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EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF LEADERS' EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE ON EMPLOYEE RETENTION AND JOB SATISFACTION: AN EMPLOYEE-CENTRIC PERSPECTIVE

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EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF LEADERS' EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE ON
EMPLOYEE RETENTION AND JOB SATISFACTION:
AN EMPLOYEE-CENTRIC PERSPECTIVE

A Dissertation
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education
in
Educational Leadership

by
Stacia McCambridge
December 2024

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ABSTRACT

Employee retention and job satisfaction are crucial for the success of higher education institutions, as turnover incurs high costs and disrupts operations. This qualitative phenomenological study explored how leaders' emotional intelligence, as defined by self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management emotional intelligence, impacts employee satisfaction and retention in university settings in Southern California. The theoretical framework used for this study was the emotional intelligence theoretical framework of Goleman et al. (2002), which includes self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management competencies to conduct surveys and interviews. The two research questions that guided this study of how employees described, based on their personal experiences, the impact of their leaders' emotional intelligence on employee job satisfaction and retention at a Southern California university were: RQ1: What specific behaviors or actions of these leaders are identified by employees as indicative of high or low emotional intelligence? RQ2: How does a leader's emotional intelligence impact employee retention? Fifty-eight participants (28 current and 30 former) completed the Emotional Intelligence Assessment survey, and 14 participated in the interview portion of the study. Through data analysis of surveys and employee interviews, positive and negative themes emerged, helping to answer these research questions. The data revealed three themes: Positive Leadership Behaviors, Toxic Leadership Behaviors, and Negative

Impacts on Employees. The study findings support the need for emotionally intelligent leaders as there is a relationship between a leader's emotional intelligence and their impact on employee satisfaction and retention.

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DEDICATION

To my family, I would not have been able to complete this feat without you. To my husband, Jimmy, thank you for cleaning, cooking, and talking me off the ledge when I felt like giving up. Thanks for holding it down at home! To my boys, Ty and Owen, you are my why! I am so proud of you both. Please know you can achieve anything you put your mind to! To my parents, thank you for believing in me, checking in on me, and encouraging me in everything I do. Thank you to all my family who checked in and encouraged me these past five years! I love you all, and have the best family!

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions depend on employees to serve students, meet institutional goals, and ensure business continuity. Employee retention and job satisfaction are critical to institutional success. Employee turnover hurts higher education institutions, as employees have specific roles within the university (Moore, 2009), and retaining human capital is essential for organizational success in the rapidly evolving informational, technical, and economic environment. When employees leave the institution, their loss becomes a liability due to costs associated with new employee recruitment, onboarding, and training (Armstrong-Stassen & Ursel, 2009). According to Employee Benefit News, replacing a worker costs 33% of their annual salary (Otto, 2017).

In addition to the financial burden of turnover, institutions must consider the loss of institutional knowledge, decreased productivity, and disruptions to business continuity (Ahsan et al., 2013). In a 2021 Bureau of Labor Statistics report, the voluntary employee turnover rate was 25%. An employee retention report from Tiny Pulse indicates employee retention rates drop by 16% when workers feel uncomfortable providing supervisor feedback (2019). Research indicates that leadership is critical in shaping employee satisfaction, the work

environment, and, ultimately, employee retention (Chung & Lo, 2007; 2008; Hicks & Dess, 2008).

Goleman (1995) defines emotional intelligence as “the ability to identify, assess, and control one’s own emotions and the emotions of others.” Emotional intelligence includes self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management competencies, and research suggests that a leader's emotional intelligence can significantly impact employee outcomes. According to Goleman (1995), emotional intelligence is a powerful predictor of a leader’s effectiveness. Individuals with high emotional intelligence more effectively lead and manage others, fostering positive employee attitudes and work environments (George, 2000). The employee–supervisor relationship significantly shapes job satisfaction and organizational tenure (Wagner, 2007). Therefore, institutions would benefit from hiring and cultivating emotionally intelligent leaders to retain talent.

Problem Statement

The impact of a leader’s emotional intelligence, which includes self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management, on employee job satisfaction and retention has not been previously described by employees in higher education. Organizations require influential leaders to meet short- and long-term goals (Bamel et al., 2022; Islam et al., 2020, 2021). Furthermore, empirical studies have highlighted emotional intelligence as critical to effective leadership (Saha et al., 2023). Empathy, self-awareness, emotional

control, and relationship prioritization are all critical competencies of emotional intelligence (Alston et al., 2010; Hicks & Dess, 2008; Locke, 2005). Influential leaders leverage emotional intelligence to adjust employee behavior, fostering productive working relationships (Alston et al., 2010; Anand & Udaya, 2010; Ramos-Villarreal & Holland, 2011). Although organizations are beginning to appreciate emotional intelligence and see it as a critical soft skill for leaders, job postings often do not list it as required.

Emotional intelligence involves understanding, controlling, and managing one's and others' emotions and activities necessary to foster emotional and intellectual growth (Goleman, 1995). Leaders without emotional intelligence may negatively impact employee retention, generating significant organizational challenges (Pepe, 2010), including high costs, loss of institutional knowledge, and employee burnout. A higher education institution's workforce is essential to achieving its mission and goals; therefore, issues with employee retention directly impact the institution's ability to achieve its goals.

Employee compensation is the most significant operating cost for the California State University and the University of California systems, comprising approximately 70% and 69% of their annual budgets, respectively (California State University, 2023; Legislative Analyst Office, 2024). Universities should be concerned about employee turnover, as decreasing enrollments and financial loss require attention to mitigate contributing problems (Larrobino, 2006). Investigating how a leader's emotional intelligence impacts the retention of

employees is crucial to helping universities retain valuable employees and reduce employee turnover costs. Research suggests that leaders with low emotional intelligence are less likely to inspire dedication and retention in their employees, potentially increasing the risk of losing valuable employees and impacting the university's ability to meet institutional goals. Despite emotional intelligence being an essential skill for effective leadership in higher education, it remains understudied.

Through qualitative data collected in interviews, the researcher reflected on the employee's perceptions, assumptions, and experiences of their leaders' emotional intelligence and the impact on employee retention. Data was obtained from employees and used to measure the impact of a leader's emotional intelligence. Data obtained from this qualitative, phenomenological study was analyzed using NVivo software and hand-coding to discover patterns and themes. Universities can use findings from this research to create professional development training programs for their leaders that focus on improving emotional intelligence.

Purpose Statement

This qualitative phenomenological study aimed to understand how a leader's emotional intelligence impacts employee satisfaction and retention from a subordinate's perspective. Specifically, the study explored leadership characteristics using Goleman et al.'s (2002) emotional intelligence framework, which includes self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and

relationship management competencies. Considering the increasing importance of emotional intelligence in leadership, this research seeks to understand its impact on employee satisfaction and retention within the context of higher education.

This study is motivated by the need to provide practical insights into how leaders, guided by emotional intelligence, can positively influence employee satisfaction and retention. Understanding these dynamics is necessary for an organization to succeed, particularly within the changing landscape of higher education. This study's qualitative phenomenological analysis captures employees' perspectives and lived experiences, illuminating the relationship between a leader's emotional intelligence and employee satisfaction and retention. Insights gained from this research can inform how leadership development practices and human resource strategies are designed to reduce turnover costs and preserve institutional knowledge.

This qualitative phenomenological study examined current and former university employees' perceptions, assumptions, and experiences, specifically exploring the impact of leaders' emotional intelligence on employee satisfaction and retention at a university in Southern California.

Research Questions

Adopting Goleman's definition of emotional intelligence, the research questions guiding this study were designed to answer the following questions: Do

employees at one southern California institution perceive their leaders as emotionally intelligent?

1. What specific behaviors or actions of these leaders are identified by employees as indicative of high or low emotional intelligence?
2. How does a leader's emotional intelligence impact employee retention?

Significance of Study

This research explored the critical intersection of leadership and emotional intelligence, thoroughly uncovering their significant implications. Empirical studies show that organizations employing leaders with high emotional intelligence are attuned to the emotional dynamics of the organization, correlating with overall success (Kreitz, 2009). Acknowledging the variety of university leadership roles, all leaders must develop their emotional intelligence competencies across the institution. University leadership roles are diverse (Kreitz, 2009), and developing a leader's emotional intelligence becomes essential for effective collaboration across various departments. These skills help leaders navigate daily interactions with those they supervise, ultimately contributing to the university's success.

This study holds particular significance within educational leadership, contributing to the existing literature on emotional intelligence and its impact on employee satisfaction and retention. Educational leaders face multiple responsibilities in the current challenging landscape of higher education and must pivot their leadership styles to meet the changing needs of their employees and the institutions (Greenockle, 2010, p. 260). The COVID-19 pandemic

intensified these challenges, requiring a deeper understanding of emotional intelligence and its role in effective university leadership.

Amidst the disruptions caused by the pandemic, leaders needed to find ways to inspire the retention of talented employees for the university's success. In today's highly competitive workforce, employee retention is critical in the face of high costs to recruit, onboard, and train new employees (Ahsan et al., 2013). In addition, the potential loss of program growth, new students, and student retention due to staff shortages and hidden costs such as lost productivity (Das, 2002) underscores the need to explore the relationship between a leader's emotional intelligence, employee satisfaction, and retention in this research.

Assumptions

Assumptions are evident truths widely accepted by peers and researchers (Leedy & Ormrod, 2020). The initial assumption was that all participants would share their experiences openly and provide honest responses guided by the assurance of confidentiality. Researchers have the responsibility to protect participants' privacy, foster trust, and, in turn, encourage open disclosure of sensitive information. Establishing trust through privacy protection fosters more accurate and insightful data.

The second assumption was that the study's doctoral student maintained objectivity and neutrality throughout the research. To minimize any bias introduced by the researcher, participants self-reported their perspectives. The final assumption was that leaders perceived by their employees to have high

emotional intelligence created a more positive work environment, increasing employee satisfaction and retention.

Delimitations

Delimitations are aspects within the control of the doctoral student (Leedy & Ormrod, 2020). This study focused exclusively on employees from one Southern California university setting without stipulations on age, gender, race, or ethnicity, limiting the generalization of findings to other regions. The research covered the period from May 15, 2024, through July 15, 2024, and this study did not consider any developments or changes beyond this timeframe. These guidelines allowed for quality and validity in the results and matched the organization's general population as accessible and assessable for this study.

Definition of Key Terms

The following key terms are used throughout this dissertation. Definitions of the study's various terms are provided to better inform the study's objective.

1. **Effective Leadership** entails successful interaction between a person who assumes a directing, motivating, and inspiring position and an individual or group who follows the leader's lead (Kouzes & Posner, 2002; Brymer & Gray, 2006; Kest, 2006)
2. **Emotional Competence** is a learned capability based on emotional intelligence that results in outstanding performance at work, according to Goleman (1998b).

3. **Emotional Intelligence:** The three primary emotional intelligence theorists will define emotional intelligence.
 - I. **Salovey and Mayer** (1997) defined Emotional Intelligence as “the ability to perceive emotions, integrate emotions to facilitate thought, understand emotions, and to regulate emotions to promote personal growth.”
 - II. **Goleman** (1998) defined Emotional Intelligence as 'the capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, and for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships.'
 - III. **Reuven Bar-on** (1997) described EQ as "an array of personal, emotional, and social abilities and skills that influence one's ability to succeed in coping with environmental demands and pressures."
4. **Employee Performance** is the degree to which a person successfully completes a task or series of tasks under specific conditions (Locke, 1968).

Operationally, employee performance is characterized by how well a worker accomplishes the tasks and responsibilities allotted to them and how well they meet the goals and objectives established by their employer.

5. **Employee retention** is operationally defined in this study as an employee's self-reported intention to stay with their current employer.
6. **Intelligence** comprises the ability to handle and reason about information, which is referred to as Intelligence (Mayer et al., 2008).
7. **Leaders** can persuade groups to pursue visions or sets of objectives from within an organization.
8. **Leadership** is the capacity to persuade a group to pursue an idea or a set of objectives (Robbins & Judge, 2011, p. 410).
9. **Qualitative research** investigates the meaning particular people or groups assign to social or human issues. The research process involves developing questions and processes, data collection that typically takes place in the participant's environment, inductive data analysis that builds from more specifics to more general themes, and the researcher's judgments of the significance of the data (Glesne, 2016).
10. **Retention** is the effort put forth by an organization to keep employees for a significant period of time (Frank et al., 2004).
11. **Turnover** occurs when employees quit their jobs and leave their employer, and wages and service transactions no longer exist (Price et al., 2007).

12. **Job Satisfaction** represents a pleasant or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences (Schneider and Snyder, 1975; Locke, 1976). This study operationally defines job satisfaction as an individual's subjective feelings of fulfillment and contentment with their job, whether employees enjoy their work, feel valued and appreciated, and feel their job meets their personal and professional needs.

Summary

Retaining human capital is essential for organizational success. This qualitative study explored leader emotional intelligence as a predictor of employee retention from an employee's perspective. Chapter 2, the literature review, highlights the evolution of intelligence theories, definitions of emotional intelligence, and three primary models of emotional intelligence: Salovey and Mayer's ability model of emotional intelligence, Reuven Bar-On's emotional and social intelligence model, and Goleman's competency model of emotional intelligence. Chapter 3, the methodology, details the study's qualitative phenomenological design and theoretical framework. Data were gathered and analyzed using Goleman et al.'s (2002) emotional intelligence framework, including self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management competencies. Chapter 4 offers data analysis and coding, highlighting emerging themes. Chapter 5 summarizes the findings and conclusions and presents recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This qualitative phenomenological study explores leaders' emotional intelligence, as defined by self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management, and the impact on employee satisfaction and retention. Recognizing that fundamental elements shape leadership performance is central to studying emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995; Kerr et al., 2006). According to Goleman (1998), emotional intelligence is "the capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, and for managing emotions well in ourselves and our relationships." This critical leadership skill equips leaders to navigate their emotions and foster positive relationships with others.

Researchers Daniel Goleman, Reuven Bar-On, John Mayer, and Peter Salovey highlight the essential role of emotional intelligence in leadership in their work, citing its impact on communication, decision-making, relationship management, conflict resolution, and empathy. This study explores whether emotional intelligence is a critical soft skill for effective leadership and whether leaders with high emotional intelligence were more likely to create positive work environments with less employee turnover.

The research examined leadership characteristics using Goleman et al.'s (2002) emotional intelligence framework, focusing on emotional competencies

such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. It investigated the relationships between a leader's emotional intelligence, employee satisfaction, and retention in a four-year public university in Southern California. The literature review incorporates the evolution of intelligence theories, definitions of emotional intelligence, and three primary models of emotional intelligence: Salovey and Mayer's ability model of emotional intelligence, Reuven Bar-On's emotional and social intelligence model, and Goleman's competency model of emotional intelligence. In addition, the study explored the impact of leaders' emotional intelligence on employee satisfaction and retention within the institution.

This literature review clarifies the historical context of the problem and outlines the study's conceptual framework. An extensive search included more than 148 articles related to emotional intelligence to inform this literature review. Keyword searches included emotional intelligence, leadership, emotionally intelligent leaders, emotionally intelligent leaders in higher education, employee satisfaction, employee retention, leaders lacking emotional intelligence, and leaders with high emotional intelligence. Various sources were consulted, ranging from California State University's EBSCOhost database, ProQuest database, ScholarWorks, ERIC database, and Google Scholar to Digital Dissertations from the websites of colleges and universities. The literature comprises peer-reviewed scientific articles, journals, books, and past dissertations authored by experts in the field. The study explored the impact of

leaders' emotional intelligence on employee satisfaction and retention within a university setting.

Historical Background of Intelligence Theories

Looking at the historical development of intelligence theories is essential to understand emotional intelligence. Historically, intelligence was defined through a cognitive perspective and measured through logical-mathematical reasoning and linguistic abilities. The limitations found in traditional intelligence models opened the door for scholars to expand their views and consider a more comprehensive understanding of intelligence, including emotional dimensions. Consequently, this paradigm shift led to emotional intelligence being viewed as a significant part of human cognition. Scholars like Daniel Goleman, influenced by Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences (1983, 2004, 2011), expanded the traditional intelligence framework to include the capacity to perceive, understand, and manage one's own emotions and the ability to navigate and influence others emotions.

This section examines the historical development of intelligence theories, from the earliest cognitive models to the current recognition of emotional intelligence as a type of human intelligence. These theories underpin the concept of emotional intelligence, which emerges from various components across intelligence theories. This historical context informs emotional intelligence models and their implications for leadership and organizational dynamics.

According to Sternberg (2022), human intelligence includes mental abilities such as learning from experience, adapting to new situations, understanding abstract concepts, and using information to control one's environment. Over time, intelligence theories have evolved across different models, including psychometrics, cognitive psychology, cognitivism, contextualism, biological science, and emotional intelligence, each expanding our understanding of intelligence (Sternberg, 2022).

Psychometric Theories

Centuries of human intelligence study led to the psychological measurement field of psychometrics. According to Sternberg (1994), psychometricians study "individual differences in intellectual abilities," looking to understand and explain intelligence structures. Traditionally, hypotheses have relied on data collected from quantifiable mental capacity assessments (Sternberg, 1994). As articulated by Sternberg (2022), psychometric theories depict intelligence as a collection of skills evaluated through mental exams. This quantifiable model allows strengths in one area to compensate for weaknesses in another, such as strong reasoning skills offsetting a deficiency in numerical ability.

An anthropologist and eugenicist, Francis Galton, conducted groundbreaking research in 1890 that shifted psychometric and statistical approaches (Lynn, 2012). Influenced by Darwin, Galton's 1865 work on heredity had been motivated by a desire to investigate differences in human ability.

Galton believed evolutionary success resulted from superior genetic traits and contributed to the early eugenics movement, which supported selective parenthood to improve humanity. Galton proposed human breeding limits to prevent the birth of “feeble-minded” individuals (Irvine, 1986; Jensen; 2002), arguing that enhanced mental and behavioral capacities benefit not only individuals but society as a whole (Jensen, 2002). This led Galton to rank individuals based on natural abilities or measurable traits (Simonton, 2003).

Charles Spearman’s (1904) two-factor intelligence theory included two components. The first was general intelligence, the g factor affecting performance in intellectual tasks and abilities. The g factor suggested that those excelling in one mental ability test tended to perform well in others. In comparison, those performing poorly in one test exhibited poor performance across the board. The second was the specific factor, the s factor. The s factor varied from test to test since it was linked to special skills that a given test needed. Spearman used factor analysis, a mathematical method, to investigate patterns of individual differences in test scores to find the underlying cause of performance variations. He found that all unique variations in test scores could be attributed to only two forms of variables. Proposing a two-factor theory, Spearman argued that intellectual tasks are controlled by the g factor, incorporating numerical and verbal elements. At the same time, a second component, s, shows an individual’s specific ability in a particular field. Despite some support for this conception, it became evident that human abilities were

diverse, and no single factor or ability could account for all aspects of intelligence (Spearman, 1914).

In 1905, Alfred Binet and Theodore Simon developed the first intelligence test, the Binet–Simon Scale, utilized by the French government to identify children requiring alternate education (Allen, 2005). Binet and Simon defined intelligence as fundamental to function in life, requiring judgment, good sense, practical sense, and initiative. Those with poor judgment, they argued, may be labeled a “moron” or “imbecile.” Acknowledging their scale’s limitations, Binet advocated for a qualitative study of intellect, calling attention to varied development rates influenced by the environment and the changeable nature of intellectual growth, which he believed applied to children in similar circumstances (Binet & Simon, 1916, 1973; Siegler, 1992).

In 1916, Stanford psychologist Lewis Terman adopted the Simon scale, using a single number, intelligence quotient (IQ), to represent an individual’s intelligence score on the test. This thorough assessment evaluated reasoning, knowledge, quantitative reasoning, visual-spatial processing, and working memory (Binet & Simon, 1916, 1973). The Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale quickly emerged as the predominant measure of human intelligence in the United States.

In the 1900s, emotional intelligence theories gained prominence in psychologists’ intelligence theories. Thorndike (1920) introduced “social intelligence,” which he divided into emotional and motivational components

(Sharma, 2008). Thorndike's (1911) emotional intelligence theory of law and effect evolved and explored how animals responded to positive and negative circumstances. In collaboration with Stein in 1920, Thorndike extended his law and affect theory, introducing three forms of intelligence: abstract, mechanical, and social. Their model, including social intelligence, defined it as the "ability to understand and manage men and women, boys and girls, and to act wisely in human relations" (R.L. Thorndike & Stein, 1937, p. 275). This concept encompassed cognitive (understanding others) and practical components, as seen in emotional intelligence models by Mayer, Salovey, Caruso, Bar-On, and Goleman.

Louis Leon Thurstone, an American psychologist, challenged Spearman's theory by proposing seven "primary mental abilities" (1938): verbal comprehension, word fluency, number facility, spatial visualization, associative memory, perceptual speed, and reasoning. Thurstone's Primary Mental Abilities (PMA) test was created to assess these factors and to rate an individual's intelligence. Looking at mental test data from individuals with similar total IQ scores, Thurstone found varied profiles of primary mental abilities, supporting the possibility of his model over Spearman's unitary theory. Tests given to children showed that the seven fundamental skills were not entirely distinct; Thurstone found evidence of a general factor, *g*. Thurstone created a mathematical compromise to reconcile these contradictory findings that accounted for a generic component and the seven individual skills. This agreement laid the foundation for

subsequent scholars to propose hierarchical theories and models of multiple intelligences (Ruzgis, 1994).

American psychologist David Wechsler, recognizing limitations in the Stanford-Binet test, asserted that human intelligence includes various mental abilities. Wechsler defined intelligence in a person as “the global capacity to act purposefully, reason, and deal effectively with his environment” (Sharma, p. 59, 2008), highlighting its multifaceted nature over a singular capability. In 1955, Wechsler introduced the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale (WAIS), evaluating perceptual reasoning, processing speed, verbal comprehension, and working memory (Hartman, 2009). While Wechsler’s test incorporated social reasoning, it did not treat social intelligence as a distinct entity. Wechsler believed intelligence to be shaped by intellectual and personality traits and non-intellectual factors such as “affective, social, and personal factors” (Sharma, p. 59, 2008). Realizing the importance of non-intellectual characteristics for life achievement, he argued that drive alone could not compensate for the absence of core intellectual factors. Thus, emotional intelligence became integral to an individual’s personality development.

The Stanford-Binet and Wechsler human intelligence tests faced criticism for their low reliability, with individuals having IQs below 50, cultural bias, and lower scores in culturally impoverished children (Kaplan et al., 1994). The assumption that psychometric and eugenic exams reflect innate capacity rather than accumulated knowledge raised concerns about their use in shaping

educational and social policies rather than solely measuring an individual's progress at a given time (Allen, 2005). Eugenacists thus deemed the Stanford-Binet test an accurate tool for detecting an essential but subtle human characteristic. IQ tests were created for Western culture and are biased toward the environments in which they were created; however, this creates challenges in culturally diverse settings. Psychometricians and eugenacists maintained that the tests measured natural learning capacity despite finding that US Army tests indicated improved performance with longer immigrant residence in the United States (Allen, 2005).

Studying processes involved in intelligence performance led to cognitive theories arising from individual disparities in cognitive test performance. While dominant in questions about the structure of human intelligence, psychometric theories lacked obvious claims regarding the mechanisms underlying intelligence. Psychometricians faced challenges settling disputes without a scientific framework, questioning the reliability of an approach accommodating numerous hypotheses (Allen, 2005).

Cognitive Theories

Cognitive psychology incorporates mental capacities such as perception, learning, memory, reasoning, problem-solving, and decision-making, aligning closely with the abilities assessed by psychometric intelligence tests. To address these differences, cognitive psychologists proposed investigating the mental processes underlying intelligence and applying these insights to the aspects

presented by psychometricians. Lee Cronbach (1957), a testing pioneer, noted a lack of common ground between psychologists exploring individual variations and those studying human behavior commonalities (Sternberg, 1994). In response, he presented the “two disciplines of scientific psychology” to the American Psychological Association in 1957, laying the foundation to advance cognitive intelligence theories.

In 1973, American psychologists Earl B. Hunt, Nancy Frost, and Clifford E. Lunneborg demonstrated the combined use of psychometrics and cognitive modeling. Their work connected individual task differences to patterns observed in psychometric intelligence test scores, revealing cognitive processes that underlie intelligence (Sternberg, 2022). Sternberg (2022) highlights that the cognitive theories discussed relied on “serial processing of information” and challenged the notion that humans process information in chunks sequentially. Instead, many psychologists now assert that cognitive processing is fundamentally parallel.

Distinguishing between serial and parallel information processing models posed challenges that were eventually resolved by David E. Rumelhart and Jay L. McClelland’s advanced mathematical and computer modeling approach. The parallel distributed processing model argues that the brain can process multiple information sources simultaneously. However, this model failed to consider the variations in IQ descriptions across cultures and subgroups. Additionally, standard tests fall short of predicting how intelligence will be applied, though they

may be good at predicting academic performance. To close this gap between real-life and academic environments, psychologists have focused on studying cognition within its environment rather than in isolation.

Cognitive-contextual Theories

Cognitive-contextual theories examine how cognitive processes work in various situations, with American psychologists Howard Gardner and Robert Sternberg suggesting two prominent theories. Gardner (1983, 2004, 2011) introduced the theory of “multiple intelligences” (MI), challenging classical views by claiming that intelligence is comprehensive. Unlike prior theorists, Gardner identified linguistic, musical, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic intelligence (Gordon, 2023). Gardner (1987) defined intelligence as “an ability to solve a problem or fashion a product that is valued in one or more cultural settings,” challenging traditional definitions and the use of intelligence tests.

Gardner (1983, 2004, 2011) argued that existing methods for assessing intelligence were insufficient because of ingrained views of intelligence. He also stressed the need to reform the understanding of intelligence before creating improved assessment methods. Gardner’s evaluation of developmental and cognitive psychology presented the idea that emotional intelligence could be nurtured in diverse cultural settings, asserting that “human intelligence” is influenced by individual experiences and cultures. Further exploring person-related intelligence, Gardner integrated interpersonal and intrapersonal cognitive

capacities, acknowledging a cultural difference in IQ measurement. Intrapersonal intelligence encompasses self-awareness, self-understanding, and the ability to navigate one's strengths and weaknesses, while interpersonal intelligence involves understanding, recognizing, and appreciating others' feelings and moods. Gardner argued that individuals with high interpersonal intelligence excel in collaboration, effective communication, empathy, and motivation. Gardner (2006) claimed that the Goleman theory of emotional intelligence and his views on personal intelligence aligned (p. 215) with Goleman's (1995) competency model, where self-awareness, self-regulation, social skills, empathy, and motivation constitute emotional intelligence.

Supporting Gardner's idea of multiple intelligences, Sternberg proposed the "triarchic" hypothesis, criticizing standard intelligence concepts as too narrow. His theory identified three interdependent aspects: analytical/problem-solving, creative, and practical intelligence. Problem-solving abilities are encompassed by "analytical intelligence," while the capacity to handle circumstances using prior knowledge and present abilities is known as "creative intelligence," and the capacity to adjust to circumstances and surroundings is known as "practical intelligence" (Sternberg, 2005 p. 136). These abilities individually address a person's internal environment, external world, and experiences. Sternberg (2022) stressed that individuals with higher intelligence traits know how to accurately leverage their strengths and weaknesses, compensating for deficiencies as

needed. Goleman et al. and Sternberg point out how emotional intelligence can be learned and developed over time.

Biological Theories

Psychometric, cognitive, and cognitive-contextualism theories all looked to explain intelligence theories through hypothetical mental entities. Biological theories took a different approach, focusing on the biological origin of intelligence and avoiding mental theories altogether. Advocates of reductionism argue that understanding intelligence requires pinpointing its biological foundations, mainly through hemispheric, brain-wave, and blood-flow studies (Sternberg, 2022).

