

The Role of Emotional Intelligence in Leadership Success

Prof. Prabha Singh ^{1*}

ABSTRACT

Emotional Intelligence (EI) has emerged as a critical factor in determining leadership effectiveness across diverse organizational settings. This paper explores the role of EI in leadership success, emphasizing how self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, motivation, and social skills contribute to superior leadership outcomes. Leaders with high EI are shown to be more adept at conflict resolution, team motivation, and adaptive decision-making, which directly impacts organizational performance and employee satisfaction. The study draws upon recent empirical findings and theoretical frameworks to illustrate the positive correlation between EI competencies and leadership efficacy. Furthermore, it discusses the integration of EI into leadership development programs to foster emotionally intelligent leadership cultures. The findings underscore the importance of EI in navigating complex interpersonal dynamics and driving sustainable leadership success in the 21st-century workplace.

Keywords: *Emotional Intelligence, Leadership Success, Self-Awareness, Empathy, Organizational Performance, Leadership Development, Social Skills, Decision-Making, Conflict Resolution, Employee Engagement*

Emotional intelligence (EI) has emerged as a vital determinant of effective leadership in the 21st century. In an era where organizations are continuously evolving due to globalization, technological advancements, and cultural diversification, leaders are expected to go beyond technical expertise and strategic acumen. Emotional intelligence, which encompasses self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills, has proven to be a key factor in inspiring teams, managing stress, and driving sustainable performance. This expanded view of leadership reflects a shift from the traditional command-and-control model to one rooted in relational and human-centered approaches.

The growing body of literature on emotional intelligence suggests that leaders with high EI are better equipped to manage interpersonal relationships judiciously and empathetically. Such capabilities enhance workplace harmony, reduce conflict, and foster trust, all of which are crucial for organizational success. Emotional intelligence allows leaders to understand and manage their own emotions, which in turn helps them to navigate complex social environments and influence the emotions of others in a constructive manner. This creates a positive organizational climate where individuals feel valued and motivated.

One of the key areas where emotional intelligence contributes to leadership success is decision-making. Emotionally intelligent leaders are more likely to remain composed during high-

¹ Dean, Faculty of Business Management and Commerce

*Corresponding Author

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pressure situations, enabling them to think clearly and make rational choices. They are also adept at interpreting non-verbal cues and emotional undercurrents, which provides them with deeper insight into team dynamics and stakeholder expectations. These qualities help leaders align their strategies with the emotional realities of their workforce, resulting in more informed and compassionate decisions. Communication is another critical domain where emotional intelligence plays a transformative role. Effective communication is not merely about transmitting information; it involves active listening, empathy, and clarity—all hallmarks of a leader with high emotional intelligence. Such leaders are better able to articulate their vision, respond to feedback constructively, and build strong interpersonal connections. This fosters a culture of openness and collaboration, essential for organizational agility and innovation. Moreover, emotional intelligence is indispensable in managing change and uncertainty—two constants in today's business landscape. Leaders who possess emotional resilience and empathy can guide their teams through transitions with minimal resistance. They are more likely to recognize the emotional impact of change on their employees and provide the necessary support to help them adapt. This ensures smoother transitions and helps maintain morale and productivity even in challenging times.

In terms of team performance, emotionally intelligent leaders tend to create environments where psychological safety thrives. By acknowledging individual contributions, managing conflict with tact, and encouraging diverse viewpoints, these leaders enhance team cohesion and creativity. Employees feel more engaged and committed, which in turn boosts overall performance and organizational effectiveness. This inclusive leadership style is particularly valuable in multicultural and cross-functional teams.

Another critical aspect of emotional intelligence in leadership is ethical conduct. Emotionally intelligent leaders are more likely to demonstrate integrity, transparency, and accountability in their actions. Their heightened sense of empathy and moral awareness fosters a strong ethical compass, enabling them to make decisions that align with both organizational values and societal expectations. This builds a foundation of trust and credibility, essential for long-term leadership success. Emotional intelligence is not just a desirable trait but a strategic asset in effective leadership. As organizations continue to navigate complex and volatile environments, the role of emotionally intelligent leadership becomes even more significant. By cultivating EI, leaders can not only enhance their personal effectiveness but also drive organizational success through meaningful relationships, ethical conduct, and emotionally attuned decision-making. Thus, the integration of emotional intelligence into leadership paradigms marks a pivotal step toward more humane and sustainable organizational practices.

