

# **The relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership in school leaders: A systematic review**

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this systematic review is to explore the literature on emotional intelligence related to school leadership using Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-analysis (PRISMA) guidelines. The authors searched the electronic databases of Eric education, PsycINFO, Scopus, and Psychology Database to find relevant articles. We used search criteria to identify a total of 110 references. Using rigorous selection methods, 35 articles were systematically reviewed. The results revealed that emotional intelligence is key for effective leadership and that the most commonly used skills/competences are self-awareness, self-management, and empathy. Additionally, the literature makes it clear that the extent to which the leader builds trusting relationships contributes greatly to the development of teacher satisfaction and performance. These findings can help to inform the design of successful pre-service programmes for aspiring leaders and in-service for school principals. Limitations and future lines of research are discussed.

**Keywords:** emotional intelligence; school leaders; headteachers; leadership; school principals, emotion skills, leadership, behavioural EI-based competencies

## **Introduction**

Leadership theory has guided the formation of school leaders since the late 1800's (Papalewis, 2005). As with all leadership, but particularly in schools, leadership is all encompassing with multiple demands. School leaders serve many stakeholders-students, parents, teachers, facilities personnel, superintendents, local politicians, and more. They must be ready at all times to handle a variety of complex situations. Each situation calls for a particular leadership response that leaders must handle swiftly and appropriately (Hambleton & Gumpert, 1982).

Smart leaders think systemically about their schools, 21<sup>st</sup>-century school leaders realize that a leader doesn't walk alone; they build a collective of stakeholders so that every young person receives a high-quality education. They drive change to turn around schools. They establish a collective purpose, cultivating collaborative cultures led by individuals and teams who are dedicated to deep processes of enquiry in teaching and learning (Fullan & Quinn, 2016). Often, the kinds of demands placed on teachers to improve or learn a new curriculum is stressful and can cause resistance. Change can be difficult and emotional, as it disrupts one's comfortability. Leaders influence and motivate to attempt something new; this requires trust which depends on the relationship that has been built over time (Berkovich & Eyal, 2017; Pierce, 2014; Price, 2012). This can be particularly stressful, adding to the numerous other stress-producing situations that both teachers and school leaders handle daily. It can lead to burnout (DeMatthews et al., 2021).

This kind of non-stop leadership calls for an emotionally intelligent leader who is in touch with their own emotions-recognises them, understands them and manages them in the spirit of handling each situation expediently and genuinely. Blase and Blase (2004) noted that "an awareness and understanding of emotions, the ability to manage one's emotions, and the ability to express emotions in appropriate ways, given the context, are regarded as critical to

effective school leadership” (p. 258).

Throughout the school day, the school leader experiences a multitude of emotions. Learning how to pay attention to their feelings while attending to others’ emotions is a true task. When one represses their feelings to be present for another they can find themselves in a state of ‘emotional labour.’ Psychologists and social workers use the term emotional labour to describe the effort required to manage the way we express our feelings’ (Brackett, 2020, p.129).

McDowelle & Bell (1997) urged those who prepare educational leaders to include a research and knowledge base on emotional intelligence (EI) competences such as self-awareness and self-management; these critical competences influence the leader’s ability to create productive teams, manage self and others, improve instruction and empathize with their staffs.

In days past, there was an absence of any reference to the school leader’s emotions in the educational administration literature. Now, in 2021, we recognize how essential it is for school leaders to work with their emotions. We recognize that care and compassion for self and others, and the ability to address one’s emotions builds trust, relationships, and aides in embracing needed change (Côté, 2014; Djambazova-Popordanoska, 2016; Kyriacou, 2001; Mayer et al., 2016; Lopes, 2016; Sánchez-Núñez et al., 2015). It also best prepares school leaders to not only cope with job stresses but to make the best choices for self, others and the school.

Our ability to pay attention to and modify our own emotions and those of others was postulated in Salovey and Mayer’s white paper on EI (1990). They defined EI as ‘the ability to monitor ones and others’ feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and actions (p. 5)’ Goleman, psychologist and former science writer for the NY Times’ seminal book, *Emotional Intelligence* (1995) brought the concept of EI to the world.

His book stimulated a strong influence on schools and the education of children. This focus on EI in schools began with the research and practice promoted by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). CASEL researchers and practitioners began the movement to bring social and emotional learning to every student; to provide them with an emotional education and increase their possibilities of success in life. Today, social and emotional learning (SEL) is widely known and encouraged in schools around the world. We recognize that successful implementation of SEL is only possible when the school leader champions its cause.

The relationship between EI and school leadership is the subject of this systemic review. The school principal directly impacts the school's culture, teacher commitment to the work, job satisfaction, student achievement and well-being (Leithwood et al., 2004; Russo-Netzer & Shoshani, 2019; Tan, 2018). Over time, the principal's values, mindsets, and behaviours influence the health of the school culture and the climate in which learning takes place. The quality of the relationships that principals build with their staff creates the support that teachers need to be most effective in their classrooms (Hackett & Hortman, 2008; Leithwood et al., 2004). Without the trust in and guidance of the school leader, teachers may lack motivation and can be unwilling or unable to perform their jobs to their highest ability. "Principals' social and emotional competences (SECs), well-being, and leadership form the foundation that influences the- school climate, teachers' commitment, and well-being; family and community partnerships, and student outcomes" (Mahfouz et al., 2019)

Increasingly, the professional development of school leaders is considered to be essential, so they are fully equipped to navigate the complex challenges they face every day (Mahfouz et al., 2019). The skills and competences of EI (self -awareness, self-management, social-awareness, and relationship-management) are essential. The words and actions of school

leaders greatly influence the experience and performance of teachers and students (Leithwood et al., 2004).

