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# The Role of Emotional Intelligence in Leadership

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## ABSTRACT

Emotional intelligence (EI) has emerged as a central competency in determining leadership effectiveness across diverse organizational contexts. This paper examines the intricate relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership, emphasizing how core EI competencies, self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills enhance leaders' ability to connect with followers, manage conflict, and foster collaborative, high-performing teams. Drawing upon established models and recent research, this study analyzes various leadership styles and their dependence on emotional competencies, highlighting the profound role of EI in shaping organizational culture and driving performance. The paper also investigates methods of assessing and developing emotional intelligence in leaders, acknowledging the challenges associated with its integration in leadership practice. The findings support the view that emotionally intelligent leadership is not only desirable but essential for creating psychologically healthy and effective workplaces in an increasingly dynamic and emotionally complex world.

**Keywords:** Emotional Intelligence (EI), Leadership Effectiveness, Self-Awareness, Empathy, Transformational Leadership, Social Skills, Organizational Climate.

## INTRODUCTION

Emotions drive people's lives, serving as powerful forces that can influence choices and actions significantly. Emotions not only impact individual behaviors but are also a crucial source of information for decision-makers who adeptly utilize them as integral parts of their reasoning processes. All human activities are, in fact, intimately connected to emotional experiences, highlighting the profound role that our feelings play in daily interactions and choices. Consequently, emotion and mood are of critical and undeniable importance across the spectrum of human existence, encompassing every facet of life, including leadership. A leader's ability to profoundly understand not only one's own emotions but also the emotions of others, while successfully utilizing that invaluable information to enhance performance in oneself and promote achievement in others, is utterly paramount. The craft of effective leadership implies being adept at molding emotions in much the same way as shaping strategic plans, with the aim to motivate, inspire, and galvanize collective action. Good leaders, therefore, are those who can inspire their teams, engage with their followers, and enhance overall productivity. All of these crucial activities rely heavily on emotional perception and person perception, as well as the capacity to respond in ways that are harmonious with those perceptions, fostering an environment of trust and collaboration. Leadership has a profound impact on performance, and to a degree, this effect is consistent across different contexts, countries, and cultures worldwide. However, the success of leadership partly depends upon a diverse range of skills and personality traits, which can vary significantly among different leaders. It is posited that a leader's Emotional Intelligence is deeply related to their overall leadership effectiveness, emphasizing the need for leaders to cultivate this skill. A considerable number of authors and scholars consistently consider emotional intelligence to be the very Heart of Leadership, underscoring its essential role in the effectiveness and success of leaders in any environment [1, 2].

### **Understanding Emotional Intelligence**

Emotional intelligence is defined as the ability to be aware of and handle one's emotions in varying situations. Individuals who can assess their own and others' emotions and adapt their behavior in the environment, empowering them are expected to be leaders. Emotional intelligence includes five categories: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skill. Although IQ and technical skills are important aspects of leadership, emotional intelligence is the most essential contributor to effective leadership. The work on emotional intelligence has created widespread interest in organizations. However, some of the writings on emotional intelligence are difficult to comprehend, several surveys are uncomfortable to administer, and interviews are awkward to schedule. It has been suggested that emotional intelligence is a better predictor of performance than general intelligence. Research explored how effective leaders use emotional intelligence, its impact on organizational climate and financial performance, and how emotional and social competencies can be learned. The research identified key emotional and social competencies that distinguished outstanding corporate performers from average ones. Psychologically intelligent leadership is the effective enhancement of organizational climate and financial performance via the application of emotional and social intelligence. In emotionally intelligent organizations, managers apply emotionally intelligent leadership and consequently foster psychologically healthy workplaces. The study analyzed interviews and assessments of managers, focusing on work experience. It yielded distinct competencies within five categories. Core skills consisted of: knowing yourself (accurately recognizing one's feelings), maintaining control (regulating emotions and moods), and reading others (perceiving emotion in others). Higher-order skills consisted of: perceiving accurately (perceptiveness in understanding social situations and in reading others), and communicating flexibly (articulation, persuasiveness, assertiveness, and listening) [3, 4].

