured framework for synthesizing existing evidence rather than testing a priori hypotheses.

2. Methodology

This review follows the PRISMA outline for transparency and duplicability, concentrating on quantitative studies relating EI and teacher burnout across instructive levels, regions, and measurement methods. It applies clear inclusion criteria, systematic database explorations, and organized data extraction and analysis. A meta-analytic approach was not employed due to substantial heterogeneity across the included studies, including variations in EI conceptualizations (trait-based versus ability-based), burnout instruments, sample characteristics, educational contexts, and statistical reporting formats. These differences limited the comparability of effect sizes and precluded meaningful quantitative pooling. Accordingly, a qualitative thematic synthesis was adopted to integrate findings across studies while preserving contextual and methodological diversity.

2.1. Search strategy

An inclusive search was carried out in Scopus and WoS Core Collection to cover research on education, occupational health, and behavioural sciences. Boolean and truncation operators' collective crucial terms associated to EI and teacher burnout (e.g., emotional competence, emotion regulation, educator stress). Searches were limited to English, peer-reviewed studies from 2015–2025. Citation tracking was completed in September 2025, and all records were screened and de-duplicated in Rayyan. **Table 1** abridges the keywords and thematic parameters[13].

2.2. Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Eligibility was ranked using pre-defined PICOS parameters. Only quantitative studies directly examining the EI–burnout link amongst working teachers were involved. Studies on students, administrators, or other professions was omitted except teacher-specific outcomes were provided. The conditions are detailed in **Table 2**[14,15].

Table 1. Categorization of keywords and search parameters used in the database query.

Category	Inclusion	Exclusion
Population	Teachers, lecturers, or educators at any educational level (primary, secondary, tertiary, or vocational)	Non-teaching populations, students, or pre-service teacher samples without classroom exposure
Indicator (Exposure)	Emotional intelligence (ability-based, trait, or mixed) evaluated through validated tools (MSCEIT, WLEIS, TEIQue, EQ-i)	Non-validated EI scales, emotional competence proxies, or mixed constructs not isolating EI
Outcome	Teacher burnout or burnout-related dimensions (emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, reduced personal accomplishment)	Stress, engagement, or job satisfaction without burnout assessment
Study Design	Quantitative empirical studies (cross-sectional, longitudinal, or experimental)	Qualitative-only studies, theoretical papers, reviews, or meta-analyses
Publication Type	Peer-reviewed journal articles in English	Dissertations, book chapters, editorials, or conference abstracts

**MSCEIT — Mayer–Salovey–Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test; WLEIS — Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale; TEIQue — Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire; EQ-i — Emotional Quotient Inventory*

Table 2. Eligibility criteria for study inclusion and exclusion.

Category	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Publication Type	Peer-reviewed journal articles	Book chapters, editorials, conference abstracts, reviews
Language	English	Non-English publications
Design	Quantitative empirical (cross-sectional, longitudinal, experimental)	Qualitative-only, conceptual or theoretical papers
Exposure	Validated EI scales (ability, trait, or mixed models)	Non-validated EI measures or proxy constructs
Outcome	Teacher burnout or its dimensions	Job satisfaction, stress, or engagement without burnout indices
Population	Practicing teachers or lecturers at any educational level	Students, administrators, or non-teaching staff

2.3. Study selection process

Ensuing the PRISMA 2020 outline, the review progressed over identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion stages. Examinations in Scopus and web of science (WoS) produced 206 records, condensed to 180

after de-duplication. Using Rayyan, studies were separated built on inclusion standards: English peer-reviewed empirical works (2015–2025) including active teachers and inspecting EI or connected constructs relative to burnout. After eliminations for insignificance or meagre methodology, 73 studies were included. Screening records were documented in Rayyan, and the selecting process is shown in **Figure 1**, with complete search strings in **Table 3**.

