Contribution of Emotional Intelligence to Efficient Leadership. A Narrative Review

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Abstract. Introduction: Emotional intelligence contributes to the development of successful communication between leaders and employees and ensures good management. It is an integral part of the leader to control and regulate the well-being of his subordinates. The purpose of the present systematic review is to synthesize the available data on the role of emotional intelligence in the leadership of various domains (businesses, schools, sports teams, teams). It attempts to show emotional intelligence's positive and direct relationship with leadership, especially with charismatic leadership. Material and method: This systematic review was carried out for 2019-2023. Criteria for inclusion of an article in the study were to be published from 2019 to 2023, to be relevant to the topic, to be published in a valid journal, to be published in the English language, to belong to the discipline of psychology, and to have open access. After a systematic and critical evaluation, seven articles were included in the study. Results: The studies addressed the role of emotional intelligence in leadership and their interaction. Transformational leadership leads people with high emotional intelligence to adapt. In addition, leadership skills training develops practical skills, assessment and problem-solving skills, communication skills, self-governance, and emotion recognition skills. Emotional intelligence plays a pivotal role in effective leadership. Leaders with high EI tend to be more transformational, make better decisions, manage stress effectively, and create cohesive team dynamics. While the relevance of EI in leadership is undeniable, future research will undoubtedly continue to refine our understanding of its nuances and applications in diverse contexts.

Keywords. Emotional Intelligence, Leadership Efficiency, Decision-making, Communication, Empathy, Conflict Management, Organizational Change

1. Introduction

The rapid pace of economic, political, and social advancements invariably precipitates cultural transformations and changes in organizational frameworks and business operations. Consequently, entities are compelled to seek suitable strategies to navigate these shifts effectively. According to Saif et al., (2018) and Tang et al., (2010), globalization necessitates the development of a communication framework conducive to embracing diversity, facilitated by the collaboration of individuals from various cultural, linguistic, and religious backgrounds. Moreover, organizations strive to optimize operations by prioritizing effective communication to enhance efficiency. Research has indicated a positive correlation between emotional intelligence and effective communication within leadership-employee interactions and
employee-employee interactions, facilitating proficient management (Gkintoni et al., 2017, Mindeguia et al., 2021).

Emotional intelligence is the capacity to comprehend and regulate personal and interpersonal emotions, utilizing them as a framework for cognitive processes and behavioral responses (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Individuals can identify and acknowledge their emotions and interpersonal connections, enabling them to address and resolve their issues through this comprehension effectively (Cayak & Eskici, 2021, Eskici & Eskici, 2021). Therefore, it pertains to the capacity to perceive, integrate, and regulate one's emotions. According to Mayer, Caruso, and Salovey (2000), the study conducted by these researchers yielded significant findings. Emotional intelligence is crucial for a leader's ability to manage and oversee their subordinates' emotional state effectively. In order to achieve success in the realm of business, a leader must possess a blend of cognitive and affective intelligence (Gujral, 2016). A positive correlation exists between high levels of emotional intelligence and the cultivation of emotional skills, and various outcomes such as enhanced performance, increased job satisfaction, improved interpersonal relationships with colleagues, heightened commitment, and elevated levels of trust. According to Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso (1998), Numerous studies have demonstrated a significant correlation between leadership and emotional intelligence. The study conducted by Palmer et al. (2020) demonstrated a significant correlation between inspirational motivation and individualized thinking, which are critical elements of transformational leadership, and the leader's and others' capacity to monitor and regulate emotions. These leaders believed that they could effectively motivate and inspire their subordinates to collectively strive towards shared objectives, which is referred to as inspirational motivation. Additionally, they demonstrated a remarkable level of attentiveness towards their subordinates' accomplishments and growth requirements, encompassing the provision of feedback and assigning appropriately challenging work.

Previous scholars have directed their scholarly inquiries toward examining cognitive aptitude as the primary determinant of effective leadership, thereby neglecting the significant role played by emotional intelligence in this domain (Gkintoni & Dimakos, 2022). The abovementioned alterations resulted in a transition towards emotional intelligence; however, additional examination is necessary given its significance. This systematic review aims to consolidate the existing data regarding the influence of emotional intelligence on leadership within diverse sectors, including businesses, schools, sports teams, and groups. This study aims to demonstrate the positive and direct correlation between emotional intelligence and leadership, particularly in the context of charismatic leadership.

