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Teachers' Social Intelligence and Classroom Management Practices: A Systematic Review

Aima Shafiq*, Muhammad Tahir Khan Farooqi

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Aima Shafiq* & Muhammad Tahir Khan Farooqi, are currently affiliated with the Department of Educational Research and Assessment, University of Okara, Pakistan.

Email: Aima.shafiq768@gmail.com**Email:** drtahirfarooqi@ue.edu.pk**Abstract**

The systematic review is a synthesis of empirical evidence of the relationship between social intelligence of teachers in classroom management with regard to instructional management and behavioral management. With the growing emergence of teaching as a socially constructed practice, the role of social intelligence of teachers in the classroom management has emerged as an urgent subject of research. A search was carried out using PRISMA 2020 on the platforms of Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, Science Direct, SAGE Journals, and Google Scholar. A qualitative thematic synthesis was performed using 24 studies that passed the screening and eligibility tests. The analysis presents trends in the conceptualization and measurement of teacher social intelligence as well as its correlation with classroom management strategies of instruction and behavior. The synthesis showed that the positive relationships between teacher's social intelligence and classroom management outcomes were consistent. More effective instructional management was observed in teachers who employed greater levels of social intelligence: more understandable instruction, flexible scheduling, and smooth changeovers. They also demonstrated more behavioral control, especially in proactive discipline, good behavioral control, and reduced interruption in the classroom. Although there were differences in definitions and measurement techniques, the results of the studies were not much different. Such findings underscore the power of social smartness in teachers as one of the professional competencies that improve classroom management and teaching. The strength of the review is that it brings together the scattered findings and explains the importance of social intelligence in bringing about the important aspects of classroom management. The discussion of implications to teacher education, professional development, and future research is made to promote socially informed practice of teaching.

Corresponding Author*

Keywords: Social intelligence of teachers; classroom management; instructional management; behavioral management; systematic review.

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INTRODUCTION

The issue of classroom management is one of the key issues in the modern research of education since it directly influences the quality of teaching and student achievement. According to the latest research, classroom management is an effective way to save the maximum possible time on teaching, improve student involvement, and minimize disruptive behavior by creating the best conditions to learn (Emmer and Sabornie, 2015; Evertson and Weinstein, 2023). On the other hand, classroom mismanagement results in disruption of instruction and behavior of the teachers, educator stress, and reduced student achievement, particularly in diverse and high-demands environments (Aloe et al., 2021; Romano et al., 2022).

Social intelligence of teachers has become an essential individual ability that forms the processes in the classroom. It can be described as the skill to decode social interactions, to decode the intentions and feelings of other people, as well as to be flexibly responsive in social situations (Kanning, 2014; Weis and Süß, 2021). Social intelligence applies in the teaching field to enable a teacher to understand the dynamics of the classroom, effectively interact with students, predict behavioral issues, and even change instruction on the fly (Albrecht, 2019; Jennings et al., 2020). According to the latest findings, the increased social or socio-emotional competence of teachers allows them to interact with the classroom more effectively and promote positive teaching environments (Aldrup et al., 2020; Dewaele et al., 2023). Although the concept of classroom management has been conceptualized in a variety of ways, recent studies identify two central areas including instructional management and behavioral management. Instructional management.

The nature of the organization of instructions, the clarity of explanations, the speed of lessons, the control over learning, and effective use of classroom time (Brophy, 2006; Evertson and Emmer, 2017). The behavioral management is concerned with development of rules, prevention and reaction towards misbehavior, use of discipline methods, and development of respectful behavior (Simonsen et al., 2008; Romano et al., 2022). These areas are traditionally defined as great predictors of effective classroom management on all levels of education (Aloe et al., 2021; Wolff et al., 2021).

There has been an emergence that social intelligence among teachers is beneficial to teaching and behavioral control. Social intelligence in high levels results in adaptive teaching, easy transitions to classrooms, and increased student attention, therefore improving instructional management (Jennings and Greenberg, 2009; Aldrup et al., 2020). At the same time, proactive behavior control, efficient disciplinary mechanisms, and less conflict are supported by the sensitivity of teachers to the social and emotional indicators of students (Brackett et al., 2011; Dewaele et al., 2023). However, findings in research are not uniform and are in cases inconsistent. These contradictions are based on conceptual and methodological disparities. The definitions and measures of social intelligence of teachers are not standardized, and many studies tend to rely on social intelligence overlap with social competence, interpersonal skills, or the socio-emotional competence (Mayer et al., 2008; Weis and Süß, 2021). Operation of classroom management also takes a different shape with some of the studies integrating instructional and behavioral issues with more general relational or emotional measures. The inhomogeneity problem discourages comparability and does not even allow creating a consistent evidence to inform teacher education and professional growth (Aloe et al., 2021; Romano et al., 2022).