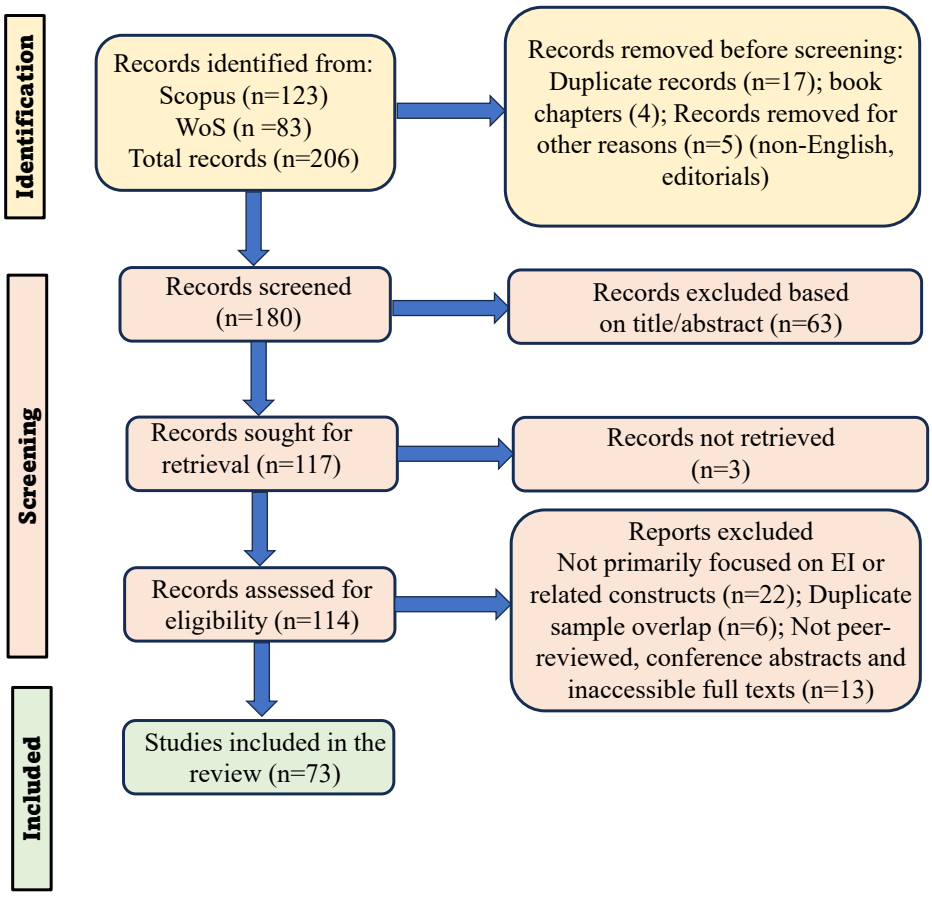

Figure 1. PRISMA 2020 flow diagram for study selection process.

Table 3. Search Strings for Database Query.

Database	Search string
SCOPUS	TITLE-ABS-KEY (("emotional intelligence" OR "emotion regulation" OR "emotional competence" OR "trait emotional intelligence" OR "EQ-i" OR "TEIQue" OR "WLEIS" OR "MSCEIT") AND ("teacher burnout" OR "educator burnout" OR "emotional exhaustion" OR "depersonalization" OR "reduced personal accomplishment") AND (teacher OR educator OR lecturer OR faculty OR "instructor")) AND (PUBYEAR > 2014 AND PUBYEAR < 2026) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE , "English"))
WoS	TS=("emotional intelligence" OR "emotion regulation" OR "emotional competence" OR "trait emotional intelligence" OR "EQ-i" OR "TEIQue" OR "WLEIS" OR "MSCEIT") AND TS=("teacher burnout" OR "educator burnout" OR "emotional exhaustion" OR "depersonalization" OR "reduced personal accomplishment") AND TS=(teacher OR educator OR lecturer OR faculty OR instructor) AND PY=(2015-2025) AND LA=(English) AND DT=(Article)

2.4. Data extraction and analysis

All 73 included studies were systematically reviewed, and key information was extracted into a structure Excel matrix, including authorship, year, region, education level, sample, EI and burnout procedures like TMMS-24, WLEIS, MBI, study design, analytical approaches, and principal findings. Potential mediators and moderators, such as resilience, coping, mindfulness, and administrative environment

were also recorded[16,17]. Given the substantial heterogeneity in research designs, EI conceptualizations, outcome measures, and statistical reporting, a qualitative thematic synthesis was employed. Thematic synthesis followed an iterative and systematic process. Extracted findings related to EI, burnout dimensions, and associated mediators or moderators were initially coded inductively across studies. Codes were then compared and refined through constant comparison to identify recurring patterns and relationships. Related codes were subsequently grouped into higher-order themes representing shared mechanisms or contextual influences. Theme development involved multiple rounds of review to ensure conceptual coherence and consistency, with discrepancies resolved through discussion until consensus was reached. This process resulted in seven core themes explaining how EI relates to teacher burnout, including emotional competence, emotion regulation, mindfulness, social support, organizational climate, leadership, and teacher–student relationships.

2.4.1. Quality assessment and risk of bias

Methodological quality and risk of bias were assessed qualitatively using established appraisal tools. Cross-sectional studies were evaluated using the AXIS tool, while longitudinal and intervention studies were appraised using the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) critical appraisal checklists. These tools assess potential sources of bias related to sampling procedures, measurement validity, confounding, and reporting transparency. Based on these criteria, studies were classified as high, moderate, or low methodological quality[18,19]. The majority of included studies were rated as high quality, with a substantial proportion classified as moderate and a smaller number as low quality. Appraisal outcomes were used to inform the synthesis, with greater interpretive weight placed on findings from methodologically stronger studies. A key methodological limitation of the included evidence is the predominance of cross-sectional designs relying on self-report measures of EI and burnout. Such designs are inherently vulnerable to common method variance, social desirability bias, and reverse causality, limiting the ability to draw causal inferences regarding the directionality of the EI–burnout relationship. Although validated instruments were widely used, the reliance on single-source self-reported data may have inflated observed associations. These limitations were considered during synthesis, with greater interpretive weight placed on longitudinal, intervention-based, and multi-method studies where available. This review analyzed only published, peer-reviewed studies and did not involve new data collection or human participants. All procedures followed PRISMA 2020 guidelines, with study screening conducted using Rayyan and synthesis performed in Excel, ensuring transparency and methodological rigor throughout.

