



THE CONNECTION BETWEEN EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND LEADERSHIP EXCELLENCE

Dr. Saraswathy Kumar* Dr. Sibongiseni Kumalo Dr. Binu Menon* Ms. Harini Kumar***
*Senior Facilitator & **Rector

Abstract

Emotional Intelligence (EI) has become an essential factor in successful leadership as organizations are becoming more diverse, rapidly changing, and require greater amounts of interpersonal interaction. In addition to the requirement of technical skills and cognitive skills, leaders today must also possess a variety of emotional competencies necessary for effectively managing people, resolving conflict, and motivating teams to achieve organizational goals. Emotional intelligence was first identified and made popular by Daniel Goleman and includes several key dimensions such as self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. All of which directly impact leadership effectiveness and enhance the performance of leaders. In this paper, the relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership effectiveness is examined by studying the emotional competencies that contribute to leadership effectiveness and how these competencies affect the performance of an organization. In addition, this study uses a systematic approach to identify key emotional intelligence factors that create successful leaders and then evaluates the impact that these key emotional intelligence factors have on employee performance, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. Finally, this study looks at the ways in which emotionally intelligent leaders foster positive work environments, promote collaboration and develop strong interpersonal relationships within teams. The results of this study indicate that leaders with higher levels of emotional intelligence are more successful in their decision-making, communication, and conflict management skills and create a positive motivating work environment for their employees.

Keywords: *Emotional Intelligence, Leadership Excellence, Organizational Behaviour, Leadership Effectiveness, Employee Performance, Emotional Competencies.*

Introduction

Leadership excellence blends intellect and emotional competence; leaders must think strategically and be able to relate to others. Emotional Intelligence, an idea that Daniel Goleman popularized, refers to the ability to understand and manage one's and others' emotions. Today's rapidly changing, competitive organizational environment is challenging for leaders because they must manage different types of teams, deal with uncertainty, and engage employees. In these conditions, emotional intelligence will be an important skill for leaders to have in order to manage the complexities of their interpersonal relationships and the challenges of their organization.

In the past, being an effective leader was primarily based on having an IQ, having good technical skills, and accomplishing tasks. Today's leadership approaches are demonstrating that these attributes alone are insufficient for long-term success. There is a shift in approach towards people-centered leadership in modern organizations, where leaders need to be aware of the emotions around them, have the ability to empathize with others, and manage their relationships with others. Leaders with high emotional intelligence will be more effective at managing workplace stress and creating constructive resolutions to conflict than leaders who do not. Because emotionally intelligent leaders create a positive work culture based on trust, collaboration, and strong employee motivation and satisfaction. Emotionally intelligent leaders are capable of understanding how to meet their employees' needs emotionally while also finding appropriate responses. The result can be a supportive work culture that fosters a positive working

relationship. As a result, enhancing company employee productivity, lowering turnover rates, and increasing their commitment to the organization will be accomplished. Increasingly, the ability to inspire, influence and establish an emotional connection with employees has become synonymous with effective leadership.

Literature Review

Gerhardt, Bauwens& Van Woerkom (2025) Conducted a wide-ranging review to look at how emotional intelligence and leader outcomes relate in the current organizations that exist today. They noted that increasing workplace complexity creates a need for leaders to develop emotional competency in addition to technical competency. Their findings highlighted emotional intelligence's ability to increase leaders' adaptability, resilience, and success within uncertain environments.

Abbas et al. (2025) There was an empirical research study on emotional intelligence of leaders in the hospitality and tourism industries. It focused on how emotional intelligence of leaders affects employee growth through positive impacts on employee performance due to the leader creating a psychological capital and positive climate surrounding the employee. The authors concluded that emotional intelligence plays an important role as an intervening variable between leader behaviour and organisation results.

Korakis&Poulaki (2025) Conducted a systematic literature review to study how emotional intelligence impacts transformational leadership. They created a theoretical framework to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence competencies (e.g., empathy and self-regulation) and the motivational and inspirational behaviours of transformational leadership (e.g., an individual consideration).

According to Agrawal's (2025) research on effective modern leadership, emotional intelligence is essential to improving the ways that decisions are made, how conflicts are managed, and how teams work together, as well as positively contributing to the overall culture of organizations. It was recommended within the study that emotional intelligence training be incorporated into organizational leadership development programs to improve the quality of leadership and productivity within the workplace.

Nwagwu and Henry (2025) conducted a quantitative research project using employee surveys, which confirmed a statistically significant positive correlation between emotional intelligence and leadership effectiveness. The study concluded that organizations need to make emotional intelligence development a priority to improve both the quality of leadership and employee satisfaction.