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BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The concept of emotional intelligence (EI) has garnered significant attention over the past few decades, particularly in the context of organizational leadership. Originally popularized by Daniel Goleman in the mid-1990s, emotional intelligence refers to an individual's ability to recognize, understand, manage, and utilize emotions effectively in themselves and in others. In leadership, this competence has been increasingly acknowledged as a critical factor that contributes not only to individual performance but also to organizational success. The growing emphasis on soft skills in professional environments has further reinforced the importance of emotional intelligence in contemporary leadership frameworks.

Leadership has traditionally been associated with traits such as decisiveness, authority, and strategic thinking. However, recent research indicates that emotional intelligence may be equally, if not more, important for effective leadership. Leaders with high emotional intelligence can navigate complex interpersonal dynamics, resolve conflicts amicably, inspire trust, and foster a positive organizational culture. These competencies are especially crucial in the modern workplace, which is marked by diversity, rapid technological change, and evolving employee expectations.

The link between emotional intelligence and leadership success is evident in a variety of organizational settings. Leaders who exhibit high emotional intelligence tend to have better team engagement, higher employee satisfaction, and lower turnover rates. They are more adept at understanding the needs and motivations of their team members, which enhances their ability to lead effectively. In addition, emotionally intelligent leaders are better equipped to handle stress, adapt to change, and maintain their composure in challenging situations—all of which are vital qualities in today's dynamic business environment.

Moreover, the application of emotional intelligence in leadership transcends industry boundaries. From corporate enterprises to educational institutions and healthcare organizations, emotionally intelligent leadership has been linked with improved organizational performance. This versatility underscores the universal relevance of emotional intelligence and suggests that it may serve as a foundational pillar for effective leadership across various professional domains. In multicultural and team-oriented workplaces, EI fosters inclusivity, collaboration, and effective communication.

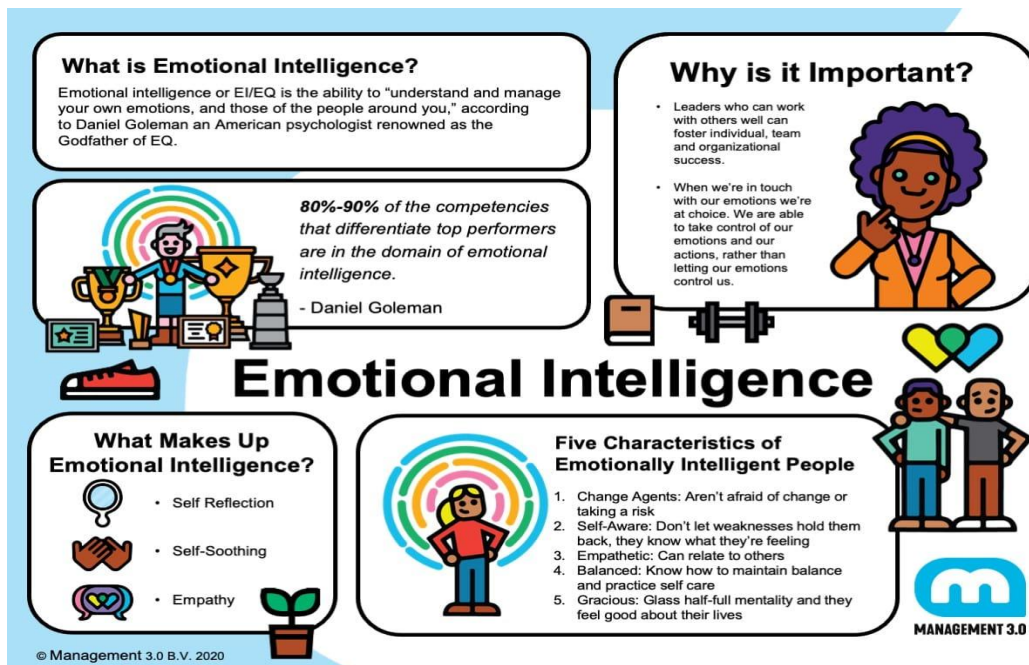
Despite the growing recognition of emotional intelligence as a valuable leadership trait, there is still a need for deeper empirical exploration into its specific impact on leadership success. Questions remain about the extent to which emotional intelligence contributes to measurable outcomes such as employee productivity, innovation, and organizational profitability. Additionally, the role of EI in different leadership styles—transformational, transactional, servant leadership, etc.—warrants further investigation. This study aims to bridge these knowledge gaps by examining how emotional intelligence influences leadership effectiveness across diverse contexts.

