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The Integral Role of Emotional Intelligence in Effective Leadership

Subhasree Roy[1], Dr. Soma Nandi[2]

[1]Research Scholar, Department of Education, West Bengal State University
[2]Associate Professor in Education, East Calcutta Girls' College, Lake Town

Abstract
Emotional intelligence is the ability to notice and control your own emotions, and to understand the emotions of others so you can use that information to guide your thinking and actions. Leadership is the ability to influence and direct a team toward a shared vision. This article will shine a light on the importance of emotional intelligence (EI) in leadership, the impact EI has on organisational performance and employee well-being, and the need to focus on EI in leadership development. This paper investigates the importance of Emotional Intelligence (EI) as a key element in successful leadership. EI also increases a leader's ability to make good decisions, manage conflict constructively, handle crises calmly and in turn motivate followers by creating trust and a common purpose. Those competences translate into concrete advantages, such as the higher productivity of our teams, better worker commitment and a more positive corporate culture. The findings demonstrate an inescapable truth, if the organisations of today are going to succeed, they obviously need those success drivers throughout their leadership ranks. This article offers real-world suggestions for incorporating EI development into leadership programs and highlights the strategic importance of such efforts in ensuring organisational resilience and success.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Leadership, Effective Leadership, Organisational, Well-being.

Introduction

Emotional intelligence (EI) has become a cornerstone of effective leadership, no longer is it sufficient to rely on technical expertise and strategic thinking. In fact, in a world that seems to constantly change and where human dynamics are increasingly complicated, leaders with high emotional intelligence -self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy and superior social skills are much better at motivating followers, can make more effective decisions when the pressure is on and do a much better job of managing conflict. A vast body of research supports the point that such leaders help to create a positive organisational climate of trust and openness factors that directly lead to stronger employee morale, engagement, and loyalty. The strong relationship between emotionally intelligent leadership and higher team performance demonstrates EI as a potent enabler of organisational success, positioning its purposeful cultivation through focused training and mindful application as an essential strategic priority for any progressive organisation.

Literature Review

Mandell and Pherwani (2003) in their study examined the association of Emotional intelligence and transformational (leadership) behaviour as affected by a leader's gender. The result of the study showed that female leaders used EI more at work than male leaders.

Singh (2007) carried out a study on 340 software professionals of a large company in India, to study the relationship between EI along with leadership and effectiveness at work along with work behaviour amongst these professionals. As for the organisational leadership, EI shows a positive and significant relation for both sexes. The findings show that there are no statistically significant differences between male and female software professionals with respect to EI and overall leadership effectiveness. Among the elements of EI relating to emotion management, however, the relationship was the most significant predictor of leadership effectiveness.

Mills (2009) conducted a review on Emotional intelligence (EI) and effective leadership for empirical data related to the claim that EI is a significant contributor to effective leadership. The author has reviewed nearly 50 studies on the link between great leadership and emotional intelligence. In summary, the results of the study suggest that leadership effectiveness has a moderate relationship with emotional intelligence (EI).

Singh & Pathardikar (2010) explored how personality traits and EI affect the leadership effectiveness of principals in the context of school learning in India. It was determined that the principal personality traits and their EI were identified as a predictor of leadership effectiveness. The study also revealed that the principal was different in terms of their qualities which played a differential role in predicting the effective performance of the principal as a leader.

Tang et al. (2010) performed a cross-national comparative study with 50 Taiwanese academic leaders and 52 of their American counterparts (who were in similar professions within the US to those of the Taiwanese). Their comparison found that Taiwanese participants' overall EI correlates positively with all five of the leadership practices studied (leadership effectiveness). American participants also have a positive correlation with EI and only three leadership areas: model the way, enable others to act, and encourage the heart.

Drigas and Papoutsi (2020) studied EI as a core competency for leaders during organisational crises. They found that emotionally intelligent leaders can quickly identify employees' stress and anxiety, offering direction and support to maintain calm. Their ability to report information with transparency and optimism helps diminish uncertainty and demoralisation, making employees feel secure and in control during periods of instability.

Hartung (2020) established a strong correlation between EI and overall leadership effectiveness. The study demonstrates that leaders with high EI are more successful in persuading, encouraging, and directing employees toward achieving organisational objectives. Furthermore, such leaders are more genuine, humble in their interactions, and possess a clear understanding of their own strengths and limitations, which drives positive impacts.