A review of the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015) identifies the magnitude of the knowledge and skills needed for effective leadership. A standard such as, 'Leads with interpersonal and communication skill, social and emotional insight and understanding of all students and staff members' backgrounds and culture, is but one of many that speak to the need for EI' (p.10). To better understand how EI is being utilized by school leaders and which skills and competences are most called upon. We turn to the literature on EI and school leadership (2015). Berkovich and Eyal's work addressed leaders' emotional experiences and displays, behaviours and their effects on followers and leaders' emotional abilities. Several themes emerged: '(a) leaders emotional experiences and displays (b) leaders' behaviours and their effects on followers' emotions, and (c) leaders' emotional abilities' (p. 133).

Building upon Berkovich & Eyal's work, their review explores the link between EI skills and competences and leadership effectiveness. The reference to emotion skills draws upon the skills of the model by Mayer & Salovey (1997) and the work of Brackett (2020), which speaks to emotion recognition, understanding, labelling, expression and emotion management of self and others. The reference to emotion competences is based on the Goleman/Boyatzis (1998) framework of self-awareness, social-awareness, self-management and relationship management. Researchers have found that some factors such as self-management, time management, influence, decision making, commitment, communication and empathy are considered essential for leadership effectiveness (Sun et al., 2014). Underlying these competences, awareness of feelings helps them think about their leadership and influences their leadership behaviours (Cliffe, 2011). The complexity of schools demands that school leaders

are equipped with an arsenal of skills and competences to not only raise test scores but to ward off resistance, health crises and even danger from the environment in which we live.

Given that such competences impact school leaders' job performance, the second area in question is, "What do we know about how to best develop these skills both at the pre-service level and in-service level for aspiring leaders as well as veteran leaders?" Recent research is becoming available on programmes that are focusing on development in EI for school leaders (Kearney et al., 2014.) but these are still limited.

Principals impact the attitudes of teachers through the quality of the relationships that they build (Price, 2012). What can we learn from the research regarding the impact that EI has on the role of the school leaders as perceived by self and others?

As we explored leadership theories to provide a framework for the skills and competences of EI, we came across numerous references to transformational leadership. Burns (1978) defined transformational leadership as a process in which leaders and followers help each other to advance to a higher level of morale and motivation. Transformational leaders inspire their followers, build a collective vision and create ownership, a sense of belonging and identity in the organization. EI skills and competences appear to align with a transformational leadership style.

This review was initiated by a desire to learn about how and what aspects of EI are being utilized by school leaders on a daily basis. And what, if any, professional development prepares them to become able to excel at their job.

In summary, this review examines the professional impact of EI skills and competences on principal leadership as identified by the leaders themselves and their followers, namely teachers. It identifies teachers' perceptions of the characteristics and abilities of their leaders and what they believe represents effective leaders. It also explores the strengths and limitations of leaders' EI based on gender, culture, socioeconomic factors and age. While the focus in

educational leadership development is placed on instructional leadership (improving students' academic outcomes) and acquisition of skills for leading systems change in schools, there is an increasing focus on developing the social and emotional competences of young people (CASEL, 2019) including cultural relevant pedagogy and equity (Jagers et al., 2019). The school leader today must examine her mental models and possibly shift her thinking to display a mindset that embraces antiracism, cultural competence and equity. This requires an emotionally intelligent person who is willing to assert her voice and know how important it is to listen.

The following initial research questions emerged during coding and analysing the data for this study.

- Are there specific EI skills and competences that are needed for effective school leadership and how do we best develop them?
- What do we know about research-based efforts to develop EI skills and competences for aspiring and current school leaders?
- What can we learn from the research on the role that EI has on school leaders as perceived by school leaders themselves and others?

## **Methodology**

To answer the research questions, a systematic review of the literature was conducted according to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) statement (Moher et al., 2009).

### ***Search strategy and criteria for inclusion***

To carry out an exhaustive search on the relationship of leadership and EI in school leaders, we used the following databases: Eric education, PsycINFO, Scopus, and Psychology Database. The terms were introduced as follows: a) "emotional intelligence" and "leadership"

and "school leaders" b) "emotional intelligence" and "leadership" and 'school principals' c) "emotional intelligence" and "leadership" and "headteachers" d) "emotional intelligence" and "leadership" and "headmasters." These combinations appeared in the title, abstract, or keywords. The context of education is changing rapidly therefore a time limit of 2004–2019 was applied. Finally, the inclusion criteria were scientific journal articles written in English. These included measures of EI and leadership in school leaders. Exclusion criteria were unpublished research, comments, editorials, master's theses, or dissertations and non-English publications.

### ***Quality assessment***

We used part of the Appraisal Checklist (The Joanna Briggs Institute, 2008) to assess the methodological quality of a study and to determine the extent to which a study has addressed the possibility of bias in its design, conduct, and analysis. Three independent evaluators (authors: R.G-L expert in methodology, P.F-B expert in EI, and J.P expert in leadership) examined six domains (Sample selection / Inclusion criteria / Confounding factors / Objective outcome assessment / Reliable measurement / Statistical analysis) which are used to evaluate the risk of bias for each study: "+" indicates low risk of bias, "-" indicates a high risk of bias and "?" indicates an unclear or unknown risk of bias (Table 1). Regarding the sample selection, the studies that indicate a high risk of bias are those that have relatively small sample sizes that limit the generalisability of the results and negatively impacted the quality (Arif & Sohail, 2009). Concerning inclusion criteria, we found a high risk of bias in those studies that have a sample based on subjective or convenience criteria (Cliffe, 2011). When there was a lack of description of the evaluated factors, there was a high risk of bias in the domain of confounding factors (no article included in this review was at high risk of bias in this factor). With regards to the objective outcome assessment and reliable measurement

domains, there was a low risk of bias in those studies that use objective measures and previously validated instruments respectively (Reynolds & O'Dwyer, 2008). Finally, there was a low risk of bias in the statistical analysis dimension when objective and research-appropriate analyses were performed in the study (Berkovich & Eyal, 2017). There was an excellent level of agreement between the three evaluators using the quality assessment scale ( $j = 0.80$ ).

