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Faculty of Management

Department/ Specialization Project Management



Project title

**The Impact of Project Managers' Emotional Intelligence
on Project Success**

A Study of Projects in Saudi Arabia

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Graduation Project – 1

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1. Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Research Background

Success in professional environments has long been associated with intellectual superiority (Taher Abulrahman habosh- Fares suliman alhshmi, no date) academic achievements, and the acquisition of specific skills and leadership qualities necessary for task completion. Historically, success was often seen as the result of cognitive abilities and technical expertise, with emotional aspects considered secondary or even irrelevant to professional

performance (Goleman, 1995). However, recent advancements in leadership theories and management practices have revealed that true excellence in leadership requires more than just technical competence; it demands a combination of character and emotional intelligence (Goleman, 2002).

For many years, the prevailing belief was that emotions should be kept out of the workplace to maintain professionalism and productivity. This perspective was rooted in the idea that leadership effectiveness depended primarily on the ability to focus on work tasks and achieve results (Caruso, Mayer, & Salovey, 2002). However, contemporary leadership models have shifted towards recognizing the importance of emotional intelligence (EI) as a critical component of effective leadership. Emotional intelligence, defined as the capacity to recognize, understand, manage, and utilize emotions in oneself and others, is now seen as essential for navigating complex social interactions and achieving successful outcomes in various organizational contexts (Goleman, 1995; Mayer & Salovey, 1997).

In the current business environment, emotional intelligence is understood as a vital leadership trait that influences a leader's ability to inspire, motivate, and manage teams effectively. Blanchard (2018) argues that modern leadership goes beyond mere task management and productivity to focus on influencing others and fostering an environment where individuals can reach their full potential for the greater good. This approach highlights the significance of emotional intelligence in leadership roles, emphasizing that the ability to engage with team members on an emotional level can significantly impact organizational success (Blanchard, 2018).

This evolution in leadership thinking reflects a broader understanding of what constitutes effective leadership in today's complex and dynamic environments. Leadership development is now characterized by a rich array of theories, models, and techniques designed to cultivate both technical skills and emotional competencies (Northouse, 2018). In particular, the integration of emotional intelligence into leadership practices is seen as a way to enhance team cohesion, resolve conflicts, and drive successful project outcomes (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2004).

In the specific context of project management, success depends on a range of factors including the technical expertise of project managers and their teams, as well as essential interpersonal skills such as communication, time management, and conflict resolution. The traditional project management framework focuses on three core elements: scope, quality, and timely delivery (Maqbool et al., 2017). However, recent research shows that a significant portion of a project manager's time is spent managing relationships and resolving conflicts that affect project progress (Maqbool et al., 2017). This realization has led to a shift from emphasizing only technical skills to recognizing the importance of behavioral and emotional intelligence in achieving project success.

Emotional intelligence plays a critical role in project management by enabling leaders to effectively manage team dynamics, handle stress, and maintain positive stakeholder relationships (Mersino, 2017). For example, project managers with high emotional intelligence are better equipped to handle the emotional demands of their roles, foster a collaborative team environment, and navigate complex stakeholder interactions (Müller & Turner, 2010). This is particularly pertinent in the context of Saudi Arabia, where ongoing economic diversification and national development initiatives, such as those outlined in Saudi Vision 2030, create a unique and evolving project management landscape (Saudi Vision 2030, 2016).

Saudi Vision 2030 outlines ambitious goals for economic diversification and infrastructure development, making effective project management crucial for achieving these objectives (Saudi Vision 2030, 2016). As Saudi Arabia embarks on this transformative journey, the role of project managers becomes increasingly significant. Their ability to balance technical skills with emotional intelligence is essential for navigating the complexities of large-scale projects and ensuring their successful completion (Alsharif, 2020).

