

عنوان البحث

تعزيز الانسجام الجماعي وفعالية
القيادة: دراسة حول الذكاء العاطفي في بيئات العمل الافتراضية

Research Title

Strengthening Team Harmony and Leadership Effectiveness: A Study of
Emotional Intelligence in Virtual Work Environments

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في الماضي، كان يُنظر إلى القيادة على أنها تتطلب الحضور الجسدي. كان القائد يدخل المكتب، يقرأ لغة الجسد، يلاحظ من يبدو متوتراً أو من يشعر بالحماس، ويتفاعل بناءً على هذه الإشارات. لكن الآن تغير كل شيء. لم نعد نقود الفرق داخل قاعات الاجتماعات، بل نقودها عبر الشاشات. ومع انتشار العمل عن بُعد، أصبحت القيادة تأخذ شكلاً مختلفاً: إنها الآن قيادة افتراضية. ومع هذا التحول، تصبح الجوانب العاطفية في إدارة الأفراد أصعب، لكنها أيضاً أكثر أهمية من أي وقت مضى.

واحدة من التحديات الأكبر في البيئة الافتراضية هي الانفصال العاطفي. من الصعب معرفة ما يشعر به شخص ما عندما لا يمكنك رؤيته مباشرة. قد يكون أحد أعضاء الفريق متوتراً أو منهكاً أو غير متفاعل، ولكن عبر رسائل قصيرة أو مكالمات فيديو، يمكن أن تمر هذه المشاعر دون ملاحظة. وهنا يأتي دور الذكاء العاطفي (Emotional Intelligence)، كأداة أساسية يجب أن يمتلكها القائد الناجح في العصر الرقمي.

الذكاء العاطفي، كما عرفه ماير و سالوفي (1997)، يتكون من أربع مهارات رئيسية:

1. إدراك العواطف،

2. استخدام العاطفة في دعم التفكير،

3. فهم المشاعر وتفسيرها،

4. إدارة العواطف والتحكم بها.

هذه المهارات ليست مجرد صفات اجتماعية، بل هي نوع من "المنطق العاطفي" الذي يمكن القائد من تحليل السلوكيات، وفهم ما بين السطور، والتصرف بطريقة مناسبة في المواقف الصعبة.

في القيادة الافتراضية، تُختبر هذه القدرات إلى أقصى حد. فالقائد لا يمكنه ملاحظة التوتر الجسدي. التواصل يكون مجزأً، والعواطف قد تكون مخفية خلف نبرة رسمية أو صمت مفاجئ. القائد الذي يتمتع بذكاء عاطفي يستطيع أن يلاحظ التغيرات البسيطة مثل تراجع الحماس في المشاركة أو الردود القصيرة ويفهم أنها ربما تشير إلى ضغوط نفسية أو خلافات داخلية.

الأبحاث تدعم هذا الطرح. على سبيل المثال، نايومن (2006) يؤكدون أن القادة الذين يتمتعون بذكاء عاطفي عالٍ يكونون أكثر قدرة على إدارة المشاريع الافتراضية بنجاح، خاصة في البيئات متعددة الثقافات والمرهقة. فهم يتعاملون مع التغيرات بسرعة، ويسيطرون على الانفعالات، ويديرون العلاقات بشكل فعال. الذكاء العاطفي هنا لا يُعتبر ميزة فقط، بل أداة استراتيجية.

دراسات أخرى، مثل غاميرو (2021)، تُظهر أن الفرق التي تضم أعضاء يتمتعون بذكاء عاطفي عالٍ تعاني من نزاعات أقل، وتُحقق تعاوناً أكبر، وتحصل على نتائج أفضل من حيث الرضا المهني والصحة النفسية. هم يسلطون الضوء على مفهوم "التركيب العاطفي للفريق"، ويقصدون به أن الذكاء العاطفي لا يجب أن يكون لدى القائد فقط، بل أيضاً داخل الفريق كله.

