

LUISS Guido Carli University

Department of Business Administration

**The Calm in the Chaos: How Emotional Intelligence in  
Leaders Reduces Workplace Conflict and Enhances  
Productivity**

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# **Chapter 1. Introduction**

## **1.1. Background and Relevance of the Study**

Organizations operating in today's fast-paced business environment need to address both strategic decision-making challenges and interpersonal relationship management issues. The modern workplace faces its biggest challenge in handling human relationships effectively when employees experience stress, disagreement, and organizational change. Leadership functions as the key element that shapes how conflicts develop and how employees perceive them before resolving them. The ability to understand and manage emotions constructively has become essential for leaders to achieve success in their roles. The workplace success factor of emotional intelligence has become widely recognized because it enables people to understand and manage emotions while using them constructively. Leaders who demonstrate strong emotional intelligence tend to create harmonious work environments which reduce workplace tensions while developing strong teams. Leaders who lack emotional intelligence tend to create worsening team morale and conflicts that result in negative organizational outcomes including decreased productivity and employee retention rates.

## **1.2. Problem Statement**

Conflict in the workplace is a natural occurrence and sometimes even necessary, however, unresolved or poorly managed workplace conflicts lead to negative impacts on employee wellbeing and organizational performance. Numerous studies have proved that emotionally intelligent leaders demonstrate superior abilities to stop conflicts from starting and to reduce their intensity and find solutions to them (Schlaerth et al., 2013; Mayer et al., 2008). Despite that there is still a lack of comprehensive investigations into how emotional intelligence affects both conflict management and employee productivity and performance metrics. In high-pressure and team-based settings where leadership style can have a serious impact on group dynamics and overall efficiency, this research gap becomes highly relevant.

## **1.3. Research Objectives and Questions**

The general aim of this thesis is to assess the significance of emotional intelligence as a factor in leadership and its role in team productivity and conflict resolution within the workplace. This research seeks to contribute to the expanding body of literature about emotional intelligence in organizational settings while, simultaneously, having practical implications for leadership skills development.

The research is guided by the following main questions:

1. How does emotional intelligence in leaders influence the resolution of workplace conflict?
2. Does having an emotionally intelligent leader improve employee productivity and team performance?

To support these questions, the study will explore the following sub-questions:

- What are the emotional intelligence competencies most relevant to conflict management?
- How do employees perceive emotionally intelligent leadership during times of conflict?
- Does poor emotional intelligence in leaders correlate with lower motivation or decreased output in teams?
- How do leadership style and EI interact in shaping organizational outcomes?

#### **1.4. Academic Relevance / Literature Gap**

Attention to the emotional intelligence in organisational behaviour literature has risen over the past two decades, particularly due to the foundational work of Goleman (1995), Mayer & Salovey (1997), and Bar-On (2006). Multiple empirical studies, such as those by Joseph & Newman (2010), have shown a positive correlation between emotional intelligence and work performance, while others like Jordan & Troth (2004) have demonstrated its role in reducing interpersonal conflict. However, most research tends to isolate these outcomes, focusing either on emotional intelligence and conflict or emotional intelligence and performance, rarely both in a unified framework.

This thesis addresses this gap by examining the dual impact of EI on conflict resolution and productivity. For example, the study by Schlaerth et al. (2013) found that emotionally intelligent leaders use collaborative conflict management styles, yet did not examine performance outcomes. Similarly, research by Srivastava (2013) explores EI's role in team cohesion and morale but stops short of linking it directly to productivity metrics. By

combining these threads, this thesis aims to provide a more holistic view of emotional intelligence as a core leadership capability.

Over the last couple of decades, emotional intelligence has become a major focus in organisational behaviour research. Foundational thinkers like Goleman (1995), Mayer & Salovey (1997), and Bar-On (2006) set the stage for this surge of interest. Multiple empirical studies have backed up the relevance of EI—Joseph & Newman (2010) showed a positive link between EI and job performance, while Jordan & Troth (2004) highlighted EI's role in reducing conflict among colleagues. However, there's a pattern of researchers focusing at either how EI affects performance or how it impacts conflict, but not really putting those two outcomes together.

This thesis aims to fill that gap by tackling both angles at once—how emotional intelligence influences both conflict resolution and productivity. For instance, Schlaerth et al. (2013) found that leaders high in EI tend to use collaborative approaches to managing conflict, yet did not dig into whether that translated to better performance. Likewise, Srivastava's (2013) work discusses EI in relation to team morale and cohesion but does not extend so far as to explicitly connect it to productivity measures. By synthesising these strands, this thesis aims to adopt a more holistic view of emotional intelligence as a central leadership skill.

### **1.5. Practical Significance / Managerial Implications**

Knowing how emotional intelligence affects conflict in interpersonal relationships and productivity has significant practical applications for managers, team leaders, and human resource professionals. With companies pouring resources into leadership training and development programs, it is essential that emotional intelligence receive equal attention as



technical and strategic competencies. Research outputs can inform training program design, influence leadership selection criteria, and shape organizational policy on conflict resolution and performance management.

## **1.6. Methodological Overview**

This thesis uses a survey-based quantitative research approach to explore these questions. Employees in different sectors and roles will receive a structured questionnaire to evaluate their impressions of the emotional intelligence, conflict management style, and supposed influence on team output of their leaders. Using descriptive statistics and correlation analysis, data will be examined to find trends and links among the key variables.

## **1.7. Structure of the Thesis**

This thesis is structured as follows:

- Chapter 2 presents a comprehensive literature review covering theories of emotional intelligence, leadership styles, workplace conflict, and employee productivity.
- Chapter 3 outlines the research methodology, including the research design, survey instrument, and data analysis techniques.
- Chapter 4 presents the survey results and statistical findings.
- Chapter 5 discusses the results in the context of the existing literature and explores their practical implications.
- Chapter 6 concludes the study with a summary of key findings, limitations, and

recommendations for future research.

## **Chapter 2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Introduction to the Literature Review**

In contemporary organizational behavior research emotional intelligence (EI) has gained widespread recognition as a critical leadership skill by both scholars and practitioners.

This chapter critically reviews the key theoretical foundations of emotional intelligence and examines how EI manifests in leadership practices, conflict resolution approaches, and its relationship to employee productivity. The literature review provides a foundation for addressing the two core questions of this thesis: (1) How emotional intelligence in leaders influences the resolution of workplace conflict, and (2) Whether emotionally intelligent leadership enhances productivity and team performance.

The review is structured in five main sections. It begins by exploring definitions and models of emotional intelligence. It then investigates the role of EI in leadership effectiveness and conflict management. The next section focuses on the impact of EI on productivity outcomes in the workplace. Finally, the chapter identifies existing gaps in the literature and integrates these concepts to build the rationale for the present study.

### **2.2. The Concept of Emotional Intelligence**

Emotional intelligence (EI) encompasses the capacity to recognize, interpret, regulate, and influence emotions—both within oneself and in others. As a multidimensional construct, EI has undergone significant development over the past thirty years and is now regarded as a critical factor in effective leadership, successful interpersonal dynamics, and overall organizational effectiveness.

The foundational framework of EI was established by Salovey and Mayer (1990), who characterized it as the ability to "observe and assess emotions in oneself and others,

differentiate between them, and apply this understanding to inform decision-making and behavior." Their ability-based model identifies four core dimensions of emotional intelligence:

1. Emotional perception – The skill to accurately identify and interpret emotional cues.
2. Emotional facilitation – The capacity to utilize emotions to enhance cognitive processes.
3. Emotional comprehension – The ability to analyze emotional information and recognize how emotions evolve.
4. Emotional regulation – The proficiency in managing emotions constructively in oneself and others to foster personal and intellectual development (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2004).

Expanding on this framework, Daniel Goleman (1995) introduced a mixed model of emotional intelligence, which gained widespread recognition, particularly in leadership studies. Goleman posited that EI frequently outweighs cognitive intelligence (IQ) in predicting professional success. His model comprises five key dimensions: self-awareness, self-regulation, intrinsic motivation, empathy, and social skills.

Goleman's approach merges cognitive and affective competencies, making it particularly valuable for examining leadership effectiveness. It provides insights into how leaders navigate conflicts, maintain effective communication in high-pressure situations, and shape team dynamics.

An additional influential framework is the Bar-On model (1997), which defines emotional intelligence as a constellation of interconnected emotional and social skills that shape an individual's ability to comprehend and articulate emotions, foster relationships, and manage everyday challenges. Bar-On's trait-based approach delineates five key domains:

intrapersonal abilities (self-awareness, emotional expression), interpersonal skills (empathy, social responsibility), adaptability (problem-solving, flexibility), stress management (impulse control, resilience), and general mood (optimism, emotional stability).

