

THE IMPACTS OF LEADERS' EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE ON  
ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT AMONG ACADEMICIANS IN  
UNIVERSITY TECHNOLOGY MALAYSIA

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UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MALAYSIA

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the  
requirements for the award of the degree of  
Master of Science (Human Resource Development)

Faculty of Management and Human Resource Development  
Universiti Teknologi Malaysia

JUNE 2012

*To my beloved parents, wife, son, daughter, and to You (the reader).*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First of all, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to ALLAH (SWT), who guided, helped, and supported me for everything I was able to achieve and for everything I tried but I was not able to achieve.

I wish to express my sincere appreciation and thankfulness to my research supervisor, Dr. Ishak bin Mad Shah for encouragement, motivation, full support in academic, and social issues. Truly, I have been overwhelmed by his patience, personal kindness, valuable comments, and advices during my study. Without his continuous guidance and help, this thesis would not have been completed.

I have greatly appreciated the golden opportunity from UTM to pursue my Master degree, I thank very much all UTM community including every people in (faculties, library, staff, employees, students and labourers). Special thankfulness to all people in FPPSM.

Finally, I would to thanks my parents and all the members of my family, friends and and relatives for their constant love, help and support which motivate me to face the life difficulties.

## ABSTRACT

More recently, many researchers revealed that emotional intelligence (EI) is a very important skill that required for success in nowadays organizations. It has been linked to improve workplace behaviour, such as, organizational commitment (OC). The main purpose of this study is to investigate the impacts of the EI of leaders on the OC of their subordinates. The study was conducted at University Technology Malaysia, and used stratified sampling consisting of 191 academicians from 14 faculties as the research respondents. The leaders' EI was evaluated with the Bar-On Emotional Quotient-360 (EQ-360) which is multi-rater instrument. On the other hand, the organizational commitment survey (OCS) which is developed by Meyer and Allen, was used to evaluate the OC of the academicians. Survey data were analyzed using descriptive statistic, Pearson correlation, and regression analyses. UTM academicians' leaders were found as high emotionally intelligent leaders. Besides, academicians' OC was at a moderate level. This study also found that there are significant relationships between leaders' EI that operationalized by intrapersonal, interpersonal, stress management, adaptability, and general mood, and subordinate (academicians) organizational commitment. Furthermore, the impact of leaders' EI on academicians OC was significant. Recommendations for future research and organization were presented.

## ABSTRAK

Mutakhir ini, ramai penyelidik mendedahkan kepintaran emosi (dirujuk sebagai EI) sebagai kemahiran yang sangat penting yang diperlukan untuk kejayaan dalam sesebuah organisasi. Ia telah dikaitkan untuk memperbaiki tingkah laku di tempat kerja seperti komitmen organisasi (dirujuk sebagai OC). Tujuan utama kajian ini adalah untuk menyelidik impak EI seorang pemimpin terhadap OC subordinatnya. Kajian ini dijalankan di Universiti Teknologi Malaysia menggunakan persampelan berstrata yang terdiri daripada 191 ahli akademik daripada 14 fakulti sebagai responden kajian. Penilaian EI pemimpin dibuat menggunakan instrumen multi-penilai iaitu *Bar-On Emotional Quotient-360 (EQ-360)*. Sementara itu, kajian selidik komitmen organisasi (dirujuk sebagai OCS) yang dibangunkan oleh Meyer dan Allen telah digunakan untuk menilai OC ahli akademik. Data kajian selidik dianalisa menggunakan statistik deskriptif, korelasi Pearson dan analisis regresi. Pemimpin ahli akademik UTM didapati sebagai pemimpin yang tinggi kepintaran emosinya. Sebaliknya, OC ahli akademik berada pada tahap sederhana. Kajian ini juga mendapati bahawa terdapat hubungan yang signifikan antara EI pemimpin yang dikendalikan secara intrapersonal, interpersonal, pengurusan stress, penyesuaian dan suasana umum, dan komitmen organisasi subordinat (ahli akademik). Tambahan pula, impak EI pemimpin terhadap OC ahli akademik sangat signifikan. Cadangan untuk kajian akan datang dan untuk organisasi juga dikemukakan.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AC	-	Affective Commitment
ADeq	-	Adaptability emotional quotient
AS	-	Assertiveness
CC	-	Continues Commitment
EI	-	Emotional Intelligence
EM	-	Empathy
EQ-360	-	Emotional Quotient-360
EReq	-	Interpersonal emotional quotient
ES	-	Emotional Self-awareness
FL	-	Flexibility
GMeq	-	General Mood emotional quotient
HA	-	Happiness
IC	-	Impulse Control
IN	-	Independence
IR	-	Interpersonal Relationship
NC	-	Normative Commitment
OC	-	Organizational Commitment
OCS	-	Organizational Commitment Survey