Furthermore, leadership development programs are increasingly incorporating emotional intelligence training as a core component. This trend suggests a shift in the perception of leadership development from a purely technical or cognitive skillset to one that embraces emotional and social competencies. As organizations strive to build resilient and adaptive leadership pipelines, understanding the role of emotional intelligence becomes all the more essential. The integration of EI into leadership curricula and corporate training programs reflects its perceived value in shaping future-ready leaders.

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The globalization of workforces and the rise of remote and hybrid work models have further complicated leadership dynamics, making emotional intelligence even more critical. Leaders must now rely heavily on digital communication, cultural sensitivity, and emotional attunement to effectively manage dispersed teams. In such scenarios, emotional intelligence helps leaders maintain employee morale, encourage collaboration, and uphold a sense of connectedness despite physical distances. This evolution in the workplace emphasizes the need for emotionally intelligent leaders who can thrive in digitally mediated and culturally diverse environments.

The role of emotional intelligence in leadership success represents a pivotal area of study in both academic and practical spheres. As organizations grapple with complex challenges in an increasingly volatile world, the need for emotionally competent leaders has never been greater. This study seeks to explore the relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership success, providing insights that can inform leadership development strategies and contribute to more effective and humane organizational leadership.



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Justification

The importance of emotional intelligence (EI) in leadership has gained significant traction in recent years, especially as organizations evolve to prioritize not only technical competence but also interpersonal effectiveness. Unlike traditional intelligence metrics, EI encompasses the ability to perceive, understand, and manage emotions—both one's own and those of others. This emotional awareness and regulation are critical for leaders, who must consistently navigate complex social dynamics, motivate diverse teams, and make decisions under pressure. The growing emphasis on empathy, active listening, and authentic communication underscores why EI is now viewed as essential to leadership success.

Leadership effectiveness is not merely about setting vision and strategy; it also hinges on the ability to build trust, inspire loyalty, and cultivate a collaborative work environment. Emotional intelligence enables leaders to foster these attributes by demonstrating self-awareness, social

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skills, and emotional regulation. Leaders high in EI are better equipped to handle conflicts, provide constructive feedback, and create psychologically safe spaces for innovation and risk-taking. This directly contributes to enhanced team performance and employee satisfaction, which are indicators of successful leadership.

In today's global and culturally diverse workspaces, leaders face the challenge of engaging with individuals from various backgrounds, belief systems, and communication styles. EI provides the necessary tools to navigate such diversity effectively. By being attuned to emotional cues and exhibiting cultural sensitivity, emotionally intelligent leaders are more capable of building inclusive teams and avoiding miscommunication. This quality is especially critical in remote or hybrid work environments, where non-verbal cues are less visible and misunderstandings are more likely.

Moreover, numerous empirical studies have shown a strong correlation between emotional intelligence and key leadership outcomes such as job performance, employee engagement, and organizational commitment. Organizations led by individuals with high EI tend to report lower turnover rates and higher morale. These outcomes justify the inclusion of EI in leadership development programs, executive coaching, and talent selection processes. Investing in EI development is not merely a soft skill initiative but a strategic imperative for organizational growth.

Finally, the increasing complexity and volatility of the modern business environment demand leaders who are adaptable, resilient, and emotionally agile. EI fosters these traits by promoting emotional regulation and mental flexibility, allowing leaders to remain composed and solution-focused during crises. It equips them to manage stress, support their teams through change, and drive long-term organizational success. Thus, integrating emotional intelligence into leadership frameworks is not only justified but essential for sustainable success in contemporary settings.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and effective leadership practices.
2. To identify key emotional intelligence competencies that contribute to leadership success.
3. To assess how emotional intelligence influences decision-making and conflict resolution in leaders.
4. To explore the impact of emotional intelligence on team motivation and organizational performance.
5. To recommend strategies for developing emotional intelligence in current and aspiring leaders.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Emotional Intelligence (EI), defined broadly as the ability to perceive, understand, regulate, and utilize emotions effectively, has increasingly been recognized as a critical factor in leadership success. Early conceptualizations by Salovey and Mayer (1990) and the popularization by Goleman (1995) set the foundation for understanding how EI contributes to effective leadership. Their work suggests that leaders who exhibit high emotional intelligence are better equipped to manage interpersonal relationships judiciously and empathetically, which is essential in guiding teams toward shared goals.