Though these models vary in focus—Salovey and Mayer’s ability-centric approach, Goleman’s leadership-oriented model, and Bar-On’s personality-driven perspective—they collectively affirm that emotional intelligence is a measurable, trainable skill with tangible applications in professional environments. Petrides and Furnham (2001) later refined this discourse by differentiating trait EI (subjective self-reported emotional competencies) from ability EI (objective, performance-measured emotional skills), underscoring the need to integrate both constructs in psychological and organizational studies.

In organizational behavior research, EI is commonly assessed using self-report instruments such as the Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i), Schutte Self-Report EI Test, or performance-based evaluations like the MSCEIT (Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test). While these tools diverge in their conceptualization and measurement of EI, they collectively enable empirical analysis of emotional intelligence in workplace dynamics.

In summary, emotional intelligence has matured into a well-defined construct with diverse theoretical underpinnings and practical relevance. Within leadership, it functions as a pivotal mechanism for strengthening interpersonal dynamics, mitigating workplace stress, and cultivating emotionally intelligent teams. The subsequent section will examine how these EI competencies manifest in effective leadership practices and strategic decision-making.

### **2.3. Emotional Intelligence in Leadership**

Leadership serves as a pivotal determinant in shaping organizational culture, directing team interactions, and attaining strategic objectives. In contemporary leadership studies, emotional intelligence (EI) has emerged as a fundamental capability that significantly impacts a leader's capacity to inspire teams, facilitate effective communication, and navigate complex challenges and conflicts. Empirical evidence consistently indicates that leaders with heightened emotional intelligence demonstrate superior proficiency in fostering positive interpersonal relationships, adapting to dynamic work environments, and sustaining team unity during high-pressure situations (Goleman, 1998; Schlaerth et al., 2013).

Goleman (1998) posited that EI exerts a more substantial influence on leadership effectiveness than either technical skills or conventional cognitive abilities (IQ). His research delineates five critical dimensions of emotional intelligence essential for leadership efficacy:

1. Self-awareness – Recognizing one's emotions and their effects on others
2. Self-regulation – Controlling impulsive reactions and maintaining emotional stability
3. Intrinsic motivation – Pursuing goals with persistence and enthusiasm
4. Empathy – Understanding and valuing team members' emotional perspectives
5. Social competence – Cultivating strong professional networks and collaborative relationships

These competencies equip leaders to address workplace stressors with resilience, enhance employee engagement, and establish a foundation of trust throughout the organization.

Furthermore, research suggests that certain leadership styles exhibit strong correlations with high emotional intelligence, notably transformational, servant, and authentic leadership. Such styles emphasize emotional connection, empathetic leadership, and authentic communication — all hallmarks of emotionally intelligent leadership.

## **Transformational Leadership and EI**

Transformational leadership is characterized by the ability to inspire and motivate followers through a compelling vision and emotional engagement. Bass and Avolio (1994) delineate four key dimensions of this leadership style—idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration—each of which aligns closely with core emotional intelligence competencies. For instance, individualized consideration demands high levels of empathy and self-awareness, while inspirational motivation relies on emotional expressiveness and social skills to foster connection. Empirical research indicates that transformational leaders with elevated EI scores are more likely to cultivate highly satisfied, motivated, and productive teams (Barling, Slater, & Kelloway, 2000).

## **Servant Leadership and EI**

Rooted in Greenleaf's (1977) philosophy, servant leadership prioritizes the needs of employees, emphasizing active listening, empathy, stewardship, and conflict resolution—qualities inherently linked to emotional intelligence. Studies demonstrate that servant leaders with strong EI competencies are particularly effective in mitigating interpersonal tensions and promoting inclusive, psychologically safe work environments (Cerit, 2009; Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006). By accurately perceiving and responding to team members' emotional cues, these leaders prevent misunderstandings and minimize workplace conflict.

## **Authentic Leadership and EI**

Authentic leadership is defined by transparency, ethical clarity, and self-congruence. Such leaders typically exhibit high emotional intelligence, leveraging self-awareness and

emotionally balanced decision-making to maintain integrity. Avolio and Gardner (2005) posit that EI serves as the bedrock for authentic leadership, enabling individuals to navigate ethical dilemmas and sustain trust even in challenging circumstances.

Conversely, leaders deficient in EI often exhibit dysfunctional behaviors, including poor communication, impulsivity, emotional volatility, and an inability to mediate team discord. These tendencies correlate with escalated workplace conflict, diminished morale, and employee disengagement (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2013). In severe cases, low EI leadership fosters toxic work cultures, undermining psychological safety and organizational cohesion.

Emotionally intelligent leaders excel in regulating group dynamics, fostering empathy, and preemptively identifying stress signals. This proactive emotional stewardship allows them to de-escalate tensions early and sustain team performance under pressure.

The extant literature underscores a robust, positive correlation between emotional intelligence and leadership efficacy. EI not only predicts individual leader success but also enhances team functionality and organizational outcomes. The following section will explore how EI equips leaders to manage workplace conflict with constructive, emotionally attuned strategies.

## **2.4. Emotional Intelligence and Conflict Resolution**

Conflict constitutes an inherent element of organizational functioning, emerging from divergent objectives, communication failures, or interpersonal friction. When mismanaged, such conflicts can significantly impair team cohesion, employee morale, and overall performance. Emotional intelligence (EI) has consequently emerged as an essential leadership



competency for addressing workplace disputes, providing leaders with the self-regulation, empathy, and interpersonal skills necessary to convert conflict into constructive dialogue.

Scholars generally categorize workplace conflict into three distinct types. Task conflict arises from disagreements regarding work methods or strategic approaches, while relationship conflict stems from personal tensions and emotional incompatibilities. Process conflict involves disputes concerning role allocations or procedural fairness. Research indicates that while task conflict may occasionally stimulate innovation, relationship and process conflicts typically undermine team effectiveness. Emotionally intelligent leaders demonstrate superior ability to identify these conflict types and implement appropriate, situation-specific responses.

Within conflict situations, two EI competencies prove particularly valuable. Self-awareness enables leaders to recognize their own emotional triggers, thereby preventing reactive escalation. Empathy facilitates perspective-taking, allowing leaders to validate others' viewpoints even during disagreements. Empirical studies confirm that leaders with well-developed EI foster more collaborative problem-solving approaches while minimizing unproductive arguments.

The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument identifies five primary approaches to conflict resolution. Emotionally intelligent leaders tend to favor collaborative and compromising styles, which emphasize mutual understanding and shared solutions. In contrast, leaders with lower EI more frequently resort to competing or avoiding behaviors, approaches that often exacerbate tensions and damage long-term team dynamics.

Beyond influencing actual conflict management behaviors, EI also shapes how others perceive a leader's actions. Leaders who maintain composure under pressure and demonstrate genuine listening are typically viewed as more credible and impartial. This perception

significantly reduces team defensiveness, creating conditions more conducive to effective resolution.

However, emotional intelligence is not without its limitations. Some scholars caution that EI skills can be employed manipulatively, creating a false appearance of empathy while strategically influencing outcomes. This potential misuse highlights the importance of pairing EI with authentic ethical leadership. When employees perceive leaders as emotionally skilled but disingenuous, the benefits of EI may be substantially undermined.

Perhaps most significantly, EI's value extends beyond conflict resolution to include proactive prevention. Leaders with high EI cultivate psychological safety within their teams, creating environments where employees feel respected and comfortable voicing concerns. This preventive aspect, though less frequently discussed in the literature, may represent one of EI's most powerful organizational benefits.

Ultimately, while conflict remains inevitable in organizational settings, emotional intelligence provides leaders with the tools to transform potentially destructive situations into opportunities for growth and innovation. This transformative capacity, rather than mere conflict mitigation, constitutes EI's most compelling contribution to contemporary leadership practice. The following section will examine how these emotionally intelligent approaches to conflict management correlate with measurable outcomes in team productivity and organizational efficiency.

## **2.5. Emotional Intelligence and Workplace Productivity**

Emerging research increasingly demonstrates that emotional intelligence (EI) extends beyond interpersonal dynamics to significantly influence measurable organizational outcomes,

including productivity, employee engagement, and team effectiveness. This section examines how EI contributes to workplace performance through its effects on motivation, communication, and organizational climate.

Goleman's (1998) foundational work established that emotional competencies - particularly self-regulation, motivation, and empathy - serve as critical factors in maintaining workplace focus and resilience. In high-pressure environments, emotionally intelligent leaders demonstrate superior capacity to manage both their own emotions and those of team members, thereby reducing emotional fatigue and minimizing productivity losses. Supporting this, Carmeli's (2003) research revealed that employees with higher EI exhibited greater task performance and organizational adaptability.