Psychologist Jerre Levy's hemispheric studies showed that the left hemisphere excelled in analytical skills like language use, while the right hemisphere excelled in visual and spatial tasks (Sternberg, 2022). Hans Eysenck, examining brain-wave patterns and response times during intelligence tests, confirmed links between specific EEG wave components, event-related potential (ERP) waves, and IQ scores on psychometric exams (Sternberg, 2022).

John Horn's research indicated lower blood flow to the brains of older individuals, with more pronounced declines in specific brain areas responsible for close attention, spontaneous alertness, and the encoding of new information (Sternberg, 2022). Using positron emission tomography (PET), Richard Haier found that individuals who excelled on traditional intelligence tests had less activation in critical brain areas than those who performed poorly. Furthermore, neurologists Antonio Damasio, Hannah Damasio, and their colleagues, using

PET scans and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), studied brain function in problem-solving participants, reinforcing the notion of intelligence as a developing faculty over time (Sternberg, 2022).

Emotional Intelligence Theories

Recognizing the interconnectedness of intelligence and emotion is essential to understanding emotional intelligence history and how its components contribute to its measurement (Côté, 2014). Research shows that emotion and cognition interact, though these components of the mind were considered separate in the past. Emotions significantly influence how we process information and shape effective environmental and social adaptation, so striking a balance between thought and emotion is critical (Lazarus, 1991; Damasio, 1994; LeDoux, 1996; Keltner & Haidt, 2001; Barrett, 2013). Since its introduction, the idea of emotional intelligence has attempted to link emotion and cognition (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Emotional intelligence is a set of abilities and traits impacted by social, biological, and psychological variables (Cabello & Fernandez-Berrocal, 2015; Chopra & Kanji, 2010; Mishra, 2016). Emotional intelligence originates from social intelligence (Chopra & Kanji, 2010; Dabke, 2016; Lam & O'Higgins, 2012; Yadav, 2014), and researchers have found it to be as significant as IQ, sometimes more (Goleman, 1995).

The term “emotional intelligence” was introduced by Michael Beldoch in 1964 in his studies on the relationship between emotions and behavior (Schuller & Schuller, 2018). However, emotional intelligence is seen in earlier intelligence

theories such as Thorndike's social intelligence theory (1920), where he defined it as "an ability to understand and manage men and women, boys and girls, to act wisely in human relations" (R.L. Thorndike & Stein, 1937, p. 275). According to Thorndike (Mandell & Pherwani, 2003), actual intelligence is multidimensional and includes academic, emotional, and social aspects. Influenced by non-cognitive intelligence, Wechsler expanded Thorndike's social intelligence theory and defined intelligence as the capacity to act purposefully, reason, and deal effectively with one's environment (Wechsler, 1958). The shift from simply describing social intelligence to understanding its role in interpersonal behaviors and its contribution to adaptive adaptability (Zirkel, 2000) reinforces an essential aspect of Wechsler's concept of general intelligence: "The capacity of the individual to act purposefully" (1958, p. 7).

Additionally, the concept of social intelligence being part of general intelligence was also seen in Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences (1983), including interpersonal intelligence, understanding others' emotions, motivations, and intentions. Researchers have supported the idea of multiple intelligences (Mandell & Pherwani, 2003) and propose that successful leaders have these multiple intelligences, which contribute to their success. Gardner defined personal intelligence as "knowledge of the internal aspects of a person: Access to one's emotions and to draw upon them as a means of understanding and guiding one's own behavior" (Shooshtarian et al., 2013, p. 30). Similarly, Robert Sternberg's theory of successful intelligence (1980s) incorporates

practical intelligence, adapting to the environment and dealing with practical problems, corresponding to the adaptability aspect of emotional intelligence, addressing changing circumstances and stress (Zirkel, 2000).

Salovey and Mayer formally introduced emotional intelligence in 1990. The measure for *g*, according to Mayer et al. (1999), was mental abilities that met specific requirements and improved with age (p. 269), and when compared to the *g* standards, emotional intelligence was found to be a form of intelligence (Mayer et al., 1999; Mayer et al., 2004). Mayer and Salovey defined emotional intelligence as the “ability to monitor one’s own and others’ feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one’s own thinking and actions” (Dabke, 2016, p. 28; Hur et al., 2011, p. 591, p. 388). As their work continued, they redefined emotional intelligence as “the ability to perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thoughts, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth’ (Shrestha & Baniya, 2016, p. 16). Mayer and Salovey’s model laid the foundation for emotional intelligence, with subsequent contributions and expansions by Goleman and Bar-On.

The concept of emotional intelligence gained popularity with the publication of Daniel Goleman’s book *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ* (1995). Goleman theorized that a person’s ability to manage emotions intelligently predicts success in life (Goleman, 1995, 1998b). As defined

by Goleman in 1995, emotional intelligence is “the capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships” (Goleman, 1995, p. 43). Remaining a leader in the literature on emotional intelligence, Goleman continues his work on emotional intelligence and has published several books and articles, including “The Emotional Intelligence of Leaders” (Goleman, 1998) and “Working with Emotional Intelligence,” which discuss how emotional intelligence impacts effective leadership and the workplace.

Reuven Bar-On started researching emotional intelligence in 1983, concentrating on emotional labor and work, even arguing that he first coined the term in his unpublished thesis (Chopra & Kanji, 2010). Bar-On proposed emotional intelligence as a skill that could be developed through training, programming, and treatment and defined it as “a cross-section of interrelated emotional and social competencies, skills and facilitators that determine how well we understand and express ourselves, understand others and relate with them, and cope with daily demands, challenges, and pressures” (Bar-On, 2004). Bar-On’s emotional intelligence model is process-oriented rather than results-oriented, referring to performance potential instead of actual performance.

Definition of Emotional Intelligence

In 1990, John Mayer and Peter Salovey introduced the concept of emotional intelligence, defining it as “the subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one’s own and other’s feelings and emotions, to

discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions" (p. 189). In 2004, Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso refined their framework by defining emotional intelligence as the

Capacity to reason about emotions and of emotions to enhance thinking. It includes the ability to accurately perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions, to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions as to promote educational and intellectual growth. (Mayer et al., 2004, p. 197)

Reuven Bar-On introduced the term "emotional quotient" (EQ) in 1997 as a measure of emotional intelligence, describing it as "an array of personal, emotional, and social abilities and skills that influence one's ability to succeed in coping with environmental demands and pressures" (Bar-On, 1997). In 2000, Bar-On further defined emotional intelligence as "non-cognitive capabilities, competencies, and skills that influence one's ability to succeed in coping with environmental demands and pressures" (Bar-On, 2000, p. 14).

In 1995, Daniel Goleman defined emotional intelligence as "the capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships" (Goleman, 1995, p. 43). Goleman and Boyatzis later defined emotional intelligence as "observed when a person demonstrates the competencies that constitute self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and social skills at appropriate times and

ways in sufficient frequency to be effective in the situation” (Boyatzis et al., 2000, p. 3).

Models of Emotional Intelligence

Researchers have used two theoretical frameworks to understand emotional intelligence: ability models and mixed models (Mayer et al., 2008).

Emotional intelligence is viewed as pure intelligence by ability models since it is a purely mental ability. The ability model considers perception and reasoning that result from emotions and closely relates to the cognitive abilities used to process emotional information and regulate emotions (Di Fabio & Saklofske, 2014; Mandell & Pherwani, 2003; Shrestha & Baniya, 2016; Wang et al., 2016). According to the ability model, a person observes emotional cues in the environment and combines emotion and intelligence (Cho et al., 2015; Du Plessis et al., 2015), organizing their feelings and providing direction to manage emotions within relationships (Singhal et al., 2014). The “ability to engage in sophisticated information processing about one’s own and others’ emotions and the ability to use this information as a guide to thinking and behavior” is the definition of ability-based emotional intelligence (Cho et al., 2015, p. 1241).

Emotional intelligence mixed models integrate personality qualities and mental capacity. The emotional intelligence trait models refer to how people view their emotional intelligence. Traits, social behaviors, competencies, and capacity for handling high pressure are all part of the mixed model (Du Plessis et al., 2015; Mandell & Pherwani, 2003; Wei et al., 2016). According to Chopra and

Kanji (2010), the trait-based mixed model refers more widely to possessing self-perceived talents and behavioral dispositions, such as stress management, interpersonal connections, and intrapersonal features. Table 1 below represents the three primary models of emotional intelligence.

Table 1. Emotional Intelligence Models

Mayer and Salovey Ability Model Four Branch model	Goleman and Boyatzis, Mixed Model	Bar-On Mixed/ Trait Model Emotional- Social Intelligence
Perceiving emotions Self-awareness (FBM)	Self-awareness	Self-perception
Understanding of emotions Social awareness (FBM)	Social- awareness	Self-expression
Managing emotions Self-management (FBM)	Self- management	Interpersonal
Use of emotions Relationship management (FBM)	Relationship management	Decision making
		Stress management

Mayer and Salovey: Ability (Four Branch) Model of Emotional Intelligence

Mayer and Salovey’s ability emotional intelligence model, introduced in 1990, was the first theoretical model developed by Peter Salovey and John D. Mayer (Chopra & Kanji, 2010; Shrestha & Baniya, 2016). As defined by Mayer and Salovey, emotional intelligence is “the ability to perceive emotions, access

and generate emotions to assist thoughts, understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and reflectively regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth” (Mayer and Salovey, 1997 p. 5). The ability emotional intelligence model includes four emotional abilities: (a) recognizing one’s own and others’ emotions, (b) applying emotion appropriately to facilitate reasoning, (c) understanding complex emotions and their impact on subsequent emotional states, and (d) having the ability to manage one’s own and other’s emotions (Mayer & Salovey, 1997).

According to Mayer and Salovey (1990), emotionally intelligent people can recognize their feelings, helping them respond appropriately in various circumstances (p. 193). In addition to identifying their feelings, they can evaluate the verbal and nonverbal cues used by others to express their emotions. The ability to empathize with others and adequately understand their feelings is frequently related. The ability to understand and relive another person’s experiences on a personal level is known as empathy (Mayer & Salovey, 1990, p. 194). Emotional intelligence heavily relies on empathetic reactions.

David Caruso collaborated with Mayer and Salovey to refine the ability model, leading to the development of the Mayer–Salovey–Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT) in 2002. This performance-based assessment consists of eight tasks, two from each of the four abilities of Mayer and Salovey’s emotional intelligence model, evaluating an individual’s ability to perceive, understand, use, and manage emotions and objectively measuring a leader’s

formidable skills. Comprising 141 items, the MSCEIT takes approximately 30 to 45 minutes to complete and provides 15 principal scores, including the total emotional intelligence score, two area scores, four branch scores, and eight task scores, along with three supplementary scores (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2002).

The MSCEIT is seen as a reliable model by which to measure emotional intelligence. It distinguishes itself from other models using objective assessments rather than self-reporting methods. This approach addresses the challenges associated with self-reporting emotional intelligence, where leaders may overestimate their abilities, reflecting their emotional intelligence abilities more accurately. Figure 1 represents Mayer and Salovey's ability emotional intelligence model.

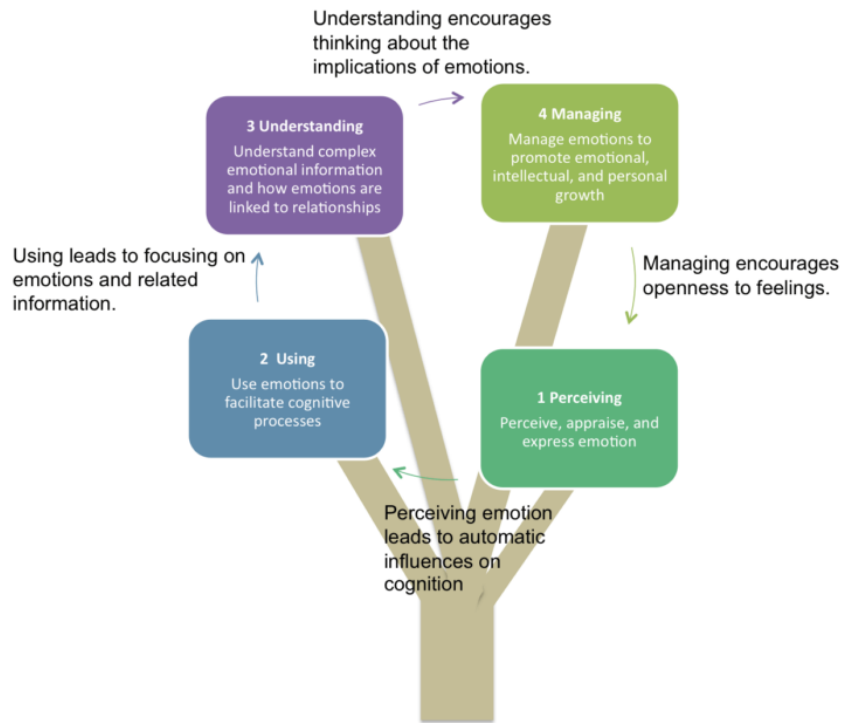


Figure 1. Ability Emotional Intelligence Model Mayer and Salovey

Source: <https://positivepsychology.org.uk/emotional-intelligence-mayer-salovey-theory/>

Goleman: Mixed (Competency) Model of Emotional Intelligence

Daniel Goleman’s mixed competency emotional intelligence model, presented in 1995 through his influential book *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*, propelled the concept into mainstream awareness.

Goleman’s model was built on Mayer and Salovey’s model, framing emotional intelligence as a set of skills that could be developed over time. Goleman defined emotional intelligence as “the capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those

of others, for motivating ourselves, for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships” (Goleman, 1995, p. 43).

Goleman’s 1998 initial competency model focused on five emotional intelligence categories: self-awareness, self-regulation, social ability, empathy, and motivation. It listed 25 competencies essential for effective leadership. Self-awareness involves understanding one’s emotions, strengths, limitations, motivations, values, and goals and intuitively informing judgments. Self-regulation encompasses managing feelings and impulses and adapting to changing circumstances. Social ability refers to managing relationships and the ability to get along with others. Empathy involves considering others’ feelings, especially when making judgments, and motivation is being aware of one’s motivations.

Collaborating with Boyatzis, Goleman further expanded his emotional intelligence model, focusing on leadership and organizational dynamics. This model, established in his 2002 book *Primal Leadership: Realizing the Power of Emotional Intelligence*, highlights the importance of emotional intelligence in leadership, arguing that these skills can be developed through practice and feedback. Goleman and Boyatzis’s emotional intelligence model has four domains (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management) and three dimensions (personal, social, and organizational). Motivation, self-regulation, and self-awareness are personal abilities that enhance an individual’s understanding and ability to control emotions, thoughts,

and actions. Social skills include incorporating empathy, social awareness, relationship management, and focusing on improving interpersonal understanding, relationship formation and maintenance, and conflict resolution. Organizational skills involving leadership, collaboration, and influence increase one's capacity to communicate effectively within an organizational setting.

In this comprehensive model, emotional intelligence is defined as demonstrating competencies in self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and social skills at the correct times and in sufficient amounts to be effective in each situation (Boyatzis et al., 2000, p. 3). This model highlights the importance of nurturing emotional intelligence in the workplace for improved leadership, cooperation, and communication, contributing to overall organizational success (Cherniss & Goleman, 2001). Figure 2 represents Goleman and Boyatzis's mixed emotional intelligence model.

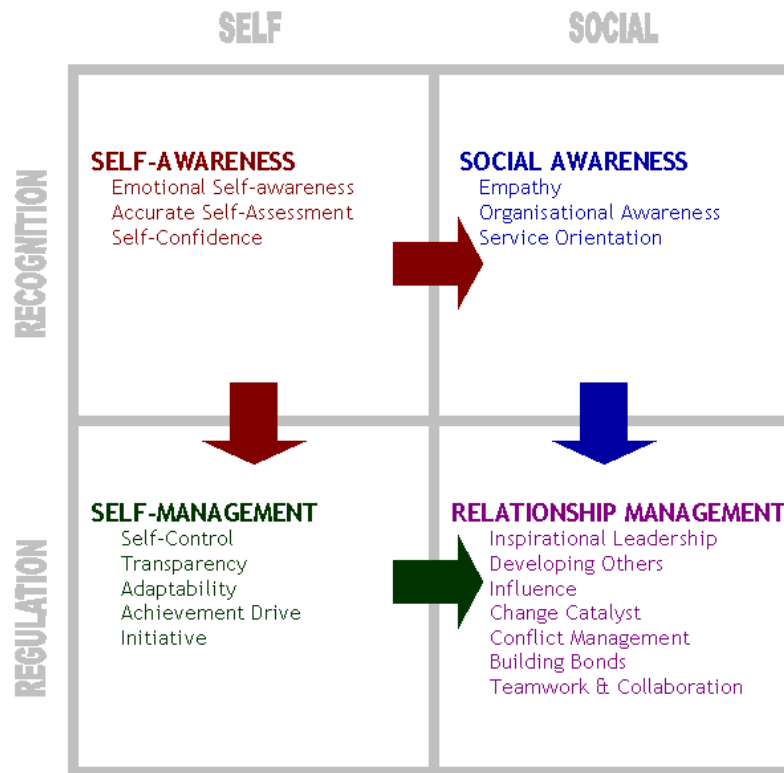


Figure 2. Mixed Emotional Intelligence Model Goleman and Boyatzis
 Source: <https://specialeducationnotes.co.in/Goleman.htm>

Bar-On: Trait/ Mixed Model of Emotional and Social Intelligence

Reuven Bar-On (1997) formed an emotional intelligence model, defining emotional-social intelligence as “an array of interrelated emotional and social competencies, skills, and behaviors that determine how well we understand and express ourselves, understand others and relate with them, and cope with daily demands, challenges, and pressures” (2013). Bar-On’s model pulled from Darwin’s work on “emotional expression for survival and adaptation” (Bar-On, 2006, p. 2) and Thorndike’s research on social intelligence and human

performance. Integrating elements from Gardner's (1983) interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence concepts, the mixed model of emotional-social intelligence (1997) by Reuven Bar-On focused on a comprehensive set of abilities, including empathy, social responsibility, and interpersonal skills.

The Bar-On emotional intelligence model corresponds to a system of connected behaviors stemming from emotional and social abilities, which impact performance and behavior. The five scales in the Bar-On model include self-perception, self-expression, interpersonal, decision-making, and stress management, which form the basis for driving human behavior and relationships as fundamental components of emotional intelligence.

The Bar-On model uses the EQ inventory EQi, a self-report assessment tool, to measure emotional intelligence. The EQi contains 133 items measured on a 5-point scale, evaluating self-perception, self-expression, interpersonal skills, decision-making, and stress management. The model includes 15 subscale factors: self-regard, emotional self-awareness, assertiveness/emotional self-expression, independence, empathy, social responsibility, interpersonal relationships, stress tolerance, impulse control, reality testing, flexibility, problem-solving, self-actualization, optimism, and happiness/well-being.

However, using self-reported tools to measure emotional intelligence raised concerns about potential overestimation. To address these concerns, the Bar-On model features a built-in correction factor, adjusting scores based on validity indicators obtained from two instruments, improving the accuracy of the

test results (Bar-On, 2006, p. 2). Figure 3 represents Bar-On's mixed emotional intelligence model.



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Based on the original BarOn EQ-i authored by Reuven Bar-On, copyright 1997.

Figure 3. Trait/ Mixed Emotional Intelligence Model Bar- On
Source: <https://ap.themyersbriggs.com/overview/EQ-i-20-8>

Leaders' Emotional Intelligence Impact on Employee Satisfaction and Retention
Leadership positions are among the most crucial aspects of a university (Chung & Lo, 2007). Leaders must comprehend the substantial impact of their behavior, leadership style, and emotional intelligence on job satisfaction and

employee retention (Ramos-Villarreal & Holland, 2011; Scott, 2005). Leaders can shape employee behaviors and influence employee satisfaction, commitment, and retention (Warrick, 1981; Watson, 2009). Studies show that healthy relationships with supervisors are critical to employee job satisfaction (Watson, 2009).

Larrabee et al. (2010) examined the relationship between job satisfaction and intention to remain employed in a sample of 464 registered nurses in five West Virginia hospitals. Participants assessed their intention to stay and job satisfaction using Likert-type ratings, including intrinsic motivators and hygienic factors. Path analysis showed that total work satisfaction predicted roughly 59% of the variance in the desire to stay without mentioning any particular subscale associations.

Wang et al. (2012) examined the connection between 560 nurses in Chinese hospitals' intention to stay and their level of job satisfaction. Again, participants evaluated their desire to stay and job satisfaction using Likert ratings, which covered intrinsic motivators and hygienic factors. The correlation analysis showed that the desire to stay and overall job satisfaction were strongly positively correlated ($r = 0.507$, $p < 0.01$). Furthermore, "recognition for successes" exhibited the most significant association ($r = 0.421$) among motivation factors, while "pay" had among the lowest correlations ($r = 0.334$). However, motivation components showed stronger correlations with a desire to stay than hygiene variables.

Parker's (2019) qualitative descriptive study examined a leader's emotional intelligence using the Goleman and Boyatzis' emotional intelligence model, defined by self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management, to evaluate how a leader's emotional intelligence impacted employee performance in universities across southeastern and southwestern regions. Fifty-four participants completed the Harvard Business School's Emotional Intelligence Assessment, and 10 volunteered for a follow-up interview. Prior research has linked emotional intelligence with effective leadership (Goleman, 2004), and the empirical findings of Parker's (2019) study demonstrated the significance and importance of emotional intelligence in leaders and its direct impact on employee performance. The findings support the idea that employing emotionally intelligent leaders or providing professional development opportunities for leaders to develop their emotional intelligence skills impacts employee performance and benefits the organization. Goleman's research identified

emotional intelligence is the sine qua non of leadership. Without it, a person can have the best training in the world, an incisive, analytical mind, and an endless supply of smart ideas. However, he still will not make a great leader (1998, pg. 82).

Parker's (2019) study found that employees value emotional support from their leaders, and emotionally intelligent leaders benefit the organization. Human potential and relationship management are significantly impacted by emotional

intelligence (Chopra & Kanji, 2010). Participants discussed how their leader's support and encouragement were essential to job satisfaction, morale, and motivation. Leaders' actions greatly influence their subordinates since "90 percent or more of an emotional message is nonverbal" (Goleman, 2005, p. 97). Leaders who ranked high in self-awareness on the emotional intelligence assessment reported higher employee performance and job satisfaction (Parker, 2019).

The leader's inability to manage conflict created low morale and motivation, leading to job dissatisfaction. Job dissatisfaction, in turn, leads to employee turnover. Influential leaders must have the knowledge, skills, and ability to mentor and lead their employees effectively if they wish to retain them. Employees choose where they work; therefore, decision-makers increasingly weigh their leaders' style and conduct (Chen & Silverhorne, 2005). Employee satisfaction with a leader's performance is a critical aspect of leadership, influencing factors such as job satisfaction, the work environment, and employee retention (Chung & Lo, 2007; Hicks & Dess, 2008).

Emotionally intelligent leaders for self-management demonstrate professionalism, honesty, and the ability to take responsibility for their errors (Parker, 2019). According to Bradberry and Greaves (2009), "Self-awareness is necessary for effective self-management," and participants in their study felt that self-awareness and self-management were intertwined. Goleman (2005) clarifies that the loss of self-control might result from an inability to control emotions and

behaviors, increasing the risk of emotional hijacking. Self-management emotional intelligence, or self-control, helps one restrain anger and impulses to react to various circumstances constructively.

Leaders with high emotional intelligence also ranked high in social awareness and demonstrated empathy and intuition. In contrast, those leaders who rated low in emotional intelligence lacked social awareness and could not sense others' emotions and feelings or read emotional cues (Parker, 2019). A leader's lack of support, empathy, and involvement can make employees feel alienated and dissatisfied with their jobs, leading to increased turnover. Leaders with high emotional intelligence in relationship management create environments of trust and a sense of value (Parker, 2019).

Leaders scoring low in emotional intelligence for relationship management lacked communication skills, were uninspiring, and failed to instill a sense of value in employees, lowering employee performance and job satisfaction (Parker, 2019). According to Yadav (2014), employees' relationship with their supervisor determines 50% of their job satisfaction. Self-control and social awareness are two emotional competencies for relationship management and effective communication (Goleman, 2005; Lam & O'Higgins, 2012). According to Chopra and Kanji (2010, p. 977), relationship management and emotional intelligence create "an individual intelligent enough to effectively understand and pick up their own and others' emotional activities to adjust in every situation."

Parkers' (2019) qualitative study supports prior research indicating that employees view leaders with emotional intelligence as more effective (Dabke, 2016) and that leaders with high emotional intelligence lead more effectively (Ramchunder & Martins, 2014) and raise employee satisfaction. The study revealed the apparent risk of turnover brought on by job dissatisfaction, as two participants indicated they left previous jobs due to their leader's lack of emotional intelligence. Employee turnover is expensive and harmful to the organization (Wells et al., 2014), presenting strong evidence of the need for emotionally intelligent leaders.

Ramchunder and Martins's (2014) empirical study supported the relationship between emotional intelligence and successful leadership. Because emotional intelligence can significantly impact employee behavior, academics know how emotional intelligence affects performance and how important emotional intelligence is for managers to improve organizational success (Chopra & Kanji, 2010; Lall, 2009).

Petersons' (2012) qualitative phenomenological case study explored 15 human resources professionals' perceptions, assumptions, and professional experiences regarding how a leader's emotional intelligence affects employee engagement and retention. The case study revealed four themes: why employees leave, the importance of retention, the perceived impact of emotional intelligence in leaders on retention, and the significance of training in emotional intelligence for leaders. Eighty percent of participants in the first theme (why

employees leave) reported that many leadership factors influence an employee's choice to leave a company. Regarding the second theme, the significance of employee retention, all Participants (100%) agreed that universities and other organizations must retain valuable staff members. The third theme, "Perceived effects of leader emotional intelligence on employee retention," was answered by 100% of participants, who said that emotional intelligence is critical to effective leadership in maintaining employees' commitment and retention. The fourth theme was the significance of emotional intelligence training for leaders. According to 74% of participants, emotional intelligence training is critical for an organization and its staff retention.

Employee turnover requires employees "to play multiple and often conflicting roles: a condition that culminates in stress and burnout and, eventually, to turnover" (Rusaw, 2004, p. 1). Organizations with high turnover experience "removal of individuals with institutional memory" (Rusaw, 2004, p. 495), leaving the organization without experienced staff who can serve as mentors in the department. Losing "personnel weakens organizational performance" (Rusaw, 2004, p. 483), affecting the organization's ability to meet the institutional vision and goals. Research has shown that staff turnover negatively impacts employee retention, as seen in this case study. Peterson's findings may help universities design and concentrate training programs to increase leaders' emotional intelligence and lower turnover costs (Lazar, 2004; Piotrowski & Plash, 2006; Sanford, 2005).

Effective university leadership significantly enhances retention and minimizes employee turnover (Toofany, 2007). Employees are motivated to stay with an organization when they are happy, and the decision to stay is often influenced by organizational commitment and employee satisfaction (Chung & Lo, 2007). A higher education institution's workforce is essential to achieving its mission and objectives.

Sofia's (2020) study examined the relationship between leadership qualities regarding emotional intelligence, SOAR (strengths, opportunities, aspirations, results), and employee retention. Employee retention is crucial to organizational success because of the high costs associated with hiring and selecting high-performing employees, providing onboarding and training, losing business continuity, the intrinsic loss of knowledge and expertise, and lost productivity, which often goes underappreciated (Ahsan et al., 2013). Emotional intelligence was measured using the Wong and Law 16-item Emotional Intelligence Scale, the 19-item SOAR profile, and the Intention to Remain scale, completed by a sample of 352 participants to assess their leaders' EI, SOAR-based capacity and retention. Sofia's study was designed as a quantitative cross-sectional survey to explore three research questions and test three study hypotheses about leaders' EI and SOAR-based capacities and the impact these traits have on employee retention. The findings demonstrated that SOAR and leader emotional intelligence positively predict subordinate retention.

