

The Importance of Emotional Intelligence for Finnish Female Leaders

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<p>The aim of this research was to find out the importance of emotional intelligence for female leaders from the perspective of female leaders. The female leaders were asked what they thought emotional intelligence is, if they considered them emotionally intelligent leaders, and which areas of emotional intelligence they considered to be their strengths and weaknesses. Additionally, they were asked what kind of traits an emotionally intelligent leader should have and whether emotional intelligence was visible in their work places. The aim of the interviews was to understand their perceptions on emotional intelligence.</p> <p>The literature framework consists of leadership theories, female leadership, multi-cultural leadership, emotional intelligence, and emotional intelligence in leadership. The chapter on emotional intelligence highlights the different areas of emotional intelligence. Goleman divides emotional intelligence to self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. The literature sources include relevant books and articles related to the topics to support the findings of the research.</p> <p>The research was conducted as qualitative research. All of the respondents were female leaders with the majority of having experience working as team leaders in the ICT field. The interviews were conducted during autumn 2020 either face to face or via Skype. All interviews were recorded, and the author made written notes during the interviews.</p> <p>The results of the interviews were analysed by transcribing them and then summarized in the discussion of the thesis. Despite the small number of respondents there were differences on the opinions of the respondents. The results indicated that all of the respondents thought they were emotionally intelligent, especially in the field of empathy. Other results showed that emotional intelligence is not that visible in their workplaces in formal situations. All respondents considered emotional intelligence to be an important part of leadership.</p> <p>The validity and reliability of the research are discussed in the discussion chapter of the thesis. Suggestions on further research can be also found in the discussion chapter. The thesis ends with description of the research process and lessons learned by the author.</p>	
Keywords	
Emotional intelligence, leadership, female leaders	

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1 Introduction

During her studies, the author came across the term of emotional intelligence. The topic itself seemed interesting to study further. All individuals have emotional intelligence, but it felt interesting to further understand what areas of emotional intelligence are thought to be important for leaders. The author has met very skilful female leaders and wanted to better understand their opinions on the topic. The aim of this thesis was to find out the importance of emotional intelligence for female leaders. Also, the possibility to conduct interviews to leaders who have teams consisting of different nationalities seemed interesting. Is there a difference in leading a team with people from all around the world and leading a team with only Finnish team members? Does it require different skills or set of minds from the leaders? How is emotional intelligence perceived? In the thesis multicultural and Finnish teams are defined as per below:

- Finnish team: a workplace team consisting only of Finnish team members working in Finland
- Multicultural team: a workplace team consisting of team members of different nationalities and who work across the globe.

According to the European Institute of Gender Equality (2018) "ICT jobs are predominantly taken by men rather than women". The research will benefit all companies interested in the emotional intelligence of female leaders, but especially ICT companies, since most of the respondents work in that field. Emotional intelligence is about perceiving, using, understanding, and managing emotions of oneself and others, to be able to differentiate between different feelings and label them. First, being able to detect and interpret emotions of others; second, being able to deploy emotions to carry out activities; third, being able to understand how different emotions correlate; and fourth, being able to regulate emotions.

The research also aimed to find out whether emotional intelligence should have more emphasis in work-life and leadership. For example, should leaders only have the know-how and experience of their field that the job requires or should they also be emotionally intelligent. Does the other exclude the other? Does it make a better leader if they have emotional intelligence? Do female leaders consider their leadership style different from male leaders?

The following chapters go through the following topics: research methodology, what were the objectives of this research, the research problem setting, background information on the interviews, and the delimitation of the research; literature review, which consists of

different theories from various sources discussing topics such as leadership, multicultural teams, and emotional intelligence; empirical part of the thesis compiles the results of the interviews going through the results of multicultural team leaders and Finnish team leaders, differences and similarities of the difference leadership styles with different teams, the obstacles leaders face which require emotional intelligence, and areas of improvement; the last chapter consists of the conclusions of the findings, the reliability and the validity of the research, the suggestions on further research based on the findings, and a summary of the thesis process. The interview questions and the list of the interviewees can be found in the appendices.

1.1 Objectives

The aim is to find out the meaning of emotional intelligence for female leaders. How important it is for the leaders, do they consider themselves as emotionally intelligent, how much are emotions taken into consideration in their daily work and overall, at their workplace? In their opinion, should there be a difference in deploying emotional intelligence when leading multicultural teams or Finnish teams? How do they deal with emotions? And some groups of people more emotionally intelligent than others?

1.2 Research Problem Setting

Research questions are as follows:

1. How does a female leader define an emotionally intelligent leader?
2. How important is emotional intelligence in work-life and for a female leader?

2 Leadership

The following three sub chapters will go through different leadership theories relevant to the study, theories and articles related to female leaders, and short theory part on leading multi-cultural teams.

2.1 Leadership Theories

Leadership has no one common definition among scholars. It is a complex concept and has a different meaning to different people and it has been defined and conceptualized in many ways throughout the years. The first leadership theories appeared in the beginning of 20th century focusing on control and power. In 1930s the focus shifted to defining leadership as a way of influencing people, not dominating them. Ten years later the theories defined leadership being the behaviour of an individual when leading activities through a group approach. In the 1950s leadership focused more on for example to the ability to influence people in order to contribute to the group's effectiveness and to thinking about leadership as a relationship developing shared goals. (Northouse, 2019, 2-3, 15)

In the 1960s the idea of leadership being a behaviour was highlighted, but in the 1970s the concept of organizational behaviour arose. Leadership was considered as a way to reach organizational goals by initiating and maintaining groups. Moving on to 1980s leadership theories became more and more interesting to scholars and some of the hot potatoes of the time were "do as the leader wishes", influence, traits, and transformation. From the 1990s to the current state of leadership, the jury is still out there whether leadership and management are separate but overlapping processes. However, the focus is on the process of an individual influencing a group of individuals reaching common goals whereas coercion includes using punishment or threats to generate change. Leadership is more about working with your team. The modern leadership approached focus on authentic leadership, spiritual leadership, servant leadership, adaptive leadership, followership, and discursive leadership. (Northouse, 2019, 3-4, 15-16)

Leadership has previously been based on problem solving and decision making, but with the new winds of leadership the focus has shifted to delegating problem solving and decision making. The mission of the leader is to create circumstances where their team members shine and do their best to carry out the goals of the organization. Controls and instructions are not the best alternative to achieve the goals – the leader should instead help, support, encourage, and push employees to success, take responsibility, and make decisions. The power, responsibility, and decision making are transferred to the employees themselves. It changes the working culture to more proactive, flexible, and

energizing. The leader of the “new age” is a leader who serves and is genuinely interested in their employees, their wellbeing, and encourages them to success. They authorize, helps, and encourages employees to think, solve problems and make decisions, and gives space, resources, and possibilities to do so. (Salonen, 2017, 237-238)

Leading others requires certain attributes from the leader to create a safe environment for the employees. A safe, free, confidential atmosphere gives each employee a possibility to do, think, and bring out their thoughts without the fear of being judged or criticized. Being allowed to make mistakes and change one’s opinion feeds the positive atmosphere. A good leader knows their team, the abilities and needs of each member, and knows how to adjust their own actions accordingly. They value and respect versatility, recognizes everyone’s excellence, and utilizes them in the long term to the benefit of the organization. They listen, sympathize, encourage, and support the employees. They also have the courage to trust people’s initiative, ingenuity, motivation, abilities, and competence, and that they bear responsibility and want to act for the best interest of the company. They want to see their team members to grow and shine and stands proudly by them even though the team members’ expertise would overshadow their own expertise. (Salonen, 2017, 128-129, 239)

