

Intercultural Competence as a Mediator Between Emotional Intelligence and Job Satisfaction: Insights from Teaching Professionals in Thailand by:

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the mediating role of intercultural competence in the relationship between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction among teaching professionals in Thailand. Employing a cross-sectional, correlational, non-experimental quantitative design, data were gathered from 200 teachers across basic education institutions using standardized and validated instruments. Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, multiple regression, and bootstrapped mediation analysis (using the PROCESS Model 4) were employed to analyze the data. Results revealed high levels of emotional intelligence ($M = 3.92$), intercultural competence ($M = 3.84$), and job satisfaction ($M = 3.81$). Emotional intelligence correlated positively with intercultural competence ($r = 0.58, p < .001$) and job satisfaction ($r = 0.60, p < .001$), while intercultural competence showed the strongest relationship with job satisfaction ($r = 0.71, p < .001$). Regression results indicated that both emotional intelligence ($\beta = 0.42$) and intercultural competence ($\beta = 0.56$) significantly predicted job satisfaction, explaining 69% of its variance. Bootstrapped mediation confirmed a significant indirect effect ($\beta = 0.21, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.11, 0.32]$), suggesting partial mediation, where intercultural competence accounted for 52.5% of the total association between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction. These findings underscore the importance of developing teachers' emotional and intercultural skills to enhance well-being and professional satisfaction in multicultural educational environments. Additionally, future studies may employ longitudinal or experimental designs to investigate how emotional intelligence and intercultural competence develop over time, impacting teacher satisfaction, performance, and retention.

Keywords: emotional intelligence, intercultural competence, job satisfaction, Thailand, mediation.

INTRODUCTION:

The globalization of education has led to increasingly multicultural classrooms, making intercultural competence a crucial skill for teaching professionals to navigate diverse norms, values, and communication styles. Additionally, Körkkö and Lutovac (2024) noted that teachers face complex emotional and relational demands, highlighting the importance of emotional intelligence in fostering adaptive responses, positive relationships, and professional effectiveness (Abebe & Singh, 2023). Empirical research indicates that emotional intelligence enables educators to manage stress effectively, resolve conflicts, and engage meaningfully with students. On the other

hand, intercultural competence facilitates effective interaction between learners and employees across cultural boundaries, contributing to professional satisfaction and well-being (Ivic et al., 2025; Vaishnav, 2024).

In the Thai educational context, the need for intercultural competence has been underscored by studies of EFL teachers and tertiary students in Thailand. For example, Taylor (2022) found that international and Thai teachers at English-medium instruction schools reported varying levels of intercultural competence, with foreign teachers typically rating themselves higher than their Thai counterparts. Similarly, Thumrongachariyakun (2020) studied teachers at an international school and identified a strong need for the development of intercultural competence in terms of attitude, knowledge, and skills. These findings demonstrate both the relevance of intercultural competence in Thailand and the lack of research exploring how emotional intelligence and intercultural competence jointly influence job satisfaction among teaching professionals.

Despite the recognition of emotional intelligence and intercultural competence as essential competencies, existing research broadly examines these constructs independently, with limited attention to their combined

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influence on job satisfaction of teaching professionals, especially in Thailand's multicultural educational settings. Moreover, the potential mediating role of intercultural competence in linking emotional intelligence to job satisfaction remains underexplored. Previous studies have often focused on generic job satisfaction or student outcomes, rather than how teachers' personal and intercultural competencies interact to shape their professional fulfillment and retention (Karanikola et al., 2025).

Addressing this gap, the present study investigated intercultural competence as a mediator in the relationship between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction among teaching professionals in Thailand. Specifically, it examined both the direct influence of emotional intelligence on job satisfaction and the indirect influence via intercultural competence, providing empirical insight into how the interplay of emotional and cultural competencies may enhance teacher well-being, engagement, and retention. The findings are pivotal to inform teacher training and professional development programs, emphasizing strategies that strengthen both emotional and intercultural competencies to promote job satisfaction in culturally diverse educational environments.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

This study is grounded in multiple theoretical perspectives that collectively examine how Emotional Intelligence (EI) influences Teachers' Job Satisfaction (TJS) through Intercultural Competence (IC) as a mediator in Thai educational settings. The framework integrates emotional, intercultural, and organizational theories to explain how personal competencies enhance professional well-being in multicultural classrooms.

The primary theoretical foundation is Emotional Intelligence Theory (Goleman, 1995), which posits that individuals with heightened emotional intelligence are better able to manage stress, resolve conflicts, and cultivate supportive professional relationships. Empirical evidence suggests that higher emotional intelligence positively contributes to job satisfaction by facilitating adaptive coping, effective communication, and classroom management in complex teaching environments (Chen & Xie, 2025; Sele & Mukundi, 2023). In Thailand's multicultural schools, emotional intelligence enables teachers to navigate diverse classroom dynamics, maintain well-being, and lay the foundation for developing intercultural skills.

