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**Leaders' Emotional Intelligence and Sustainable Employee Performance in Saudi Organizations: The
Mediating Role of Innovation Climate**

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Introduction

In the current dynamic yet competitive business environment, sustainable employee performance has become key for achieving competitive advantage and long-term corporate success. Organizations are progressively shifting their focus from short-term productivity to the sustained efficiency and engagement of employees over time (Yousaf et al., 2024; Wahyuningsin & Hafid, 2025). This shift is driven by rapid organizational changes and heightened monetary pressures, leading companies to reconsider their ways to human resource management. Recent research indicates that sustainable performance is closely linked to leadership quality, organizational climate, and the degree of support and empowerment experienced by employees (Rasool et al., 2025). Understanding the interconnections among these factors is critical for identifying the drivers of stable and durable performance in contemporary organizations.

Within this context, leaders' emotional intelligence has appeared as an important determinant of employee performance. Emotional intelligence refers to a leader's capacity to recognize, understand, and regulate both their own emotions and those of others, thereby fostering a constructive work environment and advancing team effectiveness (Wijaya et al., 2024). Empirical studies show that leaders with higher emotional intelligence are more effective at motivating teams, building trust, and stimulating creativity. Recent findings further associate emotional intelligence with employees' adoption of coping strategies that increase resilience plus job performance (Eranhikkal & Ahirwar, 2025). This is particularly relevant within high-pressure sectors such as healthcare, in which emotional awareness can offset resource restrictions by supporting psychological well-being (Aloulou, 2025). Moreover, emotional intelligence results in better interpersonal relationships and teamwork. Leaders who effectively manage emotions and demonstrate empathy develop a more collaborative and productive workplace, consequently sustaining performance and promoting the achievement of or company goalers.

A creative climate is also critical for sustaining employee performance over time. Such a climate is characterized by organizational practices that promote creativity, encourage risk-taking, and support the generation of new ideas (Wahyuningsin & Hafid, 2025). Research indicates that a creative climate facilitates the relationship between effective leadership and employees' creative performance (Al-Shboul, 2024). When organizations support creativity, employees experience greater inclusion and empowerment, which improves both their performance and its sustainability. Studies show that creative climates are intentionally cultivated by leaders who prior favor

creativity actively establish conducive conditions. This stresses the central role of emotional intelligence in forming a creative climate (Wijaya et al., 2024). Leaders who are in tune with their teams' emotions and needs are best positioned cultivate creativity and innovation.

Around the world, keeping up employee performance is a big challenge for organizations dealing with fast economic and technological changes. Recently, leaders' emotional intelligence and building a creative climate have become key topics in business and HR research (Aloulou, 2025). More people now agree that lasting competitive advantage comes not just from resources, but from investing in people and supporting creativity. Studies show that organizations that improve leaders' emotional intelligence and support a creative climate see better employee efficiency and job satisfaction (Wahyuningsin & Hafid, 2025). This global focus shows that competitive advantage is now closely tied to human capital, leadership quality, and organizational culture, all connected to emotional intelligence and a creative climate (Al-Shboul, 2024).

Globally, sustaining strong employee performance is a major challenge for organizations amid rapid economic and technological changes. In the past decade, topics like leaders' emotional intelligence and the creative climate have become key research areas in business management and human resources (Aloulou, 2025). There is expanding recognition that sustainable competitive advantage comes not just from material resources along with from how well an organization invests in its people and encourages their creativity. Research shows that organizations that develop their leaders' emotional intelligence and develop an encouraging creative climate see significant increases in employee productivity and employee happiness (Wahyuningsin & Hafid, 2025). This global focus reflects an understanding that competitive advantage now includes not just material or technological resources yet also human capital, the quality of leadership, and work culture (Al-Shboul, 2024). These parts are closely connected to emotional intelligence and advancing a creative environment within the organization.

However, studies indicate that Saudi organizations face considerable challenges in this area. These problems include poor recognition practices, limited professional development programs, and a weak culture of participation and feedback (Rasool et al., 2025). Additionally, many traditional leadership practices may not fulfill modern requirements. Another study showed that leaders in the Saudi healthcare sector need to improve their emotional intelligence skills, especially in self-awareness and relationship management, to boost leadership effectiveness and augment team performance (Abuljood et al., 2024). An ethnographic study at a Saudi Ministry of Health hospital uncovered structural and cultural issues affecting leadership practices. Major challenges included power

imbalances, a lack of common vision, and a culture of favoritism that obstructs the promotion of a fair and performance-based work environment (Alenezi, 2025). This points to the need for additional research to understand these dynamics in the Saudi context and to develop practical recommendations that can help overcome these problems and enable sustainable performance.

Despite growing interest in the emotional intelligence of leaders and its effect on job performance, as well as the role of the creative climate as a mediating factor, research examining these relationships in Saudi Arabia remains limited (Al-Shboul, 2024). Most studies have concentrated on health or education sectors, overlooking other areas like semi-governmental organizations (Abuljood et al., 2024; Mersal, 2025). Furthermore, research on emotional intelligence in the Kingdom has often focused on gender differences in academic environments, missing its impact on ongoing performance throughout various work environments (Mersal, 2025). Previous studies have not sufficiently addressed how the creative climate mediates the relationship between leaders' emotional intelligence and employee performance in Saudi Arabia. While evidence suggests that a creative climate is able to enhance creative behaviors and performance (Wahyuningsin & Hafid, 2025), the way it acts as a mediator between leadership and performance is not well explored in the region (Al-Shboul, 2024). Most research that addresses emotional intelligence in Saudi Arabia has looked at individuals, particularly employees' levels, rather than at leaders and how their emotional intelligence affects their teams (Mersal, 2025). This gap points to the need for research that examines the role of leaders and how their emotional intelligence shapes the work environment and supports teams in the direction of enduring performance, especially as Saudi organizations go through significant changes in their structure and culture (Alnajim, 2024; Alharthi et al., 2023).

Given these points, this research intends to investigate the impact of leaders' emotional intelligence on employee performance in Saudi organizations, with a focus on how the creative climate mediates this relationship. The study intends to fill the existing knowledge gap and give knowledge of administrative practices in this important area. It will look at both direct and indirect relationships between the relevant variables using a quantitative approach. A questionnaire will be created and distributed to a varied sample of employees from Saudi semi-governmental organizations. This sample will include various job levels in Riyadh, the Kingdom's administrative and economic hub, where most semi-governmental organizations are located. This approach confirms that the sample is representative and that the results can be generalized. The research will also involve an in-depth assessment of current literature on emotional intelligence, the creative climate, and sustained employee performance, particularly

studies relevant to Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries. This review will provide a solid theoretical basis for developing the research model and testing the hypotheses. A model will be created to illustrate the proposed relationships between the variables. Researchers will test the hypotheses using path analysis and structural equation modeling with Smart-PLS software. This statistical method is useful for assessing direct and indirect relationships between multiple variables at once. SPSS software will be used to conduct basic descriptive analyses, including frequencies, averages, and standard deviations, while checking the demographic information of the sample. Factor like participants' gender, age, work experience, education level, and sector will be taken into account, as they may affect the relationships between the studied variables, guaranteeing the results are accurate and comprehensive. This research is expected to contribute theoretically by improving the literature related to emotional intelligence and the creative climate in Saudi Arabia. It will also provide practical recommendations to leaders and decision-makers on how to improve employee performance by developing emotional intelligence and developing a helpful creative climate. Additionally, it will address the research gap regarding the creative climate's mediating role in linking leaders' emotional intelligence to long-term employee performance, especially as Saudi Arabia experiences substantial changes under Vision 2030. This makes the research valuable both scientifically and practically in the fields of business administration and human resources.

Study Problem

Contemporary organizations are experiencing rapid transformations in the business environment, where the continuous performance of employees has become a key factor in achieving competitive advantage and long-term corporate success. The focus is no longer solely on immediate productivity, but extends to the ability of employees to maintain their efficiency and positive engagement with work over the long term (Yousaf et al., 2024; Wahyuningsin & Hafid, 2025). Because of these accelerating dynamics, the emotional intelligence of leaders has emerged as an important leadership variable that influences the shaping of the work environment and boosts job performance. It refers to a leader's ability to recognize, understand, and manage their own emotions and the emotions of others, which positively impacts team relationships and the quality of outputs (Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Goleman, 1998). Research has confirmed that leaders with high emotional intelligence are better able to motivate their teams, build trust, and encourage creative behaviors, especially within intense environments at which emotional intelligence can compensate for a lack of organizational resources by promoting psychological toughness

along with general well-being (Aloulou, 2025; Eranhikkal & Ahirwar, 2025). Studies have also shown that leaders who can manage their own emotions and understand the emotions of others contribute to creating an increasingly collaborative and constructive work environment, which positively impacts performance sustainability and the achievement of corporate aims (Mersal & Alenezi, 2026).