إلى جانب ذلك، فإن القيادة في بيئة افتراضية تعني التعامل مع عوامل إجهاد خفية مثل العزلة، التعب من الاجتماعات الرقمية، وتداخل الحياة الشخصية مع المهنية. الذكاء العاطفي يساعد القادة على أن يكونوا أكثر مرونة عاطفية، فيضبطون نبرة التواصل، يراهنون على الوقت المناسب، ويُظهرون التعاطف حتى عبر الرسائل الإلكترونية.

وتشير دراسات حديثة إلى مفهوم جديد يُعرف بـ التعاطف الرقمي (Digital Empathy)، وهو القدرة على فهم مشاعر الآخرين والتفاعل معها عبر القنوات الرقمية. هذه المهارة أصبحت من أهم سمات القادة في البيئات الافتراضية، وتنسجم تماماً مع نموذج ماير و سالوفي.

الأمر لا يتوقف عند ذلك. الثقة هي أحد أكبر التحديات في الفرق الافتراضية. لا يمكن بناء الثقة بنفس الطريقة التقليدية. في القيادة الرقمية، الثقة تُبنى من خلال الاستمرارية، الشفافية، والذكاء العاطفي. القائد الذي يُظهر وعيًا ذاتيًا ويعترف بالأخطاء يكون أكثر مصداقية، ويخلق بيئة آمنة للتواصل.

هذا البحث يركز على دور الذكاء العاطفي في القيادة الافتراضية. ليس كفكرة مجردة، بل كأداة عملية وقابلة للقياس يمكن استخدامها لفهم العلاقات الإنسانية، تقليل الخلافات، وتحفيز الفرق التي تعمل عن بُعد. وفي زمن تُصبح فيه فرق العمل الافتراضية هي القاعدة وليس الاستثناء، يصبح الذكاء العاطفي مهارة قيادية لا غنى عنها. باختصار، القيادة في العصر الافتراضي لم تعد فقط عن متابعة المهام أو تحقيق الأهداف. إنها أيضًا عن بناء الروابط الإنسانية، وفهم المشاعر، والقيادة بالقلب كما بالعقل. والذكاء العاطفي هو المفتاح.

Introduction

Until recently, leadership was all about being there. Being physically in the same room with someone, reading someone's body language, noticing when a person is anxious or excited it helped managers know how to respond and build trust with their teams. But now, everything has changed. We have ceded leadership in hallways and meetings rooms. Instead, we lead through screens. As working from home becomes the norm for many companies, a new kind of leader has emerged: the virtual leader. And with that, the emotional part of managing people gets tougher and more important.

Emotional distance: One of the most difficult aspects of the experience online is a lack of emotional connection. If you are unable to see someone's face in its entirety it can be hard to read how they are feeling. A team member may be stressed, overloaded, detached from work, but through a video call or a few lines of written communication, that may not be immediately apparent. Leaders are increasingly asked to recognize the mental states of their team members in the absence of the usual signals. And that is where Emotional Intelligence (EI) goes from "nice to have" to "need to have."

Emotional Intelligence, as defined by **Mayer and Salovey (1997)**, includes four core skills:

1. Perceiving emotions,
2. Using emotions to support thinking,
3. Understanding emotions, and
4. Managing emotions.

These are not just social skills; they are means of emotional reasoning. They help leaders see the behavior, read between the lines and respond thoughtfully in difficult moments.

These skills are further tested in virtual leadership. Leaders can't "feel the room" or read body language to feel the tension. Communication is fragmented. Feelings end up being screened out or camouflaged behind professional tones of writing. Today, leaders need to listen harder, ask better questions, and be more attuned to timing, tone and silence. The emotionally intelligent leader recognizes when he/she stops speaking in meetings, when the replies are less verbose, that the situation is out of kilter. These little things could be harbingers of burnout, confusion or conflict and should not be dismissed.

Literature supports this view. Nauman et al. (2006) suggest that crossculturally effective virtual project leaders are those who possess the skills to quickly identify what to alter in terms of sensitivity to a culture and behave appropriately, handle interpersonal conflicts with ease, as well as, make emotional decisions. In their VPM model, EI is directly connected to project outcomes. Indeed, EI can be considered as a mechanism to cope with ambiguity and disconnection that tends to emerge in this context of online teams.