Alam's (2020) study examined how a leader's emotional intelligence influences organizational commitment, staff retention, and personal growth in Pakistan's insurance industry. A cross-sectional questionnaire was used to collect data from 48 managers and 220 employees; 206 of those surveys were included in the data analysis, and random sampling was used. The methodology used for the analysis was partial least squares (PLS) 3.27. This study highlighted the importance of leaders understanding the cognitive abilities associated with effective leadership and the impact of leaders' emotional intelligence on employee behavior in a diverse work environment.

The study findings suggest that a leader's emotional intelligence favors dedication to the organization, employee retention, and personal growth. Influential leaders must leverage their emotional intelligence to raise staff motivation levels to create, commit, and retain talent for the firm. The outcome has shown that motivated workers are content with their jobs and use the emotional intelligence of leaders to achieve organizational objectives. Thus, organizations and individuals benefit significantly from employee motivation (Alam, 2020).

Judeh (2013) investigated the impact of emotional intelligence on retention by examining the moderating role of job involvement in this relationship. Data from 241 employees in hotel and tourism corporations listed in the Amman Stock Exchange, Jordan, were analyzed. Hierarchical regression analyses confirmed a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and retention. The study

also found that job involvement facilitates the relationship between emotional intelligence and retention, suggesting its importance in influencing employee retention. Higher emotional intelligence is linked to positive social outcomes (Mayer et al., 2008). Lower emotional intelligence levels can predict increased relationship conflict and the incapacity or failure to live up to social or cultural expectations (Mayer et al., 2008).

Finally, Benjamin R. Palmer and Gilles Gignac's (2012) study looks at the link between leaders' emotional intelligence and the engagement levels of their direct reports, with implications for increasing employment brand, talent retention, and productivity. A total of 223 managers' EI ratings were supplied by 440 direct reports, making up the sample. Three big corporations employed managers and direct reports. The Genos Emotional Intelligence Inventory (Genos EI) was used to measure emotional intelligence. Using an online survey system, employees from three organizations assessed their engagement and their managers' emotional intelligence. Correlation analyses revealed a significant relationship between leaders' emotional intelligence and employee engagement scores, suggesting that leaders' emotional intelligence accounts for much of the variability in direct report engagement.

Employee engagement was described as "an individual's involvement and satisfaction with as well as enthusiasm for work" Harter et al. (2002, p. 269). Benjamin R. Palmer and Gilles Gignac (2012) suggest that future research should explore whether this relationship persists after controlling for direct

reports' emotional intelligence and whether improvements in managers' emotional intelligence lead to enhanced employee engagement. The findings suggest that by developing the emotional intelligence of their leadership team, the organizations can improve their employment brand, talent retention, and productivity. This study helps explain the empirical relationship between leaders' emotional intelligence and employee engagement.

Summary

This chapter has reviewed the history of intelligence theories, definitions of emotional intelligence, and three primary models of emotional intelligence: Salovey and Mayer's ability model of emotional intelligence, Reuven Bar-On's emotional and social intelligence model, and Goleman's competency model of emotional intelligence. Additionally, it has summarized research insights on the impact of a leader's emotional intelligence on employee satisfaction and retention within an organization through a thorough literature review.

This study examines leadership characteristics using Goleman et al.'s (2002) emotional intelligence framework, focusing on emotional competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management, explicitly addressing the relationships between a leader's emotional intelligence, employee satisfaction, and retention in a public university setting. The research explores whether emotional intelligence competencies are essential for effective leadership and whether leaders with high emotional

intelligence are more likely to create positive work environments with less employee turnover.

The literature suggests a relationship exists between emotional intelligence, “soft” skills, leadership effectiveness, and organizational outcomes. According to research findings, emotional intelligence competencies such as empathy, adaptability, self-control, emotional self-awareness, transparency, conflict management, collaboration, and fostering others’ development significantly influence leadership and organizational efficiency (Goleman, 1998a; Mayer et al., 2000).

The literature suggests a positive relationship between a leader’s emotional intelligence and employee retention. Recognizing that emotional intelligence competencies shape leadership performance is central to studying emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995; Kerr et al., 2006). This essential leadership skill gives leaders the tools to navigate emotions and create positive relationships with employees. Effective relationships with employees are essential, and leaders are encouraged to build these relationships through high levels of reciprocity, trust, respect, and communication (Grant et al., 2008).

Employees exhibit more significant levels of confidence and job satisfaction when they believe their supervisors can provide them with direction, structure, support, problem-solving, and performance communication (Watson, 2009). When a supervisor improves their understanding of emotions on the job, it allows them to think clearly, anticipate issues before they arise, and handle them

skillfully. Research also suggests that leaders with low emotional intelligence could act unsuitably or harmfully toward others and that organizational culture can be destroyed by destructive leadership behavior that harms the employees and the organization (Ramos-Villarreal & Holland, 2011).

Goleman (1995) highlights the significance of the relationship between a leader and their employee, pointing out that emotional intelligence primarily manifests through relationships. Adjustments are made to each employee based on the emotional intelligence of the leader, which creates a productive working connection (Alston et al., 2010; Anand & UdayaSuriyan, 2010; Ramos-Villarreal & Holland, 2011). Research from this literature review suggests that understanding how a leader's emotional intelligence impacts employee retention is necessary to reduce turnover and its high costs.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This qualitative phenomenological study explores how leaders' emotional intelligence, as defined by self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management, impacted employee satisfaction and retention in a Southern California university. Research suggests a positive relationship between effective leadership and leaders with high emotional intelligence (Goleman, 2004). The research suggests that emotionally intelligent leaders with high levels of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management skills can self-assess, demonstrate emotional self-control, show empathy, effectively resolve conflict, foster collaboration, motivate employees, create trust environments, build strong relationships, and create equal workplace cultures. The findings of this study stress the importance of leaders' emotional intelligence and impact on employee job satisfaction and retention.

The study findings highlighted the benefits to the organization of hiring emotionally intelligent leaders and providing emotional intelligence training for all leaders. However, minimal qualitative research has examined a leader's emotional intelligence and its impact on employee job satisfaction and retention. Additionally, the impact of leaders' emotional intelligence, self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management on employee job satisfaction and retention has not previously been described by employees in a

university setting. Therefore, this study explores the employees' perception of their leaders' emotional intelligence on employee job satisfaction and retention based on their lived experiences.

The following section describes the qualitative research design and methods used to collect and analyze data from employees at a Southern California university.

Research Approach

According to Creswell (2014, p. 3), research approaches are the strategies and processes for conducting research, incorporating steps from general assumptions to specific data collection methods, analysis, and interpretation. The research approaches considered for this study included quantitative designs, focusing heavily on numerical data to quantify results; qualitative designs, involving the study of individuals in their environments to describe a situation or experience; and mixed methods, which utilize both qualitative and quantitative approaches (Creswell, 2014). After reviewing various research designs, qualitative research was deemed most appropriate for this study due to the nature of the investigation, the planned strategies, the chosen methods, and the researcher's philosophical perspective (Creswell, 2014). Maxwell (2005) states, "Qualitative research has an inherent openness and flexibility... leading to a focus on meaning" (p. 22), allowing the researcher to explore emerging themes.

This study explores employees' perceptions of how a leader's emotional intelligence impacts job satisfaction and retention. A qualitative design strategy supported its exploratory nature, aiming to explain rather than test or measure the variables involved (Creswell, 2014). Surveys and interviews were two qualitative methods used to identify emerging and recurring themes. This study was conducted in two phases: initially, a survey was distributed to all participants who agreed to participate. One-on-one interviews with a smaller group of participants, transcription, additional literature review, and data analysis followed.

The theoretical foundations of qualitative research guide researchers to learn about the participants' perceptions of reality (Morse et al., P., 1996). This study was grounded in the interpretive paradigm, as "reality is subjective and constructed" (Sipe & Constable, p. 155, 1996). There are multiple truths and explanations; therefore, using qualitative data to capture employees' experiences through one-on-one interviews led to more in-depth data (Castillo-Montoya, 2016) and aided in remaining neutral and removing bias (Yin, 2014). Using phenomenology as the research method to collect and analyze data allowed the researcher to discover emerging themes among leaders in the department, gaining insight into employees' lived experiences.

Research Design

According to Creswell (2014, p. 4), a qualitative study was suitable "for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem." The researcher considered the study's three

qualitative design methods: case study, grounded theory, and phenomenology. A case study develops a detailed analysis of an event, activity, or process within a specific setting (Creswell, 2014). However, the researcher concluded that a single case study would provide insufficient data to ground a significant theory or contribution to the existing literature. A grounded theory design was also explored; however, this research design focuses on comparing data and forming a theory (Mateos-Moreno & Alcaraz-Iborra, 2013), which did not align with the needs or direction of this study, which was to explore the shared experiences among a group of people. The final option, phenomenology, is effective for that purpose (Grysmann & Fivush, 2016).

Thus, a qualitative phenomenological methodology was used in this study to understand employees' lived experiences and the influence of a leader's emotional intelligence on employee job satisfaction and retention. According to Mapp (2008), the main goal of phenomenological techniques is to "search for meanings and essences of the experience." One-on-one interviews allow a researcher to gather first-person reports to understand the employees' experience (Mapp, 2008, p. 308). Additionally, qualitative research facilitated the development of meaning, which was needed to communicate the complicated and often intangible aspects of participants' experiences.

The two research questions in the study explored how employees described, based on their personal experiences, the impact of their leaders' emotional intelligence, as defined by self-awareness, self-management, social

awareness, and relationship management emotional intelligence, and the impact on employee job satisfaction and retention at a Southern California university.

RQ1: What specific behaviors or actions of these leaders are identified by employees as indicative of high or low emotional intelligence?

RQ2: How does a leader's emotional intelligence impact employee retention?

For this study, participants from a Southern California university were asked to assess their leaders' perceived emotional intelligence using the 2005 Emotional Intelligence Assessment from Harvard Business School Publishing. Select participants were then asked to volunteer for a follow-up semi-structured interview with open-ended questions to investigate their perception of their leader's emotional intelligence, lived experiences, and the impact on job satisfaction and retention. Surveys alone allow a researcher's assumptions to shape data analysis (Yadav, 2014). Qualitative studies allow for a contextual understanding of the collected data and allow participants to share comfortably through flexible data collection methods. Interviews allow for personalized exploration of a phenomenon, while open-ended questions allow the participants to expand and share additional insights throughout the data collection process. The researcher hoped to gain as much insight as possible into the employees' experiences by allowing open-ended questions. Qualitative data collection methods did not limit participants to a predetermined outcome. The researcher

analyzed interview responses by coding raw data using thematic analysis, a method for identifying patterns and themes within the data (Yin, 2014).

Methodology

A qualitative research methodology was used for this study, as the researcher's goal was to understand employees' perceptions of the importance of their leader's emotional intelligence and its impact on job satisfaction and retention. The researcher found a few quantitative studies assessing leader emotional intelligence and its impact on performance and retention; however, no qualitative studies were found on employees and assessing their leader's perceived emotional intelligence and its impact on job satisfaction and retention in a university setting. Qualitative research allowed participants to share their experiences without validating preconceived beliefs or hypotheses. Maxwell (2005) explained that qualitative studies examined how participants made sense of events and behaviors and how their understanding influenced their actions.

While quantitative research starts with a hypothesis and relies on surveys and questionnaires, qualitative research is more inductive. It analyzes feelings, actions, and experiences to develop phenomena-based theories. Quantitative methods focus on justifications, whereas qualitative methods explore descriptive differences and similarities between social events and prior theoretical findings (Park & Park, 2016). Creswell (2014) identified essential steps in conducting research, such as formulating new questions, collecting data in participants' environments, analyzing data inductively to develop broad themes, and

interpreting the significance of the data. In this study, gathering accounts of employees' lived experiences allowed for open conversations, story sharing, and understanding of their experiences (Glesne, 2013).

For this study, the researcher determined that a phenomenological qualitative study was the best method, allowing the researcher to study a common group's lived experiences and share stories to identify a phenomenon. Phenomenology investigates ideas, perspectives, emotions, and behaviors from the individual participant's point of view. Creswell (2014) defined phenomenological research as portraying individuals' lived experiences related to a phenomenon from the participant's voice and perspective. The phenomenon studied in this research was the impact of leaders' emotional intelligence on employee satisfaction and retention at a Southern California university.

Philosophical Worldview

The third element of the research design is the worldview. Similar to design and methodology, the researcher's worldview and perspective might be aligned with the research issue and perspective to enhance the study approach (Cresswell, 2014). According to Creswell (2014), researchers should consider the philosophical assumptions they bring while designing a study. He identifies four worldviews, or "lenses," through which a researcher can view their research: constructivist, transformative, pragmatic, and postpositivist. In quantitative research, postpositivists aim to reduce phenomena through observation, measurement, and theory testing. Constructivists develop theories to interpret

the world by examining various viewpoints and considering truth as a social construct. The transformative approach is political, pushing for reform and giving voice to underrepresented communities. A programmatic approach is practical and focused on finding solutions to issues in the real world.

The constructivist worldview aligns with qualitative research, beginning with “the assumption that social reality is multiple...and constructed” (Creswell, 2014). Based on the criteria used to demonstrate validity, the researcher recognized that aligning design, research methodologies, and philosophical viewpoints helped produce an excellent qualitative study (Creswell, 2014). This study used constructivist phenomenological theory, aligning with the researcher's perspective and the suggested research strategy.

Research Setting

This section provides an overview of the university environment where the study was conducted. The research was conducted at a midsize, four-year public university located in Southern California. The university offers primarily undergraduate and graduate degree programs that serve over 20,000 students. The department employs approximately 60 full-time employees. The study participants were current and former employees from the same university department.

Research Sample

Study participants included current and former employees from the same university department in Southern California. The sample included accounting technicians, administrative support staff, analysts, graphic designers, marketing specialists, program specialists, student service professionals, and management personnel. The participants needed to meet the following requirements to participate in the study: 1) be current or former employees of the department where the study took place, 2) be between the ages of 18 and 65, and 3) have worked in the department for a minimum of six months.

After IRB approval, 92 participants were invited via email to participate, outlining study objectives, eligibility requirements, and the promise of confidentiality. The researcher obtained employee contact information through university directories and internet searches, including various social media sites, such as Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn, as well as other company and university websites. The target response for participation in the study was 40 for the Emotional Intelligence Assessment survey and 10 for the interviews. Although collecting enough data to reach saturation of themes and categories was important, small sample sizes were best for the detailed analysis typical of phenomenological studies.

Survey: Emotional Intelligence Assessment

Of the 92 employees invited to participate in the study, 22 did not respond to the email (three current and 19 former), and nine declined to participate (four

current and five former). Sixty-one participants agreed to participate in the survey and were sent the informed consent form. Of those, 58 participants (28 current and 30 former) completed the informed consent and were sent the link to complete the Emotional Intelligence Assessment survey. All 58 participants completed the survey, of which 33% were male and 67% female. The age range of the participants was 18–65 years: 2% were 18–24, 26% were 25–34, 34% were 35–44, 21% were 45–54, and 17% were 55–65.

Interviews

Those who completed the survey were asked whether they were interested in participating in a follow-up interview. The researcher used stratified sampling to select interview participants, securing a diverse sample reflective of the population under study. This strategy ensured that various supervisors and position classifications within the department were represented, enhancing the applicability of the study's findings across different contexts. Stratified sampling involves dividing the population into subgroups and selecting participants from each subgroup to guarantee diversity. The 14 participants selected for the interviews signed a separate informed consent form. The interview sample included six current and eight former employees, with 29% male and 71% female representation.

Research Data

The research data collection for this qualitative phenomenological study included two sources of data collection: the 2005 Emotional Intelligence

Assessment from Harvard Business School Publishing and employee interviews. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) at California State University San Bernardino conducted an expedited review and approval of the proposed study before data collection. The IRB review and application approval (Appendix A) included an overview of the planned study, the interview methodology, the survey and interview questions, and the informed consent forms.

A review of qualitative phenomenological research methods was the reason for choosing data collection tools appropriate for the chosen research design (Creswell, 2014). The researchers' perspective also influenced the data collection techniques (Creswell, 2014). As data was collected and analyzed during the research process, no changes were needed to the survey or the interview questions, the study design remained appropriate, and no IRB modifications were needed.

Data Collection Instruments

Surveys

The Emotional Intelligence Assessment from Harvard Business School Publishing 2005 (Appendix D) was used in this study to rate leaders' perceived emotional intelligence. Based on Goleman's four EI domains, the Emotional Intelligence Assessment asked employees to assess their leader's self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management emotional intelligence (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009). Study participants were not privy to which questions belonged to which of the four domains.

Interviews

According to Creswell (2007), in-depth interviews with participants were a primary data collection method in phenomenological investigations. The interview questions used in this study were developed by Parker (2019) and were based on the Emotional and Social Competence Inventory (ESCI) created by Goleman and Boyatzis and the assessment questions from Emotional Intelligence 2.0 by Bradberry and Greaves see (Appendix E). The researcher slightly modified the interview questions, removing performance questions and adding retention-focused questions, aligning with the study's theoretical model. The research questions were created to learn how employees viewed their leader's emotional intelligence in four areas: relationship management, social awareness, self-management, and self-awareness, as well as the impact that the leader's actions had on job satisfaction and retention. The questions that matched each of the four domains were not known to the participants.

Data Collection

Individuals who agreed to participate in the study were sent the survey informed consent to review and sign electronically via Adobe Sign. This secure electronic signature software required a password, and participants were sent an individual link only they could access. Those who returned the signed consent form were sent a link to the Emotional Intelligence Assessment through Qualtrics, asking them to complete the survey rating their leaders' perceived emotional intelligence. Qualtrics is a secure online survey tool used to build surveys, collect

responses, and analyze data. Employees completed the assessment by rating their leader's emotional intelligence based on their own experiences, serving as a 360-degree assessment of the leader's emotional intelligence.

A select group of those who completed the survey were invited to participate in a follow-up interview. Individuals invited to the interview portion of the study were sent a second informed consent form to review and sign electronically via Adobe Sign. The researcher conducted all interviews using Zoom, which offered participants convenient scheduling options. The Zoom platform was chosen for its ability to video record and transcribe interviews and securely record and store data, ensuring privacy, given that each participant could access the interview only with a private link and password provided by the researcher. The semi-structured interviews lasted approximately 30–45 minutes and were recorded with participants' consent. Before interviews began, the consent form was reviewed a second time with the participant, and the researcher reiterated that participants were under no obligation to participate and could back out, decline to answer any questions, or stop the interview at any time. After the interview, the researcher reviewed the Zoom transcription several times for accuracy against the video recording and shared the transcription with each participant for member checking.

Data Analysis

Qualtrics analyzed the emotional intelligence assessment survey results. This data provided an overall summary of the department leaders' emotional

intelligence levels. The participant interviews were transcribed using Zoom transcription services and then verified by the researcher several times for accuracy. The transcriptions were shared with the participants for member checking. The researcher reviewed all videos and transcribed interviews multiple times to ensure a deep understanding and increase familiarity with the data to develop emerging interview themes (Smith et al., 2000). The researcher used NVIVO software and hand-coding to identify and explore emerging themes and subthemes. According to Glesne (2013), researchers should organize the indexed themes hierarchically when searching for themes and subthemes. A codebook was created to document the themes and subthemes used to identify the overarching themes and analyze the data. The researcher used inductive and deductive coding to analyze the qualitative data. Deductive coding was used for Goleman's EI model, which had a predefined set of codes. Inductive coding was used to create codes from the data based on the emerging themes of participants. Affective coding methods were utilized because the study investigated "subjective qualities of human experience by directly acknowledging and naming those experiences" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 124).

The coding methods used to analyze data were emotion coding and versus coding. Emotion coding allowed the researcher to "explore intrapersonal and interpersonal participant experiences and actions, especially in matters of social relationships, reasoning, decision-making, judgment, and risk-taking" (Saldana, 2016, p.125). This coding method allowed the researcher to "label the

emotions recalled and/or experienced by the participant or inferred by the researcher about the participant” (Saldana, 2016, p. 125). Versus coding was used to analyze data in the research by looking at leaders with high emotional intelligence versus leaders with low emotional intelligence.

The phenomenological methodology emphasized two main data analysis techniques. According to Moran and Mooney (2002), the two primary purposes of phenomenological data analysis were interpretive and descriptive. The goal of the descriptive method was to convey the data findings naturally while adhering to the literal meaning of the data. Participants’ literal statements were given meanings. Data could be given many meanings and layered interpretations thanks to the interpretive process. To achieve reliable and legitimate data analysis for this study, the researcher used both approaches when assessing the interview data. To guarantee the reliability of the data analysis, the researcher additionally used the four fundamental inquiries that researchers should pose to themselves, as outlined by Glesne (2003): What did you notice, why, how can it be interpreted, and how do you know that your interpretation is the “right” one?

The researcher conducted a reflexive analysis of the data to ensure the data process was free from inherent bias. The researcher then assessed their subjectivity and values to see whether they could impact the themes and their interpretation of them.

Trustworthiness

A critical element of a qualitative research study is ensuring the study's trustworthiness. To achieve credibility, the research included "thick descriptions" and "concrete details" presented in a way of "showing rather than telling" (Tracy, 2010, p. 840). Data rich in rigor was essential, as it allowed the participants' stories and experiences to be heard through their voices. Showing, rather than telling, would enable readers to come up with their own conclusions about the research. In addition, the researcher utilized member-checking as another way to gain credibility. The researcher sent the transcribed interviews to the research participants to review for feedback to ensure their stories were captured accurately.

Summary

In summary, this researcher implemented a qualitative phenomenological research design exploring leadership characteristics using the Goleman et al. (2002) emotional intelligence theoretical framework, which includes self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management competencies, to conduct surveys and interviews. In phenomenological research, interviews are invaluable for collecting data, allowing researchers to understand participants' lived experiences and perspectives, in this case, regarding their leaders' perceived emotional intelligence and the impact on employee satisfaction and retention. The following chapters will discuss the relationship between the study questions, the results, and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of a qualitative phenomenological study aimed at understanding the impact of leaders' emotional intelligence on employee satisfaction and retention from the perspective of employees. The study is grounded in Goleman et al.'s (2002) emotional intelligence framework, which consists of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management competencies. Given the growing significance of emotional intelligence in leadership, particularly within the context of higher education, this research provides valuable insights into how these competencies influence employee satisfaction and retention.

The results of this study are significant in today's rapidly evolving higher education landscape, where retaining human capital is critical for organizational success. Employee turnover incurs significant financial costs and disrupts business continuity, productivity, and loss of institutional knowledge. Leadership plays a crucial role in shaping the work environment and overall job satisfaction, significantly affecting employee retention. Understanding the relationship between leaders' emotional intelligence and employee retention can offer practical strategies to enhance organizational stability and success.

In addition to understanding how leaders' emotional intelligence influences employee satisfaction and retention, this study's findings offer practical insights

for institutions to use to develop training programs to strengthen the emotional intelligence of their leaders. Universities can use the data from the assessments and data from employee interviews to enhance leadership effectiveness and assist in retaining top talent. This approach could significantly lower employee turnover costs by creating a more supportive and emotionally intelligent leadership culture.

Summary of Findings

Survey: Emotional Intelligence Assessment

In this study, 92 employees were invited to participate in a survey designed to assess the emotional intelligence of their leaders. The participants included 35 current and 57 former employees. Nine employees (five former and four current) declined to participate. In comparison, 22 employees (three current and 19 former) did not respond to the invitation, and three former employees agreed to participate but did not return the signed consent form. In the end, 58 employees (28 current and 30 former) agreed to participate and completed the informed consent form and the Emotional Intelligence Assessment via Qualtrics. Participants evaluated their leaders' strengths in the four domains of emotional intelligence, self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management as they perceived them.

The survey began with two demographic questions on gender and age, followed by a question about the length of their employment to confirm that all participants met the study's qualifications. All 58 participants met the criteria. The

survey was initially open for two weeks, and participation was moderate, so a follow-up email was sent, and the deadline was extended an additional two weeks. The assessments were completed via Qualtrics, and select participants were invited to participate in follow-up interviews.

Participants in the study worked in the departments anywhere from six months to over 24 years, providing a wide range of perspectives from both newer employees and long-term staff. Of the 58 participants, 19 (33%) were male, and 39 (67%) were female. The age range of participants spanned 18–65 years: 2% were aged 18–24, 26% were 25–34, 34% were 35–44, 21% were 45–54, and 17% were 55–65. Figure 4 presents the employees' gender, and Figure 5 displays the age ranges of the participants.

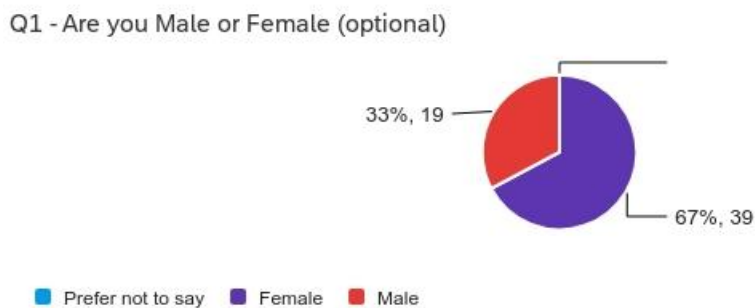


Figure 4. Participants Gender

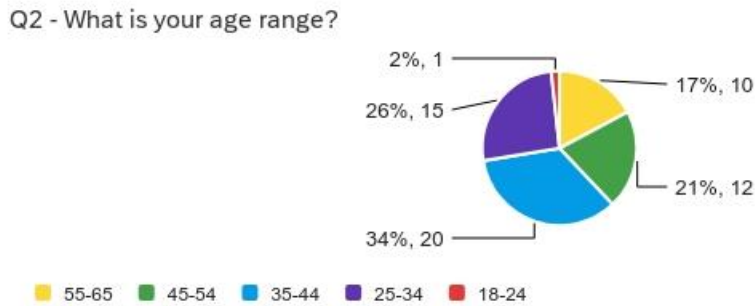


Figure 5. Participants Age Range

The survey, created from the Harvard Business School Publishing’s 2005 Emotional Intelligence Assessment, was designed around four critical emotional intelligence domains: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. Participants had no knowledge of which questions belonged to which emotional intelligence domain. Participants were given a 5-point Likert scale, from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree,” to rate their leaders across 16 statements. The survey summarized the leaders’ emotional intelligence competencies, highlighting the leadership team’s strengths and potential areas of improvement. The following sections present the findings for each domain.

Self Awareness

Participants were asked to assess their leader’s self-awareness, the ability to recognize one’s own emotions, understand one’s strengths and limitations, be aware of one’s emotions’ impact on others, and possess a strong sense of self-

worth. The survey revealed that 32 of the 58 Participants (55%) perceived their leaders as recognizing their emotions and their impact on job performance. However, 20 Participants (34%) disagreed, and six Participants 10% were neutral, suggesting that leaders in this department could not recognize how their emotions impacted employee performance or that some employees had strong negative perceptions of a few leaders. Leaders in this department were perceived by their employees to have a solid sense of self-worth, with 44 Participants (77%) rating them positively.

Additionally, 36 Participants (62%) felt their leaders understood their strengths and limitations, while 13 Participants (23%) of the responses were negative, and 9 Participants (16%) were neutral, suggesting a potential need for development in this area. Less than half, 27 Participants (48%), felt their leaders were aware of the impact of their emotions on others, with 20 Participants (35%) stating their leaders did not understand how their emotions impacted their employees, making this a critical area of needed improvement among the leadership team.

Overall, the data suggests that the leaders in this department possess a strong sense of self-worth and have some understanding of their strengths and limitations. There are some development opportunities, particularly in recognizing the impact of their emotions on others and how these emotions impact job performance. Figure 6 represents Participants' ratings of their leader's self-awareness.

Q4 - Assess your leader's strengths based on your (employee) perception of your...

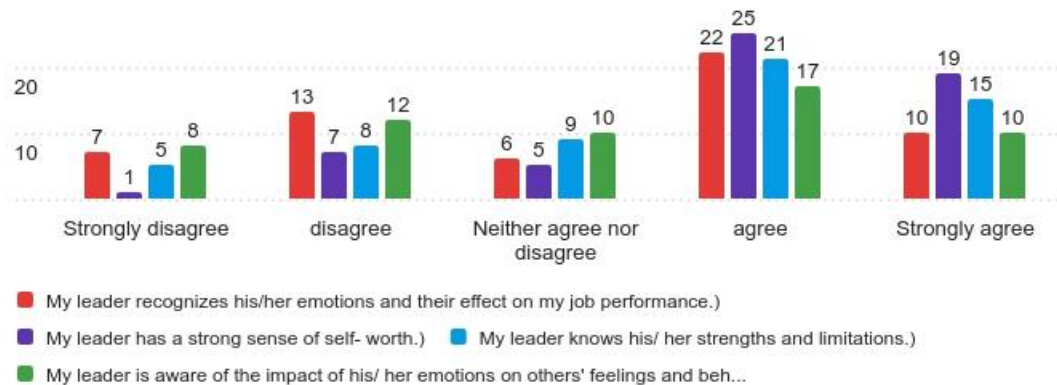


Figure 6. Self-Awareness Rating

Self Management

Participants were asked to assess their leaders' self-management competencies, including controlling disruptive emotions, taking calculated risks, acting honestly and with integrity, and maintaining optimism. Results indicated that 37 of the 58 Participants (64%) felt their leaders did a good job controlling disruptive emotions. In comparison, 11 participants (19%) expressed this as an area of concern, and 10 (17%) responded neutrally. The 36% negative and neutral responses indicate that leaders in this department need to work on controlling their emotions. A large majority, 46 Participants (79%), perceived their leaders as willing to take calculated risks, encouraging team members to think creatively and generate new ideas.

When employees were asked whether they felt their leaders acted with honesty and integrity, 38 Participants (66%) agreed, 14 Participants (24%) disagreed, and 6 Participants (10%) were neutral, indicating potential issues with either consistency or transparency in leadership practices. Additionally, 42 Participants (68%) viewed their leader as optimistic, a skill needed to motivate the team. However, the 11 Participants (19%) who responded neutrally and 5 Participants (8%) with negative responses suggest there is some room for leaders in this department to work on their ability to convey optimism.

The results suggest that leaders in this department are perceived by their employees as willing to take calculated risks, an essential leadership skill for innovation and growth. There were mixed responses regarding controlling disruptive emotions and acting with honesty and integrity; numerous employees identified weaknesses in these areas, indicating areas of needed improvement. Most leaders were also perceived as capable of maintaining optimism. Figure 7 represents Participants' ratings of their leader's self-management.

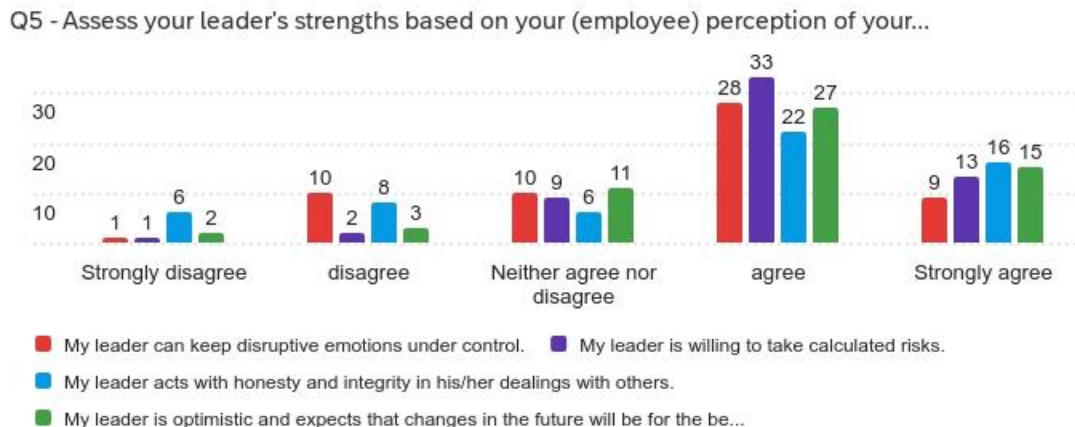


Figure 7. Self-Management Rating

Social Awareness

Participants were asked to evaluate their leaders' social awareness competencies by examining their abilities to understand office politics, sense others' feelings and perspectives, take an active interest in other's concerns, and determine if they understood company values. A majority, 45 of the 58 Participants (78%), stated that their leaders understood office politics. Only half of the participants (50%) felt their leader could sense others' feelings and perspectives. In comparison, 16 Participants (27%) identified this absence as an area of concern, and 13 Participants (22%) were neutral, indicating an area of weakness among the leadership team. Similarly, only 29 Participants (50%) felt their leaders took an active interest in others' concerns, while 18 Participants (31%) shared concern and 11 Participants (19%) were neutral, highlighting another area of needed improvement among leadership. Lastly, 41 Participants (71%) of employees felt their leader understood the company values.

These results suggest that most leaders in this department understand office politics and university values. Two critical areas of improvement were identified: Some leaders could not sense others' feelings and perspectives, and some failed to take an active interest in others' concerns. Figure 8 represents Participants' ratings of their leader's social awareness.

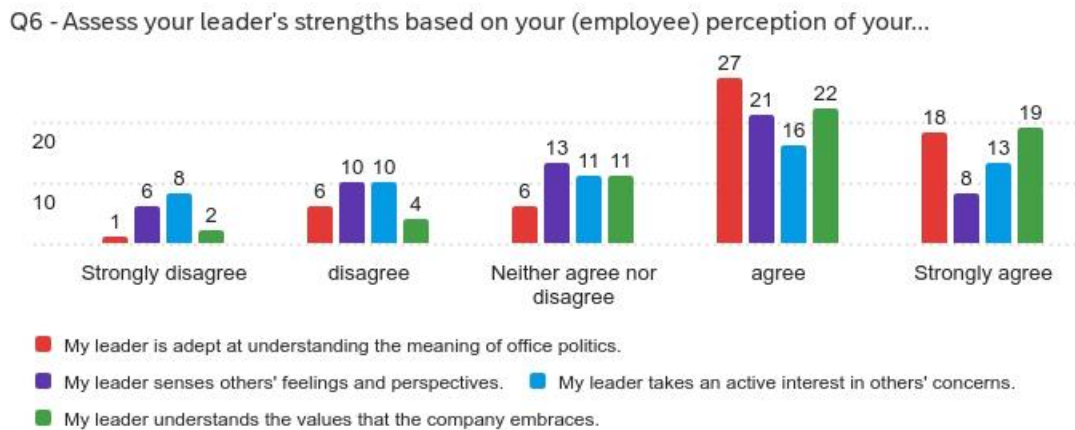


Figure 8. Social Awareness Rating

Relationship Management

Participants assessed their leaders' relationship management skills, including building personal bonds, communicating clearly and convincingly, inspiring and guiding others with a shared mission, and managing conflicts. The results showed that 29 Participants (50%) felt their leaders built solid personal

bonds, while 20 Participants (35%) shared that their leaders did not, highlighting this as an area for improvement. Additionally, 31 Participants (53%) agreed that their leader inspired and guided others with a shared mission, while 13 Participants (22%) disagreed, suggesting another area of needed improvement among leaders. Similarly, 29 Participants (50%) felt their leader was skilled at disarming conflict, while 18 Participants (31%) disagreed, and 11 Participants (19%) were reportedly neutral, indicating another area of needed improvement among the leadership. Lastly, 44 Participants (76%) believed that their leader communicated clearly and concisely.

The results suggest that leaders in this department could use training to strengthen their relationship management competencies. Only half of the employees felt their leaders built strong personal relationships, inspired and guided their team with a shared mission, and were skilled at disarming conflicts. The only area of strength was the ability to communicate clearly. Figure 9 represents Participants' ratings of their leader's relationship management.

Q7 - Assess your leader's strengths based on your (employee) perception of your...

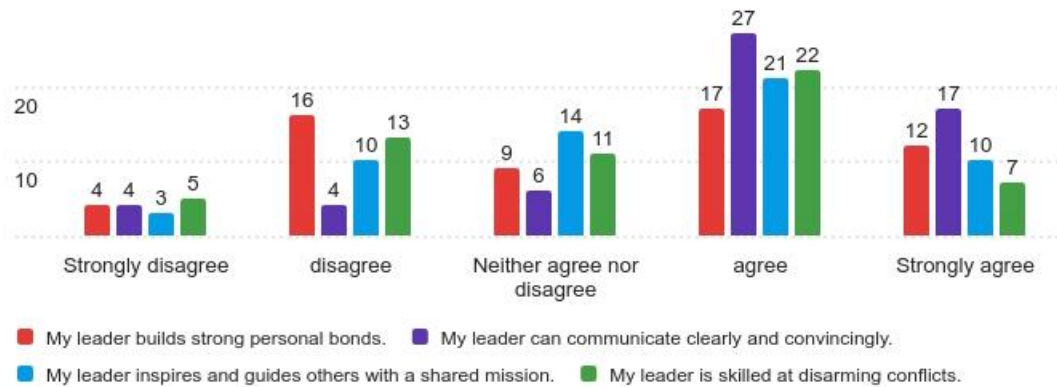


Figure 9. Relationship Management Ranking

In conclusion, the survey findings provided an overview of how employees perceive their leader's emotional intelligence in the four domains: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship management, and the impact on employees. Most leaders in this department were perceived by their employees to have a strong sense of self-worth, the ability to take risks, and a solid understanding of office politics and university values. Areas of concern identified included a lack of honesty and integrity, inability to recognize emotions and their effect on performance, unawareness of how their emotions impact others, inability to control disruptive emotions, inability to sense others' feelings, a lack of interest in others' concerns, and the inability to create bonds and communicate clearly. Leaders in this department would benefit from targeted professional development training to improve their emotional intelligence competencies.

Employee Interviews

Select survey Participants (19) were invited to participate in the interview portion of the study; of those, 14 agreed to participate. The 14 participants signed a separate informed consent, and interviews were scheduled using Zoom. The interview sample included six current and eight former employees, with 29% male and 71% female representation. The interview questions were developed by Parker (2019) and slightly modified to incorporate retention questions rather than performance questions, aligning with the theoretical model for the study. Expanding upon the assessment questions, the interview questions aimed to gain additional insights into how staff members view their leader's emotional intelligence in the emotional intelligence model's four domains of relationship management, social awareness, self-management, and self-awareness, in addition to the effect of the leader's actions on job satisfaction and retention.

The initial question in each domain was a yes or no question followed by open-ended questions to allow participants to share their experiences. The participants did not know which questions belonged to which emotional intelligence domain. The interviews lasted between 26–72 minutes. The researcher recorded each interview using Zoom. To ensure accuracy against the video recording, the researcher transcribed and reviewed interviews several times to ensure data accuracy. Once transcribed, the transcriptions were sent to participants for member checking, helping to establish credibility (Anney, 2014). Per the informed consent form, if a participant did not respond within one week, it

was assumed that the transcription was accurate and approved. After member checking was complete, the interviews were coded, and a codebook was created to collect responses and identify common responses, allowing themes to emerge. Table 2 below summarizes the specifics of the interviews.

Table 2. Participant Interviews

Participant	Interview Date	Interview Duration (min)	Pages of Data (single-spaced)
Participant #1	5/10/24	41	4
Participant #2	5/14/24	71	6
Participant #3	5/15/24	26	4
Participant #4	5/14/24	41	4
Participant #5	5/15/24	58	6
Participant #6	5/14/24	38	6
Participant #7	5/10/24	32	4
Participant #8	5/21/24	46	4
Participant #9	5/31/24	54	6
Participant #10	5/10/24	60	6
Participant #11	5/8/24	58	4
Participant #12	5/15/24	64	5
Participant #13	5/26/24	72	8
Participant #14	5/14/24	56	7

Participants' interview durations varied, as shown in Table 2. The transcribed pages only included the interview questions and responses; all other information was removed to shorten the pages for easier readability while evaluating data. In addition, some of the exchanges were conversational and not kept as part of the transcript, explaining the variations in times and number of

transcribed pages among participants. The participants understood the questions and generally stayed on topic throughout the interview. The data collection process took about one month to complete.

Participants 2, 3, and 10 perceived their leader(s) to have high emotional intelligence, significantly contributing to their desire to stay employed and grow within the department. All employees highlighted their leader's ability to create a positive, supportive, collaborative work environment. Participant 9 shared mixed feelings and experiences about their leader. They have seen both strengths and weaknesses in their leader's emotional intelligence and are not currently seeking other employment. However, they are taking advantage of the opportunities to learn and grow. However, they keep their eyes open for job postings due to their leader's unpredictable emotional behavior. In contrast, Participants 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13, and 14 perceived their leaders to have low emotional intelligence. Eight of the 10 stated they left the department explicitly because of their leader and the toxic work environment.

Self-Awareness

According to Goleman et al. (2002), self-awareness involves understanding one's emotions, strengths, limitations, motivations, values, and goals and intuitively informing judgments. The domain's three competencies are emotional self-awareness, accurate self-assessment, and self-confidence. Participants were asked to assess their leader's self-awareness by answering a series of questions.

Recognition of Emotionally Driven Behavior. The first question asked, “Does your leader recognize their own emotionally driven behavior and the potential impact on your feelings and behavior?” Nine of 14 participants (64%) answered *No*, indicating a perceived lack of self-awareness among leaders. Participants shared their experiences, leading to negative feelings and decreased job satisfaction. Two participants (14%) had neutral feelings and shared mixed responses. The remaining 22% answered *Yes*, sharing positive experiences and feelings that contributed to a positive work environment and increased job satisfaction.

Impact on Job Satisfaction. When asked to “elaborate on whether their leader’s behavior, triggered by their emotions, had a positive or negative effect on their job satisfaction and desire to stay with the university,” 10 of the 14 participants (71%) stated their leader’s negatively impacted their job satisfaction. In comparison, three of 14 (21%) rated it positively, and one (7%) had mixed feelings depending on the situation. Participants identified several positive leadership behaviors, such as self-regulation, empathy, and social skills, in their leaders, who were perceived to have high emotional intelligence, contributing to a positive work environment. Those employees who perceived their leaders to have low emotional intelligence identified several toxic leadership behaviors, such as lack of empathy, self-awareness, and emotional regulation, which they felt contributed to what they considered a toxic work environment. As a result, eight of the 14 participants (57%) stated that their negative experience directly

influenced their decision to leave the department, suggesting many leaders in this department negatively impacted job satisfaction and retention due to their low emotional intelligence.

Self-Management

Goleman et al. (2002) define self-management as regulating actions, thoughts, and feelings in various situations. Self-management competencies include emotional self-control, transparency, adaptability, achievement, initiative, and the ability to convey optimism. Leaders with self-management emotional intelligence, or self-control, can restrain disruptive emotions, anger, and or impulses and react constructively in different situations, creating environments of trust and healthy relationships with employees.

Honesty and Integrity. Participants were asked, “Does your leader act with honesty and integrity (truthful, ethical, trustworthy) toward you”? If they answered Yes, they were then asked to share an experience when their leader exhibited an open, honest characteristic and an experience when they witnessed their leader acting with integrity. If No, they were asked to share an experience demonstrating why they believed their leader did not act honestly and actions that demonstrated that lack of integrity. Ten of 14 participants (71%) in this department answered No, suggesting a perception that the leaders do not act honestly and with integrity. Participants shared several examples where they felt their leaders exhibited a lack of honesty or integrity, such as accusatory statements, failed promises, false statements, unethical decision-making,

dishonesty, lack of transparency, and lack of confidentiality, which led to mistrust, a toxic work environment, and a desire to leave. Four participants (29%) shared opposite experiences, stating that their leaders were fair, equitable, and transparent, creating a positive work environment and a desire to stay in the department.

Exhibiting Emotions. When asked, “Have you personally experienced your leader exhibiting disruptive emotions toward you or others? If yes, did these emotions create an uneasy work environment? Did these emotions create thought or a desire to leave the university? If not, in what ways does your leader exhibit emotions that create a collaborative, friendly work environment? Exhibit emotions that create a safe place for open communication.” Eight of the 14 participants (57%) responded Yes, sharing examples such as shouting matches, passive aggression in meetings, employees crying, interrogative conversations, and an overall hostile work environment. The remaining six of the 14 participants (43%) had not experienced such behavior, describing their leaders as transparent, approachable, and collaborative, creating a positive work environment.

A follow-up question was asked, “How do/did your leader’s emotions affect your desire to stay with the university?” Fifty-seven percent of participants said they left the department due to the leader’s disruptive emotions, and 14% indicated they are seeking other employment or have looked for alternative employment due to these toxic leadership behaviors. In contrast, the remaining

29% expressed a desire to stay but indicated that if these toxic leadership behaviors were present among their leaders, it would impact their desire to stay.

Social Awareness

Goleman et al. (2002) define social awareness as the ability to notice others' emotions and read situations, understand how others are feeling, and accurately sense what others may think or feel using empathy. Social awareness competencies include empathy, organizational awareness, and service. Leaders with empathy and social awareness skills increase interpersonal understanding and create and maintain strong employee relationships.

Sensitivity to Employee Emotions. Participants were asked, "Does your leader sense or respond to your feelings? If yes, share an experience when your leader acknowledged your feelings or emotions. If no, share an experience when your leader did not realize your feelings or emotions. Or when you had expressed your feelings/emotions and your leader ignored them." Responses were mixed, with eight of 14 participants (57%) answering *No* and six of 14 participants (43%) answering *Yes*. Participants who felt their leaders were empathetic cited open-door policies and attentive listening. Participants who felt their leaders lacked empathy described being dismissed by their leader when sharing concerns, making them feel unsupported and not valued. The split response suggests a varied experience among the employees, which could provide valuable insight into how different leadership styles and levels of

emotional intelligence among the leaders impact employees differently in the same department.

A follow-up question was asked, "How does/did this affect your desire to stay employed at the university?" Nine of the 14 participants (64%) left or desired to leave due to negative experiences with their leader, particularly around trust and respect. Four of the 14 participants (29%) enjoyed working in the department and had no thoughts of leaving, while one participant (7%) had a neutral stance, stating that the environment did not increase their desire to stay but has not pushed them out yet.

Interest in Employee Concerns or Ideas. When asked, "Does your leader take an active interest in your concerns or ideas? If yes, share an experience when your leader openly considered your concerns or ideas. If no, does your leader not acknowledge your concerns or ideas even though you express them? Or does your leader not solicit your concerns or ideas?" The responses revealed a range of experiences, as four of 14 participants (29%) felt their concerns and/or ideas were valued. In comparison, five of 14 participants (36%) felt ignored or dismissed, and 36% (5 of 14) felt only certain aspects were considered while other concerns were ignored. Positive examples included leaders being open to employees' ideas, listening to concerns, and encouraging group discussions. Employees who answered No shared their ideas, which they stated were only considered if they matched those of the leaders.

A follow-up question was asked, “How does this affect your desire to stay employed at the university?” Responses were mixed. Eight of 14 participants (57%) stated that their leader’s lack of consideration made them want to leave the department, citing frustration and disengagement. In contrast, five of 14 participants (36%) stated that their leader’s openness positively influenced their desire to stay employed, contributing to feeling valued and supported. One employee (7%) shared neutral feelings, stating that their leader’s actions did not contribute to their desire to stay or push them to leave.

Relationship Management

Goleman et al. (2002) define relationship management as the ability to navigate one’s own emotions and those of others to manage social interactions effectively. Their seven relationship management competencies include influence, inspirational leadership, developing others, change catalyst, building bonds, conflict management, and teamwork/collaboration. Leaders skilled in relationship management create solid personal bonds, communicate clearly, inspire employees, and resolve conflicts effectively.

Effective Communication. Participants were asked, “Does your leader openly and effectively communicate with you? How so? Please share an example.” Participant responses varied, showing a range of feelings on the department leaders’ communication styles and effectiveness. A majority, eight of 14 participants (57%), felt their leader communicated openly, though the degree of effectiveness varied, while 43% (6 of 14) participants reported their leader’s

communication as ineffective and problematic. Effective communication was linked to a positive work environment and satisfied employees, while ineffective communication led to frustration and dissatisfaction within the department.

Personal Engagement. When asked, “Does your leader take an interest in you as a person? How so?” five of 14 (36%) reported that their leaders showed genuine interest in creating a supportive work environment, and eight of 14 (57%) reported their leader lacked personal engagement, leading to feelings of neglect and a desire to leave the department. One participant (7%) indicated they stayed to themselves and could not answer Yes or No. The leaders in the department who showed concern for their employees’ well-being created positive, trusting relationships, while those who failed to engage personally created environments where employees felt neglected and had the desire to leave.

Inspiration. When asked, “Does your leader inspire you? How so?” eight of 14 participants (54%) did not feel inspired by their leader. However, four of 14 (31%) did, and two of 14 (15%) had mixed feelings about their leader’s inspirational impact. Those who answered No provided examples of a personal disconnect between disingenuous and toxic leadership practices. Those who answered Yes said their leaders provided mentorship, supported professional growth, and set high standards without causing undue stress. Those who responded with mixed feelings indicated that their leader set a high bar, and their drive and work ethic inspired them; however, they created undue stress for their

employees. Participants felt that inspiring leaders were intelligent, used positive reinforcement, set high standards, and valued professional development. In contrast, leaders who failed to inspire employees lacked personal connections, showed toxic behaviors, and created stressful work environments.

Feeling Valued. When asked, “Does your leader make you feel valued? How so?” eight of 14 department employees (57%) felt undervalued by their leader, while six of 14 (43%) felt valued. Feeling valued was linked to employee recognition, support, and growth opportunities, increasing job satisfaction and retention. Employees who do not feel valued tend to be disengaged, resulting in lower job satisfaction and, ultimately, a departure from the institution. Feeling valued is critical for employee retention, impacting job satisfaction, motivation, and organizational commitment.

Retention

The following questions focus on employee retention, a critical factor influenced by leaders’ emotional intelligence, as Goleman et al. (2002) suggest. The employee responses provided insight into how a leader’s actions and behavior impact employee retention.

Opportunities for Growth. The first question asked, “In what ways has your leader allowed/given opportunities for you to learn and grow?” Most participants agreed on the support provided by their leaders. Specifically, ten of the 14 participants (71%) indicated their leader strongly supported employee professional development opportunities and provided opportunities for their

employees to learn and grow in the department. Citing several examples, such as learning new skills, leading projects, temporary reassignments, and attending professional conferences. However, four of 14 (29%) did not feel their leader provided growth opportunities, attributing this absence to the immediate demands of the job or a lack of opportunity altogether.

Understanding Expectations. Participants were asked, “Do you understand what your leader expects of you? How or Why not?” The question sought communication consistency and clarity among the department leaders, a crucial emotional intelligence competency. More than half of the participants, eight of 14 (57%), stated they understood their leader’s expectations through clear guidance in staff meetings, job descriptions, or direct communication. However, two participants (14%) felt their leader failed to communicate clearly, and the employees did not understand what was expected of them, and four of 14 participants (29%) had mixed responses, pointing to inconsistent communication and a lack of training.

Perception of Work Value. Participants were asked about feeling valued: “Do you feel your daily work is valuable/important?” Their responses reflect the emotional impact of their leader’s behavior and actions on an employee’s sense of self-worth and job satisfaction. Eight of 14 participants (57%) felt their work was valuable, while three of 14 (21%) did not, and three of 14 (21%) had mixed feelings. Employees who valued their work referenced its impact on others, even without feedback from their leader. In contrast, employees who shared mixed or

negative responses linked their feelings to the toxic work environment, stating that the work environment overshadowed the importance of their work.

Impact of Leadership on Job Satisfaction. The next question, “Have you ever experienced a situation where a leader’s actions negatively or positively affected your job satisfaction or desire to stay with the university?” highlights leadership’s direct impact on employee retention. Half of the participants, seven of 14, reported negative experiences, diminishing job satisfaction, and the desire to stay in the department. In comparison, three of 14 employees (21%) expressed mixed feelings, and the remaining four of 14 (29%) felt their leaders created a supportive environment that encouraged their desire to stay in the department.

Leadership’s Contribution to a Positive Work Environment. Exploring retention further, employees were asked, “Does your leader’s behavior and communication style contribute to creating a positive work environment?” The participants’ responses were divided, with seven of 14 employees (50%) stating they observed leadership behaviors that created a hostile work environment. The participants shared examples of top-down leadership and one-way communication, citing that their leaders created hostile/toxic work environments. In contrast, four of 14 participants (29%) stated that their leaders created positive work environments by communicating clearly and fostering trust, while the remaining three of 14 (21%) had mixed feelings.

Effective in Retaining Employees. The question, “In what ways does your leader exhibit specific traits of behaviors that you believe are effective in retaining team members?” further explored the relationship between leadership behavior and employee retention. The responses revealed a divided perception, with eight of 14 (57%) viewing their leader as ineffective in retaining employees due to a lack of support, transparency, and favoritism, which created a toxic work environment. Meanwhile, four of 14 participants (29%) found their leaders effective in retaining employees, citing strengths in open communication, collaboration, and support for professional development. The remaining two of 14 (14%) had mixed feelings, stating they were gaining skills for a resume but looking for other opportunities.

Encouragement or Discouragement to Stay. Building on this, participants were asked, “How has your leader encouraged or discouraged your desire to stay employed at the university?” The responses emphasized leaders’ critical role in strengthening or weakening employee commitment. Of the participants, three of 14 (21%) felt their leader’s behaviors encouraged their desire to stay, citing reasons such as professional development support, decision-making inclusion, and a positive work environment. On the other hand, 11 of 14 participants (79%) felt discouraged, attributing this feeling to poor communication, lack of employee recognition, dispassionate leadership, and a toxic work environment.

Leaving a Job Due to Leadership. The final question in this section, “Have you ever left a job because of your leader? If so, could you elaborate on that experience?” ties together the themes explored in previous questions. A majority, 13 of 14 participants (93%), reported leaving a job due to negative experiences with their leader, with eight of 14 (57%) leaving this specific department due to toxic leadership behaviors. Participants shared several toxic behaviors of their leaders that contributed to their desire to leave the department, such as feeling unrecognized and unsupported, a lack of trust, unethical leadership practices, being micromanaged, dismissing ideas or concerns, and an overall toxic work environment.

Summary

The findings from the employee interviews suggest that many of the leaders in this department struggle with self-awareness, particularly in recognizing their own emotionally driven behaviors and understanding their impact on employees. A large number of employees perceived their leaders as dishonest and lacking integrity. More than half of the employees reported experiencing or witnessing their leader exhibiting disruptive emotions toward them or their colleagues. Similarly, over half of the employees felt their leaders lacked personal engagement, and just under half felt their communication was ineffective. Finally, more than half of the employees felt undervalued and uninspired by their leaders in the department. The leader’s lack of emotional

intelligence created a toxic work environment, with general employee dissatisfaction and high employee turnover.

Though several areas need improvement, the responses indicate certain critical strengths in emotional intelligence among leaders in the department. Many employees shared how they appreciated the support for professional development training opportunities provided by their leaders and opportunities to grow and learn new duties within the department. A smaller group of leaders were recognized as having strong self-regulation, empathy, and social skills. These leaders contributed to a positive work environment, creating environments of trust and collaboration. Although there were some strengths among the leadership, particularly in supporting professional development, many of the employees' negative experiences overshadowed the positive ones. Creating professional development opportunities for leaders that focus on emotional intelligence competencies will increase job satisfaction and employee retention and foster a more positive work environment in the department.

Themes

As Saldaña (2016, p. 199) explains, “a theme captures and unifies the nature or basis of the experience into a meaningful whole.” During the analysis, the researcher discovered several responses to similar leadership actions and behaviors during the coding process, causing themes to emerge. Braun and Clarke (2006) state that a theme represents significant information in the data relevant to the study questions. A concept is more likely to be a “theme in a text if

it appears more than once” (Bernard et al., 2017, p. 105). The initial review of the data involved notetaking during the interview, reviewing and transcribing the recordings, highlighting keywords and or phrases, and organizing the responses under the appropriate emotional intelligence domain. The researcher summarized the final list of codes, resulting in three themes for the second analysis cycle: Positive Leadership Behaviors, Toxic Leadership Behaviors, and Negative Impacts on Employees (see Table 3 and Table 4) and categorized them according to their alignment with the two research questions: 1) What specific behaviors or actions of these leaders are identified by employees as indicative of high or low emotional intelligence; 2) How does a leader’s emotional intelligence impact employee retention? Both descriptive and interpretive analyses were used to analyze the themes. Table 3 below represents the codebook and the themes identified for the two research questions.

Table 3. Themes and Codes Research Question 1

RQ1 What specific behaviors or actions of these leaders are identified by employees as indicative of high or low emotional intelligence?	
Theme	Codes
Positive Leadership Behaviors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • inspires me • mentor • supports professional development • understanding • works with employees • no favorites • open door policy • open communication • has my back • cares • thoughtful • supportive • empathetic • fair • equitable • transparent • trust in me

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • collaborative • listens to my concerns/ideas • listens attentively • controlling emotions/high-stress • calm • non-reactive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • trust in the leader • feel valued • feel seen • receive credit for my work • positive impact • professionalism
<p style="text-align: center;">Toxic Leadership Behaviors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • dictator • their way is the only way • micromanager • lack of trust • lack of support • lack of action • increased workload • poor communication • does not listen • miscommunication • speaks negatively about employees to other employees • not confidential • reward staff to tattletale • encouraged to report others • toxic culture • toxic work environment • hostile environment • once they felt you crossed them, there was no coming back • only pointed out errors • focused on negative • pushed out • desire to leave • no other choice but to leave • forced to leave 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • bully • aggressive • interrogate • harass • passive-aggressive, accusatory • belittled • wanted to embarrass me • made me feel stupid • negative emotional manipulation • negative emotional response • lack of emotional awareness • shut down • quit trying • accepts resignation happily • does not care about personal life • does not consider health issues • doesn't care about your family life • not transparent • lack of empathy • lack of integrity • unethical behavior

Table 4. Themes and Codes Research Question 2

RQ2 How does a leader's emotional intelligence impact employee retention?	
Theme	Codes
Negative Impacts on Employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • turnover • desire to leave • forced to leave • no choice but to leave • resigned • I left • Conflict • hr involvement • mental health • PTSD • Traumatic • in tears • crying • emotional breakdown • self-doubt ability • lack of confidence

The themes captured the negative and positive emotional intelligence leadership competencies of six department leaders as perceived by employees. Using these themes, the researcher examined the effects of various leadership practices on workplace culture and employee retention.

Positive Leadership Behaviors

Research Question #1: What specific behaviors or actions of these leaders are identified by employees as indicative of high or low emotional intelligence?

Participants in this study identified several critical behaviors and actions demonstrated by their leaders that indicate high emotional intelligence. They suggested that these behaviors contributed to a positive and supportive work environment, increasing job satisfaction and employee retention.

Self- Awareness

Participants in this study shared their lived experiences demonstrating the positive impact of their leaders' self-awareness on creating a supportive work environment and their desire to stay employed within the department. According to Goleman et al. (2002), self-awareness involves understanding one's emotions, strengths, limitations, motivations, values, and goals and intuitively informing judgments.

Participants were asked whether their leaders recognized their emotionally driven behaviors and their potential impact on their feelings and behavior. Participant 2 praised their leader for remaining composed, professional, and calm during high-intensity meetings, illustrating emotional self-awareness and self-regulation:

I have seen my supervisor in some very high, intense meetings where they have been very composed. I can't even put it into words the way I was in awe at how it was handled. Just the professionalism, the calmness, the assurity to myself, and even the people in the meeting that like they really just had this under control.

This example demonstrated the leader's ability to manage their emotions under pressure effectively. This emotionally intelligent leadership behavior positively impacted the participant's perception of their leader and provided a positive example of navigating difficult situations.

Another participant shared an example of their leaders' composure and professionalism. Participant 3 shared how their leader's thoughtful communication and emotional control in different situations contributed to a positive work environment in the department. Participant 3 shared,

I would say, my current leader, you can tell in meetings and emails that they are pretty thoughtful with their words and how they say things not to offend people but also to make sure that the point gets across as it should. I don't think they are that emotional regarding work or do not display it. I've had leaders before that are easily stressed, and it trickles down to the staff. But in my personal opinion, I think they manage their emotions well with regard to work and assignments and everything, and it doesn't have a negative impact because of that.

This leader's ability to remain calm and thoughtful in meetings and emails reflects high self-awareness and empathy, which are components of emotional intelligence that contribute to a positive work environment and prevent stress from negatively impacting staff.

Participant 10 shared examples of when they observed their leader's calm demeanor and non-reactive approach during intense situations, aligning with Goleman's concept of self-regulation:

I would say when presented with a or when confronted with a situation where, like, maybe other employees were getting a little antsy, or maybe argumentative. I saw how my leader took things in a calm manner instead

of getting reactive. They, kind of, you know, observe. They actively took a step back and then approached it as a normal conversation instead of getting worked up themselves, which made me think that I wanted to mirror that type of behavior.

This leader utilized self-regulation and social modeling, two of Goleman's emotional intelligence competencies. The leader's ability to remain calm and resolve conflict effectively showed team members that they controlled the situation.

Self-awareness emerged as a skill set among some department leaders, with employees sharing that their leaders could remain composed and professional under pressure. These examples demonstrate how self-aware leaders contribute to a supportive and collaborative work environment, increasing employees' job satisfaction and desire to stay in the department. Some leaders in this department were perceived by their employees as having high self-awareness. Leaders with self-awareness exhibit calm and controlled emotional responses in challenging situations and positively impact their teams.

Self- Management

Participants were asked to provide examples of how their leaders demonstrated self-management through honesty, integrity, and ethical behavior and how these behaviors or actions contributed to their job satisfaction.

According to Goleman et al. (2002), self-management in emotional intelligence involves regulating one's actions, thoughts, and feelings across different

situations, with competencies such as emotional self-control, transparency, adaptability, achievement, initiative, and optimism.

Participant 3 shared how their leader was fair and treated all team members equally, sharing examples of consistent policy and procedure application.

The simplest example of integrity would be attendance and punctuality.

When there are issues with lateness, they make it a point to address them fairly and flexibly, ensuring that everyone is treated equally. They are also very protective of job duties and position descriptions, making sure that no one is working outside their classification. This fairness and adherence to policy show their commitment to honesty and integrity.

The employees appreciated their leader's dedication to ethical standards and fairness, which applied equally to all employees, highlighting the leader's self-management skills. Similarly, Participant 9 shared examples of their leader's integrity through transparency and advocacy for the team.

During our one-to-ones, I've noticed a strong sense of transparency from my leader, which I didn't experience at previous jobs. For example, when another department excluded me from important discussions, my leader advocated for my inclusion, acknowledging my expertise and ensuring that decisions aligned with policy. This willingness to admit limitations and advocate for team members reflects a high level of integrity.

The leader's ability to recognize their limitations and advocate for inclusiveness demonstrates strong self-management competencies in transparency and adaptability, creating an environment of trust in the department.

In addition to these examples, Participant 10 highlighted their leader's ability to manage conflict while complying with ethical standards.

Just yesterday, a team member wanted to expedite a task, but the manager saw the risk of breaking university rules. Instead of giving in to the pressure, the manager openly communicated the risks and suggested postponing the task. They were honest about the potential consequences and maintained their commitment to ethical standards, demonstrating both honesty and integrity.

This leader demonstrated self-management through moral decision-making and open communication about the rules by choosing to handle any risks and to speak honestly about them. The leader exhibited emotional self-control and transparency competencies, which are crucial for leaders to create healthy, productive work environments.

Participants were asked to share whether they had witnessed their leader exhibit disruptive emotions toward them or others. Several participants answered *No* and were asked to share experiences where they saw their leader effectively manage their emotions, creating a collaborative and supportive work environment, encouraging open communication, and creating a friendly work environment. Participant 2 shared an example of their leader's supportive

leadership style, which they attributed to creating a collaborative and supportive work environment:

I haven't experienced any disruptive emotions from my supervisor.

Instead, they maintain an open-door policy, encouraging us to discuss any issues or personal concerns. This openness shows that we are valued and supported, whether dealing with work-related or personal matters.

The assurance of having a space to express our feelings fosters a collaborative and safe environment.

This leader's open-door policy style demonstrates effective self-management for creating a transparent and friendly work environment for all employees.

Participant 3 shared a similar example and elaborated on how their leader created a space for respectful communication and a collaborative work environment, contributing to a positive work culture:

My leader fosters a collaborative work environment by encouraging meetings and open discussions among team members. Even though the office can get noisy at times, they remind us to be mindful of others, which helps maintain a friendly atmosphere. Their transparency in meetings, where they address difficult questions openly, also contributes to a supportive environment.

The leader's ability to manage their emotional expressions to facilitate respectful and inclusive communication aligns with Goleman's descriptions of effective self-management in leadership, creating a supportive and engaging workplace.

In contrast, Participant 9 shared how some leadership decisions led to mixed feelings among their team members, even if the leader intended to create a positive environment. This example highlights the complexities of decision-making without emotional disruption.

I haven't seen my leader exhibit disruptive emotions. They strive to make decisions that align with team interests and explain their rationale clearly. However, sometimes, decisions are not well-received, which can affect the perception of a friendly work environment. Despite this, I feel comfortable sharing my thoughts and concerns with my leader.

This narrative demonstrates the leader's self-management in maintaining composure and clarity in communication during contentious decisions, highlighting the importance of emotional intelligence in leadership, as proposed by Goleman.

Lastly, Participant 10 reflected on how their leader's calm and composed leadership style created a peaceful work environment:

I haven't experienced disruptive emotions from my leader. They remain calm and composed, which creates a peaceful and professional environment. This demeanor is valuable and makes me grateful to work in such a tranquil setting. I aspire to exhibit similar self-management qualities in my future career.

The calmness and composure described here show the leader's ability to control emotions, a significant aspect of Goleman's emotional intelligence that enhances workplace tranquility and employee satisfaction.

These findings suggest that leaders who demonstrate self-management competencies such as emotional self-control, open communication, and collaboration positively impact employee satisfaction and the work environment, ultimately impacting retention. Participants perceived leaders with high levels of self-management as fair, transparent, and trustworthy. These positive traits align with Goleman's self-management competencies, suggesting that leaders who exhibit these qualities contribute to a more positive work environment, higher employee satisfaction, and employee retention.

Social Awareness

As Goleman et al. (2002) defined, social awareness involves accurately sensing others' emotions, reading situations, and empathizing with critical skills required to manage interpersonal relationships effectively and understand team dynamics.

Participants were asked if their leaders sensed and responded to their emotions and, if so, to share an experience of their leader acknowledging their feelings or emotions and demonstrating these competencies. Participant 2 recalled an instance highlighting their leader's empathy and responsiveness when they asked to speak with them about a move request.

I expressed my mixed emotions about having to move from a workspace I had fought hard to get. Despite the supervisor being extremely busy, they listened warmly and offered an explanation for the move. This openness and the opportunity to express my feelings helped me feel better about the situation.

The leader shows effective social awareness competencies by actively listening and empathizing with the employee. In doing so, the employees felt the leader valued their concerns and feelings.

Participant 3 shared a personal experience when their leader approached a personal health-related issue with empathy and support:

During a period of health challenges that required me to be out of work, my leader acknowledged my situation and reassured me that health comes first. They were supportive and understanding, which eased my stress about balancing health with work responsibilities.

This leader's sensitivity to personal challenges is an essential quality of social awareness that directly impacts employee satisfaction and retention by making employees feel cared for personally by their leaders.

Participant 9 shared an example of how their leader's ability to respond to emotional cues helped manage work-related stress:

When I expressed frustration about not meeting a deadline due to other tasks, my leader reassured me that it was okay. They took time to discuss the issue with me, emphasizing that my contributions were valued and not

to worry about the delay. This acknowledgment of my feelings was appreciated.

The leader's understanding and supportive feedback during periods of high stress demonstrated their social awareness, particularly their ability to empathize and maintain positive morale within the team.

Finally, Participant 10 shared an example of how their leader effectively responded to a personal and sensitive issue:

I approached my manager about a concern that made me feel unsafe. They sensed my seriousness and listened attentively, offering multiple potential solutions. This considerate approach made me feel heard and safe, demonstrating their ability to manage emotional discussions effectively.

The leader's ability to listen attentively and let the employee share provided security and reassurance to the employee, highlighting the leader's high social awareness. This leader created an environment of trust and safety within the work environment through their ability to listen, show support, and provide thoughtful responses to a sensitive issue. The employees felt heard and left with several solutions to consider, which they appreciated.

Further exploring the importance of social awareness, participants were asked whether their leaders took an active interest in their concerns or ideas and, if Yes, to share their experiences related to how their leaders considered their ideas and concerns. Participant 2 noted the inclusivity fostered through regular

interactions: “We have at least a meeting or two a month on our different programs... If I offer a suggestion or come in with some marketing ideas, they are totally received.” Similarly, Participant 3 highlighted their leader’s openness to employee input: “Anytime we ask for something to be added to an agenda item to a meeting, they are all for it.” These employees shared examples of how their leader’s social awareness competencies created a collaborative, inclusive work environment.

In summary, the findings suggest that employees who perceived their leaders to demonstrate high social awareness through empathy, organizational awareness, and effective relationship management significantly enhance employee satisfaction and retention. These leaders are attentive and considerate of employee concerns, encouraging open communication and contributing to an inclusive and supportive work environment. These leaders create environments where employees feel valued, listened to, and understood, which aligns with Goleman’s research emphasizing the importance of social awareness competencies for effective leadership.

Relationship Management

The findings highlight the critical role of relationship management in effective leadership, as defined by Goleman et al. (2002) as the ability to manage interactions by leveraging one’s own emotions and those of others.

Competencies such as influence, inspirational leadership, the development of others, being a change catalyst, building bonds, managing conflicts, and

teamwork and collaboration are leadership skills essential to create positive working environments and increase job satisfaction and retention.

Participants were asked whether their leaders openly and effectively communicate with them and to share an example. Participant 2 shared their leader's multifaceted communication approaches: "They communicate in multiple ways. A lot of times, it's through email. A lot of times, it's face-to-face. In meetings, we also communicate through teams, so there's always open communication." This leader's transparent and collaborative communication style created a positive work environment through consistent and clear communication.

Building on this, Participants 4 and 14 highlighted their leaders' effectiveness in personal interactions: "There would be times we had a lot of one-on-ones, so they made sure that they met with everybody," creating personal connections and addressing concerns directly. Such one-on-one meetings demonstrate the competencies of developing others and building bonds, critical to managing relationships by providing personalized attention and support. Participant 5 shared how direct communication established clear expectations: "The leader certainly did highlight instances where expectations were not being met... It was very clear and effective." Setting clear expectations is a fundamental aspect of inspirational leadership and conflict management, ensuring that all team members are aligned and aware of their roles, thus

minimizing misunderstandings and promoting a collaborative and happy work environment.

Lastly, Participant 8 noted their leader's proactive approach, showing their leader knew when and where to support their team: "They would step in with department leaders when they needed to move the direction forward." This leader knew when to step in and support their employees to complete projects and effectively communicate to meet the institution's goals.

Participants were asked if their leader took an active interest in them as a person, essential for building and developing relationships. Several participants shared experiences of when their leader took an active interest in them as a person. Participant 9 felt a personal connection through the simple gestures of their leader checking in on them: "I think checking in asking about like weekend plans... acknowledging me as a person on top of being a subordinate and employee." Leaders who show genuine concern for their employees' well-being create positive and trusting relationships, increasing job satisfaction and retention.

Participant 11 appreciated their leader's support for personal and professional growth opportunities: "They did support my academic interests by helping to fund a scholarship for training." Investing in employees' growth shows a leader's commitment to their team's personal and professional development, enhancing feelings of value and loyalty. Lastly, **Participant 2** shared an example of how they felt their leader showed a genuine concern for their well-being, "when

I do go to my supervisor, or I'm asking to leave early or take a day off... My supervisor is always very supportive, and never any negative response or feedback." Leaders who show interest in the personal aspects of employees create feelings of support and a caring work environment.

The next question explored whether participants felt inspired by their leaders. Participant 2 shared their admiration for their leader and excitement for potential learning opportunities they felt their leader could provide: "I am hoping to learn a lot from my supervisor. I feel like they are very smart... I feel I can learn a ton from them." This leader is viewed as a supervisor and mentor to the employee to facilitate professional growth.

Participant 10 was inspired by their leader's ability to balance personal and professional responsibilities: "They got their degree while raising a family... it makes me feel like, even though I have a lot on my plate, I can still get the hard stuff done." This leader's accomplishments inspired employees in the department to pursue their own goals and push through challenges, demonstrating a leader's life story's profound impact on an employee's ambition and self-perception. Leaders who connect with their employees personally and professionally can significantly enhance job satisfaction and motivation.

Lastly, making employees feel valued is crucial to maintaining a motivated workforce. Participants were asked if their leaders made them feel valued, and several employees shared examples. Participant 2 noted, "I feel like the things that I say. The actions that I take are valued... my supervisor totally sees the

value in me... they have even actually told me so.” Recognizing and acknowledging employees’ contributions relates directly to Goleman’s influence and inspirational leadership competencies, reinforcing their sense of worth and engagement at work.

Similarly, Participant 12 felt valued when trusted with special projects and increased responsibility: “When the marketing manager left, they gave me that department... I felt like they were confident in me.” This trust demonstrates how giving employees more responsibility can make them feel more valuable.

Participant 9 shared an experience of when they felt valued through indirect acknowledgment: “I’ll come across like a new policy... even though maybe I’m not credited for something... there’s the idea of like, okay? Well. It’s bigger than me. But I had a part in it.” This highlights how recognizing employee contributions, even subtly, can reinforce feelings of value.

Participant 3 emphasized the importance of regular connections with their leader in meetings, evaluations, and feedback, contributing to their feeling valued: “When we do have our one-on-ones... they definitely made it known that they value me as an employee.” Open communication and feedback from the leader contribute to employees feeling valued and appreciated for their work. Lastly, Participant 10 recalled a moment of casual recognition that made them feel valued: “They said, ‘Hey, that’s what you get for doing a good job...’ and then started laughing.” This light-hearted acknowledgment contributed to the employee feeling their work was valued by their leader.

In conclusion, findings suggest that leaders skilled in relationship management competencies, as described by Goleman, enhance communication, resolve conflict, and develop deep personal relationships that inspire and motivate their employees. This holistic leadership approach, rooted in emotional intelligence, creates a work environment where employees feel supported and valued, raising job satisfaction and reducing turnover.

Retention

The final interview questions focused on retention, a fundamental characteristic shaped by leaders' emotional intelligence, as Goleman et al. (2002) suggested. Participants discussed how their leaders have facilitated their professional development, a critical factor in their decisions to stay within the organization. They were asked in what ways their leader had given them opportunities to learn and grow. This was an area of strength among the department leaders, as several participants cited that they felt their leaders supported professional development.

Five participants highlighted their leaders' role in supporting their professional growth. For example, Participant 2 shared, "I have been able to attend multiple substantial learning events that have helped me to grow in the position... always given the opportunity to grow." Similarly, Participant 3 shared that their leader "emailed opportunities for conferences that I probably wouldn't have looked into and asked if I was interested in attending specifically for

growth.” Employees appreciated their leader’s commitment to employee professional development in the department.

Participant 6 shared an early career experience, “Right when I first started, they sent me to a big conference and continued to provide opportunities for growth outside my job duties.” This leader’s ongoing support for developing their employees reflects their commitment to long-term employee development, which helps retain employees. Participant 9 described their progression of responsibilities in the department, “When I started, I would be a participant in meetings... now, I do find myself leading.” Lastly, Participant 14 appreciated the leadership support for professional development, stating, “There were lots of opportunities... I participated in the NAFSA Academy... they were very supportive of that.” The leaders’ support for professional development in the department is critical for employee growth and helps align and develop new skills to meet organizational needs.

Other participants reference opportunities to learn and grow through mentoring and increased responsibilities. Participant 8 described growth through observation and interaction, “The main opportunities to grow and learn were when we had meetings with other leaders... I was able to see how my boss interacted and answered certain questions.” Providing employees the opportunity to participate in meetings and conversations and exposing them to high-level decision-making processes demonstrates the leader’s influence in shaping a supportive environment focused on employee growth. Participant 10 shared an

example of a practical learning experience: “I asked for permission to do an advertisement ... they said, ‘Yeah, we can try it.’” The leader’s willingness to let an employee take on a new task and learn demonstrates their trust and support in their employee’s capabilities and ideas.

Encouragement and support for personal development are also critical to professional development. Participant 11 shared an experience when their leader supported their academic goals: “They called me in their office and identified a professional development award that I should apply for, and they helped support and further my academic goals.” Most employees felt the leaders in this department valued professional development and provided them with opportunities to grow, including conferences, experiential learning, and support for personal academic goals. These opportunities all contributed to employee growth and engagement.

The next question explored whether participants understood their leader’s expectations. Several participants mentioned clear job descriptions and regular reviews that helped them understand their roles. Participant 7 stated, “I felt like I understood the expectations of my job because it was in my position description.” Participant 10 noted, “I do have my position description, and we had our employee reviews, so that made it clearer about what I’m expected to do.” Participants 12 and 14 referenced regular meetings as helpful in understanding expectations. Employees reflected on regular feedback, employee reviews, and

clear job descriptions, which were ways that employees in this department understood their roles and expectations of the job.

The next question explored if employees felt their work was valuable or important. Participant 4 connected the importance of their work to its impact, stating, “Yes. I did. Just because of the gravity of how it affects the students on a daily basis.” Participants 3 and 6 responded simply, “Yes.” Participant 10 provided a practical rationale, explaining, “I’d say ‘yes,’ because a simple answer is that answering phones and emails the way I do captures revenue.” Participant 11 emphasized the critical nature of their role, saying, “I did feel that it was valuable and important... it was critically important that we ran a great program.” Lastly, Participant 12 highlighted their motivation derived from alignment with the organization’s mission, “I felt that it was valuable and important because of the mission of the university.” These employees recognized their work and the impact of the work across various roles and responsibilities.

Participants shared how those leaders who foster a supportive, trusting, and engaging work environment enhance job satisfaction and encourage long-term commitment. The next question asked participants to share an experience where their leader’s actions positively affected their job satisfaction and desire to stay in the department. Participant 2 highlighted how their leaders’ communication styles and behavior positively affected their daily work experience and overall job satisfaction. Participant 3 shared that their leader is “not really a

micro-manager, and it seems like a lot of people thrive in our department by being trusted to do their jobs.”

Building on this, Participant 6 reflected on their experiences, saying, “The opportunity they give me, I feel like, maybe at other universities I wouldn’t have gotten those opportunities, especially as early as I did starting, so that really made me want to stay because I felt like I saw a lot of growth here.” Similarly, Participant 9 shared how acknowledgment from their leader positively influenced their job satisfaction,

In terms of positively affecting job satisfaction based on their actions, like oftentimes there are situations where If I’m called into a meeting that I wasn’t initially a part of because there is that acknowledgment like, you know, I’m glad you guys included me but really, let me get my employee to be part of this because they’re the one with that knowledge that is needed.

These examples highlight how leaders who provide their employees opportunities for growth contribute to an employee’s desire to stay.

The next question explored how a leader’s behavior and communication style contributed to creating a positive work environment. Participant 3 shared the positive impact of their leader’s communication style, saying that their leader was “not really a micro-manager.” Similarly, Participant 9 stated, “I think my leader’s behavior and communication style creates a positive work environment.” Participants 10 and 2 answered, “Yes.”

Participants were asked what traits or behaviors in leaders influenced retaining employees. Participant 2 highlighted an open-door policy and positive feedback as effective ways for their leaders to retain employees: “The open-door policy is one way to show the team that you can always come to me. Also, the positive feedback I receive from my supervisor is one of the top reasons I will stay in the organization.” On creating an environment of support where employees feel valued, Participant 4 also stated, “They were willing to work with you, to get you into different things. Harboring employee advancement was fantastic.” Leaders committed to professional development positively influenced employees’ desire to stay employed in this department. Similarly, Participant 6 appreciated their leader’s trust and support. “The faith or trust they have to give me things, opportunities, or manage programs has been effective in retaining me.”

Building on the support theme, Participant 3 described their leader’s commitment to listening and problem-solving. “Always open to listen or solve whatever problems we have as a group to see what solutions we can come up with and make sure it’s the best solution for everyone.” The leader’s engagement makes employees feel heard, which supports retention. Participant 9 described their leader’s ability to be transparent and control their emotions, stating, “The efforts to be transparent and to control and share emotions are valuable. Taking a neutral stance during disagreements helps in moments of conflict.” These

interviews highlighted that leaders who created environments where employees felt heard and valued were essential to employees.

Next, participants were asked how their leaders encouraged their desire to stay employed at the university. Participant 2 stated, “My supervisor has encouraged me to stay through their actions and the overall vibe they create. The feeling of being cared for and the opportunity to grow personally and professionally has made me want to stay.” Similarly, Participant 3 shared how their leader supported career growth: “Being allowed to shadow higher level positions and learn more about their role has encouraged me to stay.” The leaders who support and provide professional development opportunities create positive work environments that effectively retain employees. Participant 4 described how expanding learning opportunities “encouraged me by involving me in different areas and processes. Although the long-term advancement prospects were not immediate, the effort to broaden my experience was appreciated.” They indicated that this effort contributed positively to their desire to stay.

For theme one, Positive Leadership Behaviors, the findings suggest that leaders with high emotional intelligence significantly impact employee job satisfaction and retention. Based on the interviews, participants highlighted several behaviors that align with Goleman’s emotional intelligence model, particularly self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. Leaders demonstrating these emotional intelligence competencies foster a positive work environment, ultimately reducing turnover.

In conclusion, leaders in this department, whose employees are perceived to have high emotional intelligence through self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management, created a positive work environment with increased employee satisfaction and a desire to stay employed in the department. The findings strongly suggest that leadership training to develop and improve emotional intelligence competencies should be a priority for universities. In addition, all leaders should be required to undergo ongoing emotional intelligence training so that they can continue developing and improving their emotional intelligence competencies.

Toxic Leadership Behaviors

Participants in this study shared several toxic leadership behaviors and actions demonstrated by their leaders that indicated low emotional intelligence, sharing examples of how these behaviors and actions created a toxic work environment, resulting in dissatisfied employees and high turnover.

Self- Awareness

Goleman et al. (2002) define self-awareness as the ability to recognize and understand one's own emotions, strengths, limitations, motivations, values, and goals and how these elements intuitively inform judgments and actions. According to Goleman's model, self-awareness encompasses emotional self-awareness, accurate self-assessment, and self-confidence. Participants were asked if their leaders recognized their emotionally driven behavior and its potential impact on their feelings and behaviors. Participants reported significant

deficiencies in self-awareness competencies among their leaders, leading to negative employee outcomes.

For example, Participant 1 noted, “The leader did not recognize negative emotions in themselves or others, which often exacerbated conflicts within the team.” The leader’s inability to recognize and manage their emotions strained the work environment. Participant 6 described an instance in which their leader’s lack of self-awareness resulted in intense personal conflict: “The leader’s persistent questioning and refusal to empathize or understand my perspective pushed me to almost quit my job on the spot.” This leader lacked self-awareness and the ability to accurately self-assess, which are critical aspects of Goleman’s self-awareness competency.

Participant 7 shared how their leader’s mood and emotional state impacted the work environment: “If they were having a bad day, they would create a tense and unpredictable atmosphere.” The leader could not self-regulate their emotions, negatively impacting the work environment. Participant 5 criticized their leader’s “unconventional” approach, which they shared lacked recognition of the emotional and psychological toll their behaviors and actions had on employees:

I think that the individual’s approach to leadership was unconventional. I would say less common and one that I’ve always found intriguing for many reasons. But let’s focus on what it did not do. It did not instill confidence, it did not promote collegiality, it did not emphasize teamwork, and it did not

recognize capacity. It did not appreciate the physical or psychological toll that particular form of leadership or dictatorship drove. And it was just wonderfully negative. The communication or lack thereof of expectations resulted in confusion and uncertainty.

Similarly, Participant 9 reported, "The leader was both unaware and dismissive of the emotional impact their decisions had on employees, leading to resentment." The leader's lack of self-awareness negatively impacted the work environment, leading to dissatisfaction. Participant 14 explained how their leader could not differentiate between emotional and logical responses:

My leader was intelligent enough to, on the surface, understand some things, but it was never in terms of how it was going or how it impacted other people's feelings and behavior. And it was always assumed that it was logical because it was coming from them versus emotional. It definitely had a negative effect and, again, in part because they didn't recognize when it was an emotional response versus a logical response.

The leaders lacked self-awareness and did not understand how their toxic behaviors impacted the work environment, which was evident from the examples they shared. One particular leader would encourage employees to report information on colleagues, particularly ones they did not favor, creating a toxic work culture. Participant 13 noted,

I think they were really pleased when they pitted people against each other for their own personal and professional gain. They rewarded people

emotionally who would come and complain or kind of tattletale on each other, and they would then punish someone who either didn't engage in that behavior or who was someone who was being complained about.

This leader's lack of ability to distinguish between emotional and logical responses increased the tension among team members in the department, contributing to a toxic work environment.

Participant 11 shared their frustration with their leader and stated that they failed to "acknowledge the emotional and psychological demands on the employee," leading to frustration. The leaders' inability to manage their emotionally driven behavior and actions created a hostile work environment. According to Goleman et al. (2002), self-awareness is necessary for effective leadership, as it involves understanding one's emotions and how they impact others. The lack of self-awareness among the leaders in this department led to negative feelings among the employees, resulting in lower job satisfaction and higher turnover.

Self- Management

According to Goleman et al. (2002), self-management involves regulating one's actions, thoughts, and feelings in different situations. Self-management competencies include emotional self-control, transparency, adaptability, achievement, initiative, and the ability to convey optimism. Leaders with self-management competencies demonstrate the ability to restrain anger and impulses, build solid relationships with employees, and react constructively to

different situations. This study found significant deficiencies in leaders' self-management competencies in this department, contributing to a toxic work environment characterized by dishonesty and lack of integrity.

Participants were asked whether their leaders acted with honesty and integrity and, if not, to share an experience where they believed their leader did not act honestly with integrity. Participants shared several examples of their leaders' lack of self-management, characterized by a lack of honesty, integrity, and transparency, resulting in a hostile work environment and diminished trust. Participant 1 shared an example of their leader exhibiting what they considered "erratic behavior," making it difficult for employees to feel secure in their roles:

The leader in question started to display erratic behavior, making it difficult for employees to trust or feel secure in their roles, and started accusing me of things that everybody knew were not true. Totally fabricated statements and accusations that we're not grounded on any kind of evidence at all. I think the fact that lack of integrity was demonstrated in multiple ways, the deceit that I personally experienced, but also the tracked record that I was just one of the many. So, there was a continuous number of people who potentially went through something similar to what I went through.

This leader's behavior reflects a failure in emotional self-control and transparency, key components of self-management emotional intelligence.

Participant 13 recalled an incident where their leader attempted to include something in their performance evaluation that had already been addressed in the prior year's evaluation. This leader "was digging and looking for things to put in my evaluation, they couldn't find something bad, so they were gonna put whatever was on the last year's [evaluation]. I didn't think they worked from an ethical place." This behavior indicates a lack of integrity and transparency, as the leader's actions undermined trust and created fear among employees. Several employees mentioned that questioning their leader was unacceptable; you either had to agree with the leader's views or risk being ostracized. Participant 12 described a fallout after questioning a report, "everything went south from there after nine years of working together." This situation demonstrates how a lack of self-management led to a breakdown in professional relationships and a toxic work environment where employees felt they could not question the leader's decisions. Participant 6 noted they "could work with that person as long as you didn't question anything." The leader did not welcome employee feedback or take any interest in employees' concerns or ideas.

Participant 7 observed their leader engaging in the "crafting of a narrative to, for lack of a better word, set someone up for failure." Participant 1 stated, "I can't recall a situation where I can remember them acting with integrity." Participant 5 observed that their leader's behaviors involved manipulating messages depending on the audience. These leaders in the department engaged in behaviors that undermined trust and teamwork. This manipulation of

communication indicates poor self-management, as the leader prioritized self-preservation over moral behavior and openness.

Participant 14 provided an example of dishonesty where the leader unfairly wrote up one of their employees, undermining their leadership. The leader cited the employee:

didn't do what they were supposed to do. I never told them to do that because we had it in a different format. I was directing their work, but they put it in writing against this person that they could not follow instructions, but they were not given that instruction.

The leader accused the employee of not completing a task that was never assigned to them. This example demonstrates the leader's lack of integrity and transparency.

Participants were then asked if they had ever personally experienced or witnessed their leader exhibiting disruptive emotions toward them or others. Participants stated that leaders in this department lack emotional intelligence, which has significantly impacted employee satisfaction and retention. The participants' experiences demonstrate a pattern of disruptive emotions, including hostility, passive-aggressiveness, indifference, and outright aggression, all of which have contributed to a hostile work environment.

Participant 1 described their experience as being in a "hostile work environment." Although the disruptive behaviors were not directed at them, they witnessed these actions in meetings and through statements made by the leader.

This created hostility that eventually led them to leave the department at the earliest opportunity. Similarly, Participant 5 highlighted the emotional disconnection and lack of empathy from their leader. The leader's cold demeanor and absence of constructive feedback created an atmosphere of isolation and disconnection. Participant 5 said the leader had "a lack of emotion toward me that I felt to be disruptive. A lack of understanding or care or appreciation." This approach "incentivizes a lack of participation and a lack of community," effectively shutting down engagement and fostering an uneasy work environment.

Participants 6 and 7 both directly confirmed that the negative emotions expressed by their leaders created an uneasy atmosphere and a desire to leave the organization. Participant 8 recounted multiple instances where their leader exhibited passive-aggressive behavior and shared one example from a marketing meeting. The participant recalls an example where their leader "was professionally passive-aggressive with the marketing director with the request or things, and they would almost make the marketing director jump through hoops." The leader would then continue talking negatively about the person when they left the meeting to all the staff. This type of communication, combined with gossip and negative talk after meetings, led Participant 8 to feel extremely uneasy and ultimately compelled them to want to leave.

Participant 11's account of outbursts and negative emotional energy in meetings further highlighted the instability within the department. Participant 11 stated,

You never knew what to expect right, or you never knew who was gonna be the target, and again, it was like questions asking for updates on projects and tasks that were already answered, but they couldn't process or remember and therefore would create these very negative experiences for everyone involved.

The leader's aggressive communication style and impatience created an uneasy, unpredictable, and stressful work environment where employees did not know what to expect from the leader. This participant noted that several employees, including themselves, left the university because of the leader's behavior.

Participant 12 also experienced both personal attacks and witnessed disruptive behaviors toward others, confirming that these emotions led to both a desire to leave and an uncomfortable work environment.

For Participant 13, the toxic environment peaked with a shouting match in a meeting where they felt unjustly criticized, sharing, "They were just beating me up to the point where I felt like I had to yell back at them." The constant undermining and micromanagement by leaders in this department embarrassed and frustrated employees, resulting in a strong desire to leave. Finally, Participant 14 recounted their role in protecting their team from the leader's emotional outbursts. They witnessed their leader "eviscerating" colleagues in

front of others, creating a culture of fear and distrust. The participant felt that the environment was so psychologically unsafe that they prioritized shielding their team from harm over the actual work being done. Despite their efforts, they eventually left, feeling like they had abandoned their team in a “war zone.”

According to Goleman et al. (2002), self-management encompasses several competencies, including emotional self-control, transparency, and adaptability. In summary, these examples shared by employees demonstrate that the leaders’ lack of emotional intelligence and disruptive behaviors profoundly impacted the work environment in this department. These negative leadership behaviors created feelings of unease, isolation, and hostility, damaging the morale and significantly contributing to employees' decision to leave the department.

Social Awareness

As Goleman et al. (2002) defined, social awareness involves perceiving and understanding others’ emotions, reading social situations accurately, and responding empathetically. This competency includes empathy, organizational awareness, and service orientation. Leaders with social awareness skills enhance interpersonal understanding, foster positive relationships, and create a supportive work environment. However, a lack of social awareness among the department leaders was a significant concern for many participants in this study. Many participants expressed concerns that their leaders lacked social awareness, highlighting a consistent failure to respond meaningfully to

employees' emotions, concerns, and ideas, negatively impacting employee morale and overall job satisfaction.

These lived experiences reflect an absence of empathy, acknowledgment, and effective emotional engagement, undermining the employees' emotional well-being and reducing their desire to stay in the department. Participants were asked if their leaders sensed or responded to their feelings and, if so, to share an example.

Participant 5 spoke of a specific instance in which they expressed feeling overwhelmed and exhausted, only to receive a dismissive and unempathetic response. The leader advised them to "practice holding your breath" in a moment of vulnerability; the leader failed and showed a lack of empathy and support. Instead of listening and offering the employee some reassurance or understanding, the leader makes light of the participant's emotional state, leaving them feeling unsupported and alone. This interaction demonstrates the leader's inability to recognize or address the emotional needs of their employees.

Participant 7 recounts an experience where their leader completely ignored their physical and emotional health during an illness. Despite being visibly sick with a high fever, the participant states, "I was asked, but pretty much told, to complete my job tasks before going home, because that was my job," revealing a lack of compassion and care for their well-being. This leader's blatant disregard for the participant's emotions during a time of vulnerability illustrates the leader's insensitivity and emotional detachment.

Participant 11 experienced a similar dismissal when they decided to leave the organization after 14 years of service. Their leader's response lacked emotion. Neither did the leader try to retain the employees or thank them for their service or acknowledge the loss from their departure, reflecting a lack of emotional connection. The leader's dismissiveness was particularly painful given the participant's long tenure and dedication to the institution, which went unacknowledged in their final moments at the organization.

Participant 12 details a situation when they became emotional during a meeting due to the vague and accusatory nature of the presented information. Instead of offering empathy or clarification, the leader dismissed the participant's emotions, stating, "Well, we can reconvene tomorrow." The participant shared,

I had tears coming down my face, and you know, you never want to be emotional. But when someone accuses you of something, you know, and you're asking for information. The information could have been phrased differently. They didn't even have the courtesy of phrasing it appropriately instead of it being an accusation.

The leader failed to provide any meaningful support or understanding. The emotional toll of being accused without sufficient explanation left the participant feeling unheard and invalidated.

Participant 13 shares an example where their leader's emotional responses were sporadic, if not non-existent, stating, "It's hard to say because my leader seemed oblivious to the emotions of the team, which often led to

decisions that negatively impacted morale.” The leader rarely expressed positive feelings; when they did, it felt manipulative or disingenuous. This participant notes that their leader appeared to lack concern for others’ feelings, creating an atmosphere where negative emotions were the only ones acknowledged.

Participant 1 shared, “I felt that the leader did not have any concern regarding anybody’s feelings. It was nearly impossible to detect whether the person had any positive feelings. Negative feelings they would definitely express.” Participant 11 echoed this sentiment, stating, “I don’t really know if the leader understood or cared about the emotional needs of the staff, leading to a lack of support during challenging times.” The leader’s apparent lack of empathy created a disconnect between the leaders and their employees, leaving employees feeling unsupported during difficult periods.

The participants’ responses to whether their leader acknowledged their concerns and ideas paint a clear picture of a leadership approach characterized by selective listening, dismissiveness, and a lack of genuine engagement. These experiences revealed leaders who focus more on maintaining control and pushing their agendas than on fostering a collaborative environment where employees’ concerns and ideas are valued.

Participant 1 shares that it was “impossible to have a constructive discussion with this particular leader. It would have resulted in your firing immediately. By using some form of manipulation of the system.” The employee shared that all they could do was maintain collegiality and keep their head down

until they could resign. This toxic environment, where opposing ideas, views, or concerns were disregarded unless they mirrored the leader's views, killed open communication, leaving employees voiceless and unsupported. The participant's resignation became their only way of asserting control over their situation.

Similarly, Participant 6 described a leader who would only listen to concerns or ideas if they aligned with their views or were directly related to something they had already introduced. The participant was the vocal advocate for their team, often raising issues on behalf of colleagues who preferred more indirect communication styles. Despite their efforts, there was a sense that the leader's acknowledgment of concerns was superficial, and any feedback that contradicted their stance was met with resistance. The lack of space for genuine, collaborative dialogue left employees feeling that communication was one-sided.

Participant 8 stated that their leaders welcomed ideas that improved workflow; however, their concerns were not considered, creating a perception that productivity and efficiency were prioritized over the well-being of the employees. Participant 11 offered a similar account, stating that the leader regularly requested feedback and ideas on program development, but concerns were ignored when brought to the leader. This dynamic suggests a transactional relationship in which the leader values the participant's output, not their well-being or input on other matters.

Participant 13 describes interactions with their leader as similar to a "cage match." While the leader might initially express interest in ideas during one-on-

one meetings, those ideas were often met with resistance or outright rejection when raised in group settings. The participant felt that ideas were accepted only after significant pushback, and even then, they were often dismissed or revisited only later, under different circumstances. This adversarial approach created an environment where employees had to fight for their ideas to be heard, and even when they “won,” it felt like a hollow victory, as the leader’s listening appeared performative rather than genuine.

According to Goleman et al. (2002), social awareness encompasses noticing and understanding others’ emotions, a skill crucial for effective leadership. Competencies in social awareness include empathy, organizational awareness, and service. These participants’ experiences showed that the leaders frequently failed to acknowledge concerns. While they might occasionally entertain ideas, this was often done selectively or under specific conditions.

Employees felt their leaders were more interested in maintaining control and avoiding challenges than fostering open, constructive discussions. This selective acknowledgment created an emotionally and professionally neglectful work environment for employees, as their contributions were devalued unless they aligned with the leader’s pre-existing views. These leaders lacked social awareness, failing to recognize and respond to the needs of their employees, leading to employees feeling undervalued and without support. These deficiencies in social awareness contributed to a hostile work environment and higher turnover rates.

Relationship Management

The findings suggest deficiencies in leaders' relationship management competencies in analyzing the interview data to see if leaders openly and effectively communicated with their employees. Participant 1 described how communication deteriorated when circumstances changed, "when things were going well, the leader was engaging, but during difficult times, they withdrew and did not provide the necessary support, creating a sense of abandonment." Goleman's (2005) relationship management domain emphasizes the importance of consistent engagement and support between the leader and employee in maintaining positive workplace relationships. The leader demonstrated a lack of emotional intelligence and the ability to manage difficult situations with transparency during challenging times.

Participant 7 felt that their leader's communication "was not effective. It was more one way," which suggests a failure to engage in meaningful, two-way communication, where feedback and dialogue are essential. This one-way approach indicates a lack of empathy and relational awareness, critical components of emotional intelligence. Participant 11 noted that communication was primarily "a one-sided directive approach. Do this. I need this. Complete this task. There wasn't any kind of conversation that was happening." The leader communicated via directives and did not welcome open communication, creating a rigid and demoralizing work environment.

Participant 12 experienced a breakdown in communication after a critical incident, leading to being cut off from crucial work-related information. This deliberate exclusion highlights the leader's emotional mismanagement, as they chose to withhold communication rather than engage openly, further damaging the working relationship and violating trust between the employee and leader.

When exploring if the leaders in the department were actively interested in their employees as individuals, several participants shared experiences indicating a lack of emotional intelligence and personal investment by leaders. Participant 1 shared that, initially, their leader relied on them heavily due to their competence in handling significant issues. However, when things began to decline, the leader completely disengaged, illustrating that their interest was conditional, based solely on performance rather than a genuine investment in the participant as a person. Participants 5, 8, and 12 quickly responded, "No," highlighting their leader's lack of personal interest, indicating an emotional disconnect and an absence of relational engagement.

Participant 13 describes an experience where initially their leader showed interest but quickly withdrew support following a mistake, stating, "They did in the beginning, but if you make any mistakes, they were like okay, you're trash now." The leader's reaction was punitive rather than nurturing, leading the participant to feel devalued. The absence of grace, mentorship, or personal investment, especially when learning something new, demonstrates a failure to support employees through their development and challenges.

Participant 14 provided a deeply personal example of how their leader failed to show care after the passing of a family member, stating that when my family member

passed away, that's a moment in another person's life where you can say, how are you doing? How is everything? I got an initial. I am sorry to hear that. Take some time off. But when I got back, there was no consideration of what I had just gone through. And it went straight into this process, where they were just drilling on me for what was not done.

The leader offered an initial acknowledgment of the loss but failed to provide any ongoing support or adjustment upon their return to work. The leader's focus quickly shifted to tasks, disregarding the participant's emotional well-being, demonstrating a profound lack of empathy and personal interest.

Several participants responded negatively when asked if their leaders inspire them, revealing a lack of emotional intelligence among leaders. These examples demonstrate how uninspiring leadership, with poor relationship management, left employees feeling disengaged and demoralized. Participants 1, 5, 8, and 11 quickly replied, "No," their leaders did not inspire. The one-word answer suggests that their leaders failed to inspire or motivate employees, highlighting the emotional disconnect between the leader and employees.

Participant 13 stated, "inspired me to never supervise like that, to never have such a toxic environment." The leader's micromanagement, failure to delegate, and creating a toxic environment taught this participant how not to lead.

Instead of being motivated to follow in their leader's footsteps, the participant learned what to avoid, particularly how not to treat others and how not to create a toxic workplace.

Several participants responded negatively or mixed when asked whether their leaders made them feel valued, shedding light on leadership failures in fostering a sense of worth among employees. These responses highlight how lacking emotional intelligence, recognition, and support can lead to feeling undervalued in the workplace.

Participant 1 shared, "Yes when they needed me. But when things turn around, absolutely not." The participant felt valued initially when their leader needed their skills and expertise, but as soon as circumstances shifted, that recognition disappeared. This conditional treatment reflects a lack of genuine appreciation for the person beyond their immediate service. Participants 5, 8, and 11 responded with a quick "No," stating they did not feel valued by their leader. This absence of recognition or sense of worth indicates a leader failing to connect with their employee meaningfully.

Participant 7 shared that while they felt their work was important, they did not feel personally valued. Participant 13 experienced a decrease in feeling valued after an early incident. Despite initial signs of recognition, after a mistake in a meeting, they felt disregarded, never again receiving acknowledgment of their contributions. This response reflects how a single negative interaction, when mishandled by a leader, can permanently damage an employee's sense of being

valued. Participant 14 shared a detailed and disheartening experience when they expressed concerns and hinted at resignation due to overwhelming stress and a lack of support. Their leader responded dismissively, encouraging them to quit rather than address the underlying issues. This lack of care and recognition, especially during a moment of vulnerability, was a clear sign that they were not valued.

In summary, the findings suggest that several leaders in this department struggle with relationship management, a critical competency of emotional intelligence. Employees shared that the leaders in this department had poor communication, failed to inspire, did not listen to their concerns or ideas, and did not connect to them personally. These deficiencies in emotional intelligence damaged the workplace culture, resulting in low employee morale, a lack of trust, and issues with employee retention.

Retention

While examining whether leaders provided opportunities for their employees to learn and grow, the researcher found this was an area of strength for the leadership team. Few participants indicated that opportunities for growth and development were either limited or poorly supported. Participant 1 reflects that there was no real development plan for them. Due to the pressing need to fill a prominent role and bring structure, there was no time for personal development or growth. Participant 5 mentioned that there were very few growth opportunities from their perspective, acknowledging that their leader's guidance or

communication around unmet expectations might be interpreted as development. Lastly, Participant 7 questioned, “whether delegated work could be considered a growth opportunity, suggesting that while they gained awareness of different cultures, there was little intentional development from their leader”.

Participants were then asked if they understood their leader's expectations, and several responses revealed inconsistent or unclear communication, which frustrated employees with their leaders. Participant 1 noted that they only understood the expectations when directly asking questions. The leader took no initiative to explain expectations unless explicitly asked, making it difficult to follow a consistent direction. Participant 1 also shared that the leader often held strong, factually unsupported opinions. Participant 4 describes a situation where, although job duties were outlined, beyond those essential responsibilities, expectations became unclear. The participant expresses frustration with leadership that allowed tasks to proceed without proper guidance, only to criticize later what was not done correctly.

Participant 5 shares that their leader expected excellence, but the lack of resources or clear direction made it feel like they were expected to “paint the Mona Lisa with finger paints,” indicating a significant gap between expectations and practical support. Participant 6 reflected on how they initially found it challenging to understand their leader's expectations due to unpredictable communication and what they perceived to be cultural differences. Over time,

they developed a better understanding, but the learning curve was steep and not fully supported.

Participant 8 provided a blunt “No,” stating they did not understand their leader's expectations, referencing inadequate communication. Participant 9 acknowledged that while expectations were sometimes clear, there were also moments of confusion, especially when job descriptions did not align with the actual responsibilities of the employee. The lack of a solid framework made navigating the leader's expectations difficult. Participant 11 explained that they vaguely understood their role but had to figure out much of it independently due to their leader's lack of direct communication. This lack of direction resulted in uncertainty and limited guidance on outcomes or vision.

Participant 12 points out that while they generally understood expectations, changes in direction were often not communicated, causing confusion and making it challenging to stay aligned with the leader's goals. Participant 13 had a challenging experience, as no one could teach them the job correctly. They were left to figure things out while trying to meet unclear expectations. The lack of leadership support and open criticism created an environment where they felt lost and unsupported. Participant 14 states that most of the time, they understood expectations, but there were moments of surprise due to unspoken or unclear expectations, which led to occasional misunderstandings. These responses collectively highlight a leader's failure to communicate clearly and consistently, which was a common theme among

leaders in the department. Ineffective communication between leaders and employees created frustration and a lack of trust, impacting overall job satisfaction and retention.

Participants were then asked if they felt their daily work was valuable or important. Several participants expressed negative or mixed feelings, suggesting employees lacked recognition and purpose in their roles. Participant 1 initially felt valued by their leader, stating, "I do believe initially, they really valued me." However, as the relationship deteriorated, so did their sense of worth. The participant described a "total black and white" shift. This drastic change highlights how inconsistent leadership can erode an employee's sense of value over time.

Participant 5 described their work as "needed and necessary" but not necessarily valuable, saying, "Perhaps the leader felt that by maintaining or improving certain aspects, we are providing a valuable service, although that value and import were not showcased in any feedback from the leader." This statement demonstrates how the absence of clear, positive feedback from leadership can leave employees questioning the significance of their efforts. Participant 7 felt that while the tasks were important, they were not: "I felt that the work I did needed to be done, and I felt that it was important. Me, no." Participant 8 shared a similar sentiment, expressing that while they valued their work, they were unsure if anyone else did: "I valued my work. I don't know if it was valued." This disconnect between the importance of the work and their value as an

employee identifies a more significant issue of employees feeling like cogs in the machine rather than integral parts of the organization.

These experiences shared by participants revealed a consistent theme: the leadership's failure to provide recognition and a sense of purpose made employees feel their daily work was not valued. Without feedback, clear responsibilities, or emotional support, participants questioned the importance of their contributions, which negatively affected their job satisfaction.

When asked if they had ever experienced a situation where their leader's actions negatively impacted their desire to stay, several participants provided responses that reflected significant dissatisfaction, often rooted in poor leadership, lack of support, or toxic work environments. Participant 1 expressed how their leader discouraged them from wanting to stay, stating, "I've had wonderful leaders who have inspired me... This one was just the total opposite," indicating that the negative leadership experience directly affected their desire to remain. Participant 4 shared how their leader's lack of interest in their concerns led to a desire to leave, stating, "I didn't want to waste any more time waiting for a happy work environment when I knew I would be carrying most of that workload myself." The lack of equity in job duties and failure to address concerns contributed to their decision to leave.

Participant 5 described a situation in which their leader's failure to act left them feeling unsupported and discouraged their desire to stay in the department: "There was a degree, I won't say, of enjoyment, but a propensity to allow myself

and even other team members to flounder.” This consistent lack of support and leadership diminished their sense of loyalty and drove them to consider leaving. Participant 6 expressed mixed experiences, stating, “There’s been negative ones where I just felt like this isn’t worth the pay; it’s not worth the stress.” The stress of dealing with a leader who limited growth and learning discouraged the employees and pushed them to look for another job.

Participant 11 directly tied their decision to leave after 14 years to the “lack of acknowledgement, lack of communication, and lack of emotional intelligence” from their leader. They expressed feeling undervalued and unsupported, ultimately discouraging and pushing them to leave a position they had held for a long time. Participant 12 explained how challenging and questioning their leader’s decisions led to strained interactions: “I had no other choice but to leave. I tried to hang in there, but they were already upset, so it did not matter what I said or did.” The leader’s inability to communicate effectively, have empathy, and resolve conflict made it impossible for the employee to stay in the department.

Participant 13 shared the humiliating experience of being pushed out of their position: “It was embarrassing and degrading. They brought in someone at the same exact level and gave them my office.” Participant 14 described the emotional toll of working under a leader who failed to recognize their efforts during a difficult personal period: “I was so hurt by her leadership personally. It all stems from their actions,” they explained, noting how their leader’s behavior during the pandemic and a family loss ultimately drove them to resign.

These findings suggest that the leaders in this department who exhibited toxic leadership behaviors created toxic work environments where several employees left the department. The lack of leaders' emotional intelligence left employees feeling disrespected and undervalued. Participants' last question was whether you ever left a job because of your leader. Thirteen of the 14 participants indicated they had left a job because of their leader, highlighting that good leadership is essential in the workplace, particularly in employee retention, job satisfaction, and the health of the work environment. Even if employees enjoy their job duties, weak, toxic, or unsupportive leadership can drive even the most dedicated workers to leave.

Theme two, Toxic Leadership Behaviors, reveals that several participants identified behaviors exhibited by their leaders that indicated low emotional intelligence, contributing to a hostile work environment. The interview responses highlight how these leaders' deficiencies in self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management led to employee dissatisfaction and high turnover.

In sum, the toxic leadership behaviors identified in this department were characterized by a lack of emotional intelligence across self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. These deficiencies led to a hostile work environment where employees felt unsupported, undervalued, and disconnected. The findings indicate that the toxic behaviors of leaders in this department significantly contributed to employee dissatisfaction

and high turnover, underscoring the importance of emotional intelligence in effective leadership. Eight participants cited that they left their positions in this department due to the toxic leadership behaviors they experienced.

Negative Impacts on Employees

Research Question #2: How does a leader's emotional intelligence impact employee retention?

The participants' experiences revealed that leaders with low emotional intelligence significantly impacted employee job satisfaction and retention. Emotional detachment, poor communication, lack of empathy, and creating a toxic work environment surfaced in the participant's shared experiences, demonstrating how these leaders' behaviors directly influenced participants' desire to leave. These employees left the organization due to the profound negative impacts of their leaders' toxic leadership behaviors and lack of emotional intelligence.

The investigation into the impact of emotional intelligence on leadership within the department reveals a troubling pattern of toxic leadership behaviors that negatively impact employees and directly influence employee retention. The following examples from participants demonstrate how leaders' deficiencies in emotional intelligence created harmful work environments and ultimately drove employees to leave. Several participants shared negative experiences that led them to resign due to poor leadership, toxic environments, or lack of support.

Participant 5 recounted their leader's failure to acknowledge the "physical or psychological toll" of their leadership style and how it contributed to a hostile work environment. They described the work environment as one that "did not instill confidence," causing significant frustration and dissatisfaction among employees. The leader's emotional neglect and inability to support their team's well-being decreased job satisfaction, reducing the employee's desire to stay. Participant 6 experienced "severe emotional distress" when their leader's relentless questioning led them to an emotional breakdown. They shared that they had to tell their leader, "If you don't stop, I'm going to just walk out of here like I'm going to quit right now." This situation escalated because of the leader's inability to recognize and respond to emotional cues.

Participant 10 shared an example of their leader's dishonest behavior, creating an environment of stress and anxiety. They noted, "I experienced a lot of stress and anxiety because of my leader's dishonest behavior. It felt like I was constantly on edge, wondering what was really going on behind the scenes." This constant uncertainty and stress from leadership behavior ultimately pushed them to leave the department.

Participant 11 recalled,

I have personally witnessed this in meetings, outbursts, and very negative emotional energies spewed at others primarily but then also sometimes at me. It was whenever they were focused on trying to get information from

an individual, their mannerisms for expressing those needs were always aggressive and belittling.

They linked their decision to leave the institution directly to their leader's emotional neglect, stating, "Their level of emotional intelligence, or lack thereof, did have a direct impact on my decision to leave." The leader's aggressive and belittling behavior created a psychologically exhausting environment, which, according to Participant 11, led multiple employees to seek employment elsewhere.

Participant 12 describes how they had "no other choice" but to leave due to their leader's unethical and emotionally harmful behavior, which required HR intervention. They explained

an unwillingness to communicate or negotiate. It was a very one-sided approach to management that I experienced from this leader. And so all of those things impacted me greatly emotionally and physically at times. And I, ultimately, couldn't feel sick to my stomach all the time, and I had to leave the institution.

The impact of such behavior on their mental health and job satisfaction is evident in the participant's forced departure, with HR finding that the leader's actions violated campus policies.

Participant 13 experienced emotional distress due to a toxic leadership environment, which significantly impacted their mental health and job satisfaction. They reported emotional turmoil: "I had PTSD... emotionally, I was

messed up... It took so long for me to get back into the workforce.” The leader’s behavior included ignoring and humiliating employees, which left Participant 13 feeling “ostracized” and under constant scrutiny. They recalled, “I absolutely began to feel under the microscope and couldn’t do anything right and I broke down at work and I remember calling my husband like, I can’t do this anymore.” This experience not only led them to quit but also affected their mental health and confidence in their professional abilities.

The toxic environment greatly affected Participant 14, who felt compelled to protect their team amidst the chaos. They expressed that their primary responsibility was to create psychological safety for their team, a task that became increasingly difficult: “My job. 100% number one job was to create psychological safety with my team because they didn’t have it. And I felt that was more important than the work we were doing.” They described the work culture as a “war zone” and felt a deep sense of guilt about leaving: “I still have survivor’s guilt about leaving. I still check in on everybody on that team. Because I felt like I left people behind in a war zone.”

Participant 1’s experiences demonstrate how a leader’s lack of emotional intelligence negatively impacted employee retention. They described a hostile, deceitful work environment where their leader’s inability to manage relationships or communicate effectively drove them to leave the university. One example was when Participant 1 was “ousted” based on “fabricated statements” with no evidence. They noted, “The fact that lack of integrity was demonstrated in

multiple ways... There was a continuous number of people who potentially went through something similar.” This lack of self-awareness and dishonesty indicated a more significant issue within the department.

Participant 1 also described the leader’s sudden shift from praise to hostility. “All of a sudden, it went down the hill, fast and furious.” This volatility ruined trust and reflected poor emotional regulation. The leader’s top-down, authoritative style left no room for discussion or collaboration: “It was top-down one person’s opinion... There was no negotiation at all,” further demonstrating a lack of emotional intelligence. Ultimately, Participant 1 left not because they disliked their work but due to the leader’s behavior: “I left because there was no encouragement at all... But it was impossible to work under the leader.” These examples highlight how leaders with low emotional intelligence create a toxic work environment and damage employee satisfaction and retention.

Participant 4’s experience highlights a mix of professional growth opportunities and an unhappy work environment marked by job duty inequality. While they appreciated the leader’s support for development, stating, “They were willing to work with you, to get you into different things... Harboring employee advancement was fantastic,” this positive aspect was overshadowed by the unequal distribution of responsibilities. Despite the professional growth, Participant 4 ultimately decided to leave due to the work environment, “It just became a no; it didn’t outweigh that for me.” The leader’s failure to address this

imbalance demonstrates a lack of emotional intelligence, damaging the overall work experience despite the developmental opportunities offered.

Participant 5's account highlights the negative impact of a leader's lack of emotional intelligence, particularly empathy and inclusivity. They described an environment where favoritism and exclusion created a divide between those in the leader's "inner circle" and those outside it: "There was a level of transparency that was not provided to others," which left those outside the circle feeling "shut out" and "isolated." This favoritism fostered a toxic environment, showing the leader's lack of social awareness.

Participant 5 also felt like "a cog in a machine" rather than a valued team member, emphasizing the leader's failure in relationship management. The leader's indifference, expressed in phrases like "it is what it is," further eroded Participant 5's sense of worth, leaving them feeling ignored and questioning whether the leader cared about their well-being. Participant 6's shared how their leader's support for professional development was greatly appreciated; however, their leader's lack of emotional intelligence in communication, integrity, and trust led to feelings of discouragement and manipulation, causing them to contemplate leaving.

Participant 7's experience highlights how a leader's lack of emotional intelligence, particularly in communication, fairness, and integrity, led to their decision to leave the organization. They stated that the leader's behavior "directly influenced" their departure and "pretty much determined" whether they would

stay. One issue was the leader's tendency to "constantly just talk badly about other people," which created a toxic work environment of negativity and gossip. Participant 7 noted, "There's a way to not agree with what's going on without bad-mouthing people... Those sorts of conversations are kind of like cancer." This leader's chronic negativity reflected a lack of self-awareness and social awareness, fostering an unhealthy workplace culture.

Favoritism also significantly influenced employees' decisions to leave the department. Participant 7 explained that it "made it increasingly difficult to excel if you were not a favorite." The need to "get in good with this person" undermined trust and fairness, alienating employees outside the leader's inner circle and creating division. The stress from this toxic environment took a serious toll on Participant 7's health, leading to a hospital stay: "Subsequently, I was in the hospital that night [and] for the next two weeks." Within 90 days, the emotional and physical strain caused them to leave, illustrating the profound impact of emotionally unintelligent leadership.

Participant 8's experience demonstrates how a leader's lack of emotional intelligence, especially in communication and empathy, severely damaged their job satisfaction and led to their departure. Initially, the work environment seemed supportive, but after returning from a leave, the leader's emails became accusatory, shifting from general updates to questions like, "Why wasn't this done?" This shift created distrust, with Participant 8 feeling the leader was trying to "put me on record like I wasn't doing my job."

Participant 11's experience demonstrates how a leader's lack of emotional intelligence, particularly in managing emotions and communication, contributed to a toxic work environment, leading them to leave after 14 years. The leader's "outbursts and very negative emotional energies" created an atmosphere of unpredictability and fear: "You never knew who was gonna be the target." The leader's "directive" and "non-open" communication style further isolated employees: "All of those things impacted me greatly emotionally and physically," Participant 11 explained, describing the toll it took on their well-being. Ultimately, they decided to leave, saying, "I couldn't feel sick to my stomach all the time." This reflects how emotionally unintelligent leadership can drive even long-term employees to seek healthier work environments.

Participant 12's experience highlights how a leader's lack of emotional intelligence, particularly in managing emotions and conflict, pushed them to leave despite their efforts to stay. The leader "could not get over their personal issue" and took out their anger on Participant 12, creating a toxic environment that damaged the team's ability to function. The leader's misdirected anger and lack of self-awareness left Participant 12 feeling unsupported. As tension escalated, the leader became increasingly hostile when challenged. Participant 12 described how the leader was "already upset" and "pissed," unwilling to engage in constructive dialogue. This inability to manage conflict effectively damaged trust, with Participant 12 stating, "Once you lose trust and respect for your

leader... you know that you have to leave.” They felt unsafe and unsupported without trust, especially after witnessing others in similar situations.

Participant 13 shared some examples of how their leader's lack of emotional intelligence impacted their mental health. Sharing one example of a shouting match with their leader, “They were just beating me up to the point where I felt like I had to yell back at them,” Participant 13 reflected on the hostile work environment created by the leader’s aggressive behavior. The work environment was also characterized by paranoia and distrust, where employees avoided interactions out of fear: “People stopped coming into my office... Because the leader assumed that we were talking about them,” Participant 13 explained. This toxic culture ruined trust, isolated employees, and damaged relationships.

The emotional toll was devastating. Participant 13 described suffering from PTSD and feeling “emotionally fucked up” after leaving the job. The constant manipulation and belittlement made them question their abilities, and the damage from this experience delayed their return to the workforce. This case highlights how emotionally unintelligent leadership can cause lasting psychological harm and push employees out of an organization.

Participant 14’s experience highlights the emotional and psychological toll of working under a leader lacking emotional intelligence, particularly in managing stress and relationships. The leader’s failure to recognize their team’s emotional and professional efforts was a critical factor in Participant 14’s decision to leave.

Despite experiencing personal loss, Participant 14 continued to support their team, but there was “no recognition of any of the work that I was doing.”

Participant 14 felt responsible for protecting their team from the toxic environment, which was compounded by feelings of survivor’s guilt after two team members were fired: “When I felt like I was no longer effective in protecting them... then I knew I couldn’t protect anybody,” they explained, emphasizing the leader’s failure to ensure psychological safety.

The leader’s behavior also affected others, as Participant 14 witnessed the leader “eviscerate” an employee during a Zoom meeting, describing the behavior as “harsh and mean and unnecessary.” This public shaming reflected the leader’s lack of self-regulation and empathy. Communication broke down toward the end, with the leader simply stopping all contact: “When they were upset with me, towards the end, they just stopped talking,” Participant 14 said, reinforcing the toxic atmosphere and their decision to leave.

For the third theme, Negative Impacts on Employees, the research question explored how a leader’s emotional intelligence impacts employee retention. The findings from participant interviews revealed that leaders lacking emotional intelligence exhibit toxic leadership behaviors that profoundly and negatively impact employee job satisfaction and retention. Factors contributing to these negative outcomes included emotional detachment, poor communication, lack of empathy, and the creation of toxic work environments. These behaviors directly influenced employees’ decisions to leave, highlighting the critical role that

emotional intelligence plays in fostering a healthy and supportive work environment.

Leaders with low emotional intelligence created environments of emotional distress, poor communication, dishonesty, favoritism, and overall toxicity. These negative impacts on employees led to disengagement, dissatisfaction, and high turnover. The participants' experiences demonstrate that leadership's lack of emotional intelligence severely damages employee retention by creating work environments where employees feel unsupported, devalued, and disconnected from their leaders.

Summary

In summary, the study findings highlight the profound impact of leaders' emotional intelligence, or lack thereof, on employee satisfaction and retention. Leaders with high emotional intelligence foster positive work environments characterized by trust, empathy, and open communication, promoting employee satisfaction and retention. Conversely, leaders lacking emotional intelligence and demonstrating behaviors such as emotional neglect, dishonesty, and poor communication contributed to toxic work environments with high employee turnover and low employee morale. These leaders' failure to manage conflict effectively, communicate transparently, and support their employees led to disengagement and dissatisfaction. Goleman (2005) argues that leaders with low emotional intelligence struggle to inspire dedication, contributing to higher turnover and undermining organizational goals (Chen & Silverthorne, 2005).

Participants consistently reported that it was not the nature of the job that drove them to leave but the overwhelming emotional toll of working under emotionally ineffective leaders. Overall, the study reinforces the necessity of emotional intelligence training for leaders to cultivate supportive, productive workplaces that retain employees and drive organizational success.

CHAPTER FIVE

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

This research study used a qualitative phenomenological methodology to explore employees' lived experiences and how a leader's emotional intelligence influenced job satisfaction and retention at a four-year public university in Southern California. A phenomenological design was used to gather detailed relevant data through in-depth interviews. The use of interviews allowed the researcher to capture participants' experiences directly, as they described and interpreted those experiences, in alignment with Castillo-Montoya's (2016) emphasis on understanding how participants make meaning of their lived experiences. The phenomenological approach enabled the researcher to remain neutral and reduce bias during data collection and analysis, as Yin (2014) recommended.

Chapters 1–4 provided background and explored the theoretical framework of emotional intelligence, focusing on its impact on leadership effectiveness through three primary models. A qualitative phenomenological approach was used, gathering data through surveys and interviews, which were analyzed using Goleman et al.'s emotional intelligence framework. The findings revealed how leaders' emotional intelligence, or lack thereof, shaped work environments, directly affecting employee retention and satisfaction.

Chapter 1 outlined the study's significance in higher education, introducing the problem statement that it was not known how employees described the impact of their leader's emotional intelligence on employee satisfaction and retention. It also included the purpose statement, research questions, key terms, and theoretical framework. Chapter 2 provided a literature review, exploring the evolution of intelligence theories and defining emotional intelligence through three main models: Salovey and Mayer's ability model, Goleman's competency model, and Bar-On's emotional and social intelligence model. The chapter also examined the relationship between leadership, emotional intelligence, and employee retention, establishing a conceptual foundation.

Chapter 3 detailed the research design and methodology, outlining the qualitative phenomenological approach used to explore employees' perceptions of their leaders' emotional intelligence and its impact on job satisfaction and retention. This chapter covered data collection methods, participant selection, and data analysis. Chapter 4 presented the data analysis and findings, identifying critical themes about how leaders' emotional intelligence affected employee retention and satisfaction. The analysis revealed themes from employees' experiences, offering insights into emotional intelligence competencies that influence these outcomes.

This chapter answers the study's research questions, identifies its limitations, and gives recommendations for practice and future research. It

emphasizes the importance of emotional intelligence in leadership to enhance employee satisfaction and retention.

Overview

This qualitative phenomenological research study was essential to the literature on emotional intelligence as it addressed the need to understand how emotionally intelligent leaders could positively influence employee satisfaction and retention, specifically from the perspective of employees in a university setting. Retaining human capital is critical for the success of any university, particularly in today's rapidly changing informational, technical, and economic landscape. When employees leave, the university faces significant costs, including recruitment, onboarding, and training, as well as the loss of business continuity, productivity, and valuable institutional knowledge (Armstrong-Stassen & Ursel, 2009; Ahsan et al., 2013). Effective leadership shapes employee happiness and loyalty since the dynamic between employees and their leaders greatly influences job satisfaction and staff retention (Chung & Lo, 2007).

Goleman emphasized the significance of intelligence in guiding leaders to handle team dynamics with care and understanding while motivating them to navigate conflicts and shape positive work environments. These aspects play a role in shaping employee satisfaction and retention. Emotional intelligence is a powerful predictor of leadership effectiveness. Leaders with high emotional intelligence encompassing self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management are better equipped to create positive work

environments and manage teams effectively (Goleman, 1995). These skills foster strong relationships, promote innovation, and improve employee retention, particularly in higher education, where retaining top talent is essential for organizational success.

Emotional intelligence is frequently overlooked in selecting leaders and professional development training programs despite its recognized importance. The demand for emotionally intelligent leaders is growing across industries. However, the extent to which a leader's emotional intelligence impacts employee satisfaction and retention, particularly in higher education, has not been thoroughly explored (Bamel et al., 2022; Saha et al., 2023), leaving a gap in the literature. This study aimed to address this gap by using qualitative research to build upon prior quantitative studies on the relationship between emotional intelligence and effective leadership, focusing on how a leader's emotional intelligence influenced employee satisfaction and retention. Understanding this relationship is valuable for employee success and the university's overall performance.

This gap in the literature led to the problem statement that it was not known how employees described the impact of their leader's emotional intelligence, specifically their self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management, on employee satisfaction and retention. Therefore, this qualitative phenomenological study explored how a

leader's emotional intelligence, defined through these four domains, affected employee satisfaction and retention in a Southern California university setting.

Daniel Goleman's research on emotional intelligence served as the theoretical foundation for this study. The study examined leadership characteristics through Goleman et al.'s (2002) emotional intelligence framework, comprising the four competencies of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. In his works, Goleman connected leaders' emotional intelligence to employee performance, effective leadership, and employee satisfaction and retention (Goleman, 1998, 2000, 2004, 2005).

The Emotional Intelligence Assessment survey and semi-structured interviews were the data collection instruments used in the study to explore leaders' perceived emotional intelligence and its impact on employee satisfaction and retention. The survey provided initial data by evaluating leaders' emotional intelligence across the four emotional intelligence domains, while the follow-up interviews offered deeper, qualitative insights into employees' personal lived experiences.

The choice to use a qualitative phenomenological study was based on the desire to explore employees' lived experiences with their leaders rather than testing pre-existing theories. Phenomenology focuses on shared experiences, allowing me to uncover common themes from participants' interactions with their leaders, gaining insight into how emotional intelligence affects leadership

behaviors and employee outcomes, specifically exploring the impact on job satisfaction and retention (Mapp, 2008).

For this study, 58 (28 current and 30 former) employees completed the Emotional Intelligence Assessment survey from Harvard Business School Publishing 2005 through Qualtrics. The survey was designed to assess the emotional intelligence of their leaders, using the Goleman et al. (2002) framework to assess self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management emotional intelligence competencies. The survey began with basic demographic questions on gender and age, followed by a question about the length of employment. Participants worked in the department for six months to 24 years, providing diverse perspectives from newer and long-term employees. The participants' demographics varied, including 33% male and 67% female, with 2% aged 18–24, 26% aged 25–34, 34% aged 35–44, 21% aged 45–54, and 17% aged 55–65.

Of those, 14 agreed to participate in a follow-up interview to allow further exploration of their personal experiences. The interview sample consisted of six current and eight former employees, with 29% male and 71% female participants. All interviews were conducted using the Zoom platform and lasted between 26 and 72 minutes. Each interview was recorded for accuracy. The interview questions were adapted from Parker's (2019) framework, focusing on employee retention rather than performance. The questions were also designed to explore participants' perceptions of their leaders' emotional intelligence across

the four emotional intelligence domains. Additional questions were built into the interviews to explore the impact of leaders' emotional intelligence on employee job satisfaction and retention.

The interview structure consisted of an initial Yes/No question in each emotional intelligence domain, followed by open-ended questions that allowed participants to share their experiences. The participants were unaware of which questions related to which emotional intelligence domain to try to prevent biased responses. Once the interviews were complete, the researcher transcribed them, reviewed them against the Zoom recordings for accuracy, and sent the transcriptions to participants for member checking to ensure credibility (Anney, 2014). The transcripts were coded and analyzed to identify themes.

The research questions for this study were designed to explore how employees, based on their lived experiences, describe the impact of their leader's emotional intelligence on employee satisfaction and retention, as defined by self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. Guided by Goleman's definition of emotional intelligence, the study aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What specific behaviors or actions of these leaders are identified by employees as indicative of high or low emotional intelligence?
2. How does a leader's emotional intelligence impact employee retention?

Through data analysis of surveys and employee interviews, positive and negative themes emerged, helping to answer these research questions. The data

revealed three themes: Positive Leadership Behaviors, Toxic Leadership Behaviors, and Negative Impacts on Employees. These themes aligned with the study's two research questions. These themes captured the employees' perceptions of their leaders' emotional intelligence across six department leaders through descriptive and interpretive analyses. The Positive Leadership Behaviors theme highlighted how leaders who demonstrated high emotional intelligence, particularly in self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management, contributed to positive work environments, increased job satisfaction, and supported retention.

In contrast, the Toxic Leadership Behaviors theme revealed the damaging effects of leaders with low emotional intelligence on team dynamics and employee satisfaction and retention. Leaders perceived by employees to have low emotional intelligence demonstrated characteristics such as poor communication, lack of empathy, and unethical behaviors, leading to employee dissatisfaction and high turnover. The last theme, Negative Impacts on Employees, highlighted how leaders with low emotional intelligence exhibiting toxic leadership behaviors directly influence employees' decision to leave the department.

Findings

The data analysis revealed three themes: Positive Leadership Behaviors, Toxic Leadership Behaviors, and Negative Impacts on Employees. These

themes reflected how a leader's emotional intelligence, or lack thereof, influenced job satisfaction and employee retention in this Southern California university department. The two research questions explored whether employees perceived their leaders as emotionally intelligent, looking at behaviors or actions identified by employees as indicative of high or low emotional intelligence and how these actions or behaviors impacted employee retention. Data from the Emotional Intelligence Assessment survey from Harvard Business School Publishing 2005 survey and interviews captured the participants' perception of their leader's emotional intelligence and the experiences that created those perceptions. Additional retention questions were added to the interview portion to support the research questions.

Research Question 1

What specific behaviors or actions of leaders are identified by employees as indicative of high or low emotional intelligence?

Positive Leadership Behaviors

The findings of this study suggest that department leaders who demonstrated behaviors indicative of high emotional intelligence contributed positively to employee satisfaction and retention. These behaviors, observed across the emotional intelligence domains of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management, align with Goleman et al. (2002) framework and reveal why leaders with high emotional intelligence are

essential to employee satisfaction and retention and the university's overall success.

Department leaders who demonstrated self-awareness, mainly through accurate self-assessment, clearly understood their strengths and limitations. According to Goleman (1998, 2000, 2004, 2005), accurate self-assessment is critical to emotional intelligence and effective leadership. It involves being open to feedback, knowing where you excel, and recognizing areas that require growth. Participants highlighted a few department leaders who were aware of their emotionally driven behavior and demonstrated self-awareness, sharing how these behaviors positively contributed to their job satisfaction and retention in the department.

Participant 2 praised their leader for remaining composed, professional, and calm during high-intensity meetings. "I have seen my supervisor in some very high, intense meetings where they have been very composed." Participant 10 shared an example when "employees were getting a little antsy, or maybe argumentative. I saw how my leader took things in a calm manner instead of getting reactive." Employees appreciated their leader's ability to remain composed and professional during high-stress situations while maintaining clear, thoughtful, and effective communication. Those leaders who modeled self-awareness in the department created enhanced job satisfaction and retention according to employees.

A few department leaders demonstrated strong self-management, particularly in emotional self-control and transparency. According to Goleman (1998, 2000, 2004, 2005), self-management involves managing emotions, expressing them appropriately, and maintaining control under pressure. These leaders demonstrated their ability to control emotions by reacting thoughtfully to situations, thus creating positive employee relationships. Employees shared positive experiences with their leaders' ability to exhibit emotions to create a collaborative and friendly work environment. Participant 2 said, "My supervisor has always said it's an open door. Feel free. To me, that's showing that we're cared for... It's always an open door, and we can always come in and discuss our feelings." Leaders demonstrated the ability to control their emotions, creating a collaborative work environment where employees wanted to come to work.

These leaders also showed honesty and integrity, admitted mistakes, and communicated transparently. This behavior was evident in one of the examples shared by the employee of their leader being transparent in a meeting with a campus partner. Participant 9 noted, "To me, that was acting with integrity being able to admit, 'I don't have the answer,' but someone on my team does," highlighting the leader's transparency and willingness to depend on their team member's strengths. Employees reported that their leaders' ability to manage their emotions and maintain integrity positively impacted their work experience and desire to stay employed at the university. Employees who rated their leaders

high in self-management shared examples of how their leaders created healthy work environments of support and trust.

Some of the department's leaders exhibited social awareness competencies, specifically empathy, which Goleman considers a foundational emotional intelligence competency. Employees felt their leaders could sense and respond to their emotions, understand their perspectives, and show genuine concern for their ideas. Participant 3 shared a personal example: "I would say that they eased the tension in my stress a lot, saying like, 'Hey, health comes first.' They made a point to say, like, worry about you; you're still handling your job fine." This leader's ability to show empathy reduced the employee's stress and made them feel valued and cared for personally and professionally.

Participant 2 shared an example of their leader's receptiveness to feedback for marketing ideas, stating, "I come with various marketing ideas, and they're always received very well... I always get really good feedback." Leaders' sensitivity to their employee's emotions created an environment where employees felt valued and supported. The leaders' ability to sense and respond to their employees and show interest in their concerns and ideas strengthened employee satisfaction and commitment to the university.

In relationship management, most leaders supported professional development and collaboration and were viewed as having high emotional intelligence. Goleman (1998, 2000, 2004, 2005) emphasizes that leaders who encourage professional growth and teamwork demonstrate emotional intelligence

by creating an environment where employees feel valued, empowered, and motivated. Leaders provide their employees with various opportunities for professional development, such as job shadowing, professional conferences, and taking on new projects, keeping them engaged.

Many employees shared experiences of their leader's collaborative approach, highlighting an "open door policy" inviting input on meeting agendas and encouraging teamwork. Leaders also promoted collaboration by empowering their employees to work together on projects outside of the department meetings. Employees appreciated these efforts and praised their leaders for trusting them. They noted that the leaders who focused on development and collaboration increased their satisfaction and desire to stay with the organization.

In answering the research question, "What specific behaviors or actions of these leaders are identified by employees as indicative of high or low emotional intelligence," the findings suggest that leaders with high emotional intelligence demonstrated several positive leadership behaviors and actions. These actions included self-awareness through accurate self-assessment, where leaders understood their strengths and limitations; emotional self-control, managing their emotions effectively, even under pressure; and empathy, sensing and responding to their employees' emotions and needs.

Leaders also demonstrated transparency by being honest and open in their communication with their employees, fostering an environment of trust. Employees cited examples of their leaders actively listening to their concerns and

ideas, making them feel valued and supported. Moreover, these leaders promoted a collaborative work environment and provided their employees with various professional development opportunities, empowering employees to grow. These positive leadership behaviors created a supportive work environment where employees were happy to come to work and were inspired by their leaders, ultimately contributing to job satisfaction and retention in the department.

Toxic Leadership Behaviors

This study's findings suggest that department leaders with low emotional intelligence significantly negatively impacted employee satisfaction and retention in the department. Leaders displayed toxic leadership behaviors across the emotional intelligence domains of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. The toxic leadership behaviors identified included the inability to accurately self-assess, a lack of emotional self-control, a lack of empathy, and ineffective communication. These behaviors created what employees described as a toxic work environment, decreasing morale and high employee turnover.

Most employees in the department felt that their leaders lacked self-awareness, specifically in the ability to accurately self-assess. These leaders failed to recognize how their emotionally driven behaviors impacted their employees. For example, Participant 1 said, "The leader did not recognize negative emotions in conversations or didn't see anything wrong with them." Participant 14 shared a similar opinion: "No. That's a definite no... It definitely had

a negative effect because they didn't recognize when it was an emotional response versus a logical response... They pitted people against each other for their personal gain." This inability to manage their emotions and adjust their behavior contributed to a hostile work environment. Leaders who lack self-awareness create instability in the team and negatively impact employee morale and retention (Goleman, 1998, 2000, 2004, 2005).

Participants shared several examples of how their leaders lacked self-management, specifically emotional self-control. Employees shared experiences of leaders reacting impulsively and emotionally, leading to outbursts of anger, hostile behavior, and accusatory statements. For example, Participant 6 described, "They just kept repeatedly asking me over and over, 'Why would you do that?' until I was in tears... They are not able to read people and see how their behavior is affecting others." Similarly, Participant 11 shared, "I have personally witnessed this in meetings, outbursts, and very negative emotional energies... You never knew what to expect or who would be the target." Participant 13 recounted, "We actually had a shouting match in a meeting... It was embarrassing. People stopped coming into my office... It put me under a microscope, and I broke down at work. I couldn't do it anymore." Participant 14 added, "I saw them act that way towards others quite a bit... they eviscerated someone in a meeting, and it was so harsh and mean that I had to follow up afterward to make sure they were okay... It was very hard. I still have survivor's guilt about leaving. I felt like I left people behind in a war zone."

These employee experiences demonstrate the profound emotional toll leaders' inability to control their negative emotions had on employees. This created an environment of fear, stress, instability, and emotional exhaustion. Several employee experiences cited words like hostile, traumatic, tears, mental breakdown, and others, highlighting the severe mental impact negative leadership can have on employees. The leader's inability to manage emotions created a toxic work environment, resulting in high employee turnover.

Another prominent issue among the leaders in this department was a lack of social awareness, specifically empathy. Employees reported that their leaders failed to recognize or respond to their emotional needs, making them feel neglected and undervalued. For example, Participant 1 shared, "I felt that the leader did not have any concern regarding anybody's feelings. It was nearly impossible to detect whether the person had any positive feelings. They would definitely express negative feelings." This feeling was echoed by Participant 5, stating that when they *"shared feelings of drowning, the response was, well, practice holding your breath. The conversation was devoid of empathy, and I was looking for some ray of hope or support, but it wasn't there."* The leaders in this department could not empathize with their employees. Several employees stated in the interviews that their leader had no emotions.

Similarly, Participant 7 recounted a disheartening experience when their leader ignored their illness: *"No, my leader did not respond to my feelings. I was at work with a fever of 104, visibly sick, and I was told to complete my job tasks*

before going home.” The leader completely ignored the employee's illness and showed no empathy or consideration for the employee's personal well-being. Participant 12 experienced something similar in a meeting, stating, “I became emotional in a meeting after vague and unclear information was presented to me. I asked for more specifics, but my feelings were dismissed, and I was not given any details to defend myself or address the issue.” This lack of empathy from these leaders in the department contributed to feelings of isolation and disengagement, further damaging team morale.

Employees shared that their leaders' inability to connect emotionally directly impacted their job satisfaction and decision to leave the university. As Goleman (1998, 2000, 2004, 2005) explains, it quickly becomes evident that leaders who lack empathy cannot build strong relationships, which is critical for retaining employees. Empathy is a critical leadership skill. Leaders must be able to build relationships, understand the needs of their employees, resolve conflict, inspire loyalty, and communicate effectively to build positive work environments that inspire loyalty, all of which require empathetic leadership.

Some leaders in the department struggled with relationship management, particularly communication. Several employees described ineffective communication, with leaders failing to convey information. Employees shared experiences where they felt “interrogated” in meetings and conversations because the leader would assume they knew information that was not communicated to them by the leader. This poor communication led to

misunderstandings, frustration, and, ultimately, a breakdown in trust. Employees not only felt like they were being intimidated, accused, or harassed in communication, but they also felt their leaders did not listen to their concerns or value their input, compounding their dissatisfaction. Participant 1 shared that the leader “would ask for ideas, but if they didn’t mirror theirs, they were disregarded.” Ineffective communication and disinterest in employees’ concerns and ideas from leadership weakened the team morale and contributed to a toxic work environment.

The study’s findings suggest that several department leaders have low emotional intelligence, as evidenced by their inability to accurately self-assess, lack of emotional self-control, absence of empathy, and ineffective communication. This created a toxic work environment, significantly impacting employee satisfaction and retention in this department.

Research Question 2

How does a leader’s emotional intelligence impact employee retention?

Negative Impacts on Employees

The findings revealed that leaders with low emotional intelligence exhibited toxic leadership behaviors, which hurt employee well-being and retention. Several employees reported not feeling worthy or capable, feeling anxious, physically ill, and mentally strained due to their leader’s inability to regulate their emotions. Participant 14 shared, “My job, 100% number one job,

was to create psychological safety with my team because they didn't have it... I felt like we were at war every day." Participant 1 shared a similar feeling:

There was a continuous number of people who potentially went through something similar to what I went through... There were at least two other people who were ousted... because of the pressure the leader put on by accusing people of things.

Several employees shared experiences where their leaders engaged in harassing, accusatory, and interrogative communication either with them or witnessed this happen to their colleagues in meetings, leaving them feeling on edge, significantly impacting their mental health and ability to perform effectively at work.

The toxic work environment contributed to employees feeling disengaged and unmotivated. The constant harassment, belittling, false accusations, and negative interactions with their leaders created an environment of fear and anxiety. Employees lost their passion for their work and were afraid to make mistakes and become the next "target." This toxic work environment eradicated creativity and innovation according to employees. The implications here are twofold: Employees will be intimidated out of developing creative solutions to potential setbacks they encounter and may lose their resolve to ensure accuracy in the day-to-day tasks.

Moreover, many employees felt so stressed by their leaders' toxic behaviors that they felt they had no choice but to leave the department. Reports

of a lack of trust, false accusations, harassment, and public belittlement pushed several employees to quit. Participant 14 stated, "I couldn't stay. I couldn't stay in that environment. I didn't have to quit then. I could have just kept my head down and dealt with it... But I sat down with my family, and I said, "I cannot do this anymore." Similarly, Participant 11 explained, "I left after 14 years. Several of my colleagues left actively and explained to University HR that it was because of the lack of support and what they envisioned or perceived as a toxic environment."

Participant 12 echoed these sentiments,

I ended up leaving. I did not stay because once you lose trust and respect for your leader, and there's a level of contention, you know that you have to leave. I saw many people before me not be successful in trying to protect themselves, so I saw no hope.

Participant 1 recalled, "There were at least two other people who were ousted... I use the word 'ousted' purposefully because of the pressure the leader put on by accusing people of things." Likewise, Participant 13 shared, "I was basically pushed out of my position, having someone else come in at the same level as me and being in my office while I was in a cubicle without really any say... It was embarrassing and degrading."

In some cases, employees left for positions they did not necessarily want or left the university despite many years of service or nearing retirement to escape the emotionally toxic environment. The overwhelming stress made staying in the department impossible for many, leading to their departure in

search of healthier work conditions. The impacts of such turnover lead to the loss of historical institutional knowledge, loss of revenue given the ongoing need to retrain and onboard new hires, and ultimately, damage to what could have been long-term organizational team members.

In conclusion, the evidence in this study supports the need for emotionally intelligent leaders. There is a relationship between a leader's emotional intelligence and their impact on employee satisfaction and retention. The study's findings suggest that leaders in this department with low emotional intelligence significantly negatively impacted employee retention by creating a toxic work environment filled with anxiety, stress, and disengagement. The leaders' inability to regulate their emotions, combined with harassing and ineffective communication, left employees feeling demoralized and led many to leave their positions. Eight of the 14 participants stated they explicitly left this department because of their leader's toxic behaviors and work environment.

This trend highlights how emotionally intelligent leadership is crucial for creating a positive workplace culture and reducing turnover. The absence of these qualities can lead to dissatisfaction and high employee attrition. The apparent correlation identified through these experiences and the subsequent negative impact on employees highlights the critical need for organizations to require leaders to complete ongoing emotional intelligence training. Additionally, leaders can consider annual feedback surveys highlighting critical areas for assessment and improvement.

Limitations

Limitations are circumstances beyond the researcher's control. The study was limited by external factors such as organizational changes, subjectivity, self-report bias, and weakness in generalizability.

Single Institutional Focus

The first study's limitation was its limited generalizability due to the research's focus on a specific small group and context. The study was conducted at one university in Southern California; therefore, the findings and conclusions of this study may apply only to the specific university described by the participants and may reflect the specific culture, leadership styles, and organizational environment unique to that institution. This limitation complicates the application of the study findings to larger groups or different organizational settings. Expanding the organizational scope, size, and geographic location could address this limitation.

Self-Reported Data

This study gathered information based on participants' accounts through surveys and interviews. However, when individuals report on their own experiences, their responses may be influenced by what they think is expected or socially acceptable rather than being completely honest. This social desirability bias could impact the reliability of the findings.

Potential Bias in Interview Responses

Participants volunteered to participate in the follow-up interviews. Those who participated in the interviews may have strong positive or negative feelings or opinions about their leaders, which could alter the results, representing a selection bias. Those who chose not to participate in the interviews may have provided different perspectives and insights.

Emotional Intelligence Assessment

Although Harvard Business School Publishing created and released the Emotional Intelligence Assessment evaluation in 2005, there is no supporting research about the effectiveness or reliability of the instrument.

While the Emotional Intelligence Assessment from Harvard Business School Publishing was used as a 360-degree evaluation tool, the decision to keep participants' identities anonymous was a limitation. The researcher did not know which participant completed which assessment, which, in hindsight, limited the researcher's ability to link the survey responses to participants who went on to participate in the follow-up interviews. This lack of identification reduced the opportunity to explore the individual experiences in the interviews further, building on the survey findings and potentially making the study less comprehensive and robust than intended.

Leadership Turnover or Organizational Changes

Former employees may have evaluated leaders who were no longer at the university when the study was conducted. Therefore, their responses may reflect

a prior organizational culture, which may differ from the current environment. As a result, the feedback may not represent the current leadership or culture of the study setting as it exists today. It is essential to consider this possible discrepancy, particularly when comparing the opinions of present employees.

Subjectivity

The final limitation of the study involves subjectivity. Qualitative research relies on the researcher's interpretation of the data, which personal biases, assumptions, and beliefs may influence. This possibility creates challenges in ensuring the study's validity and reliability.

Summary

While this study aimed to contribute to the existing body of knowledge, it is essential to acknowledge its limitations. This research applied the framework of Goleman et al. (2002) for assessing emotional intelligence within leadership roles in one higher education institution. Therefore, the findings of this study may not be universally generalizable beyond the environment of this defined setting. This intentional restriction is necessary to provide a focused and in-depth exploration of the impact of emotional intelligence on leadership within the higher education setting.

Recommendations for Universities

This study's findings highlight several ways universities can implement strategies to improve the emotional intelligence of their leaders. To address

these findings, the following recommendations provide strategies to help university leaders develop emotional intelligence, which is critical in creating a positive work environment and enhancing job satisfaction and retention.

An essential first step for universities would be to include emotional intelligence soft skills as required in all job postings for leadership roles. This would indicate to potential candidates that the institution values emotional intelligence in its leaders. By clearly mentioning self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management competencies, such as empathy, active listening, conflict resolution, adaptability, collaboration, effective communication, and self-regulation, universities can attract candidates who understand the importance of emotionally intelligent leadership. This support ensures that new leaders align with the institution's commitment to creating an empathetic, collaborative, and emotionally aware workplace culture.

Building on this foundation, the following recommendation is for universities to create professional development training programs focused on the four domains of emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. Leaders at all levels should be required to participate in these programs upon hire. By equipping leaders with the tools to improve their emotional intelligence, universities can develop a leadership culture that makes them more emotionally aware and better equipped to lead effectively.

In addition to creating professional development training for all leaders to complete upon hire, ongoing leadership development workshops should be created and offered to all employees to develop emotional intelligence skills. These workshops focus on empathy, conflict resolution, stress management, and communication, ensuring that employees and leaders have ongoing opportunities to strengthen their emotional intelligence through regular practice and reflection.

I further recommend creating coaching and mentorship programs for leaders, where they can receive personalized feedback on their emotional intelligence. One-on-one coaching with experienced mentors can help leaders with low emotional intelligence improve their emotional intelligence in real-world situations, allowing for competency-specific development.

Additionally, universities should incorporate emotional intelligence, the “soft skills” of leadership, into the performance evaluation process. By including emotional intelligence in leaders’ performance reviews, universities can stress the importance of relationship management and emotional regulation in achieving team success and effective leadership.

Lastly, universities should create an organizational culture that promotes emotional intelligence at every level. By creating an environment that encourages open communication, empathy, and strong interpersonal relationships, universities can support the development of emotionally intelligent leaders and create a more supportive, positive work culture. By implementing these recommendations, universities can build emotionally intelligent leadership teams.

Emotionally intelligent leaders can build strong relationships, make sound decisions, inspire and motivate their teams, create positive work environments, and create a positive workplace culture that increases employee satisfaction and retention.

Recommendations for Future Research

First, explore the role of cultural differences on emotional intelligence. Future studies could examine if or how cultural differences may impact how emotional intelligence is seen in leadership. As emotional intelligence may be interpreted differently across cultural perspectives, exploring how these differences impact effective leadership and employee satisfaction would be valuable.

Second, focus on the leaders' emotional intelligence training program's effectiveness. Future studies can explore the impact of targeted emotional intelligence training programs for leaders to assess whether these programs strengthened leaders' self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management competencies and led to measurable improvements in job satisfaction and employee retention.

Third, conduct a comparative study across different sectors. Studies could compare leaders' emotional intelligence and impact on employee satisfaction and retention in corporate settings, non-profit organizations, and higher education. Understanding whether emotional intelligence has a similar or different impact on

staff retention across different sectors could benefit customized leadership development programs.

Fourth, examine the influence of organizational culture on leadership emotional intelligence. A study could explore organizational culture changes, particularly how leadership changes in higher-level positions (such as a dean or CEO) influence mid-level or department leaders' emotional intelligence and leadership style. It would be interesting to discern how changes in the organizational environment affect leaders' behaviors, their relationships with employees, and how they are perceived by staff over time. Additionally, such research could examine the relationship between a leader's emotional intelligence and how they adapt their leadership style in response to organizational culture changes

APPENDIX A
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL LETTER

From: do-not-reply@cayuse.com <do-not-reply@cayuse.com>
Sent: Thursday, May 2, 2024 4:22 PM
To: Jay Fiene <jfiene@csusb.edu>; Stacia McCambridge <smccambr@csusb.edu>
Subject: IRB-FY2024-312 - Initial: IRB Expedited Review Approval Letter



May 2, 2024

CSUSB INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
Expedited Review
IRB-FY2024-312
Status: Approved

Prof. Jayray Fiene and Ms. Stacia McCambridge
COE - Educ Leadership&Tech ELT, CECE-Student Service
California State University, San Bernardino
5500 University Parkway
San Bernardino, California 92407

Dear Prof. Jayray Fiene and Ms. Stacia McCambridge:

Your application to use human subjects, titled "Exploring the Impact of Leaders' Emotional Intelligence on Employee Retention and Job Satisfaction: An Employee-Centric Perspective," has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of CSU, San Bernardino. The CSUSB IRB has weighed the risk and benefits of the study to ensure the protection of human participants. The study is approved as of May 2, 2024. The study will require an annual administrative check-in (annual report) on the current status of the study on May 2, 2025. Please use the renewal form to complete the annual report.

This approval notice does not replace any departmental or additional campus approvals which may be required including access to CSUSB campus facilities and affiliate campuses. Investigators should consider the changing COVID-19 circumstances based on current CDC, California Department of Public Health, and campus guidance and submit appropriate protocol modifications to the IRB as needed. CSUSB campus and affiliate health screenings should be completed for all campus human research related activities. Human research activities conducted at off-campus sites should follow CDC, California Department of Public Health, and local guidance. See CSUSB's [COVID-19 Prevention Plan](#) for more information regarding campus requirements.

If your study is closed to enrollment, the data has been de-identified, and you're only analyzing the data - you may close the study by submitting the Closure Application Form through the Cayuse Human Ethics (IRB) system. The Cayuse system automatically reminds you at 90, 60, and 30 days before the study is due for renewal or submission of your annual report (administrative check-in). The modification, renewal, study closure, and unanticipated/adverse event forms are located in the Cayuse system with instructions provided on the IRB Applications, Forms, and Submission Webpage. Failure to notify the IRB of the following requirements may result in disciplinary action. Please note a lapse in your approval may result in your not being able to use the data collected during the lapse in the application's approval period.

You are required to notify the IRB of the following as mandated by the Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP) federal regulations 45 CFR 46 and CSUSB IRB policy.

- Ensure your CITI Human Subjects Training is kept up-to-date and current throughout the study.
- Submit a protocol modification (change) if any changes (no matter how minor) are proposed in your study for review and approval by the IRB before being implemented in your study.
- Notify the IRB within 5 days of any unanticipated or adverse events are experienced by subjects during your research.
- Submit a study closure through the Cayuse IRB submission system once your study has ended.

The CSUSB IRB has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risks and benefits to the human participants in your IRB application. If you have any questions about the IRB's decision please contact Michael Gillespie, the IRB Compliance Officer. Mr. Michael Gillespie can be reached by phone at (909) 537-7588, by fax at (909) 537-7028, or by email at mjg@esr@csusb.edu. Please include your application approval number IRB-FY2024-312 in all correspondence. Any complaints you receive regarding your research from participants or others should be directed to Mr. Gillespie.

Best of luck with your research.

Sincerely,

King-To Yeung

King-To Yeung, Ph.D., IRB Chair

APPENDIX B
SURVEY INFORMED CONSENT



College of Education
Office of Doctoral Studies

INFORMED CONSENT: SURVEY

The study in which you are being asked to participate is designed to investigate how a leader's emotional intelligence impacts employee retention from a subordinate's perspective. Stacia McCambridge is conducting this study under the supervision of Jay Fiene, Ph.D., Professor of Education Leadership at California State University, San Bernardino. This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board, California State University, San Bernardino.

This Emotional Intelligence Assessment survey will be used to collect data for a qualitative phenomenological study to explore and understand employees' lived experiences, perceptions, and meanings associated with their leader's emotional intelligence in the workplace context, particularly its influence on employee retention at CSUSB. The study hopes to capture this population's lived experiences by allowing them to share their voices and experiences at the university. Through this study, the researcher hopes to better understand leaders' emotional intelligence and its impact on employee retention.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to complete an online survey. The survey will be conducted using Qualtrics, a web-based software tool provided by CSUSB. The survey's purpose is to assess your leader's emotional intelligence. Participants will answer a series of questions based on their perception of their leader using a Likert scale rating system. For each question or statement, participants choose from 1) strongly disagree, 2) disagree, 3) neither agree nor disagree, 4) agree, or 5) strongly agree.

Participation is completely voluntary, and you may skip or not answer any questions and can withdraw from participation at any time. Participants who stop answering the questions or terminate one's participation will not negatively affect one's employment at CSUSB. You can withdraw any of your responses within one week after the transcripts are shared with you. The research has been approved by the CSUSB Institutional Review Board (IRB).

All of your responses will be confidential. This consent form and will be placed in a password-protected Google Cloud service provided by CSUSB. One year after the conclusion of this research project, all video and audio recordings will be deleted. One copy of this consent form is for you to keep for your records. The paper(s) to be written will report on your gender and lived experiences at your place of employment; however, the researcher will use pseudonyms and not reveal your identity.

The survey will take 30 to 45 minutes. A follow-up interview will be requested; however, participation is not required. The researcher recognizes that there may be some potential emotional distress in this study if, for example, the recollection of some experiences brings up

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Maritime Academy • Monterey Bay • Northridge • Pomona • Sacramento • San Bernardino • San Diego • San Francisco • San Jose • San Luis Obispo • San Marcos • Sonoma • Stanislaus



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uncomfortable or negative experiences. As a precaution, CSUSB campus counseling and psychological resources will be shared at the conclusion of the survey.

If you have any questions, need to report anything, or require further information on your rights, please contact the primary investigator and advisor, Jay Fiene, Ph.D., Professor of Education, California State University, San Bernardino at (JFiene@csusb.edu) or (909) 537-7621 (office).

All research results will be available via ScholarWorks, an open-access institutional repository that showcases and preserves the research, scholarship, and publications of California State University, San Bernardino faculty, staff, and students. The repository is a John M. Pfau Library service and can be found at <http://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/> and at 5500 University Parkway, San Bernardino, CA 92407.

By signing below, I confirm that I have been informed of the study and understand its purpose and nature.

I understand that I must be 18 years of age or older to participate in your study. I have read and understand the consent document and agree to participate in your study.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

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APPENDIX C
INTERVIEW INFORMED CONSENT

STUDENT INFORMED CONSENT: INTERVIEWS

The study in which you are being asked to participate is designed to investigate how a leader's emotional intelligence impacts employee retention from a subordinate's perspective. Stacia McCambridge is conducting this study under the supervision of Jay Fiene, Ph.D., Professor of Education Leadership at California State University, San Bernardino. This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board, California State University, San Bernardino.

This interview's purpose is to collect data for a qualitative phenomenological study to explore and understand employees' lived experiences, perceptions, and meanings associated with their leader's emotional intelligence in the workplace context, particularly its influence on employee retention in one of the six colleges at California State University, San Bernardino. The study hopes to capture this population's lived experiences by allowing them to share their voices and experiences at the university. Through this study, the researcher also hopes to center the participants' voices and report back to campus, informing leadership of the findings related to employee retention.

The interviews will be conducted via Zoom, a video conferencing platform. This platform allows for simultaneous video recording and transcribing of interviews while ensuring privacy, given that each participant can only access the interview with a private link and password provided by the researcher. Participants will be asked to complete an Emotional Intelligence Assessment from Harvard Business School Publishing (2005) to rate their leader's emotional intelligence. Participants will then answer semi-structured, open-ended, conversational questions about their lived experiences.

Participation is completely voluntary, and you may skip or not answer any questions and can withdraw from participation at any time. Participants who stop answering the questions or terminate one's participation will not negatively affect one's employment at CSUSB. The interviews will be scheduled at a time that is convenient for you. In addition, the information you provide will be transcribed and shared with you for your approval before being incorporated into the study's text. You can withdraw any of your responses within one week after the transcripts are shared with you. The research has been approved by the CSUSB Institutional Review Board (IRB).

All of your responses will be confidential. This consent form and the voice and video recording files will be placed in a password-protected Google Cloud service provided by CSUSB. One year after the conclusion of this research project, all video and audio recordings will be deleted. One copy of this consent form is for you to keep for your records. The paper(s) to be written will report on your gender and lived experiences at your place of employment;

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however, the researcher will use pseudonyms and not reveal your identity.

The interviews will take between 30 to 45 minutes. If additional time is needed, a separate interview will be scheduled at your convenience and only with your approval. Again, you are not obligated to participate in any follow-up interviews. The researcher recognizes that there may be some potential emotional distress in this study if, for example, the recollection of some experiences brings up uncomfortable or negative experiences. As a precaution, CSUSB campus counseling and psychological resources will be shared at the conclusion of the interviews.

If you have any questions, need to report anything, or require further information on your rights, please contact the primary investigator and advisor, Jay Fiene, Ph.D., Professor of Education, California State University, San Bernardino at (JFiene@csusb.edu) or (909) 537-7621 (office).

All research results will be available via ScholarWorks, an open-access institutional repository that showcases and preserves the research, scholarship, and publications of California State University, San Bernardino faculty, staff, and students. The repository is a John M. Pfau Library service and can be found at <http://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/> and at 5500 University Parkway, San Bernardino, CA 92407.

By signing below, I confirm that I have been informed of the study and understand its purpose and nature.

I understand that I must be 18 years of age or older to participate in your study. I have read and understand the consent document and agree to participate in your study.

I understand this research will be Video and Voice Recorded Initials _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

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APPENDIX D
EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENT

Emotional Intelligence Assessment

(Emotional Intelligence domains will not be shared with participants)

Qualifying Demographics

1. Are you Male or Female (optional)? (Male or Female)
2. What is your age range? (18-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-65)
3. How long have you worked at the university, or if you are no longer employed, how long were you employed there?

An Informed Consent form was inserted before the participant took the assessment via Qualtrics.

Purpose

Assess your leader's strengths in four areas of emotional intelligence based on your (employee) perception of your leader.

Instructions

Answer each statement based on your perception of your leader. Mark the number to indicate whether you 1) strongly disagree, 2) disagree, 3) neither agree nor disagree, 4) agree, or 5) strongly agree.

A. (self-awareness)	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree	
	1	2	3	4	5
My leader recognizes his/her emotions and their effect on my job performance.					
My leader has a strong sense of self-worth.					
My leader knows his/her strengths and limitations.					
My leader is aware of the impact of his/her emotions on others' feelings and behavior.					
B. (Self-management)					
My leader can keep disruptive emotions under control.					
My leader is willing to take calculated risks.					
My leader acts with honesty and integrity in his/her dealings with others.					
My leader is optimistic and expects that changes in the future will be for the better.					
C. (Social awareness)					
My leader is adept at understanding the meaning of office politics.					
My leader senses others' feelings and perspectives.					
My leader takes an active interest in others' concerns.					

My leader understands the values that the company embraces.					
D. (Relationship management)					
My leader builds strong personal bonds.					
My leader can communicate clearly and convincingly.					
My leader inspires and guides others with a shared mission.					
My leader is skilled at disarming conflicts.					

Goleman , D. (2005). Emotional Intelligence Assessment. Harvard Business School Publishing.

APPENDIX E
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview Questions

Expansion of Emotional Intelligence Assessment

(Emotional intelligence domains will not be shared with participants)

Emotional Intelligence

A. (Self-awareness)

- 1) Does your leader recognize their own emotionally driven behavior and the potential impact on your feelings and behavior? (Y/N)
 - i. Would you say your leader's behavior, triggered by their emotions, has/had a positive effect on your job satisfaction and desire to stay with the university?
 - a) Please elaborate, explain, and share an experience as to how your leader's behavior guided your actions/decisions.
 - ii. Would you say your leader's behavior, triggered by their emotions, has/had a negative effect on your job satisfaction and desire to stay with the university?
 - a) Please elaborate, explain, and share an experience as to how your leader's behavior guided your actions/decisions.

B. (Self-management)

- 1) Does your leader act with honesty and integrity (truthful, ethical, trustworthy) toward you? (Y/N)
 - i. If yes,
 - a) Share an experience when your leader exhibited an open, honest characteristic.
 - b) Share an experience when you witnessed your leader acting with integrity.
 - ii. If no,
 - a) Share an experience as to why you believe your leader did not act honestly.
 - b) Describe the actions of your leader that you believe demonstrate a lack of integrity.
- 2) Have you personally experienced your leader exhibiting disruptive emotions toward you or others? (Y/N)
 - i. If yes,
 - a) Did these emotions create an uneasy work environment?
 - b) Did these emotions create thought or a desire to leave the university?
 - ii. If no, in what ways does your leader:
 - a) Exhibit emotions that create a collaborative, friendly work environment.
 - b) Exhibit emotions that create a safe place for open communication.
 - iii. How do/did your leader's emotions affect your desire to stay with the university?

C. (Social awareness)

- 1) Does your leader sense or respond to your feelings? (Y/N)
 - i. If yes,
 - a) Share an experience when your leader acknowledged your feelings or emotions.

- ii. If no,
 - a) Share an experience when your leader did not realize your feelings or emotions.
 - b) Or when you had expressed your feelings/emotions and your leader ignored them.
- iii. How does/ did this affect your desire to stay employed at the university?
- 2) Does your leader take an active interest in your concerns or ideas? (Y/N)
 - i. If yes,
 - a) Share an experience when your leader openly considered your concerns or ideas.
 - ii. If no,
 - a) Does your leader not acknowledge your concerns or ideas even though you express them?
 - b) Or does your leader not solicit your concerns or ideas?
 - iii. How does this affect your desire to stay employed at the university?
- D. (Relationship management)
 - 1) Does your leader openly and effectively communicate with you? (Y/N) How so? Please share an example.
 - 2) Does your leader take an interest in you as a person? (Y/N) How so?
 - 3) Does your leader inspire you? (Y/N) How so?
 - 4) Does your leader make you feel valued? (Y/N) How so?

Retention

1. In what ways has your leader allowed/given opportunities for you to learn and grow?
2. Do you understand what your leader expects of you? (Y/N) How or Why not?
3. Do you feel your daily work is valuable/important? (Y/N)
4. Have you ever experienced a situation where a leader's actions negatively or positively affected your job satisfaction or desire to stay with the university?
If so, could you elaborate on that experience?
5. Does your leader's behavior and communication style contribute to creating a positive work environment?
6. In what ways does your leader exhibit specific traits or behaviors that you believe are effective in retaining team members?
7. How has your leader encouraged or discouraged your desire to stay employed at the university?
8. Have you ever left a job because of your leader? If so, could you elaborate on that experience?

Parker, A, Lisa, 2019 Emotional intelligence: A descriptive study of how employees' describe the impact of leader emotional intelligence on the employees' performance (Doctoral dissertation, Grand Canyon University)
ProQuest

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