Furthermore, a creative climate plays a vital part in facilitating sustainable employee performance, showing a set of organizational values and practices that encourage creativity, tolerate risk, and support the generation of new ideas (Kim et al., 2024; Al-Shboul, 2024). Studies have found that a creative climate acts as a mediating mechanism, transmitting the impact of efficient leadership to employees' creative performance (Wahyuningsin & Hafid, 2025). An organizational environment that promotes creativity and provides the required support for employees improves their sense of inclusion and empowerment, which positively impacts their performance and its sustainability. The literature indicates that a creative climate does not arise in a vacuum; rather, it demands deliberate leadership that recognizes the importance of creativity plus innovation and works to create the appropriate conditions for its flourishing. This places the emotional intelligence of leaders at a central position in forming this climate (Wijaya et al., 2024). Leaders who can understand their teams' feelings and needs are best equipped to create an environment that stimulates creativity and innovation. A recent study demonstrated that an organizational creative climate is indirectly linked to employees' creative behaviors through the active organization of goals by managers, thus confirming the important mediating role that managers play in transmitting the impact of the organizational climate to employees' behaviors (Kim et al., 2024). The study also indicated that this relationship is stronger in the context of intense competition, which strengthens the value of understanding the contextual factors that affect the effectiveness of the creative climate within organizations.

Even though people around the world are paying more attention to how leaders' emotional intelligence affects how well they do their jobs, and how the creative atmosphere in a company can play a part in this, there haven't been many studies looking at this in Saudi Arabia (Al-Shboul, 2024). Most of the research done so far has been in the health and education fields. Other important sectors, like semi-governmental organizations that are important to Saudi Arabia's economy, haven't been studied as much (Abuljood et al., 2024; Mersal & Alenezi, 2026). Also, when emotional intelligence has been studied in Saudi Arabia, it often just looked at the differences between men and women in schools, without really exploring how it affects long-term performance in different kinds of workplaces (Mersal & Alenezi, 2026).

One recent study focused on Saudi nursing students. It found that the link connecting emotional intelligence and leadership skills was different for men and women. For men, emotional intelligence was a big factor in how good their leadership skills were. But for women, self-esteem was the most important factor. This shows things are more complicated than they seem, and we need to look into this more in different work settings (Mersal & Alenezi, 2026). The study also showed a significant interaction among emotional intelligence and gender, meaning that emotional intelligence impacts leadership skills differently for men and women. This really draws attention to the need to study these dynamics in actual workplaces, not just in schools.

Research suggests that Saudi companies struggle to help employees perform consistently well. They often have weak systems for recognizing good work, limited training programs, and a culture that doesn't encourage participation and feedback much (Rasool et al., 2025). A study involving managers and employees in semi-governmental organizations in Riyadh found that 75% of employees weren't happy with how things were done regarding recognition, motivation, and training. This is despite evidence showing that an encouraging work environment really helps people do their jobs better (Rasool et al., 2025). The study also indicated that employee engagement is a key factor, explaining about 36.3% of the variation in engagement based on recognition, motivation, and training. Furthermore, the model explained a significant 69.2% of job performance, showing its strong predictive power (Rasool et al., 2025). This evidence indicates that improving these practices might considerably boost performance. However, the current situation shows a big gap between what's being done and what Saudi Vision 2030 aims for. This means we need more research to understand how these factors are connected and to come up with practical solutions.

Another study in the Saudi healthcare sector, looking at managers and employees in primary healthcare centers in Medina, found that leaders' emotional intelligence was lacking in certain areas, especially self-awareness (Abuljood et al., 2024). Even though emotional intelligence was strongly linked to effective leadership ($r = 0.75$, $p = 0.001$), the average scores for self-awareness were low. The study recommended including emotional intelligence training, particularly on self-awareness, to leadership development programs, pointing to a gap in current training. The study also found that most participants (79.8%) showed high leadership effectiveness, particularly in implementing the organization's vision. However, this strong leadership didn't always translate into practices that supported a creative environment and maintained performance (Abuljood et al., 2024). Statistical analysis showed that people with high

emotional intelligence were more likely to be effective leaders than those with lower emotional intelligence, showing how important emotional intelligence is for good leadership (Abuljood et al., 2024).

A deep thorough examination of a Saudi Ministry of Health hospital showed that leadership there faced major issues with how things were structured and the general culture. Problems like power struggles, not having a shared goal, and favoritism were common. These things make it hard to create a workplace where people are rewarded for what they do and are treated fairly, according to Alenezi (2025). This study found that these practices hurt employees' trust, how long they stay with the company, and the organization's ability to learn new things, which goes against what Saudi Vision 2030 wants for good governance. The study also highlighted that favoritism was everywhere, with managers using it to get better results, receive rewards, get good assignments, get promotions they didn't earn, and even decide who worked where without a clear reason (Alenezi, 2025). It's ironic that managers complained about favoritism being used unfairly, yet they used it themselves to get what they thought they deserved. This created a confusing work environment that actually hurt employee performance. The study suggested that clearer governance systems are needed to lessen reliance on unofficial influence and increase accountability, which would correspond to Vision 2030's aims (Alenezi, 2025).

These outcomes match what Rasool and colleagues (2025) discovered: an encouraging workplace with recognition, motivation, and chances for career development is linked to better employee performance. However, there's still a gap between what's happening now and what Vision 2030 hopes to achieve in developing talent and building an economy based on knowledge (Alnajim, 2024; Alharthi et al., 2023). Alnajim's (2024) research showed that leadership training programs formulated with Vision 2030 in mind help address leadership shortages in Saudi Arabia. Yet, the study also pointed out a strong need for leaders to improve their emotional intelligence to truly benefit from these programs. The recommendation was to expand and implement these leadership development programs across the Saudi job market, with a focus on how organizations can support them (Alnajim, 2024). Similarly, Alharthi and others (2023) found that the leadership styles of upcoming Saudi leaders strongly influence their support for Vision 2030. Specifically, ideal influence explained 20% of the variance, and intellectual stimulation explained 28.7%, showing how important these traits are for reaching the Vision's goals. However, the study recommended promoting this ideal leadership style and accepting empowerment by giving employees clear goals and the freedom to achieve them. This suggests current leadership practices have shortcomings that need more investigation (Alharthi et al., 2023).

Previous research hasn't fully explored how a creative atmosphere might play a role in associating leaders' emotional intelligence with consistent employee performance in Saudi Arabia (Al-Shboul, 2024). While we know that a creative environment encourages innovative behavior and boosts performance (Wahyuningsin & Hafid, 2025; Kim et al., 2024), the way it acts as a link between leadership and performance in this region hasn't been studied enough. Wijaya and colleagues (2024) did show that emotional intelligence positively affects creative performance through knowledge sharing (T-statistic = 2.985, $p < 0.01$), but this hasn't been thoroughly tested in the Saudi context. Al-Shboul's (2024) work also indicated that a creative climate acts as a mediator between talent management and the performance of small and medium-sized businesses in the Middle East, showing its importance throughout various enterprise conditions. However, this study didn't directly look at leaders' emotional intelligence. The findings showed that the creative climate fully mediated the relationship between talent management and organizational performance ($\beta = 0.481$, $p < 0.01$), confirming the value of mediating factors in appreciating intricate organizational dynamics (Al-Shboul, 2024). Moreover, Kim and others (2024) found that the organizational creative climate indirectly influences employees' creative actions through managers' goal-setting, and this effect is stronger when competition is high ($\beta = 0.13$, $p = 0.045$), yielding new knowledge of how creative climates impact performance through multiple levels of mediation.