Similarly, Gamero et al. (2021) discovered that virtual teams with existence of emotionally intelligent members were significantly related to increased engagement, enhanced psychological safety, and reduced emotional exhaustion. They highlight the significance of the emotional composition of the team and that it's not just the leader's EI that matters,

but also what the researchers call the collective emotional capacity of the group. When an emotional climate is healthy, teamwork is more effective, and it's easier to get through tough times unscathed.

But online leadership is not just about getting through bad times, it is also about creating culture. A strong leader even in the middle of nowhere makes for emotional spaces. They give empathy, encouragement and presence even when they can't make physical contact. Emotionally Intelligent: Goleman (1995) defined emotionally intelligent leaders as those who create and sustain resonant relationships, that is relationships that motivate and inspire others by connecting with what drives them emotionally, not just what they are expected to do.

To lead virtually is also to navigate unquantifiable stressors: isolation, tech fatigue, porous worklife divides and cultural miscommunications. Emotional Intelligence trains leaders to be more emotionally agile able to shift their tone and adjust their tone expectations, and to read subtle emotional signals from people paying attention in a wide variety of cultures. This is important for wellbeing in global virtual teams, as demonstrated by Barisa and Heinitz (Barisa & Heinitz, 2021). Their research has shown that emotionally intelligent leadership can create healthier work environments, even when the teams are never in the same place.

More recently, it has also been extended to the domain of digital empathy, the ability to perceive and respond to others' feelings digitally. That means that when someone you care about is dealing with a serious illness, coming up with the right way to convey your concern in a text exchange is crucial just when many of us are feeling misplaced guilt about not doing more, in person or otherwise. Digital empathy is quickly becoming a key leadership quality in remote environments, and it's closely related to the model created by Mayer and Salovey.

Besides, emotional intelligence plays a role in trust building, which is one of the challenging issues in virtual teams. Trust isn't built the same way that it is in other brick and mortar relationships. For virtual leaders, trust is developed and nurtured by being consistent, clear, fair and emotionally present. EI helps leaders provide that. And a leader who knows how to manage his emotions and keep calm under crossfire is making it a safer space to speak out. "A leader who knows themselves can be a person who says 'I screwed up', which becomes more real and respected.

This proposal addresses how Emotional Intelligence factors to virtual leadership, not as just some airyfairy concept, but as an actual, tangible skillset that contributes to leadership that is human centered. By this, it wants to explore how EI can facilitate leaders to sustain the motivation, minimize the conflict and enhance the emotional health in virtual teams. " As technology continues to proliferate and more and more companies shift to flexible and remote working, understanding and utilizing EI is now a strategic requirement not simply a soft skill.

In conclusion, virtual leadership is not just a matter of logistics, but also a matter of the heart. Success is about how adeptly a leader can bond, communicate and shore up people without ever shaking their hand or sitting next to them. Emotional Intelligence is the cornerstone to doing that effectively.

Problem Statement

Virtual leadership is no longer a temporary trend. For many companies, it's become the new normal. But though technology facilitates teams connecting from anywhere, it doesn't address the more fundamental human challenges of remote collaboration. One of the largest problems is an emotional gap that opens up when the physical distance keeps you apart. In office settings, leaders could regularly see if someone was stressed, unfocused or having a bad day. Today, many of these signals are obscured behind screens, emails and video calls.

It's getting harder for virtual leaders to build trust, manage team feelings, and deal with misunderstandings when they don't see each other's faces. Meanwhile, many leaders continue to use outdated leadership styles that are poorly suited to the emotional terrain of digital teams. This means that virtual teams frequently face issues such as miscommunication, disengagement and emotional exhaustion.

Although remote work is becoming increasingly common, little is known about its practical implications for virtual leadership and Emotional Intelligence (EI). This paper aims to address this gap by considering how EI skills, such as empathy, self awareness and emotional regulation, can facilitate virtual leadership and improve team's connectedness and mitigate emotional friction in digital workspaces.