This study aims to address a gap in the existing literature by examining the impact of project managers' emotional intelligence on project success within

the Saudi Arabian context. By exploring various dimensions of emotional intelligence, such as self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills, this research seeks to identify their relationship with key success metrics including time management, cost control, quality assurance, and stakeholder satisfaction (Müller & Turner, 2010). The findings will contribute to both academic knowledge and practical applications, offering insights that can improve project management practices and inform the development of targeted training programs for project managers in Saudi Arabia (Rezvani, Khosravi, & Dong, 2017).

Understanding the connection between emotional intelligence and project success offers valuable implications for organizations and policymakers in Saudi Arabia. By highlighting the importance of emotional intelligence, this research aims to support the creation of effective training programs, enhance recruitment strategies, and ultimately contribute to the successful execution of projects that align with Saudi Arabia's economic and infrastructural goals (Clarke, 2010; Rezvani et al., 2017). Through this investigation, we seek to emphasize the significance of emotional intelligence in project management and provide actionable recommendations for leveraging this competency to achieve superior project outcomes.

1.2. **Research Problem**

The problem addressed by this study lies in the inadequacy of project managers in applying emotional intelligence during their work and their lack of awareness regarding its positive impact on their professional performance. Potential negative outcomes can be avoided by enhancing emotional intelligence, and more importantly, it can unlock the latent potential and talents of team members, especially during times of crisis. Each of us possesses a level of emotional intelligence that influences our daily interactions and responses. This study seeks to answer the following question: What is the impact of project managers' emotional intelligence on their team's performance and, consequently, on the success of the project?

In an increasingly competitive global market, the success of projects has become a critical determinant years and the significance of emotional intelligence (EI) in leadership and management has gained increasing recognition. However, in the field of project management, there remains a notable gap in understanding how emotional intelligence specifically influences project success. Despite the established link between emotional intelligence and effective leadership, many project managers in Saudi Arabia continue to focus predominantly on technical skills and neglect the potential benefits of emotional intelligence. This oversight could result in missed opportunities for improving team performance, managing conflicts, and ultimately contribute on project success.

1.2.1. Theoretical Gaps

Much of the existing research on emotional intelligence (EI) in project management is based on theories and models developed in Western contexts.

Theoretical frameworks for EI, such as Goleman's Emotional Intelligence Model or Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Model, are predominantly grounded in Western cultural and organizational settings hence there is a lack of exploration into how these theories apply to the unique socio-cultural and economic context of Saudi Arabia.

1.2.2. Practical Gaps

Most of the current project management training programs in Saudi Arabia emphasize technical skills over emotional intelligence hence there is a lack of structured training programs that address the development of emotional intelligence skills specifically for project managers in Saudi Arabia.

The core research problem addressed in this study is:

How does the level of emotional intelligence among project managers can be a key element of project success in Saudi Arabia?

1.3. Research Significance

1.3.1. At the theoretical level

This study significantly advances the theoretical understanding of emotional intelligence (EI) by applying existing EI theories, such as Goleman's Emotional Intelligence Model and the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Model, to the unique context of project management in Saudi Arabia, a non-Western and rapidly developing economy where these theories have been less explored (Goleman, 1995). By investigating how dimensions of EI—such as self-awareness, self-regulation, social awareness, relationship management, and team leadership—affect project success in this specific cultural and organizational setting, the research aims to validate and potentially refine these theories to better fit diverse environments (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2004). By expanding beyond traditional technical and managerial competencies, the study contributes to the broader literature on leadership and project management, emphasizing EI as a crucial factor for achieving project success.

1.3.2. At the practical level

The empirical significance of this study lies in its ability to offer evidence-based insights and practical recommendations for the role of emotional intelligence (EI) in project management, specifically within the Saudi Arabian context. By providing data-driven evidence on how EI impacts project success, this research will help practitioners and policymakers understand the practical benefits of incorporating EI into project management practices, offering a foundation for future policy recommendations (Mersino, 2017). Additionally, the study's findings will be instrumental in designing and implementing targeted training programs aimed at enhancing crucial EI competencies among project managers in Saudi Arabia, thereby addressing gaps in existing development programs and improving managerial effectiveness (Rezvani, Khosravi, & Dong, 2017). Furthermore, the research will identify new research questions and opportunities for future studies,

contributing to the ongoing development of the EI field and expanding its application in different project management contexts (Müller & Turner, 2010).

