

## The Role of Teacher-Student Relationship in Enhancing Engagement and Academic Outcomes in Business Education

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### Abstract

This paper investigates the role of teacher-student relationships, emotional intelligence, cultural diversity, and institutional climate in management education. Based on a review of 57 academic articles and a survey conducted with 23 students from top Indian management schools, including IIM Trichy and SPJIMR, findings of the research suggest that strong institutional climates effectively nurture inclusivity, collaboration, and approachability, even in the absence of special curricula on EI and diversity. Key findings indicate that 73.9% of the respondents found their teachers approached interactions with empathy, 91.3% praised the diversity efforts, and 91.3% of students agreed or strongly agreed that their institutions celebrate diversity and encourage inclusive discussions. The study highlights some gaps in the integration of EI and diversity into core curricula and calls for improved mentorship and customized support to further strengthen TSRs and to better prepare students for leadership.

**Keywords:** Teacher-Student Relationships (TSRs), Student Engagement, Academic Outcomes, Pedagogy in MBA Programs, Barriers to Engagement in Higher Education, Professional Competencies in MBA Students

### Introduction

The relationships between teachers and students (TSRs) are fundamental to successful learning in MBA programs, where growth extends past academic performance to encompass the cultivation of leadership and professional skills. These relationships defined by trust, respect, and empathy shape the dynamics of engagement in diversified and globalized classrooms based on cultural diversity, emotional intelligence, and institutional climate (Markey et al., 2023). With an upward trend towards cultural diversity in MBA programs, teachers face a scenario in which norms and communication patterns differ therefore, an environment that is both inclusive and equitable must be developed (Bećirović & Bešlija, 2018). Moreover, emotional intelligence has been established as an important factor for professional and interpersonal success and aids in trust building, conflict management, and teamwork within such environments. However, inconsistency in the

integration and assessment of EI in educational practice remains a challenge (Sánchez-Álvarez, 2020). Moreover, institutional climate in the form of policies, resources, and support systems influences the quality of TSRs because it either enables or limits effective faculty-student interaction (Osman, 2022; Marmet, 2023). Despite the integrations achieved, such as inclusive policies and technological tools, this still faces challenges like limited resources and rigid academic structures, which are common in multicultural settings (Zahra, 2021). The paper aims to counter the above challenges while examining the role of cultural diversity, the influence of emotional intelligence, and the impact of institutional climate on TSRs in MBA programs while offering actionable insights to optimize such relationships in line with the dual objectives of achievement of academic and professional success.

### **Teacher-Student Relationships in MBA Education**

Teacher-student relationships (TSRs) form the cornerstone of effective learning environments, significantly influencing not only academic performance but also the emotional and professional growth of students. In the context of MBA programs, these relationships take on a heightened importance. Unlike the traditional learning space, MBA classrooms are dynamic places that ring out with different views. They breed future leaders able to take up challenges in the global business arena.

Positive TSRs foster students' cognitive, emotional, and behavioural engagement, which is typified by open communication, mutual respect, and trust. These relationships are far from simple interactions of information; they become catalysts in the development of critical thinking, teamwork, and leadership skills a must for business success. On the other hand, strained TSRs may restrict the development of these vital skills, decreasing engagement and slowing learning. MBA programs come with unique challenges in forming Teacher-Student Relationships (TSRs). Primarily, adult learners juggle academic and professional responsibilities, which forces educators to be more personalized in their approach toward each student. Additionally, the programs are very culturally diverse, making instructors navigate through various norms, ways of communication, and expectations, all to achieve a rapport with students. Educators have changed from knowledge dispensers in this dynamic learning environment to architects who create an environment of collaboration, empathy, and inclusiveness. This paper will focus on how TSR in MBA education lies on three fundamental dimensions: cultural diversity, emotional intelligence, and institutional climate. The paper discusses the dimensions on which TSR rests in the learning environment of the MBA program with regard to addressing student engagement in relation to closing the gap between academic outcomes and industry expectations.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is rooted in **Social Exchange Theory** (Homans, 1958), which proposes that relationships are built on the exchange of mutual benefits and reciprocity.<sup>1</sup> Within the context of **MBA education**, teacher-student relationships (TSRs) flourish when both instructors and students perceive value in their interactions. Survey data corroborates this framework:

- **90.9%** (20 out of 22) of students **agree or strongly agree** that teachers are approachable (Q1), highlighting a perception of mutual accessibility.