### ***Data extraction and Analyses***

#### **Data Extraction**

Three evaluators independently (authors: J.P; R.G-L, and A.A.H) reviewed the full text of all citations (N = 110) that were identified as “potentially relevant.” The following main information was extracted: author, year, country, study design, aim of the study, description, and number of the participants included in the study, and the overall conclusion of the study.

- Once the preliminary 35 articles were selected (Table 1). We employed the help of a Research Assistant to assist with triangulating the data, coding the articles, and selecting recurring patterns across articles. We created a table of essential data for all articles and then categorized these data into themes. In order to conduct this research, we began by using a “grounded theory” approach.

- Insert Table 1-

#### **Data analyses**

This is an approach to analyse the data that we obtained from the literature in the hope of devising research questions and possibly thematic findings. We first read the literature without coding and identified our draft research questions. Glaser and Strauss (1967) defined grounded theory as the “discovery of theory from data.” Groat & Wang (2002) supports this by saying that grounded theory involves the “use of an intensive, open-ended, and iterative process that simultaneously involves data collection, coding (data analysis), and memo-writing (theory building)” (p. 181).

We began our research by asking questions about what we already had knowledge of or had observed in school leaders who had embraced professional development in EI leadership. Selecting the literature was accomplished using the Prisma guidelines. We revised the literature and began theoretical sampling. Each of the three researchers did their coding independently and then came together to decide on the categories that we saw in the literature. Through the process of analytic induction, we analysed the data and observed themes emerging across multiple studies. After selecting, reading and analysing the data, we posited that there were six distinct themes emerging. We used those themes as our guide to categorize the studies.

We did not set out to postulate theory, but rather to present and synthesize a body of literature which brings together the fields of EI and educational leadership. Our intention was to let the literature inform us of the emerging constructs in these combined fields. Noting the similarities and differences in the literature through this qualitative approach, allowed us to notice recurring themes that shed light on the relationship between these two fields. Perhaps as researchers expand this research, we will be able to formulate a cohesive theory.

### ***Search and screening results***

We identified a total of 110 references. After removing duplicates, this resulted in 76 studies. Of these 76 studies, only 58 were selected to review the full text taking into account the inclusion/exclusion criteria specified. Thirty-five studies were finally included. Disagreements were resolved by consensus. The evaluators initially disagreed about whether to include or exclude one of the studies (Stillman et al., 2018). This study was excluded as it was focused on the EI of teachers, students and climate, but did not specifically address school leadership. In the rest of the articles, the agreement between evaluators was perfect (kappa index = 1.0). The process of finding and selecting the items was carried out according to the guidelines provided by PRISMA and is shown in Figure 1.

- Insert Figure 1-

## *Measures*

Table 1 demonstrates the range of tools used to measure EI and leadership. It shows there were significant variations in the choice of tools in the reviewed studies. Concerning EI, of the 35 studies employing EI questionnaires, six used the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT; Mayer et al., 2002). It is a 141-item test composed of the branches of perceiving, facilitating, understanding, and managing emotions. The reported full-scale reliability of the MSCEIT is .93, and with branch scores ranging from .79 to .91 (Mayer et al., 2002). This instrument is a performance test where participants are required to solve emotional problems in which there are correct and incorrect answers. In contrast in seven studies of this review, validate self-reports instruments were used such as The Trait Meta-Mood Scale (TMMS; Salovey et al., 1995); Wong Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS; Wong & Law, 2002); Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQi; Bar-On, 1997); or The Emotional and Social Competency (ESCI) based on the Goleman framework (2006), where participants report their subjective beliefs about their own EI or combine self-report with raters' reports. Seven articles used structured or semi-structured interviews to assess EI. Most of these interviews did not report a reliability index. Finally, the rest of the tools were infrequently used instruments in research, most of them are only used in a specific study (Wirawan et al., 2019). With respect to leadership, four studies included in this review used The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ; Bass & Avolio, 1990). This test measures the principal's leadership behaviours and includes 16 items representing four sub-components of behaviours, including individualised consideration, intellectual stimulation, idealised influence, and inspirational motivation. Cronbach's alpha of this questionnaire is .91. To measure leadership, different interviews were used, specifically in eight studies. Many other tools were used in only one or two studies.

## Results

The research questions below focused the research as it progressed:

1. Are there specific EI skills and competences that are needed for effective school leadership?
2. What can we learn from the research on the role that EI has on school leaders as perceived by school leaders themselves and others?
3. What do we know about research-based efforts to develop EI skills and competences for aspiring and current school leaders?

The six themes that follow are explained first by an initial paragraph summary of the findings, followed by the details of those findings. They address the research questions that guided this systemic review:

- a. Most needed emotional skills and competences for leadership effectiveness.
- b. The effect of EI abilities of the leader on those that follow them.
- c. Relationship between EI and transformational leadership.
- d. Socio-cultural differences (gender, culture, position, age) in EI on leadership.
- e. Impact of EI on leadership.
- f. Leadership development programmes with a focus on EI.

### **a) Most needed emotion skills and competences for effective leadership**

Summary: Thirteen articles (See table 1, the studies 8, 1, 27, 29, 32, 6, 12, 10, 23, 2, 22, 19 and 25) sought to research the relationship between EI and leaders' effectiveness, our first research question. All, at varying degrees, described the EI competences and skills that school leaders used and believed should be used by an effective leader (See Table 2). All of the intrapersonal and interpersonal skills cited fall into the domains of self-awareness, social-

awareness, self-management and relationship management defined by the Goleman/Boyatzis model of EI, and foundational to the K-12 school-based social and emotional learning movement of the Collaborative for Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL). The work done by CASEL practitioners and research scientists since 1990 has developed and assessed the positive effects of social, emotional and academic learning for young people. Gains in academic achievement have shown increases of 11 percentile points on standardized tests, and increases from pre to post on students' well-being, among other positive factors (Taylor et al., 2017; Durlak et al., 2011). Without the school leader leading the initiative, SEL would not be sustained. Leaders and other adults need to develop the same set of emotion skills and competencies and commit to personal professional growth. This systematic review reveals how school leaders' call upon their EI skills and behavioural EI competences on the job.