OP	-	Optimism
PS	-	Problem-Solving
RAeq	-	Intrapersonal emotional quotient
RE	-	Social Responsibility
RT	-	Reality Testing
SA	-	Self-Actualization
SMeq	-	Stress Management emotional quotient
SR	-	Self-Regard
ST	-	Stress Tolerance
USA	-	United State of America
UTM	-	Universiti Teknologi Malaysia

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Introduction**

Typically, with the major historical changes, countries seek to review their political, economic and social issues. They focus particularly on reform of regulatory structures within their administrative systems to upgrade their overall performance of organizations and people. Therefore, organizations around the world in the current century have sought seriously, with the global changes. They tend to explore the future of a century, and keep up with the so-called “leaders industry”. Where, there are predictions at the global level that “leaders industry” or administrative leadership is a feature of the current era. Moreover, it is the main concern of the pioneers of organizations which seek to reserve their position in the future ranks (Assisi, 2003). In other words, most failure of organizations refers to lack of efficient leadership, due to that the leadership behavior affects the individuals’ performance and satisfaction.

Many researchers in social psychology and management science have studied the phenomenon of leadership. These studies have applied whether in terms of leadership styles, traits, abilities, competencies, and skills, and its relation to some variables, or in terms of developing theories or approaches. In addition, previous researches tried to explain the leadership phenomenon and access to the effective form, which increase the



leadership effectiveness. Furthermore, leadership drives a great responsibility toward achieving the goals of organization and employees. This aim can be achieved through the ability of the administrative leader to raise the attention of his/her subordinates and push them to take care of achieving good performance. While the human personality diverse according to many different factors, (e.g. environments and cultures), it is natural that employees have diverse needs and desires. Consequently, this issue requires high level leaders' abilities of understanding and dealing with diversity of employees' needs and desires (Halawani *et al.* 1991; Rowden, 2000).

Although, there are many different traits and characteristics of leaders in the literature, recent studies have emphasized that leaders need to possess emotional intelligence (EI) as one of the most important traits and characteristics of an effective leader (Goleman, 1998). However, EI concept has concerned of many scientists and researchers, regardless their psychological, social or administrative views. So it has been published hundreds of articles, researches, and studies about EI during the period from the mid-nineties of the last century until now (Aljabhan, 2009). Interestingly, huge studies in EI literature concerned with the behavior of leaders in organizations (Landy, 2005).

According to Humphry (2002), the high incidence of the studies related to EI during the short period was due to it helps leaders to gain multiple sources of power and influence behaviors and outcomes of subordinates. Emotionally intelligent leaders, for example, can impact on their employees' job satisfaction, and performance quality, which lead to significant benefit in the organization outputs effectiveness. This is, however, what today's organizations are looking for, in the light of changing and volatile environment, and the global economic crisis.

This chapter exhibits the background of the study, following by statement of the problem, and then it elaborates the purpose, objectives, and research questions. In

addition, the significance, and scope of the study are also provided. Finally, the conceptual and operational definitions of study terms are presented along with chapter summary.

## **1.2 Background of the Study**

Undoubtedly; organizations need to investigate the organizational commitment (OC) among their employees, due to its growing importance and implications, on the individual, group, organization or national level. However, OC studies are much needed in public sector organizations, as Al-ajmi (1999) asserted that public sector employee is less committed than private sector, due to some reasons, such as, internal and external work environment, and job motivations.