- **86.4%** (19 out of 22) of students **agree or strongly agree** that teachers demonstrate empathy (Q4), indicating the presence of emotional value in these relationships.
- **81.8%** (18 out of 22) of students **agree or strongly agree** that institutions provide resources (Q8). This suggests that institutional support acts as a valuable "resource" that, when exchanged, strengthens TSRs.

## Literature Review

### Teacher-Student Relationships and Cultural Diversity in Education

The relationship between teachers and students, commonly referred to as TSR, in modern education, refers to the relationship between teachers and students modulated by the impact of cultural diversity. The quality of this relationship is important not only for the performance of students in academics but also for their well-being and for creating an engaging learning process. This review brings together insights from five studies, shedding light on how TSR and cultural diversity intersect, shaping educational equity, student success, and engagement across various settings and age groups.

The following are the articles researched for the purpose of this study-

Title	Summary	Authors
<b>The Role of TeacherStudent Relationships (TSR)</b>	Supportive TSR enhances academic success, emotional well-being, and engagement. Adverse TSR or perceived favouritism can marginalize students.	Xu et al., 2023; Fontenot, 2024; Bećirović & Bešlija, 2018; Baysu et al., 2021
<b>Cultural Diversity in the Classroom</b>	Diverse viewpoints enrich education but pose challenges like unconscious bias and cultural misrepresentation.	Markey et al., 2023; Baysu et al., 2021; Bećirović & Bešlija, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 2022
<b>Culturally Responsive Teaching</b>	Integrating students' cultural identities into pedagogy fosters strong TSRs through inclusive curricula and discussions.	Markey et al., 2023; Fontenot, 2024; Bećirović & Bešlija, 2018; Xu et al., 2023

<b>Challenges in Multicultural Settings</b>	Educators must balance cultural norms with educational goals; TSR dynamics vary across individualistic/collectivistic cultures.	Bećirović & Bešlija, 2018; Xu et al., 2023; Baysu et al., 2021
<b>The Role of Institutions and Policies</b>	Institutions promoting equality and diversity strengthen TSRs. Assimilation-focused policies may harm minority student outcomes.	Markey et al., 2023; Baysu et al., 2021

### **Influence of emotional intelligence on TSRs in MBA education**

According to Daniel Goleman, Emotional Intelligence (EI) is the capability to perceive, comprehend, and control one's emotions and to perceptively recognize and influence the emotions of others. Goleman identifies self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills as the five components of EI. All these constituents taken together are crucial in developing good interpersonal relationships between teachers and students, among others. (Fianko, S. K., Jnr,

*S. A. J. S. A., & Dzogbewu, T. C. (2020))*

The following are the articles researched for the purpose of this study-

Title	Summary	Authors
<b>Understanding Emotional Intelligence</b>	EI is the ability to perceive, understand, and control one's emotions and affect others' feelings. Goleman identifies five key components crucial for TSRs.	Fianko et al., 2020
<b>Measuring Emotional Intelligence</b>	EI assessment includes traitbased measures (selfreporting), ability-based measures (objective emotional tasks), and composite models like the Emotional Competence Inventory.	Conte, 2005; Mayer et al., 2016; Joseph & Newman, 2010

<b>Relevance of EI to TSRs</b>	TSRs in MBA programs extend beyond knowledge transmission to nurture emotional and professional development. High EI in teachers creates trust and inclusivity; high EI in students improves stress management and collaboration.	Law et al., 2004; Houghton et al., 2012
<b>Emotional Intelligence in Teaching</b>	Teachers' EI is critical for building trust, managing classrooms, and enhancing engagement. EI training programs improve selfawareness, emotion regulation, and classroom practices.	Asrar-ul-Haq et al., 2017; Hen & Sharabi-Nov, 2014; Dolev & Leshem, 2016; Akhmetova et al., 2014; Mohzan et al., 2013
<b>Teacher EI and Student Engagement</b>	Teachers' EI improves participation, academic achievement, and satisfaction. Empathy and emotional regulation enhance trust and engagement.	Mohzan et al., 2013; Zhou et al., 2024; Al Jaber et al., 2024; Perera & DiGiacomo, 2013; Halimi et al., 2020; Sánchez-Álvarez et al., 2020
<b>EI and Leadership Development</b>	Teachers with high EI model empathy and adaptability, fostering leadership traits. EI supports transformational leadership through empathy and social intelligence.	Parrish, 2015; Cavazotte et al., 2011; Crossan et al., 2012; Sadri, 2013
<b>Developing EI in MBA Programs</b>	MBA programs integrate EI through training, workshops, and coaching. Strategies include experiential learning, team-building, and roleplaying to develop selfawareness and communication skills.	Gilar Corbí et al., 2018; Sigmar et al., 2012; Filice & Weese, 2024; Fall et al., 2013; Crossan et al., 2012; Conrad & Newberry, 2011

<b>Student EI and Collaboration</b>	High EI students excel in group dynamics and crosscultural collaboration. EI principles underpin Cultural Intelligence (CQ) training, which increases satisfaction in international contexts.	Taras et al., 2013; Fall et al., 2013; Ramsey & Lorenz, 2014
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### **Institutional Climate: The Foundation of Relationships**

Institutional climate is fundamental to the functioning of any academic institution, influencing the experiences of both students and educators. It encompasses the overall atmosphere within an institution, marked by inclusivity, resource accessibility, and opportunities for professional growth.

Title	Summary	Authors
<b>Defining Institutional Climate</b>	Encompasses inclusivity, resource accessibility, and professional growth opportunities. A positive climate fosters cooperation and trust.	Wang & Calvano, 2022; Al-Kurdia, 2020; Dhar, 2013
<b>Inclusivity</b>	Ensures diverse stakeholders feel recognized. Institutions with diversity initiatives show improved TSRs and outcomes.	Osman, 2022; Mallik, 2020; Sharma, 2021; Bueno & Banagan, 2024
<b>Resources &amp; Technology</b>	Advanced LMS, AI, and VR tools enable personalized interactions and enhance TSRs. Digital/physical resources boost MBA engagement.	Kim & Park, 2022; Ibrahim, 2023; Arbaugh, 2024; Thompson P., 2019
<b>Professional Development &amp; Policies</b>	Faculty training and policies (e.g., flipped classrooms, mentorship) improve TSRs and classroom engagement.	Marmet, 2023; Chen, 2024; Fisher, 2018; Al-Kurdia, 2020
<b>Systemic Challenges &amp; Solutions</b>	Funding gaps and rigid structures limit TSRs. Solutions: hands-on learning, collaborative projects, and	Bilash, 2020; Arbaugh, 2024; Osman, 2022; Patricia D., 2012

	industry partnerships.	
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While existing research in the domain of teacher-student relationships and emotional intelligence delivers many important insights, there are still critical gaps in knowledge and practice for the most valuable understanding and improvement of MBA education. First, many focus on shortterm outcomes such as academic performance and classroom dynamics, leaving the long-term impacts of TSRs and EI less understood. Further, there is a need to understand how these two factors affect career success, leadership competencies, and lifelong learning post-MBA. Again, while cultural diversity may be the common divisor in many studies, most of them deal with it in the global business scenario rather than in the microcosms created in MBA classrooms where issues of cross-cultural dynamics make a difference in TSR. More work should be done to better understand how the institutional climate and cultural diversity interact in shaping TSRs in different regional and institutional settings.

More importantly, although the institutional policies and resources are oft-cited, the intangible factors, including faculty attitude, institutional ethos, and interpersonal rapport, do not receive sufficient attention. Only then would closing these gaps make room for standardized metrics of TSR evaluation, longitudinal studies tracking their evolution, and culturally appropriate interventions in consideration of diverse demographic profiles within MBA cohorts. Bridging the gaps will not only enhance research in this area but also provide concrete strategies to bring about more inclusive, effective, and impactful educational environments.

### Methodology

A mixed-method approach was adopted for this study, covering a thorough literature review and primary data collection. The aim was to investigate the dynamics of teacher-student relationships in management education, especially in the context of emotional intelligence, cultural diversity, and institutional climate.

### Gathering of Data from Secondary Sources

A search of relevant academic literature was conducted by an extensive search using three major databases: Google Scholar, ProQuest, and Scopus. It focused on articles published in leading journals, such as Higher Education Pedagogies, Frontiers in Psychology, Journal of Applied Psychology, and Academy of Management Learning & Education. This list is supplemented by the inclusion of academic books and institutional research reports to broaden the review.

A total of **84 articles** were identified initially. Each article was evaluated for relevance based on predefined inclusion criteria:

- Articles discussing TSRs specifically in higher education or management education.
- Articles exploring TSRs in relation to emotional intelligence, cultural diversity, or institutional climate.

Those articles that focused on educational levels, such as junior school or high school, were excluded, as were those that did not engage with the intersection of TSRs and the key themes of this study in an MBA context. Using this selection criterion, **57 articles** could be included in the review.

### **Analysis of Management Curricula**

To understand how EI and diversity-related education are integrated into the curricula of MBA programs, we examined the curricula of the top 40 management institutions in India as per the NIRF rankings. The analysis showed that most of the institutions do not offer any specialized courses on EI or cultural diversity. Some of the existing courses are available only as second-year electives, and they are mostly offered to students specializing in either Organizational Behavior (OB) or Human Resource Management (HRM). The non-availability of their inclusion across core curricula is an indication of a massive gap in management education.

### **Primary Data Collection**

To supplement the literature review, a primary survey was conducted to directly derive insights from students in these top-ranked management institutions. The questionnaire consisted of 12 questions with a 5-point Likert scale to assess the TSRs in the following dimensions:

- General TSR review.
- The role of EI in TSRs.
- Cultural diversity and inclusion.
- Institutional climate.
- Peer-to-peer learning and collaboration.

In addition to multiple-choice questions, there were also open-ended questions, which allowed the students to comment personally on their experiences and, therefore, to provide qualitative feedback. The survey was carried out among the students from these institutions to ensure a diverse sampling of opinions and therefore to get a well-rounded representation.

### **Selection of Tools and Methodology Rationale**

Understanding TSRs in management education requires a holistic approach, covering systematic literature review, curriculum analysis, and primary data collection. This design was chosen to identify the gaps in previous research, to thoroughly assess the current state of MBA curricula, and to gather direct insights from students. The findings will provide support for the development of practical and academically grounded recommendations.

### **Sample Size and Representativeness**

The survey was administered to 23 students from 12 top-ranked Indian management institutions, including IIM Trichy, IIM Indore, IIM Kozhikode, IIM Mumbai, IIM Lucknow, IIM Ahmedabad, IIM A, IIM Sambalpur, IIM Tiruchirappalli, IIM JAMMU, NMIMS, SP Jain, IIFT, XLRI Jamshedpur, IIT Bombay, and XIMB (Table 1). The sample includes students from diverse graduating years (2020–2026), reflecting varied academic experiences (e.g., 2020: 2 respondents; 2022: 2; 2023: 1; 2024: 3; 2025: 8; 2026: 7).



While the sample size is small (n=23), it provides representation across leading Indian B-schools and aligns with exploratory qualitative research standards (Creswell, 2014). The findings are not generalizable to all MBA programs but offer preliminary insights into TSR dynamics in Indian management education.

**Table 1: Distribution of Survey Respondents by Institution**

Institution	Number of Respondents
IIM Trichy	5
IIM Indore	2
IIM Kozhikode	2
IIM Mumbai	2
IIM Lucknow	1
IIM Ahemdabad	1
IIM A	1
IIM Sambalpur	1
IIM Tiruchirappalli	1
IIM JAMMU	1
NMIMS	1
SP Jain	1
IIFT	1
XLRI Jamshedpur	1
IIT Bombay	1
XIMB	1

<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>
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### Questions included in the Survey

#### Survey Title:

Teacher-student relationships in Top Management Institution

#### Survey Description:

We aim to evaluate the quality of Teacher-Student Relationships (TSRs) in top management institutions and their impact on academic and professional success.

#### Questions (5-point Likert scale) Section 1: General TSR Evaluation

1. My teachers are approachable and willing to help outside of class.
2. My teachers provide constructive feedback that helps me improve.
3. I feel that my teachers are invested in my academic and professional growth.

#### Section 2: Emotional Intelligence in TSRs

4. My teachers demonstrate empathy when addressing student challenges.
5. My teachers are effective in managing classroom dynamics and resolving conflicts.

#### Section 3: Cultural Diversity and Inclusion

6. This institution celebrates cultural diversity and encourages inclusive discussions in classrooms.
7. My institution creates an environment where students from all backgrounds feel included and respected.

#### Section 4: Institutional Environment

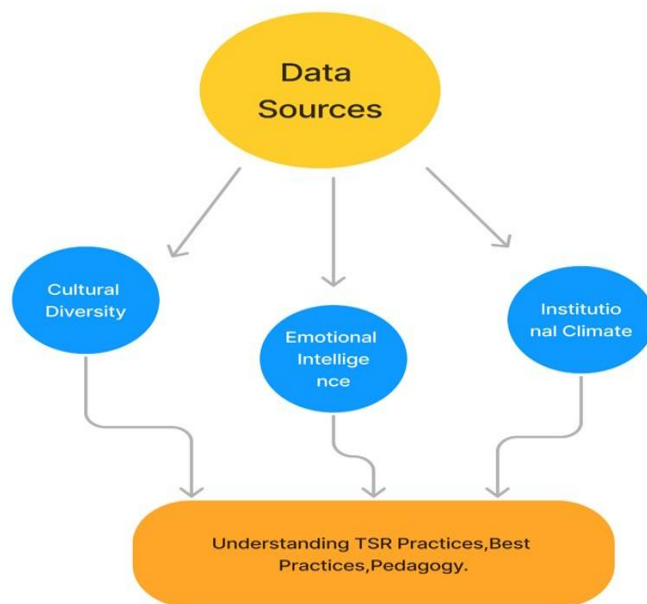
8. The institution provides resources and support systems that enhance teacher-student relationships.
9. Institutional policies and practices encourage collaboration between teachers and students.

#### Section 5: Peer-to-Peer Learning and Collaboration

10. Peer-to-peer learning opportunities in this institution enhance my academic and professional skills.

#### Section 6: Open-Ended Questions

11. What aspects of teacher-student relationships in your institution contribute most to its success?
12. How can teacher-student relationships in your institution be further improved?



## Results

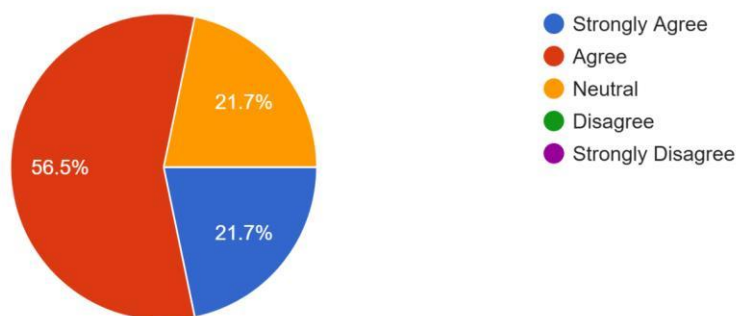
With a survey conducted among 23 students from top management schools in India—IIM Trichy, IIM Kozhikode, IIM Indore, SPJIMR, and XLRI—valuable insights emerged regarding teacherstudent relationships (TSRs), institutional climate, and peer collaboration. In terms of teacherstudent relationships, 100% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their teachers are approachable and willing to help outside of class, highlighting a culture of accessibility and support. Nearly 87% acknowledged receiving constructive feedback, while 86.9% agreed that teachers effectively handle classroom dynamics and resolve conflicts. However, while 73.9% agreed or strongly agreed that teachers demonstrate empathy in addressing challenges, 17.4% were neutral, suggesting room for improving emotional connections. Regarding cultural diversity and inclusion, 91.3% of students agreed or strongly agreed that their institutions celebrate diversity and encourage inclusive discussions, and 100% affirmed that their institutions create environments where students from all backgrounds feel respected and welcomed. For institutional climate and peer collaboration, 95.6% agreed that institutional policies foster collaboration between teachers and students, and 95.6% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that peer-to-peer learning opportunities enhance their academic and professional skills, reflecting the importance of collaborative environments in these institutions.

Open-ended responses revealed critical success factors for TSRs, including teacher approachability, with many students praising professors' accessibility for mentorship, academic guidance, and project support. Formal mentorship programs where students are paired with faculty for continuous guidance were also frequently mentioned. Interactive teaching methods,

such as real-world problem-solving, case-based learning, and student debates, were highlighted as fostering engagement, with one student noting, "Professors push students to debate, synthesize discussions, and reach logical conclusions." Additionally, collaborative efforts such as faculty involvement in projects, competitions, and workshops stood out, as many professors were noted for providing detailed reviews and personalized feedback.

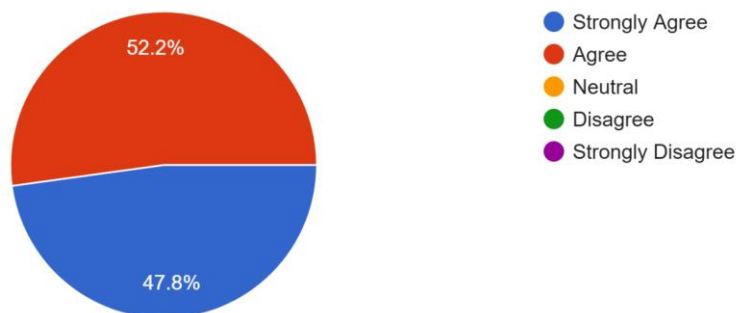
I feel that my teachers are invested in my academic and professional growth.

23 responses



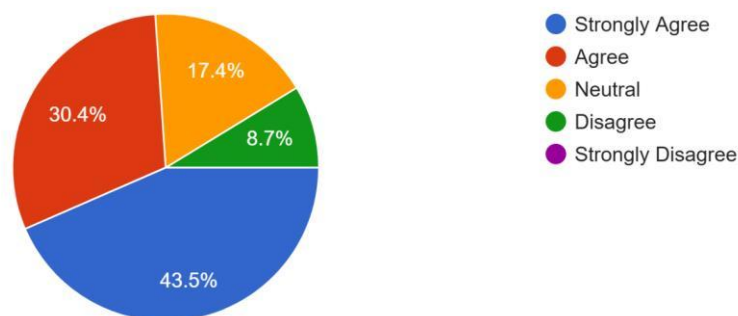
My institution creates an environment where students from all backgrounds feel included and respected.

23 responses



My teachers demonstrate empathy when addressing student challenges.

23 responses



## Discussions

Although there has been extensive research in the field of TSR and how it affects academic achievements, emotional well-being and development of leadership. There have been limited studies when it comes to the impact of these relationships in the context of MBA education. Despite the global recognition of EI in enhancing TSR, its direct inclusion in MBA curricula is inconsistent, often being limited to being a second-year elective that is only for students' option for HRM specialization, depriving other students of the results. Additionally, the role of institutional climate-encompassing inclusivity, accessibility of resources, and integration of technology in supporting TSRs within diverse classrooms of business schools are underexplored. This study tries to address these gaps.

## Highlighting Important Findings

An analysis of India's top-ranking MBA colleges' curricula (according to Nirf rankings 2024) was conducted, which presented the notable lack of specialized courses on EI and diversity.

The primary survey conducted amongst the students and alumni from these institutions, however, presented a different reality. The results showed that students were satisfied and agreed with stress management, empathy, and engagement shown by their professors at these institutions. Additionally, 78% highlighted that instructors with emotional intelligence foster an inclusive and participative learning environment, which in turn boosts satisfaction and professional readiness. These institutions boast an inclusive environment for students of all walks, castes, creeds, and colors. This, in turn, enhances peer-to-peer collaboration among students and leads to heightened emotional intelligence, rationale, and morals of inclusivity among both the professors and students. The results are in accordance with earlier studies like Sanchez alvarez, which emphasized a strong positive relationship between EI and academic performance. Xu et al. 2023 highlights the importance of culturally important education in higher education for increased engagement. This study goes one step further by emphasizing how institutional climate, especially in MBA programs with a diverse student body, amplifies TSRs. The paper emphasizes the significance of TSRs in building emotional resilience, promotion of leadership, and teamwork in MBA programs, unlike earlier studies, which focused more on the transactional aspect of these

relationships. This viewpoint gives us a deeper understanding of the way TSRs act as a foundation for both personal and professional development.

### **Addressing Limitations**

This study, relying on self-reported data, may be subject to biases and reflects only participants' perceptions. Its generalizability is restricted since it focuses solely on Indian management institutions. Additionally, the cross-sectional design employed limits the ability to evaluate the long-term effects of TSRs on leadership development and career outcomes. Future research should address these limitations by incorporating mixed-method approaches, expanding the sample to include international MBA programs, and utilizing longitudinal designs to enhance the study's reliability and depth.

### **Strategic Implications for the Future**

This study relies on self-reporting questionnaires based on a 5-point Likert scale, which may introduce bias due to subjective perceptions of the participants. The long-term aspects and relationships of these factors on leadership abilities and career outcomes are not studied.

Future research in this direction can address these limitations by adopting mixed-method approaches, including more samples and international MBA programs to build depth and width in studies related to this field.

### **Conclusions**

This is an important study since Teacher-Student Relationships are very instrumental in the formation of academic success and professional competence within an MBA program. The consideration of such dynamics with gaps in teaching Emotional Intelligence points out an institutional culture developing into a holistic approach to management education. These findings represent a first step towards further research and actionable initiatives in creating inclusive and transformative learning environments. These results can lead to answering the changing needs in global business leadership and how MBA and related programs can sustain their impact in relevance to the demands of the future.

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