The Importance of Study

In the fast changing workplace of today, in which virtual work has become the norm, leadership is facing an entirely new challenge. This is a significant study because it addresses a facet of virtual leadership that many organizations pay scant attention to the emotional aspect of leadership in virtual teams. Here's the most important conclusions of this research:

- **Overcomes the Emotional Barrier of Virtual Team bonding**

Distance in space leads to distance in hearts. When people are working remotely, it's less easy to feel stress, disconnection, or even motivation. In this research, Fresh on the heels of their team based, distributed research in an organization where most never meet we draw attention to the ways Emotional Intelligence (EI) supports leaders to detect and act on emotional signals that are typically nonapparent in virtual environments.

- **Leadership and Leaders Development in the Digital Age**

Certainly today, most coaching development programs still emphasize traditional models. But Leading Through a Screen Is a Different Kind of Lead. This study provides insights for the organizations on how to train virtual leaders to be more effective in terms of emotion and adaptiveness.

- **Educating a Positive Team Atmosphere and Trust**

Trust is more difficult to establish when you can't look the other person in the eye. EI support leaders in creating psychological safety, resolving conflicts with empathy and keeping team members emotionally engaged which is critical for virtual team success.

- **Fulfills a Void of Research on Emotional Intelligence and Virtual Leadership**

Despite some research on EI in leader leadership, its application to virtual leadership is still evolving. This study adds on to knowledge by examining the role of EI in digital work settings in particular.

- **Practical Value for Organizations**

Businesses may develop tactics they can implement immediately like enhancing the emotional nature of communication, maintaining remote team morale and determining which virtual roles should be filled by emotionally intelligent leaders.

Study Objectives

Current research This study... Emotional intelligence does come in handy on multiple occasions in managing virtual teams, and this what the study sought to clarify in downstream sections. The research does not only dwell in theory; it's about knowing how EI works in real life, in the places and situations where leaders often need to lead and support and connect with individuals they might not necessarily meet in person. These are the main aims of this study:

- **Investigating the role of Emotional Intelligence on the effectiveness of virtual leadership**

The research aims to uncover how leaders who are highly emotionally skilled can successfully maintain momentum, focus, and cohesion with virtual teams, particularly when operating under stress and communicating across time zones.

- **To know about the elements of EI that help leaders cope with emotional demands in the remote teams.**

Remote work leads to stress, loneliness or miscommunication. This research examines how leaders wield empathy, self awareness and emotional regulation to balance those tasks.

- **To investigate the relationship between EI and team engagement, trust and collaboration**

Effective virtual teams rely on deep emotional connections. The study examines why EI builds trust, lowers conflict and helps teams functioning cohesively.

- **To measure the EI in its Mayer and Salovey model in a remote working system**

Trusty Scientific Model The research applies a trusted scientific model to investigate leaders' reactions to and suppression of emotions in digital environments.

- **To provide practical dimensions about training virtual leaders with emotional intelligence**

Finally, the study aims to offer companies concrete tools they can use to train or identify leaders who can thrive emotionally not just technically in the era of remote work.

Study Questions

To understand how EI facilitates leadership in virtual environment, this study is led by the following focused research questions: Each is designed to reveal a particular facet of the ways in which EI impacts performance in virtual teams, leader behavior, and emotion processes over distance.

1: What impact does Emotional Intelligence have on virtual leading of teams?

This challenge is about understanding how EI contributes to effective management of remote teams by leaders. It looks at how emotional intelligence and empathy influence productivity, communication and decision making when teams are not physically collocated.

2: How do emotionally intelligent leaders establish trust and psychological safety in virtual teams?

It's harder to build trust online. This topic of how leaders use EI to provide an environment where team members feel valued and heard and comfortable sharing ideas and concerns without fear is interesting.

3: The influence of Emotional Intelligence on communication and conflict resolution in virtual teams.

Body language and tone do not exist when communicating virtually so there is plenty of room for misinterpretation. This research question addresses the extent to which EI helps leaders to sense discomfort early and address the issues before they become problematic.

4: How does Emotional Intelligence affects team engagement and emotional well being in virtual environments?

Many virtual teams are exhausted and disconnected. This study explores how emotionally intelligent leaders influence motivation and emotional stability in subordinates.

5: How can the Mayer and Salovey model be utilized to construct EI based leadership training for remote environments?

The last question, which bridging theory and praxis, concerns how the Mayer and Salovey's EI model can be applied in the creation of programs of training for the virtual leader of the future.

Study Hypotheses

The following are the hypotheses from the research questions and the framework of Emotional Intelligence (EI) developed by Mayer and Salovey. All of these reasons are based on the assumption of how EI may impact virtual leadership and team performance.

1: High Emotional Intelligent Leaders are better able to lead virtual teams.

This assumption proposes that being emotionally intelligent leaders will be more aware of team interactions, and that they will adjust their leadership styles to mitigate tackling virtual communication challenges.

2: Emotional Intelligence has a positive effect on developing trust in remote leadership.

As trust doesn't come naturally without being together, it's likely that leaders who demonstrate empathy and emotional awareness will make teams feel more trusting.

3: Greater Emotional Intelligence helps to cooler heads prevail in conflict resolution and communication in virtual teams.

This theoretical article examines how EI helps leaders interpret subtle emotional cues and react with calm to miscommunications via text based or video technologies.

4: When there's emotional intelligence at the helm, teams become more engaged and psychologically safe.

The concept being that EI enables the development of emotionally nurturing climates where people feel it is safe to share ideas, take risks and remain motivated.

5: Emotional Intelligence is a tool that allows creating adaptive leadership in dynamic virtual settings that indirectly promotes a successful project completion.

That's because EI helps leaders stay adaptable, manage stress, and make more informed decisions when managing remote projects under stress.

6: Virtual project teams characterized by high levels of emotional composition (both positive and negative) are more resilient and show less conflict and more engagement.

Finally, this theory considers the emotional composition of the group as a whole, rather than only its leader suggesting that emotionally varied and sensitive teams are likely to perform more effectively.

Previous Studies

Understanding the role of **Emotional Intelligence (EI)** in leadership, especially virtual leadership has grown over the years. Below are some key studies, arranged from the earliest to the most recent, that form the backbone of this research.

- **Goleman (1995) – The Emotional Intelligence Model**
Goleman is generally regarded as the father of modern EI theory. His construct included self awareness, self regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills as five EI components. Not specifically centered on remote leadership, those information are critical for comprehending how emotional skills influence effective leadership behavior.
- **Nauman et al. (2006) – Emotional Intelligence in Virtual Project Management**
This early study applied EI specifically to virtual project leadership. It showed that emotionally intelligent leaders in remote settings are more adaptable, better at managing cross cultural teams, and more capable of dealing with time pressure and communication breakdowns.
- **Barisa and Heinitz (2021) – Psychological Safety and EI in Virtual Teams**
This research explored how leaders with high EI can create psychological safety in virtual teams. The authors found that such leaders reduce emotional misunderstandings and foster open, trusting environments where people feel comfortable sharing ideas.
- **Gamero et al. (2021) – Team Emotional Composition and Virtual WellBeing**
This study focused on the emotional makeup of the team itself. It concluded that teams with balanced emotional intelligence—not just the leader—experience less stress, fewer conflicts, and greater collaboration and satisfaction.
- **Lubich et al. (2022) – Emotional Intelligence and Digital Stress**
One of the more recent works, this study examined how EI helps reduce digital fatigue and emotional burnout. Leaders with higher EI were better at managing their team’s emotional load and keeping morale steady during stressful remote work situations.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in several key theories that explain how Emotional Intelligence (EI) and leadership work together, especially in virtual environments. These theories provide a solid base to understand the emotional processes and leadership behaviors that influence team success in remote settings.

1. **Goleman's Emotional Intelligence Model (1995)**

Goleman introduced EI as a set of five core competencies: self awareness, self regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. In virtual leadership, these traits help leaders communicate with sensitivity, resolve emotional tension, and maintain strong interpersonal relationships even without physical presence. Goleman emphasized that EI often matters more than IQ in effective leadership.