Fukami and Larson (1984) pointed that many studies on OC show that the greater OC can decrease rates of turnover, absenteeism and late for work. In the same time, it can increase the level of the organizations effectiveness and improve job performance. Furthermore, Davenport (2010) noted that results of several studies on OC have confirmed that, the lower OC can lead to high degree of absenteeism, turnover, and the low degree of job satisfaction and performance. In addition, they pointed that more research about the causes leading to appearance of such cost phenomena which drains a lot of effort and money of organizations are needed. On the other hand, Abonada (2007) counted the OC as one of the key elements to measure the compatibility between individuals, and between them and their organizations. She also noted that individuals those with high OC tend to stay in, do more efforts for their organization, and support its values.

However, the OC is affected by number of external organizational factors, such as, limited employment opportunities, labor laws, prevailing socio-culture, higher education systems that do not fit output of graduates with the requirements of organizations in the labor market. On the other hand, OC is affected by number of internal factors, such as, motivation, organizational environment, organizational policies, leadership style, and characteristics of subordinates (Abonada, 2007). Even though, there are many factors which impact on the OC level, but one of the most important factors is leadership effectiveness (Davenport, 2010; Mert *et al.* 2010). In other word, organizations cannot ignore the essential role of leadership in the employee's failure or poor relationship with his or her job and organization.

The definition of leadership effectiveness can be appeared by more than one way, but for the purpose of this research it can be defined as having followers with a high level of OC. This standard was chosen because the literature showed that OC is an important aspect of the leader effectiveness and the organization success (Ruestow, 2008). Thus, for over 50 years, many organizations tried to identify traits and characteristics associated with effective leadership (Higgs, 2003). In 2000, Goleman indicated that whichever leadership model is examined it is asserted that leaders need to possess emotional intelligence as one of most important leadership traits and characteristics (Goleman, 2000a; Goleman, 2000b).

More recently, EI has become a popularized concept in the workplace (Higgs and Aitken, 2003). It has been linked to leadership effectiveness in organizations and overall organizational performance (Kerr *et al.* 2006). Leaders who are aware of EI and practice the associated skills have credited with enhancing growth and development in organizations (Goleman, 1998; Kerr *et al.* 2006). In this global society, organizations need emotionally intelligent managers to manage people, process, and help the organization to remain competitive (Momeni, 2009).

Not only that, but also several of benefits can be achieved from emotionally intelligent leaders, including maintaining employees, especially, whose have competence and experience, improving the organization performance, and contributing in improving the quality and safety decisions. Moreover, Carmeli (2003) pointed that usage of emotions in adaptive ways can help in:

- generating multiple future plans (flexible planning),
- improve the decision-making process due to a better understanding of one's emotional reaction (creative thinking),
- facilitate cognitive processes such as creativity on the one hand and punctuality on the other hand (mood redirected attention),
- and enhance persistence regarding challenging tasks (motivating emotions).

In order to grow organizations and keep them competitive, it is equally important to have engaged employees (Hall, 2010). However, the emotionally intelligent leaders are most likely to play a key role in improving the employees' integration, job satisfaction, and OC to their organizations. Thus, more investigations and research in EI of leaders and its expected impacts on employees/followers outcomes, behavior, attitude, and performance are needed. As well as, examine the how EI can play its role more efficiently and effectively.

### **1.3 Statement of the Problem**

Even though, EI awareness increased since the last decade (Hall, 2010), there is still a lack of understanding of emotional competencies among managers (Joseph and Newman, 2010). Despite, multiple forms of intelligence are needed to achieve effectiveness (Boyatzis and Ratti, 2009); EI skills became increasingly more important than intelligence quotient (IQ) in workplace (Stein *et al.* 2009). In fact, only 20% of the variance of people's success is accounted by cognitive intelligence, whereas, the

remaining 80% is explained by EI (Goleman, 1995; Bar-On and Parker, 2000). Therefore, it is clear that EI is a very important skill that required for success in nowadays organizations.