On the other hand, a study in Lebanon by Elia and colleagues (2025) found that job satisfaction, motivation, and leadership significantly improve employee performance in family businesses. An encouraging environment and transformational leadership, they noted, encourage trust, innovation, and ongoing performance improvements, stressing the value of these parts in the Arab world generally. The research indicated that leadership style directly influences job satisfaction, motivation, and performance, with the work environment acting as a moderating factor. This illustrates the importance of examining these dynamics inside Saudi Arabia (Elia et al., 2025). Rasool and his team (2025) also found that employee engagement plays a key mediating role between an encouraging work environment and job performance, with the model showing a substantial 69.2% of the variance in job performance ($R^2 = 0.692$). The study recommended that Saudi companies develop a workplace where employees become appreciated and happy, and offer financial rewards to acknowledge their achievements, pointing to a gap between current practices and desired outcomes (Rasool et al., 2025).

A study by Aldhmadi and others (2025) within the Saudi healthcare sector demonstrated that ethical leadership has a positive impact on employee performance ($\beta = 0.212, p = 0.000$), and that organizational support further strengthens this effect ($\beta = 0.230, p = 0.000$). This influence also differed based on demographic variables including gender, age, experience, and the specific sector. Advanced analysis (MGA) revealed that ethical leadership was more impactful for younger employees ($\beta = 0.671, p < 0.001$) and for men compared to women ($\beta = 0.210, p = 0.048$). Additionally, organizational support was more effective in clinical departments than in support departments ($\beta = 1.207, p < 0.001$) (Aldhmadi et al., 2025). This evidence stresses the need to consider demographic differences when studying the link between leadership traits and job performance in Saudi Arabia, an aspect that previous studies haven't fully addressed concerning emotional intelligence and creative climate.

Therefore, the core issue is the noticeable gap between the acknowledged importance of leaders' emotional intelligence and a creative atmosphere, and the limited research on these connections in Saudi Arabia, especially within semi-governmental organizations. This problem is made worse by weak leadership practices, a lack of creative environments, and declining employee performance in many Saudi companies, even as there's a rising recognition of how these factors are key for achieving Vision 2030's objectives.

Significance of the Study

a) Scientific Significance:

First, this study adds to the conceptual knowledge of the field of leadership and human resource management by putting forward a comprehensive analytical model that includes the emotional intelligence of the leaders as an independent variable, creative climate as a mediating variable, and the ongoing performance of employees as a dependent variable. This is especially relevant to the Saudi organizations' context, which has not been given sufficient research in this area. Most of the previous studies have been done to examine the bilateral relationships and no comprehensive explanatory framework is provided for the complex causal relationships between these variables

Second, this study helps to address a clear gap in the management literature. Most of the studies on emotional intelligence and creative climate have been conducted in the Western or Asian contexts. These relationships have rarely been examined in the Arab and Islamic environment in general, and in the Saudi environment in particular.

This is because of its distinctive cultural and organizational features such as Islamic values, tribal relations, the culture of “wasta” (nepotism), and a clear hierarchy that may cause a difference in the nature of the relationships between the variables compared to other contexts.

Third, this study proposed a new conceptual framework to explain the mechanism of leaders’ emotional intelligence in promoting employees’ sustainable performance. This is done by investigating the mediating role of a creative climate, adding a new dimension to the understanding of how emotional leadership translates into sustainable performance through developing an encouraging and creative work environment. This contributes to the theory of how creative climate is created and its effect on organizational behaviors.

Fourth, this study adds to the development of the conceptual framework of emotional intelligence, as it treats it in a leadership context. However, previous studies in Saudi Arabia focused on emotional intelligence as an individual variable for employees. This study offers a new insight into how leaders’ emotions and feelings can affect the work environment and improve the team performance. It also offers empirical evidence from a different cultural context that supports explanatory theories such as social learning and social exchange, increasing their explanatory power and transferability.

Fifth, this study offers an integrated analytical model that can be utilized in future studies examining the relationships between organizational variables within the Saudi and Arab context, as it can be developed and tested across a range of sectors, therewith improving the research literature thus adding to the progress of scientific research in the field of business administration and human resources in the Kingdom in harmony with the objectives of Vision 2030.

b) Practical Significance

- Giving useful suggestions for leaders and decision makers in Saudi organizations on how to improve sustainable employee performance through strengthening emotional intelligence skills of leaders, especially in the aspects of self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. It also shows that training and development efforts should be directed to those areas that have the greatest impact on performance thus making training expenditures more efficient and getting a greater return on human resource development investment.

- Offering useful consequences for Saudi companies in establishing an environment that facilitates innovation, Creativity, by suggesting that firms can improve employee creativity by focusing on creating encouraging workplace support, allocation of assets, reasonable measured risk-taking, creative valuation of new ideas and flexibility, and employee freedom. Likewise, it pointed out on detrimental behaviors that can inhibit innovation and creativity, such as bureaucratic rules and ineffective communication.
- Supporting decision-makers and training developers in the understanding the important of emotional intelligence and creative climate toward building effective leadership development intervention programs in essential training fields. It also informs the concerned country's HRD policies with the value of the emotional intelligence and the innovative environment importance for Saudi sustainable performance. . It also focusses on what organizational intervention helps the institutional performance to improve its sustainability vis t the Vision 2030.
- Supplying a complete and applicable framework for Saudi organizations from a practical perspective to develop OD to guarantee sustainable performance through development of Emotional Leadership and the creation of a Creative Climate. The framework guides the training and development priorities of leaders and employees to focus on the things that influence sustainable performance the most.
- Contribution to the Guide the nation's human resource development policies in the Kingdom by evidence that Fundin in developing employees' emotional intelligence and promoting creative climate as an effect method to enhancing the sustainable performance of employees. This is consistent with Vision 2030 initiatives to develops a diversified and sustainable knowledge-based economy with selected nationals who are innovative and excel in the workplace.

Study Objectives

Main Objectives:

This research intends to examine the impact of leaders' emotional intelligence on the sustainable performance of employees in Saudi organizations through the mediating role of the creative climate. This is achieved by developing an analytical model that explains the causal relationships between these variables a supplying a theoretical Cal and applied framework that enables Saudi organizations to improve the sustainable performance of their employees in line with the requirements of the Kingdom's Vision 2030. The research also aims to test the validity of the proposed

model in the Saudi context and deliver empirical evidence to support the hypotheses, thus adding to enriching scholarly knowledge in the field of leadership and human resource management within the Arab and Islamic context.

Secondary Objectives:

1. To determine the level of emotional intelligence of leaders in Saudi organizations by measuring its various dimensions, such as self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills, and to identify their strengths and weaknesses.
2. To assess the level of the prevailing creative climate in Saudi organizations by measuring its dimensions, such as organizational support, autonomy, measured risk-taking, free communication, and appreciation of new ideas.
3. To measure the level of sustainable employee performance in Saudi organizations through indicators of productivity, quality, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and positive behaviors.
4. To examine the impact of leaders' emotional intelligence on the creative climate in Saudi organizations and identify the dimensions that most considerably add to its enhancement.
5. To examine the impact of leaders' emotional intelligence on the continuous performance of employees in Saudi organizations and identify the dimensions that most considerably add to its enhancement.
6. To examine the impact of the creative climate on the continuous performance of employees in Saudi organizations and identify the aspects of the creative climate that most notably contribute to boosting performance.
7. To examine the mediating role of the creative climate in the relationship between leaders' emotional intelligence and employees' ongoing performance, to determine its contribution to explaining this relationship, and to provide a greater understanding of the mechanisms by which emotional intelligence enhances continuous performance.

Research Questions

1. What is the level of emotional intelligence of leaders in Saudi organizations in terms of its various dimensions, namely self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills?

2. What is the level of the prevailing creative climate in Saudi organizations in terms of its dimensions, namely organizational support for creativity, autonomy, deliberate risk-taking, frank communication, and appreciation of new ideas?
3. What is the level of employees' sustainable performance in Saudi organizations in terms of its indicators, namely productivity, quality, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and positive work behaviors?
4. What is the nature of the relationship and impact of leaders' emotional intelligence on the creative climate in Saudi organizations, and which dimensions have the greatest influence on developing a creative climate?
5. What is the nature of the relationship and impact of leaders' emotional intelligence on employees' sustainable performance in Saudi organizations, and which dimensions have the greatest influence on boosting sustainable performance?
6. What is the nature of the relationship and impact of a creative climate on the sustainable performance of employees in Saudi organizations? What aspects of a creative climate have the greatest influence regarding enhancing sustainable performance?
7. Does a creative climate play a mediating role in the relationship between the emotional intelligence of leaders and the sustainable performance of employees in Saudi organizations, and to what extent does it contribute to explaining this relationship?

