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Emotional Intelligence and empowerment of women leaders in South Africa

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Emotional Intelligence and empowerment of women leaders in South Africa

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A research article submitted to the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Management in the field of Business Administration

Johannesburg, 2024

ABSTRACT

While South Africa has made considerable progress in advancing gender equality, challenges persist in elevating women to leadership positions. Emotional Intelligence (EI), defined as the ability to recognise, manage, and understand one's own emotions while empathising with and prompting the reactions of others, has emerged as a critical factor in women's leadership and development. Research indicates that women leading with high EI are more adept at navigating the intricacies of interpersonal relationships, fostering collaboration, and leading with empathy.

Recognising EI as an important aspect of effective leadership, the study aims to explore how women who are in leadership within the context of South African municipalities are impacted by the complexity of EI on decision-making, conflict resolution, team dynamics, and overall organisational success. In South Africa, where women have historically faced systemic barriers to leadership, EI offers a promising path to their empowerment.

The research adopted a qualitative approach, and collected data through face-to-face interviews with women who are in leadership positions within the City of Johannesburg municipality. Through a holistic analysis of EI and its connections to women's empowerment in leadership, the study attempts to offer important insights for promoting gender-inclusive and emotionally intelligent leadership practices as well as the capacity to connect on a profound level with colleagues, build diverse and inclusive teams.

The study shows that a woman in a leadership position who is emotionally intelligent can create a positive working environment where all the staff members are comfortable and enjoy working. They contribute significantly to the effective functioning of an organisation. Further to the above, it is important for women in leadership positions to have strategies for managing their emotions to ensure effective management.

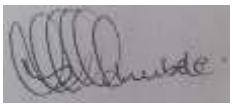
The study recommends that EI should be a requirement for placing women in leadership positions. Using EI as a selection factor for women in leadership roles is a calculated move that will guarantee compassionate and successful leadership. Organisations need to develop specialised training courses that emphasize EI proficiencies like empathy, self-control, self-awareness, and interpersonal skills. Workshops, coaching sessions, and evaluations are some of the initiatives that can be used to help women leaders improve their EI.

KEY WORDS

Emotional Intelligence (EI), Leadership, Women leaders, Women Empowerment, Emotional skills, Leadership skills.

DECLARATION

I, **Vukosi Marion Makhubele**, declare that this research report is my own work except as indicated in the references and acknowledgements. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in this or any other university.

Name: Vukosi Makhubele Signature: 

Signed at …Albertsdal……

On the ……19th …… day of …February…… 2024.

DEDICATION

To my mom and late dad, whose unwavering support and encouragement have been the driving force behind my academic journey. You're understanding and believe in my abilities have influenced me into the person I am today.

To my husband and children, you guys are amazing. Your love and support have held and kept me through the most difficult and challenging times. Thank you for permitting me to pursue my dream and help me achieve my goals.

To my aunt, thank you for your prayers and always available to listen and baby sit when I needed a break. I am thankful to have you in my life.

Lastly, I thank the almighty God for enabling me and making all this possible.

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I want to express my sincere gratitude to the following individuals for helping to make this research feasible.

Without the time and permission from the participants, as well as the support of my superiors at work, this study would not have been feasible. I appreciate all of you for entrusting me with your experiences as participants.

To my supervisor, Dr Jabulile Msimango-Galawe. I appreciate you. Your work speaks for you. I knew I wanted you to supervise me from the first day I heard you give a session on leadership quest. Thank you for being patient and encouraging me to give out the best.

To my friends, thank you for your kind words and believing in me. For the times I came to vent and was filled with doubt, your kind words and encouragement kept me going.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

Emotional Intelligent (EI)

City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality (CoJMM)

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Study Background

South Africa (SA) has a history of gender inequality and discrimination, and women have faced significant barriers in the workplace and in leadership positions (Barkhuizen, Masakane & van der Sluis, 2022). Since achieving democracy in 1994, South Africa has built a strong legal framework supported by the Constitution, which is widely regarded as one of the most liberal in the world. Amongst other things, the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa cherishes gender equality and stipulates that "everyone is equal before the law" (RSA, 2006, p.5). Despite significant improvement in recent years, women continue to be underrepresented in leadership positions in several industries and countries around the world (Jamorabo, Chen, Gurm, Jahangir, Briggs, Mohanty & Renelus, 2021). Seale, Fish and Schreiber (2021) indicate that to ensure the liberation of South African women leaders, a substantial increase in women representation in higher ranks to allow decision-making is needed.

Schultz (2021) argues that the leadership of both male and females has been characterised by various transformation and numerous challenges due to significant changes such as technology and societal alterations. Due to constant changes, organisations lately need high capacity and well-skilled leaders who can respond to changes and challenges effectively and successfully (Schultz, 2021). Therefore, to ensure an increase in representation of women in decision-making positions, significant resources are required to support their needs to be effective leaders. These include skills to deal with emotions to help women to support their co-workers. Haricharan (2022) argues that for a person to cope with constant changes and solve problems, it is significant to manage emotions.

Organisations needs to achieve their intended goals, and this relies on the interrelationship between employees and their leadership skills (Adigüzel & Uygun, 2020). This means that when there is high level communication between employees and their senior managers, employees get motivated, and production is likely to increase.

Various scholars have shown an interest in the notion of EI and the study of feelings and/or emotions has received attention in leadership (Baker, 2019; Gomez-Leal et al., 2022; Haricharan, 2022). Baker (2019) indicates that organisational behaviour researchers have an interest in the study of emotions. Many authors have demonstrated that EI is associated to significant work-related behaviours such as leadership and team effectiveness (Mfikwe et al., 2017; Gomez-Leal et al., 2022; Alam et al., 2020). This means high intelligence leadership lead to teamwork effectiveness. Further, leadership can lead to a catastrophe or success of an organisation. Regardless of numerous successes reported in women's empowerment, issues such as stereotyping, wage inequality, and discrimination are still a concern in female leadership. Systemic barriers that women continue to encounter prevent them from rising to positions of leadership in the workplace.

Various authors have defined EI differently; however, the meaning is similar. According to Fteiha and Awwad (2020), EI means an individual's competence to control and manage feelings and ensuring that the feelings are expressed in an effective manner. Akter et al. (2021) define EI as the capability to control and manage emotional cues and information. The managing of feelings aims to ensure that colleagues work together efficiently with the aim of achieving intended goals. Several scholars highlight EI as the proficiency of individuals to express and comprehend their feelings (Alam et al., 2020; Haricharan, 2022, Akter, et al. 2021, Baesu, 2019, Bashir, 2017, Gleman & Boyatzis, 2016).

The study conducted by Adigüzel and Uygun (2020) indicate that excellent intellectual skills can make a person an excellent worker, but highly developed EI plays a significant role in one achieving high intended goals. Further to the above, the study stipulates that EI is comprised of two significant aspects, which are implementing emotions properly and applying knowledge appropriately (Adigüzel & Uygun, 2020). This translates to a leader who is both rational and emotionally intelligent. Haricharan, (2022) argues that EI is a significant aspect of determining success in the workplace and that it is an important component of effective leadership.

1.2. Purpose of the Study

When women try to enter leadership positions, it is somehow questioned if they are the right person for the position. They often do not receive much attention as received by their male counterparts (Eagly & Carli, 2018). As much as there is a visible positive transformation in gender inequality at workplaces, the idea of women leadership has not yet been fully admitted and this challenge is still experienced in many developing countries (Mulawarman & Komariyah, 2021). There is a long history of lack of acknowledgement of women as effective leaders. Furthermore, women leaders are deemed to not have the essential characteristics to be successful leaders (Yadav & Lata, 2018; Mulawarman & Komariyah, 2021).

The purpose of the study is to assess the significant aspects of EI and how they contribute to and empower women in leadership. This will be achieved through the analysis of the impact of EI on women in leadership positions. The researcher anticipates that conducting this study will help women to recognise the characteristics of EI within themselves. This will further ensure that women in leadership enhance their leadership skills and pave a way for more women in leadership positions.

The prominence of EI and how it contributes to women in leadership is a topic that is not given much attention and is rarely a priority in the scholarly world (Panda & Banik, 2019). Even though there have been slight developments regarding this topic, there are still gaps, not just in South Africa but globally (Panda & Banik, 2019). This research is intending to fill this gap by analysing the experiences and practice of women in leadership positions and reviewing available literature on the topic.

1.3. Research Problem

Even though there is a progressive transformation in recent years, women are still experiencing difficulties in their leadership positions and this calls for empowerment to cope with challenges and changes in their roles (Hryniwicz & Vianna, 2018). Interestingly, the use of EI to advance the development and empowerment of women in leadership is becoming an area of attention (Panda & Banik, 2020). The realisation of the insistent gap between males and females in management roles across various sectors and industries, as well as the larger societal and cultural variables that contribute to this gap, has also in part motivated the study.

There is also a substantial deficiency of equality in management positions, with women underrepresented in senior leadership positions across a wide range of industries. This is despite increasing recognition of the value of social intelligence in leadership to support and empower them (Gipson et al., 2017). It is in this regard that this study intends to analyse the reputation of EI and how it empowers women who are in leadership roles in SA.

1.4. Research Questions

The study asks the following research questions:

1. What is the role of EI on empowering women in leadership positions in the City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality (CoJMM)?
2. What is the perceived impact of EI on women manager's style of leadership?

3. What is the role of EI on the development of women leaders?

1.5. Research Objectives

The following are the objectives of this study:

Table 1: Objectives of the study

The objectives of the research	Research approach	Method to address the objectives
1. To explore the role of EI on empowering women leaders in the CoJMM.	Qualitative approach	• Interview women who are in positions of leadership
2. To assess the perceived impact of EI on work performance of women who are in leadership positions in the CoJMM.	Qualitative approach	• Interview women in leadership positions
3. To assess the role of EI on the development of women leaders.	Qualitative approach	• Interview women in leadership positions.

1.6. Justification/Rationale of the Study

The concept of EI is a significant source for women in leadership positions to enhance their leadership potential. This study is stirred by the interest that the researcher has in analysing the aspects of EI and how it empowers women leaders in their respective workplaces. This study determines to analyse and recognise EI in South African leaders, specifically, women leaders employed in municipalities.

There is a need to comprehend the difficulties that women currently experience in leadership roles so that they can be encouraged to take on such roles. However, if women learn to empower themselves to meet these challenges, they can become change leaders for the world. According to studies, women are more likely to succeed in their positions and influence positive change within their organisations or communities (Barkhuizen et al., 2022; Haricharan, 2022). Furthermore, their peers and subordinates are more likely to view them as capable leaders. Every leader needs social intelligence and EI to be successful, but women in particular need it as they work to achieve greater representation in the workforce (Barkhuizen et al., 2022).

This study significantly contributes to an in-depth understanding of aspects of EI and ways in which it empowers women leaders in both the public and private sectors. Additionally, this study contributes to building the base for women leaders to cope with challenges related to their positions and further provides practice recommendations. The study analyses the significance of EI and how it empowers women in leadership positions.

1.7. Delimitations of the Study

The study adopts a qualitative approach. However, there are shortcomings associated with the research approach. The population utilised for the study is relatively small compared to the total number of women occupying leadership roles within South African municipalities.

The study further acknowledges that a small population of at least 15 women from management positions were engaged to ensure effective management due to time and financial constraints.

1.8. Operational Definitions

Emotional Intelligence (EI): the ability to control and manage feelings and ensure that feelings are expressed in a good manner and effectively (Valente et al., 2020)

Social intelligence: a collection of skills that allow one to establish and sustain healthy relationships in pairs, teams, or large groups. Simply put, it is the capacity to interact, love, and cooperate with others (Boyatzis, et al, 2020).

Leadership: an approach by which one person persuades a group of individuals to pursue a shared objective (Yadav & Lata, 2018).