- Insert Table 2-

In Kenya, 100 school principals' performance was found to be positively correlated with the experiential factors of perceiving and using emotions, derived from an EI assessment (Ayiro, 2014). Pierce (2014) noted that EI correlated with teacher collective efficacy, especially in the areas of conflict management and influence competences. Saleem et al., (2017), in a study of 50 principals and 300 teachers, showed that leaders have a strong sense of EI and can manage disruptive emotions of their subordinates; they can utilize teachers' capacities and capabilities in the most effective ways.

#### **b) Relationship between EI and transformational leadership**

Summary: This theme addresses the first and second research questions: "*What were the specific EI skills and competences that are needed for effective school leadership?*" What can we learn from the research on the role that EI plays for school leaders, as perceived by school leaders themselves and others? Nine articles (See Table 1) the studies 2, 13, 16, 7, 5, 15, 20,

33 and 33) found a relationship between EI and transformational leadership. Although the different studies used different measures of EI, in all cases correlations were found between EI constructs and the dimensions of transformational leadership including idealized influence (attributed), idealized influence (behaviour), inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration (Ayiro, 2014). All studies referenced found a strong and significant link between EI and transformational leadership while different articles cited a stronger correlation to some EI domains over others such as social awareness and relationship management in one study and self-management in another.

Hackett & Hortman (2008), using the Emotional and Social Competency (ESCI) with 46 assistant principals in the U.S, found that all four EI domains correlated with the five areas of transformational leadership. Myers (2014), in a case study of a single principal, agreed with the importance of the domains. The subject stated that leadership is, ‘mainly about working with people and empowering others. And it’s a lot of hard work up front, when getting to know each other and building trust. And, once that’s done, you can really work with each other well, and much more efficiently, and you can also distribute that leadership much more.’

Berkovich & Eyal (2017) suggested that the specific EI skills of a school leader may not only correlate with their transformational leadership skills but also may impact the emotional skills of those they lead. In their study of 69 principals and 639 teachers, they found that a principal’s EI, specifically their ability to recognize emotions, had an indirect effect on their teacher’s ability to emotionally reframe, an effective, evidence-based emotional skills of those they lead.

### **c) The effect of EI abilities of the leader on those who follow them**

Summary: Eleven studies (See Table 1, the studies 5, 12 ,25, 31, 19, 30, 1, 7, 21, 29, and 35) All studies referenced in this theme found evidence of the positive effects of the EI of

leaders on the teachers in their schools. The articles sought to identify the specific aspects of EI that were most responsible for positively impacting teachers. These included the ability of the leader to read the emotions of others, to regulate their own emotions, to help teachers reframe unwanted emotions, to maintain relational transparency through one's own self-awareness. These EI abilities of the leader promoted job satisfaction, teacher collective self-efficacy and improvement in instructional practices. This theme speaks to the research question, *'What can we learn from the research on the role that EI has on school leaders as perceived by school leaders themselves and others?'*

A few studies found that the emotional skills of teachers were impacted by the EI of their leaders. A study of 69 principals and 639 teachers in Israel, found a positive, indirect relationship between a leader's emotion recognition ability and their teacher's ability to emotionally reframe (Berkovich & Eyal, 2017). This study suggests that one of the benefits of emotionally reframing is the ability to have a more positive outlook on emotion-eliciting negative events. The authors comment that this relationship may exist because a principal's ability to recognize the emotions of their teachers is linked with their capacity to adopt a supportive relationship with those whom they lead. It is important to note that the impacts of a principal's emotion recognition abilities on their teacher's emotional reframing is indirect, (mediated by transformational leadership behaviours). It requires not just the skill of understanding and managing emotions but the two more interactive EI skills of awareness and expression.

#### **d) Socio-cultural differences (gender, culture, position, age) in EI on leadership**

Summary: Seven articles (See Table 1, the studies 12, 6, 3, 4, 22, 11, 32, and 28) sought to explore unique differences (gender, culture, position, age) in EI in leadership. This theme

responds to the question, *“What can we learn from the research on the role that EI has on school leaders as perceived by school leaders themselves and others?”* Differences in the EI of leaders based on gender were explored in multiple ways and studies found mixed results. It may be that female teachers are more in tune with a leader’s emotional competence than males and that female leaders may express their feelings more readily and therefore may be perceived as more emotionally competent but there is too little evidence to draw valid conclusions. Socioeconomic differences may also alter perceptions of the leader's EI. Cultural values appear to influence perceptions of a leader's EI as do educational background and the age of the leader.

A study conducted in the UK on 60 leaders found no gender differences in leader trait EI (Benson et al., 2014). Reynolds & O’Dwyer (2008), conducted a study of 65 middle school principals in the US that supported these findings and reported that gender did not predict leadership effectiveness scores. However, when exploring this relationship further, researchers found that females had significantly higher scores on the ability to inspire a shared vision subscale. There is a research need to explore the effects of EI on school leadership based on these variables, as few studies have done so.

#### **e) Impact of EI on school leadership**

Summary: Eight articles (See Table 1, the studies 2, 32, 34, 8, 9, 21, 22, and 4) sought to explore the consequences of EI on school leadership thereby addressing the research question, *“What can we learn from the research on the role that EI has on school leaders as perceived by school leaders themselves and others?”* Leaders reported that their being aware of their feelings helped them to be more creative and effective. The second most referred to area that leaders perceived as essential for leadership was their emotion regulation and stress management.

A few studies focused on the consequences of multiple EI skills. One study of 100 school principals explored the relationship between overall principal performance and EI skills,

finding that the skills that predicted principal performance were the ability to use emotions to facilitate thought and the ability to perceive emotions in self and other (Ayiro, 2009).

Crawford (2004) took a similar approach to study the effects of EI on leadership through the case studies of four school leaders. She found a clear link between the emotional experiences of leaders and their ability to lead effectively. The school leaders in this study emphasized the importance of being able to skilfully express emotions through the deliberate use of emotion regulation strategies. The importance of the skill of emotion regulation was also supported by the findings of a study conducted with both senior and middle leaders of schools (Benson et al., 2014). This study found that the most significant EI trait for leaders to possess was self-control, which included the skills of emotion regulation and stress management

#### **f) Leadership development programmes with a focus on EI**

Summary: Five articles (See Table 1, the studies 24, 14, 27, 18, and 17) presented the results from leadership intervention programmes focused on developing EI and leadership capabilities for school leaders. This theme directly addresses the research question, *“What do we know about research-based efforts to develop EI skills and competences for aspiring and veteran school leaders?”* There are few studies in this theme that are worthy of note. Research is very much needed on such programmes that are designed to improve or enhance EI skills and competences. Three of the articles discussed professional development programmes aimed at directly developing the social and emotional competences of school leaders while two of the articles discussed a less common type of programme, which trains school leaders to be internal school coaches, developing their EI through a process of self-reflection and skill-building.

Kearney et al., (2014) evaluated the impact of an intervention focused on improving the EI of aspiring school principals, as a part of a leadership preparation programme. This programme included six interventions focused on teaching six EI competences helpful for

leadership: social awareness, anxiety management, decision making, appropriate use of assertive behaviours, time management, and commitment ethic. This study included data of 31 participants split into experimental and control groups. Two out of the six interventions yielded statistically significant results: social awareness, and time management. The authors commented that emotional competences are best taught to leaders through both awareness and practice.

## **Discussion**

This systemic review was set within the context of educational leadership and EI. While EI skills and competences are not the only essential development area for school leadership, they have become more recognized as important for the execution of the roles and responsibilities of the school leader. We continue to learn how leaders can positively impact the educational outcomes of young people. Now, more than ever, we realize the influence that the leader has on culture, climate and teacher performance which in turn directly impacts students. The need for coherence, a shared depth of understanding, has been understood as a means of improving teaching and learning (Fullan & Quinn, 2016). We believe that for leaders to build a truly collaborative culture they must have developed their EI skills and competences.

This extensive review of literature across leadership development and EI in education consisted of an international, systematic review of 35 articles. The articles consisted of empirical studies as well as a variety of qualitative methodological approaches.

The research review was guided by these emerging questions:

- Are there specific EI skills and competences that are needed for effective school leadership?
- What can we learn from the research on the role that EI has on school leaders? Perceived by school leaders themselves and others?

- What do we know about research-based efforts to develop EI skills and competences for aspiring and current school leaders?

With respect to the first question, “Are there specific EI skills and competences that are needed for effective school leadership?” This review provides evidence that there are many ways in which the EI skills and behavioural competences of the school leader leads to effective school leadership (Ayiro, 2014, Brinia et al., 2014). They impact the leader’s performance and that of others in the organization. Of note, these competences were the most frequently mentioned across all studies: self-awareness, self-management, and empathy (Tan et al., 2019; Sun et al., 2014; Singh & Dali, 2013a). Self-awareness and the awareness of the emotions of others was noted as critical tools for leaders to focus on and build as they support the ability to manage emotions, be empathetic, and have system awareness. Some studies mention differences in self-awareness based on gender (Brinia et al., 2014). Other studies mention awareness as an important first step of other skills like management (Patti et al., 2012). Self-management, the ability of the leader to manage their own emotions and those of others; knowing whether or not one should express a particular emotion in a given situation - serves as a key lever to support leaders in managing stress and staying calm in tough situations (Sun et al., 2014). Some studies referred to this as “self-control” and mentioned links between this and better decision-making as a school leader, as well as better capability in planning for the future (Benson et al., 2014). Finally, empathy was highlighted multitudinously and was demonstrated through the use of effective listening and strong interpersonal connections (Patti et al., 2012; Singh & Dali, 2013a).

In addition, several inter-personal and social skills and competences were highlighted as paramount to EI. Leaders who demonstrate high EI have strong interpersonal competences, such as: communication skills, influence, and the capability to build trust. Communication skills include the ability to express a broad range of feelings, from anger to joy, in ways that

connect with others. In addition, communication includes the ability to effectively express and generate positive emotions around a powerful vision. All leaders need to possess the ability to effectively communicate in conflict situations, regulate their own emotions and lead others through conflict (Brinia et al., 2014). Influence, another inter-personal competency, is the power to impact others in a variety of ways. For example, leaders who effectively influence can make meaning of events for their followers by reframing negative emotional events into positive ones or encourage others to acquire new learning or skills (Patti et al., 2015). A final interpersonal competency related to EI includes the ability of the leader to effectively build trust among all stakeholders. The quality of the relationships that the leader builds engender a culture of trust.

With respect to the second question, there are many examples given in this review that support the relationship between EI and school leadership, as perceived by self and others. There is a correlation between EI and transformational leadership. The EI of principals impacts teacher's self-efficacy and the leader's ability to effect change (Ayiro, 2014; Hackett & Hortman, 2008). Key aspects of transformational leadership (building trust, encouraging others, encouraging innovative thinking, coaching and developing people, acting with integrity) overlap with key EI competences (mentioned above) of self-awareness, social awareness, emotion management. A leader's social / interpersonal awareness and relationship management are closely related to the characteristics of transformational leadership, as defined in the literature. That said, other studies have raised questions as to how emotion skills and behavioural competences are explicitly evidenced in transformational leadership and suggest that a more aligned comparison would be helpful (Küpers & Weibler, 2006).

External factors-such as culture, socio-economic differences, gender differences, values differences, types of schools, level of leader experience, etc., influence how EI is perceived in leaders and their followers. For example, these external factors can impact how leaders view

and perceive their own EI; how individuals view and perceive the EI of their leaders, and how many individuals in the community perceive and value its importance (Grobler, 2014; Reynolds & O'Dwyer, 2008).

With respect to the third question, after analysing the leadership intervention programmes included in this review, we concluded that there is an inconsistency across intervention programmes in terms of length of programme and the best methodologies for delivery. From an applied point of view, the findings of this study could have implications for the implementation of training for school leaders in EI. It highlights the important role that EI should have in preparing future aspiring leaders. This study also emphasizes the importance of taking into account gender, socio-economic and cultural differences in intervention programmes to promote EI (Grobler, 2014; Reynolds & O'Dwyer, 2008).

While the studies in this review have allowed us to identify a relationship between EI and leadership in school principals, they have several limitations. Concretely, the majority of the studies included in the review use correlations or descriptive approaches and are therefore unable to predict causality. Although the purpose of the paper is not to critique the instruments but to review the studies, findings the variety of different instruments that measure EI, create a wide variability in the constructs that are measured could cause less reliability in comparing and contrasting study results. Even if the researchers triangulated their process and took every step to prevent their biases, their analytic process may have been affected by their biases. Finally, the researchers' data were limited to four widely used databases. Perhaps we missed including articles located in other journals. Last, of all, only 35 studies were reviewed; a more extensive review of studies is warranted to validate these results.

## **Conclusion**

Systemic reviews, such as this one, provide us with the ability to see the patterns that are emerging in a particular field in this case, the relationship between school leadership and the need for development in EI skills and competences. Systemic reviews have been prevalent since 1763 when James Lind published the first summary of the research on scurvy (1763). Such reviews provide a non-biased summary of the empirical evidence on a particular topic. This review has increased our knowledge about the research findings in educational leadership and EI from 2004-2019. It has shown that numerous aspects of EI have become increasingly recognized as integral to the role of the school leader and should be included in leadership development for aspiring and practicing administrators.

School leaders are responsible for building coherence in their schools, lead change efforts, transform both people and the organizational culture, provide safety, support and care all in the service of educating our children. To be able to do this, school leaders have to be the best at their craft; they have to believe that their efforts are efficacious; they build trusting relationships and distribute leadership. As we have read in this review of the literature, around the globe, the school leader's EI is called upon to forge these relationships (Pierce, 2014). As we discussed in the beginning of this review, emotions are involved in every leadership decision. In all of the studies that were reviewed, school leaders talked about how they worked with their emotions to offer empathy when needed or when employing self-management to accomplish a task or goal, or to rectify a conflict with another. The behavioural leadership competences and skills needed for effective leadership most frequently mentioned across all studies were subsets of self-awareness, self-management, empathy (social awareness) and relationship management, the four domains of EI. All of them involved the use of their emotion skills of recognizing, naming, understanding, expressing and regulating their behaviours.

Study after study indicated that the school leader's behaviours are representative of how well they consciously manage their emotions. Their actions directly influence the school's

culture and climate, and teachers' perceptions of the school climate correlates with student outcomes. Given this link, it is incumbent upon us to prepare school leaders with the emotion skills and behavioural leadership competences of EI so that they positively impact all aspects of climate (Sebastian & Allensworth, 2019; Singh & Townsley, 2020; Park et al., 2018).

While some programmes focus on EI skills and competences, very few have been researched in terms of short or long-term impact. There is also inconsistency across intervention programmes in terms of length of programme and the best methodologies for delivery and assessment.

Limited areas of study discovered by this review include gender and sociocultural differences in how leaders view and perceive their own EI and in how individuals view and perceive the EI of their leaders. These variables must be taken into account in intervention programmes. We encourage researchers to study and contribute their findings to this growing field of educational leadership. It is hoped that this systemic review will help to bridge the gap that research needs to expand the role of EI in the preparation and practice of school leaders.

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Word Count 6.785

Table 1: Description of the reviewed Studies

Authors	Sample (N)	Country	Instruments	Quality
<b>1. Arif &amp; Sohail (2009).</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One principal</li> <li>Two coordinators</li> <li>Eight teachers</li> </ul>	Asia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Semi-structured interviews</li> <li>Observations</li> </ul>	-/-/+/-/-
<b>2. Ayiro (2009).</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>100 high school principals</li> </ul>	Africa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MSCEIT</li> <li>Leadership Effectiveness</li> </ul>	+ / + / + / + / + / +
<b>3. Ayiro (2014).</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>309 principals</li> </ul>	Africa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MSCEIT</li> <li>The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire</li> <li>Global Service Climate Scale</li> <li>Team effectiveness questionnaire</li> </ul>	+ / + / + / + / + / +
<b>4. Benson, Fearon McLaughlin, &amp; Garratt (2014).</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>60 middle and senior leaders</li> </ul>	UK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Semi-structured interviews</li> <li>EI Questionnaire</li> </ul>	- / + / + / - / - / +
<b>5. Berkovich &amp; Eyal (2017).</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>69 school principals</li> <li>639 teachers</li> </ul>	Asia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emotion recognition ability</li> <li>Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire</li> <li>Emotion Regulation Questionnaire</li> </ul>	+ / + / + / + / + / +
<b>6. Brinia, Zimianiti, &amp; Panagiotopoulos (2014).</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>301 educators</li> <li>36 principals</li> </ul>	Europe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EQ-i</li> <li>Questionnaire structure designed by Denison et al. (1995)</li> </ul>	+ / + / + / + / + / +
<b>7. Chen &amp; Guo (2018).</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>534 primary teachers</li> </ul>	Asia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>WLEIS</li> <li>The Principal Instructional</li> </ul>	+ / + / + / + / + / +

