

# The Role Of EI In Effective Leadership, In The Context Of Saudi Arab: A Systematic Review

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## Abstract

**Background:** The field of Emotional Intelligence (EI) is a growing field reflecting its effectiveness in different professions and institutes. There is little evidence available to seek a comprehensive role of EI in effective leadership. This study explores the role of EI in effective leadership.

**Aim:** The aim of this study is to investigate how the component of EI plays an effective role in leadership, in the context of Saudi Arab.

**Method:** For the purpose, a systematic approach was employed to identify and select relevant studies from key databases. Inclusion and exclusion criteria ensured the consideration of studies published within 05 years that examined the role of EI for effective leadership. Data extraction and analysis were conducted to synthesize findings from 11 selected studies.

**Results:** In total 130 articles were explored and only 03 were found very relevant and 28 somewhat relevant based on inclusion criteria. Findings revealed that EI play a key role in any field specifically in effective leadership and leadership skills including empathy, self-management, and self-awareness. However, limitations including selection bias were acknowledged.

**Conclusion:** The study concludes that EI can enhance the leadership role and can bring very significant advancement in the field of leadership. Since, there was no studies found that studied exclusively EI in relation with effective leadership.

**Keywords:** Emotional Intelligence, leadership, role of EI, effective leadership

## Introduction & Literature Review

Emotional Intelligence is a growing concern in all fields specifically in healthcare system. Since the leaders, and administrators who are more alert to the EI needs of their staff and employees, are able to provide better help in terms of psychological and emotional needs, and able to enhance their performance in terms of overall organizational goal achievement. It is also evident from the literature that there is association between decision making under the influence of emotions with overall impact on interpersonal and intra-personal relationships. (Noshili et al., 2022; Al-Kubaisi & Shahbal, 2021)

Barbra in 1966 first coined the term “emotional intelligence” and referred the concept of EQ, for measuring interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence. In the absence of sufficient literature evidence, EI was examined through structured tools and in structured settings using performance tests (Salovey & Mayer, 1990)

Emotional Intelligence (EI) is defined as “the ability to control and express one’s own feelings and emotions, and use to guide one’s thinking and actions”. In initial researches EI is described consisting of; identification of emotions, facilitating owns’ and others emotions, understanding one’s emotions and regulating emotions as per different situations (Salovey & Mayer, 1990, 1997). Emotional intelligence is also described of “a set of skills to process emotionally related information”. It also reflects relationship between feelings and behavior, giving rational to specific behavior in certain situation (Walter, Shenaar-Golan & Routray, 2021).

EI has been investigated in many fields including psychology and sociology, education, business and management in relation with productivity, progress, innovation and observe its effect on performance (Grandey et al., 2000; Joseph & Newman, 2010; Law et al., 2004; Mayer et al., 2008). EI is a popular skill in business in relation with ethical evaluation and behavior revealed significant implication for

educators and administrators. The primary aspect of EI is to identifying emotions, which can be expressed using facial expressions, gestures, tone, non-verbally and through artwork and has shown correlation with effective leadership.

Leadership’ is defined as to influence, motivate and enable team members to contribute to the institutional effectiveness, can influence a group of individuals towards achieving a common desired goal by a process. Studies found that EI plays a major role and is directly associated with innovation, production, competence, confidence, health, work satisfaction, quality of work, and commitment with work, job satisfaction, relationship between academic performance and school management (Cherniss, 2006).

Researchers also found that there is direct relationship between EI and advancement of leadership with the ability to comprehend emotions, influencing leadership potential and emergence (Cote et al., 2010). It was also emphasized to enhance understanding about EI to improve decision making for effective leadership (Suciu et al., 2010). Researches reflect that EI improve the effectiveness of leadership in relation with workload, stress, and performance (Batool, 2013). Few researchers also examined the correlation between EI and different styles of leadership and have shown significant influence of EI on team building and leadership (Naznin, 2013; Salehi & Mohammadi., 2017; Gautam & Khurana, 2017).

EI facilitate leaders to achieve desired organizational goal. Few researchers tried to explore relationship between EI and leadership skills, and found that EI has a significant impact on developing leadership skills in organizations (Khurana & Gautam 2018). It was also reflected from literature that leaders who have high EI are able to achieve high organizational goals. According to a number of researches, it was found that EI reported to be an indispensable trait for effective leadership and decision-making.

