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IMPORTANCE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN LEADERSHIP

A qualitative analysis

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ABSTRACT

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<p>As the studies in social sciences are growing day by day, so is the study in topics such as emotional intelligence and leadership. Emotional intelligence and its impact on leadership is one of the widely discussed subjects in the modern times. This thesis is an attempt to comprehend, from individuals in leadership positions, the perception of emotional intelligence and the importance of emotional intelligence in leadership.</p> <p>The thesis consists of literature on background and evolution of emotional intelligence, its components and its evaluation models, and its relationship with leadership as its theoretical framework. A qualitative approach was applied for the purpose of this study. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with leaders from different industries to gather rich text data. Such data were initially coded, and themes were generated from them using the technique of thematic analysis.</p> <p>The two research questions of this study have been answered in the form of themes of their own. Factors such as self-awareness, empathy, communication, relationship management and so on are the topics of significant findings of this study.</p>		
Key words communication, emotional intelligence, emotions, empathy, leadership, self-awareness, self-management, thematic analysis		

ABSTRACT
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1 INTRODUCTION

The title of this study is ‘‘Importance of emotional intelligence in leadership’’. As the title suggests, this thesis is an attempt to study the impact of emotional intelligence in leadership. My choice to conduct a research in this topic is based on the interest in emotional intelligence and leadership that was derived from the numerous course contents on leadership during the degree programme.

The term ‘emotional intelligence’ (EI) is quite often used in the modern times and is seen as an important element in many aspects of life, whether it be personal or professional. Emotional intelligence, in simple words, can be understood as the ability to manage emotions effectively. Emotions are vital components of human lives and managing them properly often seems to be difficult functions for most of us. Their effective management is necessary for us to succeed in our personal, social and professional relationships.

Leadership, simply understanding, is the act of leading a group of people or an entity. A leader needs to inspire others to do their job in order to achieve the set goals. It is a difficult task to become a leader as it requires a variety of qualities and skills such as integrity, awareness, communication, empathy and so on. The work of the leader is quite hectic and stressful and because of these reasons the importance of emotional intelligence is vastly growing among the established and aspiring leaders.

The aim of this study is to explore the impact of emotional intelligence on leadership. The research is an attempt to understand the connection between emotional intelligence and leadership. Understanding the viewpoints of different leaders on emotional intelligence and its importance in leadership are the primary objectives of this thesis. This study is guided by following research questions that will facilitate in achieving the aim of the study: What is emotional intelligence? and Why is emotional intelligence important for leadership?

Theoretical part is included to explain about literature background of the topic. The theory deals with the background of emotional intelligence and leadership, their development throughout the history, the aspects of emotional intelligence, and different types of leadership styles. Literature relating to the connection between emotional intelligence and leadership is explored and the importance of EI on leadership is also studied as a part of the theory. Scientific research articles were searched on ResearchGate, PubMed, Google Scholar, and other available platforms.

This thesis is a qualitative study undertaken to identify the influence of emotional intelligence on the leadership. Interview based questions are used as research tools in this thesis. An interview guide consisting of the semi-structured interview questions was prepared and interviews were conducted in accordance with the interview guide. The primary data collection was done through these interviews which were then analysed using the technique of ‘thematic analysis’ to find the results of the study. I believe that this study will help the readers to understand the effects of emotional intelligence on leadership and will provide information regarding the use of emotional intelligence in the workplace.

2 EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

This section consists of literature on emotional intelligence, its background, evolution, and components. A discussion on ‘emotional intelligence in leadership’ is also included in this section.

2.1 Background

Emotional intelligence, often understood as EI or EQ, is a set of skills relating to emotional and social nature, that influence people’s perception and expression of themselves. Emotional intelligence (EI) is getting high attention in research field from the last decade. It is the concept that is new in both the fields of management and psychology. (Lubbadeh 2020.) The book ‘Emotional Intelligence’ by Daniel Goleman, published in 1995, is considered a milestone in the field of EI. After this book came out, it grabbed the attention of many researchers in different fields. In this very book, Goleman indicated that a person’s intelligence quotient (IQ) is responsible for providing only 20% of the factors contributing towards success in life while emotional intelligence (EI) is an important part of remaining 80%. (Lubbadeh 2020). Joseph and Newman have also furthered that the allure of EI as a crucial base for success in performing a job has been growing (Guillen & Florent-Treacy 2011).

Many studies have indicated that there is a relation between leadership and emotional intelligence. The relationship has often been stressed in abilities of empathic listening, resonance, and self-awareness (Guillen & Florent-Treacy 2011). Similarly, Goleman has indicated in his writings that there is a common denominator in most of the highly effective leaders and that commonality is emotional intelligence. He even stated that technicalities and IQ are more of entry level prerequisites for leadership positions while EQ is ‘sine qua non’, i.e., it is an absolutely necessary condition. Goleman has further added that a person may possess intelligent ideas and critical thinking skills and may have been trained in the best possible manner, but without emotional intelligence, the person would still not become a great leader. (Ovans 2015.)

2.2 Emotional intelligence

Emotional intelligence depicts the aptitude, capacity, skill, or self-perceived capability to recognise, evaluate and manage emotions of one's own, and also of the others, including the groups (Serrat 2017). Martinez refers to emotional intelligence as “*an array of non-cognitive capabilities, competencies, and skills that influence one's ability to succeed in coping with environmental demands and pressure*” (Ahangar 2012). Individuals with high degree of EI are aware of themselves and are also able to sense others' emotions (Serrat 2017). EI is similarly perceived by Ilona Jerabek. She defines EI as people's self-awareness of their feelings and needs, the capability to identify them suitably, and to combine them with their own long-term personal needs as well as the needs and feelings of other people. (Berenson, Boyle & Weaver 2008.)