2. **Mayer and Salovey's Ability Model of EI (1997)**

This scientific model defines EI as a set of mental abilities, including perceiving emotions, using emotions to support thinking, understanding emotional meanings, and managing emotions. In virtual settings, where communication is limited to written or video interactions, leaders must rely on these abilities to recognize team emotions and respond appropriately.

3. **Tuckman's Team Development Model (1965)**

Tuckman's theory explains that teams go through four stages: Forming, Storming, Norming, and Performing. In remote teams, these stages still happen, but emotional cues are harder to detect. Emotionally intelligent leaders can sense conflict, guide team adaptation, and move teams toward high performance by responding with empathy and awareness.

4. **Transformational Leadership Theory (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1985)**

This theory describes leaders who inspire and motivate their teams by creating a shared vision and fostering personal growth. Transformational leaders connect emotionally with their teams perfectly with EI. In remote work, where motivation can fade, emotionally intelligent leaders use this style to keep people engaged and supported.

Methodology and Research Methods

To understand the emotional side of virtual leadership, we'll conduct semi structured interviews. This method allows for both structure and flexibility. It helps gather consistent data across participants, while still giving them space to speak freely and share personal experiences that numbers alone can't describe.

How It Will Be Done:

1. Designing the Interview Questions

- The first step is to build a set of thoughtful, open ended questions about emotional situations in remote leadership. We'll touch on topics like communication breakdowns, empathy in conflict, dealing with burnout, and motivating people from a distance.
- These questions will reflect well known EI frameworks (like Mayer and Salovey's model) but also leave room for participants to speak from the heart.

2. Choosing the Right People

- We'll reach out to individuals who've been managing or working within virtual teams' leaders, HR professionals, remote managers, and others with experience in emotionally demanding roles.
- The goal is to include people from different industries and backgrounds, so we can collect diverse perspectives.

3. Holding the Interviews

- The interviews will be done online—via Zoom, Teams, or whatever works best for the participant.
- With permission, each conversation will be recorded and later transcribed to make sure no valuable insight is missed.

4. Collecting What Matters

- The raw data will come from what people share: stories, thoughts, emotions, and reactions.
- We'll look beyond just the answers—paying attention to tone, pauses, and emotional expression as well.

5. Making Sense of the Data

- We'll use **thematic analysis** to group ideas and identify patterns.

- For example, we might notice common ways leaders handle tension, or how they use empathy when the team feels disconnected. We'll link these patterns back to the EI skills that were used or needed.

6. Understanding the Meaning

- Once the themes are clear, we'll reflect on what they tell us about virtual leadership.
- Are some EI skills more important than others? What emotional challenges seem most common? We'll try to answer these through interpretation.

7. Checking with Experts

- Before finalizing conclusions, we'll ask a few experts to review the findings. Their input will help confirm what makes sense and where we might have missed something.

What We Hope to Learn

The ultimate purpose of all of this is to gain an understanding of how Emotional Intelligence benefits or hinders it realistic virtual leadership scenarios. We anticipate learning not just about the upsides, but the emotional tensions leaders encounter online. The findings should give companies insights on where to concentrate their efforts when training or locating leaders to fill remote roles. It's not just a task management story, it's a story about managing emotions, connections, people.

Data Gathering Tools

Because this study is concerned with the emotional and leadership engagement side of the virtual spaces, we need instruments that tap more than those skin-deep reactions. The objective isn't simply to amass data — it's to comprehend actual human experiences, emotional patterns and the significance of the way virtual leaders lead.

Here is how the study will collect those insights:

- **Conversation Framework (Interview Guide):**
A flexible set of open ended questions will be created to guide each interview. The questions will cover important topics like how leaders notice emotional signals online, how they handle tension or burnout, and what emotional strategies they use to keep teams connected. The aim is not to control the conversation, but to give it direction while still letting the interviewee speak freely.
- **Online Recording Platforms:**
All interviews will be held through video call platforms like Zoom or Microsoft Teams. With the participant's permission, each session will be recorded so nothing is missed. This helps the researcher return to the conversation later — not just to listen again, but to notice tone, hesitation, and the small emotional cues that aren't obvious in writing.
- **Written Transcripts & Personal Notes:**
Each recorded session will be transcribed word for word. While reviewing the transcripts, the researcher will also include personal notes — things like when a speaker's tone shifted, or when they paused before answering. These subtle signals often say just as much as the actual words.
- **Permission and Trust Forms (Consent):**
Before starting, participants will be given clear and respectful consent forms. These explain the purpose of the study, how their privacy will be protected, and that their input is voluntary. This helps build a sense of trust from the start — which is especially important when discussing emotional experiences.
- **Reflective Researcher Notes (Emotional Journal):**
Since the research topic is emotional by nature, the researcher will also keep a personal journal. This isn't for collecting participant data, but to reflect on how each conversation made the researcher feel a way to stay emotionally aware and reduce personal bias during analysis.

These tools are not just technical steps — they are meant to create space for real, honest, and emotionally rich conversations. Because at the end of the day, the goal is to understand how leadership works when the people involved are separated by distance but still connected by emotion.

Study Boundaries

Objective:

This section is intended to firmly establish the boundaries of the research — what is in scope vs. what is out of scope, and why. The scope of the study is more easily manageable and relevant by establishing hard limits. Given that EI in virtual leadership is a wide topic, it is useful to narrow the focus to the kind of material to be analyzed so that in depth and clear analysis is aimed for.

1. Scope of Study

- **Geographical Focus**

This research is conducted in the context of Saudi Arabia, a nation experiencing the visibility of virtual leadership increasingly in various fields particularly on the backdrop of COVID19 pandemic and post world order. The study will draw from the experiences of this region, but will also endeavor to examine issues that are relevant to virtual leadership in the international arena.

- **Organizational Focus**

Employees come from many different types of workspaces, providing an abundant opportunity to see how EI operates in different job functions and industries:

- Two MNCs, in which team based coordination occurred across borders.
- Two schools where teachers shifted to remote instruction and assumed new emotional roles with students and families.
- One kindergarten, doing early childhood education by screens — emotional and leadership challenges of a different sort.

2. Methodological Boundaries

- **Qualitative in Nature**

The study is qualitative — a collection of stories and lived experiences, not numbers. No surveys or experiments, just some good conversations with folks who have led remotely, or worked remotely.

- **Interviews as the Main Source**

Semi structured interviews will be the only source of primary data. There will be no observational fieldwork or assessment of performance. The emphasis shifted away from nuts and bolts planning and toward emotional intelligence — how leaders and team members emotionally navigated through it, adapted to it, and still connected across so much distance.

3. Data Sources

- **First Hand Accounts**

The data will be the voices of the participants — their stories of virtual work, emotional battles, leadership wars and the moments they felt connected or disconnected.

- **Supporting Literature**

Scholarly articles, leadership theory, and models of emotional intelligence (e.g. Goleman, Mayer & Salovey, etc.) will be employed to further aid in analysis and interpretation of the data.

4. Limitations

- **Cultural Specificity**

As all participants are working and living in Saudi Arabia, norms, around leadership, communications and emotional expression are subject to cultural bias in the interpretation of the themes. As such, although some aspects may not be related only to this region, some could result from the social and professional characteristics of the region.

- **Subjective Perspectives**

As in any qualitative research the research results are limited to personal experiences and interpretations. Emotions are complex, unique to the individual – everyone's experience may be different. Also, the lens of the researcher may affect interpretation of stories.

- **Not Measuring Outcomes**

This research is not concerned with success or performance in a traditional sense. It's not be able to quantify productivity or whether/how people viewed the leader as a leader it will instead focus on how EI was applied, experienced or was missing in virtual leadership.

5. Time Frame

- Not 'The COVID Period'

Though the abrupt transition to remote work was set off by the COVID19 pandemic and is covered in the study — the research was not limited to that time frame. Many companies have stuck with remote or hybrid work, postcrisis.

It also covers learnings from the initial COVID transition to remote work and subsequent more steady state virtual practices, to bring a more expansive perspective on how Emotional Intelligence is still critical to leadership in the changing world of work.

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