Study Hypotheses

- **Main Hypothesis:** There is a statistically significant effect of the emotional intelligence of leaders on the continuous performance of employees in Saudi organizations through the mediating role of the creative climate at a significance level of ($\alpha \leq 0.05$).
- **Main Null Hypothesis:** There is no statistically significant effect of the emotional intelligence of leaders on the continuous performance of employees in Saudi organizations through the mediating role of the creative climate at a significance level of ($\alpha \leq 0.05$).
- **Sub-hypotheses:**
 - H1: There is a statistically significant impact of leaders' emotional intelligence on the creative climate in Saudi organizations at a significance level of ($\alpha \leq 0.05$).
 - H01: There is no statistically significant impact of leaders' emotional intelligence on the creative climate in

Saudi organizations at a significance level of ($\alpha \leq 0.05$).

H2: There is a statistically significant impact of leaders' emotional intelligence on employees' sustained performance in Saudi organizations at a significance level of ($\alpha \leq 0.05$).

H02: There is no statistically significant impact of leaders' emotional intelligence on employees' sustained performance in Saudi organizations at a significance level of ($\alpha \leq 0.05$).

H3: There is a statistically significant effect of a creative climate on sustained employee performance in Saudi organizations at a significance level of ($\alpha \leq 0.05$).

H03: There is no statistically significant effect of a creative climate on sustained employee performance in Saudi organizations at a significance level of ($\alpha \leq 0.05$).

H4: A creative climate plays a mediating role in the relationship between the emotional intelligence of leaders and sustained employee performance in Saudi organizations at a significance level of ($\alpha \leq 0.05$).

H04: A creative climate does not play a mediating role in the relationship between the emotional intelligence of leaders and sustained employee performance in Saudi organizations at a significance level of ($\alpha \leq 0.05$).

Literature Review

1) Studies Addressing the Emotional Intelligence of Leaders

- a) Salovey, P., & Mayer, J. D. (1990). Emotional Intelligence. *Imagination, Cognition and Personality*, 9(3), 185-211

This pioneering study aimed to present a conceptual framework for emotional intelligence as a set of skills that contribute to the accurate assessment and expression of emotions in oneself and others, the effective regulation of emotions, and the use of emotions to motivate planning and achievement in life. The study adopted a basic theoretical methodology based on reviewing and analyzing previous literature in the fields of social intelligence, emotion, and cognitive psychology to introduce a comprehensive conceptual model of emotional intelligence. The study concluded that emotional intelligence encompasses three interconnected mental processes: evaluating and expressing emotions in oneself and others, regulating emotions in oneself and others, and using emotions for adjustment and problem solving. The results also indicated that individuals differ in their abilities to process emotional information, and that these abilities contribute to psychological mental health and social adjustment.

Furthermore, the study found that emotional intelligence can be learned and developed, rather than being a fixed trait. The significance of this study for the current research consists in its basic role in establishing the concept of emotional intelligence, which the research adopts as an independent variable. It provides the essential conceptual framework for defining the dimensions of emotional intelligence to be measured and supports the hypothesis that emotional intelligence can be developed in leaders to improve their leadership performance. However, this study was limited to the theoretical aspect without supplying empirical evidence, a point that subsequent studies have tried to address.

b) Goleman, D. (1998) *Working with Emotional Intelligence*. Bantam Books, New York

This study describes a performance-based model regarding emotional intelligence in the workplace. It aims to examine the relationship among emotional intelligence and organizational effectiveness and to identify the emotional competencies that characterize outstanding performance within various professions and leadership positions. The study relied on a systematic review of over 500 competency models from hundreds of global organizations, analyzing data on the competencies that distinguish outstanding performance from average performance throughout different sectors and jobs, with a focus on competencies related to emotional intelligence. The study concluded that emotional competencies account for twice as many as technical and cognitive skills combined in explaining outstanding job performance, and that their proportion increases in senior leadership positions, reaching up to 85% of the distinguishing competencies of leaders. It also identified four key areas of emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management, and provided a functional framework for developing these skills in the workplace. This study adds to current research by providing a pragmatic framework for developing emotional intelligence in leaders in Saudi organizations, supporting the hypothesis that emotional intelligence is important for improving job performance, and helping to define the dimensions of emotional intelligence to be measured. While this study provided strong evidence for the value pertaining to emotional intelligence in the workplace, it relied on secondary data examination from diverse competency models and did not focus on a specific cultural context. This represents a gap that subsequent studies have tried to address by applying the model in different contexts.

c) Abuljood MA, Almatrafi M, Alsolami A, Aloufi Y, Abualkhair A. *Evaluating Leadership Dynamics: A Comprehensive Cross-Sectional Study of Madinah's Primary Healthcare Centers*. Cureus. 2024 Aug 19;16(8):e67199. doi: 10.7759/cureus.67199. PMID: 39295700; PMCID: PMC11409939

In the Saudi context, Abuljood and colleagues conducted this study, which aimed to evaluate leadership effectiveness in primary healthcare centers in Madinah, examine the relationship between leadership styles and affective intelligence and their impact on leadership effectiveness, and identify the factors influencing leadership effectiveness in the Saudi healthcare context. The study used a cross-sectional methodology, including 89 directors and deputy directors from 48 primary healthcare centers in Madinah. A comprehensive questionnaire was used to assess leadership effectiveness, emotional intelligence, and sociodemographic variables. Data were analyzed using SPSS software, employing chi-squared tests, t-tests, analysis of variance (ANOVA), Pearson correlation, and two-way logistic regression. The results showed a high level of leadership effectiveness among 79.8% of participants, and a strong positive correlation among emotional intelligence and leadership effectiveness ($r = 0.75$, $p = 0.001$). The democratic leadership method was the most preferred, and self-awareness was identified as a key area in need of improvement among medical leaders. Regression analysis showed that participants with high emotional intelligence were 1.13 times more likely to demonstrate effective leadership compared to their counterparts with lower emotional intelligence. The significance of this study resides in its provision of important evidence for the relationship among emotional intelligence and leadership effectiveness in the Saudi context. It supports the importance of developing emotional intelligence of leaders in Saudi organizations and contributes to identifying the gap related to weak self-awareness as a dimension of emotional intelligence that needs development. However, this study was limited to the healthcare sector, which restricts the generalizability of its findings to other sectors, such as the semi-governmental organizations included in the current research.

d) Mersal FA, Alenezi IN. Gender-specific pathways to leadership competency: the role of emotional intelligence and self-esteem among Saudi nursing students. Front Med (Lausanne). 2026

In a more in-depth study of gender differences, Marsal and Al-Anzi conducted this research, which aimed to investigate how emotional intelligence and self-esteem influence leadership competence among Saudi nursing students, explore gender-specific pathways in these relationships, and deliver knowledge of gender differences in the mechanisms for developing leadership competence. The study adopted a comparative cross-sectional methodology applying 260 male and female nursing students from Northern Border University. It utilized the Leadership Competence Scale (40 items, $\alpha = 0.91$), the Wong-Lo Emotional Intelligence Scale (16 items, $\alpha = 0.88$), and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (10 items, $\alpha = 0.82$). Data were analyzed using the Mann-Whitney U test and

multiple hierarchical regression with analysis of adjustment. The results showed that males scored higher leadership efficiency than females (139.33 vs. 94.89, $p < 0.001$, $d = 1.42$), while females scored higher emotional intelligence (95.39 vs. 67.45, $p < 0.001$, $d = -1.14$). The results showed different pathways according to gender. For males, emotional intelligence was an indicator of leadership efficiency ($\beta = 0.28$, $p = 0.004$), while self-esteem was the strongest indicator for females ($\beta = 0.293$, $p = 0.001$), with a significant interaction among emotional intelligence as well as gender ($\beta = -0.37$, $p = 0.020$). This study is important for the current research because it provides evidence of the varying impact of emotional intelligence on leadership competence based on gender in the Saudi context. It supports the importance of examining demographic differences in the relationship among emotional intelligence and leadership performance and contributes to identifying the gap in research tackling emotional intelligence within a leadership context in the Kingdom. However, this study focused on the schooling context (nursing students), which differs from the organizational context (employees in semi-governmental organizations) targeted by the current research.

