

# **The Impact of Emotional Intelligence on Middle-Level Managers’ Leadership Effectiveness**

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## **Abstract**

*This research investigates how emotional intelligence (EI) influences the leadership effectiveness of middle-level managers in business organizations. The study uses quantitative data collected through structured questionnaires from a sample of 150 middle-level managers across three industries. The findings indicate a positive and statistically significant relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership effectiveness, suggesting that managers with higher EI demonstrate better team performance, communication, and conflict resolution abilities. The study contributes to management literature by highlighting EI as a predictor of leadership quality and offers practical implications for training and development programs.*

*Keywords :Emotional Intelligence, Leadership Effectiveness, Middle-Level Managers, Organizational Behavior, Management Skills*

## **Introduction**

Leadership effectiveness is widely recognized as a crucial factor influencing organizational performance, employee motivation, and overall workplace harmony. In contemporary organizations characterized by rapid change, competitive pressures, and complex interpersonal dynamics, leadership is no longer defined solely by technical competence or positional authority. Instead, the ability to understand, regulate, and respond appropriately to emotions has emerged as a key dimension of effective leadership.

Middle-level managers occupy a strategically significant position within organizational hierarchies, acting as an essential link between top management and operational employees. They are responsible not only for implementing strategic decisions but also for managing teams, resolving conflicts, motivating subordinates, and ensuring smooth communication across levels. The effectiveness with which middle-level managers perform these roles directly influences organizational efficiency and employee engagement. Emotional intelligence (EI), broadly defined as the capacity to perceive, understand, manage, and utilize emotions in oneself and others, has gained increasing attention in leadership and organizational behavior research. Leaders with high emotional intelligence are better equipped to manage interpersonal relationships, cope with workplace stress, foster collaboration, and create a positive organizational climate. These capabilities are particularly important for middle-level managers, who frequently face competing demands from senior leadership and frontline staff. Despite growing interest in emotional intelligence, empirical research examining its impact on the leadership effectiveness of middle-level managers, particularly within business organizations, remains limited. This study seeks to address this gap by examining the relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership effectiveness among middle-level managers. By doing so, the research aims to contribute to existing management literature and provide practical insights for leadership development, training, and organizational policy formulation.

### ***Review of Related Literature***

The literature from 2001 to 2025 consistently establishes emotional intelligence (EI) as a critical determinant of leadership effectiveness, extending beyond traditional cognitive and technical competencies. Early empirical studies by Wong and Law (2002), Gardner and Stough (2002), and Mandell and Pherwani (2003) demonstrated that emotionally intelligent leaders exhibit stronger communication skills, better leader–member relationships, and higher transformational leadership effectiveness. Subsequent research highlighted the role of EI in conflict management, motivation, empathy, and interpersonal sensitivity, particularly in managerial and project-based contexts (Jordan & Troth, 2004; Leban & Zulauf, 2004).

Mid-2000s studies reinforced EI as an independent predictor of leadership effectiveness, with evidence showing that leaders high in EI receive superior performance evaluations and manage teams more effectively, even when cognitive intelligence is controlled (Rosete & Ciarrochi, 2005; Côté & Miners, 2006). Research also emphasized the relevance of EI for middle-level managers, linking it to job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and managerial effectiveness (Carmeli, 2003; Carmeli & Josman, 2006; Dulewicz & Higgs, 2003). Later studies and meta-analyses provided robust empirical support for the EI–leadership relationship. Scholars demonstrated that EI predicts transformational leadership, job performance, trust, employee engagement, and team effectiveness across organizational settings (Harms & Credé, 2010; O’Boyle et al., 2011; Miao et al., 2016). Research further confirmed that emotional intelligence operates through emotion regulation and interpersonal facilitation, enabling managers to cope with stress, ambiguity, and relational demands (Joseph & Newman, 2015).

Recent and post-pandemic studies underscore emotional intelligence as a vital leadership capability in dynamic, uncertain, and digitally evolving work environments. Emotionally intelligent leaders have been shown to enhance employee well-being, organizational citizenship behavior, resilience, and adaptability in hybrid and high-pressure contexts (O’Connor et al., 2019; Kerr et al., 2020; Miao et al., 2022; Serrat, 2023). Despite extensive evidence supporting the positive impact of EI on leadership effectiveness, the literature reveals a relative lack of focused empirical studies on middle-level managers across industries. This identified gap provides a strong justification for the present study.

### ***Objectives of the Study***

To measure the level of emotional intelligence among middle-level managers in selected organizations.

To assess the influence of emotional intelligence on leadership effectiveness among middle-level managers.