One of the important attributes of a leader is being able to lead themselves. Feeling the sense of urgency can cause a leader to rush to things. However, a leader can choose how to relate to the sense of urgency by tackling it in a calm manner. Prioritizing tasks, dividing and executing them in smaller parts, and sometimes rewarding oneself after the completion of a task can help when being under stress. Relaxing is also important since it signals the brain that everything is fine, and the brain can focus on processing the tasks they are given. It is not enough for the brain to recover from one’s workload only during the weekend or vacations, in the contrary, the recovery should happen on a daily basis. By listening oneself, it is possible to find out the best way to relax and recover. A leader should have “micro breaks” during the day which help you keep on going. Decisions are often made too quickly so there should be a time and a place to processing them. Outlining the future, decision making, problem-solving and scanning risks takes time. Leaders should also have enough resources at their disposal. Staff reductions can cut costs and improve productivity in the short term but pushing the employees too much hinders the renewal of the organization. Lack of resources can result the execution of only the routine tasks which on the other end can lead to missing new ideas and perspectives. (Salonen, 2017 128-131)

2.2 Female Leaders

According to Tilastokeskus (2018) the proportion of women in senior professional roles 47,3% and furthermore 37,0% in managerial positions. According to Northouse (2019, 424) "women are significantly underrepresented in major leadership positions". One explanation for this is the lack of female's investment in education and work experience, but there is no empirical proof that women would be less educated or more likely to quit their jobs when becoming mothers. However, it is proven that women take on more household responsibilities, which has an impact on the career and work-experience. Men get more formal training and development opportunities in work environments than women. Men are more likely to promote themselves and initiate negotiations than women, but that does not mean that women would be less effective, committed, or motivated in leadership roles. In fact, the leadership style of women is often more democratic and transformational than men. There is also the issue of prejudice towards gender. The bias can cause women being evaluated and perceived more negatively than men (Northouse 2019, 424). According to Sidani et al. (2015) women can be disqualified from leadership positions due to the differences between women and men arising from the general views. Female leaders are often criticized for their actions in leader positions or for the way they achieved the leader role.

Emotions and being emotional are traditionally been associated with women's behaviour. The emotional intelligence of leaders is still considered to be a trait of female leaders. Being efficient and rational are often considered as notions of leadership, which make it easier to choose men to leadership positions. Male leaders often prefer to talk about interaction skills than emotional intelligence even though they might mean the same thing. However, some of the successful female leaders have recently started talking about emotions and leading emotions. (Saarinen & Aalto-Setälä 2009, 32; Aaltio-Marjosola 2001, 50-51)

Both male and female leaders need and show emotions. The relevant question is whether the two use them differently and in different situations. Women are perhaps allowed to have and show more emotions than men. Basically, it is not just about women having more emotions, but different things are expected from them than from men. Women are claimed to be more emotional which can push them away from leader positions where it can be expected that emotions will disturb the decision making. Both male and female use emotions in leadership situations but from a cultural perspective, showing nurturing and empathic emotions is more allowed. Also, some leadership situations can include negative emotions which might be more permitted to male leaders. Strategic decisions, corporate

acquisitions and restructuring can include strong emotions and require the management to process them, but there is no proof that women would be worse at this than men. (Aaltio-Marjosola 2001, 51-52)

When leaders are appointed, occasionally female potential can be overlooked for several reasons. The criteria for appointing leaders is often rather abstract "leader potential". Even though the equality plans would be in place, promotions are often based on unofficial, often masculine, criteria. Female and male leaders are evaluated with different bases if you believe that males and females have different leadership styles. Many women have said that they will not even try to aim at leader positions because moving up in your career is so unlikely. The reasons why there are so few female leaders are historical, stereotypical, caused by the organization, or due to the differences between men and female, whether being real or imaginative. According to Piha, when looking at differences in gender-specific leadership styles, the research results are conflicted which would not explain the lower number of females in the top management. Also, as so-called leadership theories are taking more feminine course, it would be natural to have more female leaders. There are only poor reasons for the number of female leaders: discrimination, negative thoughts on female leaders and prejudice. (Piha 2006, 113-116)

Piha (2006, 114-117) goes through some of the hindrances of career development of women and refers to the study by Women in Management Worldwide. Some of the biggest hindrances are:

- the negative assumptions of the management concerning women, their abilities and commitment
- the belief that women do not fit into corporate culture
- the assumption that women do not want to climb up the corporate ladder
- the unwillingness of the management to give women experience on general management
- the lack of mentoring and negative mentoring
- rewarding which is not equal to men and women
- corporate cultures which were designed before the number of females was as great in the workplace
- discrimination and sexual harassment

There is no indication that women would be less educated for leadership positions or that women would be less committed to their work. It is clear that even though female leaders would be at least as well educated as their male colleagues, they are not able to rise to the top managerial positions in the same proportion. For women it is easier to reach leader positions in fields where the workforce is female dominated. (Piha 2006, 114-117)

According to Helsingin Sanomat (2020) there have been obstacles in the career development for women even though the Equality act was enacted 34 years ago in Finland. The obstacles have been difficult to outline or even invisible. That is the reason why women striving for higher positions have come across the term “glass ceiling”. Women have educated themselves and proceeded in their careers for a long time but reaching the top tier has been rare. There has been a shift from the 1970’s to the present day and women do not need to be tough anymore or one of the “guys” to perform as leaders.

There are studies about the differences between the leadership of women and men. Some of the studies have found some differences when others have found none. The studies that have found some differences indicate that the leadership style of women is interactive. Women shape the atmosphere in a way that the team members feel important and participate more. They do not rely on leading by formal authority. Instead they lead with interaction. Some other studies have demonstrated that female leaders are more flexible, intuitive and their ability to be empathic and create productive working atmosphere is higher than the male leaders. Female leaders share knowledge and power and highlight supporting team members’ confidence. The communication is open and work in both ways, from top to bottom and vice versa. Leadership is not seen as a means of power but integrative function. (Aaltio-Marjosola 2001, 136-137)

According to Eagly (2007) “women are increasingly praised for having excellent skills for leadership and, in fact, women, more than men, manifest leadership styles associated with effective performance as leaders”. There has been a progress in attitudes and behavior towards gender equality, but it is still harder for women than men to become leaders and gain success. Masculine attributes have been characterizing leadership in historical terms but “stereotypically feminine qualities of cooperation, mentoring, and collaboration are important to leadership”. Good leaders should be future-oriented rather than present-oriented and aim to advance the team members commitment and contribution to the organization. Attitude towards female leaders have changed over time and female leaders have more access to leadership positions, but women are still facing prejudice and challenges that male leaders do not face. Eagly concludes that “given the profound changes taking place in women’s roles and in the cultural construal of good leadership, it is clear that women will continue their ascent toward greater power and authority. The presence of more women in leadership positions is one of the clearest indicators of this transformation.”