Therefore, it is necessary to conduct a systematic synthesis of available empirical studies that can help elucidate the particular correlation between the social intelligence of teachers and classroom management, in terms of instruction and behavioral control. Systematic reviews offer a stringent, transparent methodology of the patterns, methodological trends, and gaps in the research through the literature by following the established reporting standards, including PRISMA 2020 (Page et al., 2021). The purpose of this review is to use the method of PRISMA to evaluate research studies that identify the relationship between the social intelligence of teachers and classroom management which can be measured using the instructional and behavioral perspectives. Through a rigorous literature review in various learning environments, the review shall answer the question on how social intelligence of

teachers improves these underlying elements of classroom management procedures and suggest future research gaps.

Table 1.

Alignment of Research Objectives and Research Questions

Research Objectives	Corresponding Research Questions
RO1: To systematically identify and synthesize empirical studies examining the relationship between teachers' social intelligence and classroom management practices, with a focus on instructional and behavioral management.	RQ1: How has teachers' social intelligence been defined and operationalized in empirical studies related to instructional and behavioral classroom management?
RO2: To analyses how teachers' social intelligence has been conceptualized and measured across different educational contexts in relation to classroom management.	RQ2: What empirical evidence exists regarding the relationship between teachers' social intelligence and effective instructional and behavioral classroom management practices?
RO3: To examine the specific domains of classroom management: instructional management and behavioral management associated with teachers' social intelligence in the existing literature.	RQ3: What aspects of instructional management and behavioral management are associated with teachers' social intelligence in the existing literature?

Table 2.

PRISMA-Based Screening and Selection Procedure

Stage	Description of Procedure
Identification	A comprehensive search was conducted across Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, Science Direct, SAGE Journals, and Google Scholar using predefined Boolean search strings related to teachers' social intelligence and instructional or behavioral classroom management.
Duplicate Removal	Duplicate records retrieved from multiple databases were identified and removed prior to screening to ensure that each study was assessed only once.
Title and Abstract Screening	Titles and abstracts were screened to exclude studies that were irrelevant to the research objectives, non-empirical in nature, focused exclusively on students rather than teachers, or did not address instructional or behavioral classroom management.
Full-Text Eligibility Assessment	Full-text articles were reviewed against predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria, with particular attention to empirical design, teacher-focused social intelligence constructs, and explicit measurement of instructional and/or behavioral management outcomes.
Exclusion at Full-Text Stage	Studies were excluded at this stage if they lacked methodological clarity, did not operationalize classroom management within instructional or behavioral domains, or were not published in peer-reviewed journals.
Final Inclusion	Studies meeting all inclusion criteria were retained for qualitative thematic synthesis and included in the final systematic review.
PRISMA Compliance	The overall review process followed the PRISMA 2020 guidelines, ensuring transparency, replicability, and methodological rigor throughout the identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion stages.

Table 3.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Study type	Empirical studies (quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods)	Conceptual papers, editorials, book reviews, commentaries
Participants	Teachers (school, college, or university level)	Student-only samples
Core construct	Teachers' social intelligence or closely related constructs	Studies not addressing social intelligence
Outcome focus	Instructional management and/or behavioral management	Studies focusing only on relational or emotional climate
Publication type	Peer-reviewed journal articles	Theses, dissertations, conference abstracts

Language English
Timeframe 2000–2025

Non-English publications
Studies outside the defined timeframe

PRISMA Flow of Study Selection

The process of selecting the studies was done according to the PRISMA 2020. Systematic search in Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, Science Direct, SAGE Journals and Google Scholar identified a total of 268 records. The total number of studies that were screened after removal of 37 duplicate records was 231. In this screening process, 192 records were eliminated since they were non-empirical, they did not concentrate on teachers or they did not discuss instructional classroom management or behavioral classroom management. The rest of 39 articles were evaluated on their eligibility with the complete text of the articles. After complete review of the full-texts 15 studies were eliminated because of insufficient methodological description or absence of specific measure of social intelligence of teachers, or failure to operationalize the classroom management in instructional or behavioral domains. Thus, 24 studies that satisfied all the inclusion criteria were incorporated into the final qualitative thematic synthesis.

Table 4.
PRISMA Numerical Reporting

PRISMA Phase	Number (n)
Records identified through database searching	n = 268
Records after duplicates removed	n = 231
Records screened (title & abstract)	n = 231
Records excluded	n = 192
Full-text articles assessed for eligibility	n = 39
Full-text articles excluded	n = 15
Studies included in qualitative synthesis	n = 24

RESULTS

Overview of Included Studies

After the screening and selection process of PRISMA, 24 empirical studies that fit the inclusion criteria were incorporated in the qualitative final thematic synthesis. These studies investigated the correlation between social intelligence of teachers and classroom management, which these concepts were operationalized strictly as an instructional management and a behavioral management. The studies included in it were representative of various educational settings, some of which are primary, secondary, and higher education institutions, and they were done in different geographical areas. Regarding research design, most of the 24 reviewed studies utilized quantitative research methods with most of them using survey methodology in data collection. Fewer research papers were of qualitative or mixed-method design. The social intelligence of teachers was studied with the help of different self-report and observational measurements, and the results of managing classrooms were always given with references to the instructional practices and/or behavioral practices.