Coleman (2021) identified EI as a key determinant of employee motivation. The research indicates that leaders with EI understand and value their employees' feelings and desire for success. By creating a trusting environment, showing genuine concern for well-being, and aligning individual goals with organisational objectives, these leaders foster a sense of purpose that significantly drives intrinsic motivation and commitment.

Moon (2021) investigated the role of EI in leadership decision-making, particularly during difficult situations. The study found that leaders with high emotional intelligence can use empathy and self-regulation to foster a positive perception of their decisions among employees. This ability helps maintain a constructive workplace environment even when implementing decisions that are not universally popular, thereby mitigating negative impacts on morale and productivity.

Majeed & Jamshed (2021) found a direct negative consequence of low EI in leadership. Their research showed that leaders lacking emotional intelligence have difficulty recognising employee emotional behaviours, leading to poorly thought-out decisions. These decisions can have a detrimental impact on employee morale and the organisation, often resulting in disengagement, demotivation, and ultimately, lower organisational productivity.

Objectives of the study

- To know about emotional intelligence and its components.
- To know about leadership and the characteristics of effective leadership.
- To understand how emotional intelligence positively impacts leadership outcomes.
- To recommend steps to develop leaders with high emotional intelligence within organisations.

Methodology

The study is qualitative. It is based on secondary data, which is obtained from various sources including books, research journals, publications and websites regarding this topic.

Emotional Intelligence Concept, Theories and Components

- **Emotional Intelligence**

The term emotional intelligence is relatively new, the idea itself has been around for centuries. Plato once said, "all learning has an emotional base" (Wharam,2009). Charles Darwin later demonstrated the importance of emotions for survival. A number of psychologists have further researched this concept. This includes E.L. Thorndike (1920) presented social intelligence. David Wechsler (1940) who said that it was people's emotional abilities that helped them succeed. Abraham Maslow (1950) who emphasized emotional growth in the Hierarchy of Needs and Howard Gardner (1993) who includes interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence in his model of multiple intelligences.

Emotional Intelligence is managing one's own emotions and using them in something productive, motivating oneself and people around us, spending productive time together by developing relations and understanding the inner mind of people and working together to achieve organisational goals effectively and efficiently.

According to **Mayer and Salovey (1997),** Emotional Intelligence is, "the capacity to reason about emotions and of emotions to enhance thinking. It includes the ability to accurately perceive emotions, to assess and generate emotions to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge and to reflectively regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth."

Bar-On (1997) characterised EI as "an array of non-cognitive capabilities, competencies, and skills that influence one's ability to succeed in coping with environmental demands and pressures (p.14)".

Matthews and Ziedner (2004) look at an Emotionally Intelligent person as, "someone who sizes up encounters quickly and accurately, and chooses a strategy for dealing with the encounter that is effective in maximising personal gains, while maintaining good relationships with the other persons involved (p. 26)".

Theories of Emotional Intelligence

Like most psychological constructs, emotional intelligence has different definitions and theories. At present, there are three models of emotional intelligence- the ability model, the mixed model and, the trait

model.

The ability model by Salovey and Mayer focused on Emotions as sources of information that can provide the individual with ingredients to understand her or his environment. People have different information processing abilities. This can help in adaptation. This process is supported by four factors: perceiving emotions, using emotions, understanding emotions and managing emotions.

The mixed model uses Daniel Goldman's conception of emotional intelligence and within it divides emotional intelligence into four aspects: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management.

The trait emotional intelligence model defines emotional intelligence as a personality trait. It is "a constellation of emotional self- perceptions located at the lower level of personality" (Petrides, 2009).

- **Components of Emotional Intelligence**

Daniel Goleman popularised the concept of emotional intelligence around the world.. Goleman's emotional intelligence Framework comprises five key areas: Self-Awareness, Self-Control, Motivation, Empathy, and Social Skills. These elements permit leaders to produce trust, significant meaningful decisions and resolution

Goleman (1998) in his book **"Working with Emotional Intelligence"** presented a mixed model of emotional intelligence with five dimensions-

Self-Awareness: It means understanding one's emotions, recognising and differentiating your own feelings, being emotionally literate, identifying specific emotions in oneself and others, discussing feelings and communicating openly and expressing freely. This also involves the capacity to experience empathy, sympathy, motivation, and encouragement for others, the capacity to judge wisely based on a good balance of affect and argument, neither excessively sentimental nor even logical, understanding the distinction between emotion and act, the ability to regulate and accept responsibility for an impression, and emotional knowledge.

Self-regulation: This involves emotions that are appropriate to the situation and that respond accordingly. It is tolerance, depression and anger management, elimination of verbal bridge lows, fights, and group barriers, overcoming through verbal anger without resorting to violence, less suspension or expulsion, more positive feelings about self, school, and family, and more engagement in stress management.

Self-motivation: It includes being more engaging, the ability to concentrate and concentrate on handwork, lower affectivity, higher self-regulation and unwavering scores in achievement tests, gathering emotions and directing yourself to the target, being able to withstand a wave of self-doubt, static and impulse.

Empathy: More ability in understanding all emotional responses of others, and appropriately responding to others' verbal and nonverbal messages, sensitive to how others feel and think, listen more reflectively and can share perspectives from another position. Worriers are generally nice, helpful, and truthful about their emotions. Others are good to the worried, supportive – and truthful to the worried. They become good partners, since they are sweet and polite. In other words, a social person equipped with psychic social skills in interacting with fellow beings, draws happiness from his relationship with another fellow being and becomes a source of happiness to other fellows.

Social Skill: It involves growing in the ability to analyse and relate, growing in assertiveness and effectiveness in communication, growing in popularity and outgoing, befriending others and co-workers, growing in requests by colleagues, growing considerate, polite, more social and harmonious in groups, collaborative and helpful, and more democratic with others.

Leadership- Concept, Theories, factors influencing leadership

- **Leadership**

Leadership is the capacity of a leader to influence a group in the accomplishment of objectives or the process of influencing and supporting others so that they will be able to work independently enthusiastically towards goal achievement. To fulfil the meaning of leadership, three important elements can be summarised: influence, voluntary effort, and achievement of common goals.

Good (1945) defined leadership in his **"Dictionary of Education"** as the ability and readiness to inspire, guide, direct or manage others, the role of interpreter of the interests and objectives of a group, the group recognising and accepting the interpreter as spokesman.

Hodge and **Johnson** defined "leadership as the ability to shape the attitude and behaviour of others, whether in formal or informal situations".

Theories of Leadership

Great Man Theory: An early theory suggesting that leaders are born with innate qualities like charisma and authority (Zafar et al., 2018).

Trait Theory: Builds on the Great Man theory by identifying specific traits that are common among effective leaders, although many of these can be developed (Fennell, 2021).

Behavioral Theory: Focuses on the idea that leadership is defined by actions and behaviors, and that leaders can be made through learning and by adopting specific behaviors (GENTE et al., 2022).

Contingency Theory: Proposes that leadership effectiveness is contingent on the situation. It suggests that a leader's style must be a good match for the specific demands of the situation, including factors like task structure and leader-member relationships (Khan, 2016).

Situational Leadership Theory: A variation of contingency theory that focuses on follower readiness (skill and commitment) and suggests four leadership styles: telling, selling, participating, and delegating (Patrulescu, 2009).

Transformational Theory: Focuses on leaders who inspire and motivate their followers to achieve more than they initially expected, often by creating a vision for change (Dinibutun, 2020).

- **Characteristics of Effective Leadership or a Leader**

The characteristics of effective leadership are described below-

1. Honesty and Integrity: Common elements in establishing credibility and trust are honesty and integrity. "Honesty and integrity" which includes being True to your word, being committed and honest with people as well as adhering to morals and ethics are two significant qualities that constitute an effective leader **(Hasan, 2019**).

Effective and Transparent Communication: Effective Communication Clarity is key for a leader to effectively communicate tasks, expectations and feedback. Specifically, the study emphasises that 'transparency is seen as a critical. An attribute of an effective leader, it promotes an atmosphere of openness and commands directives to be clear and understandable **(Rouss, 2020).**

Strong Decision-Making Ability: The ability to make good decisions quickly and efficiently is important. The results show that quick and efficient decision making is an important attribute of a leader which demonstrated a high level of association with leadership behaviour consultative **(Kayode, et. K et al., 2014**).

Empathy and Emotional Intelligence: Being able to understand and manage their own feelings as well

as the feelings of team members is key to motivation and unity. In conclusion, the research mentioned that a leader should be "emotionally intelligent" so they can comprehend the emotional issues of their members to consolidate relationships in the organisation **(Kapoor, 2020).**

Ability to Motivate and Inspire: One of the great things a leader must have is the ability to inspire, motivate and encourage their team. The study found that a leader must have the ability to persuade and motivate team members prospecting go the extra mile for the attainment of the coveted goals of an organisation **(Rudolf, 2016).**

Ethical and Moral Conduct: Leaders should be committed to strong ethical and moral conduct. It suggests that the leader's credibility is shaped by his or her ethics, so refusal to compromise in this area must be upheld at all costs and it is crucial for the loyalty and followership of one's team. An ethical leader attends to the needs of followers and is perceived as being just and fair **(Wesley & Narayan, 2013).**

How emotional intelligence positively impacts leadership outcomes ?

Emotional intelligence (EI) is not new; there are plenty of written works that have connected this important trait as a key to effective leadership, which in practice requires an understanding of interpersonal social dynamics, relationship-building capability, and an orientation of success of the organisation above itself. Emotional intelligence at the leadership level will lead to self-awareness, in other words, leaders will be aware of their emotions, strengths and weaknesses. This leads to leaders making far more informed decisions, cultivating their behaviour to closely resemble their values system, and ultimately creating trust amongst the team.

Enhanced Decision Making: Emotional intelligence enables leaders to not only know how to master their emotions but also how to understand when making decisions by knowing the emotions of their employees as well. This allows them to explain why they did, what they did and control the emotional impact of hard decisions that reach more rational and acceptable results **(Moon, 2021; Goleman, 2021).**

Conflict Resolution: EI is a key element of conflict management. Leaders who can regulate their own emotions can create safe environments for discussions to happen with openness and without bias and reach collaborative solutions to achieve the goal of resolving underlying causes, as a result, minimise the daily tension in the workplace **(Jordan & Troth, 2021; Milhem, 2019).**

Enhanced Crisis Management: In times of crisis, a leader with high EI will instantly recognise the stress and anxiety of employees. They can regulate the emotions of their employees by being calm, empathic, and transparent, giving them a sense of safety, and keeping the order, essential in unsteady times **(Papoutsi, 2019; Singh, 2024**).

Increased Employee Motivation: EI leaders are more effective at motivating employees. These leaders develop a culture of trust among the workforce, care about employee welfare, align individual or team goals with organisational goals which leads to higher purpose and intrinsic motivation **(Alam et al, 2020).**

Higher Employee Engagement: High EI helps leaders to create emotional connections with employees. **Sergey (2020) and Mindeguia, et al., (2021)** explained that a true leader understands how to listen, value their input and build a collective vision for the organisation which carries a strong sense of belonging and pride, motivating its employees to be their best.

Building Trust and Loyalty: Trust and loyalty are built through emotional intelligence. A secure environment is established by leaders who are authentic and consistent while genuinely caring about their employees and treating them with respect and value which brings long-term loyalty to both the leader and the organisation that they lead **(Aguilar Yuste, 2021; Lee, et al., 2022).**

Creation of a Positive Organisational Environment: EI significantly affects the overall workplace. Emotionally self-aware leaders who practice emotion regulation cultivate an atmosphere of well-being, cooperation, and respect in which employees feel safe, supported, and inspired to pursue the organisation's objectives **(Jordan & Troth, 2021; Hartung, 2020**).

Improved Communication and Feedback: An emotionally identification chief adapts his/her communication style to the needs of his/her employees. They give improvement-oriented feedback rather than criticism-oriented feedback that protects the self-esteem and motivation of employees, and receive the message in a constructive manner **(Görgens-Ekermans & Roux, 2021; John & Niyogi, 2019)**

Stronger Interpersonal Relationships: EI also prepares leaders to effectively manage all the relationships they lead. Having a comfortable personality, empathy, and a good understanding of emotional signals to build relations with team members and make it easy for employees to seek help and cooperation, increases team performance (**Drigas & Papoutsi, 2019; Majeed & Jamshed, 2021).**

Step to develop leaders with high emotional intelligence

Provide an Empathy Seeding: Working to put themselves in the shoes of their team starts to shift the leader into a more empathetic frame of reference. Notably, "Empathy enables leaders to understand the perceptions and feelings of employees" that can be learnt and improved through deliberate practice, since it is vital for making inclusion decisions **(Akamatsu & Gherghel, 2021).**

Enhance Communication Skills: Communication is one of the important aspects of EI. Functional leaders tend to be task-oriented while high emotional intelligence leaders "adjust the communication style according to employee needs, transmit information effectively and clarify their thoughts in a way that resonates better with the recipient" **(Alam et al., 2020).**

Managing Stress and Emotion: One of the major EI foundations is self-regulation, especially when under pressure. Emotional intelligence enables leaders to control their own feelings and the feelings of others, to keep situations under control, to prevent escalation, and to direct team focus during hard times **(Liu, 2021).**

Create a Positive Atmosphere at Work: Applying their EI, will allow leaders to create a supportive environment. According to the research, simply put, emotionally intelligent leaders "help shape an organisational culture in which workers feel valued and inspired to show up and perform" which leads to more confidence, more collaboration, and higher productivity **(Goleman 2021).**

Build Conflict Resolution Skills: An ability to handle conflict is another top notch of Emotional Intelligence. As they keep a leader "calm and unbiased" and help resolve disputes efficiently through collaboration, "self-awareness, self-regulation, and social skills are essential when managing conflict" **(Jordan & Troth, 2021; Milhem, 2019).**

Practice Mindfulness (Self-Awareness): Self-awareness (the foundation of EI) can be developed by routinely practising mindful examination of your own feelings and your emotional triggers. The mixed model sees "self-awareness" as the basic part of its overall components, which allows leaders to understand their advantages, disadvantages, and how their emotions influence their behaviour and decisions **(Goleman, 2021; Hartung, 2020).**

Feedback on Behaviours: Providing and accepting constructive feedback is an experiential way of improving EI. Leaders with emotional intelligence "give constructive feedback... freeing employees to improve performance without feeling discouraged," while receiving feedback about their own leadership from their employees **(John & Niyogi, 2019).**

Develop a Growth Mindset: Leaders need to be encouraged to view EI competencies as skills that can be developed; accept feedback over which they have control, and push themselves beyond their comfort zone. Emotionally intelligent leaders "know that they have to develop their workers' talents and potential" and can apply this mental framework to their own lifelong learning to view setbacks in their progress as learning opportunities and react accordingly **(Milhem, 2019**).

Lead by Example: At the end of the day leaders increase their own emotional intelligence by being the behaviour they want to see. Good behaviour will be followed by the fellow employees which is enhanced when the leaders manage their good behaviour including communication skills, emotional regulation, and self-awareness which creates a chain reaction starting from the leadership behaviour of an individual **(Milhem, 2019).**

Findings of the Study:

Studies found that EI can improve the performance of leaders. Self-reliance, control, and building trust are all elements that promote success with this vital quality.

The core leadership functions also benefit from EI. It teaches leaders how to respond more constructively to conflict and emerge from crises with calm nerves rather than having accumulated inventory of ill feelings, symptoms or complaints. It provides them with skills of persuasion, such as encouraging a work team in difficult times.

These enhanced leadership capabilities translate into real benefits for the organization. Work teams with emotionally intelligent managers, the study found achieve better results and more expandability than teams whose supervisors lack empathy for other people.

Self-awareness is the main foundation of EI because leaders who recognize their own weaknesses and strengths, together with their emotions, are better placed to make sound decisions, win trust and manage appropriately as leaders.

Empathy is an essential quality of leadership. To have a feel for what others are thinking and feeling which may affect their decisions is vital for establishing harmonious relationships, fostering inclusive decision making and ensuring that employees feel valued.

In the end, emotional intelligence can be nurtured and developed. The study discuss that EI is not simply a fixed personal characteristic for which leaders are innately endowed. Instead it can be cultivated in several ways, such as through mindfulness and getting feedback from others, honing one's communication skills, learning how to manage stress effectively and practising active listening skills.

Conclusions

Emotional intelligence is an essential trait of quality leadership that helps leaders develop effective rapport, appropriate judgment-based decision-making, and enhance team productivity. Leaders can use EI to establish a positive work culture, manage conflict, and propel the organisation. With the changing dynamics of business, the need for EI in leaders will keep growing. Because of this, organisations should make it a priority to include EI development in their leadership training programs to create new leaders who can have a greater impact on their team as well as an emotionally aware leadership team.

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