More recently, many researchers supported that EI has a significant relationship with leadership effectiveness and success (e.g. Cavallo and Brienza, 2000; Stein *et al.* 2009; and Tang *et al.* 2010). It means that, leaders who have high level of EI lead more effectively and successfully than those with low level of EI. Therefore, emotionally intelligent leaders are more likely to be better performers in organizations (Koman and Wolff, 2008), which lead them to yield high profit-earning companies (Stein *et al.* 2009), and achieve business outcomes (Rosete and Ciarrochi, 2005). Leaders' EI is also related to both positive work attitudes and work effectiveness (Carmeli, 2003). It has been linked to improve workplace behavior (Jordan and Lawrence, 2009), for example, organizational citizenship behaviors (Carmeli and Josman, 2006), and job satisfaction (e.g. Guleryuz *et al.* 2008). However, one of the most important workplace behaviors that have linked to EI is organizational commitment (e.g. Bar-On, 2000; Howard, 2008; Bennett, 2011).

Indeed, emotionally intelligent leaders have increasingly substantial impact on organizational commitment (Carmeli, 2003; Mert *et al.* 2010). Therefore, employees' OC is considered as one of dependent variables that can be highly predicted by leadership effectiveness (Mayfield and Mayfield, 2002). For example, when leaders deal with their subordinates in respected way and considerations (DeCotiis and Summers, 1987), express a positive mood (George, 2006), and utilize participating style more often (Wu *et al.* 2006), subordinates showed greater levels of OC. However, employees with high level of OC and work under emotionally intelligent leaders are more likely to always remain with their organizations even in difficult situations, sharing organization's values, goals and concerns, and spending effectively and freely in achieving the desired results (Steers, 1977; Meyer and Allen 1997; Tella *et al.* 2007).

Although, most of previous studies, in the available literature, provided a strong correlation between EI and OC either positive relationship (e.g. Hall, 2010; and Bennett, 2011) or negative relationship (e.g. Wong and Law, 2002; and Sy *et al.* 2006), but there are some studies provided a contrast results. Ruestow (2008) and Miller (2011) found that there is no relationship between leaders' EI and subordinates' OC. It means that, high level of EI among leaders may do not play direct role in increasing or decreasing subordinates' OC. These inconsistent results, therefore, led to increasing the need for more examination of the leader/subordinate EI/OC relationship and impacts, to test variables with new methods. This current study, however, aims to examine this issue, to provide more relationship and impacts evidences.

Moreover, in researches, several background issues, such as, type of organizations, job duties, and subordinates' characteristics, may lead to different findings. For example, academic settings are quite different from business settings (Spendlove, 2007). In fact, academic settings have complexity in terms of their multiple goals, traditional values (Petrov, 2006), and employees' duties (Toker, 2011) and characteristics (Middlehurst, 1993). Most of the previous studies that examined the leader/subordinate EI/OC relationship, focused on private sector companies (Hall, 2010; Bennett, 2011; and Miller, 2011), public human service organization (Ruestow, 2008), so, there is a lack of studies that have been applied in education sector. Therefore, the current study investigated the leader/subordinate EI/OC relationship and impacts focusing on academic setting to fill the knowledge gap of literature and provide useful results for education sector.

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

Based on the problem statement of the study that mentioned above, the premise of the research is expressed in the following three research questions:

1. What are the levels of emotional intelligence (EI) of UTM leaders?
2. What are the levels of organizational commitment (OC) of UTM academic staff?
3. What are the impacts of EI and its dimensions (intrapersonal RAEq, interpersonal EReq, stress management SMeq, adaptability ADeq, and general mood GMeq) of UTM leaders on OC of UTM academicians?

### **1.5 Objectives of the Study**

The purpose of the current study was to examine the impacts of leaders EI on the OC of their subordinates. In other words, it determined whether the leader's level of EI affects the OC level of their followers in academic setting. Specifically, does the academic staff of leader with higher EI have higher levels of OC? Results of this research help to refine the theory of EI, add to the body of research some evidences about the relation and impacts of leader's EI on their followers, and examine EI/OC impacts in an academic context.

Moreover, it helps the university to identify the EI levels of its academic leaders (heads of faculties departments) and the OC levels of its academic staff, which lead to a number of benefits, for example, contributing in developing leadership training programs of university.

The purpose of current study may be summarized within the three following objectives:

1. To determine the levels of UTM leaders' emotional intelligence.
2. To determine the perceived levels of UTM academic staff organizational commitment.