Lastly, by demonstrating the tangible benefits of EI in managing projects effectively, the study will enhance the understanding of EI's role in achieving project goals and fostering successful outcomes, helping project managers and organizations appreciate the value of emotional competencies (Clarke, 2010).

1.4. Research Questions

1. What is the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and project success in Saudi Arabia?
2. What is the impact of project managers' emotional intelligence on their leadership effectiveness and team performance in Saudi Arabian projects?
3. How does emotional intelligence influence the decision-making processes of project managers in Saudi Arabia?
4. What are the key challenges and opportunities associated with developing emotional intelligence among project managers in Saudi Arabia?

1.5. Research Objectives

1. To analyze the relationship between emotional intelligence and project success in Saudi Arabian organizations.

- This objective aims to understand how various dimensions of emotional intelligence contribute to achieving successful project outcomes, including factors like time management, cost control, quality assurance, and stakeholder satisfaction.

2. To assess the impact of project managers' emotional intelligence on their leadership effectiveness and team performance.

- This objective will explore how project managers' emotional intelligence influences their ability to lead teams, manage conflicts, and maintain team cohesion, ultimately affecting overall project performance.

3. To investigate how emotional intelligence influences decision-making processes in project management within the Saudi Arabian projects context.

- This objective seeks to identify how emotional intelligence affects the way project managers make critical decisions, particularly in high-pressure situations or when managing complex projects.

4. To identify the key challenges and opportunities associated with developing emotional intelligence among project managers in Saudi Arabia.

- This objective aims to uncover the barriers to and benefits of enhancing emotional intelligence in project managers, providing insights into how organizations can better support emotional intelligence development through training programs and other initiatives.

1.6. Research Hypotheses

Alternative hypothesis

1. H1: There is a positive relationship between project managers' emotional intelligence and project success in Saudi Arabian organizations.

- This hypothesis suggests that higher levels of emotional intelligence in project managers are associated with better project execution hence outcomes, including on-time delivery, cost control, and overall quality.