Although the topic of EI has been under investigated in other fields and contexts and less investigation is done to examine the relationship between EI and effective leadership directly in health care system (Bar-On, 2000; Cooper & Yarbrough, 2016; Goleman, 1998 & 2014; Reilly et al., 2022).

The present paper will attempt to review both the relationship between emotional intelligence and development of leadership skills. EI is considered as one of the prerequisite for leadership effectiveness and this paper will seek to address the question, that what are the ways in which emotional intelligence effects leadership skills.

Hence, this paper extends existing literature on EI by proposing a theoretical framework, which could link EI with the effective leadership. This research will be as per the researchers' knowledge, the first research review that examined EI with effective leadership and will contribute to the findings of the literature, exclusively in the context of Saudi Arabia. Emotional intelligence and leadership has been the subject of a significant importance since recent years, but little has been explored in this domain. The purpose of this paper is to review relevant emotional intelligence and leadership literature and to study the ways in which emotional intelligence affects leadership skills.

## Method

A comprehensive study was done to evaluate relationship between EI with role of effective leadership in the context of Saudi Arab. The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and PRISMA framework provided the review with predetermined parameters.

## Research Question

To explore the research question:

1. What is the role of emotional intelligence in effective leadership, in the context of Saudi Arabia?

In a growing field of EI, it seems viable to explore an effective relationship outcome on leadership, so to bring advancement in the field of health along with other fields including education, business management and administration.

## Selection Criteria

Systematic review of the literature was conducted according to the inclusion and exclusion criteria.

## Inclusion Criteria

- **Relevance:** Studies that focused on the relationship between leadership and EI. Research studies conducted specifically in the context of Saudi Arabia.
- **Publication:** Only published peer-reviewed articles and research publications were considered.
- **Date:** Research studies conducted within five years from 2018-2023.
- **Topic:** Research studies conducted investigation/explored relationship between emotional intelligence with effective leadership.
- **Language:** Only studies published in English language were included.
- **Population:** The study scope encompassed different professions and fields; therefore, it almost included all relevant fields.
- **Study design:** Quantitative and Qualitative both studies were included for the review.

## Exclusion Criteria

- **Irrelevance:** Studies not related with EI and effectiveness of leadership.
- **Publication type:** Grey literature, non-peer reviewed and non-published articles were excluded.
- **Date:** Research studies conducted other than Saudi context. Research studies conducted before 2018.

- **Language:** Studies published in other languages.
- **Study design:** Studies conducted in laboratory, or on animals, and not applicable to EL and leadership.
- **Population:** Studies focusing only on one aspect or is in association with other outcomes; achievement, work progress, team building etc.

### Search Strategy and Criteria Inclusion

To carry out search on effective leadership and emotional intelligence, key words; emotional intelligence, leadership, effective leadership and intelligence, and workplace, emotional intelligence and leadership, were interchangeably used to get the most relevant research for systematic review.

The following steps were taken to formulate and execute the search:

1. **Database Selection:** Key academic databases, including PubMed, Embase, Scopus, and Web of Science, were selected for their comprehensive coverage of health-related literature.
2. **Search Terms:** A comprehensive list of search terms was developed, including variations and synonyms to capture a broad range of relevant studies. The terms included "Emotional Intelligence," "EI," "effective leadership" and related concepts.
3. **Boolean Operators:** The search terms were combined using Boolean operators such as "AND" and "OR" to

create precise and comprehensive search queries.

4. **Date Limitation:** A restriction was applied to consider only studies published within the last 5 years, ensuring the inclusion of recent research.
5. **Language Constraint:** A language filter was applied to include studies published in the English language.
6. **Initial Search:** The initial search queries were executed in each database to identify relevant titles and abstracts.
7. **Title and Abstract Screening:** The retrieved titles and abstracts were systematically screened to eliminate irrelevant studies that did not align with the research focus.
8. **Full-Text Review:** Full texts of potentially relevant articles were reviewed against the inclusion and exclusion criteria to determine final study selection.
9. **Reference Mining:** The reference lists of selected studies were examined to identify additional relevant sources that might have been missed during the initial search.

The systematic search strategy aimed to ensure comprehensive coverage of the existing literature related to the role of EI in effective leadership. The selected studies from the search formed the foundation for the subsequent analysis and synthesis of findings in the research study.