3. To investigate the impacts of the selected independent variable: emotional intelligence of UTM leaders and its dimensions (intrapersonal, interpersonal, stress management, adaptability, and general mood) on the selected dependent variable: organizational commitment of UTM academic staff.

## **1.6 Research Hypotheses**

To understand the leader/subordinate EI/OC impacts, several hypotheses are provided in this study. The hypotheses are predictions of the relationships and impacts among variables of the research. The hypotheses of the current study as follow:

H1<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant impacts exist of leaders' EI and its dimensions (RAeq, EReq, SMeq, ADeq, and GMeq) on the OC.

H2<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant impacts exist of leaders' EI and its dimensions (RAeq, EReq, SMeq, ADeq, and GMeq) on the AC.

H3<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant impacts exist of leaders' EI and its dimensions (RAeq, EReq, SMeq, ADeq, and GMeq) on the CC.

H4<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant impacts exist of leaders' EI and its dimensions (RAeq, EReq, SMeq, ADeq, and GMeq) on the NC.

## **1.7 Significance of the Research**

The current research examined the impacts of leaders' EI on the followers' OC. However, understanding how the emotionally intelligent leaders affect the subordinates'



behaviors and attitudes is critical to building and driving a prosperous organization. This study suppose to add some contributions to the growing body of research on EI, and help continue refining the EI theories and its impact on leaders and followers effectiveness in the workplace.

In brief, the this research has the following important advantages:

1. The outcomes of this study have some contributions to a full knowledge of this topic.
2. The findings of the present study can assist academic leaders to understand some variables that affect on their academic subordinates' OC.
3. It is a contribution to help UTM to develop training programs for staff to improve its leaders' characteristics and skills.

## **1.8 Scope of the Study**

The specific problem which investigated in the current study was that there was a challenge in academic context to understand whether highly emotionally intelligent managers influence academic staff to remain committed to their organization or not. There was an old axiom that “people do not leave companies, they leave bosses” (Reid and Crisp). The scope of the current study was limited to academic staff of university technology Malaysia (UTM) Skudai campus, Johor Bahru state, Malaysia in 2011/2012. This current study was limited to academicians of UTM who are full-time employees, hold jobs at rank of professor, associate professor, senior lecturer, assistant lecturer, or tutor, and report to one of heads of departments in UTM faculties. The managers/leaders in this study were heads of departments in each faculty of UTM, who supervise and assess the performance of academic staff. The current study used multi-rater assessment instrument to obtain information pertaining to leaders' EI (operationalized by RAeq,

EReq, SMeq, ADeq, and GMeq), from academic followers' perceptions. It used also, self-report assessment instrument to obtain information pertaining to academicians' OC (operationalized by AC, CC, and NC) of the same leaders. The following section addresses the operational definitions of terms that are used in the context of this study.

## **1.9 Limitation of the Research**

A review of relevant studies noted that emotionally intelligent leaders are likely to be effective in building and driving successful organizations. It is interesting to observe that, due to the popularity of the EI concept and leadership effectiveness, most of studies and research in the literature have investigated EI in laboratory conditions, using student only, employees only, or leaders only as sample populations (Lopes *et al.* 2004; Ruestow, 2008; Howard, 2008; Stewart, 2008; and Guleryuz *et al.* 2008). Most of the research examined the relationship between a leaders' EI and their success, and many used self-report measures rather than objective measures which needed to meet sufficient validity and reliability standards.

Even most studies that examined the impacts and relationship of leader's EI and level of followers' OC were in USA organizations settings, and shortage in the number of studies have been applied in the academic context.

## **1.10 Conceptual and Operational Definition**

This section describes the terms that used in the current study of leaders' EI, and their employees/followers' (academicians') OC. The study was conducted at Universiti

Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) Skudai campus that is located in Johor Bahru state in southern portion of Peninsular Malaysia.