#### **Definition and Components**

Emotional intelligence has become a popular and widely publicized concept in the last several years and has recently generated interest in leadership. Emotional intelligence is defined as the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one's feelings and actions. The broad domain of emotional intelligence includes the following four areas. The first is perception, appraisal, and expression of emotion, which is the ability to perceive accurately, appraise, and express emotion; to access and/or generate feelings when they facilitate thought; to understand emotion and emotional knowledge; and to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth. The second is facilitating thought, which is the ability to induce feelings that facilitate thought or understanding. The third is understanding and analyzing emotion, which is the ability to understand and analyze emotions and emotional knowledge. The fourth is reflective regulation of emotion, which is the ability to control and monitor emotions and feelings. Researchers are now addressing leadership styles and their effects on followers' attitudes, behaviors, job satisfaction, and performance. Surprisingly, little inquiry has emerged on the role of emotional intelligence in leadership and its relationships with these leadership styles. Perhaps even more surprisingly, far less attention has been given to emotional intelligence in teacher leadership. The purpose of the present study is to investigate the self-reported frequency of specific leader behaviors in relation to it in a large district-wide sample of teachers. Questionnaires reporting self-reported leadership behaviors and emotional intelligence were administered to a sample of more than 800 teachers in a Kansas school district [5, 6].

#### **Historical Background**

Over the last twenty years, leadership theories have evolved to include charismatic, visionary, and transformational leadership, moving away from the traditional "great man" theory suggesting some individuals are inherently leaders. Research led to "trait theories" examining behavioral styles of managers and the emotional connections they have with employees. Effective leaders must manage their emotions to motivate their teams and make sound decisions. They have also aimed to cultivate a positive organizational culture through enthusiasm and passion. As organizations grow, top executives often rely on middle and lower-level officials for management tasks, leading to the emergence of "situational leadership theory," which posits that a leader's influence stems from situational awareness. There is a heightened focus on emotional intelligence (EI) and its significant role in effective leadership. EI is suggested as a critical factor for leaders' success; those with high EI are more likely to exhibit transformational behaviors. Individuals with EI are aware of their co-workers' feelings, utilizing this awareness to enhance communication and problem-solving at work. Leaders who can regulate emotions effectively tend to drive positive organizational outcomes, increasing overall productivity and effectiveness. Research underscores the vital role of leaders' emotional intelligence in enhancing

organizational success. The emotional climate within an organization is shaped by its members, and the ability to navigate emotions effectively is beneficial for anyone in an organizational role [7, 8].

### **The Importance of Emotional Intelligence in Leadership**

The role that emotional intelligence plays in leadership is prominently apparent within many different leadership styles. It is critical to note that even in leadership styles that are not typically recognized for their strong emotional intelligence characteristics, possessing a high level of emotional intelligence can significantly improve their overall effectiveness and impact. However, to genuinely lead and inspire followers, it is essential to adopt charismatic or transformational leadership styles. The key fundamental difference between these two prominent styles lies in the followers' emotional attachment and connection to their leader. This emotional bond is crucial in fostering loyalty and engagement. A leader must make a concerted effort to attend to and address the emotional needs of their followers to develop this bond. If a leader consistently demonstrates genuine care, empathy, and respect for a follower, the follower's performance is likely to see substantial enhancement and improvement. Emotional intelligence not only contributes to effective leadership but also significantly influences the degree to which leadership effectiveness is achieved. This study will utilize a thorough literature analysis to deeply understand how emotional intelligence contributes to the development and maintenance of effective leadership practices. Moreover, the rich experience of this journey in authentic leadership is thoroughly explored, with special emphasis placed on the essential outside-in steps such as recognizing and understanding various emotions; fostering empathy; and examining how these aspects come together to present a leadership style that truly reflects these emotional stimuli and responses in practice [9, 10].

### **Key Emotional Intelligence Skills for Leaders**

Effective leadership hinges on a range of emotional intelligence skills that empower leaders to inspire, foster relationships, resolve conflicts, and cultivate environments where employees flourish. Leaders must possess self-awareness to comprehend and manage their emotions, alongside self-regulation to maintain composure. They also need motivation to pursue group objectives and empathy to recognize the emotional states of others, coupled with social skills to influence behavior effectively. These five core abilities blend innate traits with cognitive flexibility, presenting a compelling framework for leadership growth. Emotionally intelligent leaders create strong relationships that emphasize assessment, motivation, empathy, and social abilities. They remain grounded in self-awareness, uphold emotional climates during personal challenges through self-regulation, exemplify optimism in pursuing collective goals, and actively engage in social strategies to inspire desired behaviors. Conversely, some leaders may lack self-awareness and self-regulation, leading to questionable actions devoid of concerns for negative outcomes. Such individuals may exploit their positions without accountability. In contrast, emotionally adept leaders utilize their authority judiciously, carefully observing their surroundings to inform their understanding of social dynamics and decision-making processes. This understanding is balanced with empathy and the ability to influence, allowing them to build trust and rapport. By adapting their communication style and demeanor for diverse audiences, these leaders emerge as wise figures, catalyzing the potential of both individuals and organizations [11, 12].