2.3 Multicultural Leadership

Multiculturalism in work-life is a natural change, but it is also needed as a competitive advantage. There are several studies indicating the benefits of diversity. The benefits of multicultural leadership require a proper management and the requirements are good human resource management, reaching the existing resources and optimal utilization in the long term. Uncontrolled multiculturalization can easily lead to creation of clicks within the personnel, majority-minority tensions and competitive situations. Multicultural organization requires ethic, responsible, knowledgeable, and skillful abilities from the leaders. (Lahti 2008, 21-22, 43)

According to Chidiac (2018) “diversity approaches provide a pattern for success in the workplace in relation to thinking, feeling and interactions with employees from different backgrounds. The diversity approach that minimizes the prominence of social group membership, and instead concentrates on the importance of equality, is known as a value in equality approach, which improves representation-based concerns, and thus increases performance and persistence.”

Lahti (2008, 40-41) describes that the starting point for multicultural leadership is prevailing the conception of people and its ideals: justice, equality and individuality. Everyone has the right to be treated with respect, everyone has the right to integrity, and people’s abilities do not depend on gender, skin color or ethnic background. Everyone should have the right to grow and develop and advance in their careers, employers have a moral obligation and responsibility to respect and promote equal human rights and equality, and multiculturalism of staff and its even distribution throughout the organization contributes to the well-being, ability and performance of individuals and organizations. The leader’s personal values and human perceptions are connected to cultural and organizational systems. Sometimes a leader must adapt to norms and practices that are foreign to them, maintaining credibility at the same time.

Browaeys (2008, 150-158) highlights the different areas of management styles related to cultural values: time, power, competition, space, and communication. Different cultures look at time differently based on their environment, history, traditions, and general practices. In cultures with monochronic perception of time people tend to focus on one task at a time and prefer to focus on information rather than people, and following schedules. In polychronic time focused cultures people focus on several tasks at hand and scheduled are considered more of a guideline. They prefer to focus on people rather than priority of schedules. Cultures can also focus on the past, the present, and the future.

In past focused culture the decisions and plans have to be aligned with history and how things are done previously. Cultures focused on the present are quicker to make decisions and aim for short-term gains. Cultures with focus on the future can pass some short-term gains if there are other benefits in the long-term.

In different culture power can be looked through equality and inequality. In some cultures inequality is regarded to be the status quo and there is no need to change it, whereas in other cultures inequality is considered to be undesirable. In the cultures where inequality is “accepted”, the employees wait for the manager to give them tasks and make the decisions. In cultures where equality is cherished, the leader role is more participative than directive. If competition is valued in a culture, the organization strives to good performance and achieving goals. On the flip side, in other cultures competition situations are not valued, but instead co-operation, relationships, and consensus are preferred. Browaeys (2008, 154)

Space is also something which is perceived in different ways in different cultures. The so-called comfort zone of a person can vary largely. If you invade someone’s personal space, they might feel uneasy. The size of that space varies in different cultures. There are high-context and low-context cultures. In low-context cultures the messages are often clear, explicit, detailed, and information-based. In high-context cultures the main point of the message can be hidden within the text, the communication is indirect, and the relationships between parties is emphasized. Browaeys (2008, 157-159)

3 Emotionally Intelligent Leadership

There are several ways intelligence can be perceived. There are for example logical-mathematical intelligence, linguistic or verbal intelligence, spatial intelligence, emotional intelligence, and general knowledge. The study of intelligence has for a long time revolved around IQ tests – the types which for example Mensa uses for their members – but those mostly focus on the logical-mathematical intelligence. Some researchers argue that intelligence is not only a quality of an individual but more like a skill or a habit of using one's existing capacity. For example, in Finland the positions of managers are often being filled with people who are experts in their respective field but might not possess the emotional skills needed to be a leader. (Saarinen & Aalto-Setälä 2009, 35-36)

3.1 Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence can be described as follows: “our emotions play an important role in our daily lives; people vary in their ability to perceive, understand, use, and manage these emotions; and these variances affect individual capability in a variety of contexts, including organizational leadership.” (McCleskey, 2014)

Emotions are a way for us humans to gather information of our surroundings. Through our feelings we observe the world and gain crucial information on what is happening in our surroundings and within ourselves. We do not register events in an objective matter. The emotions that arise from an event are our subjective reaction. There are five phases when experiencing emotions: observing the event, interpretation of the observation, emotional reaction, emotional experience, and expressing one's emotion. There are not necessarily good and bad emotions, all of them are important. However, problems occur when the negative and burdensome emotions stick to you and you are affected by them for a long time. The best performing employees are gained when it is made sure that the emotions they are experiencing at the workplace are pleasant. Having positive emotions support well-being widely when experiencing negative emotions long-term is harmful physically and mentally. Emotional intelligence is considered to be one of the key elements of modern leadership. Leading people is first and foremost interaction with other people. Only by understanding the mechanisms behind emotions and the effects of them it is possible to lead oneself, and others towards self-direction, motivation, and flourishing. (Salonen 2017, 142-147, 179, 239)

According to Hasson (2017, 6), “emotional intelligence is about using your emotions to inform your thinking and using your thinking to understand and manage your emotions”. The ability to express one self's feelings, acknowledge and understand how others feel

and behave contributes to emotional intelligence. It helps to sense and manage the emotional needs of others. Emotional intelligence is not about giving into your feelings or “being nice”. It is more about controlling your feelings in a way that they are expressed properly and effectively (Goleman 1999, 19). It is about being “aware of, understand, and manage both your own as well as other people's emotions in order to adapt to life's demands and pressures”. They also focus their thoughts on the person they are communicating with. They do not necessarily put themselves on the persons shoes, rather they start pondering how they can help. (Stein 2009)

Emotionally intelligent people often know what they are feeling and they:

- recognize their moods for the most part
- understand why they are feeling the way they are feeling
- sense what the feelings of others are
- are able to manage their feelings, for example by switching their intense feelings to more mellow ones
- are able to manage the feelings of other making them feel more at ease

“They're good at realistically looking at the big picture, picking out what's important, and responding appropriately.” (Stein 2009)

It is claimed that people are often hired based on their “books smarts” and professionalism but they are let go due to the lack of emotional intelligence skills. Previous experiences and school certificates are not anymore that important if the interpersonal chemistry does not function in the workplace. Teaching emotional intelligence has improved leaders being more self-knowledgeable and sensitive, doctors to having more empathy, police being more apt to control conflicts, and unemployed getting employed. According to leadership studies two out of three abilities contributing to success are characterised to be of emotional or social type. The higher you climb the corporate ladder, the more the importance of these skills is emphasized. Thus, the emotional intelligence has relatively large meaning for creating and steering the emotional atmosphere (Saarinen & Aalto-Setälä 2009, 32, 52)

Emotional intelligence can be classified to two categories: personal skills and social skills. Personal skills demonstrate how well we get along with ourselves and social skills define how well we perform with other. Emotional intelligence can be further divided into five sub-categories, which will be gone through in the following subchapters. They are self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. The areas of emotional intelligence are detached from each other, so they all affect your work contribution in different ways. However, they all are linked to each other, one supporting the other skill.

You might shine in one or two of these categories, but that is not enough to make you a great leader. The real “stars” of emotional intelligence possess a wide range of the different categories. (Goleman 1999, 41-43, 55) The following chapters explain the characteristics of emotional intelligence.