Another theory that complements this, Intercultural Competence Theory (Deardorff, 2006) which conceptualizes intercultural competence as a dynamic process encompassing attitudes (openness to cultural differences), knowledge (understanding cultural norms), and skills (adaptation and communication). Teachers with high intercultural competence foster inclusive classroom climates, reduce misunderstandings among culturally diverse students, and enhance professional self-efficacy, commitment, and overall job satisfaction (Gal et al., 2025; Ulbricht et al., 2022). In the Thai

context, intercultural competence serves as a critical mediator that translates emotional competencies into tangible outcomes in multicultural teaching environments.

Cross-Cultural Adaptation Theory (Kim, 2012) frames professional adaptation in culturally diverse workplaces as a continuous process involving stress, adjustment, and internal transformation. Teachers with higher EI are more likely to develop robust intercultural competence, which allows them to manage multicultural classroom challenges effectively and achieve higher job satisfaction (Haikuo, 2025; Liao et al., 2021).

Additionally, the Job Demand-Resources (JD-R) Model (Demerouti et al., 2001) posits that emotional intelligence and intercultural competence serve as personal resources that buffer job demands, including classroom complexity, cultural diversity, and workload pressures. These resources enhance engagement, reduce stress, and improve overall job satisfaction in multicultural educational settings.

Finally, Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005) emphasizes the relational dimension of work, suggesting that teachers with higher emotional intelligence and intercultural competence establish positive exchanges with colleagues, students, and parents. Such interactions reinforce motivation, commitment, and perceived professional value.

Drawing on these perspectives, the study proposes that Intercultural Competence (IC) mediates the relationship between Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Teachers' Job Satisfaction, such that higher emotional intelligence enhances intercultural competence, which in turn fosters greater job satisfaction. Focusing on teaching professionals in Thailand, this framework provides context-specific insights into how emotional and intercultural competencies interact to support effective teaching and professional well-being in culturally diverse educational environments.

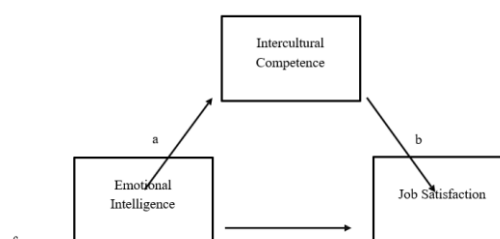


Figure 1. Schematic Diagram showing the interplay of the variables

Research Problems

- How do the respondents assess their emotional intelligence?
- How do the respondents assess their job satisfaction?
- How do the respondents assess their intercultural competence?

- Is there a significant relationship between emotional intelligence, job satisfaction, and intercultural competence?
- Is there a significant difference in the level of emotional intelligence and the level of job satisfaction among the respondents when grouped according to their demographic profile?
- Is there a significant difference in the intercultural competence of the respondents according to their nationality?
- Which of the variables of concern (emotional intelligence and intercultural competence) singly or in combination predict job satisfaction?
- To what extent does intercultural competence mediate the relationship between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction?

Null Hypotheses

- Ho1 There is no significant relationship between the level of emotional intelligence and the level of job satisfaction.
- Ho2 There is no significant difference in the level of emotional intelligence and the level of job satisfaction among the respondents when grouped according to their demographic profile.
- Ho3 There is no significant difference in the intercultural competence of the respondents according to their nationality.
- Ho4 None of the variables of concern (emotional intelligence and intercultural competence) singly or in combination predicts job satisfaction.
- Ho5 Intercultural competence does not mediate the relationship between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a cross-sectional, correlational, non-experimental quantitative design, which allows for data collection without manipulating variables (Setia, 2016), enabling the examination of relationships among variables and the testing of mediation effects. This design was particularly appropriate for investigating whether Emotional Intelligence (EI) is associated with Teachers' Job Satisfaction (TJS) through Intercultural Competence (IC) as a mediating variable.

The study was conducted among basic education teachers in Thailand, using a stratified convenience sampling technique to ensure representation across public and private institutions, as well as among Thai and foreign teachers.

The sample size was determined using G*Power 3.1 software to ensure sufficient statistical power for both direct and indirect effects. An a priori power analysis for linear multiple regression with two predictors, an alpha level of 0.05, and a medium effect size ($f^2 = 0.15$), following Cohen's (1988) guidelines, indicated that at

least 107 participants were required to achieve a statistical power of 0.95. To account for potential non-responses and incomplete data, the sample size was increased to 200 teachers, thereby strengthening the reliability and generalizability of the findings. Data were collected using structured questionnaires with established and validated scales adapted to the Thai educational context to ensure both reliability and cultural appropriateness. A pilot test was conducted with 30 teachers to assess clarity, internal consistency, and content

validity before full-scale data collection.

Emotional Intelligence (EI): 20 items based on Goleman's (1995) framework, demonstrating excellent model fit (CFI = 0.962, TLI = 0.954, RMSEA = 0.046 [90% CI: 0.040–0.053], SRMR = 0.030) and internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.93$).

Teachers' Job Satisfaction (TJS): 20 items adapted from Bhatti et al. (2019) and Hamaidi et al. (2019), showing strong fit (CFI = 0.958, TLI = 0.950, RMSEA = 0.048 [90% CI:

0.041–0.056], SRMR = 0.032) and reliability ($\alpha = 0.92$). Intercultural Competence (IC): 18 items adapted from Fantini (2022) with excellent fit indices (CFI = 0.965, TLI = 0.957, RMSEA = 0.045 [90% CI: 0.038–0.052], SRMR = 0.028) and high reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.91$).