Emotion: a strong feeling coming from one's circumstances or relationship with other people (Gkonou & Miller, 2021)

Transformation: manner of transitioning from one position of quality to another (Harvey, 2004**).**

1.9. Structure of the report

This section will provide the outline of the structure of this study and the structure will be as follows:

1: Introduction

The first section of the study includes the background of the study, problem statement, research questions, objectives of the study, Justification/Rationale of the Study, delimitations of the study, and operational definitions.

2: Literature Review

The second section of this study will provide the literature overview that is related to the study followed a theoretical framework and then a short conclusion.

3: Research Methodology

The third section of this study will present the research design and the research methodology. The focus is on the research design, methodology, and data collection processes as well as how the collected data was analysed.

4: Presentation of Findings

The focus of this section of the study provides a presentation of the data collected from the fieldwork and then presents the key findings. The first part of this section presents the analysis of the key themes. The research findings are then presented and linked to the study propositions presented in section 2.

5: Discussion of findings

The fifth section provide a discussion of the findings by linking the reviewed literature and the findings of the study as a way of ensuring that the main objectives of the study are addressed.

5: Conclusions and Recommendations

This final section of the study concludes whether the study achieved the intended aims and objectives and ensures that all the research questions are answered. This section further provides the presentation summary and conclusions of the study followed by the recommendations. The last part of the section present suggestions for further research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

This section offers an understanding of various concepts and debates that are key to the study including leadership, Emotional intelligence, EI attributes, what role EI has in leadership, the impact that EI has on women empowerment, and the use of EI by women who are in leadership for transformation.

2.2. Understanding leadership

Various scholars highlight that the concept of leadership is one of the most debated topics over the years (Jooste & Coetzee, 2022; Gómez-Leal, et al, 2022). Several studies have stipulated that leadership is one of the topics that are validated because of the significant influence that it carries on all forms of institutions and organisations. Various scholars define leadership and explain it in several ways. However, the definition and explanation of leadership differs according to the form of leadership and environment where leaders operate (Gómez-Leal, et al, 2022). According to Baesu (2019), leadership is the process and procedure in which individuals show and express a form of management process collectively with the personality of the leaders.

Every leader in an organisation has a significant role that is influential to the emotions of all the members of an organisation. For an organisation to perform well, there is need for a leader who promotes the emotional bond between the employees and the leadership of the organisation (Baesu, 2019). This means that the success and failure of an organisation relatively depends on the ability of the leader as well as their capacity to channel employees' emotions either positively or negatively. A leader who performs well encourages change within an organisation. A great leader is one who is capable of foreseeing, mastering one's emotions, and empathising with many if not all members of the organisation (Gómez-Leal et al., 2022).

Krén and Séllei (2021) argue that the best way to describe leadership is through the influencing process that motivates employees, and the motivation can further ensure performance improvement in an organisation. In this sense, the leader's emotional reactions are very important for the success of an organisation and leaders utilise their own emotions to build a conducive working environment through how they behave or share feelings with employees.

2.3. Emotional intelligence

The idea of EI was first introduced by psychologists Peter Salovey and John Mayer in the early 1990s. They described EI as the capacity to recognise, comprehend, and control personal and other people's emotions. According to their theory, EI is comprised of four key components, which are using emotions, understanding emotions, managing emotions, and perceiving emotions (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). The idea that EI is essential for both social and personal functioning was popularised by this early theory, which also serves as a springboard for further studies. This theory has since been developed and expanded upon by numerous researchers and theorists, resulting in the creation of more recent models and viewpoints on EI. In line with almost thirty years of studies, EI emerges from the combination of emotions and intelligence which suggest that people use information from their perceived comprehension of emotions and how to control them to help them think through problems and make decisions (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2004). EI refers to a person's ability to comprehend and control emotions and it is more teachable and easier to acquire than emotional knowledge (Cherry, 2018).

When looking at EI, it is important to distinguish between emotions and EI. Our emotions grow in response to knowledge and circumstances (Faltas, 2017). Our emotions are influenced by our feelings and the events that surround us. However, Emotional Intelligence is a skill, it is the capacity to be aware of, identify, and comprehend emotions, feelings, and moods as well

as the ability to employ them in a way that is adaptive (Faltas, 2017). This clearly shows that every part of our existence is impacted and touched by EI.

Raghubir (2018) describes EI as the capability and aptitude to control and manage individual's emotions as well as other people's emotions. EI has surfaced in many fields and Raghubir (2018) has indicated that the reason EI is significantly gaining much attention from several disciplines is that it encourages the well-being of leaders and has an optimistic impact on subordinates. EI empowers people to make progressive decisions and enables leaders to manage their subordinates (Görgens-Ekermans & Roux, 2021). This means the concept of EI has a remarkable influence on the success of organisations and institutions. EI has also been explained as the aptitude to monitor individuals' emotions and the emotions of others to get an understanding of oneself and others to further utilise the information to guide the way an individual thinks and acts (Valente et al., 2020). The definition of EI by various authors provides similar means and takes into consideration the fact that one's emotion has a significant impact on other people's emotions (Raghubir, 2018).

Raghubir (2018) stipulates that EI is not a mental characteristic but a skill that one can learn. Several studies indicate that EI is the ability that people possess, and other studies emphasise that EI is a possessed capability that people can learn if they do not possess it (Raghubir, 2018; Abdel-Fattah, 2020; Valente et al., 2020). The overall definition of EI accounts for social and emotional problem solving. The baseline for EI is more connected and related to the capability and ability of recognising emotions (Krén & Séllei, 2021).

2.4. Emotional intelligence attributes

EI attributes play a substantial role in the explanation and definition of the concept (Jooste & Coetzee, 2022). The first step in developing EI attributes has to do with assessing one's current state. This means that there is a need for one to do an honest personal inventory. According to Jooste and Coetzee (2022), EI attributes can be divided into two categories, personal and social attributes. Personal attributes include self-management as well as self-awareness (Raghubir, 2018). Self-awareness has been explained as the attribute that can be attained through monitoring the state of one's emotions and the identification of emotions, weakness, strengths, and personal needs (Raghubir, 2018; Jooste & Coetzee, 2022; Fiori & Vesely-Maillefer, 2018). Self-awareness also relates to a person's ability to identify and recognise their own emotions, and this understanding means knowing the impact that emotions have on one's behaviour and thoughts (Halkiopoulos, Gkintoni & Antonopoulou, 2020).

Self-awareness helps a person to reserve judgment until sufficient information is collected and allows individuals to think before taking any unplanned action. A self-aware person is a person who can honestly assess himself or herself openly, recognise their strength and locate areas that require improvement. Jooste and Coetzee (2022) indicate that a self-aware leader can take constructive criticism and welcome both negative and positive feedback. From this point of view, a leader who is not self-aware believes that no one can correct him or her and believes that they are always right.

The second EI attribute is the social attribute, explained as social awareness and relationship management (Halkiopoulos, Gkintoni & Antonopoulou, 2020). According to Raghubir (2018), the individual who has social awareness attribute is an individual who can carefully observe, be thoughtful of other people's feelings and consider their perspectives. The attribute of relationship management is explained as the aptitude to control and manage the relationship with others as well as to use one's sentiments and the emotions of other people to enhance and maintain positive relations, good communication, and positive influence (Halkiopoulos, Gkintoni & Antonopoulou, 2020).

2.5. The role of Emotional Intelligence in empowering women in leadership

Several authors highlight the need for clarification of the concept of EI and its role in leadership knowledge development (Barreiro & Treglown, 2020; Lubbadeh, 2020). EI plays a noteworthy role in an organisation as it enables the well-being of both the leaders and subordinates (Majeed & Jamshed, 2021). EI is a crucial aspect in promoting women to leadership roles. It improves their capacity to manage themselves and others successfully, develops a good and inclusive work atmosphere, and helps break down limitations to leadership. Raghubir (2018) argues that an individual who possesses EI abilities is a person who understands how to engage in an effective prediction. He further stipulated that this individual could anticipate the future emotional reactions of other people. An individual with high EI has the prospective to support the growth of constructive relationships since they can predict how others will feel and react to future interactions (Majeed & Jamshed, 2021).

The person who oversees his or her emotions can engage in the emotional forecast, and this enables them to predict the feelings of others in response to future interactions. Further to the above, emotionally intelligent individuals have a positive influence on their working relationships (Papoutsi et al., 2019). The study done by Raghubir (2018) reveals that emotions can negatively affect the ability to effectively interact with the interdisciplinary team as they can overshadow the team leader's judgment. This may further hinder the development of an effective working relationship.

According to Baesu (2019), individuals should not be judged according to professional competence and how intelligent they are but should be judged according to how they behave and interact with other individuals. In addition, how leaders engage with members of an organisation depends on their level of EI. Krén and Séllei (2021) argue that EI is more apprehensive with the capability of integrating collected evidence and utilising emotions as well as reactions to process the said information.

Most scholars highlight the significance of EI and outline their beliefs on the effect that EI has in life, particularly organisational leadership (Mfikwe & Pelser, 2017; Krén, & Séllei, 2021; Fida, Khan & Safdar, 2019). Baesu (2019) argues that EI is mostly analysed with interactive relations and that includes organisation leader and employee relationships. This means emotional influence is very important and it is a significant part of leadership as the leaders are the main role players in managing the emotions and mood in an organisation.

Leaders with high EI create mutual trust and an environment that is comfortable employees. Leaders who share knowledge, create a platform for employees to be part of decision-making, promoting teamwork, which will further enhance organisational performance (Krén & Séllei, 2021). In this sense, the emotional behaviour of the leader plays a significant role in daily work activities. Krén and Séllei (2021) further stipulate that EI behaviour has a momentous effect on the success of the organisation through the connection of leaders and employees.

Every organisation is characterised by the group mood, and this is usually determined by the characteristics of the emotions of the members within the organisation (Chiang et al., 2021). From this viewpoint, the mood of an organisation is shaped by the contamination of emotion. Leaders' behaviour and the expression of their feelings play a significant role in an organisation. Carden, Jones and Passmore (2022) stipulate that self-awareness together with empathy enhances the success of an organisation. The leader of an organisation who is emotionally intelligent can direct and verbalise their emotions to assist others to understand their own emotions and further assists in developing emotional awareness in the organisation (Matjie, 2018).

Various studies show that leaders are not just leading the organisation, but they have a significant role in leading the emotions of the organisation members (Matjie, 2018; Cherkowski et al., 2021; Jooste & Coetzee, 2022). This is the reason leaders should always be aware of their own emotions and their behaviour should be influenced by EI as it affects the whole performance of an organisation (Krén & Séllei, 2021). Gillar-Corbi et al. (2019) argue that EI is a proficiency that can be improved and/or developed as it can affect how well employees perform in the work environment.

EI is very substantial in boosting the self-efficacy of employees. Self-efficacy is related to the belief that an individual has in trusting their abilities to organise, plan, and the capability of carrying out the required daily activities to achieve the set goal (Ran et al., 2022). In this sense, self-efficacy is very important among women in leadership as it assists them in making reliable decisions. A leader who has high EI can motivate and manage employees and this means quality leadership can be instilled amongst women in leadership using EI.

Emotionally intelligent leaders can create a healthy working culture and they can identify and understand the needs of team members and employees' weaknesses and strengths (Olawoyin, 2018). From this point of view, team members are expected to perform well and achieve the set organisational goals. Leaders who do not have EI may have trouble in understanding and identifying employees' weaknesses and strengths, thereby failing to create a conducive working environment (Olawoyin, 2018; Papoutsi & Chaidi, 2022).

EI plays a considerable role in every aspect of women in management roles. For this reason, EI should be encouraged among women in leadership to ensure the development of good working relationships, and the ability to understand others (Panda & Bank, 2020). This study argues that EI boosts a leader's confidence in both their professional and private lives.