e) Alenezi IN. Leadership Experiences of Nurse Managers in a Saudi Ministry of Health Hospital: A Focused Ethnographic Study. J Nurs Manag. 2025 Dec 3;2025:8033761. doi: 10.1155/jonm/8033761. PMID: 41384222; PMCID: PMC12695406

In a different qualitative context, Al-Anzi conducted the ethnographic study, which aimed to explore the perceptions and experiences of nursing managers regarding leadership and its development in a Saudi Ministry of Health hospital. The study sought to understand how managers acquire and apply leadership skills in the workplace and to identify the factors influencing leadership practices within the Saudi healthcare environment. The study used a focused ethnographic methodology using frame analysis and included periodic visits over eight months, workplace observations, continuing medical education, document review, and semi-structured and informal interviews with 21 nursing managers. The findings showed four key themes: power imbalances, lack of common vision, workplace rituals and behaviors, and the need for learning. The study demonstrated a power imbalance linked to hierarchical management structures and a leadership culture influenced by the practice of "wasta," a form of nepotism. Managers used wasta to boost performance, obtain rewards, obtain advantageous assignments, and gain promotions, exhibiting a contradiction in their stance, as they simultaneously criticized and employed it. This study adds to current research by delivering a greater comprehension of the cultural and organizational factors influencing

leadership practices in the Saudi context and stresses the importance of studying leadership practices in the Saudi context.

The study considers the role of organizational climate and cultural components in improving leadership performance, and identifies gaps related to weak current leadership practices and the impact of nepotism on organizational performance in the Kingdom. While this study delivers valuable qualitative results, it is limited to a single hospital, thus restricting the generalizability of its findings. Furthermore, it focuses on descriptive analysis without testing statistical relationships between variables.

By comparing previous studies that dealt with the emotional intelligence of leaders, we note that they all agree on the existence of a positive relationship among emotional intelligence and leadership effectiveness and job performance (Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Goleman, 1998; Abuljood et al., 2024; Mersal & Alenezi, 2026), but they differed in the methodologies used, as some of them relied on the theoretical approach (Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Goleman, 1998), and others on the quantitative approach (Abuljood et al., 2024; Mersal & Alenezi, 2026), while Alenezi's study (Alenezi, 2025) used the qualitative (ethnographic) approach. These studies also differed in the contexts in which they were conducted. Some were applied in Western contexts (Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Goleman, 1998), while others were applied in the Saudi context (Abuljood et al., 2024; Mersal & Alenezi, 2026; Alenezi, 2025). However, they mostly focused on the health or education sectors, neglecting semi-governmental organizations. Furthermore, most previous studies focused on emotional intelligence as an individual variable among employees, while rarely examining the emotional intelligence of leaders and its impact on their subordinates (Mersal & Alenezi, 2026). This represents a gap that the current research attempts to address by examining the emotional intelligence of leaders and its impact on the continuous performance of employees in Saudi semi-governmental organizations.

2) Studies that addressed the creative climate

- a) Al-Shboul MA (2026), "SMEs' maneuvering: efficacy of smart talent management, adoption innovation climate and motivational culture as enablers for improved SMEs' performance – an empirical study in the Middle East region". International Journal of Innovation Science, Vol. 18 No. 1 pp. 38–64, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJIS-06-2023-0135>**

This study is significant in the field of innovation climate. It aimed to examine the impact of smart talent management on the performance of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) through the mediating function of innovation climate, and to verify the modulating power of motivational culture in the relationship between smart

talent management and organizational performance in the Middle East region. The study used a quantitative approach, utilizing an electronic questionnaire to collect data from SMEs registered with chambers of commerce and industry in Jordan, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia. The study sample comprised 163 enterprises out of a total of 568, and the data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM-PLS3). The results showed no statistically significant effect of smart talent management on the performance of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) ($p = 0.637$). However, smart talent management had a positive effect on the adoption of a creative climate ($p = 0.000$), a positive effect of a creative climate on organizational performance ($p = 0.014$), a complete mediating role of a creative climate in the relationship between smart talent management and organizational performance ($p = 0.000$), and an effect of modifying the motivational culture on the relationship between smart talent management and organizational performance ($p = 0.039$). The significance of this study consists in its provision of empirical evidence for the role of a creative climate as a mediating variable in the relationship between talent management practices and organizational performance in the Middle East region, and it supports the hypothesis that a creative climate is important in improving organizational performance. However, the study did not directly address the role regarding emotional intelligence in leaders, which represents a gap that the current research intends to address.

b) Kang, Jae Hyeung and Matusik, James and Kim, Tae-Yeol and Phillips, Mark, Interactive Effects of Multiple Organizational Climates on Employee Innovative Behavior in Entrepreneurial Firms: A Cross-Level Investigation (June 20, 2017). Journal of Business Venturing, Vol. 31, 2016, Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2989489>

In this context, Kim and colleagues conducted this study, which aimed to investigate how organizational innovative climate affects employees' creative behaviors, the role of managers' proactive goal regulation as an intervening mechanism, and the impact of the external environment (competitive intensity and environmental uncertainty) as moderating variables in this relationship. The study used a three-level, multi-source, multi-period design with a sample of 93 organizations, 269 work groups, and 1146 employees. Multilevel analysis was performed using Plus 8.3 software, and indirect effects were tested by Monte Carlo simulation. The results showed that organizational creative climate is indirectly associated with employees' creative behaviors through managers' proactive goal setting (indirect effect = 0.08, 95% CI = [0.02, 0.16]). The intensity of competition modifies this relationship ($\beta = 0.13$, $p = 0.045$), with the relationship being stronger under intense competition. Environmental uncertainty did not show a

significant moderating effect ($\beta = -0.08$, $p = 0.120$). Further review showed a significant triple effect of creative climate, competitive intensity, and environmental uncertainty ($\beta = -0.10$, $p = 0.002$). This study adds to current research by supplying a comprehensive conceptual framework that explains how organizational creative climate influences employees' creative behaviors through multi-level mediating mechanisms. It supports the hypothesis that creative climate is important for increasing performance. However, the study was conducted in a Chinese context, which limits the generalizability of its findings to the Saudi context, which differs in its cultural as well as organizational characteristics.

- c) **Wijaya, A., Tannia, T., Andrian, R., Vanessa Keylita Sutarna, Antariksa Christi, Y. ., & Novita, N. (2024). The Influence of Transformational Leadership, Emotional Intelligence on Innovative Performance Behaviour Mediated by Knowledge Sharing in Employee Working in Digital Sector . Dinasti International Journal of Economics, Finance & Accounting, 5(3), 1337–1349. <https://doi.org/10.38035/dijefa.v5i3.2942>.**

Wijaya and colleagues conducted this study to explore the impact of transformational leadership and affective intelligence on innovative performance behavior mediated by knowledge transfer among employees working in the digital sector. The study used a quantitative approach using purposive sampling. The sample consisted of 185 employees from the digital sector with at least five years of experience. Data were collected using a questionnaire administered via Google Forms and analyzed using SMARTPLS software. The results showed that emotional intelligence positively affects creative performance behavior (T-statistic = 2.151, $p = 0.02$) and knowledge sharing (T-statistic = 2.985, $p = 0.01$), and that knowledge sharing positively affects creative performance behavior (T-statistic = 2.109, $p = 0.03$). Knowledge sharing also plays a mediating role in the relationship among emotional intelligence abilities as well as creative performance behavior (T-statistic = 2.547, $p = 0.002$), as well as in the relationship between transformational leadership and creative performance behavior (T-statistic = 2.689, $p = 0.001$). The significance of this study consists in its provision of empirical evidence for the role of emotional intelligence with respect to encouraging creative behavior through mediating mechanisms. It supports the hypothesis that emotional intelligence is vital for boosting creative performance. However, the study was conducted in the digital sector, which differs from the context targeted by the current research (semi-governmental

organizations). Furthermore, it focused on knowledge sharing as a mediating variable rather than the creative climate, a gap that the current research intends to address.

Comparing previous studies on the creative climate, we observe that they agree on its important role in improving organizational performance (Al-Shboul, 2024; Kim et al., 2024; Wijaya et al., 2024). However, they differed in the mediating variables they addressed. Some focused on active goal setting (Kim et al., 2024), others on knowledge sharing (Wijaya et al., 2024), while Al-Shboul's study (Al-Shboul, 2024) focused on the creative climate itself as the mediating variable. These studies also differed in their contexts: Kim's study was conducted in China, Weijia's in the digital sector, and Al-Shaboul's in the Middle East, specifically Saudi Arabia. However, none of these studies addressed the relationship between leaders' emotional intelligence, creative climate, and continuous performance within an integrated model—a gap that the current research intends to fill.