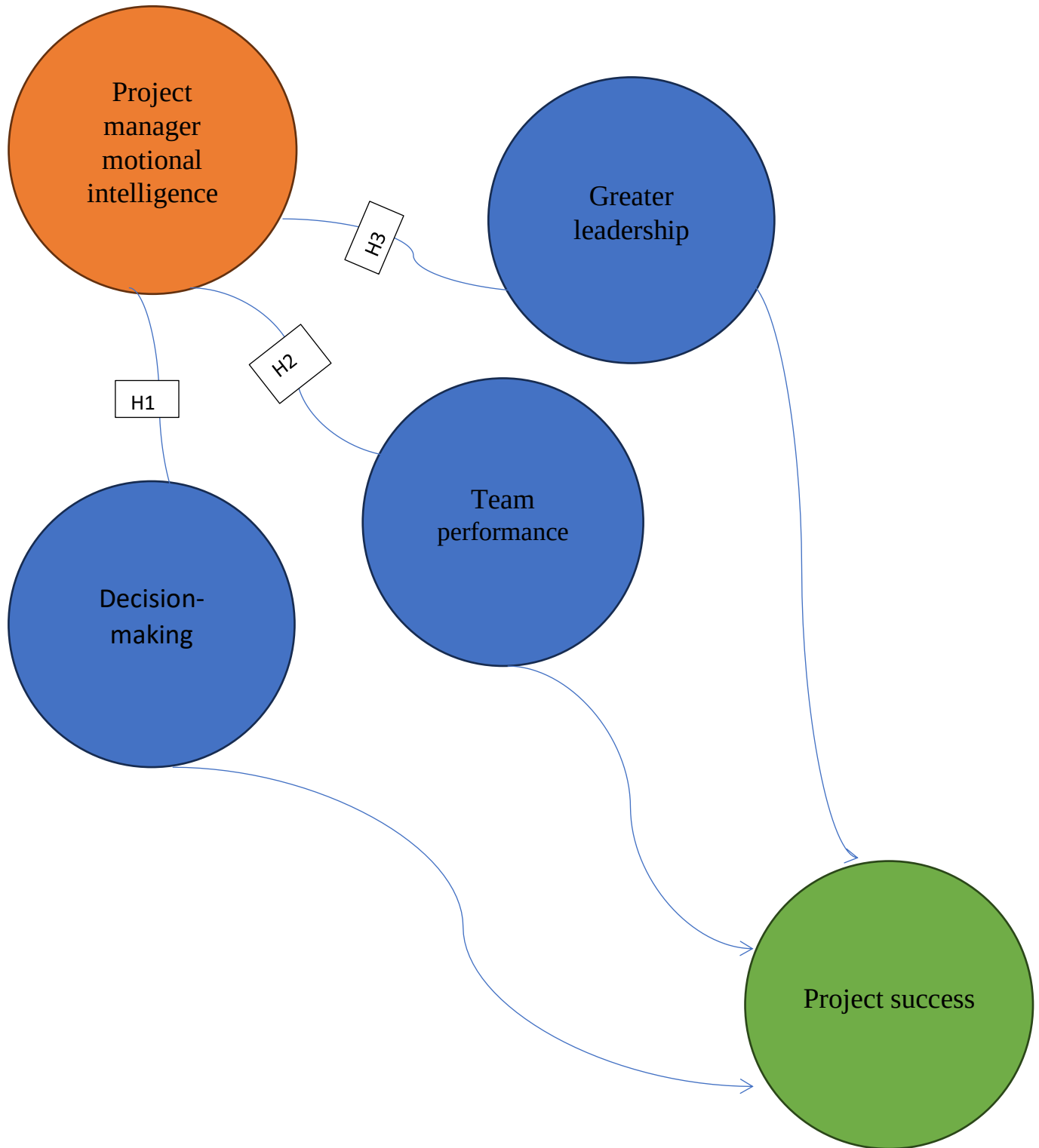
2. H2: Project managers with higher emotional intelligence demonstrate greater leadership effectiveness and team performance.

- This hypothesis proposes that project managers who possess strong emotional intelligence skills are more effective leaders, capable of fostering cohesive teams and achieving higher levels of team productivity.

3. H3: Emotional intelligence positively influences the decision-making processes of project managers in Saudi Arabian projects.

- This hypothesis indicates that project managers with higher emotional intelligence are better equipped to make sound decisions, particularly under pressure, leading to improved project control hence better more tangible success.

1.7. Research Model



1.8. Research Methodology

Research Philosophy

This study is grounded in an interpretivist research philosophy. Interpretivism emphasizes understanding the subjective meanings and social contexts of human behavior, acknowledging that reality is constructed through social interactions and interpretations. By adopting an interpretivist stance, the research aims to explore how project managers' emotional intelligence is perceived and experienced within the specific context of Saudi Arabian projects, focusing on the nuanced and complex nature of these experiences rather than seeking objective measurements.

Research Type/Logic

The research follows an inductive logic. Inductive reasoning involves exploring phenomena and generating theories based on empirical observations and insights. In this study, the focus is on understanding how project managers' emotional intelligence influences project success through the lived experiences and perspectives of the participants. This approach allows for the development of theories and concepts grounded in the context of Saudi Arabia's project management environment.

Research Approach

A qualitative research approach is employed in this study. Qualitative research is suited for exploring and interpreting the meanings and experiences related to emotional intelligence in project management. By using qualitative methods, the research can provide in-depth insights into how project managers understand and apply emotional intelligence, capturing the rich, subjective data necessary for a comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon.