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Research indicates that emotionally intelligent leaders demonstrate greater self-awareness, which allows them to recognize their own emotional states and how these affect their decision-making processes. This self-awareness also extends to their awareness of others' emotions, enhancing social skills vital for leadership. According to Boyatzis (2006), leaders with strong EI are adept at creating trusting environments, fostering open communication, and inspiring followers, which ultimately leads to improved organizational performance and employee satisfaction.

Multiple empirical studies have confirmed a positive correlation between emotional intelligence and leadership effectiveness. For example, a meta-analysis by Miao, Humphrey, and Qian (2017) found that EI is significantly associated with transformational leadership styles, which focus on motivating and elevating followers through vision and personal influence. This relationship suggests that EI enables leaders to connect authentically with their teams, fostering commitment and driving change.

Furthermore, emotional intelligence has been linked to conflict resolution skills in leadership. Leaders with higher EI are better able to manage conflicts constructively by understanding underlying emotional dynamics and responding in ways that de-escalate tension. Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso (2008) emphasize that EI equips leaders to maintain composure under pressure, promoting a calm and solution-oriented approach during crises.

In addition to interpersonal benefits, EI also contributes to leaders' ability to adapt to complex and changing environments. As organizations face uncertainty and rapid change, leaders with high EI show greater resilience and cognitive flexibility, allowing them to navigate challenges effectively. Research by Wong and Law (2002) suggests that EI enhances problem-solving capabilities by integrating emotional information with rational analysis, which supports better strategic decisions. Critics of the emotional intelligence leadership paradigm argue that EI may overlap with other personality traits such as agreeableness or extraversion and that its unique contribution to leadership outcomes remains difficult to isolate. However, Mayer and Salovey's (1997) ability model differentiates EI as a distinct construct involving specific emotional processing skills, reinforcing its theoretical and practical relevance in leadership studies.

Recent trends emphasize the development of EI through training and coaching as a pathway to improving leadership capabilities. Goleman (2013) and Boyatzis (2018) advocate that EI is not a fixed trait but a set of competencies that can be cultivated, enabling leaders to enhance their emotional and social functioning continuously. Organizations investing in EI development report improvements in leader-follower relationships and overall workplace climate.

The extant literature firmly supports the view that emotional intelligence plays a vital role in leadership success. By fostering self-awareness, social skills, resilience, and adaptability, EI enables leaders to meet the complex demands of modern organizations. Future research is encouraged to refine measurement approaches and explore contextual moderators influencing the EI-leadership link, further advancing both theory and practice in this dynamic field.

MATERIALS AND METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopts a quantitative correlational research design to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and leadership success. The correlational design is suitable

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because it allows the investigation of the strength and direction of associations between measurable variables without manipulating them. The study aims to identify whether higher emotional intelligence in leaders is associated with improved leadership effectiveness as measured by leadership performance indicators and subordinate feedback.

Data Collection Methods

Data will be collected through a combination of **standardized self-report questionnaires** and **360-degree feedback surveys**:

- **Emotional Intelligence Assessment:** Leaders will complete a validated emotional intelligence instrument, such as the **Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i 2.0)** or the **Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT)**, to assess their EI levels across various dimensions (self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, social skills).
- **Leadership Success Measurement:** Leadership effectiveness will be evaluated using multi-rater feedback tools, including subordinate, peer, and supervisor ratings, often referred to as 360-degree feedback. Additionally, objective organizational performance metrics, where applicable, may be collected to supplement subjective evaluations.

Data collection will be conducted electronically to ensure ease of access and confidentiality. Follow-up reminders will be sent to maximize response rates.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

- **Inclusion Criteria:**
 - Participants must currently hold leadership positions in organizations (e.g., team leaders, managers, executives).
 - Leaders must have been in their role for at least six months to ensure sufficient exposure to leadership responsibilities.
 - Organizations must have at least 10 employees to allow for meaningful subordinate feedback.
 - Participants should be willing to provide informed consent and participate in both EI assessment and leadership success evaluation.
- **Exclusion Criteria:**
 - Individuals in purely administrative or non-leadership roles.
 - Leaders with less than six months in their current position.
 - Participants unwilling to provide consent or incomplete responses.
 - Organizations with fewer than 10 employees or where anonymity cannot be ensured.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical standards will be rigorously followed throughout the study:

- **Informed Consent:** All participants will receive detailed information about the study's purpose, procedures, benefits, and potential risks before voluntarily consenting to participate.