The concept of emotional intelligence is drawn from theories on different disciplines such as behaviours, emotions, and communications. The term ‘emotional intelligence’ was first used by Peter Salovey and John Mayer and was further popularised by Daniel Goleman. (Mehta & Singh 2013.) Goleman widened perspective on emotional intelligence. He asserted that EI is a way to know what one is feeling, to be able to manage them without being flooded by them, to motivate oneself, to be innovative and to perform at one's pinnacle and also simultaneously to be able to sense others' feelings and efficiently manage relationships. (Jena & Pradhan 2014.)

Robert K. Cooper defines EI as the ability to feel, comprehend and successfully apply the strength and wisdom of emotions as a basis for human energy, information, communication, and influence (Houston 2021). Similarly, Byron Stock has explained emotional intelligence as the inherent potential of sensing, utilizing, conveying, identifying, recollecting, learning from, coping with, comprehending, and explaining emotions (Tripathy 2018). Among other definitions, Travis Bradberry and Jean Greaves describe EI as one's capacity to distinguish and comprehend emotions in oneself and others, and one's capability to apply that knowledge to handle behaviours and relationships (Tripathy 2018).

There are many scholars that have attempted to define emotional intelligence. Studies have also been conducted to examine the connection between EI and leadership. Further literature on EI and leadership is set up in the forthcoming chapters of this study.

2.3 Evolution of emotional intelligence

In 1920, Thorndike suggested an intelligence model in which he not only included conventional factors of intelligence but also other new factors which he labelled ‘social intelligence’. Thorndike differentiated between academic, mechanical, and social intelligence. (Weis & Süß 2005.) He explained such social intelligence as the “ability to understand and manage men and women, boys and girls - to act wisely in human relations” (Mo & Andrew 2007). In this definition of social intelligence, Thorndike made the differentiation between cognitive and behavioural elements of such intelligence. ‘To understand others’ relates to cognitive components while ‘to act wisely in human relations’ is inclined towards the behavioural aspects. (Weis & Süß 2005.) The succeeding research in social intelligence have seen varying interests and various approaches. Many studies have been done to distinguish academic intelligence and social intelligence, but the success has only been slight. (Mo & Andrew 2007.)

In the 1940s, the concept of non-cognitive intelligence was built which asserted the intelligence to be incomplete until its non-cognitive aspects were ably defined. In the succeeding decade, Maslow indicated that it was possible for people to develop their emotional strength. Ideas of multiple intelligence, and interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence were introduced by Gardner after that. In the 1990s, a breakthrough article “Emotional Intelligence”, authored by Salovey and Mayer was published. The concept of EI was then further propagated by Daniel Goldman in his book “Emotional Intelligence: Why It can Matter More than IQ”. (Dhani & Sharma 2016.) A table demonstrating the timeline for development of EI in twentieth century is given below.

TABLE 1. Five periods of development in emotions and intelligence in past century (adapted from Dhani & Sharma 2016)

<p>1900-1969</p> <p>Intelligence and Emotions as Separate Narrow Fields</p>	<p>Intelligence Research</p> <p>Psychometric approach to intelligence is developed and refined.</p> <p>Emotions Research</p> <p>Debate which happens first: physiological reaction or emotion.</p> <p>Movement from Darwin’s theory for heritability and evolution of emotional responses to now being viewed as culturally determined.</p> <p>Social Intelligence as concept is introduced.</p>
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(continues)

TABLE 1. (continues).

<p>1970-1989</p> <p>Precursors to EI</p>	<p>The field of cognition and affect emerged to examine how emotions interacted with thoughts.</p> <p>Gardner theory of multiple intelligences described an intrapersonal intelligence and an interpersonal intelligence.</p> <p>Empirical work on social intelligence developed four components: social skills, empathy skills, prosaically attitudes, and emotionality (sensitivity).</p> <p>Brain research began to separate out connection between emotion and cognition.</p> <p>Occasional use of EI appeared.</p>
<p>1990-1993</p> <p>The Emergence of EI</p>	<p>Mayer and Salovey publish a series of articles on EI.</p> <p>First ability measure of EI published.</p> <p>Editor of the journal Intelligence argued for an existence of EI.</p> <p>Further developments for EI in the brain sciences</p>
<p>1994-1997</p> <p>The Popularization and Broadening</p>	<p>Goleman publishes Emotional Intelligence which becomes worldwide best-seller.</p> <p>Time magazine used the term “EQ” on its cover</p> <p>measures of EI using mixed model theories were published.</p>
<p>1998-Present</p> <p>Research on the Institutionalization of EI</p>	<p>refinements to the concept of EI.</p> <p>new measures of EI introduced.</p> <p>appearance of peer-reviewed articles on the subject.</p>

The above table outlines the evolution of emotional intelligence. It can be witnessed from the above table that separate study of emotions and intelligence emerged during the 1960s. The concept of social intelligence was introduced. In the next era of 1970s and 80s, the concepts of cognition, interaction of emotions and thoughts, and interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence were introduced. In the succeeding eras, scholars like Mayer, Salovey and Goleman published many articles on emotional intelligence and popularised it in the global scenario.

2.4 Components of emotional intelligence

Daniel Goleman, a scholar on the field of emotional intelligence, first proposed 5 components of EI, namely, self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills (MindTools 2020). In the book ‘The Emotionally Intelligent Workplace’ by Cary Cherniss and Daniel Goleman (2001), Goleman stated that the 5 components had been redesigned into 4 components, namely, self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. The former two have been categorised as intrapersonal skills while the latter two have been characterised as interpersonal skills. (Smith 2002.) The following figure is the framework of emotional competencies proposed by Daniel Goleman.