Ulandari et al.'s (2024 to 2025) systematic literature review of more than 800 research articles indicates an increase in academic interest in the areas of emotional intelligence, leadership, and employee performance. The results of their analyses indicated that leadership models driven by emotional intelligence have become the prevalent trend to research regarding organizations, particularly after 2024.

Maulana et al.'s (2025) bibliometric and systematic review of leadership within construction organizations provided evidence that emotional intelligence is an integral component of effective communication, team coordination, and the sustainability of leadership in project-based industries (i.e., organizations).

A meta-analysis conducted by Dođru in (2022) concluded that when examining emotional intelligence in relation to organizational outcomes, there were strong relationships found between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction, organizational commitment, performance, and decreased stress levels. As such, they concluded that emotional intelligence should be viewed as one of the key competencies required for successful leadership.

Statement of the Problem

The statement of the Problem outlines several challenges faced by leaders in today's fast-paced and competitive organizational environment, including the management of workplace relationships, the resolution of conflicts, the motivation of employees, and the maintenance of positive organizational climates. These challenges stem from limited awareness of one's emotions and poor regulation of one's emotions. In addition, although many organizations have recognized emotional intelligence as being critical to effective leadership, these organizations typically use technical skills as the primary criteria for developing and choosing leaders. These practices contribute to numerous negative outcomes in the workplace, including the following: low employee engagement; breakdowns in communication; high levels of stress; and decreased organizational effectiveness. Therefore, it is necessary to explore the relationship between emotional intelligence and leader effectiveness in order to better understand how emotional competencies impact leader effectiveness and, ultimately, the success of the organization.

The purposes of this Study are to

1. Understand the concept of emotional intelligence in relation to leadership
2. Determine the relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership excellence
3. Identify emotional intelligence competencies that contribute to leader effectiveness
4. Analyze how emotional intelligence affects employee performance and organizational effectiveness
5. Provide recommendations for enhancing leadership through the development of emotional intelligence

Purpose of the Study

1. To provide explanations for how important it is for organizations to consider the role of
2. emotional intelligence when defining leadership.
3. To support the development of leadership training and development programs.
4. To increase employee satisfaction and organizational productivity.
5. To contribute to the body of academic knowledge related to leadership and
6. organizational behaviour.
7. To deliver practical implications for managers and HR professionals.

Research Methodology

Research Design: Descriptive Research Design.

Data Types: Secondary Data.

Secondary Data Types

Books, journals, research articles, and organizational reports

Theoretical Framework

The study examined emotional intelligence theory and transformational leadership theory.

Emotional Intelligence Consists of

1. Self-awareness
2. Self-regulation
3. Motivation
4. Empathy
5. Social skills

All of the components impact how leaders make decisions, communicate, manage conflict, and motivate teams.

Study Scope

The scope of the study centered on the role of emotional intelligence to develop excellence in leadership in an organization. Emotional intelligence components such as self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, motivation, and social skills impacted the effectiveness of leadership. The study could apply to a variety of sectors in both leadership positions as well as to employees including business, education, and service industry. The focus of the study is on leadership's behavioural and emotional aspects, not the technical or operational competencies associated with an organization. This research provides insights into how to improve leadership development, HR practices, and improve organizational performance by using research findings as a baseline to enhance leadership skills within the organization. These findings also provide a foundation for future organizational behavior and leadership studies.

Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Leadership Excellence are two classifications of theories from both psychology and management that illustrate how EI and Leadership Excellence are related. EI was introduced into the literature by Daniel Goleman and is defined as the ability to recognize, understand, manage, and influence one's own and others' emotions. In contrast, Leadership Excellence is defined as a leader's ability to reach organizational goals while maintaining satisfaction, motivation, and performance of employees.

Goleman's EI Theory provides the theoretical basis for this study, as it outlines five core competencies; self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. These elements affect the effectiveness of leaders in the workplace because they help leaders cope with difficulties in the workplace, resolve conflicts, and create strong interpersonal relationships. Leaders with high levels of EI are likely to exhibit better decision-making ability, agility, and communication, all of which are essential for achieving Leadership Excellence.

Additionally, Transformational Leadership Theory proposed by James MacGregor Burns and later extended by Bernard Bass provides another strong theoretical foundation. This theory argues that effective leaders develop their ability to inspire and motivate their employees to reach their full potential by providing a vision, developing an emotional connection with employees, and influencing through personal example. EI makes leaders more effective in exhibiting transformational leadership behaviors such as individualized consideration, inspirational motivation, and idealized influence.