**Table 1:** Identify Number of Searches

Database	Searching string and searching terms	Search syntax	No of articles	Year
PubMed	Main searching terms using document, title, abstract and keywords	("Emotional Intelligence" OR "EI") AND ("effective leadership" OR "leadership styles") AND ("effectiveness"	7,200	2018 – 2023

			4,350
	Secondary searching terms	"EI"	
Embase	Main searching terms using document, title, abstract and keywords	("Emotional Intelligence " OR "EI") AND ("effective leadership "	5,350
	Secondary searching terms	"relationship" OR "association with")	5,350
	Main searching terms using document, title, abstract and keywords	("Emotional Intelligence " OR "EI") AND ("effective leadership" OR "association with EI")	6,520
Scopus	Secondary searching terms	"EI") AND ("role of EI"	7,820
Web of science	Main searching terms using document, title, abstract and keywords	("Emotional Intelligence " OR "EI") AND ("effective leadership" OR "association") AND ("relationship" OR	4,060
	Secondary searching terms	"relationship" OR "effectiveness") AND ("EI")	5,300

Table 1 summarizes the research outcomes by presenting the number of identified articles and the specific search parameters used for each database. The databases used include PubMed, Embase, Scopus, and Web of Science. The main and secondary search terms, encompassing key concepts such as "Emotional

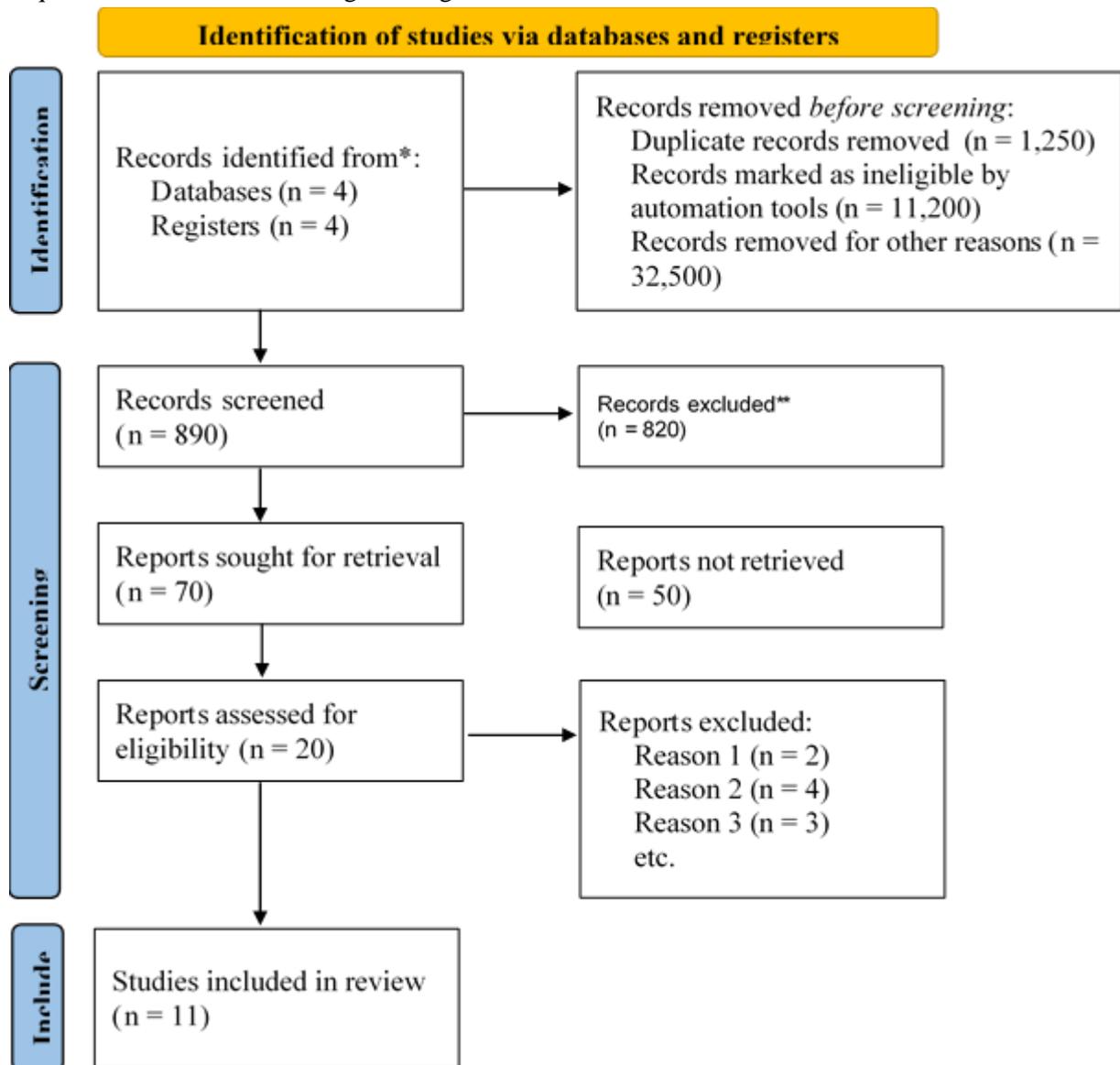
Intelligence", and "effective leadership" were employed in each search. The search syntax utilized logical operators to refine the query. The table highlights the quantity of articles retrieved from each database, with a focus on the years 2018 to 2023 to ensure recent relevance. This consolidated overview offers

insights into the research scope and findings related to the integration of role of Emotional Intelligence for effective leadership.

### Studies Selection

The study's progression unfolded in a carefully sequenced manner, transitioning from a general

approach to a focused and specific selection process. Commencing with a broad scope, records were initially identified from both databases and registers, amounting to a cumulative 8 records.



The process of study identification involved searching through databases and registers, yielding 4 records from databases and 4 from registers. Before screening, 1,250 duplicate records were removed, along with 11,200 records flagged as ineligible by automation tools, and 32,500 records excluded for other reasons. Upon screening, 890 records were assessed, leading to the exclusion of 820 records based on predefined criteria. From the

remaining 70 reports sought for retrieval, 50 were not retrieved, leaving 20 reports to be assessed for eligibility. Among these, 11 reports were included in the review after excluding 9 due to various reasons, such as incompatibility with the research objectives or inadequate methodology. The culmination of this process resulted in a final selection of 11 studies for comprehensive analysis and synthesis in the review.

**Data extraction, analysis and Quality Screening Assessment**

In 11, most relevant and 28 somewhat relevant researches were found after removing duplications and based on inclusion/exclusion criteria.

The data extraction procedure includes methodically acquiring and synthesizing pertinent data from the chosen research. This process attempted to record significant discoveries, epiphanies, and essential information that would lead to a thorough

analysis and synthesis of the study. The process of extracting data involved carefully going over each study to find information like the goals of the study, the methodology, the characteristics of the sample, and the specifics of the intervention, the outcomes that were measured, and other pertinent results. The study was in a position to draw valuable findings and insights from the body of selected research by meticulously extracting this data, which eventually contributed to the study's broad aims and improved its validity and dependability.

**Table 2:** Quality Screening of the Searches

Studies selected from 2018-2023 for Literature Review						
s.no	Authors	Studies appropriate and described	Covered relevant studies	Method section described	Findings described	Rating
1	Ian Flor Flores et al (2022)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Good
2	Adel Omer Bataweel et al (2023)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Good
3	Manal F.Albarbi et al 2018	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Good
4	Leila Aloui et al (2020)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Good
5	Praise Choeni et al (2023)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Good
6	Greta Cummings et al (2008)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Good
7	Mahboobeh Davaei et al 2023	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Good

**Table 3:** Research Matrix Extracted Data

Author, year	Aim	Design	Sampling and setting	Population	Findings
Farhan Alshammari et al. (2020)	Relationship between emotional intelligence with leadership.	Utilize quantitative approach through questionnaire.	Examined with nurse leaders only.	Involved healthcare staff; nurse leaders only.	Found significant relationship between EI and leadership role.
Haïfat Maoulida et al. (2023)	Curriculum developed to enhance social-emotional competencies.	Utilized conceptualization framework in education context.	Identify strategies to enhance student's social emotional competencies.	Case study: students	Expected outcome is increase in social, emotional, and in creativity of students.
Mahnoobeh Davaei et al (2023)	Explore the role of intelligence in teams: a systematic literature review.	Systematic literature review.	Focus on cognitive ability, emotional intelligence, and cultural intelligence through literature search.	Examined 44 studies.	Demonstrate growing interest in research on global virtual teams.
Manal F. Alharbi, et al.(2018)	Explore emotional intelligence among Saudi children in basic education.	Cross sectional study design.	Students in 10 schools	684 students were the study participants.	Basic education teachers and parents face challenges in incorporating strategies to enhance child's emotional and social functioning.
Frank likehemeng et al (2018)	Explore relationship between leadership style and employee performance.	Exploratory study	Literature synthesis from management, human resource, leadership	Research papers related to traditional approaches to public service governance.	
Adel Omer Bataweel et al (2023)	Exploring emotional intelligence and thinking style in Saudi residents: A cross-sectional study.	Cross-sectional study.	Sample of 245 participants were part of this online study.	245 participants belong to healthcare profession.	Findings revealed a positive relationship between rational style, experiential style and emotional intelligence.

Raquel. Gomez-Leal et al (2021)	Relationship between emotional intelligence and lead leaders: a systematic review.	Systematic review	Focus on literature related to emotional intelligence of school leaders.	Explored 110 references based on research criteria.	Findings revealed that leaders builds trusting relationships contributes greatly towards trust relationship with teachers.
Sistad.Linda (2020)	Emotional intelligence and leadership which impact does emotional intelligence have on leadership.	Systematic review.	Focus on relationship between EI and leadership through literature.	Examined research focusing on relationship between EI and leadership	Findings confirmed that EI is string associated with the leadership style, but little was found related to leadership styles.
Indu. Gautam et al (2019)	Impact of emotional intelligence on the development of leadership skills-a literature review.	Literature review.	Review both the relationship between emotional intelligence and development for leadership effectiveness.	Literature related to emotional intelligence and leadership skills and or effective leadership and its impact on team.	Findings provide insight into the relationship and association between emotional intelligence and leadership skills.
Shuet.Ching. Neong et al(2022)	Emotional intelligence and organization culture: A systematic literature review.	Literature review: original paper.	Focus literature between 2005-2022.	Examined literature related to emotional intelligence with job satisfaction, job performance and burnout.	Findings revealed that leadership, knowledge dissemination and corporate decision-making are associated with organizational culture and organizational emotional intelligence.

## Results

The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) methodology was used in the study to assess the role of Emotional Intelligence with effective leadership in the context of Saudi Arabia. Most of the researches indicated EI competences and effective leadership skills related to education and business management. Found that EI abilities have positive effects on leadership roles, including interpersonal and intra-person skills fall in the domains of self-awareness, social-awareness, self-management and relationship management.

Few studies found a relationship between EI and transformational leadership. Although the different studies used different measures of EI, in all cases correlations were found between EI constructs and the dimensions of transformational leadership, including idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individual consideration. Literature review found significant link between EI and transformational leadership such as social awareness, and relationship management.

During the data extraction stage, out of each study's critical information was painstakingly recorded in order to provide a thorough analysis and synthesis. A table summarizing the study's findings listed each study's objective, design, sampling strategy, population, and conclusions. Each study received a quality grade of "Good" or "Fair" after it underwent a quality evaluation based on factors including study selection, coverage of pertinent literature, technique description, and the clarity of the findings.

## Discussion

The study's main objective was to thoroughly investigate and evaluate the role of EI with effective leadership in the context of Saudi Arab. For this literature review, researches selected were conducted between 2018 until 2023. Most of the researches were found in academic context, and academic management.

Those were not directly associated with effective leadership.

Khurana and Gautam (2018) stated that leadership abilities directly depend upon the emotional intelligence. They also found a positive relationship and significant impact between roles of EI with effective leadership in service industry. A deeper understanding of skills and abilities based on emotions could be used in the development of leadership programmes to enhance the leadership effectiveness among managers and employees.

Researchers has also investigated that emotional intelligence is associated with transformational leadership qualities and can lead the organization towards more creativity (Pan, Trakulmututa & Yourayong 2020; Goleman & Boyatzis, 2019). Hence found that individual with high emotional intelligence is more capable to motivate people to achieve higher organizational goals.

Srivastva and Bharamanaikar (2004) examined the relationship of emotional intelligence with leadership excellence, success and job satisfaction. Most of the researches revealed relationship of emotional intelligence with leadership excellence. In a study conducted by Majeed and Jamshed (2021), showed leader's emotional intelligence and team culture are two main predictors for team retention. Evidences from the literature reflected that team culture plays an important role in an organization and reflected a correlation between leader's emotional wellbeing and team building.

Many of the studies conducted in Saudi Arab's context linked EI with decision power, good performance and interpersonal connection, in education, administration, industrial hiring, and difference of leadership between male and female nurses. (Shahbal et al., 2022; Shahbal et al., 2023). The selected researches for the review reflected limited sample size; nurses only, teachers only,

administration only, that limit the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, research tools used for data collection were based on qualitative approach. Hence, reflected personal biases in responses. Additionally, few of the research findings reflected that the leaders who demonstrate high EI show strong interpersonal competencies. Again, based on single aspect of effective leadership style. This review tried to examine relationship between EI with effective leadership based on very few available researches. Those were not sufficient to establish the evidence due to difference in variables selected for the research, methodologies, and sample size and study objectives.

Studies conducted by Bulmer et.al (2009) reflected that EI impact patient care and ethical decision-making in health care system. Hence, found strongly related with personality traits, behavior styles as important characteristics of health professionals. EI has been observed to have a strong correlation with understanding patient's needs and emotional reactions, in terms of decision making, towards the patient. Additionally, literature shows that nursing staff in healthcare system have higher EI as compare to physicians and other staff and has shown better coping and intrinsic motivation (Arslan, 2022; Bataweel, 2022).

Researches also reflected negative impact in case of low EI and poor decision-making. It was reflected in several researches that healthcare staff with low EI has shown poor judgment, low motivation, lack of vision and poor decision power that results in poor quality care of the patients (Dutheil et al., 2019; Bataweel, 2022).

Finally, EI and effective leadership is directly associated with improved quality care and high performance. On contrary, EI has been under discussion as learned or innate ability by some researchers as well (van der Linden et al., 2018, Rupani, 2013; Miller, 2022). Studies in

EI and effective leadership has been found as a paradigm shift for not only health system but also for other related fields as well (Seshia et al., 2018).

It is evident that EI can improve leadership and make it more effective. Additionally, a careful study design can bring into more strong relationship of these two variables. Hence, research findings can be utilized in many other professions to enhance performance and improve organizational outcomes. The concept of EI with effective leadership is not only important for education and business management, or for industries but also important for social scientist and psychologists as well.

### **Addition of this research into existing literature**

This study reflected grey areas found in the area of EI and effective leadership. Additionally, identified that by using mix method approach for data collection and considering multi group for data collection, can provide bases for generalizability of the research findings. There is a dire need for further studies to explore the relationship of EI with effective leadership as a whole. As the literature reflected that, many researches were conducted with very limited population and or in specific setting. That limits the generalizability of the research findings and its scope.

### **Implications**

Most of the researches reflected role of different types of intelligence and team's outcome. Number of researches conducted to examine the relationship of EI with effective leadership is relatively very low, specifically in the context of Saudi Arab. Further researches can contribute to this growing field of EI. This systemic review can be helpful in bridging the gap and bring implication that is more practical

and can increase the scope for effective leadership

### Recommendations and suggestions

Future studies should have big sample size so that findings can be generalize for age, gender and socio-economic background, in wider context. Similarly, tools should be used that can explore both the variables together. Moreover, research tools to be used should be based on mix approach (qualitative variables and quantitative variables).

**Limitation** This limited review of literature across leadership development and EI in effective leadership of an international, systematic review of 11 articles out of 130 articles. Many of the articles relevant were found in other languages, therefore not included.

This research review was based on very limited number of researches. The period did not showed sufficient number of researches and mostly researches explored were not related to both the variables together. Only studies conducted in Saudi context were selected, resulted in very small sample size.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, the systematic literature review has shown the link between emotional intelligence and organizational culture. Additionally, a leader with high EI can provide conducive environment for high performing employees and increase their knowledge acquisition and dissemination. EI seems a more relevant and pertinent set of skills in all managers, administrators and employees of the organizations. Thus, the three main themes, which emerge from this systematic literature review, are leadership, knowledge, and decisionmaking in determining organizational culture, and their link with emotional intelligence.

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