			Management Rating Scale • The Instructional Strategy Scale	
<b>8. Cliffe (2011).</b>	• 7 headteachers	UK	• Self-report questionnaire of EI from Goleman's • Face-to-face interview	-/-/+/-/-
<b>9. Crawford (2004).</b>	• 4 primary headteachers	UK	• A semi-structured interview	-/-/+/-/-
<b>10. Farahbakhsh (2012).</b>	• 139 school principals	Asia	• Questionnaire of quality of work life • EI questionnaire	+//+//+//+
<b>11. Fridell Newcom-Belcher, &amp; Messner (2009).</b>	• 445 principals	USA	• The servant-leadership styles inventory	+//+//+//+
<b>12. Grobler (2014).</b>	• 2386 educators	Africa	• Use of emotional competence By school leaders via the perceptions of their teachers	+//+/-/+//+
<b>13. Hackett &amp; Hortman (2008).</b>	• 46 assistant principals	USA	• The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire • The Emotional and Social Competency based on Goleman	-/+//+//+//+
<b>14. Kearney, Kelsey, &amp; Sinkfield (2014).</b>	• 31 students	USA	• Emotional Skills Assessment Process	-/+//+//+//+
<b>15. Mirza &amp; Redzuan (2012).</b>	• 268 schools' principals	Asia	• EQ-i	+//+//+//+//+

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The leadership behaviours</li> </ul>	
<b>16. Myers (2014).</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One senior high school principal</li> <li>30 administrators, faculty members, etc.</li> </ul>	USA		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interview</li> <li>Observation</li> <li>semi-structured interview format</li> </ul>	-/+/-/+/-/-
<b>17. Patti, Holzer, Brackett, &amp; Stern (2015).</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>12 internal coaches</li> </ul>	USA		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Self-report measure developed by the research team</li> <li>One on One Interviews</li> </ul>	-/+/-/+/-/+
<b>18. Patti, Holzer, Stern, &amp; Brackett (2012).</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Two Case Studies</li> </ul>	UK and USA		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MSCEIT.</li> <li>Emotional Competency Inventory, 2.0</li> <li>One on one interviews</li> </ul>	+/+/-/+/-/+
<b>19. Pierce (2014).</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>13 school principals</li> <li>129 teachers</li> </ul>	USA		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emotional and Social Competence Inventory</li> <li>Collective Teacher Belief Scale</li> </ul>	+/+/-/+/-/+
<b>20. Prasad &amp; Pabla (2013).</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>42 Directors</li> </ul>	Asia		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MSCEIT</li> <li>Transformational leadership questionnaire</li> </ul>	-/+/-/+/-/+?
<b>21. Badu &amp; Djafri (2017).</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>55 principals</li> </ul>	Asia		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Questionnaire</li> </ul>	-/+/?/-/+
<b>22. Reynolds &amp; O'Dwyer (2008).</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>65 middle school principals</li> </ul>	USA		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leadership Practices Inventory</li> <li>MSCEIT</li> <li>Moos's Coping Responses Inventory</li> </ul>	-/+/-/+/-/+
<b>23. Saleem, Batool, &amp; Khattak (2017).</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>50 principals and 300 teachers</li> </ul>	Asia		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leadership styles and</li> </ul>	+/-/+/-/+

			degree of EI of the principals, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organizational commitment level of the teachers and teachers' perception about organizational support</li> </ul>	
<b>24. Sánchez-Núñez, Patti, &amp; Holzer (2015).</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>32 aspiring leaders</li> </ul>	USA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rathus Assertiveness Schedule</li> <li>Interpersonal Reactivity Index</li> <li>The Big Five Inventory</li> <li>Depression Scale A self-report</li> <li>Trait Meta Mood Scale</li> <li>MSCEIT</li> <li>Emotional Social Competency Inventory</li> </ul>	-/+ /+ /+ /+ /+
<b>25. Shapira-Lishchinsky, &amp; Levy-Gazenfrantz (2016).</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>62 teacher-mentees</li> </ul>	Asia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Semi-structured interviews.</li> </ul>	-/+ /+ /- /- /-
<b>26. Singh &amp; Dali (2013a).</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>60 principals</li> </ul>	Africa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interview</li> </ul>	+ /+ /? /- /- /-
<b>27. Singh &amp; Dali (2013b).</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Five focus group (ten principals in each group)</li> </ul>	Africa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interview</li> </ul>	- /+ /? /- /- /-
<b>28. Sood &amp; Kaushal (2018).</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>198 leaders</li> </ul>	Asia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developing EI' by Weisinger</li> <li>Multifactor leadership questionnaire</li> </ul>	+ /+ /+ /+ /+ /+
<b>29. Sun, Wang, &amp; Sharma (2014).</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>100 school teachers</li> </ul>	Asia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Questionnaire with eight factors</li> </ul>	+ /+ /? /+ /+ /+

<b>30. Tai &amp; Kareem (2019).</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1195 teachers</li> </ul>	Asia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Principals Change Leadership EI Scale</li> <li>• Teacher Attitudes towards Change Scale</li> </ul>	+/+/+/+/+/+
<b>31. Taliadorou &amp; Pashiardis (2015).</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 182 principals</li> <li>• 910 teachers</li> </ul>	Europe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WLEIS</li> <li>• Political capacity</li> <li>• School Leadership Questionnaire</li> <li>• job satisfaction</li> </ul>	+/+/+/+/+/+
<b>32. Tang, Yin, &amp; Nelson (2010).</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 50 academic leaders in Taiwan</li> <li>• 50 academic leaders in the USA</li> </ul>	Asia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership Practice Inventory-Self</li> <li>• Low's Emotional Skills Assessment Process</li> </ul>	+/+/+/+/+/+
<b>33. Wang, Wilhite &amp; Martino (2016).</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 20 school administrators</li> <li>• 284 teachers and administrators' support staff members</li> </ul>	USA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Widener Emotional Learning Scale</li> <li>• Survey of Transformational Leadership</li> </ul>	+/+/+/+/+/+
<b>34. Yamamoto, Gardiner, &amp; Tenuto (2014).</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 9 administrators</li> </ul>	Asia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviews</li> </ul>	-/+/+/+/+/?
<b>35. Wirawan, Tamar, &amp; Bellani (2019).</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 280 elementary school principals</li> </ul>	Asia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scale based in the Emotional and Social Competency of Goleman</li> <li>• Leadership style measure</li> </ul>	+/+/+/-/-/+

**Quality items:** Sample selection/Inclusion criteria/Confounding factors/Objective outcome assessment/Reliable measurement/ Statistical analysis. “+” indicates low risk of bias, “-” indicates high risk of bias and “?” indicates unclear or unknown risk (The Joanna Briggs Institute, 2008).