At the team level, EI enhances collaborative efficiency by mitigating productivity losses associated with miscommunication and interpersonal conflict. Jordan and Troth's (2004) findings indicate that teams composed of emotionally intelligent members demonstrate greater effectiveness in collaborative tasks and experience fewer disruptions from interpersonal tensions. Furthermore, emotionally intelligent leaders play a pivotal role in shaping productive group dynamics through their ability to manage conflict constructively, deliver emotionally appropriate feedback, and motivate diverse team members.

The relationship between EI and employee engagement represents another critical pathway to enhanced productivity. Miao, Humphrey, and Qian's (2016) meta-analysis established a moderate-to-strong positive correlation between leader EI and both task performance and organizational citizenship behaviors, challenging the perception of EI as merely a "soft" skill. Their findings underscore EI's tangible impact on business outcomes through its effect on employee energy, focus, and commitment.

Conversely, the absence of EI in leadership can significantly impair productivity. Ashkanasy and Daus (2005) demonstrated that leaders who fail to regulate their emotions often create work environments characterized by fear, confusion, and disengagement. Such environments typically experience increased employee withdrawal, burnout, and turnover - all of which carry substantial organizational costs. These findings position EI not only as a performance enhancer but also as a critical risk mitigation tool.

However, the mechanisms linking EI to productivity remain complex and context-dependent. While EI may improve morale and reduce conflict, its impact can be constrained by external factors such as resource limitations, workload pressures, or structural inefficiencies. This thesis seeks to address this gap in the literature by examining EI's role within broader organizational contexts, analyzing both leadership behaviors and employee performance metrics.

An additional consideration involves cultural and generational variations in EI valuation. In hierarchical or high-intensity industries, emotionally expressive leadership may be perceived as incompatible with organizational norms, while creative sectors often prioritize such competencies. This research will explore these potential variations across different professional contexts and demographic groups.

Fundamentally, EI enhances productivity by shaping the emotional landscape of work - influencing how employees perceive their roles, interact with colleagues, and respond to challenges. These psychosocial factors frequently exert greater influence on performance than formal systems of task management or incentive structures.

The following section will synthesize these findings across the domains of EI, leadership, conflict resolution, and productivity to identify theoretical gaps and formulate this study's research questions.

## **2.6. Integration of Emotional Intelligence, Conflict, and Productivity**

The preceding analysis has established emotional intelligence (EI) as a critical factor influencing leadership effectiveness, conflict resolution, and organizational performance. However, scholarly examination of these elements has largely occurred in isolation, creating a significant gap in our understanding of their interconnected nature. This section synthesizes these dimensions into a cohesive theoretical framework to guide the empirical investigation.

Current research demonstrates that EI-equipped leaders excel in identifying and resolving interpersonal tensions (Goleman, 1998; Jordan & Troth, 2004), with effective conflict management subsequently enhancing employee morale and engagement (Rahim, 2002; Schlaerth et al., 2013). Parallel research streams confirm EI's positive association with job satisfaction, motivation, and team performance (Miao et al., 2016; Carmeli, 2003). Yet the potential mediating role of conflict management in translating EI into measurable productivity gains remains underexplored in empirical literature.

This fragmentation reflects a persistent dichotomy in organizational studies that artificially separates relational and performance outcomes. Goleman's (2001) emotional competence framework represents one of the more integrative approaches, proposing that relationship management and performance enhancement constitute interdependent outcomes of emotionally intelligent leadership. However, this theoretical proposition lacks sufficient empirical validation, particularly regarding specific mechanisms linking EI-driven conflict resolution to productivity metrics.

Emerging research offers preliminary support for these relationships. Liu and Liu's (2013) mediation analysis revealed that EI enhances team performance through its influence on

conflict management approaches. While promising, such findings require replication across diverse organizational contexts to establish generalizability. Furthermore, the current literature exhibits two critical limitations:

First, most studies rely on leader self-assessments or external evaluations of EI, neglecting employee perceptions of how managerial emotional intelligence manifests in daily workplace interactions. This oversight is particularly significant given that subordinate interpretations of leadership behaviors fundamentally shape team dynamics and work outcomes.

Second, existing research largely disregards contextual variables that may moderate the EI-conflict-productivity relationship. The efficacy of emotionally intelligent leadership likely varies across: industry sectors (e.g., high-pressure finance versus creative fields), organizational cultures (hierarchical versus flat structures), cultural contexts (collectivist versus individualist orientations).

This study addresses these gaps through three key contributions:

1. Examining the dual impact of leader EI on both conflict resolution quality and productivity outcomes
2. Incorporating employee perspectives on leadership EI and its workplace consequences
3. Analyzing sectoral and role-based variations in these relationships

The resulting framework provides a more nuanced understanding of how emotional intelligence operates in practice, moving beyond universalistic claims to recognize contextual contingencies. These insights will inform practical applications in leadership development programs, conflict management training, and performance optimization strategies.

The subsequent methodology chapter will detail the mixed-methods approach employed to investigate these relationships, including survey instruments, sampling strategy, and analytical techniques designed to capture the complex interplay between emotional intelligence, conflict management, and productivity in organizational settings.

## **2.7. Summary of the Chapter**

This chapter has systematically examined the theoretical and empirical literature surrounding emotional intelligence (EI) and its organizational implications, establishing three key areas of impact: leadership effectiveness, conflict management, and workplace productivity. The analysis began with foundational EI conceptualizations, including Salovey and Mayer's (1990) ability model, Goleman's (1995) competency framework, and Bar-On's (1997) trait approach. These models collectively provide a multidimensional understanding of emotional intelligence, ranging from cognitive-emotional abilities to personality-based dispositions that influence professional conduct.

The review subsequently demonstrated how emotionally intelligent leadership manifests across various leadership paradigms. Transformational, servant, and authentic leadership styles were shown to be particularly enhanced by EI competencies such as emotional self-awareness, empathic concern, and adaptive regulation. These capabilities enable leaders to cultivate psychologically safe work environments, positively influence team dynamics, and navigate stressful situations effectively - competencies that become particularly crucial during conflict situations.

In examining conflict resolution, the analysis revealed consistent patterns between leaders' emotional intelligence and their preferred conflict management approaches. Emotionally intelligent leaders disproportionately favor collaborative and compromising strategies over

avoidant or competitive behaviors, as evidenced through integration with the Thomas-Kilmann conflict framework. This relationship holds across different conflict types (task, relational, and process), suggesting EI's broad applicability in organizational dispute contexts.

The productivity segment substantiated EI's tangible organizational value, with meta-analytic evidence (Miao et al., 2016) confirming moderate-to-strong correlations between leader EI and both individual performance metrics and team effectiveness indicators. However, critical gaps persist in understanding the mediating mechanisms linking EI to productivity gains, particularly through conflict resolution pathways. Additionally, the literature demonstrates a pronounced imbalance toward leader-focused assessments, with insufficient attention to employee perceptions of leadership EI and its downstream effects.

These identified limitations inform this study's threefold contribution:

1. Developing an integrated model connecting leadership EI, conflict resolution quality, and productivity outcomes
2. Incorporating subordinate perspectives to capture lived experiences of emotionally intelligent leadership
3. Examining contextual variations across industries and organizational roles

The subsequent methodology chapter will detail the mixed-methods approach designed to address these research gaps. This will include specification of the survey instrument for capturing employee perceptions, sampling strategy to ensure diverse organizational representation, analytical procedures for testing hypothesized relationships, and ethical protocols governing data collection and handling. By bridging these theoretical and methodological components, the study aims to advance both scholarly understanding and practical applications of emotional intelligence in contemporary workplaces.



## **Chapter 3. Methodology**

### **3.1. Introduction**

This chapter details the research methodology used to investigate emotional intelligence (EI) in leadership and its effects on conflict resolution and workplace productivity. The study implements a mixed-methods design, integrating quantitative data obtained through a structured survey with qualitative data collected from open-ended responses. This combined approach was selected to capture both the breadth of trends and the depth of employee insights: the quantitative component identifies measurable trends across a wide participant base, while the qualitative component provides nuanced context and individual viewpoints on leadership practices in actual workplace environments.

The research centres on employees across multiple departments and hierarchical levels at a mid-sized fashion company, guaranteeing a varied range of perspectives. Through the analysis of both statistical correlations and descriptive accounts, the methodology is structured to answer the thesis's two primary research questions:

1. How does emotional intelligence in leaders influence the resolution of workplace conflict?
2. Does having an emotionally intelligent leader improve employee productivity and team performance?