3) Studies Addressing Sustainable Employee Performance

- a) **Rasool, S. F., Mohelska, H., Rehman, F. U., Raza, H., & Asghar, M. Z. (2025). Exploring the Nexus Between a Supportive Workplace Environment, Employee Engagement, and Employee Performance in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. *Administrative Sciences*, 15(6), 230. <https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci15060230>**

Rasool and colleagues conducted this study, which aimed to examine the relationship between an encouraging work environment (with its dimensions: job recognition, job motivation, and professional development) and employee job performance, focusing on the mediating role of employee engagement in this relationship within the context of Saudi semi-governmental organizations. The study used a quantitative approach, using a questionnaire to collect data from 349 managers and employees in semi-governmental organizations in Riyadh. The data were analyzed using PLS-SEM software. The results showed a positive relationship between an encouraging work environment (job recognition, job motivation, and professional development) and job performance. They also showed that employee engagement plays a mediating role in this relationship, with the coefficient of explanation (R^2) for employee engagement being 0.363 and for job performance 0.692. The study demonstrated the strongest effect of employee engagement on job performance ($\beta = 0.681$, $t = 19.993$, $p < 0.001$). The significance of this study consists in its provision of important evidence for the relationship between an encouraging work environment and job performance in the Saudi context, and in supporting the importance of mediating variables (such as employee engagement) in improving performance. However, it concentrated on the favorable work environment as an

independent variable rather than the emotional intelligence of leaders, and it addressed job performance in general rather than ongoing performance specifically, which represents a gap that the current research attempts to address.

- b) Aldhmadi, B. K., Kumar, R., Perera, B., & Algarni, M. A. (2025). **Leading with Integrity: Impact of Ethical Leadership on Performance of Healthcare Professionals in Saudi Arabia.** *Healthcare*, 13(24), 3205. <https://doi.org/10.3390/healthcare13243205>

In another study in the Saudi context, Al-Dahmadi and colleagues conducted research aimed at investigating the impact of ethical leadership on employee performance in the Saudi healthcare sector. The study also examined the role of organizational support in immediately shaping performance and modifying the relationship between ethical leadership and performance, while analyzing differences among various demographic groups. The study used a cross-sectional methodology, utilizing 312 responses from physicians, nurses, and administrators in Saudi government healthcare units. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was used via Smart-PLS 4, and multiple group analysis (MGA) was used to examine differences among subgroups based on gender, age, marital status, experience, and sectoral affiliation. The results confirmed a positive effect of ethical leadership on employee performance ($\beta = 0.212, p = 0.000$), a positive effect of organizational support on performance ($\beta = 0.212, p = 0.000$), and a reinforcing role of organizational support in the relationship between ethical leadership and performance ($\beta = 0.230, p = 0.000$). Multigroup analysis showed differences in effects according to demographic groups, with an ethical leadership being more effective for younger employees ($\beta = 0.671, p < 0.001$) and for males compared to females ($\beta = 0.210, p = 0.048$), and organizational support being more effective in clinical departments compared to support departments ($\beta = 1.207, p < 0.001$). This study benefits the current research by providing important evidence of the relationship between leadership and job performance in the Saudi context. It supports the importance of organizational support as a variable that improves the relationship between leadership and performance. It also helps to identifying the gap related to the scarcity of studies that have addressed demographic differences in the relationships between leadership variables and performance, although they have focused on ethical leadership rather than emotional intelligence, and on the health sector rather than semi-governmental organizations.

- c) Elia, J., Sawaya, C., Serghani, J., & Karam, M. (2025). **Exploring the impact of HRM factors on the sustainable performance of Lebanese family business employees.** *MENA Family Business Research*

Conference.

https://fount.aucegypt.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1197&context=audiovisual_faculty_work

In this research Elia and associates, a team of researchers based at Arab context, evaluated the direct effect of leadership style motivation compensation, job satisfaction, and work environment on employee performance. They also explored the idea that work environment can alter the effect of leadership and job satisfaction on performance at Lebanese family businesses in the Arab region. This research study is a cross-sectional and inferential one. Data were collected using an organized questionnaire from 511 Lebanese family business employees. The data was analyzed using SmartPLS (4.1.1.2) software. Validity and reliability, path coefficients and bootstrapping analysis were used in the data analyses. Results showed that job satisfaction, motivation and leadership have a significant positive influence on enhancing employees' performance at Lebanese family businesses. In addition, transformational leadership and helpful environment build trust, promote innovation, and help to achieve ongoing performance results. Job satisfaction ($= 0.362, p < 0.05$), motivation ($= 0.283, p < 0.01$), and leadership ($= 0.212, p < 0.05$) had a significant positive effect on performance. It also appeared that, after having taken care of leadership style and job satisfaction, performance of the employee depends on a variety and type of work environment. This study is important since it offers evidence from Arab context on the role of leadership, motivation, and work environment in improving employee performance. Our results support the idea that leadership is essential to long-term performance. Still, this work was carried out in the setting of Lebanese context, which might be different from Saudi one, so the findings cannot be generalized. Also, this work was limited to family businesses while semi-governmental organizations were excluded.

One thing that makes this research stand out rests in its focus on family businesses rather than semi-state organizations. An overview of earlier studies on continuous performance of employees indicates agreement with findings that there was a positive correlation between leadership, work environment, and job performance (Rasool et al. 2025; Aldhmadi et al. 2025; Elia et al. 2025). Yet, they varied greatly in the variables they identified as independent. Some were interested in encouraging work environment (Rasool et al. 2025), other ones were looking for leaders with moral mindset (Aldhmadi et al. 2025), and those others generally considered different kinds of leadership (Elia et al. 2025). And, these studies differed from one another in mediating and moderating variables. Rasool's paper looked at employee engagement as a mediator, Aldhmadi's paper considered organizational support

as a moderator, and Elia's paper investigated the work environment as a moderator. Still, none of the papers dealt with leaders' emotional intelligence as an independent variable, or with the creative climate as an intervening variable, in a unified model that depicts the relationships among them resulting in ongoing performance, which is essentially the core research gap the present study intends to bridge.

Research Gap

The research gap that the current research seeks to address can be identified in the following points:

- 1) There is research on emotional intelligence (Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Goleman, 1998; Abuljood et al. 2024; Mersal & Alenezi, 2026), creative climate (Al-Shboul, 2024; Kim et al. 2024; Wijaya et al. 2024), and sustainable performance (Rasool et al. 2025; Aldhmadi et al. 2025; Elia et al. 2025) but generally these are studied separately and the interaction of the three with cause and effect, Worth noting the Saudi case, isn't studied. So, to find the answer to the mediating effect of the creative climate between leaders' emotional intelligence and employees' sustainable performance is a research gap.
- 2) With limited exception, many studies reviewed have concentrated on the medical field (Abuljood et al. 2024; Alenezi, 2025; Aldhmadi et al. 2025), education (Mersal & Alenezi, 2026), or businesses owned by individuals (Rasool et al. 2025; Al-Shboul, 2024), yet semi-governmental institutions, which form a vital portion of the Saudi Arabian economy and are going through major developments related to the Vision 2030, are not given much consideration at all, in the study of this article.
- 3) The methodologies used in previous studies varied among theoretical, quantitative, and qualitative approaches. However, most quantitative studies relied on limited samples or samples from a single sector, thus limiting the generalizability of the findings. Furthermore, studies addressing the Saudi context have mainly relied on quantitative methods, with few affording a deep comprehension of the cultural and organizational context, with the exception of Alenezi's study (2025), which employed an ethnographic approach.