Proposition 1: Employees with higher levels of EI are more likely to display increased work performance and feel more empowered in the workplace.

EI assists women leaders in better understanding their strengths and shortcomings, allowing them to capitalize on their strengths while improving their weaknesses and leading authentically. Work performance and employee empowerment are positively correlated with EI, which means that as the individual level of EI rises, so does employee empowerment. Research shows that workforces with high EI typically execute better on the job than those with lower EI (Ahangar, 2012; Baesu, 2019; Gillar-Corbi et al., 2019). Developing EI can result in a more empowered workforce, made up of people who are happy, confident, and involved in their work, which will ultimately boost productivity and success within the company. Individuals with high echelons of EI are well able to control their reactions, which can affect advanced levels of self-awareness and self-control. They may be able to avoid overreacting or making rash decisions by remaining composed and focused on stressful situations.

Furthermore, EI can facilitate improved interpersonal communication. They are well adept at associating with others and work together more successfully because they have a better understanding of the feelings and perspectives of others. In the face of change or adversity, EI can help people become more flexible and resilient. They are more adept at controlling their stress and overcoming obstacles, which may aid them in maintaining motivation and productivity under trying circumstances. Overall, EI plays a substantial role in work performance, and those who cultivate this skill set are likely to have greater career success.

2.6. The impact of EI on women empowerment

The intersection of EI and the empowerment of women leaders is a critical area of research, particularly in the context of SA, where the dynamics of society and culture present unique

challenges and opportunities for women who are in leadership roles (Manning, 2021). Enhancing women's access to leadership roles has been the focus of women empowerment research across a wide range of disciplines. EI has a significant impact on women's capacity to traverse social difficulties, stand up for their rights, and realise their full potential. Developing EI empowers women leaders to speak up with confidence, get over prejudices, and affect good change in their communities and companies. EI gives women the tools they need to negotiate cultural habits, speak clearly, and form partnerships for collective empowerment (Nkomo & Ngambi, 2017).

A study by Goleman and Boyatzis (2017) asserts that EI characteristics including self-awareness, self-regulation, and social skills are essential for women in leadership jobs to overcome gender biases and lead effectively. Furthermore, being aware of one's feelings, abilities, and shortcomings is essential to empowerment. Women who possess this ability may become more self-assured and assertive in social and professional contexts, better able to communicate their needs and goals (Goleman & Boyatzis, 2017). Based on the above assertion, women who possess EI are better able to control their own emotions, comprehend and impact others, and negotiate the intricacies of social and professional networks. Using EI to empower oneself can result in enhanced resilience, increased self-confidence, build stronger networks and achieve greater success in various aspects of one’s life (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2018).

Literature emphasizes how important EI is to women's empowerment in several ways. EI has a significant role in facilitating women's ability to overcome obstacles and realise their potential in a variety of domains, including leadership, job performance, education, mental health, and social integration. Various scholars mention some of the ways that women might improve their overall empowerment and leadership potential by cultivating their EI competencies such as:

1. Enhanced Self-Confidence-women who possess self-awareness and self-management abilities are better able to recognise their worth and make bold statements in a variety of contexts. Women who are self-aware and self-regardful are more confident in their professional skills and are more likely to take on leadership responsibilities and stand up for themselves.
2. Enhanced Resilience- women who possess emotional restraint, and a positive outlook are better equipped to handle obstacles and failures without losing their motivation or drive. Women can overcome obstacles and persevere in their work trajectories by practicing effective stress management and emotional self-control.
3. Greater Networks- women who possess social awareness and relationship management abilities are better able to establish and maintain strong personal and professional networks that offer vital resources and support. Social responsibility, empathy, and interpersonal skills all assist women in creating the kind of networks and professional ties that are essential for career growth.
4. Increased Influence- women who possess influence and conflict resolution skills are more able to speak up for others as well as themselves, advancing gender equality and propelling organisational transformation. Women who are adept at making decisions, solving problems, and being flexible are better able to successfully navigate their jobs over the long run.
   (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2018; Cherry, 2018; Faltas, 2017; Kotsou, Mikolajczak, Heeren, Grégoire, & Leys, 2019)

According to Nkomo and Ngambi (2017), cultural expectations and EI have an impact on women's empowerment and leadership effectiveness (Nkomo & Ngambi, 2017).

On the other hand, Pillay, Viviers, and Mayer, 2018 imply that EI competencies assist women to manage with stress and adversity, therefore boosting their leadership capabilities and empowering them to succeed in difficult settings (Pillay, Viviers, & Mayer, 2018). Nkomo and Ngambi (2017), argues that women can use EI talents to challenge old norms, advocate for gender equality, and lead revolutionary change initiatives (Nkomo & Ngambi, 2017). In his study, Manning, (2021) suggests that women leaders with high EI are more likely to participate in transformational leadership behaviors, empowering their teams and cultivating a culture of cooperation, creativity, and growth. They provide opportunity for people to improve their talents, express their views, and make meaningful contributions to corporate success (Manning, 2021).

Enhanced leadership qualities, including effective communication, conflict resolution, and team cooperation, are exhibited by women leaders with high EI. EI supports women in managing diverse teams, navigating the challenges of leadership roles, and creating inclusive work environments. However, there are barriers that women face in leadership including gender bias and societal challenges. Through improved emotion regulation, resilience building, and leadership skills demonstration, EI can assist women in overcoming these obstacles (Shabani, Citaku, Ramadani, Mano, Barach, Waldrop, Zillioux, Khan, 2021). EI is essential to empowerment because it allows leaders to understand and regulate their own and others' emotions, resulting in a supportive environment in which people feel secure in their abilities of taking control and executing decisions.

Proposition 2: Leaders who possess stronger self-regulation and awareness abilities at work tend to perform better and feel more empowered.

The competence to recognise and understand one's own thoughts, behaviour and emotions is understood as self-awareness. Self-awareness is a critical factor when it comes to empowering women at work and promoting their professional development as well as the progress of gender equality efforts. It is important in a person's work performance because it consents them to recognize their own strong point and weaknesses, identify areas for improvement, and make changes to improve their performance (Raghubir, 2018; Jooste & Coetzee, 2022; Fiori & Vesely-Maillefer, 2018).

Self-aware people are more likely to recognize their own areas of improvement, blind spots, and biases. This can assist them in recognizing when they need to seek feedback or support, as well as making necessary changes to their approach or behaviour. As a result, self-aware people are frequently better equipped to navigate challenges and overcome obstacles at work. Furthermore, self-awareness can improve interpersonal relationships and communication skills. Self-aware people are often well able to recognise the impact of their words and actions on other people, as well as to communicate effectively with colleagues and clients.

People who can control their emotions and behaviour in the workplace are frequently better able to deal with difficulties and make wise choices. For instance, they might have improved impulse control and the ability to avoid distractions, which can help them maintain concentration on crucial tasks and meet deadlines. Strong self-regulation abilities can also help people manage stress and prevent burnout, which can enhance their work and their overall wellbeing.

Self-regulation is a crucial component of professional behaviour because it helps people maintain appropriate boundaries, resolve conflicts, and negotiate tricky social dynamics. Furthermore, it helps them progress in their careers and promotes a culture of gender equality.

Building trust, empathy, and relationship with others can help women express their emotions in a way that is suitable for the circumstance and can improve how they perform at work (Matjie, 2018; Papoutsi & Chaidi, 2022). Strong self-regulation skills in women often translate into success at work, which promotes greater empowerment and advances gender equality in the workplace. Having the capacity to control personal thoughts, feelings, and behaviour to realise long-term objectives and adjust to changing circumstances is regarded as self-regulation. It is an essential skill for the workplace because it enables people to control their stress, maintain their focus, and make wise decisions.

2.7. The use of EI by women in leadership for transformation

Several studies show that there is doubt about women's leadership skills (Panda & Banik, 2020). Daniel Goleman's fundamental work on Emotional Intelligence with his model that includes social skills, empathy, self-awareness, motivation, and self-regulation lays the platform for understanding how EI affects leadership (Goleman, 1995). Researcher shows that EI is a major predictor of transformative leadership in both men and women, although the effect is stronger in women. Women leaders with strong emotional intelligence are more effective in inspiring and motivating their teams (Goleman & Boyatzis, 2017; Salovey & Mayer,1990; Haricharan, 2022; Mulawarman & Komariyah, 2021). Shanker (2020) argues that people have now realised that the success of an organisation requires more than just formal education. He argues that EI is an individual skill and there is a difference between the emotions of men and women. There are many studies conducted to ascertain who is more intelligent between men are and women (Papoutsi et al, 2022; Panda & Banik, 2020). The study done by Papoutsi et al, (2022) infers that men and women are emotionally comparable and different, and this has a significant outcome on their EI.

Papoutsi and Chaidi (2022) argue that feminine leaders are not smarter than masculine leaders in terms of EI and that male leaders are not superior to women leaders. In this sense, Papoutsi and Chaidi (2022) support that EI is an individual aspect and has nothing to do with gender. Furthermore, the study analysing the EI of female and male leaders reveals that, on average, women tend to be more aware of their emotions, and they are naturally empathetic. Male leaders on the other hand, are found to be more self-confident and positive, which makes them handle challenges and stress at workplace better than their female counterparts. Women with high EI are more likely to use transformational leadership styles, which relate to better management performance. High levels of EI contribute considerably to effective leadership by strengthening interpersonal skills, decision-making, and creating inclusive work cultures.

The study by Mulawarman and Komariyah (2021) on women and leadership style shows that most successful women leaders adopt a flexible style of management. This means that they adapt their style of leadership according to the demand of the environment they work in. The study further stipulates that most women in leadership do not adhere to one specific leadership style. From the above, women in leadership tend to create a conducive environment for better performance compared to men, which is fundamental to EI from a leadership perspective (Mulawarman & Komariyah, 2021). Furthermore, women in leadership positions may face additional barriers and biases that can hinder their leadership opportunities and recognition. However, when women leaders overcome these challenges and effectively leverage their skills and capabilities, they can be successful in various leadership styles (Yan, Wu & Zhang, 2018).

Ndawo (2021) emphasises that there is a significant need for improvement in EI and this can be achieved through the facilitation of EI training for both females and males. This can enhance the operation and functioning of a leader in the workplace. To ensure that the organisation gets a leader who is transformation and performance-oriented, organisation needs to consider EI

testing as a way of predicting the effectiveness of the leaders. In this way, organisation will be able to predict if the leader has abilities to improve the organisation, which will further improve the performance of the organisation. Ran et al. (2021) argue that it is paramount to assess how females and males act emotionally in making decisions as this significantly affects team members.

EI is a key component of transformational leadership. Women leaders with high EI are more likely to be effective transformational leaders because they can better understand and control their own emotions and those of their team members, resulting in increased empowerment and better organisational outcomes. The study by Mfikwe and Pelser (2017) comparing leadership styles of women and man in senior leadership positions discovered that there are no differences between the manly and womanly styles of leadership. The study also reveals a difference in terms of EI levels between women and men in senior positions (Mfikwe & Pelser, 2017). EI has a substantial effect on both male and female leadership decisions and the empowerment of both genders through training may assist (Baba, Makhdoomi & Siddiqi, 2021).

Proposition 3: The gender of an individual in a leadership role influences their EI levels and performance in the workplace.

There is some evidence to back up the idea that a leader's gender can affect how emotionally intelligent they are and how well they perform at work. The competence to identify, control, and comprehend individual's reactions as well as those of others is referred to as EI (Barkhuizen, Masakane, & van der Sluis, 2022). There may be differences in how men and women express and control their emotions at work, which may influence their leadership style and productivity (Jamorabo et al., 2021). A transformational style of leadership is characterised by forging close bonds with followers, inspiring and motivating others, and enabling them to realise their objectives. These may be more prevalent among women (Haricharan, 2022). Contrarily, men may be more prone to implement a transactional style of leadership that emphasises rewards and penalties (Arenas, 2019).