Research Strategy/Design

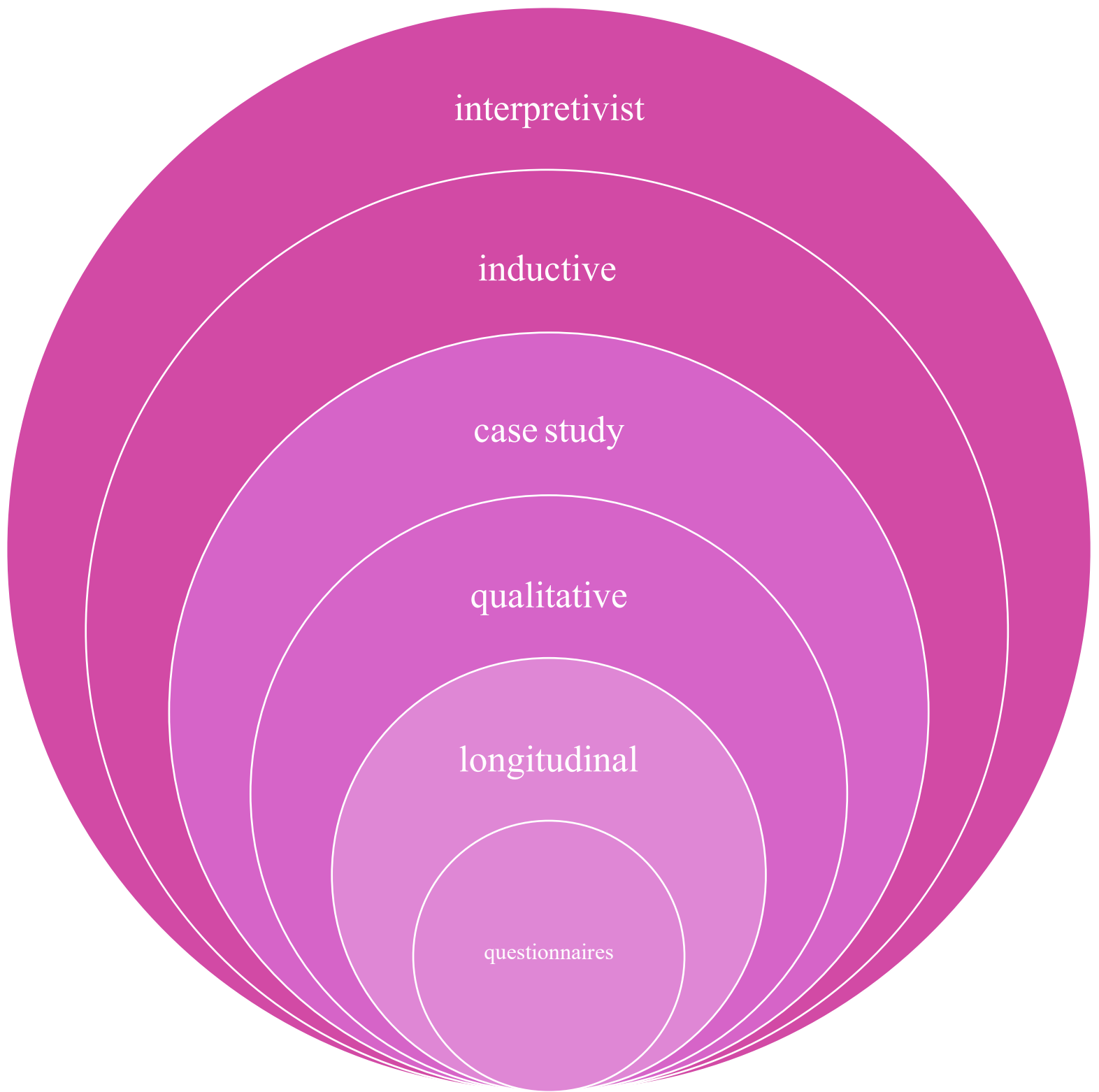
The research adopts a case study strategy within its design framework. Case studies are used to gain a deep understanding of complex issues within real-life contexts. This strategy involves detailed, contextual analysis of project managers' experiences and practices related to emotional intelligence, allowing the study to uncover patterns, themes, and insights that are specific to the Saudi Arabian context.