3. Results and discussion

This review analysed 73 empirical studies (2015–2025) across 34 nations, reflecting a rising worldwide emphasis on how EI and socio-emotional skills affect teacher burnout. Most studies originated from Europe (41%) and Asia (32%), tailed by North America (17%), with fewer from South America and Africa. Cross-sectional designs conquered (78%), while longitudinal (14%) and intervention studies (8%) displayed developing interest. Sample sizes fluctuated from small pilot groups (<50) to national surveys (>1,000). Measurement methods diverse across studies. EI was evaluated by trait-based tools (TEIQue, EQ-i, WLEIS, TMMS-24) and skill tests (MSCEIT), while exhaustion was constantly measured with the MBI-ES. The three burnout magnitudes, emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and condensed achievement, continued stable across settings. Most studies employed correlational or regression examines, with approximately utilizing SEM to examine mediation or moderation by coping, fulfilment, and support. Less qualitative or mixed-method studies included contextual depth[20-22]. Overall, results constantly display a strong adverse link between EI and burnout, particularly emotional exhaustion. Teachers with sophisticated EI testified less

fatigue and depersonalization and superior accomplishment, confirming EI as a shielding resource against pressure. Studies found emotion regulation and mindfulness mediate this link, while organizational climate and leadership moderate it. Though mostly cross-sectional, intervention studies show EI training lessens fatigue and improves well-being, auxiliary EI as a developable skill[23,24]. Overall, the 73 studies expose strong theoretical and empirical steadiness but call for longitudinal, cross-cultural, and multi-level investigate to elucidate causal relationships. The following sections synthesize findings in relation to the guiding RQs, addressing the strength of EI–burnout associations, underlying psychological and organizational mechanisms, and the influence of cultural and contextual factors. Interpretation of findings was guided by methodological quality appraisal, with greater emphasis placed on evidence derived from high- and moderate-quality studies.

3.1. EI and trait-level competence

Across 73 studies, constant indication displays that educators with sophisticated EI experience less burnout, especially emotional fatigue and depersonalization. Whether viewed as a trait or skill, EI outlines how teachers see and accomplish emotions. In diverse circumstances, higher EI associated with better resilience and achievement, elucidating 26–44% of emotional collapse variance. Main subcomponents, like emotional regulation and empathy, lessen burnout, while ability-based measures established that precisely perceiving and altering emotions shields against emotional fatigue as presented in **Table 4**. Cross-cultural studies steadily display a strong adverse association between EI and teacher burnout across Western and Asian frameworks, with correlations from –0.35 to –0.60. Cultural differences mostly affected the impact of precise EI components. Longitudinal and intervention studies approve that EI can be improved through mindfulness or SEL programs, reducing exhaustion and improving job fulfilment within 8–12 weeks. Although many relied on self-reports and overlooked contextual factors, converging evidence across cultures and approaches aids EI as a vital psychological source for teacher well-being.

3.1.1. Gender and education level differences

Several studies explored whether the EI–burnout relationship varied by gender or educational level, although findings were mixed. Female teachers generally reported higher emotional exhaustion, whereas male teachers tended to show higher depersonalization; however, higher EI consistently mitigated burnout symptoms across genders. Some evidence suggested stronger protective effects of emotion regulation and empathy among female teachers, while other studies reported no significant gender-based moderation. Differences by educational level were also noted. Teachers in early childhood and primary education often experienced greater emotional demands and exhaustion than those in secondary or higher education, likely reflecting higher emotional labor and student interaction. Nevertheless, EI demonstrated a stable protective association across educational levels, with emotion regulation and coping self-efficacy acting as key buffers regardless of teaching context[25]. Many studies did not conduct stratified analyses by gender or educational level, limiting comparative inference and underscoring the need for more targeted and longitudinal research.

3.1.2. Null findings

Although most studies reported a significant inverse relationship between EI and teacher burnout, a subset of studies identified weak, partial, or non-significant associations for specific burnout dimensions. Several studies reported that EI was not significantly related to depersonalization or reduced personal accomplishment after controlling for organizational stressors such as workload, role conflict, or leadership quality. In other instances, global EI scores were non-significant predictors when specific subcomponents, such as emotion regulation or emotional awareness, were examined independently. These inconsistencies may be attributed to multiple factors. Methodologically, null findings were more common in studies relying

on cross-sectional self-report designs with limited statistical power or restricted variance in EI measures. Conceptually, differences between ability-based and trait-based EI instruments may capture distinct emotional processes, resulting in divergent outcomes. Contextually, high job demands and unsupportive organizational climates may attenuate the protective effects of EI, suggesting that emotional competencies alone may be insufficient to buffer burnout under structurally constrained conditions. Collectively, these findings underscore the importance of considering measurement choice, contextual moderators, and burnout subdimensions when interpreting the EI–burnout relationship.