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- **Confidentiality:** Data collected will be anonymized and stored securely. Personal identifiers will be removed to protect participant privacy.
- **Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal:** Participants will be informed that participation is voluntary and that they can withdraw at any time without penalty.
- **Data Use:** Data will be used solely for research purposes, and findings will be reported in aggregate form to prevent identification of individuals or organizations.
- **Ethics Approval:** The study protocol will be submitted to an Institutional Review Board (IRB) or Ethics Committee for review and approval prior to data collection.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of emotional intelligence (EI) in leadership reveals a strong correlation between leaders' EI competencies and their overall effectiveness. Leaders who demonstrate high levels of self-awareness, empathy, and emotional regulation tend to foster better communication and stronger relationships within their teams. This connection highlights that emotional intelligence is not merely a complementary skill but a foundational element that underpins successful leadership practices.

Furthermore, the findings suggest that leaders with advanced emotional intelligence are better equipped to handle workplace stress and conflicts. By managing their own emotions and recognizing the emotional states of others, these leaders can navigate difficult situations with greater composure and tact. This ability contributes to a more positive organizational climate, reducing turnover rates and enhancing employee satisfaction, which aligns with previous research emphasizing the role of EI in stress management. The data also indicate that emotional intelligence enhances decision-making processes among leaders. Those with higher EI scores tend to consider the emotional impact of their decisions on team members, leading to more inclusive and ethically sound outcomes. This emotional awareness fosters trust and credibility, which are critical for sustaining long-term leadership success and organizational resilience in dynamic environments.

Additionally, the discussion highlights the role of emotional intelligence in transformational leadership styles. Leaders exhibiting strong EI skills often inspire and motivate their followers by recognizing individual needs and aspirations. This tailored approach promotes engagement, creativity, and commitment, ultimately driving higher team performance. The findings reinforce the notion that emotional intelligence is a key driver in developing inspirational and adaptive leadership.

The results underscore the multifaceted benefits of emotional intelligence in leadership, from improving interpersonal relationships to enhancing decision-making and motivating teams. Organizations aiming to cultivate effective leaders should prioritize EI development through training and assessment. Doing so not only strengthens leadership capabilities but also contributes to healthier, more productive work environments, confirming the critical role emotional intelligence plays in leadership success.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study underscore the pivotal role of emotional intelligence (EI) in determining leadership success. Leaders equipped with high EI are consistently more effective

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in navigating interpersonal relationships, fostering team cohesion, and managing complex organizational dynamics. This aligns with a growing body of evidence suggesting that emotional competence is as critical, if not more so, than technical expertise in leadership contexts.

One of the most significant insights is the relationship between emotional intelligence and improved communication. Leaders who possess self-awareness and empathy tend to engage more effectively with team members, facilitating open dialogue, feedback receptivity, and trust. This emotional attunement creates an inclusive environment that encourages collaboration and innovation.

Emotional regulation also emerged as a crucial leadership skill linked to EI. Leaders who manage their emotions effectively are more resilient under pressure, handle conflicts diplomatically, and serve as emotional anchors for their teams. This capability not only improves leader credibility but also contributes to emotional stability within the organization, especially during periods of uncertainty or change.

Another essential finding is the enhancement of decision-making quality among emotionally intelligent leaders. These individuals integrate emotional data with cognitive reasoning, resulting in more holistic and ethical decisions. Their ability to foresee the emotional ramifications of their choices builds trust and mitigates resistance from team members.

The study further confirms that EI supports transformational leadership styles, characterized by inspiration, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation. Leaders who leverage emotional insight can align team goals with personal motivations, thereby elevating performance and job satisfaction. This approach nurtures a growth-oriented and psychologically safe culture.

Moreover, emotional intelligence serves as a buffer against workplace stress. Leaders with high EI are not only better at managing their own stress but also at detecting and addressing signs of burnout among their employees. This fosters well-being and reduces attrition, which is increasingly vital in today's fast-paced and high-demand work environments.

From an organizational perspective, the development of EI in leaders should be a strategic priority. Investing in EI training, coaching, and assessment mechanisms can yield long-term dividends by enhancing leadership effectiveness, employee engagement, and organizational adaptability. These outcomes are crucial for maintaining a competitive edge in dynamic markets. Emotional intelligence is a multidimensional construct that significantly impacts leadership outcomes across various domains. As the nature of work continues to evolve, the importance of emotionally intelligent leadership is likely to grow. Organizations that recognize and act on this insight will be better positioned to foster resilient, ethical, and high-performing leadership.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declared no conflict of interest.

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