2. Literature Review

Leadership efficiency is integral to organizational success, often gauged by factors like the decision-making process, team morale, and goal achievement. In the rapidly evolving professional landscape, leadership dynamics have expanded beyond traditional metrics, paving the way for emotional intelligence (EI) to emerge as a critical determinant of leadership efficiency. This narrative review delves into how emotional intelligence contributes to efficient leadership. Drawing from a curated selection of empirical studies, anecdotal evidence, and theoretical frameworks, our exploration reveals that leaders possessing heightened EI demonstrate enhanced empathetic understanding, superior conflict management, improved communication, and a more inclusive approach to team dynamics (Amelia, 2021, Gkintoni et al., 2023a,b,c). Such leaders excel in adapting to organizational changes and fostering a work environment that promotes emotional well-being and drives productivity. This review
highlights the indispensability of emotional intelligence in contemporary leadership models and recommends its integration into leadership training and development programs.

Emotional intelligence (EI) has emerged over the last few decades as an influential factor in understanding leadership efficiency. Rooted in the works of Peter Salovey and John Mayer in the early 1990s and later popularized by Daniel Goleman in his 1995 book, "Emotional Intelligence," EI refers to one's ability to recognize, understand, manage, and reason with emotions. This literature review provides an overview of the research surrounding the contribution of EI to efficient leadership (Antonopoulou et al., 2019, 2020). Salovey and Mayer (1990) originally described EI as a type of social intelligence involving the ability to monitor one's and others' feelings and emotions, discriminate among them, and use this information to guide one's thinking and action. Goleman (1995) further categorized EI into five components: (a) Self-awareness, (b) Self-regulation, (c) Motivation, (d) Empathy, and (e) Social skills (Gkintoni et al., 2016, 2023b).

Also, Bass and Riggio (2006) found that transformational leaders who inspire and motivate their followers by creating a connection often score high on EI. Such leaders tend to have a keen sense of emotional awareness of themselves and their team members, enabling them to navigate challenging situations with empathy and understanding. Additionally, George (2000) posited that leaders with high EI tend to make better decisions as they are more attuned to the emotional currents within their teams and can better gauge the potential reactions to their decisions (Gkintoni et al., 2022). Furthermore, Druskat and Wolff (2001) showed that teams led by individuals with high EI often have better interpersonal relations, reduced conflicts, and improved collaboration. These leaders can foster trust and cooperation among team members, creating a conducive environment for productivity.

Moreover, Salovey, Caruso and Mayer (2004) found that leaders with higher EI tend to manage stress more efficiently, as they can regulate their emotions under pressure, ensuring that their teams remain motivated and unaffected by any potential negative impacts of stress. Finally, in a study of global executives, Goleman (2004) found that EI was a better predictor of leadership success than either IQ or technical skills. Leaders with high EI scores were more likely to outperform their targets and achieve higher levels of employee satisfaction.

3. Methodology

The provided sample comprises published research articles in reputable scientific journals investigating the correlation between emotional intelligence and leadership. The present study entails a systematic review involving a comprehensive search of scholarly articles utilizing "emotional intelligence and leadership" within internationally recognized databases, namely Scopus and Pubmed. The inclusion criteria encompassed several aspects:

1. The selected studies needed to have been published within 2019 to 2023.
2. They were required to be pertinent to the subject matter under investigation.
3. The studies had to be published in reputable scientific journals.
4. They were expected to be written in the English language.
5. The studies were limited to the field of psychology.
6. Open access availability was an additional criterion for inclusion.

A total of 4,438 articles were identified through keyword search. Among these, 93 articles met the specified criteria. Following the evaluation process, ten articles were deemed relevant. Specifically, following the compilation of the articles, an assessment was conducted utilizing predetermined criteria. The title was subsequently reviewed, eliminating articles that needed to be more relevant to emotional intelligence and leadership. Subsequently, the abstracts
of the articles were examined, excluding those that did not align with the predetermined criteria established for the systematic review. Ultimately, a limited quantity of articles was deemed unsuitable following a thorough evaluation.

- Total articles retrieved from the PubMed search (v=41)
- Total articles resulting from the Scopus search (v=52)
- Articles rejected after reading the abstract (n=7)
- Articles rejected after reading the abstract (n=4)
- Articles rejected after reading the title (n=10)
- Articles rejected after reading the title (n=7)
- Articles rejected after reading the article (n=4)
- Articles rejected after reading the article (n=3)
- Final set of study articles (n=7)

4. Results

Researchers from Greece, India, China, Spain, Turkey, and Russia published the articles. Among the studies mentioned above, a single publication was released in 2019, another in 2020, two in 2021, two in 2022, and one in 2023. All of the works were published in the English language. The primary focus of the research revolved around exploring the correlation between emotional intelligence and leadership across diverse domains. The sample consists of two public health professionals, two individuals from the educational sector, one representative from the sports field, and two individuals from the business sector, with one explicitly focusing on emotional intelligence groups. Certain studies examine the mediating function of emotional intelligence, whereas others demonstrate its moderating impact on the association between leaders and their subordinates. This study highlights the positive and significant associations between emotional intelligence and transformational leadership (Antonopoulou et al., 2021a,b). Additionally, emotional intelligence is found to be a reliable predictor of stress levels, motivation, and effective leadership.

Singh et al. (2022) conducted a study investigating the association between emotional intelligence and leadership styles among IT professionals in India. Their research findings revealed a significant correlation between emotional intelligence and three distinct leadership styles: transformational, transactional, and passive. The most significant impact was observed in transformational leadership, whereas the least pronounced effect was found concerning transactional leadership. The impact of emotional intelligence on leadership was determined to be of moderate magnitude, as it accounts for 19.5% of the variability observed in leadership style. A positive correlation was observed in the context of the association between emotional intelligence and transformational leadership, indicating a moderate percentage of 14.4%. The authors posited that the facets of proficient leadership, which are impacted by the leader's emotional intelligence, encompass motivation, performance management, relationship management, and effective communication. The correlation between emotional intelligence and transactional leadership exhibited a positive association, accounting for a mere 9% of the observed variability. Conversely, the connection between emotional intelligence and passivity could be elucidated by 17.4% of the variance.

Simultaneously, Ortega et al. (2019) examined the impact of emotional intelligence and leadership on university and non-university teachers. Their findings revealed a positive association between emotional understanding, emotional regulation, and the transformational leadership style exhibited by non-university teachers. Their imperative can elucidate the
correlation between emotional intelligence and transformational leadership exhibited by non-university educators to comprehend and regulate their own emotions and those of their students to assume a leadership role effectively. The individuals in question facilitate pedagogy, demonstrate empathy, exhibit motivation for teaching, and possess emotional intelligence. The relationship between transactional leadership and emotional understanding and regulation in non-university students is negative, as this leadership style primarily focuses on the leader's acquisition of power (Antonopoulou et al., 2022). However, a positive correlation exists between transactional and transformational leadership and emotional perception and understanding. However, this correlation does not hold for university students. University professors tend to exhibit a more passive leadership style, employing reduced emotional intelligence in their leadership approach while also striving for personal growth and development (Rahmani & Khan, 2022).

The study conducted by Mindegua et al. (2019) investigated the concept of Team Emotional Intelligence (TEI) and its role in the relationship between transformational team management leadership and employee cohesion. The mediating effect of team emotional intelligence on the relationship between transformational management and cohesion is complete (Liu et al., 2023, Njoroge et al., 2019). There is a positive correlation between transformational leadership and elevated levels of team emotional intelligence and heightened employee "passion," characterized by an increase in high-intensity positive emotions (Gkintoni et al., 2021). In addition, it is observed that intense positive emotions mediate the association between emotional intelligence within a team and the level of cohesion among subordinates (Reshetnikov et al., 2019). Moreover, at an individual level, these emotions impact subordinates' perception of cohesion. Leaders who possess a strong capacity for emotional intelligence within a group setting can generalize patterns and rules of behavior and identify and address the emotions and needs of their subordinates, resulting in enhanced efficiency and effectiveness (Halkiopoulos et al., 2021, Kotze & Nel, 2015).

Additionally, these leaders can foster positive emotions among their subordinates. However, this research did not identify a direct and robust correlation with individual cohesion compared to prior studies. This is because the present study specifically examined the association between management teams and employees, adopting a multi-level perspective (Gousteris et al., 2023, Stamatiou et al., 2022). Therefore, the research findings underscore the significance of comprehending and overseeing emotions as a pivotal element for proficient leadership (Singh et al., 2022). Additionally, they underscore that transformational leadership behaviors serve as the bedrock for workplace well-being and the cultivation of effective leadership.

Concurrently, Reshetnikov et al. (2020) implemented the Factory of Health Leaders program to train medical and nursing students, residents, and undergraduates. This initiative aimed to examine the fundamental attributes of prospective healthcare leaders, including their emotional intelligence and leadership approach. Throughout the training program, the participants underwent a process of skill development in leadership, communication, and governance, resulting in noticeable improvements in these domains. Individuals who participated in the HLF program exhibited elevated assessment and problem-solving abilities, practical skills, empathy, and self-motivation (Rubio et al., 2022). Cultivating self-motivation facilitates the establishment of unambiguous objectives and subsequent attainment thereof. Simultaneously, the average degree of empathy facilitates leaders in regulating their emotions and concealing their genuine sentiments, deemed essential for effective leadership (Halkiopoulos et al., 2023). The cultivation of emotional awareness facilitates the identification
and comprehension of negative and positive emotions, thereby fostering a more profound comprehension of the intricate interplay between one's emotional states and subsequent behavioral responses (Tzachrista et al., 2023). The program participants demonstrated a notable degree of emotional intelligence and a solid ability to perceive and understand the emotions of others. This capacity effectively impacts the emotional state of others and contributes to maintaining a high level of professionalism (Khan et al., 2023, Theodorakopoulos et al., 2022). Furthermore, after the program's implementation, the participants exhibited notable aptitude in leadership. They displayed a commendable level of psychological resilience, thereby substantiating the efficacy of the programs and underscoring the significant role played by emotional intelligence (Zurita-Ortega & al., 2019).

The research conducted by Çayak and Eskici (2019) on Turkish teachers also highlights the distinct role of emotional intelligence as a mediator. Specifically, the researchers demonstrated that educators held a favorable perception regarding the efficacy of their supervisors in effectively managing diversity. The gender variable, educational level, and seniority did not impact these perceptions, whereas the individuals' emotional intelligence was observed to be high. The research findings indicate that emotional intelligence plays a significant role in mediating the impact of sustainable leadership behaviors on the effective management of diversity. Leaders leverage their emotional intelligence to understand individuals and effectively navigate diverse environments comprehensively. Therefore, they establish effective organizational communication with educators and implement sustainable leadership practices.

Liu et al. (2022) conducted a study in China that examined the impact of emotional intelligence on person-organization fit among nursing staff. The study specifically highlights the significant positive impact of transformational leadership on the alignment between individuals and their respective organizations. Nursing team managers who embrace the transformational leadership style exhibit notable professional competence, demonstrate a fervent dedication to their work, display selflessness, and effectively communicate their vision to the nursing staff. In contrast, nurses who embrace the principles of transformational leadership demonstrate an understanding of the enduring significance of their contributions, draw inspiration from their leaders, actively nurture their professional competencies, and confront novel objectives (Antonopoulou et al., 2021, 2022). Individuals experience a sense of satisfaction and a feeling of accomplishment, ultimately attaining a state of self-actualization. Nurses demonstrate alignment with both individual and organizational values. At the same time, leaders cultivate a climate characterized by safety and support for nurses while striving towards attaining long-term objectives. Therefore, the equilibrium between job demands and resources enhances nurses' motivation for work engagement and dedication. The impact of transformational leadership on person-organization fit can be influenced by emotional intelligence (Cavaness et al., 2020). The presence of synesthetic intelligence serves as a moderating factor in this association. Transformational leadership's impact on nurses' adaptation is significantly positive among those with high emotional intelligence. At the same time, no significant relationship is observed among nurses with low levels of emotional intelligence. Nurses possessing elevated levels of emotional intelligence demonstrate the ability to identify, manage, and actively solicit input, in contrast to individuals with lower emotional intelligence, who undermine the impact of transformational leadership and hinder subsequent organizational adaptation.

In contrast, Rubio et al. (2002) examined leadership within sports teams, revealing a significant association between emotional intelligence and athlete motivation. Additionally, the
researcher discovered a significant positive association between emotional intelligence and anxiety. This finding implies that emotional intelligence can serve as a predictive factor for anxiety (Gkintoni & Ortiz, 2023, Gkintoni et al., 2022). Nevertheless, a negative correlation was discovered between emotional intelligence and leadership. Based on empirical findings, it has been determined that emotional intelligence does not possess predictive capabilities concerning leadership outcomes, nor does it exhibit a significant association with elevated levels of leadership proficiency.

5. Discussion and Conclusion
This study aims to investigate the correlation between emotional intelligence and leadership. The study incorporated seven articles that referred to both terms and their correlation. The primary findings indicate a positive correlation between it and leadership. A leader's emotional intelligence is a determining factor in various aspects of leadership, including motivation, performance management, relationship management, and effective communication. There exists a positive correlation between emotional intelligence and transformational leadership, with the latter being distinguished by attributes such as empathy and a genuine inclination to comprehend the perspectives of others. The mediating effect of team emotional intelligence on the relationship between transformational management and cohesion is complete. Transformational leadership has been found to effectively guide individuals with a solid emotional intelligence capacity toward adaptability.

Furthermore, as part of the endeavor to cultivate leadership abilities, there is a concurrent development of practical skills, assessment and problem-solving skills, communication skills, self-governance skills, and emotion recognition skills (Gkintoni et al., 2021a,b). The full mediating role of emotional intelligence in the impact of sustainable leadership behaviors on the management of diversity and organizational communication is also a notable characteristic (Antonopoulou et al., 2022). Emotional intelligence is a moderating factor in the relationship between transformational leadership and person-organization fit. There exists a significant association between emotional intelligence and the levels of motivation and stress experienced by athletes. One of the primary limitations of this study is the restricted availability of research studies that simultaneously address both terms under investigation.

Furthermore, most cited studies utilized a limited sample size, focusing on particular populations, precluding the ability to extrapolate findings to a broader context. Examining emotional intelligence with leadership constitutes a pivotal component within organizational psychology, business, and any domain that encompasses leadership roles (Antonopoulou et al., 2023). Enhanced interpersonal and professional relationships, successful goal attainment, and the establishing of a secure and conducive environment can be facilitated through heightened awareness and comprehension (Giannoulis et al., 2022a,b). Therefore, it is imperative to conduct further research on the impact of emotional intelligence on leaders across diverse sectors, such as companies, schools, and banks. This will provide a comprehensive understanding of its effects, allowing for more confident generalizations and developing appropriate strategies to enhance it.

An extensive examination of academic research reveals that emotional intelligence plays a substantial and influential role in leadership effectiveness. Several scholarly investigations have demonstrated a positive correlation between emotional intelligence and the quality and efficacy of leadership (Saif et al., 2018; Njoroge et al., 2019; Khan et al., 2023). The results suggest that individuals in leadership positions with greater emotional intelligence
are more inclined to display authentic leadership behaviors, exhibit superior leadership practices, and manifest heightened levels of organizational commitment (Halkiopoulos et al., 2022, Kotzé & Nel, 2015; Tang et al., 2010). According to Saif et al. (2018), emotional intelligence has a mediating role in the association between leadership styles and leader effectiveness. Moreover, there exists a correlation between emotional intelligence and multiple dimensions of leadership, such as the quality of leadership exhibited by principals (Amelia, 2021), the manifestation of sustainable leadership behaviors (Eskici & Eskici, 2021), and the practice of transformational leadership (Rahmani & Khan, 2022). According to Amelia (2021), there is a suggestion that the cultivation of emotional intelligence management skills is crucial for leaders, including principals, in order to propel organizations forward and effectively accomplish objectives.

Furthermore, research has indicated a mediating effect of emotional intelligence on the association between leadership and job autonomy, as demonstrated by Rahmani and Khan (2022). Nevertheless, it is imperative to acknowledge that emotional intelligence is a multifaceted concept, and its utilization in the context of leadership warrants careful consideration. Several scholarly investigations have underscored the imperative of engaging in a rigorous assessment of the construct of emotional intelligence and contemplating its potential limitations. The uncritical adoption and implementation of emotional intelligence, without considering its potential drawbacks, may have adverse effects on the efficacy of leadership.

In summary, existing literature provides evidence that emotional intelligence plays a significant role in enhancing effective leadership. Leaders with a higher level of emotional intelligence are more inclined to display effective leadership behaviors, exhibit superior leadership practices, and manifest elevated levels of organizational commitment. Emotional intelligence is also observed to serve as a mediator in the association between leadership styles and the effectiveness of leaders. However, it is imperative to conduct additional research to delve into the intricacies of emotional intelligence and its potential limitations in leadership, thereby ensuring its optimal implementation across diverse organizational settings. Numerous scholarly works substantiate the importance of emotional intelligence (EI) in the context of leadership. However, a subset of detractors contend that the extent of this association is excessively accentuated. According to Locke (2005), it is posited that specific leadership scenarios may necessitate a greater emphasis on cognitive intelligence rather than emotional intelligence. Furthermore, it has been suggested by several studies that the effectiveness of Emotional Intelligence (EI) may exhibit variability based on the organizational culture or the particular industry context. Subsequent investigations could prioritize the identification of circumstances in which emotional intelligence (EI) assumes a more pivotal function, assess its significance across diverse cultural contexts, and enhance the precision of instruments and methodologies employed for measuring EI.

References