### **Emotional Intelligence and Leadership Styles**

Leadership style influences a group through a leader's characteristics and practices. Generally, leadership styles fall into two categories: non-task-oriented, which focuses on human relations and psychological needs, and task-oriented, which prioritizes job production. A study investigated the relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership styles among early childhood professionals. Results showed a significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence and both leadership styles. Specifically, both non-task-oriented and task-oriented styles correlate positively with self-emotional appraisal, others-emotional appraisal, emotion regulation, and emotion use, with differences in correlation coefficients. Non-task-oriented styles are linked to using emotion, while task-oriented styles relate to emotion regulation. Early childhood professionals generally adopt democratic and participative approaches and effectively use emotions to enhance performance, particularly in managing others' moods. A strategy should be implemented to ensure sufficient resources for maintaining leadership capabilities. Emotional intelligence levels of decision-makers should be assessed and adjusted as needed. A clear standard for the required emotional intelligence for effective leadership should be established, along with a plan to help future leaders develop their strategies accordingly [13, 14].

### **Measuring Emotional Intelligence**

Over the past three decades, a wide array of methods has been developed to effectively measure emotional intelligence (EI), showcasing the growing interest and importance of this field in both academic and practical settings. While it is impractical to provide a detailed and exhaustive overview of every single

method available for measuring EI within the constraints of this article, we will take the opportunity to highlight several key approaches that have gained significant prominence and recognition among scholars and practitioners alike. Additionally, we will delve into a novel method for measuring EI, which employs a leadership framing approach, offering a fresh and innovative perspective in this increasingly relevant area. This particular scale has quickly emerged as the most extensively utilized instrument among researchers actively engaged and invested in the field of emotional intelligence. The development and refinement of this scale are ongoing, as it is continually updated and meticulously maintained to ensure that it remains both relevant and immensely valuable for understanding new contributions to the extensive study of EI. In order to foster further advancement and deeper comprehension in this vital domain, validation studies and prospective applications utilizing the scale are strongly encouraged. Such efforts can lead to significant insights and enhancements, deepening our understanding of emotional intelligence and its various impacts on personal and professional relationships [15, 16].

### **Developing Emotional Intelligence in Leaders**

While it may not be possible to teach the capacity for emotional intelligence, it is possible to develop emotional capacity and emotional intelligence competencies in leaders. Based on the research presented, this chapter offers implications for developing leaders with high emotional capacity, emotional competencies, and overall emotional intelligence. Leaders' cognitions and self-perception anticipated to enhance their emotional capacity, are discussed. Developing emotional perception abilities and greater self-awareness will enhance individuals' capacity to understand and manage their emotions. Collaboration with social feedback mechanisms, including informal feedback from peers, superiors, and a 360-degree review, is suggested. To enhance emotional competencies associated with leadership effectiveness and positive leadership performance perception, leaders should apply many of the findings in the previous chapter. Accurate perception of leadership emotion practices by subordinates and reporting of positive emotional practices are expected to promote the perception of effective leadership and positive performance perception. This includes both expressed emotion practice and experienced emotion practice. There is a growing body of research suggesting a focus on school leader development toward emotionally intelligent leaders with perceptions of positive emotional practices. Recent research tends to treat emotional intelligence as a fixed trait. However, it would be far more useful to treat emotional intelligence in its broader sense of emotional skills or competencies that could be developed in administrators. Importantly, emotional intelligence is most beneficial for competitive tasks, whereas cognitive ability is more predictive in non-competitive situations. There may be different types of competencies for different types of leadership, and negative emotional intelligence conceptualizations might create ambiguity and misinterpretation. More broadly, an academic tone and model potentially undermine working group assessment and trustworthiness. Practical viewpoints on emotional intelligence measurement could reinforce the vagueness conceptualizations around the potential influence of longer-term institutional fit and dynamics. The complexity of emotional intelligence ultimately raises the question as to whether it can actually be relegated to a model-based test [17, 18].

### **Challenges in Implementing Emotional Intelligence in Leadership**

One of the main difficulties in understanding a leader's emotional landscape is the belief that they should separate emotions from leadership. Leaders are often seen as rational beings, with emotions viewed as a hindrance. This notion arises when the emotional climate is poor, leading to evasion of vulnerability instead of embracing it. Additionally, there's a misconception that leaders' emotional expressions must be controlled and unidimensional, making the emotional climate safe yet bland. Inauthenticity is another significant challenge, as leaders often feel pressured to maintain a strong, unblemished exterior. This perception is appealing because a stable leader offers hope and comfort. However, many leaders struggle with emotional intelligence; they fail to connect with their teams or manage their emotions effectively. Emotionally intelligent leaders recognize and handle their feelings, engaging personally with colleagues. Some high-performing leaders may disguise their insecurities and maladaptive behaviors under terms like "honesty" or "candor," leading to public outbursts that can hinder employee engagement and emotional well-being. Understanding the emotional landscape requires recognizing diverse factors like gender, personality styles, emotional health, upbringing, and previous experiences [19, 18].