	SELF (PERSONAL COMPE- TENCE)	OTHER (SOCIAL COMPE- TENCE)
RECOGNITION	Self-Awareness Emotional Self-Awareness Accurate Self-Assessment Self-Confidence	Social Awareness Empathy Organizational Awareness Service Orientation
REGULATION	Self-Management Self-control Adaptability Trustworthiness Achievement Drive Initiative Conscientiousness	Relationship Management Developing Others Leadership Influence Communications Conflict Management Change Catalyst Building Bonds Teamwork and Collaboration

FIGURE 1. Framework of emotional competencies (adapted from Cherniss & Goleman 2001)

2.4.1 Self- awareness

Self-awareness is having a deep understanding of one’s own strength, weakness, emotions, needs and desire. It simply means knowing self in the deeper level before trying to know everything else. People who assess their own self honestly are self-aware people. Self-awareness is often deemed as the most significant component of EI. It is a general consensus that individuals that are conscious of their emotions have the better ability to handle their own lives and they also learn to have faith in their gut feelings which helps them in making difficult decisions. (Hinds 2017.)

The self-awareness component consists of emotional self-awareness, accurate self-assessment, and self-confidence (Serrat 2017). It involves tracking of different emotions and recognising them correctly. It also includes the acknowledgement of relationship between feelings and actions, and the comprehension of one's own strengths and limitations (Craig 2021). Individuals with the competence of self-awareness are able to diagnose how their emotions influence their performance. They are able to reflect on their experiences, strengths, and limitations, and are also decisive. (Serrat 2017.)

2.4.2 Self-management

Self-management is another component of emotional intelligence where people work on themselves. Humans are made in such a way they cannot get away from their emotions but least can manage them. Goleman explains self-regulation is the inner conversation that frees people from being prisoners of their own feelings. Generally, people who are able to manage their emotions have a better performance. It is because they have a clear thinking. (Hinds 2017.) Hinds further explains that to manage emotions is not to restrain or negate them but to understand them and use that understanding to make productive decisions.

The elements of self-management include emotional self-control, trustworthiness, conscientiousness, adaptability, achievement drive/orientation, and initiative. The dimension of self-management includes issues such as managing the feelings of impulse and distress, and demonstrating clarity of thoughts, composure and positivity in difficult circumstances. Similarly, fulfilling the commitments, being accountable for one's own actions, practicing ethical behaviors while fearlessly confronting the unethical ones, adapting according to the circumstances, flexibility, and looking for new ideas and perspectives are the subjects of self-management. (Serrat 2017.)

2.4.3 Social awareness

The dimension of social awareness in Goleman's emotional intelligence quadrant, consists of empathy, organizational awareness, and service (Kanesan & Fauzan 2019). Empathy simply means the ability to understand and share the feelings of another. It is the capacity to communicate and comprehend other person's emotional state. This ability is also often termed as "put oneself into another's shoes" which means to experience the emotions of another person within oneself. (Loannidou & Konstantikaki

2008.) In a nutshell, empathy means to recognise others' emotions, to understand the reasons behind them, and to be able to participate in someone's emotional experience without actually being a part of it (Loannidou & Konstantikaki 2008).

The elements of organizational awareness and service enhance an individual's competence to reward others' achievements and appreciate their strengths, provide insightful feedbacks, provide fitting assistance after perceiving the needs of customers, and look for ways to enhance customer satisfaction. For a leader, it is really important to have this characteristic. It gives new perspective to look at the situation from the other side and evaluate the situation better. Individuals with social awareness are good listeners and are aware of the emotional signals, are sensitive to the perspectives of other individuals, and are ready to help others with the understanding of their emotional needs and feelings. (Serrat 2017.)

2.4.4 Relationship management

Relationship management is an element of social competence proposed by Goleman. It is the ability of an individual to relate to others. The aspects such as developing others, influence, communication, conflict management, visionary leadership, building bonds, teamwork, collaboration, and catalyst for change are included in the dimensions of relationship management. (Cherniss & Goleman 2001.) Relationship management correlates with the other 3 components of emotional intelligence. When individuals are first able to understand and manage their own and others' emotions and are empathetic, then only they can build an effective relationship with others. (Cherniss & Goleman 2001.)

A leader should always be vocal and friendly at the same time. It is also about managing healthy relationship with all the team members (Hinds 2017). The individuals that have mastered the competence of relationship management are able to lead and inspire others with the use of variety of skills and tactics. They are also strong advocates of teamwork and collaboration and have the ability to resolve conflicts. (Riopel 2021.)

2.5 Emotional intelligence in leadership

Leadership and emotional intelligence are getting more important due to competitive work environment and globalization of the companies. Global presence of the organization creates a pressure among employees to perform and sustain. Leaders have higher pressure to fulfil the owner's expectations and maintaining the employee's performance. (Dobre 2013.) Leaders must manage the conflicts and to solve the conflicts, emotional intelligence plays a very important role. Leaders must be able to detect the problem, conflicts, and issues and to identify a style which can resolve it (MindTools 2020). To maintain a healthy environment in the company, leaders must know how to handle their emotions and maintain an equilibrium among employees' behaviour and his own reaction (Barsade & O'Neill 2016).

Research has shown that EI has a positive impact on the different leadership styles specially in terms of understanding of and responding to a problem. Major impact of emotional intelligence has been observed in the transformational leadership style. In transformational leadership style, a leader works closely with employees and tries to understand their needs, motivate them, and encourage creativity. Researchers Bass and Avolio also mentioned that transformational leaders "motivate others to do more than they originally intended and often more than they thought possible. They set more challenging expectations and typically achieve higher performances". (Jyoti & Dev 2015.) The behaviour of these leaders revolves around motivating employees, encouraging intellectual thinking and individualized approach whereas in the transactional leadership styles, a transaction between leader and the colleague, followers and employees is observed. A non-transactional leader usually avoids being a part of the project which turns into wrong direction and they are weak in making decisions. (Hamstra, Yperen, Wisse & Sassenberg 2013.) Leadership outcomes apply to the additional effort workers are prepared to make in order to achieve defined targets (Abbas & Asghar 2010). Research has been done to show that emotional intelligence and leadership style are related. A good example is the research performed by the Johnson and Johnson Customer Care and Personal Care Community, which found that emotional intelligence is substantially greater for the top performing managers than for other managers (Cavallo & Brienza 2001).