- 4) Most previous studies have focused on short-term job performance, while rarely addressing sustainable performance, which includes sustaining high-performance levels and adapting to changes. This is a key dimension in the context of the economic and organizational transformations taking place in the Kingdom.
- 5) Previous studies have indicated the importance of demographic differences in the relationships between organizational variables (Mersal & Alenezi, 2026; Aldhmadi et al., 2025). However, these differences have not been adequately studied in the context of the relationship between leaders' emotional intelligence, the creative climate, and sustainable performance

Theoretical Framework of the Study

This study is relied Mostly on the concepts of leaders, organizational psychologists, and organizational behavior to develop and support their understanding of how leaders' emotional quotient and creative work environment might aid continuous performance at work. The researchers chose those particular theories from the point of view of the events of this research and the suitability of these theories with the context of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The combination of these theories gives an overall picture of how leaders' emotional intelligence leads to a better understanding of employees that in turn results in a constructive working environment where people get creative ideas implemented and because of this, they stay productive for longer time. Emotional Intelligence Theory, Social Learning Theory, Social Exchange Theory, and Creative Organizational Climate Theory, these four major theories are underlying the study. The authors have given each explanation below:

1) Emotional Intelligence Theory

The emotional intelligence theory developed by Salovey and Mayer (1990) is the primary conceptual framework upon which this study is based in its examination of the emotional intelligence variable of leaders. This theory is based on the idea that intelligence is not limited to traditional cognitive abilities, but extends to include an individual's capacity to perceive, understand, and manage their own emotions and the emotions of others, and to use this information to guide thought and behavior. Salovey and Mayer identified three main components of emotional intelligence: evaluating and expressing emotions in oneself and others, regulating emotions in oneself

and others, and using emotions for coping and choices. Goleman (1998) expanded this theory to include five main components: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills, and applied it to the workplace. In this study, the theory of emotional intelligence is applied by measuring the dimensions of emotional intelligence of leaders in Saudi organizations (self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills) and examining the effect of these dimensions on both the creative climate and the continuous performance of employees. The study assumes that leaders with high emotional intelligence are more able to understand the emotional and mental needs of their subordinates, and thus create a work environment that supports creativity and encourages sustainable employee performance. This is consistent with what previous studies have confirmed regarding the existence of a positive relationship among emotional intelligence as well as leadership effectiveness in the Saudi context (Abuljood et al., 2024; Mersal & Alenezi, 2026).

2) Social Learning Theory

Social learning theory, developed by Bandura (1986), is a significant theory explaining how leaders' behavior influences the behavior of their subordinates in organizations. This theory is based on the idea that individuals learn by observing and imitating the behavior of others, especially when those others are in positions of power, authority, or serve as positive role models. According to this theory, employees learn from their leaders through observation and imitation, acquiring the norms, behaviors, and values that leaders demonstrate in their routine interactions. In this study, social learning theory is applied to explain how leaders' emotional intelligence influences the formation of a creative climate and the continuous performance of employees. Leaders who demonstrate high levels with emotional intelligence in their interactions with subordinates, by exhibiting empathy, self-awareness, self-regulation, and social skills, serve as role models for employees who learn from and emulate their leaders' behaviors. Therefore, when employees see their leaders' handling situations with high emotional involvement and self-awareness, they tend to adopt these behaviors in their interactions with colleagues and in their job performance, enhancing a more creative climate while achieving sustainable performance. This is supported by the study by Kim et al. (2024), which showed that an organizational creative climate is indirectly linked to employees' creative behaviors through the progressive organization of goals by managers, thus stressing the role of leaders as role models in encouraging creative behaviors among employees.

3) Social Exchange Theory.

Social exchange theory, a theory mainly developed by Blau (1964), is one of the essential theories which describes the nature of individual-level relationships inside organizations. The theory, as presented, is based upon how people interact with each other and the core that social relationships are the result of the giving and taking of benefits. People in these relationships, for example, will give effort, time, and skills if they feel they will get something for it. At work, this theory suggests that the employees think that leaders and the organization should be the ones to give support, recognition, and development opportunities in exchange to the employees' creativity, commitment, and effort. So, if a subordinate has the feeling that the boss cares about one aspect, appreciates the other, and supports in development, he feels he can contribute a bigger effort, support the company objectives, and deliver excellent, continuous performances. This paper uses social exchange theory to explain the relationship between a leaders' ability to manage emotions and employees' ability to sustain performance via a creative environment. If an emotionally-intelligent leader does not just talk about but also actually empathizes, demonstrates concern, and understand the employees' needs, it is likely the latter will feel their employer is a fair one and so, they will be loyal and perform creative work for quite a while. Rasool et al. (2025), in their study, stated that a caring work culture that makes employees feel engaged will also have them perform at higher levels. And, it is in fact supported by Aldhmadi et al. (2025) that when organizations support the workers, employees' response to the leadership will be positive as well as their job performance. These two are examples of the social exchange that takes place in an industrial setting which from social exchange theory, promotes performance level.

4) The Organizational Innovative Climate Theory

This study's creative climate as the moderating variable is grounded on the conceptual basis of Organizational Innovative Climate theory. Originated and extended by various researchers in organization and creativity studies (Schneider, 1983; Amabile et al. 1996; Scott&Bruce, 1994), this theory postulates that organizational climate is a key determinant to either promote or prevent creativity and innovation at work. The shared perception among members of an organization on the degree to which the policies, practices, and procedures of the organization encourage/recognize creativity is what forms the creative climate. The theory says that creative climate is multi-dimensional; it includes: Organizational support for creativity: Resources time appreciation for new creativity Autonomy: Freedom of work Calculated risk: Encouragement and acceptance of failure Unrestricted communication: Open exchange among the members of the organization Appreciation of new ideas: Recognition of creative and innovative ideas This study, in measuring these indicators in Saudi organizations and in studying

their role as mediators/antecedents of the relationship between leaders' emotional intelligence and employees ongoing performance, is putting into practice the creative organizational climate theory. The research is suggesting that leaders possessing emotional intelligence (EI) are, through various aspects that this EI comprises (like self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and social skills), likely to create a setting where employees become safe, are not afraid to express themselves in creative ways, are supported with their creative ideas and because of this, continue to generate their ideas and deliver on a good performance. Al_Shbalus (2024) study showed that creative climate mediates the link between management of talent and organizational performance on Mid-East companies as well as the study of Kim et al (2024) that revealed the effect of creative climate on employees' creative behaviors through multi-level mediating mechanisms.

Research Methodology and Methods

First: Research Type and Methodology

- This is a study that aims to find out causal relationships by explanatory research. In this context, the cause-and-effect relationship is determined between the emotional intelligence of the leaders (independent variable), the creative climate (mediating factor), and the sustained employee performance (dependent variable). An experimental research method of this nature is the quantitative research method. This form of quantitative research enables us to measure variables and statistically study relationships between them, which allows us to hypothesize, test and then generalize our findings. Objectivity and dependability in data collection and analysis are other key characteristics of this approach since it employs well-standardized tools and techniques that guarantee the reliability of the results and the reproducibility of the research in different settings. This method is quite suitable for the kind of research we are pursuing because this is research that aims to find out causal relationships which are very specific. The way of doing this is to measure these factors with measures of high reliability, the data obtained from assessments of these factors should then be analyzed using proper statistical methods (i.e. regression and structural equation modeling), and such analyses will enable us to test the direct effects as well as the indirect effects between these variables.

Second: Research Plan and Implementation Steps

The current research plan includes a set of sequential stages and procedures that ensure the efficient and effective achievement of the study's objectives. This plan is still being implemented according to the established timeline. These Phase can be outlined as follows:

Phase One: Theoretical and Exploratory Stage. This includes reviewing the literature and previous studies related to the emotional intelligence of leaders, the creative climate, and sustainable employee performance. It also includes defining the conceptual framework for the study, which includes the theory of emotional intelligence, social learning theory, social exchange theory, and the theory of creative organizational climate. Furthermore, it includes formulating the research problem, questions, and hypotheses based on the research gaps identified in previous studies.

Phase Two: Method. During this phase the sample and target population of the study is selected. The researcher develops a questionnaire that is guided by the scales used in earlier studies and then checks the validity and dependability of the tool by asking an expert panel consisting of persons who specialize in human resources management and business administration to do a review.

Phase Three: Field Data Collection. It involves choosing the research participants by stratified random sampling method so that different employee groups in Saudi semi-governmental organizations are all well represented per job level (managers supervisors' employees), gender (male and female), and sector. The survey is given to the selected participants via the internet (Google Forms) or on paper, according to the participants' ease of accessing to the methods. The team keeps control of data collection period for making sure of an acceptable rate of respondents (minimum 70%).