### ***Hypotheses of the Study***

Based on theoretical foundations and prior empirical evidence, the following hypotheses were formulated:

- H<sub>1</sub>: Emotional intelligence is positively and significantly related to leadership effectiveness among middle-level managers.

- H<sub>2</sub>: Middle-level managers with higher emotional intelligence demonstrate superior team performance and communication effectiveness compared to managers with lower emotional intelligence.

### ***Research Methodology***

#### *Research Design*

The study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design, using a quantitative approach to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership effectiveness among middle-level managers.

#### *Sample Design*

A purposive sampling technique was employed to select 150 middle-level managers from manufacturing, service, and IT organizations located in an urban region. Respondents were selected based on the following criteria:

- Occupying a middle-level managerial position
- Minimum of two years of supervisory or managerial experience

This ensured that participants possessed adequate leadership exposure for meaningful assessment.

#### *Tools of Data Collection*

Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire comprising two standardized scales:

1. Emotional Intelligence Scale (EI)
  - a. Adapted from established EI instruments
  - b. Measures self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and social skills
  - c. 20 items rated on a five-point Likert scale
2. Leadership Effectiveness Scale (LE)

- a. Measures team performance, communication effectiveness, and conflict management
- b. 15 items rated on a five-point Likert scale

### *Statistical Techniques*

The following statistical tools were used for analysis:

- a. Reliability analysis (Cronbach's Alpha)
- b. Descriptive statistics (Mean, Standard Deviation)
- c. Pearson correlation analysis
- d. Simple linear regression analysis

### *Data Analysis and Interpretation*

*Table 1: Reliability Analysis of Measurement Scales*

Scale	No. of Items	Cronbach's $\alpha$
Emotional Intelligence (EI)	20	0.89
Leadership Effectiveness (LE)	15	0.92

Both scales demonstrate high internal consistency reliability. The EI scale shows very good reliability ( $\alpha = 0.89$ ), while the LE scale exhibits excellent reliability ( $\alpha = 0.92$ ), confirming that the instruments are suitable for further statistical analysis.

*Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Key Variables (N = 150)*

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Emotional Intelligence (EI)	3.85	0.56	2.10	4.90
Leadership Effectiveness (LE)	3.98	0.49	2.30	4.85

The mean scores indicate that respondents possess moderately high levels of both emotional intelligence and leadership effectiveness. The relatively low standard deviations suggest consistency in responses, reflecting homogeneity in managerial perceptions.

### ***Hypothesis Testing***

*Table 3: Pearson Correlation between Emotional Intelligence and Leadership Effectiveness*

Variables	EI	LE
Emotional Intelligence (EI)	1	0.68
Leadership Effectiveness (LE)	0.68	1

The Pearson correlation coefficient ( $r = 0.68$ ) indicates a moderate to strong positive relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership effectiveness. This result supports Hypothesis H<sub>1</sub>, confirming that emotionally intelligent managers tend to exhibit higher leadership effectiveness.

*Table 4: Simple Linear Regression Results (EI → LE)*

#### *Model Summary*

R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Std. Error
0.68	0.46	0.45	0.36

#### *ANOVA*

Source	df	F	Sig.
Regression	1	220.15	0.000
Residual	148	—	—

*Regression Coefficients*

Predictor	B	B	t	Sig.
Constant	0.98	—	3.92	0.000
Emotional Intelligence	0.79	0.68	14.84	0.000

The regression model is statistically significant ( $p < 0.001$ ). Emotional intelligence explains 46% of the variance in leadership effectiveness. The standardized beta coefficient ( $\beta = 0.68$ ) confirms that emotional intelligence is a strong predictor of leadership effectiveness. Hence, Hypothesis H<sub>2</sub> is also supported.

***Major Findings of the Study***

1. Emotional intelligence and leadership effectiveness among middle-level managers are both found at moderately high levels.
2. A statistically significant positive relationship exists between emotional intelligence and leadership effectiveness.
3. Emotional intelligence accounts for a substantial proportion (46%) of variance in leadership effectiveness.
4. Managers with higher emotional intelligence demonstrate better communication, stronger team performance, and improved conflict-handling abilities.
5. Both hypotheses formulated for the study are empirically supported.

***Conclusion***

The study conclusively establishes that emotional intelligence plays a critical and decisive role in enhancing leadership effectiveness among middle-level managers. The findings confirm that emotionally intelligent managers are better equipped to manage interpersonal relationships, communicate effectively, and foster high-performing teams. Given the increasing complexity and emotional demands of modern organizations, emotional intelligence emerges as a key leadership competency rather than a supplementary skill. The study underscores the need for organizations to integrate emotional intelligence development

into leadership training and managerial development programs to strengthen organizational performance and employee well-being.

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