EI has been linked favourably to work performance for both female and male leaders. Women leaders, especially those who employ a transformational leadership style, may benefit more from the strength of this relationship. This may be due to the close relationship between social skills and relationship building, both of which are crucial elements of transformational leadership.

Additionally, studies have shown that perceptions of EI and leadership effectiveness may be impacted by gender stereotypes and biases. For instance, stereotypes that assume women are less logical and more emotional than men, which can lead to unfavourable assessments or fewer opportunities for advancement. These prejudices might also affect how EI is viewed and assessed for men in relation to women.

2.8. Research gaps

This section highlights the gaps that have been identified from the literature when analysing the effect of EI on the development of women.

i. The above literature review has shown that EI is crucial for effective leadership; further research is needed to determine how gender may affect how EI skills are developed and applied in leadership roles.
ii. There is a need to further investigate how EI may affect the empowerment of women in leadership roles because research has shown that EI is associated with leadership that is more effective.

iii. Despite progress toward gender equality in many areas, gender bias persists in positions of leadership. There is a need to investigate how EI can help women overcome gender bias in leadership contexts, such as assisting them in building relationships and effectively influencing others.

Further research is required to identify strategies for advancing gender equality in leadership positions and to see the connection between EI and empowering women in leadership. Also, studies on the long-term influence of EI on leadership achievement, as well as tactics for enhancing EI in women leaders should be done to comprehend how EI and leadership qualities interact in various cultural contexts.

2.9. Research framework

2.9.1. Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework consists of theories developed by professionals in the field. It is utilised to guide data analysis and interpretation of the findings (Varpio et al., 2020). The theoretical framework specifies a configuration of summarised concepts and theories (Kivunja, 2018). The theory adopted by this study is founded on Daniel Goleman's model coined in the1990s. Daniel Goleman's model argued that EI matters beyond IQ and indicated that the idea of EI develop into part of societal culture that is practical globally (Goleman & Boyatzis, 2017).

Goleman and Boyatzis (2017) explain that EI means controlling feelings for one to express them in an appropriate and effective manner. They also indicate that managing one's feelings enable people to work smoothly together. There is no one who is considered smarter or superior between men and women (Goleman & Boyatzis, 2017). This theory perceive EI as an array of abilities and skills that determine the execution of leadership.

Goleman breaks down EI into five components:

- ✓ **Self-awareness**: the capability to recognise and understand personal feelings and emotions that can have an impact on how you interact with others (Fianko et al., 2020).
- ✓ **Self-regulation**: a skill for being able to control oneself (Majeed & Jamshed, 2021)
- ✓ **Motivation**: an individual drive or inspiration to perform daily duties within an employment (Fianko et al., 2020).
- ✓ **Empathy**: a skill to value the sensations of other individuals and be able to relate to them (Kanesan & Fauzan, 2019).
- ✓ **Social skills**: The ability to actively listen, communicate effectively and persuasive, which enable the leader to relate with the team members (Kanesan & Fauzan, 2019). This has been described as a very important skill for leadership as it encourages the staff productivity and improves loyalty.

Empathy and self-awareness are essential elements of EI that can enable women in leadership to navigate opportunities and challenges in a field that is dominated by males. Women leaders can better understand themselves and their team members, forge stronger connections, and make more wise decisions by sharpening these skills. Self-awareness can be especially crucial for women in leadership roles because it can help them recognize and control their own emotions under pressure, which can help them make better decisions and communicate with their team members. Women leaders can improve their workplace culture and ultimately improve the results for their company by being aware of and responding to the requirements and emotions of their subordinates.

The study aims to explore EI and its role and how it empowers women leaders in South African, specifically women leaders working in municipalities. EI can enhance work performance among women by empowering them to communicate more effectively, forge stronger bonds with others, make better decisions, lead more effectively, and handle stress and setbacks skilfully. The foundation of the following theoretical framework come from the literature reviewed for this study.

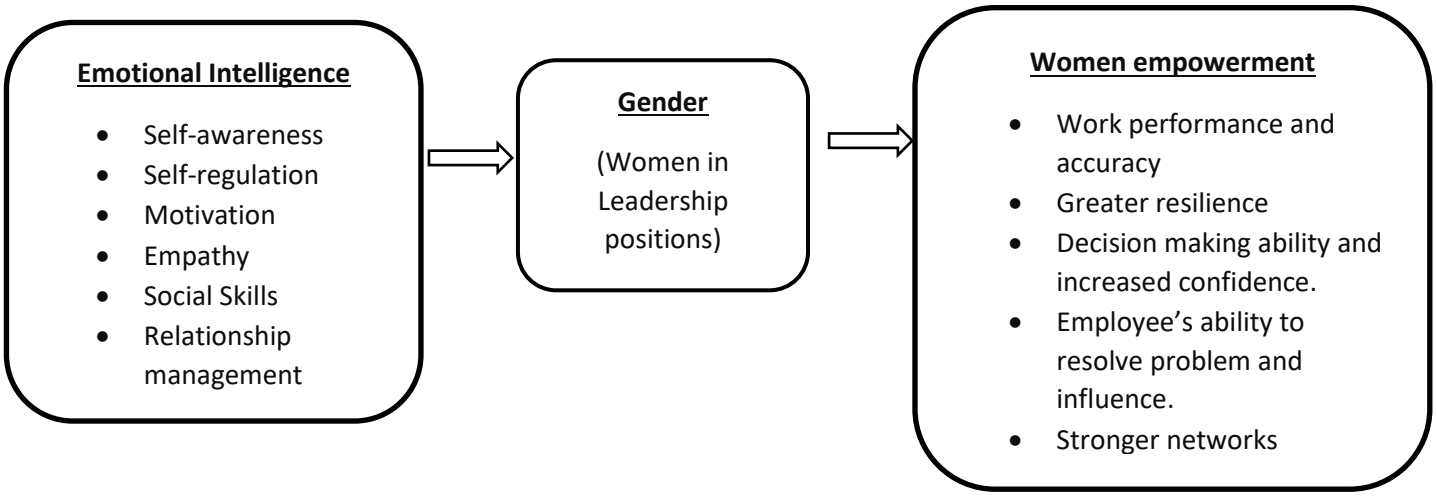


Figure 1: *A theoretical framework demonstrating the role of EI in women leaders and how their work performance is empowered by the level of EI.* Source: Author

EI is recognised as the power and the ability to identify, control, and comprehend personal emotions as well as those of other people. In numerous organisational settings, it has been revealed that EI is certainly associated to performance outcomes. This theoretical framework predicts that EI influence women leaders' performance outcomes positively. Additionally, it is anticipated that organisational and individual factors will influence this relationship, and that mediating factors may moderate the link between performance and EI. We may strengthen the connection between emotional intelligence (EI) and women's empowerment in leadership positions by using Goleman's EI paradigm. This theoretical perspective give emphasis to how crucial it is for women leaders to have self-awareness, self-control, social awareness, and relationship management to break through gender stereotypes and succeed in their careers. This framework can be exploited in future research to unpack the nuanced relationship relating to performance outcomes and EI among women leaders and to pinpoint tactics for raising EI and boosting output in corporate environments.

2.10. Conclusion

EI can be developed and enhanced and can affect how leaders in organisations perform. It can also enhance the connection between leaders and their team members. EI can also be improved over time to ensure the growth, evolution and the development of strong teams and performance improvement (Jooste & Coetzee, 2022). The increase in the global competition requires high developed EI skills and the skill is related to the rise in retention of staff members (Fernando & Gamage, 2019). EI is critical for empowering women in a variety of domains. Women may confront societal problems, personal, and professional challenges by developing critical emotional skills, resulting in increased gender equality and empowerment. Women leaders who are effective should continuously pursue to develop their style of leadership and the performance of their team. Several authors agree that improved EI begins with the knowledge and insight of the elements of EI including self-assessment and continuous training (Baba et al., 2021; Alam et al., 2020; Ndawo, 2021).

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Approach

The research approach is the procedure that has been chosen by the researcher for gathering, analysing, and interpreting the data (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019). There are three research approaches, namely, quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. The quantitative research approach is used to collect numerical data and analysing it for further explanation of the situation (Mohajan, 2020). A qualitative research approach is an approach for gathering, analysing, and interpreting non-numerical data such as visual data for attaining a further understanding of a specific phenomenon of the study interest (Van den Berg & Struwig, 2017). Mixed methods research combines qualitative and quantitative tools and incorporates numerical and non-numerical data within one study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019).

For this study, a qualitative approach for research is adopted. The said approach has been identified and explained in numerous ways by different scholars (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019; Van den Berg and Struwig, 2017; Farghaly, 2018). According to Leedy and Ormrod (2019), the qualitative research approach is the logical method of investigating and exploring real-life circumstances such as how a particular group of individuals behaves or how a certain organisation functions, and this tactic can be exploited to discover the interface amongst individuals. The qualitative research approach includes the procedures and processes for analysing experiences, behaviours, and relations without utilising numerical information. It is an approach that extends an interpretation of the type and complexity of situation (Farghaly, 2018).

This study used the inductive mode of reasoning. Induction is the systematic and straightforward process utilised for analysing qualitative data to reach well-informed conclusions (Azungah, 2018). The significant aim of the inductive tactic is to get an understanding of the phenomenon and further, to attain an understanding of the relation between situations and people (Bingham & Witkowsky, 2021).

3.2. Research Design

There are numerous definitions and explanations of the concept of research design proposed by several scholars and researchers. According to Tobi and Kampen (2018), research design is the intend for a research study giving the overall strategy for data collection. Research design is a deliberate plan for deciding on the study area, the data gathering process, and analysing the collection to respond to the research questions (Abutabenjeh & Jaradat, 2018). The significance of sound research design is to come up with research results that are evaluated to be credible and reliable. Creswell and Creswell (2017) described research design as the premeditated framework of action, which acts as the bridge between the identified research questions and execution of the strategy that is adopted for the research.

Descriptive, exploratory, and non-explanatory are the three types of research designs that can be used, and each has a specific goal (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019). The significant purpose of descriptive study is giving an illustration of a phenomenon, or people or to demonstrate how things are related without explaining why the situation took place (Turale, 2020). The exploratory study is a research study done in a situation where there is not enough information or when enough is not known about the situation and in most cases, there is no clear definition of the study problem (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). In this sense, exploratory study is the base foundation of the more conclusive research. The explanatory study is the research study aiming to explain the descriptive research by identifying the reasons for the occurrence of the situation (Thomas & Lawal, 2020).

As indicated in the previous section, the study's main aim is to explore EI in women leaders working in a municipality in SA. To ensure that the study achieves its main objective, the qualitative approach was adopted as defined previously. Therefore, the research design of this study was exploratory where primary data was collected using an interview guide over a period of 20 days, and this was suitable to respond to the study's main objective.

3.3. Population and Sample

3.3.1. Population

A population in this study refers to a collection of the research subjects that the researcher is interested in (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019). In most cases, the initial step in study design was to establish a research topic, followed by establishing the aims of the research and the significance and/or implication of the research topic and objective identification in the defining of the research target population. It was significant to indicate the exact location and characteristics of the population that was targeted, and in defining and describing, the researcher had to ensure that the members of the population were covered. The target population of this study constituted women leaders in the City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality.

3.3.2. Sample and Sampling method

Sampling comprised of probability and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling consists of stratified random sampling, systematic sampling, simple random sampling, multi-stage sampling, and cluster sampling (Rahman et al., 2022). Non-probability consists of quota, snowball, convenience, and purposive sampling (Pace, 2021). As indicated previously, this study adopted the qualitative research method to respond to the primary intention of the study.