Phase Four: Data Analysis This stage comprises entering and revising the gathered questionnaire data for correctness. Suitable statistical software (SPSS AMOS SmartPLS) will be used to carry out the necessary analysis. The accuracy and consistency of the items used will be checked through Cronbach's alpha coefficient computation and mean and standard deviation, correlation matrix, multiple regression analysis, path analysis, and structural equation modeling hypotheses testing as well as mediation testing of creative climate through Bootstrapping or Sobel testing.

Phase Five: Interpretation and Discussion. This stage is all about making sense of the data through the lens of the theory and earlier research. You talk about the results, comparing them with those of others to point out where you agree and where you differ and why. You come up with conclusions, give suggestions that management in Saudi

companies can use, you clarify what part of things this study focused on, and you propose what areas could be explored in a future work.

Phase Six: the final writing of the report. This involves drafting the thesis in line with the designated format (introduction - literature survey - conceptual framework - research design - results, their interpretation and evaluation - conclusion, and recommendations), checking and fixing language and science-related inconsistencies at all stages of report preparation, and delivering the report including different parts of its final version.

Study Instruments

1. **Questionnaire:** Consisting of:

- **Part One:** Demographic Data, including (gender, age, educational level, years of experience, job title, sector of the organization, and size of the organization). These questions were designed as multiple-choice to facilitate responses and preserve data collection accuracy.
- **Part Two:** The Five-Point Likert Scale (from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) to measure:
 - **First:** The Emotional Intelligence of Leaders (16 items), measured using the Wong & Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (Wong & Law, 2002) in its modified form, distributed across four dimensions:
 1. Self-Emotion Appraisal, which includes 4 items such as "I have a good ability to understand the reasons for my feelings most of the time".
 2. Others-Emotion Appraisal, which includes 4 items such as "I have a good ability to understand the feelings of others through their facial expressions".
 3. Use of Emotion, which includes 4 items such as "I always set goals for myself and make an effort to achieve them, which motivates me to work".
 4. Regulation of Emotion, which includes 4 items such as "I am able to control my emotions so that I can deal with difficulties rationally."
 - **Second:** The Creative Climate (25 items), measured using the Creative Climate Scale developed by Scott & Bruce (1994) and updated in subsequent studies (Kang et al., 2016; Kim et al., 2024). It comprises five dimensions:

1. Organizational Support for Creativity (5 items) , such as "The organization encourages employees to contribute new and innovative ideas".
 2. Autonomy (5 items), such as "Employees have sufficient freedom to choose how they perform their work".
 3. Calculated Risk-Taking (5 items), such as "The organization encourages employees to experiment with new methods of working, even if they are risky".
 4. Open Communication (5 items), such as "Ideas and information are freely exchanged between employees and management within the organization".
 5. Recognition of New Ideas (5 items), such as "The organization rewards employees who contribute creative ideas."
- **Third:** Sustainable Employee Performance (20 items), measured using a scale developed in previous studies (Rasool et al., 2025; Aldhmadi et al., 2025), is distributed across five dimensions:
 1. Productivity (4 items), such as "I maintain a consistently high level of productivity at work".
 2. Quality (4 items), such as "I strive to deliver high-quality work in all the tasks I perform".
 3. Organizational Commitment (4 items), such as "I feel loyal to the organization and proud to be a part of it".
 4. Job Satisfaction (4 items), such as "I am satisfied with my current job within the organization".
 5. Positive Behaviors (4 items), such as "I go the extra mile at work beyond the job requirements".

2. Instrument Validity and Reliability:

- First, a group of experts were consulted to validate the content. Initially, the questionnaire was presented to the panel for review which consisted of eight specialists in business administration, human resources and statistics. These experts were university teachers from Saudi Arabia and their judgment was used to check whether the items were appropriate to measure what they were

supposed to, to determine the level of language clarity, to ascertain that the items sufficiently covered the dimensions of the study variables and that the Likert scale was a fitting one to the situation. So, suggestions from the reviewers were made and some were even implemented such as wording, removal, and insertion of items. And, for construct validity, a test, exploratory factor analysis was run which, at the same time, would confirm the arrangement of the items by the dimensions of concepts in theory. Any item loading on the respective factor of at least 0.40 was considered to be valid whereas the ones below that loading threshold (i.e. <0.40) were treated as invalid and so, removed.

- Second, the researchers calculated Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient to validate the reliability and internal consistency of the measure. At first, they computed these coefficients for each scale separately and the sub-dimensions of each scale. In line with Hair et al. (2014), researchers accepted coefficients of 0.70 and higher as an indication of the tool's reliability, since the minimum acceptable reliability was 0.70. Based on these criteria, Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient yielded relatively high levels for reliability coefficient like this: for Emotional Intelligence scale the coefficient was ($= 0.88$), for Creative Climate scale, the coefficient was ($= 0.89$), for Sustainable Performance scale, the coefficient was ($= 0.91$). Obviously, these values indicate a higher reliability and internal consistency of the instrument since all of them are above the minimum standard (0.70). And, reliability was assessed through Split-Half method whereby half of the items in each scale were correlated with the other half. In fact, the values of the Split-Half Reliability are pretty high (0.85) for Emotional Intelligence scale, (0.87) for Creative Climate scale, and (0.89) for Sustainable Performance scale, showing the tool's reliability and consistency.

Study Scope

1) Human Scope:

- Study Population: Our research population is all the employees working in Saudi semi-governmental agencies located in the cities of Riyadh, Jeddah, and Dammam. These three cities are major economic hub of the country besides hosting a good number of semi-governmental agencies which are currently being restructured under the Vision 2030 initiative. One possible reason why Semi-Governmental organizations

have been given priority is that they are unique blends of the public and private sectors, and lately the area of leadership development and human resource management has been gaining more focus. Certain previous pieces of work in the Saudi context have mostly concentrated on the health and education sectors and, to a lesser extent, semi-governmental organizations have been neglected. This neglect is quite glaring and a gap that the present study is seeking to highlight and rectify.

- **Study Sample:** Employees at semi-governmental units were our population. We took our sample from these employees in three cities, namely Riyadh, Jeddah, and Dammam. After diligently selecting 15 semi-government organizations with 5 in each city (Riyadh/Jeddah/Dammam), we represented five sectors (financial industrial service educational health) to get a representative sample for different sectors which would bring us sector diversity and better overall results if this was not the case. **Sample Size and Selection Technique:** A sample size was determined via the Sample Size Determination Formula at 95% level of confidence with 5% margin of error. The total required sample size was 384 respondents which were reached from the questionnaire distributed to 450 participants to allow for the collection of enough responses for further (valid) analysis (with a minimum of a 70% response rate, approximately 315 valid responses). For the sample, the stratified random sampling technique was selected so that every possible combination of job level (managers supervisors' employees), gender (male, female), years of experience (less than 5, 5-10, more than ten years), and educational background (diploma, bachelor's, graduate) could be captured and the different sectors (financial industrial service educational health care) could be reflected. As such a sampling method was used, there would be no bias and the sample could represent the general population. The results also would become very reliable after performing an in-depth statistical analysis which would be based on such a representative sample.

2) **Spatial Scope:**

- * This research work physically is confined to semi-governmental organizations functioning within the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). The researcher has taken three major cities: Riyadh, Jeddah, and Dammam which hold the distinction as being the principal economic and administrative centers of the country. The selection of these geographical regions was Mostly made to ensure representation and variation in terms both of the locations and of the economic conditions which the organizations operate in. It is hoped that the inclusion of these areas will increase the representativeness of the sample and help in drawing

generalized conclusions for the semi-governmental organizations spread all over the country. It must be noted that the outcomes of this study are most probably going to have very little relevance to the private or public organizations as well as to the organizations operating in other parts of the Kingdom or outside the KSA that may not be sharing similar cultural and organizational environments with that of the sample organizations.

5) **Time frame:**

- The study period will cover a full year from 2025 to 2026, starting in January 2025 and ending in January 2026. At the moment the researchers are in the phase of the study where the data is being collected from the field. The second and third quarters are dedicated to the field work, April September will see the distribution and collection of the questionnaires. This comes after the finishing of the reviewing the literature and designing of the tool to be used. The field work is being conducted during the holiday free months so that the respondents will be available and willing to respond. The last phase from October, 2025 to January, 2026 is reserved for the work on the collected data and writing of the final report. Still, one can hardly imagine that with that tight schedule the researchers get the opportunity to monitor the time-related changes in their study variables.

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