Table 4. Summary of Key Findings: EI and Burnout Dimensions[25-29].

EI Dimension	Related burnout component	Direction of Association	Representative Instruments	Key findings/ Effect Range
Emotional awareness	Emotional exhaustion	Negative	TEIQue, TMMS-24	High awareness connected with lower fatigue and better stress appraisal ($r \approx -0.35$ to -0.50)
Emotion Regulation	Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization	Strong Negative	WLEIS, MSCEIT	Effective regulation predicted reduced exhaustion and cynicism ($\beta \approx -0.40$ to -0.55)
Empathy / Emotional Understanding	Personal Accomplishment	Positive	EQ-i, TMMS-24	Empathy enhanced sense of purpose and student rapport ($\beta \approx +0.30$)
Emotional Expression	Emotional Exhaustion	Weak Negative	TEIQue, TMMS-24	Authentic expression linked with higher job satisfaction
Global EI Composite	Burnout (Overall)	Negative	All major tools	EI reported for 25–45% of variance in burnout indicators across contexts

3.2. Chronological development of the EI-burnout relationship

A chronological synthesis of the literature reveals a clear evolution in research on the EI–teacher burnout relationship. Early studies (2015–2018) primarily used cross-sectional designs to establish direct associations between overall EI and burnout, particularly emotional exhaustion, with limited consideration of contextual factors[29,30]. Between 2019 and 2021, research increasingly focused on specific EI components such as emotion regulation and empathy, incorporating mediators including coping strategies, job satisfaction, and social support through more advanced analytical models[8,31,32]. More recent studies (2022–2025) reflect a shift toward integrative and applied approaches, emphasizing theoretical frameworks such as the Job Demands–Resources model, organizational and leadership influences, and intervention-based strategies to enhance EI, mindfulness, and resilience[21,33]. Overall, the literature has progressed from descriptive association studies toward more theory-driven, mechanism-oriented, and intervention-focused research.

3.3. Emotional regulation and coping strategies

Past trait-level EI, teachers' emotion regulation approaches mostly govern their resilience to burnout. Emotion regulation comprises handling the strength and extent of emotions in challenging classrooms. Studies show that adaptive approaches like cognitive reappraisal and problem-focused coping lessen fatigue and depersonalization, while suppression and resignation surge burnout[34]. Cognitive reassessment, reframing stressful procedures, demonstrated the robust shielding factor, nurturing reflection and balance, reduced emotional fatigue by up to 40%, whereas suppression heightened depersonalization and lowered accomplishment. The interaction between emotion regulation and coping approaches also shapes burnout results[35]. Teachers uniting cognitive reappraisal with dynamic coping displayed superior resilience and lesser turnover intent, while those relying on avoidance coping stated sophisticated exhaustion. Reflective journaling and mindfulness training improved reappraisal and abridged suppression. Experienced teachers

viewed regulation as a skill refined through practice and emotional balance (Li, 2025). Studies utilizing the ERQ and CERQ displayed reappraisal adversely correlated with fatigue ($r \approx -0.35$ to -0.55) and suppression positively with depersonalization ($r \approx +0.30$ to $+0.50$). Structural models recognized coping self-efficacy and mindfulness as mediators connecting guideline to control and attentional stability. Despite constant deductions, three limitations affect understanding: (i) dependence on self-reports over physiological or observational data, (ii) cultural norms controlling emotion–burnout links, and (iii) limited longitudinal authentication. Still, evidence aids a model where emotion regulation mediates EI's shielding effect against burnout. The summary of evidence on emotion regulation and coping strategies are presented in **Table 5**.

Table 5. Summary of evidence on emotion regulation and coping strategies.

Regulation / Coping Strategy	Effect on Burnout Components	Mechanism of Action	Representative Instruments	Key References
Cognitive Reappraisal	↓ Emotional Exhaustion ↓ Depersonalization ↑ Personal Accomplishment	Alters interpretation of stressors, promotes reflective teaching	ERQ, CERQ	(Larsen et al., 2021; Poulou & Garner, 2025)[36,37]
Expressive Suppression	↑ Emotional Exhaustion ↑ Depersonalization ↓ Job Satisfaction	Inhibits authentic expression, increases physiological strain	ERQ	(Rahm & Heise, 2019; Martínez-Monteagudo et al., 2019) [38,39]
Problem-Focused Coping	↓ Overall Burnout	Enhances agency and mastery, reduces helplessness	Brief COPE	(Lee et al., 2019; Ndukaihe et al., 2025)[40,41]
Avoidant / Emotion-Focused Coping	↑ Exhaustion ↓ Accomplishment	Disengagement and denial perpetuate stress cycles	COPE	(Chang, 2020; Chang et al., 2022)[42,43]
Mindfulness-Based Regulation	↓ Exhaustion ↑ Satisfaction	Improves attentional control and non-reactivity	FFMQ, MAAS	(Fiorilli et al., 2019; Li, 2023)[32,44]

3.4. Mindfulness and well-being practices

Research gradually categorizes mindfulness, i.e., the open, nonjudgmental consciousness of the current moment, as an important aspect connecting emotional demands to lessen teacher burnout. Regarded as both a attribute and a trainable skill, mindfulness improves EI and emotion monitor, leading to lesser fatigue and depersonalization and sophisticated accomplishment. Educators practicing mindfulness testified better balance and control. Studies in Germany and Australia displayed 4–6-week programs meaningfully reduced burnout and enhanced well-being, while[30] identified regular mindfulness duration was adversely associated with emotional fatigue ($r = -0.28$, $p < 0.01$). Overall, evidence displays mindfulness improves teachers' mental health by refining focus, dropping stress, and fostering cognitive decentering. It assists teachers stay empathetic without emotional burden and understand student behavior more flexibly. School-wide mindfulness agendas also improve collegial climate, diminish absences, and reinforce relationships. But, sustaining practice is challenged by workload and limited support, and most studies measure only short-term effects. Still, mindfulness emerges as a practical, low-cost method to boost emotional balance, resilience, and job satisfaction[45]. The summary of key evidence on mindfulness and teacher burnout is presented in **Table 6**.

Table 6. Summary of key evidence on mindfulness and teacher burnout.

Mindfulness Domain / Practice	Observed Effect on Burnout	Mechanism / Mediator	Study Design / Sample Context	Representative References
Formal Mindfulness Programs (MBSR, MBCT)	↓ Emotional Exhaustion ↑ Life Satisfaction	Enhanced attentional control; reduced rumination	4–8-week interventions; teachers in Germany, Australia	(Mérida-López & Extremera, 2017)[11]

Mindfulness Domain / Practice	Observed Effect on Burnout	Mechanism / Mediator	Study Design / Sample Context	Representative References
Daily Informal Practice (Breathing, Journaling)	↓ Stress ↑ Self-Efficacy	Improved moment-to-moment awareness	Longitudinal mixed-methods, China	(Zheng et al., 2022)[46]
Mindfulness + Emotion Regulation Training	↓ Depersonalization ↑ Empathy	Strengthened cognitive reappraisal, compassion	Experimental, Italy / Spain	(Washburn et al., 2021)[47]
Trait Mindfulness (Dispositional)	↓ Overall Burnout ↑ Job Satisfaction	Reduced automaticity; greater acceptance	Cross-sectional, USA / Finland	(Wu et al., 2023)[48]
Institutional Mindfulness Culture	↓ Absenteeism ↑ Collegial Support	Collective emotion climate improvement	Organizational case reports	(Preston & Spooner-Lane, 2019)[49]

Table 6. (*Continued*)

3.5. Resilience and coping self-efficacy

Resilience and coping self-efficacy are crucial personal resources that lessen teacher burnout. While EI offers the cognitive–emotional foundation for stress administration, resilience replicates flexibility and recovery, and self-efficacy replicates self-assurance in coping capability. Together, they aid preserve psychological stability under stress. Higher resilience associates with lower fatigue and depersonalization and better accomplishment. Studies show that emotional, spiritual, and physical intelligence, along with social support and self-efficacy, reinforce EI's shielding outcome against burnout. Quantitative studies across instructive backgrounds demonstrate resilience links with lesser emotional exhaustion ($r \approx -0.40$ to -0.55), lesser depersonalization ($r \approx -0.30$ to -0.45), and better personal achievement ($r \approx +0.40$). Regression models recognize resilience as a intermediary changing emotional awareness into coping skills. Jennings[50] found self-efficacy dropped depersonalization ($\beta = -0.25$) and improved achievement ($\beta = -0.31$). Qualitative studies add that robust teachers exhibit optimism, problem-solving, and emotional flexibility, observing recovery as vital for handling systemic stressors. Resilience also aligns with mindfulness and spiritual intelligence, strengthening purpose and meaning in teaching. Evidence demonstrates resilience can be improved through stress management, intellectual–behavioural training, and social-emotional learning programs, with effects long-lasting up to six months[51]. But extra exploration is required on how resilience stems from emotional capabilities. Overall, resilience and coping self-efficacy interpret EI into practical strategies, serving teachers view encounters as growth chances and sustain stability and effectiveness under stress. **Table 7** presents the summary of key evidence on resilience and coping self-efficacy.

Table 7. Summary of key evidence on resilience and coping self-efficacy.

Construct / Mediator	Relationship with Burnout Dimensions	Underlying Mechanism	Empirical Evidence / Context	Representative References
Resilience	↓ Emotional Exhaustion, ↓ Depersonalization, ↑ Personal Accomplishment	Emotional recovery and adaptability buffer stress reactivity	Cross-sectional and SEM-based studies (Italy, Malaysia, Iran)	(Han et al., 2025; Bocheliuk et al., 2021)[52,53]
Coping Self-Efficacy	↓ Burnout (all dimensions)	Strengthens belief in managing challenges; promotes proactive coping	Longitudinal and mediation models	(Iuga et al., 2025; Xu et al., 2025)[54,55]
Spiritual Intelligence	↓ Emotional Exhaustion ↑ Meaning and Job Satisfaction	Transcendent perspective enhances purpose and endurance	Correlational, Middle East contexts	(Li et al., 2023; Whitehead et al., 2021)[44,56]
Optimism / Positive Affectivity	↓ Exhaustion ↑ Engagement	Reframes adversity into mastery experience	Experimental and cross-sectional, Europe / Asia	(Ornaghi et al., 2023; Pishghadam et al., 2022)[57,58]
Workplace Social Support	↓ Depersonalization ↑ Professional Commitment	External reinforcement enhances self-efficacy	Mixed-methods, China / Spain	(Romanenko et al., 2025)[59]

3.6. Organizational environment and social support

While EI, mindfulness, and resilience are dynamic for educator well-being, their impact depends on the administrative climate as presented in **Table 8**. Factors like collegial trust, administrative fairness, and perceived support strongly influence burnout risk. Schools with open communication and participatory leadership report lesser burnout and superior satisfaction. Studies employing the JD-R model indicate that emotional stresses and organizational justice forecast exhaustion, while trust and self-sufficiency act as shielding resources[60]. Structural models disclose that environment affects burnout straight away and via mediators like emotion guideline and coping efficacy. For example, fairness and social support lessen emotional fatigue and enhance EI's protective effects. At the interactive level, support from managers and colleagues constantly lessened burnout. Teachers with emotionally conscious and communicative supervisors reported greater motivation and effectiveness, while unclear roles and high pressure elevated depersonalization[61]. Cross-cultural studies show peer and principal support has stronger protective effects in collectivist contexts. Across settings, the quality of support i.e/. emotional validation, feedback, and recognition, shown more impactful than its quantity. Qualitative findings highlight that social support helps teachers regulate emotions, share challenges safely, and reinforce professional identity. Staffrooms and peer networks serve as spaces for reflection and problem-solving, reducing burnout and improving innovation and retention. However, most studies rely on self-reported climate data and rarely address digital or hybrid teaching contexts. Overall, organizational climate remains central to teachers' emotional well-being, shaping how their emotional resources are sustained or depleted.

Table 8. Organizational climate and social support factors linked to teacher burnout.

Organizational / Social Factor	Observed Effect on Burnout	Mechanism of Influence	Empirical Context / Study Type	Representative References
Trust in Colleagues & Collaborative Culture	↓ Emotional Exhaustion ↑ Job Satisfaction	Fosters shared efficacy, reduces isolation	Cross-sectional & SEM	(Xu et al., 2021; Wu et al., 2023)[48,62]
Administrative / Principal Support	↓ Depersonalization ↑ Professional Commitment	Enhances appraisal of control and recognition	Mixed-methods, Asia & Europe	(Postigo-Zegarra et al., 2025)[63]
Perceived Organizational Justice	↓ Exhaustion ↑ Engagement	Fair treatment mitigates emotional strain	Path analysis, Israel / Middle East	(Salinas-Falquez et al., 2022)[64]
Workload Manageability & Autonomy Support	↓ Overall Burnout ↑ Self-Determination	Reduces role stress and perceived inequity	JD-R framework studies	(Cordova et al., 2023; Pervaiz et al., 2019)[3,65]
Peer Mentorship & Emotional Sharing	↓ Exhaustion ↑ Belonging	Normalizes emotional experiences; collective regulation	Qualitative interviews, Italy / Canada	(Puertas-Molero et al., 2018)[66]

3.7. Cross-cultural and contextual differences in the EI- burnout relationships

The link between EI and teacher burnout differs across educational systems, influenced by cultural values, socio-economic conditions, and institutional demands. The need for culturally sensitive well-being strategies is highlighted by comparative studies that reveal both constructs differ in meaning and expression between Eastern collectivist and Western individualist contexts. Higher EI is associated with improved coping, self-efficacy, and mindfulness. In Western nations like Spain, Italy, Canada, and the United States, EI is seen as a personal skill in self-awareness and control. In these situations, burnout frequently represents emotional exhaustion brought on by excessive workloads and a lack of organisational support. EI, on the other hand, is seen as relational and collective in studies from Eastern and Middle Eastern countries,

including China, Malaysia, Iran, Kuwait, and the Gulf States. According to research, burnout is influenced by contextual elements like spiritual awareness, leadership, and social support in addition to an individual's EI[67]. These patterns align with established cultural value frameworks. In individualistic cultures, where autonomy and self-regulation are emphasized, EI functions primarily as an intrapersonal resource buffering workload-related emotional exhaustion. In contrast, collectivist and higher power-distance contexts emphasize relational harmony and deference to authority, which can suppress emotional expression and shift burnout manifestations toward depersonalization and disengagement. In such settings, the protective effects of EI are more strongly contingent on external resources, including leadership support, collegial relationships, and institutional trust.

According to cross-national research, teachers in Asia report lower levels of emotional fatigue but higher levels of depersonalization because of cultural restraint, whereas teachers in Europe and North America report higher levels of emotional exhaustion but moderate levels of depersonalization as presented in **Table 9**. When support is lacking, burnout in the Middle East is frequently linked to moral or spiritual conflicts. Measurement approaches also vary; Eastern and Arab studies use self-report scales (EQ-i, TEIQue, WLEIS), while Western studies favor ability-based tools (MSCEIT). Despite these variations, EI consistently reveals a negative correlation with burnout, albeit the way it manifests depends on the cultural setting. The way that EI affects teachers' well-being is influenced by socioeconomic factors. Without systemic support, overcrowding and a lack of resources reduce the effectiveness of EI in low-resource regions like Pakistan, China, and sub-Saharan Africa. Conversely, well-funded systems such as Finland and Canada enhance EI's impact through integrated emotional skills training. Thus, EI's effectiveness rest on context, and burnout prevention requires locally adapted approaches affiliated with cultural norms and resources[68].

Table 9. Comparative patterns of the EI-burnout relationship across cultural context.

Cultural / Regional Context	Dominant EI Orientation	Key Moderators / Mediators	Typical Burnout Profile	Representative Studies
Western (Europe, North America)	Intrapersonal / Autonomy-focused	Mindfulness, self-efficacy, emotion regulation	High emotional exhaustion; moderate depersonalization	(Hilger et al., 2025)[69]
East & Southeast Asia	Interpersonal / Harmony-focused	Social support, main leadership, collectivism	Moderate fatigue; higher depersonalization	(Chen et al., 2024)[16]
Middle East (Iran, Kuwait, Gulf States)	Spiritual–Moral / Value-driven	Spiritual intelligence, resilience, affective suppression	High depersonalization; value-based stress	(Cohen & Abedallah, 2021)[31]
South Asia (Pakistan, India)	Mixed pragmatic–affective orientation	Emotional regulation, work–life balance, coping	Context-dependent overtiredness from structural strain	(Daniel & Van Bergen, 2023)[70]
Nordic / High-Welfare Europe	Institutionalized EI through training	Policy-driven well-being programs	Small burnout; robust job satisfaction	(Lillelien & Jensen, 2025)[71]

3.8. Theoretical implications

The synthesis of 73 studies suggests that the EI–burnout relationship is a multilayered process linking intrapersonal, interpersonal, and organizational factors. Across cultures and methodological approaches, EI consistently emerges as a core personal resource shaping how teachers perceive, interpret, and manage occupational stress. At the intrapersonal level, self-awareness, emotion regulation, and empathy directly reduce emotional exhaustion and depersonalization while supporting positive relational functioning. At the proximal level, mindfulness, resilience, and coping self-efficacy translate emotional understanding into effective action, enabling teachers to manage ambiguity, recover from stress, and sustain professional commitment. At the contextual level, organizational climate, leadership fairness, and social support

strengthen or weaken teachers' emotional resources as presented in **Table 10**. Supportive environments characterized by trust, recognition, and equitable management amplify the protective effects of EI, whereas rigid or unsupportive settings accelerate resource depletion. At the macro level, cultural and systemic factors further shape these dynamics, with collectivist contexts emphasizing relational harmony and individualist contexts emphasizing self-regulation. Together, these findings indicate that EI's protective role is robust across contexts but socially mediated[72].

To strengthen conceptual integration, the findings are interpreted through the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model, complemented by Conservation of Resources (COR) theory. Within the JD-R framework, burnout results from an imbalance between job demands (e.g., workload, emotional labor, role conflict) and available job and personal resources (e.g., emotional skills, social support, leadership). COR theory further explains burnout as a process of cumulative resource loss when individuals are unable to acquire, protect, or replenish valued resources over time. Across the reviewed studies, EI, mindfulness, resilience, and coping self-efficacy consistently function as personal resources that buffer the impact of high job demands. Organizational climate, leadership quality, and social support operate as job resources that amplify these protective effects. When job demands exceed available resources, burnout risk increases; conversely, when emotional and organizational resources are adequately supported, teachers are more likely to maintain engagement, resilience, and well-being.

Table 10. Integrated thematic synthesis of mechanisms linking EI and burnout.

Analytical Level	Core Constructs	Primary Mechanism	Outcome on Burnout Dimensions	Representative Empirical Anchors
Intrapersonal	Self-awareness, emotion regulation, empathy	Cognitive reappraisal, affect monitoring	↓ Emotional exhaustion ↓ Depersonalization ↑ Personal accomplishment	(Amirian et al., 2021; Bing et al., 2022)[73,74]
Behavioral / Adaptive	Mindfulness, resilience, coping self-efficacy	Attentional control, adaptive coping, persistence	↓ Stress reactivity ↑ Recovery rate	(Mossafaie et al., 2024; Qiu et al., 2025)[61,75]
Interpersonal	Shared trust, empathy, communication	Social sharing, collective emotion regulation	lessen Depersonalization enhance Belonging	(Cece et al., 2022)[76]
Organizational	Leadership style, job fairness, justice	Resource allocation, psychological safety	Lessen overall burnout and improve Commitment	(Henriksen et al., 2025)[77]
Cultural / Systemic	Collectivism–individualism norms, presentation rules	Moderation of emotion expression and support seeking	Context-specific attenuation or amplification	(Mahdian Rad & Baleghizadeh, 2025)[78]
Integrative Outcome	Interaction of personal + appropriate resources	Recursive buffering feedback loop	Constant well-being, professional engagement	(Gholamrezaee & Ghanizadeh, 2018)[79]

3.9. Practical and applied implications

This review highlights important practical implications for educational practice, leadership, and policy. EI should be systematically integrated into teacher professional development, with emphasis on emotion regulation, cognitive reappraisal, empathy, and adaptive coping, which consistently emerged as key protective factors against burnout. Brief, structured interventions such as mindfulness-based training, social–emotional learning modules, and reflective practice workshops offer feasible and effective implementation options[78]. School leadership plays a critical role in sustaining teachers' emotional resources. Supportive leadership, transparent communication, fair workload management, and collegial support can strengthen the protective effects of EI, suggesting that organizational strategies fostering psychological safety and collaboration may reduce burnout more effectively than individual-focused approaches alone[77]. Finally, EI-

based interventions should be context-sensitive and culturally responsive, aligning with local norms, educational levels, and resource conditions[61]. Policymakers and educational planners are encouraged to incorporate EI and well-being indicators into teacher support frameworks, particularly in post-pandemic educational settings where emotional demands remain high. The predominance of cross-sectional, self-report studies also constrains causal interpretation of the observed relationships. While the consistency of findings supports EI as a protective resource, it remains unclear whether higher EI reduces burnout, lower burnout facilitates emotional functioning, or whether both are influenced by unmeasured contextual factors. Consequently, theoretical interpretations should be viewed as probabilistic rather than causal, reinforcing the need for cautious application of findings in policy and practice.

4. Conclusion

This systematic synthesis of 73 empirical studies confirms a robust inverse relationship between EI and teacher burnout dimensions, including emotional fatigue, depersonalization, and lessened personal accomplishment. Emotion regulation, mindfulness, and resilience emerged as key mediators that strengthen psychological resources and enhance job fulfilment. Organizational factors such as trust, fairness, leadership, and workload management substantially shape how EI translates into well-being. While EI's shielding role is universal, its mechanisms vary traditionally, i.e., Western upbringings underscore self-regulation, while Eastern settings stress social and shared harmony. Burnout thus replicates not individual weakness, but an interaction between individual capacities and institutional conditions. This review encompasses the JD-R model by positioning EI, mindfulness, and resilience as individual assets that interact with organizational supports. It also aligns with social-cognitive and ecological organizational theories, enclosing teacher well-being as the outcome of continuous interactions among self-regulation, social context, and culture. However, it should be noted that the present review considered only studies published in the English language, which may have limited the inclusion of relevant evidence from non-English speaking regions. Also, the review focused exclusively on quantitative empirical studies, which may have limited explanatory depth by excluding qualitative insights into teachers' lived experiences and contextual meaning-making processes. This focus was intentional to enable systematic comparison of effect patterns, mediating mechanisms, and contextual moderators across studies using comparable analytical frameworks.

4.1. Future research directions

Most existing studies rely on cross-sectional, self-report designs, which restrict causal inference and raise concerns related to common method variance and reverse causality. Future research should therefore prioritize longitudinal, experimental, and intervention-based designs to clarify the directionality of the relationship between EI and teacher burnout, for instance by tracking EI, job demands, and burnout symptoms across a full academic year or multiple school terms. Experimental studies are also needed to compare the effectiveness of specific EI training components, such as cognitive reappraisal, mindfulness-based stress reduction, empathy training, or emotion regulation coaching, in reducing distinct burnout dimensions. Multi-method approaches combining self-report measures with behavioral observations, physiological indicators (e.g., heart rate variability, cortisol), or peer-rated assessments would further reduce bias and strengthen causal interpretation. In addition, future studies should examine emotional demands in digital and hybrid teaching contexts and explore how gender, cultural background, educational level, and socioeconomic conditions shape emotional resilience over time. There is a particular need for research conducted in under-represented regions, including Africa and South America, where contextual stressors and institutional constraints may alter burnout dynamics. Finally, future systematic reviews should consider

incorporating non-English literature to reduce linguistic bias and enhance the global representativeness of evidence on EI and teacher burnout.

Author contributions

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Conflict of interest

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