



# Social Psychological Factors of Emotional Intelligence Development in Management Activities

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**Abstract:** This study investigates how social psychological factors influence the development of emotional intelligence (EI) among individuals in managerial roles. A mixed-methods approach was employed, involving 120 mid-level and senior managers from technology, healthcare, and finance sectors. Quantitative data were collected through standardized surveys that measured EI and organizational climate, including dimensions such as team cohesiveness, perceived social support, and cultural acceptance of emotional expression. Qualitative insights were gathered via semi-structured interviews with 30 managers to explore subjective experiences of emotional skill-building in diverse work environments. The findings demonstrate a strong positive correlation between EI levels and supportive social contexts. Managers who reported higher team cohesiveness and open communication scored significantly better in empathy and social skills. Interviews further underscored the importance of role modeling and mentorship; participants cited learning opportunities gained from leaders who prioritized transparent communication. Additionally, industry-specific patterns emerged: managers in healthcare reported higher empathy scores, while technology firms emphasized innovation and fluid hierarchies, correlating with moderately elevated EI. Social identity factors, including gender and cultural background, also shaped emotional intelligence development. Overall, the results emphasize that social structures, collaborative norms, and inclusivity significantly impact how managers acquire and refine EI competencies.

**Keywords:** Emotional intelligence; management; social psychological factors; organizational climate; team cohesiveness; mentorship; leadership development.

**Introduction:** Emotional intelligence (EI) has emerged as a critical competency for individuals in managerial and leadership roles, influencing decision-making, team cohesion, and overall organizational well-being. Traditionally, managerial effectiveness was gauged by technical expertise and cognitive intelligence. However, a growing body of research now suggests that understanding emotions—both one’s own and those of others—plays a pivotal role in navigating workplace challenges. In this context, social psychological factors such as empathy, social norms, group dynamics, and organizational culture stand out as crucial determinants of how emotional intelligence develops in management activities.

Within organizational settings, managers frequently encounter situations that demand a nuanced reading of emotional cues. They are expected to motivate employees, mediate conflicts, and maintain a productive climate. According to theories by Goleman and others, EI comprises competencies including self-awareness, self-regulation, social awareness, and relationship management. While intrinsic traits (e.g., temperament) do affect a manager’s capacity for empathy and self-control, it is often the broader social environment—team relationships, cultural values, peer norms—that either fosters or hinders the refinement of these skills. Managers operating in highly collaborative environments, for instance, may have more opportunities to practice empathy and constructive feedback. Conversely, high-pressure organizational cultures that prioritize short-term gains over interpersonal well-being might inhibit the growth of emotionally intelligent behaviors.

Moreover, the interplay of social identity, group membership, and power dynamics can shape how emotional intelligence is expressed or suppressed in managerial contexts. Leaders who belong to a minority group may experience different social pressures than their majority-group counterparts, potentially prompting them to develop more nuanced emotional coping strategies. As the competitive and multicultural dimensions of the global economy intensify, organizations increasingly recognize that developing emotional intelligence is not a luxury but a strategic imperative. This study explores the social psychological factors that underpin emotional intelligence development in managers, highlighting how these elements interact to influence leadership behavior and organizational outcomes.

## METHODS

To investigate the social psychological factors impacting the development of emotional intelligence in managers, this study employed a mixed-methods

research design combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews. Participants were drawn from mid-level and senior management positions across three different industries: technology, healthcare, and finance. The sample consisted of 120 managers (60 male, 60 female) with an average managerial experience of eight years. Their organizations varied in size and cultural composition, offering a diverse context in which to explore the interplay between social psychological dynamics and EI.

**Survey Instruments-** A standardized Emotional Intelligence Scale—adapted from the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT) and Goleman’s EI framework—was administered at the start of the study to establish a baseline measure of participants’ emotional competencies. This questionnaire evaluated self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and social skills on a seven-point Likert scale. To assess social psychological factors, participants completed a second validated survey designed to measure organizational climate, team cohesiveness, perceived social support, and cultural values related to emotional expression. Items included statements about perceived encouragement for open communication, feedback norms, and trust levels among team members.

**Qualitative Interviews-** Following the survey phase, 30 managers (selected through purposive sampling to ensure representation from different industries and levels of EI) were invited to participate in in-depth interviews. These interviews aimed to capture the subjective experiences and organizational contexts that either facilitated or constrained emotional intelligence growth. Semi-structured interview guides covered topics such as:

- Strategies used by managers to navigate emotionally charged situations.
- Perceived influence of team or organizational culture on their ability to practice empathy and emotional regulation.
- Peer and supervisor support for emotional learning and development.

