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EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN SENIOR EXECUTIVES: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

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Keywords	Abstract
Decision-making, Effective leadership, Ethical leadership, Problem-solving, Corporate responsibility, Emotional intelligence.	The relevance of emotional intelligence has reached new heights in its applications toward decision-making, leadership, problem-solving, moral governance, and corporate social responsibility. This systematic review aims to synthesize recent empirical and theoretical contributions related to emotional intelligence affecting several domains. The findings suggest that emotionally intelligent leaders are engaged in the strategic decisions that help implement ethical environments, which encompass programs of corporate responsibility. Emotional intelligence provides a basis for cognitive bias, foundations in the realms of problem-solving, and assists the effectiveness of leadership. The paper discusses EI acting as a mediator in managerial performance; a merging with AI can possibly support diverse decision pathways. The future study must elaborate on how emotional intelligence and AI-enabled leadership analytics correlate with financial returns and digital leadership in the environment of remote work. The findings therefore suggest that emotional intelligence should be immediately taught to leaders in order to promote emotional competence that leads to better organizational success of individuals. In these turbulent times where many businesses are on the brink of existence, the extensive incorporation of emotional intelligence training into the LED/EMDC leadership would be imperative for sustaining ethical governance and growth.

1. INTRODUCTION

The term emotional intelligence deals with the ability to recognize and control one's own and others' feelings, emotions, and moods. It includes many core attributes, such as awareness of one's

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own feelings, self-control, motivation, empathy, and social skills, which would assist one in navigating social terrains (Antonopoulou, 2024). The historical significance of emotional intelligence in the study of leadership may have its genesis in the 1990s, when Peter Salovey and John D. Mayer first tried to launch the term into the public consciousness, an effort bolstered by Goleman's bestseller "Emotional Intelligence" (Antonopoulou, 2024). Emotional intelligence was a prerequisite for effective leadership, citing that leaders with high emotional intelligence create the best working cultures, build team cohesiveness, and ultimately achieve the best outcomes for their organizations (Stoyanova-Bozhkova et al., 2020).

Management wishes to further expand on the importance of emotional intelligence in the very fast-changing environment. The executives having high emotional intelligence will manage stress and make rational decisions calmly and also work on teamwork and creativity (Stoyanova-Bozhkova et al., 2020). EI is an important determinant of performance within an organization and greatly affects job satisfaction and employee engagement (Deb et al., 2023). Emotionally intelligent leaders are said to create favorable conditions that would directly affect employee morale, productivity, and in turn customer loyalty and ultimately profits generated (Stoyanova-Bozhkova et al., 2020). These days, the globalization and diversification of organizations so require that their leaders take care to integrate the diverse perspectives of all stakeholders and be aware of the gradually changing emotional climate (Antonopoulou, 2024). Felicitously enough, EI has been increasingly regarded as a mark of good leadership, yet the gaps emerging within the very literature seem to suggest that research is lacking on the contextual applications and implications thereof within the differing organizational contexts. Almost all the literature discusses the pros of EI while newly emerging research is now starting to recognize EI as an integrated and sustained part of leadership development programs and organizational functioning (Nanjundeswaraswamy, 2024).

Thus, this review aims to develop this gap by organizing present knowledge in EIs and their association with effective leadership with a focus on high-stakes situations. This review aims at tapping best practices for developing EI in leaders, analyzing the EI-organizational outcomes connection, and presenting a framework for infusion of EI in leadership training. Over the years, EI has been virtually whittled from its original definition into an important instrument for effective leadership in contemporary organizations. Leaders use EI to enhance their own success in the organizations while facilitating the health and performance of the organizational system as one entity. In a new fast-moving business environment, leaders should comprehend EI concepts and apply them when maneuvering through the complexities of organizational life. The review will therefore examine different avenues through which E.I. could be nurtured and activated towards the enhancement of an emotionally intelligent leadership environment.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

It is rather arduous and elaborate an exercise to try to juxtapose the methodology of a systematic review with that general atmosphere of intelligence which delineates how decision-making, problem-solving, leadership effectiveness, and ethical leadership intertwine. The peer-reviewed articles published within the past 10 years would first be searched for from several academic databases like PubMed, Scopus, and Google Scholar. The search terms included emotional intelligence itself, decision-making, leadership effectiveness, ethical leadership, and corporate responsibility. Following that, the articles were excluded according to preset inclusion and exclusion criteria-an elaborate list

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that spanned meta-analysis, empirical, and theoretical articles plus those not relevant to the present study.