Time Horizon

The study uses a longitudinal time horizon, where data is collected over an extended period to capture the evolving experiences and perceptions of project managers. This approach is effective for understanding how emotional intelligence influences project success over time, providing a richer, more dynamic view of the relationship between these variables.

Data Collection Techniques:

Data is collected questionnaires. These questionnaires are crafted to explore the subjective experiences and interpretations of project managers and projects stake holders regarding emotional intelligence and its impact on project success. The questionnaires allows respondents to provide detailed, open-ended answers, offering insights into how they perceive and apply emotional intelligence in their roles. The questions are designed to capture the rich, contextual nuances of emotional intelligence in the specific setting of Saudi Arabian projects. By analyzing these responses, the study aims to understand the deeper meanings and personal perspectives of the Audience, aligning with the interpretivist focus on subjective experiences and contextual understanding.



Suggested Industry/Organization for Empirical Study

The empirical study could focus on various industries in Saudi Arabia, including both the public and private sectors, and encompass a range of projects from mega to minor in scale.

1.9 Scope of study

Scope of the Study

The scope of this study encompasses the investigation of the relationship between Emotional Intelligence (EI) and project success within organizations. Specifically, the study will focus on the following aspects:

1. **Target Population :** The study will concentrate on project managers and teams within various industries to assess how EI impacts project outcomes. The population may include project managers, team members, and other stakeholders involved in project execution.
2. **Geographical Scope:** The research will be limited to a specific geographic region or multiple regions, depending on data availability and relevance. This could include a single country, multiple countries, or a specific sector within a region.
3. **Time Frame:** The study will analyze data from projects executed within a defined time frame, such as the last five years, to ensure relevance and accuracy in understanding current trends in EI and project success.

4. Aspects of Emotional Intelligence: The study will explore specific components of EI, such as self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills, and how these elements influence project success.

5. Project Success Criteria: The study will define project success in terms of key performance indicators (KPIs) such as meeting project objectives, staying within budget, adhering to timelines, and satisfying stakeholders.

6. Research Methods: The study will employ quantitative and/or qualitative research methods, including surveys, interviews, or case studies, to collect and analyze data related to EI and project success.

7. Exclusions: The study will not cover all possible variables that might influence project success, such as organizational culture, economic factors, or technological advancements, unless they directly relate to EI.

8. Assumptions and Limitations: The study assumes that participants will provide accurate and honest responses regarding their EI and project experiences. It is also limited by the availability of willing participants and the generalizability of the findings beyond the selected sample and region.

This scope defines the boundaries of the research, ensuring a focused and manageable study while addressing the key objectives and research questions.

1.10 Suggested Structure for the Study

- Introduction
 - Background and Context
 - Research Problem
 - Objectives of the Study
 - Research Questions and Hypotheses
 - Significance of the Study
- Literature Review
 - Overview of Emotional Intelligence (EI)
 - Impact of EI on Project Success
 - Summary and Research Gaps
- Research Methodology
 - Research Philosophy
 - Research Type and Logic
 - Research Approach
 - Research Strategy and Design
 - Time Horizon
 - Data Collection Techniques
- Statistical Analysis
 - Description of the Data Collected

- Statistical Methods Used

- Findings, Discussion, and Conclusion
 - Presentation of Key Findings
 - Discussion and Interpretation of Results
 - Comparison with Existing Literature
 - Implications for Practice
 - Recommendations for Project Managers
 - Limitations of the Study

2.Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The relationship between Emotional Intelligence (EI) and project success has gained increasing attention in recent years. Emotional Intelligence, as defined by Goleman (1995), refers to the ability to recognize, understand, manage, and influence emotions in oneself and others. As project management involves not only technical skills but also significant interpersonal interactions, EI has been posited as a critical factor influencing the success of projects. This literature review aims to synthesize existing research on EI in the context of project management, examining how different components of EI contribute to project success, and identifying gaps for future research.