These results confirm that all scales demonstrated strong construct validity and reliability, supporting their appropriateness for subsequent analyses.

Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) were used to answer Problems 1–3. Pearson's r correlation was applied for Problem 4 to assess relationships among variables. Independent samples t -tests and one-way ANOVA were used to examine group differences (Problems 5–6). Effect sizes (Cohen's d and η^2) were calculated to determine the magnitude of these differences. For Problem 7, multiple regression analysis identified significant predictors of job satisfaction. To ensure the validity of results, assumption tests were performed, confirming acceptable levels of normality (Shapiro–Wilk), linearity, homoscedasticity, and absence of multicollinearity ($VIF < 2$). Finally, for Problem 8, bootstrapped mediation analysis was performed using Hayes' PROCESS Macro (Model 4) with 5,000 resamples and 95% confidence intervals to test the mediating role of intercultural competence in the relationship between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction. This method provides more robust estimation than the Sobel test, reducing Type I error. All participants were informed about the study's purpose, the voluntary nature of their participation, and the anonymity and confidentiality of their responses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1 presents the respondents' Emotional Intelligence (EI) as measured through Goleman's (1995) framework. The overall weighted mean of 3.92 (SD = 0.88) indicates

that respondents “often” demonstrate emotional intelligence, corresponding to a high level of emotional intelligence. The result suggests that teachers generally possess a strong ability to recognize, understand, and regulate their emotions, skills essential for fostering positive interactions and maintaining an emotionally supportive classroom environment.

Among the items, the highest mean score was noted in “I know when I am happy” (M = 4.23, SD = 0.87), reflecting a strong sense of emotional self-awareness among respondents. Conversely, the lowest mean was found in “I rarely fly off the handle at other people” (M = 3.72, SD = 1.00), suggesting that while teachers generally manage their emotions effectively,

maintaining composure in stressful or conflict-prone situations remains an area for improvement. These variations support Goleman’s (1995) premise that self-awareness forms the foundation of emotional competence, whereas self-regulation requires sustained practice and reflection to achieve emotional balance in professional contexts.

Table 1. Assessment of Respondents’ Emotional Intelligence (n = 200)

Indicators	Mean	SD	Description	Interpretation
1 I realize immediately when I lose my temper.	3.96	0.98	Often	High EI
2 I know when I am happy.	4.23	0.87	Always	Very High EI
3 When I am being ‘emotional’ I am aware of this.	3.98	0.87	Often	High EI
4 Awareness of my own emotions is very important to me at all times.	4.07	0.89	Often	High EI
5 I can ‘reframe’ bad situations quickly.	3.82	0.98	Often	High EI
6 I rarely ‘fly off the handle’ at other people.	3.72	1.00	Often	High EI
7 I can let anger go quickly so that it no longer affects me.	3.83	0.89	Often	High EI
8 I can suppress my emotions when I need to.	3.92	0.87	Often	High EI
9 I am able to always motivate myself to do difficult tasks.	3.88	0.91	Often	High EI
10 I am usually able to prioritize important activities at work and get on with them.	3.83	0.86	Often	High EI
11 I believe you should do the difficult things first.	3.90	0.82	Often	High EI
12 I can always motivate myself even when I feel low.	3.83	0.74	Often	High EI
13 I am always able to see things from the other person’s viewpoint.	3.93	0.85	Often	High EI
14 I am excellent at empathizing with someone else’s problem.	3.98	0.81	Often	High EI
15 I can usually understand why people are being difficult.	3.79	0.90	Often	High EI
16 I can sometimes see things from others’ points of view.	3.83	0.89	Often	High EI
17 I am an excellent listener.	4.05	0.84	Often	High EI
18 I am good at adapting and mixing with a variety of people.	3.99	0.83	Often	High EI
19 I am good at reconciling differences with other people.	3.93	0.92	Often	High EI
20 I generally get along well with the people I work with.	3.81	0.88	Often	High EI
Weighted Mean	3.92	0.88	Often	High EI
Remarks: 2.61 – 3.40 Moderate JS				

Anchored on Goleman’s Emotional Intelligence Theory, this result reinforces the notion that emotionally intelligent individuals can effectively manage their internal states and interpersonal relationships, leading to professional success and psychological well-being (Goleman, 1995). The findings in this study align with those of Khassawneh et al. (2022), who found that educators with higher levels of emotional intelligence tend to enhance student learning outcomes. Another empirical evidence further supports these findings. Wang (2022) reported that teachers’ emotional intelligence significantly contributes to student achievement. Similarly, Sumatra (2021) demonstrated that emotional intelligence positively predicts teachers’ job performance and interpersonal collaboration, particularly among experienced educators. Sasere and Matashu (2025) highlighted that emotionally intelligent school leaders foster teacher well-being and instructional quality, demonstrating that emotional intelligence has a systemic influence within school organizations. In the same vein, Khattak et al. (2025) confirmed that emotionally intelligent teachers exhibit greater empathy and communication skills, thereby strengthening classroom inclusivity and collegial

relationships, an essential trait in culturally diverse educational contexts, such as Thailand.