On the one hand, inclusion criteria were meant to encompass any studies dealing with emotional intelligence and its impact upon decision-making for leadership styles, ethical processes, and corporate social responsibility. Such papers, however, that did not present any theoretical or empirical contribution in support of these relationships were excluded. For example, the empirical study by Alzoubi & Aziz (2021) related emotional intelligence with strategic decision-making and career decision-making self-efficacy with the other work by Duru in 2024. This review also included articles discussing emotional intelligence in terms of ethical leadership that is, Nyamori (2024) discussed the actionable mechanisms by which emotionally intelligent leaders could create ethical climates.

Data extraction was quickly conducted whereby summaries were prepared about the key findings, methodology, and theoretical frameworks that arose from relevant research. The synthesis, therefore, focused on comparing and contrasting the available literature. For example, on one hand, other authors Ran et al. (2021) contend that emotional intelligence is important in the decision-making process, while Uduwaka and Gunasekara (2022) argue that emotional intelligence is a useful tool for career progression, notwithstanding the vast differences in contexts in which the companies of interest were framed. Emotional intelligence was believed to be applicable to effective leadership; hence, insights from Singh (2023) and Stephen (2023) were drawn into the review due to their assertion of the reasonable evidence existing for the predictive ability of emotional intelligence for transformational leadership.

Because of the thorough review, the quality appraisal of the included studies was evaluated with more or less accord with standard criteria such as PRISMA. It compared the general methodological standards, sample sizes, and biases of the studies. Then, findings were synthesized narratively drawing attention to the manifold contributions made by emotional intelligence in the choices taken, ethical leadership, and corporate responsibility. With an identification of gaps in literature, the review suggested several avenues for future research with respect to emotional intelligence in context with emergent leadership paradigms and ethical frameworks within the corporate world.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Decision making and Problem solving

An emotionally intelligent human being is a marvelous asset in executive decision-making and problem-solving processes. The relationship is rather complex and perplexing when it comes to whether EI applied to strategic decision development affects organizational effectiveness in terms of leadership styles, team dynamics, and organizational performance. Marques systematically reviewed the literature and found that, while EI is widely accepted as a positive construct for leading and working in teams, insufficient analysis has so far been done on the actual influence of EI in the strategic decision-making context (Marques, 2024). This, therefore, further cements the idea for further research on the question concerning direct effects of EI on the upper-echelons and board-based strategic decision-making process.

The relationship between emotional intelligence and problem-solving has been well published in several articles. Aigbogun (2024) offers the argument that emotional intelligence has a significant bearing on problem-solving because the good management of the executives' emotions is bound to

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good coping with environmental stressors that are challenging in nature. This is corroborated by Tekeli and Özkoç, (2021) who found a positive correlation between emotional intelligence and problem-solving skills, thus emphasizing that leaders with emotional intelligence will be able to use their emotional awareness to tackle work-related issues more adeptly. Thus, the findings above imply that EI is indeed able to further augment the cognitive powers of executive decision-making in favor or in line with the organization.

According to Alzoubi and Aziz, (2021) emotional intelligence directly affects leaders making results-based decisions in the direction of organizational strategies. In their reasoning, emotional intelligence assists in the decision-making procedure and enhances the organizational performance by creating an environment of communication and collaboration. This goes in line with Coronado-Maldonado, who states that emotional leadership competencies are critical for the success of projects since in complex undertakings, trust and emotional intelligence are key to any successful project outcome (Coronado-Maldonado, 2023). In parallel, they provide the context where emotional intelligence mediates decision-making and managerial performance. Istianingsih et al. reveal that the indirect effect of emotional intelligence upon managerial performance through decision-making is way more significant than the direct effect, indicating emotional intelligence to be an important mediator that factors in better quality of decisions made by managers (Istianingsih et al., 2020). Thus, this underscores the view that organizations striving for improved strategic decision-making should emphasize building leaders' emotional intelligence.

Emotional intelligence affects not just individual decision-making but also general organizational functioning. According to Merlin's bibliometric analysis, raising EI improves communication, learning, problem-solving, and trust in the organization so that strategic leadership effectiveness is optimized (Merlin, 2024). EI must be looked at holistically in view of its standing in individual decision-making and in providing a conducive atmosphere for top executives' joint approaches toward problem-solving. Nonetheless, beyond the cognitive side, emotional intelligence plays an essential role in the management of behavioral biases that obstruct clear decision-making. Gharbi, (2024) discusses behavioral biases such as overconfidence and risk aversion in the context of strategic decisions, implying that top executives with high emotional intelligence will be able to recognize such biases and adopt measures to neutralize their effects, thus arriving at more rational and effective decisions (Gharbi, 2024). The capacity to conduct through emotional and cognitive challenges becomes consequential mostly in high interaction situations where the impacts of the decisions have very far-reaching consequences.

Emotional intelligence combined with artificial intelligence technologies will give decision support a new dimension. Bushuyev (2024) goes on to explain how AI could blend with human emotional intelligence in the hands of executives making strategic decisions in the project management process, so that with data-driven insights, he or she could primarily rely on a human-centered decision-making process. AI and EI in harmony would nurture a more flexible decision-making process in quickly changing business areas. The programs being developed for emotional intelligence training are already showing improvement in executives' problem-solving and decision-making. Mert's research shows that the training in emotional intelligence significantly enhances leaders' capacities for wise reflexive thought and aptitude wise action through the integration of emotional awareness and cognitive faculties (Mert, 2023). In turn, this implies that they ought to champion EI training in

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their company thereby nurturing decision making and problem-solving culture from the very top.

3.2. The Efficacy and Influence of Emotional Intelligence on Leadership

Emotional intelligence (EI) serves as the intermediary for leadership efficacy. EI is relevant to the leadership effectiveness determinant, especially concerning top executives. The relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership effectiveness has been consistently documented; many studies would propose that there is a strong positive correlation between the two constructs. In the first place, Kiishi (2024) found a positive correlation of emotional intelligence with leadership effectiveness (Kiishi, 2024, p. 5; $r=0.771$), concluding that the more emotionally intelligent the leader is, the better he/she collaborates with the team in reducing stress and enhancing performance (Kiishi, 2024). Likewise, according to Filice, one who develops emotional intelligence builds the leadership capacity and organization capability (Filice, 2024). Hence, for leadership, recognition and control of one's own emotions and the emotions of others are necessary to awaken others to accomplish goals.

On the other hand, emotional intelligence in leadership makes greater sense through Team Emotional Intelligence. Koutsoumpa's narrative review depicts TEI as a moderator between transformational leadership and employee cohesion, whereby high empathy leaders know very well how to inspire employee involvement and joy for their teams' work (Koutsoumpa, 2023). This fact seems to cohere greatly with the findings by Vermeulen et al., which treat leader-member exchange (LMX) as availing a necessary space for learning and ensuring innovative behavior by team members (Vermeulen et al., 2020). The combination of emotional intelligence with transformational leadership styles provides a strong case for the leaders' need for developing emotional skills in reaching the expected effects.

Gómez-Leal et al., (2021) conducted a systematic review on the effectiveness of emotional intelligence in an educational context, indicate that self-management, empathy, and communication are very important skills for leadership. Derived from the Goleman/Boyatzis model, these competencies indicate that self-aware and socially conscious leaders can positively influence their followers. Thus, emotional intelligence is postulated as the cohesive force of effective leadership in view of leader success, as argued by Prado et al., (2022). All findings point indeed to beyond mere individual effectiveness in leadership but also that organizations stand to benefit from emotional intelligence training for all levels of workers.

OCB relates to a number of emotional intelligence factors and the effectiveness of the leaders. When emotional intelligence is high, leaders are able to develop enhanced OCB ability in their employees, which in turn fosters a cooperative and productive work environment (Santa, 2023). Such ties are critical to transformational leadership, for the emotional tie leaders have with their followers can greatly sway organizational results. Dhungana, (2024) takes much pain to emphasize emotional intelligence on the part of leaders in the industrial sector, where they will be dealing with the dynamics of varying interpersonal stakes to accomplish their level of success. The ability to perceive-and-use emotion is thus really center stage in any leader striving for excellence in performance in a fast-paced environment.

Guillén et al., (2021) further emphasized emotional intelligence from the perspective of academic performance and engagement, stating that these competencies underpin positive relationships and supportiveness in an educational setting. The perspective opens an unconventional application of

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emotional intelligence, wherein leadership may depend on the ability to foster emotional awareness and empathy.

Meanwhile, this is a challenge for developing leadership in the 21st century, where development has begun to recognize emotional intelligence. Megheirkouni and Mejheirkouni, (2020) talk about the changing environment of leadership, with emphasis on the necessity of emotional competencies for enhancing team performance and organizational capacities for innovation. This is also substantiated by Dasborough et al., (2022) citing that emotional intelligence is an important consideration in upholding positive leader-member relationships, which are equally vital aspects in the sphere of effective leadership. Where the debate rages over whether emotional intelligence is indeed necessary in leadership, all the more, the relevance becomes poignant for the successful outcome.

Emotional intelligence is more critical in healthcare. The study conducted on nurse managers in Ghana demonstrates that effective leadership in nursing nemesis involves recognizing and managing emotions, whether of self or others: This means that emotional intelligence is no longer seen merely as an asset but rather a sine qua-non for effective leadership in any context where titles matter. Indeed, Esen and Bulut (2022) in the study show emotional intelligence as a positive predictor of self-leadership, hence proving that indeed leaders must work on their emotional competencies if they are to be effective in their own right.

Some studies also show that emotional intelligence may in fact influence the psychopathy-leader effectiveness relationship. Psychopathic leaders possessing high emotional intelligence would neutralize the harmful effects of such tendencies and, in a sense, enhance overall leadership competence (Boateng, 2023). This is a very clear pointer on the complex dynamics of leadership and the reality that leaders will need emotional intelligence buffer against possible interpersonal problems. Emotional intelligence creates multiple mediation pathways onto organizational commitment through job satisfaction. Aldawsari's research shows that experts with emotional intelligence are likely to create job satisfaction for their people, therefore increasing the organization's commitment (Aldawari, 2020). This link shows us how emotional intelligence builds the backdrop of healthy organizational culture, an important requirement for long-term success.

The synthesis of this research would indicate emotional intelligence, in many ways, is important for leadership effectiveness in divergent situations. Leaders' development of the emotional capacities would now place them in a better position to influence and develop their teams, manage complex interpersonal relationships, and achieve organizational goals. And in all these arguments, the research keeps supporting emotional intelligence as more than an add-on skill but a prerequisite for effective leadership. Hence, for organizations that would be changing with time, the emphasis on developing emotional intelligence in its leaders for building effective teams for sustainable success would become more paramount.

3.3. Emotional Intelligence and Ethical Leadership and Corporate Social Responsibility

The interplay among EI, ethical leadership, and corporate responsibility undoubtedly has numerous hidden, complex, less complicated dimensions. In the case of leadership and ethical behavior in decision-making, EI comes to play an increasingly vital role. More emotional intelligence on behalf of the leader would suggest greater ethical behavior in the leader where these social responsibility initiatives require an interpersonal sense in a more complicated scenario.

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Emotional intelligence has been shown to enhance leadership potential and effectiveness. Leaders with high emotional intelligence will understand the feelings and perspectives of those they lead, allowing them to be ethical in their decision-making and engender a culture of integrity in their organizations (Nyamori, 2024). This capacity is crucial for ethical leadership, whereby integrity, fairness, transparency, and concern for the welfare of others are its hallmarks (Nyamori, 2024). Empathy toward their staff builds not only trust but also promotes open communication and dialogue that can be very engaging for ethical decision-making (Widowati & Satrya, 2023).

The development of emotional intelligence is tied to a number of other organizational outcomes, such as work engagement and employee satisfaction. Ethical leadership combined with high emotional intelligence is exceptionally gifted to assist employees in getting engaged (Widowati & Satrya, 2023). The key behaviors that are referred to here include an increase in motivational levels, productivity, and commitment toward organizational goals that are central to the efficacy of CSR initiative implementation (Ahsan, 2023). Thus, leaders with emotional intelligence engage with their stakeholders optimally, understand their needs, respond accordingly, and build a culture of social responsibility in their organizations (Ahsan, 2023).

Nanjundeswaraswamy (2024), who also points out that ethically oriented leaders maintain an ethical atmosphere characterized by ethical behavior, thus placing the relationship between emotional intelligence and ethical leadership beyond doubt, therefore, becomes very relevant because ethical wrongdoing in a corporate environment may cost substantial reputational damage and financial loss today. Ethical behavior exemplification by leaders is not enough. They must also create an enabling environment for employees to be able to raise concerns and engage in ethical discourses (Al-Mualm, 2023). Such empowerment goes a long way in creating organizational commitment on the part of the employees, which is further cemented by ethical leadership (Al-Mualm, 2023).

The emotional intelligence that significantly affects personality formation becomes, especially in areas not spared tremor of uncertainty, a factor for decision-making among finance and corporate governance. Research indicates that leaders with higher emotional intelligence are likely to make decisions that are more rational based on emotional insights and analytical reasoning (Alzoubi and Aziz 2021). This is indeed critical to penetrating the intricacies of decision-making in corporations, where ethical considerations and profit motives are always at work. An emotional-intelligence-based decision-making paradigm would lay the ultimate foundation for ethical and sustainable business practices (Alzoubi and Aziz, 2021). Emotionally intelligent leaders thus temper increased leadership effectiveness with the delivery of socially responsible outcomes. Such leaders will think about corporate social responsibility (CSR) and the impact of their decisions upon various stakeholders (Ahsan 2023). Because of such considerations, they will carry out projects that promote the company and at the same time, give back to society and the environment. Aligning corporate goals to social responsibility is now accepted as an important determinant in the sustained success of any organization (Shukla 2023).

Emotional intelligence in leadership practice is a mitigating factor against the emotional exhaustion experienced by a large audience of employees. Ethical leaders promote a work culture that is supportive of employees feeling appreciated and understood, hence helping them deal with emotional exhaustion (Lee et al., 2021). This is especially important in industries with a high-competing environment that requires emotional labor; otherwise, if not tended to, this could lead to

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burnout. By keeping ethical leadership in focus, further coupled with emotional intelligence, organizations can promote their employee well-being and retention (Lee et al., 2021). Emotional intelligence is something that goes further upstream from one leadership style and one person to affect the whole organization. For example, organizations emphasizing emotional intelligence in leadership development programs may arise with better communication channels, quicker solutions to problems, and better trust-building among team members (Merlin 2024). These improvements are critical in creating a work environment where collaboration can sustain ethical behavior and corporate accountability. Interventions for several foreseeable future organizations are in troubled waters regarding the complexities of issues hounding their business environment, and it is the amalgamation of emotional intelligence into leadership practice that sustains the apparatuses of success.

In the research space that connects emotional intelligence with ethical leadership and corporate responsibility, much emphasis is directed towards the role of emotions in leadership. Leaders highly endowed with emotional intelligence create ethical climates, engage employees, and direct CSR activities toward the attainment of business objectives. Ethical leadership has probably been in demand more than at any other time; organizations should therefore regard the fostering of emotional intelligence in their leadership cadre as a priority for the sustainability of the organizations and further the well-being of society.

4. FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Unexplored avenues for research remain, especially regarding potential leadership implications of emotional intelligence (EI) encompassing financial performance, AI integration, and digital leadership. It would be good to conduct studies showing the influence of EI on financial performance for organizations. Existing literature deals with EI in relation to a number of leadership outcomes; however, the unexplored avenue is how EI affects financial metrics. Research may also include longitudinal studies tracking EI development in leadership and its subsequent impact on organizational profitability and productivity, thus providing insight into the economic rationale for promoting EI in leadership (Li, 2024).

It is an interesting area for future research to consider the possible interface of EI with AI leadership analytics. A more thorough understanding is important, as, with the increasing use of AI in organizational decision-making and leadership assessment, it needs to be understood how EI adds value to such AI systems. For example, AI-DSS with emotion capabilities could be studied for the extent to which they lead to higher-quality decisions and a more caring culture within the organization concerning leadership (Tretter, 2024). Thus may emerge new paradigms for leadership wherein the amalgamation of human EI and AI constructs would create maximum synergy towards the productivity of the organization (Lestari, 2023). In such a context, the more energetic influence of EI upon digital leadership and remote leadership interfaces is really merits due consideration. The drift towards remote work demands a consideration of the old paradigms of leadership because EI would play an important role in team bonding and employee engagement in virtual situations. The future works may extend to EI affecting digital leadership practices with respect to communication, trust, and collaboration with remote teams (Erhan et al., 2022). This would then be valuable knowledge for informing the skills and competencies necessary for effective digital leadership and the groundwork for the training programs geared at imparting the EI skills that leaders need to excel

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in a digital space. In light of their intersection, EI, performance, AI integration, and digital leadership could certainly present an exciting area for research. Hopefully, the exploration of this area will help scholars in arguing for the advancement of their understanding of the leverage of EIs toward organizational success in an increasingly complicated and digitized world.

5. CONCLUSION

This systematic review established that Emotional Intelligence (EI) is vital in decision-making, leadership efficiency, problem-solving, ethical leadership, and corporate responsibility. This study notes that emotionally intelligent leaders negotiate complex decision-making processes, countering cognitive biases, with ethical behavior in putting an ethical climate in organizations. EI enhances performance-related management through strategic thinking, communication, and team building. Such interrelationship with AI shall create fertile grounds for optimizing ELDSS in this digital era. Continuing with the two segments' content, emotional intelligence is the backbone of ethical leadership, where emotionally intelligent leaders perceive corporate responsibility, worker engagement, and sustainable business practices. Managers with emotional intelligence enhance the recognition and management of emotions, thereby creating an environment of trust, cooperation, and ethical decision-making that is much needed in today's ruthlessly competitive and very complex business environment.

6. AUTHOR (S) CONTRIBUTION

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7. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author(s) declared that no potential conflict of interest concerning the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

8. PLAGIARISM POLICY

The authors declare that any kind of violation of plagiarism, copyright, and ethical matters will be handled by all authors. Journalists and editors are not liable for the aforesaid matters.

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