Social Exchange Theory also supports the link between emotional intelligence (EI) and employee performance. When leaders exhibit emotional understanding or empathy toward others, it establishes a relationship of trust which, in turn, fosters strong working relationships with employees in an organisation that leads to increased levels of employee commitment, job satisfaction, and performance. The collective outcome of these three factors has a direct impact on the overall success of the organization.

In addition to this relationship, the proposed conceptual framework includes the following linkage variables for building successful organizations

1. Emotional Intelligence (Independent Variable)
2. Self -awareness
3. Self - regulation
 - Motivation
 - Empathy
 - Social Skills

Leadership Excellence (Dependent Variable)

1. Decision Making Ability
2. Communication Effectiveness
3. Conflict Management Skills
4. Team Leadership Skills
5. Mediating Variables
6. Employee Performance
7. Job Satisfaction
8. Organizational Commitment

Outcome Variable (Overall Organisational Success)

Results of the Research Study

The findings of this research demonstrate a positive correlation between leaders' emotional intelligence and their ability to effectively lead an organisation with excellence. Leaders who possess high levels of emotional intelligence exhibit improved communication ability, better decision-making ability, effective conflict management skills, and improved overall employee performance. The research also indicates that there is a strong correlation between emotional competencies (i.e., self-awareness, empathy, and self-regulation) and employee motivation and satisfaction. Therefore, based on the above findings, it can be concluded that emotionally intelligent leaders develop trust with their followers, maintain healthy interpersonal relationships within the workplace, and foster a supportive environment for all employees within the organisation. In addition, teams lead by emotionally intelligent leaders demonstrate higher levels of productivity, cooperation, and commitment to their respective organisations than teams lead by leaders who do not demonstrate high levels of emotional intelligence. Therefore, emotional intelligence has been shown to be a major influence on leadership effectiveness and overall organisational performance.

Suggestion

Emotional intelligence should be included in leadership training provided by companies to help leaders develop their interpersonal and decision-making skills. Training should include regular workshops that emphasize improving self-awareness, developing empathy, improving communication skills, and learning how to manage one's stress. HR departments can add an emotional intelligence assessment as part of the recruitment and performance assessment processes. Leaders should continuously reflect on themselves and seek feedback to help improve their ability to manage emotions and develop good relationships with others. Mentorship and coaching programs can develop the leaders within the organization who have an emotionally intelligent approach to leadership and foster the type of collaborative environment necessary for success in the modern workplace.



Conclusion

The final findings of this research point to the fact that emotional intelligence affects the leader's success in today's organizations. A person's ability to be aware of their own feelings, to show empathy towards other people and to relate well with people provides leaders with the tools they need to work with their teams; respond effectively to changes and challenges that the organisation may face; and encourage their employees to perform at their best. A leader who is emotionally intelligent creates an atmosphere that promotes open communication within the organisation, reduces the number of conflicts that occur due to poor communication, and strengthens the relationship between the organisation and its employees, all of which leads to increased productivity and sustainable growth of the organisation. Therefore, emotional intelligence should be viewed as a core leadership competency instead of a 'nice to have' skill. Creating emotionally intelligent leaders within the organisation will provide the organisation with a foundation for long-term success by generating a positive and adaptive working environment.

References

1. Goleman, D. (1995). *Emotional intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ*. New York: Bantam Books.
2. Goleman, D. (1998). *Working with emotional intelligence*. New York: Bantam Books.
3. Goleman, D., Boyatzis, R., & McKee, A. (2002). *Primal leadership: Realizing the power of emotional intelligence*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.
4. Salovey, P. & Mayer, J. (1990). Emotional intelligence. *Imagination, Cognition, and Personality*, 9(3), 185–211.
5. Bar-On, R (1997). *Bar-On emotional quotient inventory (EQ-i): Technical manual*. Toronto: Multi-Health Systems.
6. Cole, G. M. A. (2004). *Management Theory and Practice*. London: Thomson Learning.
7. Neider, L. L., & Schriesheim, C. A. (2011). The authentic leadership inventory. *Leadership Quarterly*, 22(6), 1146–1164.
8. Cherniss, C. (2000). *Emotional intelligence: What it is and why it matters*. Consortium for Research on Emotional Intelligence in Organizations.
9. Robbins, S.P., & Judge, T.A. (2017). *Organizational Behavior (17th Edition)*. Pearson Education.
10. Bradberry, T., & Greaves, J. (2009). *Emotional intelligence 2.0*. San Diego: Talent Smart.