To ensure that the study accomplished its primary goal, convenience sampling was used in choosing the participants. Convenience sampling is the sample drawn without any basic probability-based method of selection (Emerson, 2021). Convenience sampling is non-probability sampling in which participants are selected to be part of the study because they are easily accessible (Emerson, 2021). Scholtz (2021) indicates that convenience sampling is a form of non-probability sampling where members from the target population are selected due to their availability, accessibility and are willing to partake in the study, or they stay or work in the same area as the researcher.

The researcher in this study was a full-time employee of the City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality and understood fully that women who were in leadership positions were quite busy due to their scope of work and activities. The overall sample size of the study involved fifteen (15) women who are in leadership positions in the City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality. Data saturation was also a factor as a smaller sample assisted in avoiding repetition and information redundancy. Through the sample, enough data was gathered to respond to the research questions and objectives and to accomplish a sufficient understanding of the phenomenon under the study topic. The researcher selected women who are in leadership positions and are undoubtedly contactable and available to take part in the study at their convenience.

3.4. Data collection

3.4.1 The Research Instruments

It is imperative to define the research instrument, as it is a tool utilised for collecting data required for the topic of the study. Leedy and Omrod (2019) stipulate that there are various forms of instruments utilised for data collection such as interviews, surveys, questionnaires, and observations.

Each research instrument has advantages and disadvantages, and each research study has a suitable research instrument (Buriro et al., 2017). For this study, the interview was the suitable instrument chosen for collecting the data.

3.4.2. Interviews

The interview guide is the research instrument utilised to gather data in a qualitative research study and it involves the researcher asking questions and getting answers from participants (Edwards and Holland, 2020). Interviews are a verbal exchange between the researcher and the participants. It is usually done over the phone or face-to-face (Döringer, 2021). There are different types of interviews. Unstructured interviews in which the interview questions come from the situation. Structured interviews are well-presented scheduled interviews aiming to gather information from the subjects. Semi-structured interviews comprise of the researcher preparing the interview questions, but adding more questions freely during the process of the interview as the situation allows (Edwards & Holland, 2020). Semi-structured interviews were used in this study as a tool for probing in-depth conversation about the phenomenon (Edwards & Holland, 2020)

3.4.3. Procedure for data collection

The data were collected from women in positions of leadership within the City of Johannesburg metropolitan municipality, and the data collection procedures were as follows. The initial step involved formulating interview guidelines for the preparation of interviews with the women leaders within the City of Johannesburg metropolitan municipality (CoJMM). The second step was to call the participants, requesting their availability for a face-to-face interview. Participants were chosen based on the criteria that they were women in leadership positions working in the CoJMM and were available to take part in the study. Before the start of the interviews, the participants were enlightened about the process and procedure of the interview and further advised that interviews would be recorded and subsequently transcribed, and the recording would be utilised for research purposes only. The interviews were recorded utilizing a recording device that also allowed transcription to ensure that all the responses from participants were accurately captured.

3.5. Data analysis strategies and Interpretation

The process of analysis involves the interpretation of the data using logical and systematic thinking to determine patterns (Wang, Kung & Byrd, 2018). A recording devise was used to record the interviews, and the recorded interviews were transcribed to ensure that every response of all the participants was captured correctly. Point and Baruch (2023) mention that transcriptions are important in ensuring that the researcher has captured the responses verbatim from the interviews and they further ensure that all the motions are noted as they are significant for the findings of the study. During the study interview, gestures such as giggling and sighing demonstrate the perceptions and the feeling of the participants concerning the subject matter (Point & Baruch, 2023).

For this study, qualitative interviews were the main instrument used to acquire various perceptions on the research topic. The qualitative interviews provide a new perspective into a studied phenomenon by allowing the participants to reflect on the subject topic in various manners (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019). Since the interviews were the only instrument for collecting the data for the study, it was significant to be aware of the form of analysing the data before it was collected. The analysis method designated for this study was a qualitative approach for thematic analysis.

Thematic analysis, which was mostly utilised for analysing the interview-collected data, complemented the questions of the study by enabling an investigation of the interview data. According to Souza (2019), thematic analysis of data involves thorough reading of the collected data set and further identification of patterns.

The following steps defined by Souza (2019) were followed to ensure that proper thematic analysis was carried out. The first step involved becoming familiar with the collected data by transcribing the recorded audio files and carefully identifying and observing the meanings and patterns. The second step involved producing a collection of codes that represent the meaning and patterns identified from the data. The third step entailed grouping the codes. The fourth step involved grouping the codes into potential themes and further developing sub-themes (Souza, 2019). The fifth step involved reviewing and revising the themes and ensuring that there was enough data to support each theme. Afterward, they were integrated with similar themes, and themes without sufficient data to support them were removed (Souza, 2019). The sixth and final step was the writing of the narrative.

3.6. Limitations and challenges of the study

The limitations of the study limitations are related to factors that the researcher cannot control (Akanle, Ademuson & Shittu, 2020). In this study, accessibility proved to be the main factor that limited the study. As highlighted previously, participants are women in leadership within the City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality with busy work schedules. Accessibility had been referred to as the effortlessness with which the researcher could find the research participants and get their approval to take part in the study (Haines et al., 2019). The researcher planned to interview 15 participants. However, the researcher acknowledged that when the agreed time and date arrived to conduct the interviews, participants might have been unable to commit to the interview due to work commitments, leading the researcher to look for other available and accessible participants to ensure that 15 participants were interviewed for the study.

Another constraint of the study was the restriction to interviewing 15 participants, as it was not possible to interview all the women who were in positions of leadership within the City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality. Due to time constraints, it was not possible to accommodate a larger population.

3.7. Quality Assurance

3.7.1. Transferability

When the concepts of the research are the same, the transferability of the study influences the degree to which the study's findings can be comprehensive to another set (Emerson, 2021). For this research, the study was conducted in the CoJMM, and the results were limited to the women who are in leadership positions within the municipality. The findings in this study could be transferable and used in other municipalities as a way of improving the portrayal of most women leaders.

3.7.2. Internal validity of credibility

Credibility deal with how unswerving the information provided in the study is. This is influenced by making sure that information provided is from a reliable and credible source (Stewart et al., 2017). To ensure credibility, only peer-reviewed and accredited sources were utilised. To ensure credibility, all 15 research participants were requested to scrutinize the transcribed data as a way of establishing trustworthiness.

3.7.3. Dependability

The dependability addresses the accuracy of the data and the outcome of the research through different encounters such as the deviations that took place during the study (Lemon & Hayes, 2020). The focus of dependability is on the logic and traceability of the research process as a way of ensuring that the study is a true representation of reality study (Lemon & Hayes, 2020). For this study, it was ensured that the process of research was consistent, and the study was reliable and auditable. This was achieved through the utilisation of an electronic recorder to record all the participants' responses.

3.7.4. Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations are very imperative in conducting the research study. Ethical consideration consists of respect for human beings, informed consent, confidentiality, and justice. Hasan et al., (2021) mentioned that the researcher must maintain the principles of research ethics.

3.7.5. Making sure that participants have given informed consent.

Informed consent means that the researcher has given the participants enough knowledge regarding the study. After providing the information, the researcher checked if the contributors still want to participate in the study (Xu et al., 2020). For this research, the aim and the objectives were clarified to those who participated, and they were notified about their privileges and freedom to retract from the study at any time. It was further explained to the participants the benefits of carrying out the study and the method followed in conducting the study as well as the time it would take to do the interviews.

3.7.6. Making sure that there is no harm to participants.

The responsibility of the researcher is to ensure that the process and procedures of the research cause no impairment to the participants (Hasan et al., 2021). For this study, full commitments were made to ensure that the research process ran smoothly without causing any harm or damage to participants, and this was achieved by constantly asking the participants if there was any aspect in the process that made them feel discomfort or caused any harm. Participants were asked to indicate if any harmful factors arose from the process.

3.7.7. Ensuring confidentiality and anonymity

Anonymity in the research study means that the participants in the research will remain unidentified throughout and their identity unspecified (Badampudi et al., 2022). For this study, participants' names and any form of their personality does not exist on the research paper, and the signed permission forms are not part of the report. They were further notified that the evidence that was collected would only be used for research purposes.

3.7.8. Obtaining Permission

Permission to conduct the study on EI and empowerment of women leaders was obtained from the City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality.

4. PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.1. Introduction

This section presents the key findings of the research and discussion of the data gathered from fieldwork. The first part of this section presents the analysis of the key themes. The research findings are then presented and linked to the study propositions presented in section 2 of this study.

4.2. Presentation of findings

4.2.1. Findings on Proposition 1

Study Proposition 1: Employees with higher levels of EI are more likely to display increased work performance and feel more empowered in the workplace.

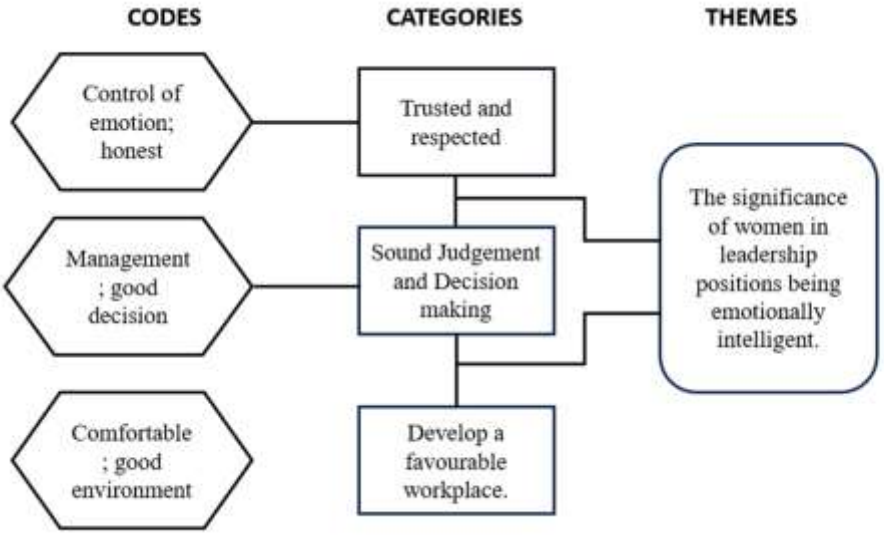


Figure 2: Summary of findings from semi-structured interviews

For study proposition 1, three themes appeared, which are trusted and respected, sound judgment and decision making and developing a favourable workplace.

Significance of emotionally intelligent women in leadership positions.

a. Trusted and respected

All the participants shared the same view that women in leadership positions who can control their emotions gain respect from their colleagues and this led to being trusted by other people. The data shows that a woman in a leadership position who controls her emotions gains respect in the workplace as the manager. This means that women leaders who are respected are trusted leaders. Participant 10 described this.

> *"...another benefit of being able to control your emotions as a leader is that people respect you and your decisions and trust your decisions because they know your decision making is not shadowed by the emotions"* – Participant 10, 13 October 2023.

Participant 10 emphasised the importance of women leaders in controlling their emotions as this creates trust with co-workers on the leaders' decision-making capabilities. Participant 2 and 6 agreed that failing to control your emotions as a woman leader or as a leader in general can make people not respect you and this is not good for someone in a leadership position.

"... failing to control your emotions as a woman and a leader or even as a male leader can make people not respect you which is not good for someone in a leadership position" Participant 2, 2 October 2023.