Collectively, these studies reinforce Goleman’s (1995) assertion that emotional intelligence enhances professional functioning. The high level of emotional intelligence exhibited by respondents in this study reflects their ability to remain composed, empathetic, and motivated in the face of classroom challenges and intercultural demands. These results indicate that teachers exhibit a high level of emotional intelligence, which serves as a crucial foundation for effective teaching, intercultural competence, and job satisfaction. Moreover, the findings emphasize that strengthening emotional regulation and reflective practices through professional development can further enhance teachers’ emotional resilience and their capacity to create inclusive, harmonious, and productive educational environments in 21st-century classrooms.

Table 2. Assessment of Respondents’ Job Satisfaction (n = 200)

Indicators	Mean	SD	Description	Interpretation
1 My income is adequate for normal expenses.	3.73	1.08	Often	High
2 I am well paid in proportion to my ability.	3.64	1.00	Often	High
3 I receive recognition from my immediate supervisor.	3.69	0.98	Often	High
4 I receive full recognition for my successful teaching.	3.71	1.03	Often	High
5 When I teach a good lesson, my immediate supervisor notices.	3.81	0.97	Often	High
6 Working conditions in my school are comfortable.	3.83	1.00	Often	High
7 Teaching provides me with an opportunity to advance professionally.	3.87	0.94	Often	High
8 My immediate supervisor offers suggestions to improve my teaching.	3.74	1.05	Often	High
9 Teaching provides an opportunity for promotion.	3.74	1.01	Often	High
10 Teaching provides for a secure future.	3.67	0.98	Often	High
11 Teaching is very interesting work.	3.84	0.91	Often	High
12 My colleagues stimulate me to do better work.	3.70	0.95	Often	High
13 I have made lasting friendships among my colleagues.	3.85	1.00	Often	High
14 I get along well with my colleagues.	3.94	0.92	Often	High
15 Teaching encourages me to be creative.	3.98	0.89	Often	High
16 My students respect me as a teacher.	3.92	0.94	Often	High
17 My students are aware of our boundaries being their teacher.	3.91	0.89	Often	High
18 My immediate supervisor makes available the material I need to do my best.	3.78	0.99	Often	High
19 My immediate supervisor gives me assistance when I need help.	3.87	0.99	Often	High
20 My immediate supervisor explains what is expected of me.	3.84	1.03	Often	High
Remarks: 4.21 – 5.00 Very High JS 3.41 – 4.20 High JS 2.61 – 3.40 Moderate JS	Weighted Mean	3.81	0.98	Often
			1.00 – 1.80 Very Low JS	

Table 2 presents the respondents’ level of job satisfaction across twenty indicators. The overall weighted mean of 3.81 (SD = 0.98) indicates that the respondents often experience job satisfaction, corresponding to a high level, suggesting that teachers generally perceive their professional experiences positively and find meaning in their work.

The highest mean (M = 3.98) was observed in the statement “Teaching encourages me to be creative,” suggesting that creativity serves as a significant source of intrinsic satisfaction. This implies that teachers derive fulfillment from opportunities that allow them to innovate, design engaging lessons, and exercise autonomy in their instructional approaches. Teachers who experience greater professional creativity reported higher levels of job satisfaction due to increased engagement and ownership of their teaching methods (Belay et al., 2022; Kaya, 2024). The following highest indicators, “I get along well with my colleagues” (M = 3.94) and “My students respect me as a teacher” (M = 3.92), emphasize the importance of positive social interactions and mutual respect in the school environment. These findings align with Leley et al. (2025), who noted that collegial relationships and

student rapport are among the strongest predictors of teacher satisfaction in various educational settings.

Conversely, the lowest mean ($M = 3.64$) was observed in the statement, “I am well paid in proportion to my ability,” indicating that financial compensation is the least satisfying aspect of the teaching profession. Despite overall high satisfaction levels, teachers continue to view pay as inadequate relative to their efforts and professional qualifications. This supports the findings of Kiiza et al. (2025), who both observed that financial dissatisfaction remains a persistent concern affecting teachers’ morale and retention.

Anchored in the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model, these findings illustrate that job satisfaction arises when the resources available to teachers, such as supportive relationships, autonomy, and meaningful work, outweigh the job demands, including workload and limited pay. The high levels of satisfaction in areas related to creativity, collegiality, and recognition suggest that intrinsic and social resources play a critical role in sustaining teachers’ motivation and well-being, even when extrinsic rewards are insufficient. Overall, the results indicate that teaching professionals in Thailand experience high job satisfaction primarily due to non-

monetary and relational factors, which provide a sense of purpose, belonging, and accomplishment.

Table 3 presents the respondents’ levels of intercultural competence, encompassing knowledge of cultural diversity, intercultural skills, and intercultural attitudes. The overall weighted mean of 3.84 ($SD = 0.91$) indicates that teaching professionals in Thailand “often” exhibit intercultural competence, corresponding to a high level of competence.

Anchored on Deardorff’s (2006) model, these results suggest that the respondents possess strong foundational attitudes of openness, curiosity, and respect, which translate into practical knowledge and skills in intercultural contexts. According to the theory, intercultural competence develops through an internal process, beginning with positive attitudes and evolving into knowledge, skills, and external outcomes, such as appropriate and effective behavior in intercultural situations. Thus, the high mean score reflects that teachers not only understand cultural differences but can also apply this understanding in their professional interactions with culturally diverse colleagues and students.

The highest mean ($M = 4.00$) corresponds to the item “I adjusted my behavior, dress, etc., as appropriate, to avoid offending my hosts”, reflecting behavioral adaptability, a key outcome in Deardorff’s model and a manifestation of emotional regulation and empathy. Teaching professionals who can regulate emotions and empathize with others are more likely to adjust their behaviors to maintain culturally sensitive relationships. This finding aligns with Chen and Hu (2023), who reported high intercultural sensitivity among university students in Macao, especially in the dimension of respect for cultural differences. Likewise, Jaber et al. (2024) found that teachers with higher levels of emotional awareness exhibited stronger intercultural adaptability, which contributed to improved workplace relationships and satisfaction.

Indicators	Mean	SD	Description	Interpretation
1. I could cite a definition of culture and describe its	3.84	1.02	Often	High
2. I knew the essential norms and taboos of the host culture	3.94	0.97	Often	High
3. I recognized signs of culture stress and some strategies for	3.83	0.90	Often	High
4. I could contrast important aspects of the host language and	3.74	0.95	Often	High
5. I could describe a model of cross-cultural adjustment	3.73	0.99	Often	High
6. I demonstrated flexibility when interacting with persons	3.88	0.80	Often	High
7. I adjusted my behavior, dress, etc., as appropriate, to avoid	4.00	0.90	Often	High
8. I used strategies for learning the host language and about	3.92	0.94	Often	High
9. I demonstrated a capacity to interact appropriately in a	3.81	0.84	Often	High
10. I used appropriate strategies for adapting to the host culture	3.82	0.85	Often	High
11. I helped to resolve cross-cultural conflicts and	3.83	0.93	Often	High
12. I monitored my behavior and its impact on my learning, my	3.84	0.87	Often	High
13. I demonstrated willingness to interact with host culture	3.89	0.87	Often	High
14. I tried to understand differences in the behaviors, values,	3.88	0.92	Often	High
15. I adapted my behavior to communicate appropriately as	3.80	0.95	Often	High
16. I dealt with my emotions and frustrations with the host	3.72	0.88	Often	High
17. I reflected on the impact and consequences of my decisions	3.86	0.88	Often	High
18. I showed interest in new cultural aspects.	3.82	0.95	Often	High
Weighted Mean	3.84	0.91	Often	High

intelligence are more likely to develop intercultural competence, which in turn enhances their job satisfaction through smoother communication, reduced conflict, and stronger social belonging. Muhammad and Sorooshian (2024) similarly demonstrated that intercultural competence significantly mediates the relationship between emotional intelligence and professional well-being, as culturally competent individuals experience greater fulfillment and motivation at work, which becomes successful (Jones et al., 2020).

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Overall, the results underscore that the respondents demonstrate high levels of intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes, reflecting both emotional maturity and cultural adaptability. This supports the proposition that intercultural competence not only reflects emotional intelligence in action but also strengthens job satisfaction by fostering harmonious and inclusive professional relationships in multicultural educational settings.

Table 4. Correlation Matrix

- Note. $p < .001$ (two-tailed)
- to ± 0.10 Negligible Correlation; ± 0.10 to ± 0.30 Weak Correlation; ± 0.30 to ± 0.50 Moderate Correlation; ± 0.50 to ± 0.70 Strong Correlation;
- ± 0.70 to ± 1.00 Very Strong Correlation (Cohen, 1988)

Table 4 presents the Pearson correlation coefficients among emotional intelligence, intercultural competence, and job satisfaction of teaching professionals in Thailand. The analysis reveals that emotional intelligence is strongly and positively correlated with intercultural competence ($r = 0.58$, $p < .001$), indicating that teachers who can effectively perceive, understand, and manage emotions are more effective in engaging with diverse cultural contexts. This is consistent with the study of Abdyrakhmanova and Poór (2023), who reported that emotional intelligence significantly predicts cross-cultural competence in educational settings. Emotional intelligence also shows a strong positive correlation with job satisfaction ($r = 0.60$, $p < .001$). This finding indicates that teachers with higher emotional intelligence are more likely to experience professional fulfillment and satisfaction. Supporting this, Abebe and Singh (2023) found that employees' emotional intelligence is positively associated with job satisfaction and work performance in higher education contexts.

The strongest relationship is observed between intercultural competence and job satisfaction ($r = 0.71$, $p < .001$), indicating that teachers who are more culturally aware, flexible, and adaptable tend to report higher levels of satisfaction in their professional roles. The study of Wu et al. (2023) found that teachers with high intercultural competence experience greater well-being and engagement in multicultural classrooms. Similarly, Ilie (2019) reported that intercultural competence positively influences professional satisfaction by facilitating effective interaction and reducing stress in diverse work environments.

Overall, the results indicate that both emotional intelligence and intercultural competence are strongly associated with job satisfaction among teaching professionals, with intercultural competence demonstrating the strongest correlation. These findings provide empirical support for the study's conceptual framework, highlighting the potential mediating role of intercultural competence in the relationship between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction.

Table 5. Differences in Emotional Intelligence and Job Satisfaction Across Demographic Profiles

Table 5 presents the results of t-tests and one-way ANOVAs examining whether levels of emotional intelligence (EI) and job satisfaction (JS) differed significantly when respondents were grouped according to demographic characteristics. According to the JD-R model, job resources can enhance employee well-being and satisfaction, especially when job demands remain constant (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Recent research on the well-being of teachers confirms that age and tenure serve as personal resources that support positive outcomes (Hohensee & Weber, 2022).

For emotional intelligence, age groups differed significantly, $F(4, 195) = 4.25$, $p = .008$, with the ≥ 45

years group ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 0.92$) and the 40-44 years group ($M = 3.97$, $SD = 0.93$) showing the highest scores. This pattern suggests that more mature teachers may have developed stronger emotional-regulation and adaptive skills over time, consistent with the notion that accumulated experience constitutes a job resource that moderates job demands. Teaching experience also yielded significant results for emotional intelligence, $F(3, 196) = 4.45$, $p = .006$, where teachers with ≥ 15 years ($M = 3.98$, $SD = 0.93$) reported the highest level compared to < 5 years ($M = 3.71$, $SD = 0.88$). These findings align with recent research demonstrating that experienced teachers possess greater personal and professional resources, leading to higher well-being (Tsuyuguchi, 2023). In contrast, no significant differences in emotional intelligence emerged for gender, $t(198) = 0.78$, $p = .437$, educational attainment, $F(2, 197) = 1.85$, $p = .161$, or nationality (Thai vs. Foreigner), $t(198) = 1.12$, $p = .266$.

Regarding job satisfaction, the age groups again showed a significant difference, $F(4, 195) = 3.90$, $p = .012$, with the 40-44 years ($M = 3.88$, $SD = 0.96$) and ≥ 45 years ($M = 3.91$, $SD = 0.95$) groups reporting higher satisfaction than younger groups. Similarly, teaching experience related significantly to job satisfaction, $F(3, 196) = 3.97$, $p = .010$, with ≥ 15 years ($M = 3.90$, $SD = 0.99$) showing the highest satisfaction. These results align with the motivational arm of the JD-R model, which posits that as personal resources increase with age and experience, job satisfaction improves, even if demands remain constant. Conversely, job satisfaction did not differ significantly by gender, $t(198) = 0.64$, $p = .524$; educational attainment, $F(2, 197) = 1.12$, $p = .329$; or nationality, $t(198) = 0.97$, $p = .334$.

In sum, the results reveal that demographic groups with greater maturity and experience report higher levels of both emotional intelligence and job satisfaction. From the model's perspective, age and experience can be

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conceived as personal resources that enhance a teacher's capacity to manage demands and engage meaningfully in their roles (Zhou et al., 2024). These findings are relevant for understanding which teacher segments may be best positioned to fully realize resource-driven satisfaction outcomes in multicultural educational settings in Thailand.

A t-test was conducted to examine whether respondents' intercultural competence differed significantly based on their nationality (Thai vs. Foreign). Results showed a significant difference in intercultural competence between Thai teachers ($M = 3.82$, $SD = 0.91$) and foreign teachers ($M = 3.95$, $SD = 0.89$), $t(198) = 2.10$, $p = .037$, indicating that foreign teachers reported higher levels of intercultural competence than their Thai counterparts.

From the perspective of Intercultural Competence Theory, this finding suggests that teachers with backgrounds involving greater exposure to diverse cultural contexts developed stronger knowledge, attitudes, and skills for intercultural interaction. The theory posits that intercultural competence develops through the intentional acquisition of attitudes, knowledge, and skills, which then manifest in appropriate behaviour (Deardorff, 2006). In a teaching context, foreign teachers may have more frequent opportunities to refine these components, thereby reporting higher self-assessed intercultural competence.

Furthermore, the result aligns with empirical research in Thailand and the region. For instance, Taylor (2022) found that in-service international teachers in Thai EMI/CLIL contexts rated their intercultural and target

language competencies higher than those of Thai teachers, indicating that nationality and contextual exposure serve as differentiating factors. Similarly, Papadopoulou et al. (2022) noted that teachers in multicultural educational settings who possess greater global and intercultural awareness tend to demonstrate higher intercultural and global competence, supporting the idea that background diversity can be a resource for enhancing competence.

In addition, this difference can be conceptualized within the framework of the Job Demands–Resources Model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). In this model, personal resources (in this case, intercultural competence) help individuals cope with demands and enable positive outcomes. Nationality may serve as a proxy for access to varied cultural experiences, which enhances personal resources; thus, foreign teachers may possess a stronger intercultural competence, enabling better adaptation to culturally diverse teaching environments and potentially leading to better professional outcomes.

However, it is important to note that nationality alone does not guarantee intercultural competence. As research by Cancino & Nuñez (2023) highlighted, teachers may possess high intercultural sensitivity yet struggle to integrate those skills into classroom practice effectively. This suggests that while the significant difference by nationality is meaningful, ongoing professional development and context-specific support remain essential for both Thai and foreign teachers to realize intercultural competence in practice fully.

Table 7. Multiple Regression Analysis of Emotional Intelligence and Intercultural Competence as Predictors of Job Satisfaction

Constant (Intercept)	1.150	0.210	–	5.476	<.001	–
Emotional Intelligence	0.420	0.065	0.420	6.462	<.001	1.25
Intercultural Competence	0.560	0.067	0.560	8.358	<.001	1.25

Model Fit

$R = 0.83$, $R^2 = 0.69$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.68$, $F(2, 197) = 217.52$, $p < .001$

The multiple regression analysis presented in Table 7 revealed that both emotional intelligence (EI) and intercultural competence (IC) significantly predict job satisfaction among teaching professionals. The model demonstrated a strong fit ($R = 0.83$, $R^2 = 0.69$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.68$), indicating that the combined contribution of emotional intelligence and intercultural competence explains 69% of the variance in job satisfaction. The regression was significant, $F(2, 197) = 217.52$, $p < .001$. Specifically, emotional intelligence emerged as a significant predictor ($\beta = .420$, $t = 6.462$, $p < .001$), suggesting that teachers with higher emotional intelligence are more likely to report greater job satisfaction. This finding aligns with recent research reporting positive associations between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction in teaching and higher-education contexts (Abdallah, 2025; Hulda & Zhu, 2023).

Intercultural competence proved to be the stronger predictor ($\beta = .560$, $t = 8.358$, $p < .001$), indicating that teachers who display higher capability in navigating diverse cultural settings and interactions tend to experience even higher job satisfaction. This result aligns with recent studies indicating that intercultural competence enhances teacher engagement, classroom adaptability, and satisfaction in multicultural settings (Guo & Laokulrach, 2023).

From the lens of the Job Demands-Resources (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), both emotional intelligence and intercultural competence function as personal resources that can buffer job demands and foster positive outcomes such as job satisfaction. In this context, emotional intelligence helps teachers regulate emotional demands and interact effectively, whereas intercultural competence equips them to manage cultural demands

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and diverse interactions. The more substantial effect of intercultural competence may reflect the relevance of culturally adaptive competence in international or multicultural teaching settings, where cultural resources become critical for job satisfaction.

In sum, the findings support the conceptual framework of this study that personal resources (emotional intelligence and intercultural competence) are

significant predictors of job satisfaction and underscore that intercultural competence holds a dominant role in this predictive relationship among teaching professionals. These results underscore the need for professional development programs that foster both emotional intelligence and intercultural competence to enhance teacher satisfaction and retention in culturally diverse educational environments.

Table 8. Mediation Analysis of Intercultural Competence Between Emotional Intelligence and Job Satisfaction (n = 200)

Effect	Label	Estimate	SE	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper	Z	p	% Mediation
Indirect	$a \times b$	0.210	0.052	0.112	0.318	4.038	<.001	52.50
Direct	c	0.190	0.070	0.053	0.327	2.714	0.007	47.50
Total	$c + a \times b$	0.400	0.055	0.293	0.507	7.273	<.001	100.00

The mediation analysis was conducted to examine the extent to which intercultural competence (IC) mediates the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and job satisfaction (JS) among teaching professionals. The results presented in Table 8 indicate a significant indirect effect of emotional intelligence on job satisfaction through IC ($a \times b = 0.210$, $SE = 0.052$, 95% CI [0.112, 0.318], $Z = 4.038$, $p < .001$). This suggests that teachers with higher emotional intelligence tend to demonstrate greater intercultural competence, which in turn enhances their job satisfaction. The direct effect of EI on JS remained significant ($c = 0.190$, $SE = 0.070$, 95% CI [0.053, 0.327], $Z = 2.714$, $p = .007$), indicating that emotional intelligence also influences job satisfaction independently of intercultural competence. The total effect ($c + a \times b = 0.400$, $SE = 0.055$, 95% CI [0.293, 0.507], $Z = 7.273$, $p < .001$) confirms that overall, emotional intelligence significantly predicts job satisfaction. Approximately 52.5% of the total effect was mediated by intercultural competence, indicating partial mediation.

These findings are consistent with Intercultural Competence Theory (Deardorff, 2006), which posits that personal emotional and social awareness facilitates effective cross-cultural interactions and improves professional outcomes. Teachers with higher emotional intelligence are better able to navigate cultural differences, which enhances their satisfaction in diverse classroom environments. Additionally, the findings align with the Job Demands-Resources (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), which highlights personal resources, such as intercultural competence, as protective factors that help employees meet job demands, reduce stress, and increase job satisfaction.

Recent empirical studies support these results. For example, a study conducted by Theeuwes et al. (2025) found that intercultural competence mediated the relationship between personal competencies and teacher engagement in multicultural classrooms. Similarly, Guo and Laokulrach (2023) reported that teachers with higher intercultural competence reported greater professional satisfaction and work engagement, particularly in culturally diverse educational settings (Romijn et al., 2021).

In a nutshell, the mediation analysis reveals that intercultural competence serves as a significant partial mediator between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction. This underscores the importance of developing both emotional intelligence and intercultural skills in teacher training and professional development programs to enhance overall job satisfaction in multicultural teaching contexts.

Table 9. Path Analysis Estimates for the Mediation Model of Emotional Intelligence, Intercultural Competence, and Job Satisfaction

The path analysis examined the relationships among emotional intelligence (EI), intercultural competence (IC), and job satisfaction (JS) among teaching professionals. As shown in Table 9, emotional intelligence significantly predicted intercultural competence ($\beta = 0.438$, $SE = 0.079$, 95% CI [0.283, 0.593], $Z = 5.544$, $p < .001$), indicating that teachers with higher emotional intelligence tend to develop stronger intercultural competence. This finding aligns with prior research, which demonstrates that emotional intelligence enhances one's ability to recognize and manage emotions in cross-cultural interactions, a critical skill for effective teaching in culturally diverse environments (Guo & Laokulrach, 2023).

Intercultural competence also significantly predicted job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.479$, $SE = 0.076$, 95% CI [0.330, 0.628], $Z = 6.303$, $p < .001$), suggesting that teachers who are adept at navigating cultural differences are more likely to experience higher levels of professional fulfillment. This result is consistent with the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R), which posits that personal resources, such as intercultural competence, enable employees to effectively meet job demands and enhance

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their well-being, particularly in multicultural work settings. Recent studies support this pathway, highlighting that intercultural competence contributes to higher engagement, satisfaction and retention among teachers in international or culturally diverse schools (Dzerviniks et al., 2024; Pintor & Premazzi, 2024).

The direct path from emotional intelligence to job satisfaction was also significant ($\beta = 0.190$, $SE = 0.070$, 95% CI [0.053, 0.327], $Z = 2.714$, $p = .007$), indicating that emotional intelligence independently contributes to teachers' job satisfaction beyond its effect through intercultural competence. This reinforces the role of emotional intelligence as a key personal

resource that not only facilitates social and intercultural interactions but also directly enhances professional well-being (Abebe & Singh, 2023).

Overall, the path analysis confirms that intercultural competence partially mediates the relationship between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction. Teachers with high emotional intelligence are more likely to develop intercultural competence, which subsequently boosts job satisfaction. These findings highlight the importance of developing both emotional intelligence and intercultural skills in teacher training and professional development programs, especially in multicultural educational settings.

CONCLUSIONS

This study concludes that teachers in Thailand generally possess high levels of emotional intelligence and intercultural competence, both of which are strongly associated with greater job satisfaction. Teachers with higher emotional intelligence are better equipped to manage interpersonal relationships and classroom challenges. Those with greater intercultural competence demonstrate adaptability, openness, and respect for diversity, thereby fostering collaboration and inclusion in multicultural classrooms.

Results from the mediation analysis revealed that intercultural competence partially mediates the association between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction, accounting for approximately half of the total effect. This finding suggests that emotional competencies enhance satisfaction, at least in part, through improved cultural adaptability. Grounded in the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Model, the study underscores emotional intelligence and intercultural competence as key personal resources that buffer stress, promote well-being, and sustain professional resilience. Overall, the findings affirm that emotional intelligence and intercultural competence are vital to teachers' well-being and job satisfaction in culturally diverse educational environments. By highlighting intercultural competence as a pathway through which emotional intelligence relates to satisfaction, the study advances understanding of how emotional and cultural capacities interact to foster inclusive and fulfilling teaching experiences. Nevertheless, given the cross-sectional and self-reported nature of the data, these associations should be interpreted as correlational rather than causal in nature.

Recommendations

Guided by the findings of this study, the following are recommended:

Educational institutions should design and implement integrated training programs that combine emotional intelligence (EI) and intercultural competence (IC) to strengthen teachers' overall professional effectiveness. Training modules should emphasize self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, and stress management,

alongside intercultural communication, conflict resolution, and cultural adaptability. Embedding these competencies into teacher preparation, induction, and evaluation systems can foster reflective practice, promote professional growth, and enhance workplace harmony. Additionally, schools are encouraged to establish peer-mentoring systems in which senior or culturally experienced teachers guide new or foreign teachers in addressing emotional and intercultural challenges. Activities such as team-teaching initiatives, intercultural exchange workshops, and collaborative learning sessions can build collegiality, mutual respect, and cross-cultural understanding among teaching staff. School administrators should foster emotionally supportive and culturally inclusive environments that value empathy, cooperation, and open communication. Leadership initiatives

may include intercultural dialogue workshops, team-building activities, and continuous feedback systems to strengthen teacher well-being and engagement. At the policy level, institutions should incorporate EI and IC indicators into teacher performance evaluations, promotion criteria, and professional standards frameworks, ensuring that these competencies are recognized and developed as part of ongoing efforts to improve teacher quality.

Education policymakers should integrate EI and IC dimensions into national teacher standards and continuing professional development (CPD) frameworks. Periodic assessments can help identify teachers' strengths and areas for growth, guiding targeted interventions that sustain motivation, job satisfaction, and teaching effectiveness in diverse educational contexts.

Future studies are encouraged to employ longitudinal or experimental designs to investigate how emotional intelligence and intercultural competence develop and impact job satisfaction, engagement, and retention. Expanding the research across different educational levels and ASEAN contexts could provide comparative insights and test the universality of these competencies in promoting teacher well-being and inclusivity.

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