### **Case Studies of Successful Leaders**

Sometimes, individuals rise to leadership despite overwhelming odds. Nelson Mandela exemplifies this through his pivotal role in the battle against Apartheid in South Africa, showcasing how emotional intelligence can effectively influence leadership. He facilitated a nonviolent transition from Apartheid, serving as the first democratically elected leader and becoming an icon of peace. His early life in the Thembu clan instilled a strong sense of social responsibility and a sensitivity to justice. Mandela aimed to

follow in his father's footsteps as a tribal chief, but after his father died, he was raised by a guardian. This approach to leadership reflects empathy, as described in Daniel Goleman's emotional intelligence model. Mandela's university education exposed him to discrimination and shaped his values, enabling him to connect with diverse groups. In 1944, he joined the African National Congress (ANC) and sought a nonviolent political approach to challenge restrictive laws. He convinced ANC leaders to adopt a new strategy, launching the Defiance Campaign against Apartheid in 1952. His journey from assistant regional secretary to head of the ANC was rapid. Mandela's emotional intelligence was crucial in advancing the ANC's goals, and he leveraged his family's wealth to support its initiatives. Nonetheless, he faced challenges, including a pro-Apartheid organization in the arts that forced him to prioritize the ANC's internal cohesion. His imprisonment brought psychological burdens but also led to a willingness to compromise and collaborate. He developed strategies to overcome leadership stalemates, advocating for cooperation and genuinely seeking to understand opposing viewpoints while remaining at peace despite adversity [20, 21].

### **Future Trends in Emotional Intelligence and Leadership**

The Fiorentina Theatre Foundation's research indicated the emergence of the concept of emotional intelligence (EI) as one of the incorporeal states, the perception of which is extremely difficult. Behind success, happiness, and a good and productive life lies emotional intelligence and its adequate application. Historical roots of EI point to the 7th century B.C, when Plato's state education model included more emotional, moral, and ethical subjects. At present, emotional intelligence is understood as a practice of recognition, perception, assessment, and controlling own and others' emotions. The effectiveness of leadership and the gap between EI and IQ in successful service and other spheres are very salient. EI has an indirect effect on feelings of effectiveness and satisfaction, directly through achieving team goals and through encouragement and influence on team behaviors. Emotional intelligence and leadership are central topics for organizations, specifically, the public sector. There is a long history in both self-government bodies and national agencies of leadership without any emphasis on skills, competencies, or properties. There has been no targeted investigative attention into the nature, learning, and development of skills and competencies, especially ones that can be largely trained, to obtain, and to develop, to influence, and deliver public services. A consequence is a deficit of leaders in the local government, the national agency, and related bodies, and shared underachievement against a backdrop of a position of power and influence. Every organization has leaders, chief executives, and managers. Many believe leadership is unsuccessful and has failed in the public sphere. It fails to deliver value for customers, citizens, and the nation as a whole. It delivers unhelpful competition for departmental budgets and across supposedly joined-up organizations, bureaucracy, frustration, inefficiencies, stymies, constraints, and dysfunction. Mistakes made today, either by ineffective leaders or managerial candidates, will have an influence on the next years or decades. The tri-fold objective of the research is to review prevailing theories relating to emotional intelligence and leadership, optimism, and aesthetic emotional development by means of documentary analyses from the public sphere. Five main domains are suggested to promote further inquiry, experimentation, and physical foundation [22, 23].

### **CONCLUSION**

Emotional intelligence is no longer a peripheral consideration in leadership discourse—it is a foundational element that determines the success and sustainability of effective leadership. Leaders who are emotionally intelligent are better equipped to navigate the complexities of human behavior, manage interpersonal dynamics, and inspire collective action through empathy, authenticity, and emotional regulation. This paper underscores the significance of developing EI competencies not only for personal growth but for cultivating organizational health and resilience. Despite challenges in measurement and implementation, fostering emotional intelligence among leaders is both feasible and imperative. As the demands on leaders continue to evolve, organizations must prioritize EI development as a core leadership strategy, investing in training, feedback mechanisms, and reflective practices that nurture emotionally attuned and adaptable leaders. Ultimately, emotionally intelligent leadership represents a transformative approach that aligns personal insight with collective empowerment, driving meaningful and lasting change.

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