Participant 6 mentioned that being emotionally intelligent as a woman in a leadership position means that you can control your emotions and the issue of controlling the emotions was very important for this participant.

b. Sound judgment and decision-making

Stronger interpersonal connections, more effective communication, and enhanced problem-solving abilities are all associated with high EI. Out of 15 women leaders interviewed for this study, 10 mentioned that a woman in a management position who controls her emotions can make a sound decision as her decision-making is not shadowed by emotions or by how she feels about the situation at hand. Participant 9 describes this as a good aspect of women in leadership positions:

"...being a woman in a leadership position you are responsible for making many decisions and are required to make those decisions without being influenced by any other thing including your emotions. This is why it is very important to ensure that before making any decision one must think very carefully… a good leader must be able to control her emotions"- Participant 9, 12 October 2023.

Participant 5 believed that controlling your emotions leads to good decision-making.

"As the leader, I know that whenever I feel like my thinking is controlled by my emotions, I keep quiet and not say much until I sit and think carefully… yes, it is very true if you do not control your emotions, they will control you and this will harm the performance of the organisation you're leading" - Participant 5, 4 October 2023.

Participant 13 mentioned that as a leader you work with people who have different characters and think differently, and this can make you angry sometimes. This participant highlighted that a leader should avoid making decisions while angry.

"I work with many people and some of them say things that will make you feel angry but as the leader, I make sure that in decision making, emotions do not play any role and I must always be professional as we are in a professional environment"- Participant 13, 17 October 2023.

c. Develop a favourable workplace.

Most of the participants mentioned that a woman in a leadership position who is self-aware and able to regulate her emotions has the potential to create a good working environment that makes the employees feel comfortable. Participant 6 believes that a leader who can control her emotions motivates her co-workers and can create a positive working environment.

"...and a woman leader who is capable of regulating her emotions can motivate her subordinates and create a good working atmosphere in the workplace" Participant 6, 5 October 2023.

Most of the women in leadership positions interviewed agreed with the sentiments of Participant 6 that a leader who can control his or her emotions is effective as he or she can create a good working environment in which staff members are comfortable working.

"Women in leadership positions who are self-aware are capable of creating a conducive and friendly working environment" -Participant 8, 9 October 2023.

> *"As a leader, you can only create a positive and comfortable working environment if you are capable of controlling your emotions"* – Participant 14, 17 October 2023.

All the interviewed participants agreed that staying calm is a significant skill that leaders who are emotionally intelligent require to realise and manage their feelings. Furthermore, they believe that decent conversation with subordinates, as a leader is very important in managing their emotions. Discussion with the subordinates gives the other person a chance to speak up and ensure that both the manager and the subordinates understand each other. The participants mentioned that calming down when responding to an angry colleague is very important.

"Working in this kind of environment as a leader, some colleagues come to my office very angry and expect me to help them right away, without checking whether they are right or wrong. What I do is sit them down and have a discussion to understand them, and having a talk with them calms them down and makes them realize if they are wrong or right"- Participant 1, 2 October 2023.

> *"… you need to calm down and stay calm when you encounter a subordinate who is not happy, and you find that they talk to you in a very bad way, you have to stay calm and listen to them, give them a chance to speak"* -Participant 4, 3 October 2023.

4.2.2. Findings on Proposition 2

Study Proposition 2: Leaders who possess stronger self-regulation and awareness abilities at work tend to perform better and feel more empowered.

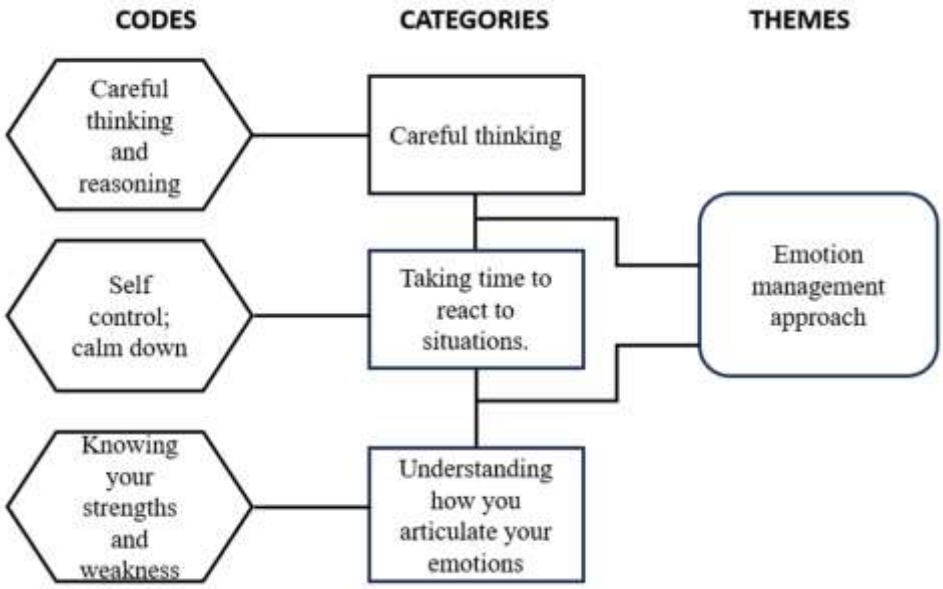


Figure 3: Summary of findings from semi-structured interviews continued

For study proposition 2, three themes emerged, which are careful thinking, taking time to react to situations, and understanding how you articulate your emotions.

Emotion management approach

Women leaders can overcome gender-specific obstacles, improve their effectiveness as leaders, and create empowering work cultures by comprehending and managing their emotions. The empowerment of women in leadership positions can be greatly aided by the integration of their EI competencies into organisational procedures and culture. Leaders that possess excellent self-regulation skills perform better and feel more in control because they are better able to manage

stress, make decisions, develop relationships, and be flexible. Women who are in leadership positions at the City of Johannesburg municipality have highlighted approaches that they use in managing and controlling emotions. The following are the approaches from the participant's responses:

a. Careful thinking

All the participants agreed that controlling emotions is not an easy task. They also mentioned that one must do careful thinking and not to take matters emotionally and personally. Participants mentioned that careful thinking before making decisions has helped them to be professional most of the time.

> *"You know as a leader; it is not easy to control your emotions because a lot of things happen in the day that makes it difficult for a leader to separate her emotions from the matter. But I have trained myself to think before making any decision and it is working for me as the manager in this department"* - Participant 4, 3 October 2023.

Participant 14 mentioned that it is very important to think before jumping into decision making and it has helped her many times to handle matters in a very good way.

> *"...in this place, there is no way emotions won't come as I am working with many people who have different characters but reasoning and applying your mind is very important as it helps me to handle matters in a very good way. What I do is that I think before jumping into answering and responding to the situations"* -Participant 14, 19 October 2023.

All the participants agreed that a leader must train herself to think carefully about any situation that may arise in the workplace. Corresponding to the participants, this is the best approach a leader can handle matters without being emotional.

> "*...I have trained myself to think carefully and reason on any matter brought to me or that may arise here at work. I have seen that it is important because it helped me separate my emotion from my decision making"* - Participant 6, 5 October 2023.

b. **Taking time to react to situations.**

Most of the participants mentioned that they normally take time to respond or to react in situations and this has helped them to not to be controlled by their emotions when they face challenging situations. They have stated that it is important to ask for time out before immediately reacting or responding to the situation. This helps them to calm down and think carefully without being influenced by their emotions.

> "*...you know with me, if I feel that something is making me angry and my response is required same time, I ask for time out for a few minutes just to calm down and then when I feel that I have calmed down I address matter"* - Participant 1, 2 October 2023.

Participant 3 mentioned that sometimes she even goes out of the building and takes a short walk to clear her mind before responding to pressing situations.

> *"As a woman leading a group of people, I always encounter confrontation and what I do is I avoid responding immediately on the matter. Sometimes I even go outside the building to take a short walk, and helps me not to be emotional, calms me down and be able to handle situations professionally"* -Participant 3, 3 October 2023.

All the participants have highlighted the significance of taking time before addressing matters at the workplace. Participant 9 indicated that she prefers to sit alone and think carefully before responding.

> *"It is a good thing that everyone has her office in our section so whenever I feel that am not happy, I normally close my office and stay in the office and allow myself to cool down. Until then, I normally advise my colleagues or clients to make an appointment for us to discuss the matter at hand"* - Participant 9, 12 October 2023.

All the participants indicated that avoiding to immediately responding to situations is an important strategy for managing their emotions. This has shown that making an appointment to deal with issues another time helps leaders, specifically women to calm down and to think carefully about the matter at hand.

c. **Understanding how you articulate your emotions.**

Emotion Management assists women leaders in dealing with prejudices and biases that frequently depict women as overly emotional. Women can defy preconceptions by properly regulating their emotions. Most of the interviewed participants mentioned that it is very important to know how you show and communicate your emotions as it helps to control your emotions. Participants mentioned that knowing what challenges them with their emotions is important as it helps them understand and know how to respond effectively in situations. Participant 5 mentioned that it is important to know your weaknesses when it comes to acting on your emotions.

> *"Working in an environment like this one as a leader, one needs to be self-awareness of their challenges and strengths on acting on their emotions because when you know your challenges or weaknesses you learn how to deal with them. When you know what you're good at, you use that to your advantage"* - Participant 5, 5 October 2023.

Participant 7 indicated that she has already identified what angers her in the workplace, which is one of her weaknesses.

> *"... one thing that I have learned is that I get tired of repeating the same thing to the same person over and over. So, if I tell you something and you repeat the same thing, I tell you not to do, I get angry. To deal with my emotions, I get someone else to speak to you"* - Participant 7, 11 October 2023.

Most of the participants have supplemented that it is critical to know things that normally stress you and things that make you lose control, and this has been identified as a significant step in knowing how to articulate yourself. Participant 4 best describes this.

> *"You know as a leader, there are several things that you need to know about yourself. To be a good leader, it is important to know the things that stress you and things that can make you lose control of yourself. Knowing all this, I came up with a way of controlling my feelings and making sure that my judgment is not overshadowed by the emotions"* Participant 4, 3 October 2023.

All the participants have mentioned that women in leadership positions who have a high level of EI can control their emotions and have a positive relationship with their colleagues. This creates a good relationship at the workplace among colleagues. The participants mentioned that good relationships at the workplace improve the functioning and the performance of the organisation. This point was emphasised by participant 2 and 8.

"a woman who can control her feelings has powers to craft positive relations with her colleagues and I believe being aware of one's own emotions is the requirement for every leader" - Participant 2, 2 October 2023.

"...with the experience I have, I can positively say the woman who is a leader and can control her emotions is capable of creating a positive relation at the workplace" – Participant 8, 9 October 2023.

Most participants have mentioned that a good leader is capable of thinking about other people's feelings. Participants have indicated this as a very important aspect as it is a significant step in building good working relationships.

"... it is important to try to be in the shoes of subordinates before you start judging their decisions. If you put yourself in their situation, you will get to know how they are feeling and to understand how they acted the way they have acted" – Participant 14, 19 October 2023.

4.2.3. Findings on Proposition 3

Study Proposition 3: The gender of the individual in a leadership role influences their EI levels and performance effectiveness in the workplace.

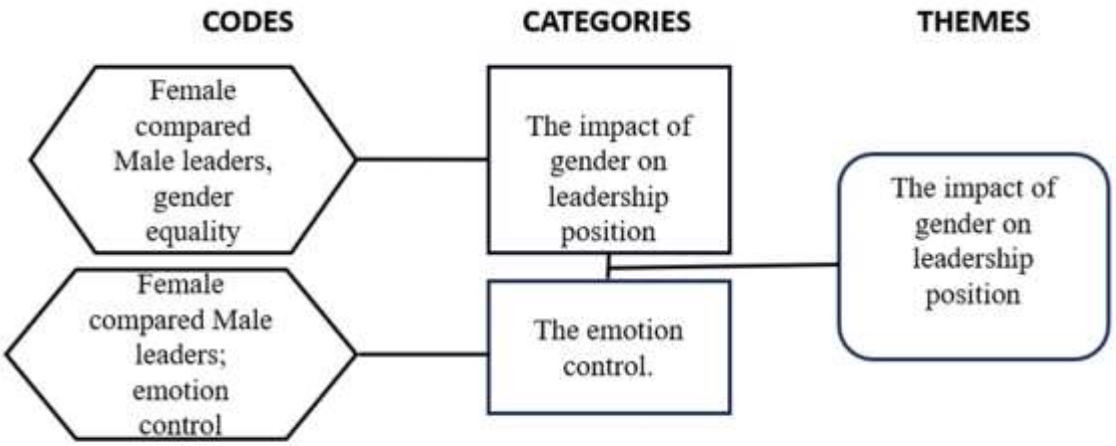


Figure 4: Summary of findings from semi-structured interviews continued

Two themes emerged for study proposition 3, which are the leadership style and the control of emotions.