Gardner and Stough (2002) conducted another study, linking emotional intelligence to leadership style, to explore this relationship among senior managers. In their research, Leban and Zulauf (2004) documented a relationship connecting emotional intelligence skills and the style of transformational leadership. A study conducted by Duckett and Macfarlane (2003) further demonstrates a link between success, emotional intelligence, and transformational leadership in a retail management context.

3 EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE EVALUATION

Many literary contents have made it generally evident that the categorisation of emotional intelligence has been made into three models, namely, ability model, mixed model, and trait model. Many key theorists defined emotional intelligence differently which led to the development of different models of emotional intelligence. The models have often characterized EQ as personal and social intelligence. (Kanesan & Fauzan 2019.)

According to Salovey and Mayer, EQ is the comprehension and management of personal (own) emotions and social (others') emotions. The mixed model proposed by Bar-On also consisted of intrapersonal (own) and interpersonal (social) components. Also, Petrides and Furnham brought forward the notion that the concept of EQ pertains to processing of the information intra and interpersonally. (Roberts, Maccann, Matthews & Zeidner 2010.)

3.1 The ability model of emotional intelligence

Mayer and Salovey are credited with the launch of the ability model of EQ. In the ability model of EQ, there are 4 components of mental abilities that process the emotions. Those 4 sets are organized in the manner of very basic to higher-level ability (Kanesan & Fauzan 2019.) They are a) perceiving emotion, b) facilitating thought using emotion, c) understanding emotions and d) managing emotions (Mayer, Caruso & Salovey 2016).

Perceiving emotion is the ability to recognize and distinguish one's own and others' emotions. The progression of perceiving, assessing, and conveying emotions begins with an individual's ability to recognise one's own emotions through body stimulation, innate feelings, and thoughts. (Mayer et al. 2016.) When one is able to conquer one's own emotional understanding through self-experience, then the ability to understand others' emotions through the surrounding cues also develops. Eventually, the individual also becomes able to distinguish between accurate and inaccurate expressions of emotions, and also to make a distinction between honest and dishonest expressions of feelings. (Kanesan & Fauzan 2019.)

Facilitation of thought using emotion is another dimension of the ability model. It is the aptitude to employ emotions in enabling the thinking process like rational interpretation, problem-solving and communication with other individuals or groups (Kanesan & Fauzan 2019). At the foundational level, a person applies emotions to prioritise thinking through focus on the vital information in the surrounding. Eventually, the person becomes able to generate vibrant emotions to assist their memory and judgement process. Such emotions are then deeply felt, influenced, and explored by the individual to draft a plan or to make a judgment. This dimension of the ability model expresses that a happy emotional state accelerates creative and inductive reasoning while sad emotional state enables deductive reasoning. (Mayer et al. 2016.)

The next facet in this model is understanding emotions. This dimension relates to an individual's capacity to classify emotions and to comprehend the meanings conveyed by such emotions (Kanesan & Fauzan 2019). Once an individual becomes able to label emotions and to realize the similarities and differences between such labelled emotions, he or she can understand emotions better. Eventually, the person develops the ability to recognize the complexity and amalgamation of feelings at a time, like concurrent feelings of love and hate. This also aids in acknowledging the transitions between the emotions. (Mayer et al. 2016.)

The final dimension in the ability model is the management of emotions. It essentially deals with the ability for prevention, reduction, enhancement, or modifications of emotions of the self and others. This dimension is responsible for bringing out a cognitive and an emotional growth in a person (Mayer et al. 2016.) When a person learns to regulate his/her emotions, they are prepared to accept any kind of emotions whether positive or negative. They learn to reflect upon and regulate their emotions and also learn to engage with or detach from emotions after considering their usefulness. (Kanesan & Fauzan 2019.)

3.2 Mixed model of emotional intelligence

Mixed model of emotional intelligence is the blend of ability and trait model. Two major theorists of EQ, namely, Reuven Bar-On and Daniel Goleman have proposed the mixed models of emotional intelligence. Goleman's model is practicality-based while Bar-On's model is more inclined towards theory. (Kanesan & Fauzan 2019.) Bar-On's model is based on the concept of personality dimensions that puts emphasis on the interdependency between the ability and trait components of EQ and applying

them for well-being. Goleman's model is based on performance resulting from the blend of a person's abilities and personality. (Mehta & Singh 2013.)

According to Bar-On, EQ can be viewed as non-cognitive abilities, proficiencies and aptitudes that impact a person's ability to effectively deal with the demands and pressure of the surrounding environment. The original model proposed by Bar-On consists of 5 dimensions that include 15 elements. The 5 dimensions are intrapersonal, interpersonal, adaptability, stress management and general mood. (Mehta & Singh 2013.)

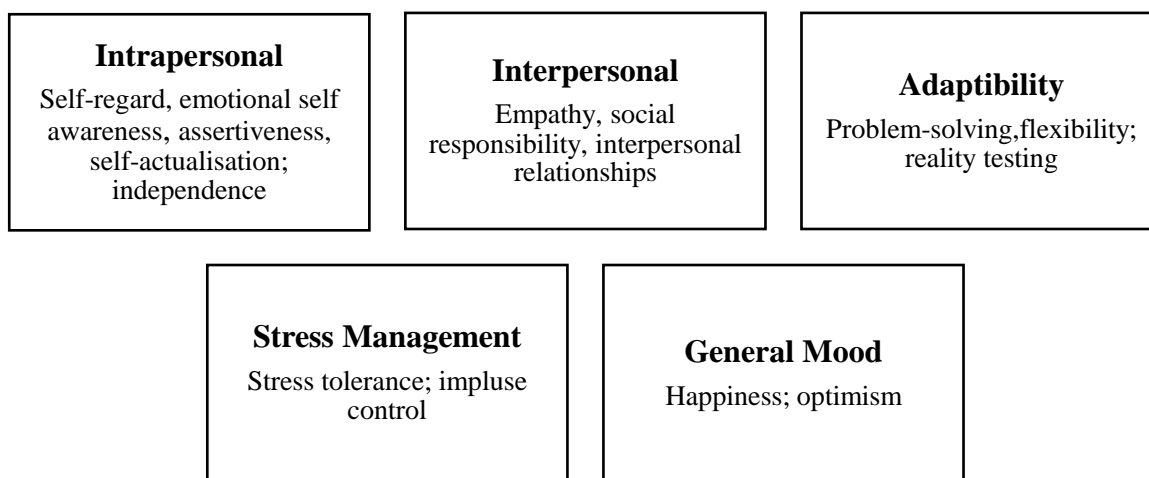


FIGURE 2. Bar-On's mixed model of emotional intelligence (adapted from Kanesan & Fauzan 2019)

Daniel Goleman described emotional intelligence as any fundamental personal attribute that is not embodied by cognitive intelligence. The dimensions of emotional intelligence in his model are self-awareness, self-management, social skills, and relationship management. Goleman views EI as a mixture of cognitive ability and personality traits and believes that these two factors are instrumental in deciding the success at the workplace. (Afroz, Firoz & Pandey 2017.)

3.3 Trait model of emotional intelligence

The trait model of emotional intelligence was described by Petrides and Furnham. They labelled emotional intelligence to be intertwined between self-perceived ability and tendency to behave. Thus, they proposed the measurement of emotional intelligence to be done using the personality dimension which introduced to the trait model of emotional intelligence. This model of EQ is made up of 15 facets of

emotions that are dispersed across different personality dimensions. Such facets are grouped under 4 factors, namely, well-being, self-control, emotionality and sociability. (Mehta & Singh 2013.)

Well-being is associated to adaptation and self-control is related to regulation of impulses and wishes. Similarly, emotionality deals with perceiving and expressing emotions for beginning and maintaining relationships. Likewise, sociability is linked to maintaining influence and relationship in the society. (Kanesan & Fauzan 2019.)

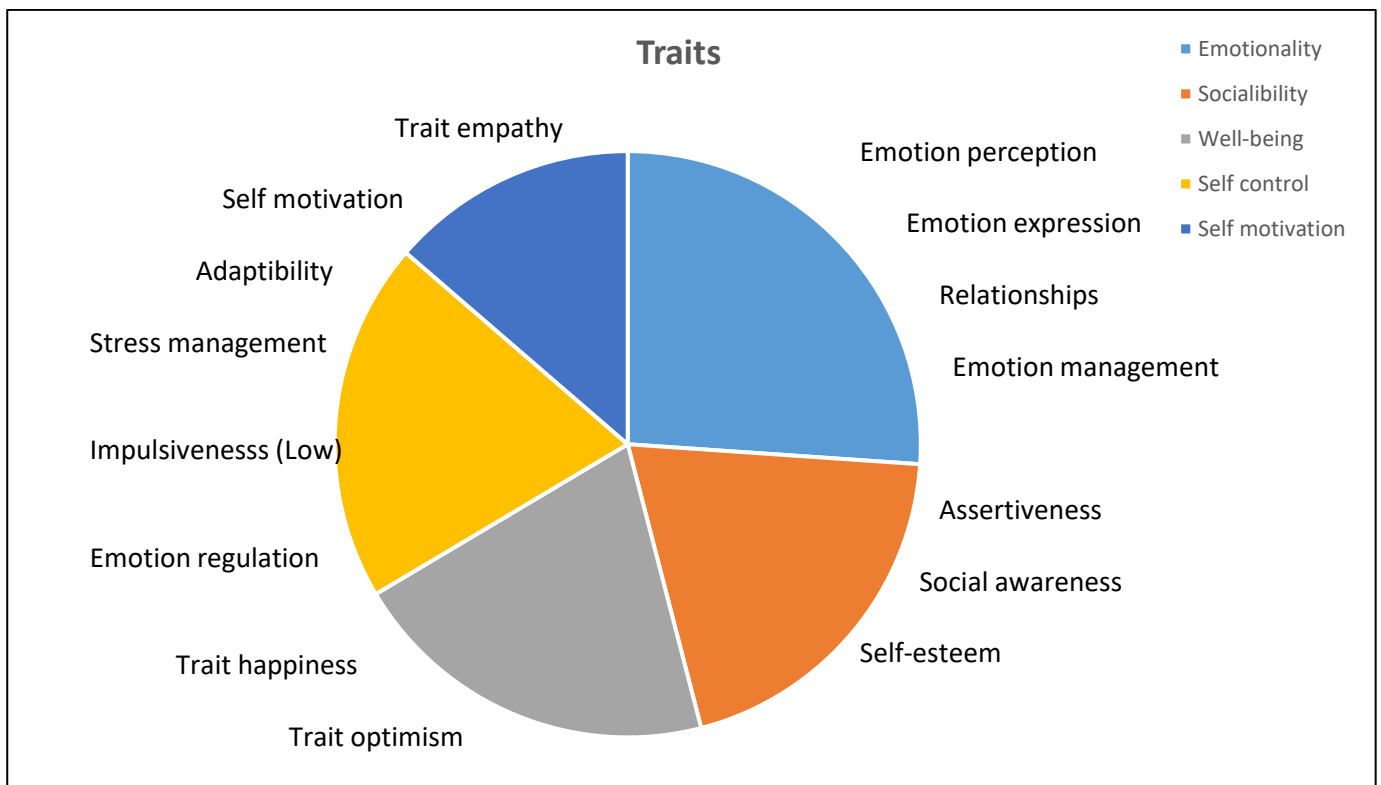


FIGURE 3. Trait model of EQ proposed by Petrides (adapted from Kanesan & Fauzan 2019)

4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section deals with the entire research process. The research methodology, research tools and materials, sampling, research settings, research procedure, thematic analysis, and reliability and validity are discussed in this section of the thesis.

4.1 Introduction to qualitative research

Many definitions of research have been provided by different scholars. Simply understanding, research is a methodical process in which firstly data is gathered which is then used to obtain findings with the use of suitable methodology. The results, findings or the knowledge obtained from such process are usually applied in the process of decision-making. (Sachdeva 2008.) Bacon-Shone (2015) outlined research as a means of locating answers to the questions in an unprejudiced manner.

There are three approaches to research methodologies, namely, qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method approach. For the purpose of this thesis, the author has decided to use the qualitative research methodology. The approach to qualitative research is interpretive as it concerns with the collection and study of non-numerical data and observations (Palmer & Bolderston 2006). This approach is generally employed in natural settings where the researcher looks for meanings and insights into the respondents' answers and experiences. The qualitative methodology is widely used in the social sciences where the focus is on the words, observations, experiences, meanings, and relationships and not on the numbers and figures of data. In this method, the data gathered is subjective to the respondents' perceptions and experiences. There are different types of qualitative research methods such as case study, interviews, grounded theory, focus group, discourse analysis and so on. (Mohajan 2018.)

Since this thesis revolves around the concept of emotional intelligence, a component of social sciences, the use of qualitative approach is suitable. For this research, the perceptions and experiences of the respondents form the core of textual data that was gathered through semi-structured interviews.

4.2 Sampling

Sampling is a subset of the population intended to be studied. It is the process in which a sample is chosen from the population. It should be chosen in such a way that it represents the population to be researched. Since a huge number of resources such as time and money are required to study the entire population, sampling is done to minimise the use of those resources. (Bhardwaj 2019.) The sampling technique used for the purpose of this thesis is convenience sampling method. It is one of the non-random or non-probability sampling types. It is also sometimes known as haphazard or accidental sampling. This sampling technique is generally based on conditions such as ease of access to the respondents, availability of the respondents, respondent's readiness to participate and so on. (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim 2016.) I interviewed those individuals in leadership positions that were easily accessible and were willing to answer the interview questions.

4.3 Research tools and settings

I chose to implement semi-structured interviews as the research tool for this thesis. It is one of the widely used research tool in qualitative data collection. The semi-structured interview is appropriate for studying the qualitative topics (Rahman 2019). The semi-structured interviews use blend of open-ended and closed-ended questions. It is simple and flexible in nature and provides the opportunities to ask follow-up questions such as what, how and why. (Adams 2015.)

The interviews were conducted one at a time in virtual settings. Due to the COVID-19 situation and also the lack of geographical proximities, the interviews could not be conducted face to face and hence had to be done through online channels such as Zoom and email. Due to the increase in studies that apply qualitative research methods in the last few decades, the use of email interviews is also growing. This type of interview is less structured when compared to the traditional method of structured interviewing. (Meho 2006.)

4.4 Research procedure

The foremost task before beginning this research was to make an interview guide that consisted of semi-structured questions. 6 different individuals in leadership positions in different industries were

chosen for the interview through convenience sampling. 3 of the interviews were recorded via Zoom while 3 of the interviewees decided to send their responses through email due to the time constraints. The interview responses received via email did not require to be transcribed as they were already in written form while the recorded interviews were transcribed and sent to the interviewees to confirm that the transcript truly reflected their views and opinions. The text data were then analysed using the technique of thematic analysis. Themes were derived from the analysis which are also the findings of this study. Following are the details of the interview participants.

TABLE 2. Details of the interview participants

Interviewee	Industry/Profession	Position	Interview Method
1	Military	Captain	Zoom
2	Food Industry	Manager	Email
3	Administrative Works	Manager	Zoom
4	Food Industry	Entrepreneur	Email
5	Cleaning	Assistant Manager	Zoom
6	Cleaning	Supervisor	Email

4.5 Thematic analysis

The technique of thematic analysis has been applied in this study to come up with the findings. In thematic analysis, the data collected from the interviewees is first transcribed into rich text data and such data is then used to generate themes. Thematic analysis systematically detects, manages, investigates, and reports the recurring and unique patterns in the dataset. The main idea in this analysis is to recognise commonalities in the data and deduce meanings from them. (Braun & Clarke 2012.) In the words of Braun and Clarke (2012), “thematic analysis is a method for systematically identifying, organising, and offering insight into, patterns of meaning (themes) across a dataset”. The objective of thematic analysis is to recognise those patterns across the dataset that seem to have important or unique characteristics (Maguire & Delahunt 2017). In this study, Braun and Clarke’s six-step thematic analysis procedure has been applied.

TABLE 3. Braun and Clarke's six-step thematic analysis (adapted from Maguire & Delahunt 2017)

Step 1: Become familiar with the data	Step 4: Review themes
Step 2: Generate initial codes	Step 5: Define themes
Step 3: Search for themes	Step 6: Write-up

4.6 Reliability and validity

In qualitative research, the core of reliability is the consistency in the analytical procedures that are applied in the research process (Noble & Smith 2015). The reliability in this qualitative study has been maintained by using the same replicative procedures in semi-structured interviews and their analysis. While preparing the semi-structured interview questions, the 'Handbook of practical program evaluation' (Adams 2015) was referred to.

Validity of a qualitative study depends on various factors such as choosing the appropriate methodology, sampling, and analysis techniques. It is also related to the validity of conclusions with respect to the sample population and research context. (Golafshani 2003.) As discussed earlier in section 4.1, semi-structured interview is one of the widely used data collection tools in qualitative study. Similarly, thematic analysis is an effective qualitative data analysis technique as discussed in section 4.5. They are valid methods and tools for the research. Furthermore, many years of experiences of the interviewees in the area of this research and also the process of member check, that is, checking and validating the interview transcripts by the respondents, adds to the validity of this study.

4.7 Ethical approval

All the participants signed a consent form which mentioned that their participation is voluntary, and their identity remain confidential. The necessary degree of confidentiality has been maintained in this thesis work and the communication with all the related parties have been done with integrity and transparency. I have done everything in my capacity to ensure that all the ethical issue has been adequately considered.

5 FINDINGS

This section deals with the findings to the research questions. The findings have been discussed in the form of themes.

5.1 What is emotional intelligence?

The answers to the first research question have been categorised and discussed under the following two themes.

5.1.1 Understanding and managing emotions

The leaders that were interviewed outlined the core of emotional intelligence as understanding and managing emotions of oneself and of the other team members. They stressed on the ability to control and manage emotions of themselves and their team in a positive approach. Following is the table consisting of the responses of the interviewees when asked about their views on emotional intelligence:

TABLE 4. Interview responses

Interviewee	Responses
1	Emotional intelligence is the ability to control and manage own emotion in positive ways to accomplish the goal.
2	Based upon my knowledge, emotional intelligence is the ability of understanding, realizing and utilizing emotions that affect the team.. it is the use of emotions in relationship management in personal, social and professional life..
3	Ability to relate to other people, understand their emotions and put yourself in other people's shoes to view life from different perspective.
4	Emotional intelligence to me is being able to channel your emotions in the right way which helps with problem solving, being there for others and also helps with your communication skills.

(continues)

TABLE 4. (continues).

5	Emotional intelligence, in my opinion, is how well any person can focus on the work at hand regardless of his emotional state. Being too happy or being too sad, both needs to be looked similarly and it should not impact what you want to achieve broadly or on a specific job at hand.
6	Emotional intelligence I believe is ability to recognize, understand your emotion and how they impact people around you and also incorporate perceiving others emotion so as to manage the relationship more efficiently.

The responses of the interviewees signify the understanding and managing of their own and others' emotions as the core of emotional intelligence. The phrases such as 'realizing emotions', 'managing emotions', and 'understanding emotions of others' are repeatedly found in the interview transcripts, which led me to include this theme in the findings.

5.1.2 Relationship management

Relationship management was also an important part of the answers from half of the interviewees when asked about their understanding of emotional intelligence. They expressed that emotional intelligence is the use of emotions in managing the personal, social and professional relationships. The extracts of interview responses are included below.

TABLE 5. Interview responses

Interviewee	Responses
2	..it (emotional intelligence) is the use of emotions in relationship management in personal, social and professional life..
4	...perceiving others emotion so as to manage the relationship more efficiently..
5	...I try to put myself in all my workers shoes and at the same time I make sure that we have a good manager-staff relationship..

Even though the prospect of relationship management was not conveyed by all the interviewees, responses from 3 of them could not be totally ignored. They stressed on the use of emotional intelligence in managing relationships with their teammates and subordinates.

5.2 Research question 2: Why is emotional intelligence important for leadership?

The answers to the research question 2 have been categorised into three themes. The themes indicate why emotional intelligence is an important trait in leadership. The three themes are self-awareness and decision-making, increased empathy and decision-making, and effective communication and conflict-management.

5.2.1 Self-awareness and decision-making

The interviewees articulated that emotional intelligence brings self-awareness in them and when they are emotionally intelligent, they can see the situations with more clarity and can understand the emotions of their team members. According to them, self-awareness helps them to make good judgement and is effective for the overall decision-making process. The extracts of the interviewees' responses related to this theme are summarized below:

TABLE 6. Interview responses

Interviewee	Responses
1	My team will follow what I do or what I command therefore my action and my self-awareness always play the important role to the outcome of my team.
3	One of my colleagues was rude and arrogant at his co-workers, I casually told him to release his emotions. And found out that he has complicated love life and the stress accumulated was being released. After sharing the fact with me he eventually behaved normally. In this incident, my self-awareness helped me approach the situation in the right way. Instead of confronting the team member as a superior, I decided to approach him as a friend.
4	Being self-aware, proactive, visionary and being ready for any setbacks are my strong point as a leader so I always have back up for my backups too. Thus, I think everyday that work is my examination as a leader, and I believe it has been important all the way from my starting days. Self-awareness has played a vital role in enhancing my role as a leader.

The leaders believed that their awareness had an important role to play in their decision-making and the outcome of the team. It has also helped them in enhancing their leadership role.

5.2.2 Increased empathy and relationship management

The analysis of the rich textual data indicated that the leaders who feel more empathetic are able to understand their own emotions properly which helps them to accurately assess the emotional state of their team members as well. This helps them to build a connection, not only with their team members, but also with other co-workers and clients. The findings suggest that empathy is vital in managing relationships at the workplace. Empathy helps them to put themselves in somebody else's shoes hence driving them towards making more thorough and purposeful decisions.

TABLE 7. Interview responses

Interviewee	Responses
1	A good leader should win the heart and mind of their subordinate therefore being a leader it is important to be empathetic.
2	It is said that empathy is like a universal solvent. Because in any problem solving, if you have ability to listen, understand other people's emotions you become successful. This results in more productivity in team to improve the relationships among co-workers, clients and customers.
3	I think it is really important to have empathy because empathy is simply having a feeling for others. I feel empathy for others, it helps me understand their issues which helps me consider them in my decision making.
5	Understanding the personality of your co-worker and being able to criticize his/her drawbacks is main responsibility of any leader. However, all people are not same and all of them don't have same strengths and weakness. Thus, understanding their strengths, encouraging those and communicating well about their weakness being empathetic is a must. This will increase the strength of group as a whole and every group member will feel important as an integral part of the group.
6	It is crucial to be empathetic. As it gives you the better understanding of what your team members feel, it makes you as a leader more approachable to them.

All the leaders consented that empathy is an important attribute in their leadership role. They were of the opinion that empathy helps them in understanding others and improves communication which eventually leads to better relationship management.

5.2.3 Effective communication and conflict management

The respondents were of the opinion that possessing emotional intelligence helps in more effective communication. The leaders agreed that their emotional intelligence has helped them become a good communicator. The leaders consented that effective communication enhances the team's efficiency at work.