Theme 1: Social Intelligence Measurement and Conceptualization of Teachers

In the 24 studies included, social intelligence among teachers was theorized as a multidimensional construct comprising of social awareness, interpersonal sensitivity, adaptive social behavior, and social problem-solving skills. Even though various terms were employed such as social competence and interpersonal intelligence, the 24

studies were all about the ability of teachers to navigate through the social process in classrooms. The majority of quantitative studies included in the 24-study sample used self-report measures to determine perceived social intelligence of teachers, with a smaller number of studies using either an observational/ multi-source measure. Irrespective of this difference, social intelligence was always regarded as a teacher-level feature that had an effect on classroom management procedures.

Theme 2: Social Intelligence and Instructional Management of Teachers

A good percentage of the 24 articles review revealed that there was a positive relationship between the social intelligence of teachers and their instructional management. These studies showed that teachers that had higher social intelligence had a better organization of lessons, better instructional communication, improved classroom transition and monitoring student learning. Among the 24-study evidence base, teachers with socially intelligent behavior were often said to be more sensitive to classroom signals, which allows them to change the instructional goal and keep the instructional process. Qualitative evidence also indicated that the social awareness of teachers helped them to make timely learning adaptations, which minimized learning interruptions.

Theme 3: Social Intelligence and Behavioral Control of Teachers

As a result, behavioral management was a prevalent finding in the 24 studies that were included. Most of these studies indicated that the elevated levels of social intelligence amongst teachers were linked with better behavior management, advance proactive discipline measures, and minimized student misbehavior. The results of the 24 studies showed a higher socially intelligent teacher was more effective in corresponding the signs of behavioral escalation in early stages and was more effective in the preventive interventions. Consistency, fairness, and clarity were also typical features of behavioral management practices, which led to more order in classrooms.

Theme 4: Methodological Characteristics of the Included Studies

The 24 studies included in the research found on methodological analysis showed that cross-sectional research designs were predominantly used. The majority of the research was conducted by means of quantitative surveys, and only a few applied longitudinal or experimental research designs. The popular forms of analytical tools were correlation and regression analysis where the relationship between the outcomes of social intelligence by the teachers and classroom management was studied. Even though the educational levels and cultural contexts differed in 24 studies, the fact that the evidence was consistent in different settings enhanced the overall levels of credibility of this evidence. The patterns of methodology, however, also raised the problem of constraints in regard to the inference of causality.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

In general, a meta-analysis of the 24 studies incorporated showed that there is a positive consistent relationship between social intelligence of teachers and classroom management of the teachers and the variables of instructional management and behavioral management. Regardless of the conceptual definitions and methods of measurements used, the overall direction of evidence of the 24 studies was quite homogeneous.

DISCUSSION

The aim of the current systematic review was to crystallize available empirical data on the relationship between social intelligence of teachers and classroom management with classroom management being narrow-focused on instructional and behavioral management. The results of the studies reviewed indicate the presence of a fairly coherent and positive correlation between the social intelligence and the two areas of classroom management among teachers. This uniformity is evident even in different levels of education, in research designs, and in different cultural backgrounds and this fact highlights the role of social intelligence as a competency based upon which teachers can effectively operate in the classroom.

Social Intelligence and Instructional Management of Teachers

The main conclusion of this review is that teachers have a strong correlation between social intelligence and effective instructional management. Teachers with a higher degree of social intelligence were more competencies in terms of their way of organizing the instruction, the instructional clarity and adapting responses to dynamics in the classroom. These findings are in line with modern studies that assume the teaching as the socially mediated process where the instructional choices are always influenced by the interpersonal communication and the context (Aldrup et al., 2020; Wolff et al., 2021). Socially intelligent educators seem to be in a better position to recognize verbal and unspoken cues by students, which allows them to adapt the pacing, explanation, and instructions in real time. Theoretically, this connection can be explained by the social-cognitive and interactionist theories, which hold that more socially-aware people are more effective in dealing with complex social conditions. This awareness in the classroom allows one to predict the challenges in the classroom before they escalate and lead to instances of disruption thus maintaining the flow of instruction. The analyzed literature also indicates that social intelligence improves the ability of teachers to balance the instructional needs with the classroom realities, which confirms the recent claims that effective instruction cannot be separated or not be supported by social competence (Jennings et al., 2020; Dewaele et al., 2023).

Social Intelligence and Behavioral Management of Teachers

The synthesis also suggests that social intelligence of teachers is very sensitive in behavioral management. In the literature, socially intelligent teachers were shown to be more successful in behavior control, predictive discipline approaches and were less likely to use punitive discipline. These results align well with the recent developments in the classroom-management literature, where the focus is put on proactive and relationship-conscious behavior-management strategies rather than reactive discipline (Aloe et al., 2021; Romano et al., 2022). The skill of teachers to interpret early signs of behavioral escalation and to react in a constructive way seems a primary process according to which social intelligence determines behavioral results. Notably, the considered evidence indicates that socially intelligent teachers have higher chances to promote well-defined behavioral expectations and be consistent and fair in their reactions. These practices ensure that classroom environments are predictable, which has been known to reduce misbehavior among students and also create behavioral stability. These results support the modern trends in the behavioral management field that see behavioral management not as control,

but as a socially conscious practice that needs to be sensitive to individual and contextual conditions.

Conceptual and Methodological Implications

Although there was an overall consistency in the findings, the review identifies significant conceptual and methodological issues in the available literature. The definition and measurement of teachers' social intelligence were based on a set of overlapping constructs such as social competence, interpersonal skills, and socio emotional competence. Although the similarities between these constructs are evident, the lack of conceptual clarity can explain the differences in the reported effect sizes and results. The recent reviews of the methods have also indicated that there should be more specificity in the definition and measurement of the social-intelligence-related constructs in education studies (Weis and Süß, 2021). On the methodology side, causal inference is limited by the fact that most of the designs are cross-sectional designs. Though all studies that have been reviewed report a certain set of associations between social intelligence and classroom management, there are not many that use longitudinal or experimental designs that can yield directionality. This disadvantage explains the caution that should be taken when interpreting the concept of social intelligence as the one that causes good classroom control, although the theoretical arguments behind such a connection are still strong. Further studies using longitudinal and intervention-based studies in the future may provide more understanding of how social intelligence evolves with time and how it affects classroom activities.

Educational Policy Implications of Research

The implications of the findings of this systematic review have serious implications on teacher education, professional development, and educational policy. The consistency of the results on the relationship between the social intelligence of teachers and the instructional and behavioral management points to the fact that social intelligence should be considered among the fundamental elements of teacher competence. To enhance the teacher preparation programs through incorporating structured opportunities to develop social awareness, interpersonal communication, adaptive interaction skills and pedagogical training may be a good idea. These findings also indicate that social-intelligence-linked competencies should be included in the professional standards and evaluation systems by teachers at the policy level. Instead of a narrow focus on instructional strategies or on disciplinary measures, a more integrative approach that recognizes the social aspects of the teaching process can help bring more sustainable changes in classroom discipline and teacher performance.

FUTURE RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS

The review also determines a number of areas where further research can be done. To retain the distinctive explanatory power, the conceptual definition of social intelligence would need a higher level of differentiating it and associated constructs. Besides, further studies are required in different cultural and educational settings to explore the functioning of social intelligence in a range of classroom settings. Lastly, intervention-based research on whether specific enhancement of teacher social intelligence brings about quantifiable effects on instruction and behavioral management would be useful to practice and policy.

CONCLUSION

The current PRISMA-based systematic review integrated the empirical data that involve assessing the connection between the social intelligence of teachers and classroom management, in which classroom management was rigidly operationalized into instructional and behavioral management. In the analyzed articles, there was the presence of a common trend to highlight that the social intelligence of teachers is positively related to the two areas of classroom management in various learning environments.

The results indicate that teachers who possess greater social intelligence are in a better position to structure teaching in an efficient manner, sustain instructions and change teaching approaches in consonance with the classroom dynamics. At the same time, socially intelligent teachers are more competent in student behavior regulation, proactive discipline, and maintaining discipline in classrooms. Collectively, these results emphasize the key role of social intelligence in the facilitation of the main functions of classroom management that are the foundation of successful teaching and learning. Although conceptual definitions and methods used in the measurement of various studies vary, the general direction of evidence is also strong. Nevertheless, cross-sectional study designs reduce the ability to draw conclusions and encourage longitudinal and intercession-based research. Future studies that are more conceptually refined and are more diverse in terms of methods would enhance the knowledge about the development of social intelligence in teachers and the way it relates to instruction and behavioral management practices in the long term.

In general, the systematic review could add to the literature since it will help bring all the dots together and provide a clear picture of the role of teachers' social intelligence in classroom instruction and behavioral management. Their implications are the need to acknowledge social intelligence as an important part of teacher competence, and the way that it should be reflected in teacher education, teacher development, and educational policy to boost classroom performance and student learning.

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