The impact of gender on leadership position

a. **The leadership style.**

Most of the interviewed participants mentioned that gender does not have any impact on the style of leadership. Participants indicated that there are people who still do not trust women leaders. Participant 2 mentioned that as a woman leader, people do not easily trust your leadership until you prove to be capable.

"*When I started working as a manager, there were several people who did not trust me, and I believe it was because I am a woman. But after working with them for some time, they started trusting and believing in my leadership*" – Participant 2, 2 October 2023.

Participant 13 mentioned that women are naturally flexible to adapt to any environment. Due to their flexibility, women tend to show a flexible style of management and their leadership style is controlled by how demanding their workplace is. Participant 6 agreed with Participant 13 by saying women leaders are flexible and easily accessible as they are mothers in nature. Participant 7 indicated that women who are in leadership positions are still facing farther challenges than men as the system was designed to favour men.

b. Control of emotions

Most of the participants mentioned that the issue of controlling emotions as a leader has nothing to do with whether you are a woman or a man. Participants indicated both men and women leaders need EI training as it can improve their leadership performance. Participant 1 who emphasised the significance of leaders managing and dealing with their emotions best described this.

> *"...as a woman who is in a leadership position, it is very significant to control yourself and to control your emotions"* – Participant 1, 2 October 2023.

Participant 3 agreed with the above by saying that leaders must take emotional control seriously irrespective of gender orientation.

> *"If there is one thing you have to seriously take into consideration as a female or male leader is the control of our emotions"*- Participant 3, 3 October 2023.

> *"... As I have mentioned before always controlling your emotions as a leader is important..."* Participant 9, 12 October 2023.

5. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The discussion of the results is presented in this section. The discussion of the results is based on the literature reviewed in section 2. This section also presents and analyses the participants demographic profile, the findings in relation to the study propositions and the conclusion.

5.1. Discussion pertaining to study proposition 1.

This study intention was alarmed by the impact and the role that EI plays and how it empowers women who are in leadership position to accurately accomplish their work. The associated research question was what is the role of EI in the empowerment of women leaders?

Participants mentioned that women leaders experience a variety of emotions when interacting with different people in the workplace. Participants also signalled that it is important for leaders to be able to manage and control their personal emotions and other people's the emotions. The literature has shown that the leader who possesses EI abilities is a leader who understands how to engage in an effective prediction and can anticipate future emotional reactions of other people (Majeed & Jamshed, 2021; Barreiro & Treglown, 2020; Lubbadeh, 2020).

Participants agreed that to lead a successful organisation, leaders experience a variety of negative and positive emotions daily, and having skills in EI ensures that the emotions are efficiently handled. The literature expressed the significance of women in leadership positions being emotionally intelligent (Mfikwe & Pelser, 2017; Krén & Séllei, 2021; Fida, Khan & Safdar, 2019). The findings for this study have also shown the significance of women who are in leadership positions to be emotionally intelligent. Most of the interviewed participants have the same perception about the importance of controlling their emotions as leaders and the findings have further revealed that EI empowers women who are in leadership positions to enhance their decision-making abilities, build stronger relationships and foster working environments that are conducive.

Both the literature and study findings have shown that it is very important to control your emotions as a leader to make sound decisions as this enhances your efficacy as leaders and promotes professional and personal development. This is one of the critical qualities for leaders and managers of organizations (Matjie, 2018; Cherkowski et al., 2021). The literature has indicated that the leadership requirements will be inadequate if EI is not included and further mentioned that EI is a necessary skill for women who are the positions of leadership (Gillar-Corbi et al., 2019).

The literature review, the theory of EI, and the findings of this study have stressed the significance of EI of women in leadership positions. From this, it was necessary to get an understanding of the thinking behind the significance of women who are in leadership positions to control their emotions. Participants were asked why it is important for women who are in leadership positions to control their emotions. One hundred percent of the participants responded that a woman in a leadership position who cannot control her emotions becomes ineffective in their leadership performance and the leader who can control her emotions is more productive and performs well in her position.

All the participants were of the same view that it is significant for women managers to control their emotions. A woman manager who can control her emotions is more empowered to carry out her leadership responsibilities compared to one who is unable to control her emotions. EI has a positive effect on the performance of women who are in leadership. As has been shown by the literature, women leaders who have high EI tend to have leadership effectiveness (Görgens-Ekermans & Roux, 2021). Both the literature and findings have shown EI as a significant requirement for effective woman leadership.

The literature has also shown that emotionally intelligent women leaders are usually liked by the people they work with (Matjie, 2018; Cherkowski et al., 2021; Jooste & Coetzee, 2022). From the above, it is clear and significant that women who are in leadership positions must control their emotions for them to be able to craft a conducive environment for all the employees to feel free and comfortable. The literature and the findings have shown that a woman in a leadership position who can control her emotions is empowered to make sound decisions and this has a considerable impact on the efficiency of the organisation she is leading. Mfikwe and Pelser (2017) mentioned that leaders who make sound decisions are leaders who are not influenced by their emotions.

The literature and findings have shown that women in leadership positions who can self-regulate and control their emotions are operative as they can create a good working space in which both the management and the subordinates feel extremely comfortable (Majeed & Jamshed, 2021; Papoutsi et al., 2019). This means that both the literature and the findings express that having an emotionally intelligent woman in a leadership position ensures that the organisation has a conducive working environment. In the literature reviewed, Krén and Séllei (2021) state that leaders with elevated EI create mutual trust and an environment that is comfortable for both employees and leaders. Olawoyin (2018) states that emotionally intelligent leaders can create a healthy working culture and they can identify and understand the needs of team members and employees' weaknesses and strengths. From both the literature and the findings, EI is a significant skill that assists leaders in creating a positive working environment that benefits both the leaders and subordinates. The literature has shown that a positive working environment created by the leader of an organisation has a positive influence on the productivity of an organisation (Papoutsi et al., 2019).

Baesu (2019) who stipulates that EI is mostly analysed through interactive relations and includes organisation leader and employee relationships supports the sentiments of the interviewed participants. From the above, a woman leader who is self-aware and can control her emotions has a high chance of creating positive relations with their colleagues. This can further enhance good relations amongst the staff. Moreover, leaders with higher EI are more likely to perform better at work and have a greater sense of empowerment there. This is because of their capacity for resilience, good communication, relationship building, and emotion management. A more effective, driven, and empowered woman is a benefit of recognizing and fostering EI in employees, which boosts organisational success.

5.2. Discussion pertaining to study proposition 2.

This study proposition was concerned with the relationship between self-regulation, self-awareness, women empowerment, and their work performance.

The findings illustrate that leaders in organisations face various emotions at the workplace and this requires strategic approach to managing emotions. Women who possess high levels of self-regulation are more adept at managing a variety of tasks, handling stress, and persevering in the face of difficulties, all of which contribute to improved work performance.

The findings indicate that a woman leader who carefully thinks before reacting to situations can control her emotions. This means it is important for a woman leader to take time and assess the situation carefully to ensure that her decision is not emotional. According to literature, being emotionally intelligent means that one has the capabilities to think carefully, which allows the leader to have control of the situation and ask the relevant questions before reacting to the situation (Mulawarman, & Komariyah, 2021; Papoutsi & Chaidi, 2022). Women who are empowered may possess greater self-assurance, independence, and agency, allowing them to establish and follow their goals, set limits, and make wise decisions.

The findings reveal that women in leadership positions avoid responding to situations immediately as a strategy for managing their emotions and this helps them to address issues in a strategic manner. Making an appointment to deal with the issues at a later stage helps women leaders to calm down and reflect carefully about the matter at hand. The literature has mentioned that emotionally intelligent leader can control their emotions and tend to have a positive reaction when they encounter matters that make them angry (Görgens-Ekermans & Roux, 2021; Krén & Séllei 2021).

According to Raghubir (2018), the individual who is self-aware can admit their shortcoming as a sign of strength rather than weakness. Leaders that are receptive to criticism and introspection can pinpoint areas in which they require further training and improvement (Raghubir 2018). This could include everything from strategic thinking and EI to communicating effectively and decision-making. Leaders show humility and dedication to both personal and professional development when they see where they may still improve.

The findings have shown that it is very valuable for leaders to have decent interaction and communication with their subordinates to ensure good management. The literature has mentioned that the attribute of relationship management has been explained as the ability to control and manage the relationship with others and maintain positive relations, good communication, and positive influence on others (Halkiopoulos, Gkintoni & Antonopoulou, 2020). Participants in the study highlighted that leaders need to ensure that there is a positive relationship between themselves and subordinates. The literature has shown that EI means being able to build positive relationships with co-workers and be able to welcome constructive feedback and criticism.

According to literature, emotionally intelligent leaders can build positive relations and develop trust among their employees (Mfikwe & Pelser, 2017; Fida, Khan, & Safdar, 2019). Baesu (2019) argues that EI is mostly analysed in relation to interactive relations and that includes organisation leader and employee relationships. This means emotional influence is very important and it is a significant part of leadership as they manage the emotions and mood in an organisation. Leaders, who share knowledge, create a platform for employees to be part of decision-making, promoting teamwork and further enhancing organizational performance (Krén & Séllei 2021). A leader who is self-aware and proactive in addressing areas of improvement positively influence their subordinates and can adapt to changing situations.

Carden, Jones and Passmore (2022) stipulate that self-awareness together with empathy enhance the success of an organisation. Kanesan and Fauzan (2019) have described empathy as the skill to absorb the emotions of other personalities and be able to relate to them. The literature has shown that an emotionally intelligent woman leader can build interpersonal relationships with their subordinate (Gomez-Leal et al., 2022; Haricharan, 2022). The organisation needs to achieve its intended goals, and the important ability of an organisation to attain the set goals relies on the interrelationship between employees (Adigüzel & Uygun, 2020). The literature has shown that leaders who show responsiveness have a high chance of positively interacting with their subordinates and this promotes a bond between the leaders and their subordinates.

Baesu (2019) argues that EI is mostly analysed in relation to interactive relations and that includes organisation leader and employee relationships. This means emotional influence is very important and it is a significant part of leadership as the leaders are the key role-plays in managing the emotions and mood in an organisation. This study found that delay in responding or reacting to situations is a significant step in managing one's emotions. Tactics to delay

reacting to situations include excusing oneself from the encounter, taking a short walk outside the office, and closing oneself in the office as a way of controlling emotions.

In relation to the above study intention, it is translucent that being an emotionally intelligent leader, one needs to be aware of things that are challenging to them. The literature has emphasized the importance of self-awareness as a valuable aspect of self-management. Self-awareness has been explained as the attribute that can be attained through monitoring the state of a person's emotions and the identification of emotions, weaknesses, strengths, and own needs (Raghubir, 2018; Jooste & Coetzee, 2022)

5.3. Discussion pertaining to study proposition 3.

This study proposition focused on how the gender of the person in the leadership position influences their emotionally intelligence and their performance at work.