**Data Analysis-** Quantitative data from the surveys were subjected to statistical analysis using SPSS, focusing on correlations between EI scores and measures of perceived social support, team cohesion, and cultural acceptance of emotional expression. A multiple regression analysis was performed to identify the extent to which these variables predicted changes in emotional intelligence levels. Qualitative interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using thematic analysis. Codes reflecting recurring themes—such as empathy training, conflict resolution protocols,

or leadership role modeling—were grouped into higher-level categories to paint a nuanced picture of how social psychological factors shape EI development in managerial contexts. Triangulation of survey data and interview findings strengthened the reliability of the conclusions.

## RESULTS

**Quantitative Findings-** Preliminary survey results indicated a strong positive correlation between perceived social support and overall EI ( $r = .62, p < .01$ ). Managers who reported higher levels of supportive peer networks and organizational climates scored significantly better in empathy and social skill dimensions. Team cohesiveness emerged as another critical predictor, with managers in cohesive teams demonstrating elevated self-regulatory capacities ( $\beta = .45, p < .05$ ). Interestingly, cultural acceptance of emotional expression displayed a modest yet noteworthy correlation with EI scores ( $r = .36, p < .05$ ), suggesting that environments open to emotional discourse offer fertile ground for EI development.

Further analysis revealed differences across industries. Managers in technology firms often reported a stronger focus on innovation and less rigid hierarchies, correlating with moderately higher EI scores compared to those in finance settings, which tended to emphasize data-driven performance metrics. The healthcare sector showed the highest average empathy scores, possibly reflecting the industry's inherent focus on patient care and interpersonal communication.

**Qualitative Insights-** Interview narratives underscored the importance of role modeling and mentorship in shaping managers' emotional intelligence. Participants commonly cited specific senior leaders who prioritized transparency and open dialogue, setting a tone that encouraged others to follow suit. Such examples were particularly potent in organizations that institutionalized mentorship programs aimed at emotional skill-building. Another recurring theme was the value of conflict resolution training. Managers who had formal opportunities to practice mediation, discuss emotional triggers, and receive feedback in real-time reported more confidence in handling tense interpersonal dynamics.

Social identity factors surfaced as well. Female managers often found themselves compelled to "prove" their ability to balance emotional sensitivity with firmness in decision-making, highlighting broader societal norms that associate empathy with gender. Meanwhile, managers operating in culturally diverse workplaces described how cross-cultural communication challenges demanded refined emotional awareness. Some participants recalled that

misunderstandings around nonverbal cues—like maintaining eye contact or tone of voice—necessitated deeper conversations to build trust and avoid conflict. Overall, the qualitative data aligned with quantitative findings, illustrating that supportive social structures, open channels of communication, and diverse role models all converge to enhance emotional intelligence in management.

## DISCUSSION

The results of this study illuminate how social psychological factors such as organizational climate, team cohesiveness, and cultural norms serve as catalysts for emotional intelligence development among managers. These insights confirm earlier theories that argue for the social rather than purely individual nature of emotional skill-building. While personal disposition and prior experience certainly play a role, the environment in which managers operate either reinforces or dampens their capacity to learn from emotional encounters. For instance, workplaces with strong peer support and open communication channels effectively normalize the practice of empathy and self-reflection, allowing managers to experiment with new behaviors without fear of judgment.

One noteworthy contribution of this research is the emphasis on role modeling and mentorship. Leaders who demonstrate high emotional intelligence inadvertently foster a learning culture where these skills can be imitated and refined. The finding that cohesive teams correlate with higher self-regulatory capacity underscores the importance of collaboration: individuals learn to negotiate emotional states effectively when they see their peers doing the same. Moreover, this study's industry-specific patterns suggest that organizational structures and performance priorities shape the degree to which emotional intelligence is valued. For example, in sectors where direct human interaction is central, such as healthcare, empathy emerges almost as a prerequisite for successful management.

At the same time, results underscore challenges related to implicit biases and cultural expectations—particularly for individuals who may experience added pressure due to their gender or cultural background. Thus, interventions aimed at promoting emotional intelligence should incorporate diversity and inclusion strategies, ensuring that multiple perspectives and experiences inform training programs. The fact that EI scores were higher in organizations that explicitly encourage emotional expression highlights the need for a systemic approach. Creating psychologically safe spaces fosters learning and self-discovery, enabling managers to confront and refine their emotional

competencies.

In practical terms, organizations looking to enhance EI in management might invest in structured mentoring relationships, conflict resolution workshops, and ongoing peer feedback. Leaders should be trained not just in the theory of emotional intelligence but in its real-world application, particularly in multicultural environments where communication norms vary widely. Future research might delve deeper into longitudinal studies that track changes in managers' emotional intelligence as they progress through specialized training programs. Additionally, cross-cultural comparisons can shed light on how cultural dimensions—power distance, collectivism vs. individualism—intersect with emotional intelligence development. Ultimately, these findings reinforce the notion that emotional intelligence is dynamic and deeply rooted in social contexts, making it both an individual and collective responsibility to foster environments where managers can grow in empathic and self-regulatory capacities.

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