1. The Concept of Emotional Intelligence

The concept of Emotional Intelligence was popularized by Daniel Goleman, who identified five key components: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. These components are essential for effective leadership, communication, and teamwork, all of which are crucial in project management. Several studies have explored the role of EI in various organizational settings, highlighting its impact on leadership effectiveness, team dynamics, and overall organizational performance (Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Goleman, 1998).

2. Emotional Intelligence in Leadership and Project Management

Research has consistently shown that EI is a critical component of effective leadership (George, 2000; Boyatzis & McKee, 2005). Leaders with high EI are better equipped to manage the emotional climate of their teams, resolve conflicts, and motivate team members, which are essential for successful project outcomes. In project management, leaders must navigate complex interpersonal dynamics, manage stress, and ensure clear communication—all areas where EI plays a pivotal role.

3. Impact of Emotional Intelligence on Project Success

Project success is typically measured by the extent to which a project meets its objectives, stays within budget, adheres to timelines, and satisfies stakeholders. Various studies have examined the impact of EI on these success criteria. For instance, Clarke (2010) found that project managers with higher EI were more likely to lead projects that were completed on time and within budget. Similarly, Müller and Turner (2007) identified a positive correlation between EI and stakeholder satisfaction, suggesting that emotionally intelligent project managers are better at managing stakeholder expectations and delivering successful projects.

4. Components of EI and Their Specific Roles in Project Management

Different components of EI have been found to contribute uniquely to project success. Self-awareness enables project managers to recognize their emotional triggers and manage their reactions, leading to better decision-making (Ashkanasy & Daus, 2005). Self-regulation helps in maintaining composure under pressure, which is critical in high-stakes project environments (Turner & Lloyd-Walker, 2008). Motivation drives persistence and resilience in the face of challenges, while empathy allows project managers to understand and address the concerns of their team members and stakeholders (Goleman, 1998). Social skills facilitate effective communication and conflict resolution, ensuring smooth team collaboration (Mersino, 2007).

5. Emotional Intelligence and Team Dynamics

Team dynamics are crucial in project management, as most projects are executed by teams rather than individuals. EI has been shown to enhance team performance by fostering trust, cooperation, and effective communication among team members (Druskat & Wolff, 2001). Teams with high collective EI are better at managing conflicts and maintaining a positive working environment, which in turn contributes to project success (Jordan & Troth, 2011).

6. Challenges and Criticisms of Emotional Intelligence in Project Management

While the benefits of EI in project management are well-documented, there are also challenges and criticisms associated with its application. Some scholars argue that the concept of EI is too broad and lacks a clear definition, making it difficult to measure and apply consistently in research and practice (Matthews, Roberts, & Zeidner, 2004). Additionally, there is debate over the relative importance of EI compared to cognitive intelligence (IQ) and technical skills in project management. Critics also point out that over-reliance on EI might lead to the neglect of other essential skills and competencies required for project success (Antonakis, Ashkanasy, & Dasborough, 2009).

7. Gaps in the Literature and Future Research Directions

Despite the growing body of research on EI and project success, several gaps remain. First, there is a need for more empirical studies that examine the impact of EI in diverse project environments, such as different industries, cultural settings, and organizational sizes. Second, the interaction between EI and other factors, such as project complexity, team diversity, and organizational culture, requires further exploration. Finally, more research is needed to develop practical tools and frameworks for assessing and enhancing EI in project management contexts.

Conclusion

The literature suggests that Emotional Intelligence is a significant contributor to project success, particularly through its influence on leadership effectiveness, team dynamics, and stakeholder management. However, the concept still faces challenges in terms of measurement and practical application. Addressing these challenges and exploring the

identified gaps in the literature will be essential for advancing our understanding of EI's role in project management and improving project outcomes.

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