The study has found that even though we are living in a world of gender inequality, women's leadership skills are still being questioned. Participants have highlighted that the EI of male leaders is not superior to that of their female counterparts. Literature has also shown that both males and females have equal EI and further emphasised that EI is an individual skill that has nothing to do with gender. The study also showed that the positive relationship at the workplace is linked to the improvement in the functioning and the performance of the organisation.

The literature has shown that a good leader is capable of thinking about other people's feelings. In line with the literature, the findings show that this is a very important aspect as it is a significant step in building good working relationships. The study also shows that it is crucial for leaders to put themselves in the shoes of their juniors to understand their situation. The findings from the study also show that if leaders understand how others are feeling, they will be able to know how to communicate and assist co-workers.

The literature indicated that social skill is a very important skill for leadership as it encourages staff productivity and improves loyalty. Social skills entail actively listening, communicating both verbally and non-verbal, and be persuasive, which enable the leader to associate with the team members (Kanesan & Fauzan, 2019).

From the above study proposition, it is evident that the expression of emotions can have both positive and negative impacts on any leaders' performance. Emotionally intelligent woman leaders can navigate complex social dynamics through their improved communication and interpersonal skills.

The findings display that woman show a flexible style of management, and this makes them adapt their style of leadership to any demand of the workplace. The literature shows that women who are in leadership tend to create an environment that is conducive for better performance compared to their male counterparts, which is fundamental to EI from a leadership perspective (Mulawarman & Komariyah, 2021). The findings and the literature have indicated that women face additional challenges at work as there are people who still do not trust women leaders. Participants mentioned that women leaders can overcome these challenges and become successful in their leadership roles.

It is evident that EI has an important role on both women and men leaders, and women should be empowered through training as a way of enhancing their EI. However, there are still barriers that women leaders still face while developing and utilising EI such as gender bias, organisational culture, and challenges that comes with work-life balance. Based on the finding from the participants and literature (Raghubir, 2018; Mulawarman & Komariyah, 2021; Goleman & Boyatzis, 2017; Kanesan & Fauzan, 2019), for women to overcome these barriers

they require EI strategies and approach such as emotional management, self-awareness and social skills.

5.4. Conclusion

This section has presented the discussion of the findings collected through interviews with women in leadership positions in the City of Johannesburg Municipality. The findings were presented according to the themes informed by the literature.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

6.1. Introduction

This section focuses on the key findings, conclusion, and recommendations. This section discusses the key findings and makes recommendations.

6.2. Summary of the main findings

Drawing from the outcomes of the study, EI plays a meaningful role in ensuring the effectiveness of leadership. Women who are in leadership positions and emotionally intelligent are trusted and respected by their subordinates. The study findings emphasize that emotionally intelligent women leaders can create positive working environments where staff members are comfortable and enjoy working. The emotionally intelligent leader contributes significantly to the effective functioning of an organisation.

The findings have shown that it is important for women in leadership positions to have strategies for managing their emotions to ensure effective management of their responses. Leaders who use EI strategies in managing their emotions respond well in all situations compared to leaders who do not have any EI strategies.

The findings emphasize that women who are in leadership positions and can manage the emotions of others professionally are likely to be respected by their subordinates. A woman leader who is respected by her subordinates can have a positive influence on their subordinates. The findings have shown that an emotionally intelligent woman leader develops good human relations in the workplace. This is because they can promote teamwork and respect among others, which further ensures the effectiveness of the organisation.

6.3. Summary of the research questions

i. *Research question 1: What is the role of EI on empowering women in leadership positions in the City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality (CoJMM)?*

The study effectively responds to the first research question and meets the objective of exploring the role of EI in empowering women leaders. The study has delved into a comprehensive exploration of the role of the EI and how its competencies empower women in leadership positions in the City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality. It has gone beyond the standing level of examination by conducting interviews that capture the role and influence of EI on women who are in positions of leadership and how it empowers them to make better decisions and further impact their work performance. The findings have shown various roles of EI on women in leadership such as significant aspects of the competitiveness' of any leader, self-control, and ability to manage other people's emotions.

The study affiliates with recent research, and the works of Jooste and Coetzee (2022) and Krén and Séllei (2021). This study is within the broader scholarly treatise, and this further indicates that the roles explored are relevant and valid. The current study went beyond exploring the roles and further engaged in a conversational analysis that revealed the underlying dynamics and connections between the roles.

The integration of existing literature has further augmented the context and depth of the research and presented a more thorough perception of the roles of EI on women in leadership positions. The study has incorporated the interview through direct quotes, survey results, and the analysis of the data and this has strengthened the competence of the study to address the intended objective.

ii. Research Question 2: *What is the perceived impact of EI on women manager's style of leadership?*

The study has diligently responded to the question, which is to assess the perceived influence of EI on work performance of women leaders and how these leaders view the impact of EI on their productivity. The influence of EI on women in leadership positions is deemed imperative in the literature. The relevance of this objective has been emphasised by recent studies such as Krén and Séllei (2021) and Alam et al. (2020). Such studies have emphasised that EI promotes the performance of employees with low intelligence abilities and that EI can affect the performance of both employees and the organisation positively.

The study has achieved this question through a versatile approach, which includes not only assessing the perceived influence of EI on women leaders but also exploring how EI can be utilised as an aspect for predicting the effectiveness and success of leadership. Furthermore, the study grasps the precise facets of EI that women leaders feel influence their effectiveness, such as self-awareness, emotional management, and empathy. The study identifies that emotions have a substantial impact on the performance of an individual and that the management of individual emotions in an organisation is closely related to its performance.

Furthermore, the study acknowledges the significance of a leader who can solve complex social challenges in an organisation. This means that a strong relationship exists between EI and the performance of a leader within an organisation. A leader with a lower EI can negatively affect her leadership and that can further result in lower performance of an organisation (Krén & Séllei (2021).

In summary, the study has effectively met the second research question by not only assessing the perceived influence of EI on women leaders, but by also exploring how EI can be utilised as an aspect for predicting the effectiveness of leadership. The study recognises the influence of EI on women in leadership positions and further emphasizes the need to capacitate leaders with all aspects of EI.

iii. Objective 3: *What is the role of EI on the development of women leaders?*

The study intended to assess the role of EI in the development of women leaders. The significant aim behind this question was to assess the bearing of EI on the empowerment and advancement of women leaders. The study acknowledges that the success of an organisation requires more than just formal education and that EI is an individual skill.

The study recognises that many successful women leaders show a flexible style of management. This means that they adapt their leadership style according to the demand of the environment that they are working in. Therefore, the study provides a comprehensive role of EI in the growth of women leaders and sheds light on the multifaceted nature of what assists their development.

The study further recognises that EI assists women in leadership and tends to create a conducive environment for better performance. This has been identified as a critical aspect to the development of women leaders. The study acknowledges that women who are in leadership positions may face additional barriers and biases that can hinder their leadership opportunities and recognition as shown in the results of the study.

In conclusion, the study effectively answers the third research question by further emphasising that EI is significant in the empowerment of women leaders as it enhances their ability to overcome challenges and effectively leverage their skills and capabilities. The study has shown that women leaders can become successful in various leadership styles, including transformational leadership.

6.4. Recommendations for practice and future research

The recommendations of this study are informed by the findings of the study. The findings have shown that EI has an optimistic influence on women in leadership positions. Therefore, this study recommends that EI should be a requirement for placing women in leadership positions.

It is possible to find people who are not just competent but also capable of leading with empathy and effectiveness. This can be achieved by taking a comprehensive strategy that considers these EI characteristics in addition to technical abilities and experience. There is a need to acknowledge the significance of stress management and work-life balance. Women leaders frequently manage a variety of tasks, and encouraging a great work-life balance enhances EI by supporting emotional well-being. Using EI as selection criteria for women in leadership roles is a calculated move that will guarantee compassionate and successful leadership.

The findings have shown that women in leadership positions need to be emotionally intelligent. Based on this finding, this study recommends that all women in leadership positions require training on ways to manage and control their emotions and on how to manage other people's emotions in their workplace. Organisations must develop specialised training courses that emphasize EI proficiencies like empathy, self-control, self-awareness, and interpersonal skills. The leadership training programs should include workshops on EI skills as a way of equipping the women leaders. The literature and findings are consistent about training women in leadership positions on EI skills. Future research on the effective strategies for managing emotions that can be used by women in leadership positions is required and such research findings must be made available to all relevant parties within organisations.

The findings and literature have shown that EI is a significant aspect of women in leadership positions and due to that, the study recommends that organisation such as the City of Johannesburg municipality should encourage leadership sessions where leaders can learn from each other. This can be through a session in which leaders come together and share their different EI strategies, which they use in their respective units within the organisation. The sessions could be made compulsories for all men and women in leadership positions. Future research could be conducted on the relationship between EI in women leaders and their psychological well-being by exploring EI level-headed application in the workplace through observing the participants.

The findings have shown that it is significant for women who are in leadership positions to have a good relationship with their subordinates. This study recommends that women in the leadership position support, respect, and care for the subordinates they are leading. The interview results have shown that people face various challenges in their lives hence it is significant for leaders to show empathy toward their subordinates.

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8. APPENDIX

Appendix A: Interview schedule

INTERVIEW OBJECTIVE: to assess the perceived influence and explore the understanding of Emotional intelligence and how it empowers women in leadership position in the City of Johannesburg Municipality.

Section 1: Biographical Details	
Position held: Number of years working at CoJMM: Years of experience in leadership position:	
Section 2: qualitative method- interview questions	
Research question	Interview question
Understanding of the role of EI and how it empowers woman in leadership positions	1. What is your understanding of EI and its role on leader? 2. Why is important for woman in leadership to be in control of their emotions 3. How do you as a woman in leadership manage your emotions? give examples of some of the things you do to control your emotions. 4. What strategies do you think woman in leadership position should use to manage their emotions?
Impacts of EI on female manager's style of leadership	1. What is your leadership style? 2. Does your leadership style have a significant impact on your emotional intelligence? 3. Do you think a woman who is in control of her emotions is more effective than a woman who cannot control her emotions? Explain how and give examples 4. On a daily basis as a leader, you deal with different people expressing different emotions, how do you handle that? please give examples. 5. How do you ensure good relations with the people you work with and how do you ensure good relations in the office?
The role of EI on the development of women leaders	1. Why do you think it is important for woman in leadership to be self-motivated and how can woman in leadership be self-motivated?

	2. why do you think it is important for a woman in leadership position to have self-awareness in terms of strength and weakness of her emotions? explain and give example. 3. Do women senior managers have better emotional intelligence than male senior leaders or managers in the South African Government? 4. Is there anything else you would like to add concerning woman in leadership position in relation to emotional intelligence?

Thank you very much for the time that you have spent talking to me and the information that you have shared with me.

Appendix B: Ethics Clearance Certificate

Graduate School of Business Administration
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

Wits Business School Ethics Committee
Constituted under the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical)

Ethics Clearance Certificate

Ethics protocol number: WBS/BA2496185/196

This certificate is only valid with a legitimate ethics protocol number and signed by the Researcher (below).

This certificate is only valid if accompanied by formal permission from the relevant stakeholder(s).

Project title	Emotional intelligence and empowerment of women leaders in South Africa
Investigator / Researcher	Ms Vukosi Marion Makhubele
Nature of Project	MBA (Research Article)
Decision of the Committee	Approved, provided stakeholders and participants are guaranteed confidentialty.
Issue Date of Certificate	9/11/2023
Expiry date	Date of submission of the project / research report
Chairperson	Dr Pius Oba +27 11 717 3976 +27 82 733 6587 pius.oba@wits.ac.za

Declaration by Researcher

One copy must be signed by the Researcher and returned to the Chairperson of the Wits Business School Ethics Committee.

I fully understand the conditions under which I am authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee.

Signature

22 September 2023
Date: