



THE ROLE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN LEADERSHIP

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Abstract

The growing importance of leadership in modern organizations can be explained by the highly dynamic nature of the market, the growing importance of employee motivation to achieve organizational goals, and the constant search for additional sources of competitive advantage. To highlight the role of emotionally intelligent leaders in contemporary organizations, the main objective of this research is to validate the fact that there is a direct link between emotional intelligence and leadership skills. Moreover, emotional intelligence predominantly influences certain aspects of leadership, as shown in this study. The three working hypotheses we issued show that a high level of emotional intelligence is associated with the ability to lead effectively, correlates with the level of consideration of a leader and that there is a directly proportional relationship between the level of emotional intelligence characteristic of a leader and the level of uncertainty tolerance. The findings of the study demonstrate that emotional intelligence, defined as the ability to understand and manage one's emotions, as well as to recognize and influence the emotions of others, is closely related to leadership skills.

Keywords: *emotional intelligence, leadership, leadership skills.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Emotional intelligence, the ability to understand and manage one's emotions, and to recognize and influence the emotions of others were first mentioned in 1990 by researchers and Peter Salovey and John Mayer, and later popularized by psychologist Daniel Goleman, who emphasized the importance of emotional intelligence in leadership (Goleman, 2019). Subsequently, several researchers have studied the importance of emotional intelligence in various fields (Mikulovic, 2021; Rizeanu, Haica, 2020, Rizeanu, 2016; Stomff, 2014). The growing importance of

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leadership in modern organizations can be explained by the highly dynamic nature of the market, the growing importance of employee motivation to achieve organizational goals, and the constant search for additional sources of competitive advantage (Grout and Fisher, 2011).

The situational leadership approach (Paul Hersey, 1985) argues that effective leaders change their leadership style according to the maturity of the people they lead and the task, which requires an objective assessment of subordinates in which leaders must understand well how their emotions and actions affect the people around them, a differentiating element between successful and least accomplished leaders. According to Lepard and Foster (2003), given the growing importance of effective leadership in organizations, the task of measuring the level of effectiveness of leadership practices remains complex and ambiguous.

The 2003 study conducted by Higgs and Aitken explores how emotional intelligence can be a predictor of leadership potential. The results of the research provide evidence which support the relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership potential, both theoretically and by the results obtained through this study on leadership performance (Higgs & Aitken, 2003). Subsequently, in 2010, a study conducted by Cote, Salovey, Lopes, and Miners summarized findings from two studies, examining the association between emotional intelligence and the emergence of leadership. The results showed that emotional intelligence is related to leadership, with a greater weight than cognitive intelligence, personality traits and gender. One of the dimensions of emotional intelligence, the ability to understand emotions, has been most consistently associated with the emergence of leadership (Côté et al., 2010).

In his study conducted in 2010, Kellerman points out that people who aspire to a leadership role must also consider an emotional element needed to successfully coordinate teams, manage stress, provide feedback, and collaborate with the others. A leader is important to the organization as it builds a work environment, and an effective work environment helps to build a solid and stable growth of the organization (Kellerman, 2010). In 2012, the research done by Lam and O'Higgins examined the interdependent influences of managers' emotional intelligence, leadership styles, and employee outcomes. The study was conducted in two large organizations in Shanghai, China, and the results highlighted the interrelationships between managers' emotional intelligence, leadership style, and employee outcomes, indicating that managers' transformational leadership style fully mediates the relationship between managers' emotional intelligence and satisfaction of the employees (Lam & O'Higgins, 2012).

In 2019 Goleman concludes that human relations should be very important for a leader who should have personal contacts with employees and should listen to their problems and solve them, treating employees in humanitarian conditions. From this perspective, it is obvious that a leader must have adequate emotional intelligence to

be able to easily get in touch with his subordinates, on several levels. This important element, which is emotional intelligence, represents almost 90% of what differentiates superior performance from colleagues with similar skills and technical knowledge (Goleman, 2019).

2. OBJECTIVE AND HYPOTHESES

2.1. OBJECTIVE

The research objectives focus on:

1. There is a direct link between emotional intelligence and leadership skills. Moreover, emotional intelligence predominantly influences certain aspects of leadership skills.
2. People in leadership positions show predominantly emotional intelligence along with leadership characteristics.

2.2. HYPOTHESES

The research hypotheses are as follows:

1. A high level of emotional intelligence is thought to be associated with increased ability of leadership.
2. It is estimated that a high level of emotional intelligence is an indicator of a high level of consideration of a leader.
3. It is assumed that in the case of leaders, there is a directly proportional relationship between the level of emotional intelligence and the level of tolerance of uncertainty.

3. METHOD

3.1 The participants

The group on which the research was conducted consists of 136 respondents, who filled in the online forms. The average age of the respondents is 39 years, 76% being female respondents and 26% male respondents. From the point of view of graduated studies, 96% graduated higher education and 4% secondary education. Within the studied group, 59% of the participants had or held management positions, while 41% of the respondents did not exercise management positions.

3.2 The instruments

1. The test of emotional intelligence developed by Daniel Goleman (1995), adapted by Mihaela Rocco (2004) which consists of 10 questions that present some situations (scenarios) in which a person may be.

2. The Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire developed by Stogdill (1963) which measures component aspects of a leader's behavior.

3.3 Procedure

The questionnaires were completed online by the respondents, stating that both the code of ethics and the GDPR legislation were complied with. All participants were instructed in the research and agreed, being aware of their anonymous identity.

3.4 The design

The following variables were used for the design of the research:

1. The dependent variables are: emotional intelligence (IE), consideration (C), reconciliation of requirements (IC), tolerance of uncertainty (IT), power of persuasion (PC), assumption of role (AR), integration (I), orientation towards superiors (OS), leader behavior (L).

2. Independent variables: gender of subjects, age category of subjects, completed studies, holding leadership positions and categories of emotional intelligence in which they fall (after analyzing the scores obtained on the emotional intelligence questionnaire).

4. RESULTS

Following the application and interpretation of the emotional intelligence questionnaire, 4 categories resulted and in terms of them the sample would be composed of: 71 people with below average emotional intelligence (52%), 44 people with average emotional intelligence (32%), 20 people with above average emotional intelligence (15%) and 1 person with exceptional emotional intelligence (1%). Also, the normality distributions for the dependent variables were analyzed and it was observed that they have distributions that do not deviate severely from the normal distribution curve, which confirms the possibility of applying parametric statistical tests to validate working hypotheses.

Hypothesis no. 1: It is assumed that a high level of emotional intelligence is associated with an increased ability of leadership. To verify and validate the first

hypothesis, the Pearson Correlation Coefficient was calculated. Table 1 shows the results of this analysis.

Table no. 1 - The results of the Pearson Correlation Coefficient between the level of emotional intelligence (IE) and the level of general leadership skills (L)

		IE	L
	Pearson Correlation	1.000	.220 ^a
IE	Sig. (2-tailed)		.010
	N	136	136
	Pearson Correlation	.220 ^a	1.000
L	Sig. (2-tailed)	.010	
	N	136	136

The results validate hypothesis no. 1: with a statistical significance $p = 0.010$ and a correlation coefficient $r = 0.220$ it is confirmed that there is a positive correlation of medium intensity between the level of emotional intelligence (IE) and the level of general leadership skills (L). In conclusion, hypothesis no. 1 is fully validated, and it can be stated that there is a directly proportional relationship between the level of emotional intelligence and the level of general leadership skills which is the characteristic of a leader in contemporary organizations.

Hypothesis 2: It is estimated that a high level of emotional intelligence is an indicator of a high level of consideration of a leader. To test this hypothesis, we used the Pearson Correlation Coefficient, and the results are shown in Table 2.

Table no. 2 - The results of the Pearson Correlation Coefficient between the level of emotional intelligence (IE) and the level of consideration of a leader (C)

		IE	C
	Pearson Correlation	1.000	.390 ^a
IE	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	136	136
	Pearson Correlation	.390 ^a	1.000
C	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	136	136

The results validate the hypothesis no. 2: with a statistical significance $p = 0.000$ and a correlation coefficient $r = 0.390$ it is estimated that there is a positive correlation of medium intensity between the level of emotional intelligence (IE) and the level of consideration of a leader (C). According to these results, hypothesis 2 can be interpreted qualitatively as: when the level of emotional intelligence (IE) increases, the level of consideration of a leader (C) also increases.

Hypothesis no. 3: It is assumed that in the case of leaders, there is a directly proportional relationship between the level of emotional intelligence and the level of tolerance of uncertainty. Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to verify and validate this hypothesis. The table below shows the results obtained.

Table no. 3 - Pearson correlation coefficient results between the level of emotional intelligence (IE) and the level of tolerance of uncertainty (IT)

		IE	TI
IE	Pearson Correlation	1.000	.394 ^a
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	136	136
TI	Pearson Correlation	.394 ^a	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	136	136

The test validates hypothesis no. 3 having a statistical significance $p = 0.000$ and a correlation coefficient $r = 0.394$. This confirms that there is a positive correlation of medium intensity between the level of emotional intelligence (EI) and the level of tolerance of uncertainty of a leader (IT). According to these results, hypothesis 3 can be interpreted qualitatively as: as the level of emotional intelligence (IE) increases, so does the level of uncertainty tolerance characteristic of a leader (IT).

For all statistical analyzes, the 95% CI confidence interval does not contain the value zero. The effect size is average. The effect obtained is unlikely to have occurred by chance and seems quite important from a practical point of view (Vasiliu, 2018).

5. CONCLUSIONS

The research highlighted certain aspects of the relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership skills. A leader is important to the organization because it builds a work environment, and an effective work environment helps to build a solid and stable growth of the organization and thus human relationships should be very important for a leader.

Over time, studies have shown that people who aspire to a leadership role must also consider an emotional element (Higgs & Aitken, 2003; Côté et al., 2010; Kellerman, 2010; Lam & O' Higgins, 2012). It is what helps a good leader to successfully coach teams, manage stress, provide feedback, and collaborate with others.

This research showed that there is a direct relationship between the level of emotional intelligence and the level of general leadership skills characteristic of a

leader in contemporary organizations, supporting similar results obtained by Higgs and Aitken in their 2003 study exploring the extent to which emotional intelligence be a predictor of leadership potential.

Regarding the link between the emotional intelligence and the ability of a leader for consideration, it can be said that there is a direct proportional relationship between the level of emotional intelligence and the level of consideration of a leader, his concern for general condition and status of subordinates, results similar to those mentioned by Kellerman (2010), who states that people who aspire to a leadership role must also consider the emotional element needed to successfully coordinate teams, manage stress, provide feedback and to collaborate with others.

Another aspect of the research also highlighted the fact that there is a directly proportional relationship between emotional intelligence and tolerance of uncertainty in a leader, his ability to withstand uncertainty and procrastination without becoming anxious or nervous. Similarly, in terms of uncertainty tolerance, the situational leadership approach of Paul Hersey (1985) argues that effective leaders change their leadership style according to the maturity of the people they lead and the task. Coordination of activities can be achieved by the leader by reconciling personal interests with organizational goals, part of the process of tolerating uncertainty.

In conclusion, the aspects highlighted by the research support the similar results of the mentioned research in the field, stating that the results of this research were obtained in a relatively different period from daily normality, namely in the pandemic, when part of human relations were affected by restrictions which were globally imposed. A possible future direction of research could be the inference of the pandemic anxiety and stress on leadership skills and whether emotional intelligence could play a moderating role in this relationship.

Received at: 21.01.2022, Accepted for publication on: 11.02.2022

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