Self-awareness consists of understanding your emotional state, preferences, resources, and instincts and utilizing that information. It is about knowing and recognizing your own emotions and moods and your thoughts related to them, knowing your own limitations and strong sides, and having the self-confidence of your own value. Self-aware people often know their own strengths and weaknesses. (Goleman 1999, 42, Goleman 2006, 47, UK Essays 2018)

Self-regulation is about regulating your emotional states, preferences, and resources. In other words, being able to control unwanted emotions and desires, carrying responsibility of your own actions, adjusting to changes, admitting your mistakes and learning from them, and being able to openly relate to new thoughts, views, and information. O (Goleman 1999, 42, UK Essays 2018)

Motivation means to being aware of emotions which guide and ease you to achieve goals. Willingness to develop and strive to better performance, committing to the objectives of the organisation, willingness to seize opportunities, and optimistically strive to achieve goals despite the obstacles and setbacks are some factors affecting motivation. (Goleman 1999, 42)

Empathy is being savvy to others’ emotions, needs, and concerns are part of empathy. You need to understand and care about others’ feelings and point of views, detect the development needs of others and foster them, anticipate, recognise, and fulfil others’ needs, utilize the diversity of others to reach common goals, and lastly to be knowledgeable of the emotional state and dominance setting of the group. Through empathy we sense what others are thinking and feeling, even though it might not be put into so many words, and we can pay attention to the situation from the other person’s perspective. (Goleman 1999, 43, Salonen.2017, 171)

Social skills is about having the skill to achieve desired reactions. It consists of influencing others by persuading them, communication by listening openly and sending out convincing messages, controlling conflicts by mediating and solving conflicts, leading and inspiring people, starting and controlling change, creating and cherishing useful relationships, working with other towards common goals, and creating synergy in a team

when pursuing common goals. Some socially apt people also help others to develop and are great at maintaining relationships. (Goleman 1999, 43, UK Essays)

3.2 Emotionally Intelligent Leaders

Looking at the motives of working, the emotions of people are very much an important factor. The willingness to commit and make results are based on being motivated and keeping the motivation up. Also, the work community plays an important role since it is something that people want to belong to. It is a social function. At its best, working brings joy to people, gives the opportunity to fulfil themselves, and makes one feel appreciated. (Kaski & Kiander, 2005, 25)

An effective leader must possess multiple “intelligences” or cognitive abilities. These are analytical intelligence, contextual intelligence, emotional intelligence, practical intelligence, and social intelligence. Some parties have argued that emotional intelligence is more important than intelligence quotient (IQ) contributing to the effectiveness of an individual and organization. On the other hand, there are critics that state emotional intelligence being just a fancy word for ideas which have been around for a long time and do not make a huge impact on person’s success in work-life. The growing number of studies, definitions, and models related to emotional intelligence indicate that the importance of it is growing and linked to the leadership effectiveness and job performance. (McCleskey, 2014)

“Leadership is intrinsically an emotional process, whereby leaders recognise followers’ emotional states, attempt to evoke emotions in followers, and then seek to manage followers’ emotional states accordingly”. A study by Kerr et al (2006) indicated that the level of emotional intelligence of a leader contributes to the effectiveness of the leader. When hiring and training a leader you should put focus on the level of emotional intelligence of the leader. The team members’ perceptions of the leader are largely linked to the emotional intelligence of the leader.

When a leader wants to get the most out of their team members and work efficiently, emotional intelligence is an important factor. An emotionally intelligent leader creates a positive atmosphere, influences and communicates on an emotional level, creates possibilities to collaboration, adapts their own style in accordance of the situation, and has a healthy self-confidence. Peoples memory, attendance, learning, and decision making deteriorates when they are upset. Positive motivation, however, can enhance achieving things. Being receptive to the feelings of others and being able to handle disagreements

benefits the work community. The leader's inability in relationships hinders the flow of work for everyone. It causes delays, weakens motivation and commitment, and generates hostility and ignorance. The non-emotionally intelligent leader is tense and reserved, sticks to the program, is passive on collaborating with others, operates always the same way regardless of the situation, and highlights themselves. (Goleman 1999, 48, Saarinen & Aalto-Setälä 2007, 53, Goleman, 2006, 79, 149)

The first step for a leader is to observe emotional events and expressions of others and themselves in the working environment. In case the leader does not see the signs, they will lose important information related to leading people. The emphasis should be on the ability to detect emotions which is the base of emotional intelligence. However, leading people should not be emotionally unstable, meaning that the leader acts the way they just happen to feel at that specific moment. Emotionally intelligent leader knows what people are feeling, talks about emotions, expresses their feelings when they are blue, smiles when they are satisfied, reads people accurately, and is good at recognizing their own emotions. (Saarinen & Aalto-Setälä 2007, 59-62)

Leading emotions at workplace requires from the leader to understand what happens within a group of people. There are several official and unofficial structures which have an impact to the group. The emotions which pop up in a group affect individuals and on the other hand, the individuals affect the group's emotional state. The sources of conflicts in workplace correlate to the internal worlds of individuals, the relationships between individuals, or disappointment towards the leader. Recognizing the phenomena's in group helps the leader in their quest of leading emotions. It is the leader that carries the weight of the emotions and acts as a vessel for them. The emotions are focused at the leader and sometimes they can end up being in an unfavourable position. It is easier for the employees because they can perceive the leader as the source of all evil. The situation can lead to the point where the leader has no space for the emotions of the work community. (Kaski & Kiander, 2005, 142-145, 164)

Salonen (2017, 270-271) advises leaders how to affect emotions with the following points. Know your inner world, stay in contact to yourself, recognize and accept your own feelings and needs. This helps you to be in contact with others and lead them. Show your emotions but adjust them to fit each situation, be empathetic, and show compassion. Recognize the right directions in an early stage from the small and quiet signs and vocalize the desired goals and directions. Support, encourage, and help employees to solve problems but do not do it for them. Spread joy and positivity but dare to deal with the hard stuff. Have faith in yourself, your employees, and the organization. Show trust in

practise by giving employees enough power and resources, and by taking their ideas and critique seriously. Accept and tolerate uncertainty and help other to do so too. Pay attention to the individual needs but at the same time be fair and unbiased. Give rewards on trying and succeeding and be open to new things. Accept the views and experiments that you have not come to think of and find out if they could be successful.

However, it is not always so simple to lead emotions, as changing the emotional climate can be a lengthy and rocky road. Not all are comfortable in expressing their emotions publicly or accustomed to work on them. Especially expressing negative emotions are often perceived embarrassing. It is very rare to experience only one emotion at a time. In practise emotions are exposed intertwined, more or less hidden, and go back and forth. The situations which are not dealt with are also difficult because they can bring up nasty emotions later on in some other instance. Additionally, the emotional atmosphere in an organization can be so bad that no-one dares or bothers to say out loud their experiences. Especially if the negative emotions are related to one's team member or leader who is not considered as emotionally intelligent it can be very hard to express one's emotions. (Salonen (2017, 248)

Feeding the employees with positive emotions helps the employees to renew, come up with new approaches and alternatives, think clearly, and foster collaboration. Even though the emotions are generated unconsciously, they can be affected. You can either strengthen or dilute the intensity of the emotions. In addition to the financial capital, personnel capital, and social capital (partner network), organizations have psychological capital, which means the amount of optimism, resilience, self-confidence, capabilities, and the experience of hope in the organization. A strong psychological capital has a clear positive correlation to the well-being at work, employee commitment, the desired behaviour of employees, and work performance. On the other hand, it correlates negatively to cynicism, excessive stress, anxiety, and the intentions to switch jobs. (Salonen, 2017, 238)

The biggest differences between successful and unsuccessful leaders when looking at emotional skills are in the areas of self-discipline, conscientiousness, reliability, social skills, and creating relationships and utilizing diversity. Each of these areas are explained in the below points.

- **Self-discipline:** Leaders who have failed in their careers are bad at tolerating pressure and inclined to outbursts of anger. On the opposite side, successful leaders are self-confident, do well under pressure, and keep their cool, which makes them reliable even in the sticky situations.

- **Conscientiousness:** Failed leaders are defensive after setbacks and critique, for example denying their errors, concealing the effects of errors, or try to blame others. Successful leaders bear responsibility by admitting their errors, take action to correct those errors, and keep on working.
 - **Reliability:** Failed leaders are often too ambitious and try to strive forward on the expense of others. Successful leaders have high professional ethics and they take care of their employees and colleagues alongside the following the requirements of their work tasks.
 - **Social skills:** Failed leaders are not that empathic or sensitive, which is why they might seem like rude, arrogant, or scary. In some cases, they present themselves as overly friendly and compassionate, but that is only the cover. Successful leaders are empathic and sensitive and act discreetly towards those above and below them.
 - **Creating relationships and utilizing diversity:** Failures cannot create a solid network which benefits everyone due to their crudity, whereas successful leaders appreciate other through their diversity and get along with all kinds of people
- (Goleman, 1999, 58-59)

4 Research Methodology

4.1 Target of the Research

This research is a qualitative research intending to find out the importance of emotional intelligence of female leaders and how they perceive the importance of emotional intelligence in their work-life. One objective was also to find out what kind of traits should an emotionally intelligent leader have in their opinion. The majority of the respondents have worked in international working environments and in roles where they either have had an international team or colleagues. The literature review consists of sources from Finnish and international books and articles.

4.2 Qualitative Research Method

Depending on the research, there might be several research methods to use. Different alternatives are not always right or wrong. Instead, they might be more or less appropriate for the purpose of the research. One should first think of the different research methods as a tool to conduct the research. For example, having interest towards people's behaviour the qualitative method is more favourable whereas quantitative research should be used when researching voting intentions. Some might even argue that qualitative data is more insightful than numbers. The choice to utilize qualitative research might also suit a person if they are not interested in statistical calculations. Qualitative data is at its simplest form data, from which all numerical data and statistical methods are removed. The synonyms for qualitative research could be for example soft, understanding, and human studies. (Silverman, 2013,6-14, Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018)

Different phenomena are investigated through interviews. Qualitative research is flexible since it is not a competition, and the interviewer wants to gain as much information as possible on the matter. Hence, the interviewee should have the interview questions or know about the interview theme before the actual interview. Other perk of qualitative research is that the interviewees can be selected based on their knowledge and experience on the research topic. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018) When it comes to emotions and feelings, the author felt like qualitative research would bear more fruit than quantitative questionnaire.

4.3 Data Collection

Five female leaders were chosen to be interviewed for this research. The interviews were conducted either face to face or via Skype to make sure that in case of unclear answers, there would be the option ask more precise question or clarify possible

misunderstandings. In case the research would have been conducted by, for example, a web survey, there might have been some questions left unanswered.

The interviews were conducted during September 2020. Three of the interviews were conducted face to face and two of them via Skype. Face to face interviews were recorded with a dictation app and the Skype interviews were recorded with Skype's recording functionality. One interview lasted on average 36 minutes. In addition to the recording the author made notes during the interviews in case the recordings would have been accidentally destroyed. The interview consisted of five main questions. Each of the main interview questions also had supporting sub questions to clarify the main question and to gain certainty that the answers would be thorough enough. The interview questions can be found in appendix 2.

4.4 Interviewees' Profiles

All interviewees are female and have experience on working as people managers. The interviewees were between 35-49 years old. Three of the five female leaders have a higher university degree, one has a lower university degree, and one of them has a vocational qualification in business. Most of them have worked in the ICT sector while being team leaders. One respondent has worked in the financing field while working as a leader. Three of them have worked or are working with multicultural teams and two have worked with Finnish teams. The length of working as a leader varied from 2 to 8 years.

5 Research Results

The aim of the interviews was to find out the importance of emotional intelligence for female leaders. The interview consisted of five main questions and the following chapters are divided according to those questions.

5.1 What is Emotional Intelligence?

When asked whether the term emotional intelligence was familiar to the interviewees, one respondent had not come across the term emotional intelligence as such, but once the interview was scheduled, she did some research and recognized what it meant. Three of the respondents were familiar with the term but did not know about it in depth. One respondent was very knowledgeable of emotional intelligence and had background on reading books and other materials about it.

The interviewees were asked what emotional intelligence means in their opinion. All the respondents stated that one part of emotional intelligence is about recognizing and understanding others' emotions. Otherwise the responses deviated to some extent. Respondent C said that compared to mathematical intelligence, emotional intelligence deals more about empathy. Respondents A, D, and E also said that emotional intelligence consists of recognizing and being aware one's own emotions. Respondent E included that social skills which enable you tackle challenges and different situations are a part of emotional intelligence whereas respondent D said that emotional intelligence involves controlling one's emotions. Respondent A, who also said she had studied organizational psychology, had the most comprehensive answer which also reflected some of the areas discussed in the literature review. In addition to the aforementioned points, according to Goleman (1999, 42), emotional intelligence consists of recognizing how one's emotions affect the person's behaviour, adjusting one's performance to others feelings, how motivation affects people, and reflecting certain situations afterwards to understand why people act as they do.

5.2 Perception of Oneself as a Leader

All the respondents perceived themselves as emotionally intelligent leaders. Respondent B mentioned that she wants to be emotionally intelligent leader. When she was reading an article related to emotional intelligence, she realized that she was, in fact, emotionally intelligent compared to some other person in her work community. When asked whether the leaders let their emotions guide their work, there was a range of different answers. Respondent A said that she "makes all the big decision based on emotions. I go through

different things and practicalities using sense to find out the most suitable solution, but I do not let emotions fully guide the decision. However, eventually it is my gut feeling that steers the decision.” Respondent D said that she is emotional, and she is good at observing others’ emotions, but she also mentioned that this might be a weakness of her, due to listening to others too intently. She said that she tries to avoid letting negative emotions to take over, especially as a leader. Respondent B said that sometimes the feelings of irritation guide her thinking in workplace but that she does not show those emotions directly to her team at work. Respondents C and E said that they do not let emotions guide their work. Respondent C said that she tries to regulate her own emotions at work whereas respondent E said even though emotions occur, she rationalizes them in the workplace.

Emotions disrupting work

On the question on what kind of emotions disrupt work, all the respondents mentioned negative emotions to be the source of disturbance. Respondent A said that she reflects her surroundings and feelings of others and it bothers her if someone is aggressive or angry towards her. Also, if there are negative vibes between two other people which respondent A picks up, it affects her own energy, even though she would not be involved. She noted that usually she can close off the emotions raising from her personal life and focuses fully on her work, but the overall atmosphere at work affects more on her work than internal feelings. Respondent B told that the feeling of irritation is the biggest disturbing feeling at work. It is harder for her to focus on tasks at hand or that she might not start doing the less interesting tasks at that point.

Respondent C said that occasionally she might get provoked or irritated and those emotions only bother her if she is not able to restrain them. She wants to control what she is saying so that she gets understood correctly. Respondent D said she tries to avoid emotional storms, especially showing her own negative emotions at work and that it is a conscious decision. In her opinion, negative emotions can disturb her work in short term and in the moment but then she just collects herself and carries on. Respondent E said the biggest disturbing emotion is feeling insufficient which can transform into feeling paralyzed.

Related to positive emotions at work, respondent A said that if there is a positive flow and atmosphere at work, you get a lot done while respondent B mentioned that if you are feeling positive, your overall feeling is lighter. Respondent C mentioned that while

negative emotions might take you off the rails, positive emotions do not cause distractions to work. Respondent D said that she can easily show positive feelings at work.

Understanding other's emotions

All the respondents said that they are good at understanding other people's emotions. Respondent A told that she analyses other people's emotions quite a lot. Only situation where she finds it difficult to understand other emotions is if the person is either "stone faced" showing no emotions in their facial expressions or a "day dreamer" who has no concrete solutions to matters. Respondent B said that it is not difficult to understand others' emotions, there's only difficult situations whereas respondent E did not think there are not more difficult situations to understand other's emotions, she can easily read people and their underlying emotions.

Respondent C said that not only working as a leader but working in customer service has taught her to understand others' emotions. She emphasized that listening is one of the most important attributes to figure out what is going on. Respondent D mentioned that if "I am upset myself, then it might be a bit more difficult to understand others. When being upset, it is not as easy to grasp others' emotions. Also, when working remotely it is trickier to understand others, since you cannot see the other person face to face."

Regulating between emotions and rationality

The respondents were asked how they regulate between emotions and rationality. Respondent A said she stops to think about the realities of the situation and then she thinks through her gut feeling. Respondent B said that she regulates the balance between emotions and rationality poorly. Internally she is very emotional, but it does not show to others, especially in work situations. She said it is easier to regulate the emotions that she shows or does not show, but many things go under her skin because she is so emotional. Respondent D also that instinctively thinks with emotions but as a leader she thinks rationally: what needs to be done and who can do it. The process is to first accept the emotions and then start rationalizing.

Respondent C said that in work she is first and foremost rational. In the role of a leader you need to make sure that you are rational and precise to her team members. Being able to handle situations requires rationality and fairness is the result of practicing and training. She needs to show her emotions at times, but she prefers showing the negative ones to her colleagues or her own leader. Also, she concluded that the leader cannot act like a

brick wall, so it is important to show your emotions to your team, but the point being that as a leader you cannot reveal the whole range of emotions. Respondent E said that she shows more emotions on her free time because home is a safe place where you can say anything and show variety of emotions and not having to think about whether it affect your career. She explained that a female showing her emotions at work could be seen as a sign of weakness and at work there should be a certain level of exposing emotions.

5.3 Strengths and Weaknesses in Emotional Intelligence

One common factor that all the respondents had, was that they all thought that one of their strengths was empathy. All of them started their answers by stating that their strength is empathy and then adding other attributes. Respondent A mentioned that her empathy skills come from her backbone. Social skills were also mentioned by all the respondents – most of them referring it as a strength and two said their social skills were at a fairly good level. Respondent A said that she can “read others and know if their energy level is low but also see if the other person gets easily excited” while respondent E said that she can “easily get people involved and she feels that she can impact on other people.” Other attributes mentioned as strengths were self-awareness by respondents A, D and E, and self-regulation by respondents B and C. Respondent B said that “in a leadership role I have to challenge my self-awareness and I think I know myself, but on the other hand I have also taken part in trainings about it.”

When asked about their weaknesses related to emotional intelligence, the female leaders were divided into two groups. Respondents A and D said that their weakness was self-regulation when respondents B, C and E stated that their weaknesses were related to motivation. All of the respondents wanted to develop these areas. Respondent A said she has had to put most work to self-regulation and she needs to develop it even more in her leader role. “If someone does not like me, I might feel a little tense and wonder if I can win the person over to my side” said respondent A. Respondent D said that self-regulation is hard, because she feel so intently and needs to work consciously in order to not let disturbing emotions guide her. Respondent C pondered how one can recognize the aspects of oneself that motivate you and which strings you need to pull to get certain things done. On the other hand, respondent E indicated that she knows that recognition motivates her but if she does not receive feedback instantly, or in some cases does not receive it at all, her motivation drops as she does achieve the feeling of success.

When asked which things the respondents thought were the most important in their work, none of them mentioned motivation. Respondents B, D and E mentioned social skills. Respondent E highlighted social skills especially in global environments, because the

people are from different cultures and then it is important to be able to read others' emotions and mental states and to understand where they stem from. She also said that it is important to listen as you might not see your global team face to face. Respondents C and E also highlighted empathy. Respondent C told that in a work with customers it is of crucial importance. "You need to understand to which audiences you are talking to, you need to be able to relate to them, and make sure they feel like they are being heard and understood." Interestingly, respondent A stated that the most important emotional intelligence attribute in her work is self-regulation and how to channel it to her team. "If the leader is in a bad mood, it reflects to the team members activities and achievements." She also said that as she experiences other people's emotions so strongly inside herself, that it might be easier to be a leader who filters those emotions – meaning that it would be less burdensome for herself not to take in other emotions. However, she concluded that having a filter for other people's emotions does not necessarily make you a better leader.

5.4 Features of a Leader

The respondents were asked about the attributes of an emotionally intelligent leader and what should a leader pay attention to. There was a variety of answers and not really one common denominator. Respondent A said it is important to know oneself and understand what kind you yourself. Meaning, that the feedback received from other should not be a surprise. The leader should be able to read people and situations well and adjust their own communication to the behavior of others. She also stated that working as a leader helps to be more emotionally intelligent. She mentioned that you, as a leader, should do your job in a soft manner. One important factor for her was to be a leader who reached goals by negotiating with people rather than manipulating them.

Respondent B said it is important to work well with the team by not shouting, lecturing a team member in front of others, or doing anything stupid that would make others feel awkward. A leader, in her opinion, should lead the team with their own skill set and with their example towards the direction in which the company aims to go. Respondent C raised three key components: looking people in the eyes, being present, and having a vision to where the team is going to. Being present means that you have to be committed to the situation and not get distracted by other things, but also having the ability to listen and adapt to various situations. Related to the vision, you should also understand how different people can be led to that vision in different ways.

According to respondent D a great leader takes others into account, understands their strengths and how to utilize those strengths. A leader should create a positive and encouraging working atmosphere and understand others' feelings but also make sure that

the work gets done. In her opinion a good leader indicates that it is okay to make mistakes, and that there is room for development and possibilities to ask questions. Respondent E mentioned two main points: caring and listening. A leader should care about more than just executing work tasks, there should be a feeling that you are working with a real person. Listening helps a leader to tune in into what is going on around them and among the team. She said that the leader should make themselves an approachable figure at work from whom you can ask questions and not a manager who sits in their high stool and gives orders.

Leadership affecting the employee

The interviewees were asked how the emotional intelligence of a leader affects the motivation, input and commitment of the employees. All of them thought that emotional intelligence was a remarkable thing affecting the motivation, input, and commitment. Respondent A told “the most important mission of an emotionally intelligent leader is to get the team and individuals to work in the best possible capacity and to make progress. It is also important to motivate people if you are familiar with their motivators, how they act, and how to get the most out of them.” Respondent B thought that an emotionally intelligent leader spots if someone is fading out or is in a wrong job. Emotionally intelligent leader helps the team members to grow. She also mentioned that the leader should be a part of the team and enable people to be experts in their own work.

Respondent C said that having the experience of being heard has a big impact on motivation. Some team members might require more micromanagement to do their work and should be given it, but others might be the opposite, “more mature”, who need to make their own mistakes and learn from them. She also said that if the leader does not listen to, understand, support, or thank you, the motivation of the team member drops. The way that the leader motivates the team affects a lot to your achievements. One important factor according to her is that “the leader cannot make you perfect, the leader can only give you opportunities to grow.”

Respondent D and E both talked about the targets set to employees and their effect on the people. Respondent D highlighted that if a leader cannot read others, focuses only on targets matter-of-factly, and does not consider other people as individuals, the motivation of the team deteriorates. If the leader is only focused on measurable targets, the ambience of the workplace changes. “Good vibes” weaken, and there is no room for creating something new and innovation. She also said that if the leader is not emotionally intelligent, there can be a clash in the team. Other respondents mentioned on some

occasions during the interview that you develop as a leader during time and respondent D felt the same. "In a leader role you develop in different situations, and notice new features in people, and are able to notice things in different ways with different people".

Respondent E talked about motivation and how different people get motivated on different things, like for example money or praise. She said that the leader should have a link to the other person. Meaning, if you have personal relationship to your colleagues, you are more committed to the company. Therefore, the leader should not only focus on the performance of the employee act like a distant manager, they should also have a personal relationship with the team member. It helps the leader to understand your motivators and know who you are. The leader cannot facilitate your work as a team member if they do not know what kind of a person you are.

Multi-cultural and Finnish teams

One interview question was whether there should be a different style of leadership with multicultural teams and Finnish teams. Respondent A said that the nationalities of the team members might have a small impact on the leadership style, but not significantly. All the other respondents indicated that you should consider the cultural implications and the hierarchy background when leading other nationalities than Finnish team members.

Respondent A said that we are all individuals so the leading people should be somewhat same regardless of the nationality of the team. Respondent E mentioned that the basic "building blocks" of leadership should be the same and leader should strive to the same result with multi-cultural and Finnish teams, but the means should be different.

Respondent C said that you need to be more sensitive with multicultural teams to be more open to different situations. She said that you need to listen and to be able to adjust your own behavior and communication according to your audiences. Respondent D told that you need to be more controlled with multicultural teams and the leader cannot act like the team members' "buddy" because you might need to show more authority. Respondent E talked about the same things: "The leader needs to adjust and juggle your own behavior and communication with other cultures while with Finnish teams you can be more straightforward, open, and direct." Respondent B said that in some cases you need to order team members to do thing, and not ask them because people from different nationalities require different attitude towards them. However, respondent C added that with Finnish teams you assume thing more easily and that can lead something to go wrong.

5.5 Emotional Intelligence in Workplace

All of the female leaders indicated that at their workplaces there is no talk about emotional intelligence in formal situations nor do they have trainings about it. Respondent C told that they have a training for new leaders which includes topics related to different leadership styles, but not emotional intelligence is not discussed as such. Respondent D also told that in her work they have gone through leadership training concerning different types of people, but not touch upon emotional intelligence.

Respondent A said that the general feeling or ambience of the office interest the managerial level people to some extent but there is no emphasis on emotional intelligence in general. Respondent B thought that in their head office located in another Nordic country people might be more empathetic by considering other peoples' emotions but in Finland self-awareness is more valued in the form of being brave to bring out certain topics. Respondent D said that it is commonly known in their workplace that their CEO wants everyone to feel comfortable at work even though soft values are not actively brought out. Respondent E said that the wellbeing of employees is important in her workplace.

The interview continued to the topics of whether some groups of people are more emotionally intelligent than other and whether there is a difference on the level of emotional intelligence between female and male leaders. Respondent C said that in jobs where you focus solely on numbers or the work is done in "solitude", emotional intelligence is not that important. On the other hand, when you work in customer service position, you need to be more emotionally intelligent to understand the emotional state of the customer and try to keep up with it.

Respondent B said that in general female leaders are more emotionally intelligent than male leaders. Respondent C said that she used to think that female leaders are more emotionally intelligent but after having a terrible female leader followed by an excellent male leader, she no longer thinks that there is a difference and that all people are individuals. Respondent A said that maybe there is also a difference between generations: especially older males are less inclined to talk about feeling but her generations' males and females can talk about them. Respondent E on the other hand wondered whether the emotional intelligence is somehow linked to the field you work in. She said the males working in the humanities field could be more emotionally intelligent than males working in the IT field.

Respondent A and B said that female leaders are better in empathy than male leaders. In addition, respondent A said that female leaders are better in self-awareness, respondent B added social skills and self-awareness to the mix and respondent D said that female leaders are better in social skills than male leaders. Respondent A also thought that female leaders are expected to be more empathic due to existing gender roles and that a tough or goal oriented female leader can sometimes be considered “a bitch”. She also stated that these attributes can be seen as negative things for female leaders but if a male leader is empathic, it is only a positive thing. On the contrary, respondent E said that nowadays you can be the way you are as a female leader, and you do not need to pretend to be something else to be a qualified leader. Respondent D thought that male leaders have more self-confidence, are more eager to take risks, and tolerate the consequence of their tough decisions. Respondent E said that seizing opportunities is more of a male attribute.

6 Discussion

The aim of this research was to find out how the importance of emotional intelligence is perceived by female leaders, if they consider themselves as emotionally intelligent leaders, what kind of leaders are considered to be emotionally intelligent, and should a leader have a different approach when leading a Finnish or a multi-cultural team. In the literary review the aim was to introduce the concepts of emotional intelligence and go through theories about leadership so that the results of the research could be better understood. The research method was a qualitative research executed through one-to-one interviews. Most of the respondents had heard about the term emotional intelligence but had not studied it further. However, many of the respondents understood and knew of the key concepts of emotional intelligence. They also could differentiate emotional intelligence from for example mathematical intelligence.

6.1 Key issues

The female leaders felt that emotional intelligence is not visible at their workplaces in formal situations. Few of them indicated that there are occasionally discussions about soft values, for example in training situations or that the top management wants to know about the general feeling at the office, but that was not very common. Some of the respondents also raised the issue with gender roles. They thought that in some cases women are expected to lead in a certain way, for example being empathic, since women in general are considered to be more empathic than men. According to Saarinen & Aalto-Setälä (2009, 32) emotions are traditionally linked to women's behavior. One respondent that the generation of leaders close to her age are more inclined to talk about feelings whereas the older generations might be less inclined to do so.

6.2 Common Denominators

Most of the female leaders mentioned that emotional intelligence involves around understanding other peoples' emotions among other things. All the female leaders considered them as emotionally intelligent and especially in empathy. The research indicated that they welcomed their own positive emotions and let them show but tried to tone down the negative emotions. The female leaders thought that the most important traits in emotional intelligence in their work were self-awareness, social skills, and empathy. The responses indicated that there should be interaction between the leader and the team members in the form of listening, reading peoples' moods, being able to motivate, and in general working with others.

The female leaders also thought that the level of emotional intelligence of a leader has a great impact on the team members. Many of them said that the main goal of the leader is to make the team operate efficiently and the best possible capacity. The topic of motivation was also raised when talking about the impact of the leader to the team. Over half of the respondents indicated that the leader needs to listen the team in order to contribute to their motivation.

Four of the five female leaders indicated that the leadership style should be different for different nationalities, which was also discussed by Browaeys (2008, 157-159). The female leaders indicated that a leader should be more sensitive and open with multi-cultural teams and listen to the team members. It was concluded that the leader needs to be able to adjust their own behavior depending on the cultural background of an individual.

6.3 Differentiating Opinions

The respondents' opinions were divided into different camps whether male or female leaders are more emotionally intelligent. There was no direct question on males and females and the level of their emotional intelligence, but the topic was touched upon during the interviews. One respondent felt that older men are less emotionally intelligent than younger leaders, one said that there are certain fields of business where the men might be more emotionally intelligent (humanities vs ICT) whereas one respondent said that female leaders are more emotionally intelligent than male counterparts. According to Saarinen & Aalto-Setälä (2009, 32) the perception that women are more emotionally intelligent than men exists, but there is no actual proof to that.

6.4 Suggestions on Further Research

It would be interesting to compare these results to female leaders from different cultural backgrounds. Since all the female leaders in this study are Finnish, the research only demonstrates the opinions of people from Finnish cultural background. Would it make a difference if the respondents were from different Nordic countries? How close are those cultures to the Finnish culture? The deviation between the responses might be greater if further research would be conducted to cultures with different perception of time, power, competition, space, and communication due to cultural background. Additionally, conducting further research on culturally diverse teams would be interesting.

Other perspective could be to interview female leaders who are very young, under their 30's and female leader close to retirement. Do their opinions differentiate from these

results and is the younger generation more demanding on having an emotionally intelligent leader? The age range of the interviewees was from 36 to 47 years, majority of them being part of generation X and one person a millennial. If you would interview managers who are either part of generation Z or baby boomers, would the results indicate different opinions. As the respondents had mainly worked in the ICT field, would it make a difference to interview female leaders from the field of nursing, arts, education or female dominated fields?

In general, it would be interesting to further investigate the perception of female leader towards the differences of male and female leaders' level of emotional intelligence. The research indicated that the respondents had varying opinions on the level of emotional intelligence of male and female leaders. It might be beneficial to dig deeper into this topic and see if the opinions of female leaders match the studies on this topic. One further interesting aspect would be to research whether emotional intelligence related topic should be highlighted in managerial trainings and what benefits could be gained from them.

6.5 Reliability and Validity of the Research

The validity of the research demonstrates the ability of the research method to measure what it is supposed to measure. In a valid research there should not be systematic errors, meaning how the respondents understand the interview questions. The results get skewed if the respondents do not think the way the researcher expect them to think. Validity is linked to defining the concepts, collecting data, carefully defining the questionnaire, and making sure the questionnaire covers the whole research problem. The research is valid when theoretical definitions are transferred to the questionnaire. The reliability of the research is linked to the accuracy of the results, in other words the ability of the research to demonstrate non sporadic results and the reproducibility of the results. The results are relevant to the time and place, which means that the results should not be generalized outside their area of competence. The reliability of the research can be weakened by for example the respondent misunderstanding the interviewee or when the interviewee records the respondents answer incorrectly. The impact of the errors is not necessarily very high. The most important aspect is for the researcher to address the random errors. (Vilkka, 2015)

The interviewees consisted of five female leaders and serve the purpose of the research dealing with the emotional intelligence of female leaders. The literary review goes through relevant leadership theories and discusses emotional intelligence and areas of it. All of the interviewees have worked in same workplaces with the author, so the existing trust could

benefit this research since the respondents might be more open to discuss the topic with someone they already know. The names of the interviewees were not linked directly to research results to contribute to the reliability of the research. The full list of interviewees was given to the thesis instructor. Instead of their names, letters A-E were used to refer to the respondents. Not being able to distinguish the answers of specific respondent contributes to the reliability of the research. The respondents felt more at ease talking about their workplaces when they could not be recognized from the responses.

Using a qualitative method fits well to this type of research to find out thoroughly and profoundly the opinions and experiences of the respondents. Having a quantitative survey might lead to a situation where something might have left unanswered. The opportunity to interview female leaders face to face in an open and relax situation made it easier to ask for clarifications and further questions if the responses were vague or narrow. If the author had written only notes during the interviews and not recorded them, some areas or topics might have been missed. Having two methods to document the answers contributes to the reliability of the research. It was also easier to transcribe the responses when you already had the frame of the interview written down.

All the female leaders interviewed are professionals in their own fields and all work in different companies, which contributed to the variation of the responses. The common feature of four of the interviewees was that they all have worked or are working in the ICT field, only one in financing field. All of the respondents have worked as leaders and it was good to have variation to the length of the years they have worked as leaders. Also, having leaders ages ranging from 36 to 47 gives a nice overview on leaders who are not fairly new to working life nor are about to retire.

One interesting question to ponder upon is that would the responses have been different had the author interviewed female leaders from different countries. However, this research could be utilized in Finnish companies, and furthermore in companies which have employees from different cultures since some of the leaders have experience on working with multi-cultural teams. Interviewing only five female leaders is only a scratch on the surface of this topic so having more interviewees could contribute to the results and the validity of this research.

6.6 Research Process and Lessons Learned

The author had the idea of conducting research on some HR related topic as she herself works with numbers and was interested in some other topic closer to so called soft values. The idea of emotional intelligence first developed during spring 2020. The literature review

was started in May and the writing continued during August and September 2020 after the summer break. Final replenishing touches to the literature review were made in October to contribute to the validity of the research. The interview questions were formed in August and the interviews were conducted in the two first weeks of September. Transcribing the interviews was done midway September and the results were documented in this paper at the end of September. The conclusions, suggestions for further research and the reliability and validity were constructed at the end of September and beginning of October.

As the author works closely with numbers, excels, and data and loves to submerge herself in them, the process of writing longer essays, or other academic papers has always been a rocky road, this process included. Talking, sparring, and communicating with others is easier for her face to face compared to generating text. The whole writing process of the thesis was laborious, especially the literature review. The best and most enjoyable part was the interviews. There was a lot of laughter and insights during the interviews. Naturally, writing a thesis gives a thorough insight on the topic you are researching. The author feels like she is now more knowledgeable on the topics of leadership and emotional intelligence. There was a phase where she started to evaluate her own level of emotional intelligence and subconsciously observing other peoples' behaviour. She also started to think what kinds of leader attributes are important to her and what kinds of leaders she looks up to. The research process also made her aware what attributes she should develop further if she ever ends up in a people leader role. Also, during the thesis process she decided that she will not ever apply to any school in the future where there is the requirement to write a thesis at the end of the degree programme – she prefers to commit to life long learning in other forms of training and education.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Interview questions

1. What is emotional intelligence in your opinion?
 - Are you familiar with the term and what do you think it means?
2. Do you perceive yourself as an emotionally intelligent leader?
 - Do you let emotions guide your work and in which situations?
 - What kind of emotions disrupt your work?
 - Do you find it challenging to understand other people's emotions and in which situations especially?
 - How do you regulate the balance between rationality and emotions?
3. Which areas of emotional intelligence are your strengths and which areas are the challenging ones for you?
 - Which ones would you like to develop even further?
 - Which areas of emotional intelligence do you consider as the most important ones in your work?
4. In your opinion, what kind is a leader who is emotionally intelligent?
 - How does emotional intelligence convey from them?
 - What kind of qualities are required from an emotional intelligent leader?
 - What kind of things does the leader have to pay attention to?
 - How does the emotional intelligence of a leader affect the motivation, input and commitment of the employees?
 - Does being a leader for multicultural versus finnish team require a different set of emotional intelligence?
5. Is emotional intelligence valued in your workplace?
 - How does it show?
 - Do you think there are certain groups of people in your workplace who are more emotionally intelligent than others?
 - Is there a difference in the level or areas of emotional intelligence between female and male leaders?