MSCEIT = Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test

EQ-i= Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQi; Bar-On, 1997)

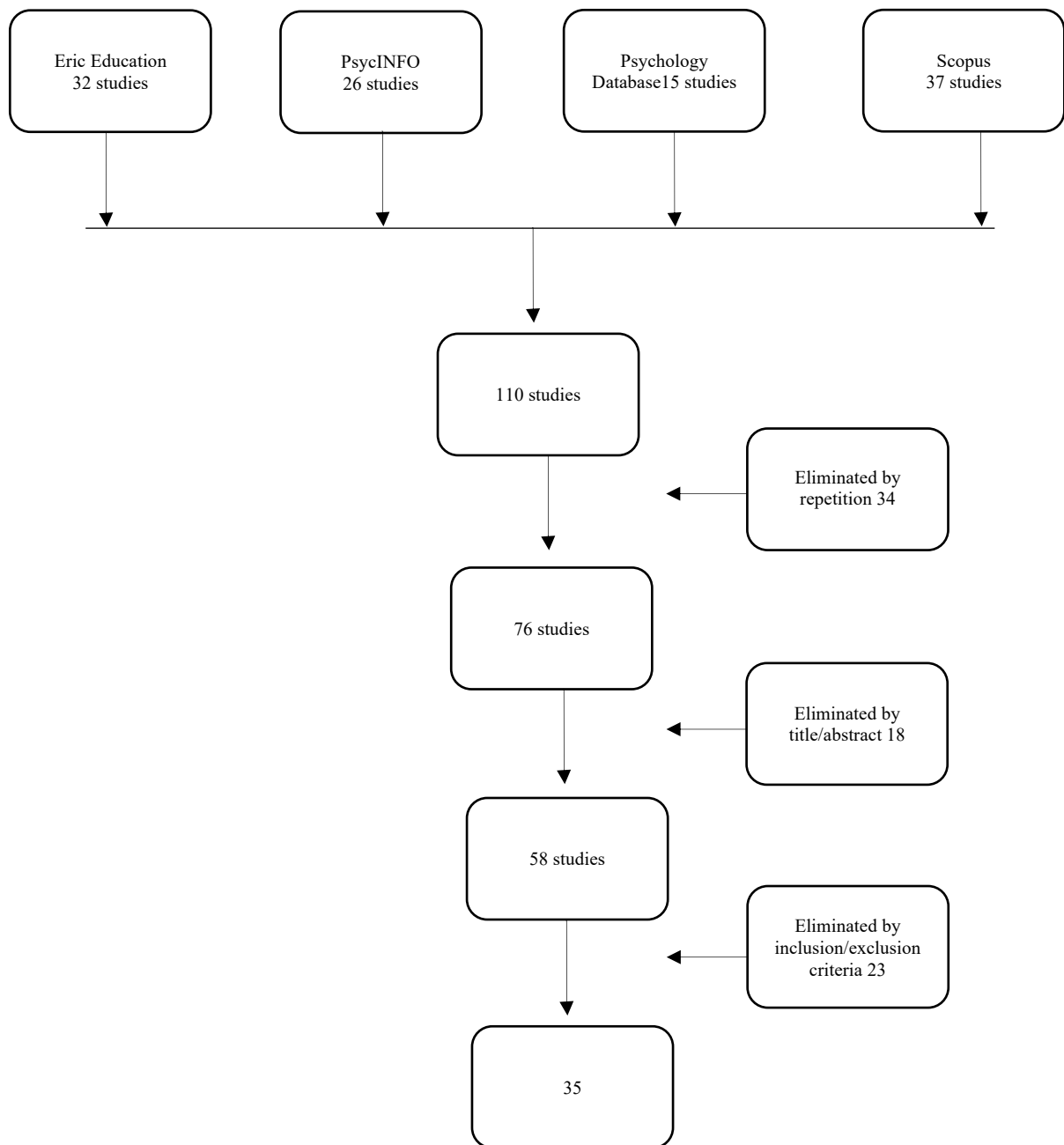
**Table 2.** Skills and Competencies stated by School Leaders I Theme ‘a’.

Thirteen of the 35 studies had data that fit the theme “Most needed skills and competencies for effective leadership: School leaders listed the following emotion skills and competencies throughout the studies. The ability to be empathic was the most cited by school leaders. Self-awareness, self-management and communication skills were also stated with a high frequency, in the studies.

Empathy ***	Social Awareness
Self-awareness ***	Interpersonal skills
Self-management ***	Clarity of vision & goals
Recognizing when emotions arise	Assertiveness
Able to deal with stress	Conflict approach
Relationship management	Relational transparency
Manage the emotions of others	Act responsibly on moral and social issues
Understand emotions	Attentiveness
Perceive and use emotions	influence
Communication skills ***	Focus on values and emotions of others
Effectively communicate anger	Decision-making
Building trust	Commitment
Authentic leadership	

\*\*\*= stated at a high frequency

**Figure 1.**



**Figure captions**

**-Figure 1.** Prisma flow-diagram (see Moher et al., 2009) for literature included in this study.