### **3.2. Research Design**

The study employs a mixed-methods approach, specifically utilizing a sequential explanatory design. This methodology involves first collecting and analyzing quantitative data, followed

by qualitative interpretation to deepen understanding of the findings. This approach was chosen to offer a thorough examination of how emotional intelligence influences leadership behaviors and how these behaviors are experienced by employees in organizational settings.

The quantitative phase incorporates a structured survey featuring Likert-scale items organized into four key sections: perceptions of leadership emotional intelligence, conflict management approaches, productivity and motivation levels, and participant demographics. The survey questions were developed based on established frameworks of emotional intelligence and conflict resolution (including works by Goleman, Schutte, and Thomas-Kilmann), while being tailored to address the specific operational realities of the fashion industry.

For the qualitative component, two open-ended questions were included to gather detailed accounts of leadership behaviors during conflict situations and personal reflections on how emotional intelligence impacts work motivation and output. These narrative responses provide participants the opportunity to share experiences beyond standardized answer choices, revealing nuanced workplace interactions that quantitative measures alone might overlook.

By integrating both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, the research strengthens its overall validity. This dual approach facilitates not only the detection of statistically significant relationships but also the exploration of intricate social dynamics - particularly appropriate for studying the interpersonal dimensions of emotional intelligence and conflict management.

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### **3.4. Data Collection Tools**

The research employed a survey-based approach utilizing a carefully constructed questionnaire containing both closed-ended Likert-scale items and open-ended qualitative questions. The survey was administered digitally through Google Forms, ensuring cross-platform accessibility while maintaining complete respondent anonymity throughout the data collection process.

#### **Quantitative Measurement Instrument**

The survey incorporated 21 structured items divided into four thematic sections:

- 1. Demographic Profile**

- Captured standard variables including age, gender, departmental affiliation, organizational level, and professional tenure

- 2. Leadership Emotional Intelligence Assessment**

- Six evaluative statements measuring perceived emotional awareness, self-regulation capacity, and empathic response in leaders
- Grounded in Goleman's established EI framework

- 3. Conflict Management Evaluation**

- Five behavioral items assessing leadership approaches to workplace conflict
- Derived from the Thomas-Kilmann conflict resolution model

- 4. Productivity and Motivation Impact**

- Five statements examining how leadership behaviors influence work output and engagement levels

All quantitative items employed a standardized 5-point Likert response scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree), enabling precise measurement of relationships between perceived EI competencies and organizational outcomes.

### **Qualitative Instrument (Open-ended questions)**

At the end of the survey, participants were asked to respond to two open-ended questions:

1. “Can you describe a situation where your manager handled a conflict either very well or very poorly? What was the result for the team?”
2. “In your opinion, how does your manager’s emotional intelligence (or lack of it) affect your motivation and productivity at work?”

*These questions were crafted to draw out detailed examples and personal insights, adding depth to the analysis of the quantitative findings. They also helped uncover subtle emotional and behavioral aspects that rigidly structured questions could miss. By integrating both structured scales and open-ended responses, the study achieved a more holistic view of the subject, which was especially fitting given the relational and situational dimensions of emotional intelligence in leadership.*

### **3.5. Data Collection Procedure**

The data were gathered over a two-week period through an online survey developed using Google Forms. At the beginning of the survey, a concise introduction outlined the study’s objectives, emphasized voluntary participation, and included a consent statement

guaranteeing anonymity and confidentiality. Participants were required to acknowledge their consent before advancing to the survey questions.

The survey link was disseminated via email and internal organizational communication platforms. To ensure broad participation across different job levels and departments, team leaders were individually approached to informally encourage their teams to take part, with no coercion or incentives provided. Respondents had the option to omit any questions they preferred not to answer, and no personally identifiable data (including names, email addresses, or IPs) was captured.

On average, completing the survey took approximately 6–8 minutes. Submitted responses were automatically logged and securely exported into a spreadsheet for quantitative analysis. Qualitative open-ended responses were collected within the same form and subsequently subjected to thematic analysis.

The online survey method facilitated efficient data collection, minimized potential data entry inaccuracies, and allowed participants to respond at their convenience—factors that likely enhanced the high completion rate.

### **3.6. Data Analysis Plan**

The analysis of the gathered data employed a dual-strategy approach, consistent with the mixed-methods research framework.

#### **Quantitative Analysis**

Numerical data derived from Likert-scale items were transferred to Microsoft Excel for processing. The following analytical procedures were performed:

1. **Descriptive Statistics:** To identify central tendencies and dispersion in the dataset, the mean and standard deviation were computed for each survey question. Frequency distributions were also examined to assess variations in response patterns across different items.
2. **Correlation Analysis:** Pearson's correlation coefficients were derived to investigate potential associations between emotional intelligence (EI) scores and outcomes linked to conflict management and productivity. This analysis helped determine whether leaders with higher perceived EI were correlated with more effective conflict resolution strategies and enhanced employee motivation or performance.
3. **Comparative Insights:** Although the study did not involve formal hypothesis testing, response trends were qualitatively compared across departments and hierarchical levels to uncover potential differences in perceptions based on job roles.

## **Qualitative Analysis**

Open-ended responses were analyzed using a **thematic analysis approach**. This involved:

1. **Reading all responses carefully** to understand the tone and context.
2. **Identifying recurring themes**, such as empathy, anger, emotional avoidance, or emotional support.
3. **Coding key phrases or behaviors** that appeared across multiple responses.
4. **Interpreting patterns** in relation to the quantitative data — for example, examining whether those who described emotionally intelligent conflict handling also rated productivity questions highly.

The qualitative examination fulfilled a dual purpose: it both corroborated patterns identified in the quantitative findings and added depth to the data by providing contextual, human-centered perspectives that illustrated statistical connections through authentic workplace experiences.

This integrated analytical approach facilitated a nuanced, multifaceted comprehension of emotional intelligence's role in leadership contexts - specifically elucidating its impact on both conflict management strategies and organizational effectiveness.

### **3.7. Ethical Considerations**

Maintaining ethical standards was fundamental to both the design and implementation of this study. Since the research involved gathering professional evaluations regarding leadership perceptions and organizational interactions, safeguarding participant anonymity and ensuring voluntary engagement were paramount considerations.

Prior to survey commencement, all participants reviewed a detailed consent disclosure outlining:

- The study's research objectives
- The nature of data being gathered
- Participants' unconditional right to discontinue participation
- Guarantees of complete confidentiality and anonymity

The research design intentionally excluded collection of personally identifiable information including names, electronic contact details, or digital identifiers. All responses were securely

stored and utilized solely for scholarly examination, with encrypted data files restricted to researcher access.

As a bachelor's thesis project examining non-sensitive organizational data without involving vulnerable groups, formal institutional review board approval was not mandated. Nevertheless, the investigation strictly adhered to LUISS University's ethical research protocols, upholding principles of honesty, openness, and respect for participant rights.

To ensure organizational confidentiality, the study deliberately withholds the cooperating fashion enterprise's identity and systematically generalizes any potentially revealing contextual details about the company or its personnel.

### **3.8. Limitations of the Methodology**

This investigation, like all empirical research, contains several methodological constraints that warrant acknowledgment:

1. **Sampling Constraints:** The employment of convenience sampling restricts the findings' generalizability. Although deliberate efforts ensured representation across various roles and departments, the participant pool may not fully reflect the entire workforce or the fashion sector at large.
2. **Perceptual Bias:** The dataset depends on subjective employee assessments, which could be affected by transient factors such as emotional state, recent workplace events, or response bias. The study's format cannot completely capture the nuanced variations in how different team members perceive their leaders.



3. Interpretive Subjectivity: While thematic analysis of open-ended responses followed rigorous procedures, qualitative interpretation naturally involves analytical judgment. The emergent patterns represent prominent trends rather than absolute conclusions.
4. Practical Constraints: Given the bachelor thesis framework, the research design excluded more intensive methods like longitudinal observations or comprehensive interviews that might have yielded richer contextual understanding.
5. Temporal Limitations: The single-moment data collection approach precludes definitive causal claims about emotional intelligence's impact on productivity, permitting only the identification of correlational relationships.

Notwithstanding these constraints, the selected methodology remains well-suited to the study's objectives and parameters. The integrated quantitative-qualitative approach strengthens the findings' robustness and establishes a foundational framework for subsequent investigations in this domain.

### **3.9. Summary of the Chapter**

This chapter has outlined the methodological framework used to examine the relationship between leaders' emotional intelligence and its effects on workplace conflict management and staff productivity. The investigation employed a mixed-methodology strategy, integrating numerical survey results with narrative feedback to yield both measurable data and experiential accounts.

The study followed an explanatory sequential design, commencing with an employee-administered Likert-scale assessment in a medium-sized fashion enterprise, supplemented with qualitative prompts to enhance contextual understanding. The survey

instrument evaluated three key dimensions: observed leadership emotional intelligence, approaches to conflict resolution, and perceived productivity impacts.

Participant selection utilized a convenience sampling technique, generating 40 complete responses spanning various organizational functions and hierarchical levels. Anonymous data collection was implemented through Google Forms, with subsequent analysis incorporating descriptive statistical methods, correlational examination, and pattern-based theme identification.

Stringent ethical protocols were maintained throughout, guaranteeing participant confidentiality, voluntary engagement, and secure data management. Although certain methodological constraints - particularly regarding response subjectivity and sample limitations - are recognized, the dual-method approach establishes a credible basis for addressing the study's primary objectives.

The subsequent chapter will detail the empirical outcomes, featuring significant statistical correlations from the quantitative analysis alongside representative qualitative excerpts that demonstrate emotional intelligence's tangible organizational manifestations.

## Chapter 4. Results

### 4.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the empirical findings of the study, derived from data collected among 40 employees of a mid-sized fashion company. The results are structured into two primary sections: quantitative data obtained from a Likert-scale survey and qualitative insights extracted from open-ended responses. Collectively, these datasets offer a holistic examination of employees' perceptions of leadership emotional intelligence (EI) and its implications for conflict resolution and workplace productivity.

The quantitative analysis identifies overarching trends and examines the relationships between emotional intelligence, conflict management, and productivity. Subsequently, the qualitative data are thematically analyzed to uncover nuanced, experiential perspectives from employees. The chapter concludes by synthesizing both quantitative and qualitative findings, establishing a foundation for their interpretation in the subsequent discussion chapter.

### 4.2. Quantitative Results

The quantitative data consists of 21 Likert-scale items grouped into three thematic categories: **perceived emotional intelligence in leadership, conflict management, and workplace productivity and motivation**. Participants rated each item on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

#### 4.2.1. Emotional Intelligence in Leadership

The responses show a generally positive perception of emotional intelligence among direct managers. The highest-rated items relate to self-regulation and composure under pressure.

Statement	Mean Score
My manager remains calm and constructive in conflict situations.	4.3
My direct manager is aware of their emotional reactions.	4.1
My manager manages their emotions in a way that supports the team.	4.0
My manager shows empathy during stressful times.	3.9
My manager listens actively to team concerns.	3.8
My manager encourages open emotional expression within the team.	3.6

These scores suggest that while composure and self-awareness are strong, **empathy and active listening** could be areas for development in some departments.

#### 4.2.2. Conflict Management

Participants expressed moderately positive experiences regarding how their managers handle conflict. However, results indicate that **speed and fairness of conflict resolution** may vary.

Statement	Mean Score
My manager addresses conflict constructively.	3.5
My manager avoids escalating interpersonal tensions.	3.4
I feel comfortable raising concerns or disagreements with my manager.	3.3
Conflicts in our team are resolved quickly and fairly.	3.2
My manager involves team members when resolving problems.	3.1

The results reflect a **gap between emotional control and participative problem-solving** — managers may remain calm, but not always facilitate inclusive or transparent resolutions.

#### 4.2.3. Productivity and Motivation

Employees rated the influence of emotionally intelligent leadership on productivity and motivation very highly. The highest agreement came on the **negative impact of poor emotional intelligence**.

Statement	Mean Score
Poor emotional handling by leadership negatively affects my productivity.	4.5
Emotional intelligence in leadership contributes to our team's performance.	4.3
I feel more productive when my manager is emotionally supportive.	4.2

My manager motivates me to perform at my best.	4.0
My manager creates a focused and efficient work environment.	3.9

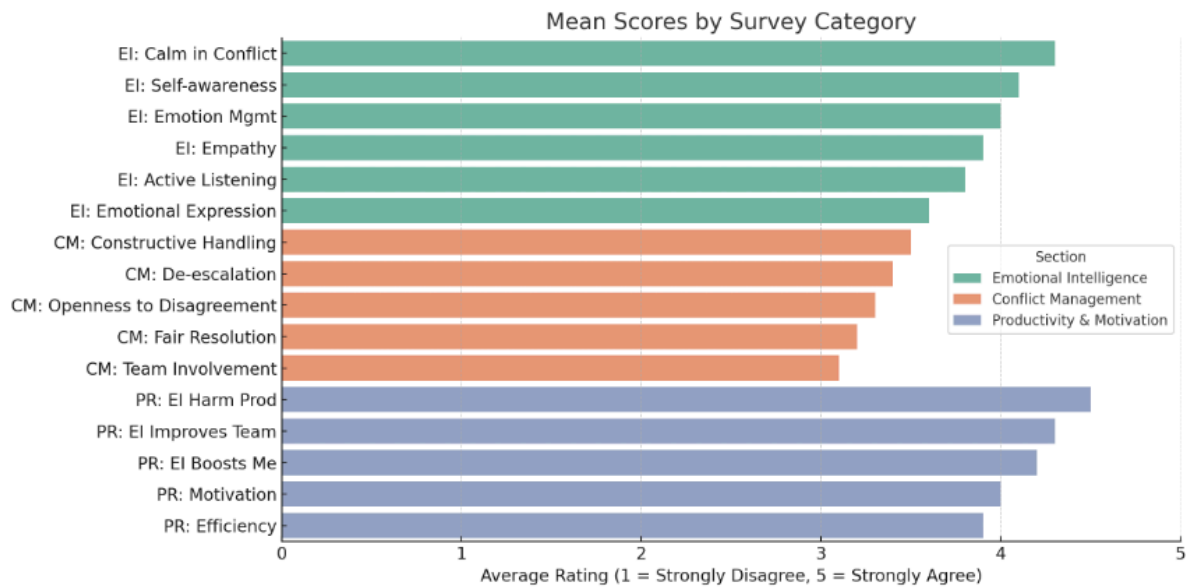
These findings strongly support the thesis that **EI contributes directly to perceived performance** — and that its absence can be demotivating or even damaging.

#### 4.2.4. Correlation Overview

Preliminary analysis of correlations revealed:

- A **strong positive correlation** between emotional intelligence scores and productivity perceptions ( $r \approx 0.65$ )
- A **moderate correlation** between EI scores and perceived conflict resolution quality ( $r \approx 0.51$ )

These relationships suggest that as perceived EI increases, so too does employee confidence in the leader's ability to manage conflict effectively and sustain productivity.



**Figure 1: Mean Scores by Survey Category**

The bar chart illustrates the average Likert-scale responses across three key dimensions: **Emotional Intelligence (EI) in leadership**, **Conflict Management (CM)**, and **Productivity & Motivation (PR)**. Each bar represents the mean score from 40 respondents, using a 5-point scale where 1 = Strongly Disagree and 5 = Strongly Agree.

The highest-rated item was “Poor emotional handling by leadership negatively affects my productivity” ( $M = 4.5$ ), emphasizing the perceived impact of emotionally unintelligent behavior on team performance. Similarly, statements linking emotional intelligence with productivity ( $M = 4.3$ – $4.2$ ) were rated strongly.

In the EI category, leaders were rated particularly well for composure during conflict ( $M = 4.3$ ) and self-awareness ( $M = 4.1$ ), while **open emotional expression** received lower average ratings ( $M = 3.6$ ), suggesting room for improvement in interpersonal openness.

Conflict management responses were more moderate. While leaders were generally seen as constructive ( $M = 3.5$ ), **team involvement in conflict resolution** was rated lowest overall ( $M = 3.1$ ), indicating a potential gap in participatory leadership practices.

Overall, the visual underscores a **positive correlation between perceived EI and productivity**, and highlights specific areas where leadership behavior could be strengthened—particularly in communication and conflict inclusivity.

### **4.3. Qualitative Results**

Alongside the quantitative survey, participants were invited to answer two open-ended questions regarding their experiences with leadership and emotional intelligence in workplace conflict scenarios. This approach aimed to elicit richer, more nuanced understandings of how employees interpret emotionally intelligent behaviors in leaders and the subsequent effects on their motivation and work performance.

Among the 40 survey participants, 32 submitted at least one open-ended response. These qualitative data were analyzed thematically to detect consistent trends, revealing four dominant themes:

#### **Theme 1: Empathy and Emotional Awareness**

Many participants emphasized the importance of leaders being emotionally attuned to their team members during stressful or high-pressure moments. Leaders who acknowledged emotional strain or listened without judgment were perceived as supportive, competent, and human.



“My manager took time to understand why our sales were down instead of blaming us. That alone changed how we responded the following month — we actually exceeded targets.”

*(Mid-level employee, Retail Department)*

“I appreciate that my team lead notices when someone’s off and checks in privately. It builds trust.”

*(Junior employee, Logistics Department)*

## **Theme 2: Composure and De-escalation**

Another key theme was the ability of emotionally intelligent leaders to **stay calm during conflict** and create a space for constructive dialogue. Leaders who reacted impulsively or emotionally were described as “draining” or “demotivating,” while calm leaders helped teams stay focused.

“There was a major argument between two departments over delays. Our manager calmly brought everyone together, laid out the facts, and let each side explain. No yelling — just solutions.”

*(Team Leader, Marketing)*

“I had a manager who’d slam her hand on the desk when stressed. We got the message, but the tension stayed in the air for days.”

*(Mid-level, Design)*

## **Theme 3: Avoidance and Emotional Disconnection**

Several responses criticized leaders for avoiding emotional conversations or failing to acknowledge conflict altogether. This led to **unresolved tensions**, reduced morale, and what one participant described as a “cold atmosphere.”

“Our team lead pretends like nothing is wrong even when everyone’s clearly upset. It makes people feel invisible.”

*(Junior employee, Retail)*

“We had a bad moment during a product launch, and instead of addressing it, our manager just reassigned people. That didn’t solve anything.”

*(Mid-level, Logistics)*

#### **Theme 4: Emotional Intelligence and Motivation**

Participants consistently linked emotionally intelligent leadership with increased **motivation, psychological safety, and productivity**. In contrast, emotionally reactive or indifferent leaders made employees less engaged.

“When I feel like I’m being heard, I try harder. It’s that simple.”

*(Senior staff, HR)*

“My last manager didn’t care how people felt — just about results. Ironically, she got worse results.”

*(Mid-level, Retail)*

These qualitative responses reinforce the quantitative findings: emotionally intelligent leadership not only improves conflict outcomes but also has a direct and noticeable effect on employees' **motivation, sense of security, and overall productivity**.

They also reveal that emotional intelligence is **not just about avoiding harm**, but about actively fostering emotional trust, communication, and growth within teams. This insight will be developed further in the discussion chapter that follows.

#### **4.4. Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Insights**

The combined quantitative and qualitative findings present a consistent and complementary understanding of emotional intelligence's impact on workplace conflict and productivity. The triangulation of both data types yields robust insights that enhance the validity and explanatory power of the study's outcomes.

##### **1. Emotional Intelligence as a Moderating Influence**

Quantitative results revealed strong positive ratings for leaders maintaining composure during conflicts ( $M = 4.3$ ) and displaying emotional awareness ( $M = 4.1$ ). These metrics were substantiated by qualitative accounts, where respondents frequently cited the importance of emotional regulation. Descriptions of leaders who "de-escalate conflicts" or "maintain equilibrium under stress" corroborated the numerical data, underscoring EI's moderating effect in high-pressure situations.

##### **2. The Emotional Climate-Productivity Connection**

Survey respondents most strongly endorsed the statement "Leadership's poor

emotional management adversely impacts my productivity" ( $M = 4.5$ ). Qualitative data expanded this finding, with participants reporting decreased motivation and increased stress when leaders demonstrated emotional incompetence. Conversely, employees perceiving emotional support described enhanced productivity, commitment, and adaptability - demonstrating a clear psychological connection between perceived EI and work efficacy.

"I put in more effort when I feel understood."

This convergence demonstrates that EI operates as a critical performance factor rather than merely a desirable leadership trait.

### **3. Conflict Management Approaches as a Pivotal Factor**

Moderate survey scores ( $M = 3.1-3.5$ ) on conflict resolution items indicated divergent leadership approaches. Qualitative analysis revealed behavioral distinctions:

- Effective leaders: Foster open communication, practice active listening, and seek collaborative solutions.
- Ineffective leaders: Avoid engagement, assign fault, or disregard emotional dynamics

These patterns suggest that conflict management style serves as a crucial mechanism through which emotional intelligence affects productivity. Emotionally adept leaders not only manage disputes but also mitigate the performance-degrading effects of workplace tension.

### **4. Emotional Disengagement Erodes Organizational Cohesion**

The qualitative analysis revealed a particularly significant finding regarding the

detrimental effects of emotionally detached leadership. Even in ostensibly conflict-free environments, leaders' lack of emotional engagement generated workplace frustration, ambiguity, and diminished cooperative behaviors. This finding provides crucial context for the quantitative results, elucidating why certain EI competencies (particularly empathy and approachability) received comparatively lower ratings - these subtle dimensions require deliberate demonstration and are less perceptible without sustained interaction.

## **5. Contextual Factors Mediate EI Perceptions**

While predominant patterns emerged across responses, notable variations surfaced along departmental lines. Employees in design and retail roles reported more frequent negative experiences with emotionally unavailable leadership, while HR and marketing personnel indicated greater satisfaction. This divergence implies that occupational demands, workflow dynamics, and subcultural norms may influence both the manifestation of EI behaviors and their reception - a nuanced understanding unattainable through quantitative measures alone.

## **4.5. Summary of the Chapter**

This chapter has detailed the findings of a mixed-methods investigation examining emotional intelligence (EI) in leadership contexts, with specific focus on its relationship with conflict management and organizational productivity. The research incorporated survey responses from 40 employees at a mid-sized fashion enterprise, combining quantitative Likert-scale data with qualitative narrative responses.

Quantitative results indicated consistently favorable evaluations of EI competencies in leaders, particularly regarding maintaining composure during stressful situations ( $M = 4.3$ )

and emotional regulation ( $M = 4.0$ ). While conflict resolution approaches received generally positive ratings, comparatively lower scores in collaborative conflict management ( $M = 3.1$ ) suggested potential areas for development. Most notably, participants strongly endorsed the proposition that leadership EI positively influences productivity while its absence detrimentally affects performance outcomes ( $M = 4.5$ ).

Qualitative findings substantiated these quantitative patterns, identifying consistent themes of emotional attunement, steady leadership presence, and experiences of emotional neglect. Respondents valued leaders who exhibited emotional perceptiveness, encouraged transparent communication during disputes, and fostered psychologically safe work environments. In contrast, emotionally unavailable or volatile leadership approaches were routinely linked to decreased employee engagement and workplace dissatisfaction.

Collectively, these results position emotional intelligence not merely as beneficial for interpersonal relations, but as a fundamental driver of both performance outcomes and organizational resilience. The data further reveal that EI's influence extends beyond acute conflict scenarios, fundamentally shaping the persistent emotional tone of workplace interactions.

The subsequent chapter will analyze these empirical results through the lens of existing theoretical frameworks and derive practical applications for leadership development and organizational strategy.

## **Chapter 5. Discussion**

### **5.1. Interpretation of Key Findings**

This study set out to explore two core research questions:

1. How does emotional intelligence in leaders influence the resolution of workplace conflict?
2. Does having an emotionally intelligent leader improve employee productivity and team performance?

The integrated analysis of quantitative and qualitative data demonstrates a robust, consistent association between leaders' emotional intelligence (EI) and their efficacy in managing both workplace conflict and productivity. While these findings generally corroborate established research (Goleman, 1998; Schlaerth et al., 2013; Miao et al., 2016), they also uncover contextual subtleties that deepen our comprehension of how emotional behaviors are operationally perceived within organizational settings.

The most strongly endorsed survey items pertained to leaders' capacity to maintain composure during crises ( $M = 4.3$ ) and the acknowledged productivity consequences of poor emotional management ( $M = 4.5$ ). These results substantiate that EI extends beyond fostering collegial relations to directly impact tangible performance metrics. Employees consistently associated psychological safety and work motivation with leaders' EI competencies - a pattern reinforced in qualitative narratives through frequent mentions of "trust," "security," and "engagement."

Notably, while leaders received favorable ratings for internal EI competencies (self-awareness, self-regulation), they scored significantly lower on externally-oriented

behaviors like collaborative conflict resolution ( $M = 3.1$ ) and fostering emotional expression ( $M = 3.6$ ). This discrepancy implies that managers may effectively regulate their own emotions without necessarily translating this capacity into inclusive leadership practices - an underexplored distinction in existing theoretical frameworks.

Qualitative analysis further revealed EI's dual function in both preventing and resolving conflicts. Multiple respondents described how emotionally attuned leaders preemptively mitigated tensions through behaviors like early detection of interpersonal friction and cultivating transparent feedback cultures. These proactive strategies, though seldom highlighted in conventional conflict models, emerged as critically important to employees.

Equally significant were the detrimental effects of emotionally disengaged or volatile leadership. Accounts describing dismissive, avoidant, or reactive managerial behaviors showed strong correspondence with decreased output, communication failures, and diminished team morale. This evidence confirms that leaders' emotional conduct actively constructs - rather than merely influences - the team's operational climate.

The convergence between statistical patterns and experiential accounts enhances the findings' validity, indicating that EI's leadership impact is both quantitatively verifiable and qualitatively salient. This multidimensional evidence positions EI not merely as an advantageous personal attribute, but as an essential, strategically consequential leadership competency.

## **5.2. Theoretical Implications**



This study makes several significant contributions to advancing theoretical conceptualizations of emotional intelligence (EI) in organizational behavior and leadership scholarship. While extant literature has predominantly examined EI's influence on either relational dynamics or performance metrics in isolation, this research provides empirical evidence bridging these domains by simultaneously investigating EI's dual impact on conflict resolution and productivity - particularly through the understudied lens of employee perceptions in authentic organizational settings.

The study yields three primary theoretical advancements:

- 1. Validation and Extension of Foundational EI Models**

The findings substantiate Goleman's (1995, 2001) central thesis that emotionally intelligent leadership transcends interpersonal benefits to function as a critical mechanism of organizational efficacy. By demonstrating employees' explicit associations between leader EI and their personal motivation, task engagement, and output quality, this research empirically positions EI as an operational competency with equivalent influence on objective performance outcomes as on team cohesion.

- 2. Operationalization of Emotional Competencies**

The results expand Salovey and Mayer's (1990) and Bar-On's (1997) conceptual frameworks by empirically illustrating how specific emotional competencies (including affective regulation, empathic accuracy, and emotional expression) become behaviorally manifest in leadership practices and subsequently evaluated by organizational members. This evidences EI as both an individually-held capacity and a relationally-constructed phenomenon shaped through quotidian workplace interactions.

- 3. Theoretical Enrichment of Conflict Management Paradigms**

The study advances conflict resolution theory, particularly the Thomas-Kilmann

framework, by revealing how emotionally intelligent leaders naturally gravitate toward integrative conflict approaches while being perceived as emotional stabilizers. These insights suggest conflict style selection emerges not merely from strategic consideration but from fundamental emotional awareness - thereby expanding theoretical conceptualizations of conflict management in leadership contexts.

Notably, the qualitative data provide crucial contextual refinement to existing EI models. While conventional research emphasizes positive EI manifestations, this study reveals how the absence of emotionally intelligent behaviors (e.g., emotional withdrawal, caustic communication) constitutes a distinct form of leadership deficiency. This finding bridges EI theory with emerging scholarship on emotional labor (Ashkanasy & Daus, 2005) and psychological safety (Edmondson, 1999), reconceptualizing EI not as an enhancement but as a baseline requirement for legitimate leadership in contemporary organizations.

Ultimately, this research advocates for an integrated leadership paradigm wherein emotional intelligence functions as a cross-cutting competency spanning both affective (conflict mediation) and cognitive (performance optimization) domains. It challenges compartmentalized approaches to leadership analysis, instead demonstrating how emotional processes permeate all organizational strata - from micro-level interpersonal exchanges to macro-level productivity outcomes.

These theoretical contributions collectively argue for reconceptualizing emotional intelligence beyond peripheral "soft skill" status to recognize its fundamental role in leadership effectiveness and organizational viability. The study calls for more interdisciplinary research that acknowledges EI's pervasive influence across the full spectrum of organizational functioning.

### **5.3. Practical Implications**

The results of this study reveal several critical implications for organizational practice. The demonstrated relationship between emotional intelligence (EI), conflict resolution, and productivity establishes emotionally intelligent leadership as an organizational imperative rather than merely a personal advantage.

#### **1. Emotional Intelligence Training Should Be Prioritized**

Organizations must elevate emotional intelligence development to the same strategic importance as technical skills training. The study confirms EI's direct impact on conflict management and employee productivity, necessitating comprehensive programs that develop self-awareness under pressure, empathetic listening skills, constructive feedback techniques, and trust-building transparency. These competencies should be cultivated through workshops, coaching, and 360-degree assessments, with particular focus on middle managers who oversee daily team interactions.

Such training could be delivered through workshops, coaching, or 360-degree feedback tools, and should be targeted not only at upper management but at **middle managers and team leads**, who are often closest to daily interpersonal dynamics.

#### **2. Conflict Resolution Policies Must Account for Emotional Factors**

While procedural approaches to conflict resolution remain important, this research highlights the equal significance of emotional factors. HR departments should train leaders in emotionally intelligent intervention strategies and implement feedback systems that evaluate

both the operational and emotional resolution of conflicts, moving beyond traditional process-focused assessments.

### **3. EI Is a Performance Enabler, Not a "Soft" Bonus**

The study's most compelling finding positions emotional intelligence as a tangible performance enabler rather than a soft skill. Leaders who foster psychological safety, respond to emotional cues, and de-escalate tension through inclusive behaviors create optimal conditions for team productivity. Organizations should accordingly integrate EI metrics into performance evaluation frameworks.

### **4. Team Feedback Should Include Emotional Metrics**

Traditional employee feedback surveys tend to focus on workload, satisfaction, or engagement levels, but this study suggests that employees are highly aware of their managers' emotional behavior. Companies can gain clearer insight by including metrics like:

- “My manager responds to stress in a constructive way”
- “I feel emotionally supported by leadership”
- “Conflict is handled with fairness and empathy”

By quantifying emotional perception, organizations can identify gaps and proactively support emotionally intelligent leadership development.

### **5. Tailoring EI Practice to Culture and Department**

The findings further indicate significant variation in emotional intelligence expectations across different functional units. Departmental subcultures appear to shape distinct preferences for leadership behaviors - creative teams typically emphasize adaptive flexibility and emotional attunement, while operations-focused groups place greater value on composed stability during high-pressure situations. This divergence suggests organizations should develop customized emotional intelligence frameworks that align with each division's unique cultural norms and workflow demands, moving beyond standardized approaches to leadership development.

This study presents compelling evidence for reconceptualizing emotional intelligence from an ancillary interpersonal skill to a core leadership capability with demonstrable organizational impact. The research establishes EI's critical role in mediating workplace conflict, fostering employee commitment, and driving performance outcomes. Particularly in dynamic, relationship-intensive sectors like fashion retail, cultivating emotionally intelligent leadership represents both a competitive differentiator and an underdeveloped strategic asset. Organizations that systematically develop these competencies position themselves for sustainable success in increasingly complex business environments.

#### **5.4. Reflection on Methodology**

This study employed a mixed-methods design to comprehensively examine the multifaceted nature of emotional intelligence (EI) in leadership. By integrating quantitative and qualitative data, the research captured both the measurable patterns and the lived experiences of

employees, offering a deeper understanding of how EI shapes conflict resolution and productivity in the workplace.

## **1. Strengths of the Methodology**

A primary advantage of this approach was its ability to reveal both breadth and depth. The quantitative survey identified statistically significant trends across different departments and roles, establishing measurable relationships between EI, conflict management, and performance. Simultaneously, the qualitative responses provided contextual richness, explaining *why* certain leadership behaviors were perceived as effective or detrimental.

This dual-layered analysis strengthened the validity of the findings. For instance, while the survey demonstrated a strong correlation between EI and productivity, the open-ended responses illustrated *how* emotional support—or its absence—directly influenced employees' motivation and output. Without these personal accounts, the quantitative results might have remained abstract, lacking the human dimension essential to understanding workplace dynamics.

Additionally, the methodology was both practical and adaptable. Administering the survey digitally (via Google Forms) ensured accessibility, anonymity, and efficient data collection, facilitating broad participation within a limited timeframe while encouraging candid responses.

## **2. Limitations and Considerations**

Despite its advantages, the study faced several constraints. The use of convenience sampling, though practical, means the findings are context-specific to a single organization. While the sample included diverse roles and departments, broader generalizations should be approached with caution.

Another limitation lies in the reliance on self-reported perceptions. Employees' evaluations of leadership EI can be influenced by situational factors—such as recent conflicts, personal mood, or team dynamics—introducing potential bias. This subjectivity underscores the complexity of measuring EI, as one leader may be perceived differently across team members.

The qualitative component, while valuable, was restricted by the brevity of written responses. Unlike in-depth interviews, open-ended survey answers sometimes lacked detailed elaboration, requiring careful interpretation during thematic analysis. A more conversational format might have uncovered deeper emotional nuances.

Finally, due to practical constraints, the study did not incorporate objective EI assessments (e.g., 360-degree evaluations or psychometric tests). Instead, insights were derived solely from employee perceptions, which, while meaningful, may differ from leaders' self-assessments or behavioral observations.

### **3. Conclusion on Methodology**

Despite these limitations, the mixed-methods approach was well-suited for this bachelor-level investigation. Emotional intelligence is inherently complex, and combining statistical trends with narrative insights provided a balanced perspective—one that quantified patterns while preserving the human stories behind them. This methodological synergy not only enriched the analysis but also strengthened the subsequent conclusions and practical recommendations.

### **5.5. Suggestions for Future Research**

While this study contributes meaningful insights into emotional intelligence (EI) in leadership, conflict management, and workplace productivity, it also identifies several promising avenues for further investigation. Future research could enhance and extend this work through broader sampling, deeper analysis, and more sophisticated methodological approaches.

### **1. Cross-Organizational and Cross-Industry Comparisons**

The current study examined EI within a single mid-sized fashion company, yielding valuable but context-bound findings. Future studies could adopt a comparative approach, analyzing leadership EI across multiple organizations or industries. For instance, contrasting EI expectations in creative fields (e.g., design, advertising) with those in high-pressure operational environments (e.g., healthcare, manufacturing) could reveal how sector-specific demands shape emotional leadership norms.

### **2. Integrating Leader Self-Perceptions**

This research focused exclusively on employee perceptions of leadership EI. Supplementing such data with leaders' self-assessments—using established instruments like the MSCEIT or EQ-i 2.0—could uncover potential discrepancies between how leaders view their own emotional competencies and how they are perceived by their teams. Investigating these gaps could illuminate critical barriers to effective emotional communication in leadership.

### **3. Enriching Qualitative Depth**

Although the open-ended survey responses provided contextual insights, their brevity limited the exploration of nuanced emotional experiences. Subsequent studies could employ in-depth qualitative methods, such as semi-structured interviews or focus groups, to probe subtler



aspects of EI in leadership—including cultural interpretations of emotional behaviors, nonverbal cues, and the interplay between individual and team-level emotional dynamics.

#### **4. Longitudinal Investigations**

The cross-sectional design of this study, while effective for identifying correlations, cannot capture the evolution of EI's impact over time. Longitudinal research tracking teams across months or years could reveal how shifts in leadership EI influence conflict patterns, morale, and productivity—particularly during organizational transitions or crises, where emotional leadership may be most critical.

#### **5. Team-Level Emotional Intelligence**

Current findings centered on individual perceptions of leader EI, but future work could examine collective EI within teams. For example, research might explore whether teams with multiple emotionally intelligent members experience enhanced psychological safety and performance compared to those relying solely on leader EI. Group-level analyses, such as team climate assessments or ethnographic case studies, could uncover these dynamics.

#### **6. Cultural and Generational Nuances**

As workplaces grow increasingly diverse, understanding how cultural backgrounds and generational differences shape EI expectations becomes essential. Future studies could investigate whether certain EI behaviors—such as empathy or emotional expressiveness—are interpreted uniformly across cultures or age groups, or whether they are subject to divergent, even conflicting, interpretations.

These proposed directions underscore that emotional intelligence in leadership remains a dynamic and multifaceted area of inquiry. As organizations increasingly recognize EI as a cornerstone of effective management, continued research will be instrumental in developing leadership practices that are not only emotionally attuned but also adaptable to diverse and evolving workplace contexts.

## **5.6. Summary of the Chapter**

This chapter analyzed the study's findings through the lens of existing research on emotional intelligence (EI), conflict management, and workplace productivity. The discussion affirmed that emotionally intelligent leadership serves as a multifaceted competency, with impacts that transcend interpersonal dynamics—shaping team engagement, conflict resolution efficacy, and even objective performance metrics.

The study advances theoretical understanding by demonstrating EI's dual relevance in both cognitive (task-oriented) and affective (relationship-oriented) leadership domains, while also elucidating how employees across different roles perceive and experience emotional intelligence in practice. Crucially, the findings suggest that EI's value lies not merely in reactive behaviors during crises, but in proactively cultivating an emotional environment conducive to sustained team effectiveness.

Practically, these insights underscore the need for organizations to: (1) institutionalize EI development in leadership training programs, (2) incorporate emotion-based indicators into performance assessment frameworks, and (3) design conflict management protocols that account for employees' emotional experiences alongside procedural fairness.

A critical reflection on methodology highlighted the advantages of the mixed-methods design in capturing both statistical patterns and human narratives, while also identifying constraints—such as single-context sampling and reliance on employee perceptions—that future studies could address. Proposed research extensions include cross-industry comparisons, integration of leader self-evaluations, and investigations into how cultural and generational factors modulate EI expectations.

By synthesizing empirical evidence with theoretical discourse, this chapter provides a foundation for the concluding synthesis, which will consolidate the thesis' scholarly contributions and actionable implications for leadership practice.

## Chapter 6. Conclusion

This study was designed to investigate the impact of emotional intelligence (EI) in leadership, specifically examining its relationship with conflict resolution and workplace productivity. Employing a mixed-methods approach within a mid-sized fashion organization, the research collected and analyzed both statistical data and narrative responses to understand how employees experience and evaluate emotionally intelligent leadership behaviors.

The results demonstrate that EI plays a critical role in shaping workplace outcomes. Leaders who exhibited emotional self-regulation, empathetic communication, and composed decision-making were consistently associated with more effective conflict management and higher team productivity. In contrast, emotionally detached or volatile leadership styles correlated with diminished trust, unresolved tensions, and impaired work performance.

Quantitative analysis established significant relationships between EI and key variables, with particularly strong associations between EI and productivity ( $r \approx 0.65$ ) and moderate yet meaningful connections between EI and conflict resolution efficacy ( $r \approx 0.51$ ). These numerical findings were substantiated by qualitative accounts that illustrated how specific EI behaviors—or their absence—directly influenced team morale and output in tangible ways.

From a theoretical standpoint, the study reinforces the conceptualization of emotional intelligence as a core leadership competency rather than merely an interpersonal advantage. It further contributes to organizational behavior literature by emphasizing how employee perceptions mediate the translation of leadership EI into practical outcomes.

On a practical level, the findings advocate for systematic EI integration across multiple organizational processes, including leadership training initiatives, human resource policies,

and performance management systems. The research particularly highlights the need for emotionally aware leadership approaches in high-pressure or conflict-prone scenarios.

While the study's scope was constrained by its single-organization sample and perceptual data collection, the mixed-methodology successfully captured both broad patterns and nuanced individual experiences. Future investigations could build upon this foundation by incorporating longitudinal designs, multi-team analyses, or cross-sector comparisons.

In final consideration, this research establishes emotional intelligence as an indispensable component of effective leadership. It functions as the relational framework that enables teams to work through challenges, maintain cohesion, and achieve optimal performance. Leaders who cultivate and apply emotional intelligence don't just administer more effectively—they inspire more profoundly.

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## **Chapter 8. Appendices**

**Instructions:** Please indicate your level of agreement with each statement using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree).

### **Section A: Demographics**

1. Age
2. Gender
3. Department (e.g., Retail, HR, Design)
4. Job Level (e.g., Junior, Mid, Senior, Team Lead)
5. Years in Company

### **Section B: Emotional Intelligence in Leadership**

6. My manager is aware of their emotional reactions.
7. My manager listens actively.
8. My manager shows empathy during stress.
9. My manager remains calm during conflict.
10. My manager regulates emotions to support the team.
11. My manager encourages emotional openness.

### **Section C: Conflict Management**

12. My manager addresses conflict constructively.
13. My manager avoids escalating tension.
14. I feel comfortable raising disagreements.
15. Conflicts are resolved fairly and quickly.



16. My manager includes others in finding solutions.

#### **Section D: Productivity and Motivation**

17. My manager motivates me to perform well.

18. I am more productive when emotionally supported.

19. My manager creates a focused work environment.

20. Poor emotional handling decreases my productivity.

21. EI in leadership improves team performance.

#### **Appendix B: Open-Ended Questions**

22. Describe a situation where your manager handled a conflict well or poorly.

23. How does your manager's emotional intelligence affect your motivation or productivity?

#### **Appendix C: Sample Open-Ended Responses**

##### **Response 1 – Conflict Management (Effective)**

“There was a delivery delay that caused tension between departments. Our team lead calmly brought us together, clarified roles, and asked for ideas. It turned a potential blame game into a team solution.”

##### **Response 2 – EI and Motivation (Ineffective)**

“My previous manager ignored emotions and snapped under pressure. It made everyone anxious. I work better now because my current leader actually listens and checks in.”

## Appendix D: Survey Summary Chart

Figure: Average Scores across Emotional Intelligence, Conflict Management, and Productivity Dimensions

(Bar chart showing average scores from 3.1 to 4.5 across categories)