*Emotional Intelligence (EI)* refers to "the ability to deal effectively with emotions", a simple definition that characterizes the relatively low level of agreement across the major EI views. Goleman (1995) described EI as the awareness of one's feeling, the awareness of the feeling of others, and how the individual transcend that awareness towards the treatment of others. Whereas, Salovey and Mayer (1997) defined EI as "*The ability to perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thoughts, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth*" (p. 5). On the other hand, Bar-On (1997) characterized EI as "*an array of non-cognitive capabilities, competencies, and skills that influence one's ability to succeed in coping with environmental demands and pressures*" (p. 14). However, the terms emotional intelligence and EI are used interchangeable in the current study.

EI in the current study used Bar-On (2000) model of intelligence known "Mixed Model"; It includes the mental abilities as self-emotional awareness, and personal characteristics are separate from the mental abilities as personal independence, where he considered that EI consists of (15) skills and competencies, distributed into five dimensions in the personal, social and emotional aspects about the individuals successful. These dimensions are:

- Intrapersonal (RA): it explains the relationship of the individual with him/herself, (i.e. assesses individual's understanding, expression, and development of him/her self). This component includes five capabilities are self-regard, emotional self-awareness, assertiveness, independence, and self-actualization.
- Interpersonal (ER): This group of components explains the relationship of the individual with others, as, it shows the individual's interpersonal skills and

functioning. It comprises three capabilities are empathy, social responsibility, and interpersonal relationship.

- Stress Management (SM): it assesses how well individual is perceived to be able to withstand stress and manage his impulses. It includes two capabilities are stress tolerance and impulse control.
- Adaptability (AD): it addresses insights of how successfully individual is able to cope with environmental and social demands by effectively "sizing up" and dealing with problematic situations. It comprises three capabilities are reality testing, flexibility, and problem solving.
- General Mood (GM): it assesses the level to which individual is perceived to maintain a positive outlook on, be contented with, and actively enjoy life. It includes two capabilities are optimism; the ability to look at the bright side of life, and happiness; sense of satisfaction and enjoyment of life (Bar-On, 2000).

**Organizational commitment (OC)** is *“the relative strength of an individual’s identification with and involvement in a particular organization”* (Porter *et al.* 1974, p. 27). In addition, developing OC over time made scholars from the different background give their own definitions as to how the construct should be define. Hall *et al.* (1970), for instance, have defined OC as the *“process by which the goals of the organizations and those of the individual become increasingly integrated and congruent”* (p. 176). Sheldon (1971) defines OC as an attitude or an orientation towards the organizations, which links or attracts the identity of the person to the organizations. Salancik (1977) defines OC as *“a state of being in which an individual becomes bound by actions to beliefs that sustains activities and involvement”* (p. 62). Meyer and Allen (1997) define OC as *“the psychological link between the employee and the organization and the employee’s desire to remain with the organization”* (p. 11). However, the terms organizational commitment and OC are used interchangeable in the current study.

OC in the current study utilized three-component model of commitment introduced by Meyer and Allen (1991); it includes:

- Affective Commitment (AC) which defined as a member's emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization. People with strong affective commitment stay employment with their organization because they want to.
- Continuance Commitment (CC) which refers to employee's awareness about whether the cost associated with leaving the organization will be more/less than stay in or not. So, people with continuance commitment do not leave their organizations due to they need to stay.
- Normative Commitment (NC) which reflects a feeling or sense of obligation to continue employment in the organization. People with a high level of normative commitment believe that, they ought to stay with their organization (Meyer and Allen, 1991).

This section provided definition of terms that used in the context of this study, to facilitate a better understanding of the overall study.

### **1.11 Summary**

The importance of leader's EI and how it can influence organizational factors has demonstrated in the background of this study. In addition, although, there are many studies have examined EI with many variables, but studying the impacts of leader's EI on employees' OC in academic context was very limited.

Thus, this study aimed to determine whether the leader's level of EI influences the OC of followers in academic staff. Specifically, do the academic followers of leaders with higher EI have higher levels of OC? In addition, the level of EI leader in UTM and level of OC of UTM academic staff were identified. This chapter has showed research questions, significance, and scope of the study.

The following chapter reviews the literature of EI and OC. Specifically, EI history, definitions, theories, models, development, and its relationship with leadership effectiveness were reviewed. On the other hand, OC history, definitions, theories, components, antecedents and sequences, and its relationship with leadership behaviors were reviewed also. However, it discusses the relationship between EI and OC based on the literature.

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