

**THE INFLUENCE OF ENGLISH TEACHERS' EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE ON
STUDENTS' ENGLISH LEARNING AT MAN 1 KOTA GORONTALO:
A QUALITATIVE STUDY**

Fadlun Doda,¹ Nonny Basalama,² Moh. Syahrudin Ibrahim,³
Hasannudin Fatsah,⁴ Indri Wirahmi Bay,⁵ Asyraf Isyraqi Bin Jamil⁶

^{1,2,3,4,5} English Language Education Study Programme, Faculty of Letters and Culture,
Universitas Negeri Gorontalo, Indonesia

⁶Academy of Islamic Studies, Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

⁶Faculty of Islamic Studies, Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin, Perlis,
Malaysia

*Corresponding author: moh.ibrahim@ung.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This research investigates the effect of English teachers' emotional intelligence (EI) on students' English learning at MAN 1 Kota Gorontalo. Emotional intelligence, including the indicators such as self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills, plays a crucial role in shaping classroom dynamics and fostering students' motivation. The research aims to explore how English teachers' EI influences students' confidence, engagement, and enthusiasm in learning English. This research employed a qualitative case study design. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews and classroom observations involving two English teachers and ten students from grades 10 and 11 during the 2024/2025 academic year. Thematic analysis was used to identify key patterns emerging from participants' experiences. Findings revealed that emotionally intelligent teachers significantly enhance students' learning experiences through five major impacts: (1) enhancing self-confidence by appreciating efforts and normalizing mistakes; (2) creating supportive and enjoyable learning environments; (3) fostering intrinsic motivation through meaningful and engaging activities; (4) encouraging future aspirations such as studying abroad; and (5) providing emotional support and promoting peer collaboration. These practices contribute to a positive classroom climate where students feel valued, motivated, and resilient. The study concludes that teachers' emotional intelligence is not only a personal quality but also a pedagogical competence essential for sustaining students' motivation and well-being. It recommends integrating EI development into teacher training and professional programs to enhance both instructional effectiveness and emotional support in language education.

Keywords: *English language learning; learning motivation; emotional support; teacher empathy; classroom emotional climate;*

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INTRODUCTION

Emotional intelligence (EI) has garnered substantial attention in educational and professional research contexts over the past decades. In educational settings, teachers' EI can significantly impact their interactions with students, fostering positive relationships and enhancing students' drive to learn (Welmilla, 2020). Therefore, teachers' EI is integral to shaping both academic and emotional outcomes for students. Therefore, teachers' EI is essential in the educational process.

Within specialized fields, the role of EI becomes even more evident. Especially in English language learning, the desire to succeed plays a vital role due to challenges students often face such as limited vocabulary, grammar understanding and courage to communicate (Lailiatissakinah & Mauriyat, 2024). These underscores the necessity of English teachers' emotional intelligence, as it equips them to foster a supportive learning environment, address students' difficulties with empathy and encourage them to navigate those challenges effectively (Safitri & Dollah, 2023). Ultimately, this highlights the crucial contribution of English teachers' emotional intelligence in shaping students' motivation and overall success in learning English. Teaching is regarded as one of the most demanding job in the world, as teachers not only face professional demands but also need to balance their responsibilities to their families, which can divide their attention between personal and professional obligations (MacIntyre et al., 2020).

While emotional intelligence (EI) is widely acknowledged as a critical factor in education, it aligns with the mandate of Indonesian Law No.20 of 2003 about the national education system, Article 40, Paragraph 2 which states that : "Educators and education personnel are obliged to create a meaningful, fun, creative, dynamic and dialogical educational atmosphere". This mandate highlights expectations that teachers possess not only pedagogical skills but also emotional attributes that allow them to nurture an engaging and supportive learning environment (Nushur & Yusuf, 2021; Sele & Mukundi, 2023).

Initial observations at MAN 1 Kota Gorontalo suggest that students view their English teachers as positive and motivating figures. Feedback from students indicates that the supportive and empathetic nature of their English teachers. These observations provide a compelling reason to further explore how emotional intelligence shapes student engagement in this context. While previous studies have reported positive associations between teachers' emotional intelligence and students' learning engagement in EFL contexts (Gumelar et al., 2024), limited research has explored how students themselves perceive the influence of teachers' emotional intelligence on their English learning experiences, particularly in the context of Islamic senior high schools in Indonesia. On the other hand, most previous studies have focused on directly measuring the effect between teacher EI and student drive to learn without exploring the dynamics of the process (Rahman et al. 2024). Therefore, this study investigates the influence of English teachers' emotional intelligence on students' English learning at MAN 1 Kota Gorontalo.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In educational environments, emotional Intelligence (EI) contributes to teacher-students' interactions and the development of the learning experience. According to Goleman (2020), EI emphasizes the capacity of an individual to perceive, understand and manage both personal emotions and the emotions of others. While a teacher's IQ level is often high, it does not always correlate with their level of EI. This suggests that intellectual ability alone is not sufficient to foster a supportive and encouraging learning environment (Nushur & Yusuf, 2021).

Within the context of English language teaching, the relevance of emotional intelligence becomes even more evident, as teachers must address not merely the cognitive aspects but also the emotional components of learning. Students often experience challenges such as limited vocabulary, difficulties with grammar, or a lack of confidence in communication, and teachers with high emotional intelligence are more capable of responding with empathy, encouragement, and adaptive strategies that sustain motivation (Rahman et al. 2024). In this regard, teachers are encouraged to create emotionally supportive learning conditions by offering meaningful learning experiences, providing constructive feedback, and guiding students through each stage of the learning process to foster confidence and motivation (Fatsah et al. 2025). Thus, EI should not be regarded merely as an abstract psychological construct but as a practical capacity that directly shapes how teachers create a supportive, engaging, and productive classroom environment, ultimately improving both students' motivation and academic achievement (Welmilla, 2020). Goleman identifies the five main indicators of EI that help to explain how professional use emotional intelligence to enhance their relationships with individuals and create a conducive environment (Goleman, 2020).

In teaching, self-awareness is recognized as a fundamental aspect of emotional intelligence (EI) that contributes significantly to the creation of an effective and positive classroom environment. According to Goleman (2020) self-awareness is the ability to recognize and understand one's emotions and their influence on thoughts and behavior. Self-awareness allows teachers to identify their emotional response such as stress or frustration and regulate these emotions in a way that supports rather than hinders the classroom atmosphere. For instance, a teacher who is aware of their rising frustration can take a moment to calm themselves, use positive coping strategies and maintain a composed demeanor, which helps prevent the escalation of tension in the classroom (Fteiha & Awwad, 2020).

Self regulation represents another key dimension of emotional intelligence. According to Goleman (2020) self-regulation is the ability to control emotions, stay calm under pressure, and adapt to change. Teachers who excel in self-regulation are able to maintain their emotional balance even in stressful or challenging classroom situations, which is crucial for fostering a positive learning environment (Abiodullah et al. 2020). It is a vital skill for teachers in maintaining a positive and productive classroom environment. This emotional control is especially important when addressing disruptions or conflicts, as it helps maintain a stable and supportive classroom atmosphere (Valente & Lourenço, 2020).

Motivation in the context of Emotional Intelligence (EI) surpasses beyond individual drive and encompasses the enthusiasm and commitment to doing one's best. Previous research by Valente et al. (2020) suggest that teachers who demonstrate high levels of motivation can inspire students by displaying a passion for teaching, which in turn encourages students to engage more deeply in their learning. Teachers who are highly motivated can create a positive learning environment that promotes enthusiasm for learning among students, making the classroom a more dynamic space for academic growth (Assali & Riskus, 2023). Furthermore, Wang (2023) highlights that motivated teachers serve as role models for their students, motivating them to pursue their own academic goals.

Empathy in emotional intelligence (EI) enables teachers to effectively understand and address the emotional needs, of their students, creating a supportive and flexible learning environment. According to Valente et al. (2020) contend that teachers who exhibit empathy are better equipped to navigate classroom dynamics by identifying when students are experiencing emotional challenges. Such teachers can provide the necessary support to create a safe and secure classroom atmosphere, which is crucial for motivating students to engage in the learning process (Valente & Lourenço, 2020).

Social skills, which include the ability to form positive relationships and collaborate effectively with others, are key components of EI that influence teaching outcomes (Goleman, 2020). Previous study states that teachers with strong social skills are more capable of building positive relationships with students, fostering a classroom environment based on trust and mutual respect (Wang, 2023). This connection enhances student engagement and motivates students to participate more actively in lessons. Furthermore, Valente et al. (2020) highlight that teachers with strong social skills contribute to better conflict management in the classroom, as they can navigate misunderstandings or disagreements effectively. This ability to resolve conflicts constructively not only creates a positive atmosphere but also helps students feel supported and motivated to learn (Gumelar et al. 2024).

To acquire a more nuanced understanding of how students' learning experience is formed and developed, it is essential to consider specific indicators that reflect their motivational levels. These indicators not only illustrate students' attitudes toward learning, but also offer practical guidance for teachers to design more responsive and effective instructional strategies (Mduwile & Goswami, 2024). In this regard, teachers' awareness of students' individual characteristics plays a crucial role, as recent research discusses the importance of adapting instructional approaches to align with the learning styles and emotional needs of today's learners, who are more collaborative, authentic, and motivated when supported by understanding educators (Dama et al. 2024). By emphasizing these indicators, teachers can foster more engaging and effective learning experiences, ultimately enhancing academic achievement and nurturing a lifelong love for learning (Pranjani et al. 2022).

METHOD

This research utilizes a qualitative case study design as Hengki and Ratna (2024) note, qualitative research provides rich, detailed data, particularly valuable for understanding emotional and social factors in learning. The participants in this study consist of 2 English teachers and 10 students at MAN 1 Kota Gorontalo. The teachers were purposively selected based on recommendations from the school administration, which identified them as having strong abilities in creating positive and supportive classroom environments, effectively managing classroom emotions, and fostering constructive teacher–student relationships. Meanwhile, the students were purposively chosen to represent diverse learning attitudes and levels of engagement in English learning, ranging from highly enthusiastic learners to those demonstrating lower levels of interest.

To gather comprehensive primary data for this study, two main methods were employed, namely classroom observations and semi-structured interviews. Both methods were selected to provide a well-rounded understanding of how English teachers' emotional intelligence affects students' English learning at MAN 1 Kota Gorontalo, ensuring richer and more reliable findings.

Classroom observations were conducted as the initial stage of data collection to obtain first-hand insights into classroom dynamics. This stage focused on observing teachers' and students' behaviors during English lessons, particularly how teachers demonstrated emotional intelligence in real instructional settings. The observations captured aspects such as teachers' communication styles, emotional regulation, empathy, classroom management, and the overall emotional atmosphere of the classroom. In addition, students' responses, including their engagement, participation, and reactions to teachers' emotional behaviors, were also recorded. The observation and interview guides were developed based on Goleman's (2020) emotional intelligence framework and Uno's (2016) indicators of students' learning motivation to ensure that the data collection remained focused on relevant emotional and motivational dimensions.

Following the observations, semi-structured interviews were conducted with both English teachers and students. This method allowed for flexibility while still maintaining focus on key issues related to emotional intelligence and English learning (Ardiansyah et al., 2023). The interviews with teachers aimed to explore how they perceive and apply emotional intelligence in creating a positive and supportive classroom environment. Meanwhile, the interviews with students focused on their experiences and perceptions of how teachers' emotional behaviors influence their confidence, motivation, and participation in learning English.

The data collected in this study were analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases, namely transcription and familiarization, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. Interview transcripts and classroom observation notes were first transcribed and organized, then repeatedly read to gain a deep understanding of the data. The data were coded manually based on key aspects of emotional intelligence (e.g., empathy, self-regulation, and social skills) and students' learning responses (e.g., motivation, engagement, confidence, and participation). These codes were then grouped into broader themes, reviewed and refined to ensure consistency with the dataset, and clearly defined and named to reflect their meanings. Finally, the themes were presented descriptively and supported by interview quotations and observation findings to explain how English teachers' emotional intelligence influences students' English learning experiences.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section integrates the findings and discussion to present a detailed understanding of how teachers' emotional intelligence influences students' motivation in learning English. Six core themes were identified, supported by several sub-themes that reflect authentic classroom experiences and emotional dynamics. These themes reveal that emotionally intelligent teaching is a key factor in shaping students' psychological development including confidence, intrinsic motivation, emotional well-being, and future aspirations. The interpretation of these findings draws upon Goleman's (2020) five dimensions of emotional intelligence—self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills—and is discussed in relation to relevant theories and previous studies. Consistent with prior research (e.g., Nushur & Yusuf, 2021; Welmilla, 2020; Fiorilli et al., 2019; Valente & Lourenço, 2020), the present study confirms the relevance of teachers' emotional intelligence within fostering supportive classroom environments and enhancing student engagement. However, the data also reveal contextual variations in how emotional intelligence is manifested in practice, resulting in six distinctive themes that illustrate how its effect on students' English learning motivation.

Enhancing Students' Self-Confidence

Teachers' emotional intelligence was reflected in how they helped students overcome fear and build confidence when using English. Observation revealed that teachers often responded to mistakes with empathy and reassurance. One teacher gently said, *"Good try, let's fix this together,"* instead of criticizing errors. Students emphasized that appreciation boosted their courage — *"Even though I'm not very good at English, ma'am always appreciated me with applause. I felt like, 'I can actually do this,'"* (Aisyah). Such practices reflect Goleman's (2020) dimensions of empathy and self-regulation, which enable teachers to maintain a supportive emotional climate. This aligns with Fiorilli et al. (2019) and Welmilla (2020), who noted that emotionally intelligent feedback reduces anxiety and fosters engagement.

Creating a Comfortable and Supportive Learning Environment

Students described their classrooms as safe, open, and enjoyable because teachers listened without judgment and encouraged questions. Observation notes indicate that during classroom interactions particularly when students responded to questions or made mistakes teachers leaned forward, smiled, and used encouraging phrases such as “Yes, that’s a good idea” and “Let’s try again.” These responses were typically given immediately after students answered or following brief pauses of reflection. In situations where students hesitated or provided incorrect answers teachers responded with calm and supportive feedback rather than criticism.

Fatimah stated “The reason I’m not afraid to ask is because I know ma’am will answer nicely”

These classroom interactions suggest that teachers’ emotional behaviors contribute to the creation of a safe and supportive learning environment. The combination of empathetic verbal responses and positive non verbal communication helps establish trust between teachers and students. As supported by Rahman et al 2024 and Valente and Lourenço 2020 emotional safety plays a crucial role in encouraging student participation. In this context teachers’ empathy appear to reduce students’ anxiety and promote greater engagement in English learning activities

Fostering Intrinsic Motivation

Teachers also nurtured students’ intrinsic motivation by designing enjoyable and meaningful learning activities. Observations showed that lessons often included games, quizzes, and humor that kept students engaged. One teacher stated, “*I try to make my students happy when I teach them, for example by giving them games so they won’t be bored,*” (Ma’am Hana). Students confirmed this effect

“I like it when ma’am shows interesting videos and quizzes. That makes me excited,” (Ammar).

“I like listening to ma’am speaking fully in English, it makes me want to speak English fluently like her” (Maryam).

“I once heard that ma’am was a moderator with a foreign guest speaker, I think that was very impressive, I want to be like her” (Haris)

These findings align with Goleman’s (2020) motivational dimension of EI, where enthusiasm and creativity sustain engagement. Similarly, Thuy et al. (2024) and Le & Nguyen (2024) noted that emotionally engaging instruction promotes students’ internal drive and long- term motivation.

Encouraging Future Aspirations

Emotionally intelligent teachers inspired students to view English as a tool for future success. Through advice and personal stories, they encouraged learners to dream beyond the classroom. Fatimah shared, “*Since my dream is to study abroad, ma’am’s advice to improve my English is what I remember most.*” Teachers also

reminded students that English is essential for future opportunities — *“Ma’am said English could be our asset for the future. Most jobs now require English,”* (Ammar). These findings highlight the motivational and social components of EI, where teachers’ optimism influences students’ goals (Goleman, 2020). Valente & Lourenço (2020) and Chambers et al. (2018) similarly found that teacher encouragement cultivates purpose-driven learning and future-oriented motivation.

Providing Emotional Support

In the observed classroom, the teacher demonstrated attentiveness to students’ personal and emotional conditions during learning activities. When a student appeared distracted, the teacher briefly paused the lesson and quietly asked whether everything was okay before continuing instruction. In another instance, when a student forgot to bring an assignment, the teacher responded calmly by saying, “It’s okay, you can show me after class,” instead of showing frustration. The teacher also encouraged peer assistance during group activities by stating, “If your friend doesn’t understand, please guide them,” which supported collaborative learning in the classroom.

Information obtained from the teacher interview further confirmed that students’ personal difficulties, such as coming from a broken home, often affected their focus and academic performance. The teacher explained that delays in submitting assignments were not always due to laziness but often caused by deeper personal circumstances. She stated:

“For students who have personal issues or come from broken homes, what I can do is give them more attention, be more understanding when they are late in submitting assignments, and make a special personal approach to ask about their feelings so they don’t feel alone. Sometimes children are late in submitting tasks not because they are lazy, but because there are deeper reasons. After I ask, I find that their books are sometimes left in one of their parents’ houses because they are divorced. I think this shows how important it is to ask students’ reasons before giving any action.” (Ma’am Hana)

This indicates that teachers intentionally provide additional care and adopt a more understanding approach toward students facing personal challenges, ensuring that disciplinary or academic decisions are based on an understanding of students’ actual situations.

CONCLUSIONS

This study was designed to examine how English teachers’ emotional intelligence in shaping students’ motivation, confidence, and engagement in learning English at MAN 1 Kota Gorontalo. The objectives have been achieved through the identification of six core impacts of teachers’ EI: enhancing students’ self-confidence, creating supportive learning environments, fostering intrinsic motivation, encouraging future aspirations, providing emotional support, and integrating EI into professional practice. The discoveries confirm that teachers’ emotional intelligence functions not only as a personal quality but also as a pedagogical skill that shapes students’ academic and emotional experiences.

Emotionally intelligent teachers were found to create learning conditions where students felt valued, encouraged, and secure to participate actively. Their empathy, self-regulation, and motivational behaviors reduced learning anxiety and strengthened students’ sense of belonging. These findings highlight the critical role emotional intelligence plays a crucial role in humanizing English language education

and in promoting holistic student development that extends beyond linguistic proficiency. However, emotional intelligence is context-dependent and may manifest differently across individuals and classroom situations. Future research should therefore examine more specifically how key components of emotional intelligence particularly empathy, self-awareness, and motivation—affect different dimensions of student learning outcomes across diverse educational settings. In addition, employing mixed-method or longitudinal designs could provide deeper and more dynamic insights into how teachers' emotional competencies evolve over time and how these changes influence long-term student engagement.

This study suggests that such limitations may be addressed through richer and more systematic exploration of observational and interview data, which can further clarify how emotional intelligence is enacted in real classroom practice and how it directly shapes students' learning experiences. Current and future studies are encouraged to explore the integration of EI in teacher training curricula and school management systems. By emphasizing emotional intelligence as a professional standard, educators and policymakers can strengthen the emotional climate of classrooms and promote meaningful, inclusive, and sustainable learning for all students.

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