Effective communication has facilitated them in uniting and motivating their teams and have also assisted in conflict resolution. When asked about handling a situation of conflict, the interviewees' produced the following responses.

TABLE 8. Interview responses

Interviewee	Responses
1	Counselling and effective communication with the team member once in a week/twice per month can be helpful to understand the problem of team member and to control those type of arrogant activities.
3	Meet him personally and listen his/her concerned problems and reasons behind the conflict. Find the solution of the conflict and motivate the person to act positively.
5	I will approach him in a euphemistic manner and listen to his problem and try to find out what has triggered him to act in such manner.
6	Having a personal meeting and getting his point of view at first is my main priority.

4 of the leaders expressed that emotional intelligence is vital for effectively communicating with the team members and also in resolving conflicts, if any. Emphasis was given on counselling and one-on-one communication for conflict management.

5.3 Discussion

The findings in the preceding section of this study outline the comprehension of emotional intelligence from the viewpoints of leaders in different industries and also the idea of how emotional intelligence acts as an important attribute in leadership positions. The findings of the research are discussed in this section.

The understanding of emotional intelligence by the interviewed leaders most likely matched with the commonly used definitions of emotional intelligence. Serrat (2017) explains emotional intelligence as “the ability, capacity, skill, or self-perceived ability to identify, assess, and manage the emotions of one’s self, of others, and of groups”. In the interview responses, the interviewees portrayed emotional intelligence as the ability to understand and manage the emotions of themselves and of their team members. They also related emotional intelligence with the ability to manage relationships with their team. The findings of the study suggest that the leaders, even though working in different industries such as military, hospitality, cleaning, and businesses, have a similar understanding of emotional intelligence. The personality traits such as emotional stability and conscientiousness have been observed very important irrespective of the sector or position to which the individual belongs to (Hjalmarsson & Dåderman 2020).

Research question 2 of this study delves into understanding the importance of emotional intelligence in leadership. The findings were categorised into three themes, namely, self-awareness and decision making, increased empathy and relationship management, and effective communication and conflict management. The interviewees’ responses indicated that self-awareness and decision-making are closely related to each other while effective communication and conflict management also share a strong connection. The findings also implied a bond between increased empathy and relationship management.

Claims have been made that emotional intelligence is a predictor of professional success as it equips the person with the ability to handle the demands and pressures of the environment (Kiyani, Haroon, Liaqat, Khattak, Bukhari & Asad 2011). The leaders who demonstrate a high level of emotional intelligence often have the ability to regulate the overall EI of their team (Brown 2014). A conference paper presented by Aloysius (2010) indicated that emotional intelligence and its factors substantially correlate with the effectiveness in leadership and more successful leaders have a higher degree of emotional intelligence.

6 CONCLUSION

The first section of this study outlines the introduction and motivation to conduct this research. It also delineates the research aim and research questions. The aim of this study was to understand the perception of leaders regarding emotional intelligence and to find out the importance of emotional intelligence in leadership. The objective of this thesis was to present the leaders' insight on emotional intelligence and its importance in their leadership roles in the form of themes. The research questions were formulated in such a manner that it would lead us to meeting the objective of this thesis.

The succeeding sections (section 2 and 3) deal with the literature of this study. Section 2 includes background, introduction, evolution, components and evaluation models of emotional intelligence. The time frame of evolution of emotional intelligence has been outlined in a tabular form and Daniel Goleman's components of emotional intelligence have been discussed with reference to literature sources. Similarly, section 3 discusses the different models of assessing the emotional intelligence proposed by revered scholars of the field.

Section 4 describes the research methodology of the thesis. Qualitative research methodology was applied in this study with the use of semi-structured interview questions. This section consists of the elements related to the research process such as research method used, sampling, research tools, research settings, reliability and validity, thematic analysis and the ethical approval in conducting the research.

Section 5 deals with the findings and discussions of this study. The perception and understanding of emotional intelligence of 6 leaders operating in diverse industries have been expressed in these sections. Similarly, the question of why emotional intelligence is important for leadership has also been answered based on the responses of the interviewees. The core findings included that emotional intelligence is the ability to understand, manage and regulate the emotions of oneself and of the others and it is important for leadership for reasons such as self-awareness, decision making, increased empathy, relationship management, effective communication and conflict management.

Even though major studies in emotional intelligence were conducted and popularised in the 20th century, the number of studies relating the EQ with workplace have not been too significant. There is still a need of extensive study that connects EQ with workplace and leadership qualities. The influence of emotional intelligence on leadership needs to be studied with regards to diverse professions and occu-

pations. There is a large number of variables in emotional intelligence which are often referred to as 'soft skills'. There are still a lot of areas of EQ available for in-depth research and study.

Finally, I have given my best to study the importance of emotional intelligence in leadership roles. Despite my efforts to conduct this study in the best manner possible, there might still be some discrepancies resulting from the limitations of time and other resources. However, I am hopeful that this thesis can prove to be a suitable foundation for further studies on emotional intelligence and leadership as they are vast topics. There are other numerous aspects of emotional intelligence and leaderships that can be studied for extending the horizon in this field.

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Interview Questions:

1. What is emotional intelligence according to you?
2. How do you see yourself as a leader? (Self-awareness)
3. How much do you value emotional intelligence in your workplace and why?
4. Tell me about a time when your self-management/self-discipline was important to the outcome of your team. (Self-discipline)
5. Being a leader, how important is it to be empathetic and why? (empathy)
6. How do you approach to a situation when your team fails to meet the deadline? (positive outlook)
7. What was your biggest challenge starting in a leadership role? How did you adapt to this situation? (adaptability)
8. In what way do you think your presence influence your team? (Influence)
9. What kind of strategy do you use to motivate your team? (Achievement orientation)
10. What is the main factor behind an efficient teamwork? (Teamwork)
11. You've noticed that a team member is aggressive or arrogant toward the rest of the team. How would you approach this person? (conflict management)
12. If you can change one thing at your workplace to improve the emotional wellbeing of employees, what will you change?