

THE IMPACT OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE ON INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS AND PROFESSIONAL SUCCESS

Marina Kostić¹

Abstract: Emotional intelligence (EI) refers to a set of abilities that enable an individual to recognize, understand, and effectively manage their own and others' emotions. In contemporary society, its significance is increasingly recognized in the context of interpersonal relationships and professional success. This review paper explores theoretical frameworks and contemporary empirical findings on the impact of EI on the quality of interpersonal interactions and work performance. Special attention is given to the dimensions of EI, such as self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, motivation, and social skills, and their role in enhancing teamwork, leadership, decision-making, and conflict resolution. Educational strategies for developing EI in educational and organizational contexts are also discussed. Based on the reviewed findings, it is concluded that emotional intelligence plays a crucial role in successful professional adaptation and the building of quality interpersonal relationships.

Key words: emotional intelligence, interpersonal relationships, professional success, empathy, communication, leadership, self-regulation, teamwork.

1. INTRODUCTION

In contemporary social and work environments, emotional intelligence has become an increasingly relevant construct in understanding human behavior, interpersonal dynamics, and professional development. Traditional measures of cognitive intelligence (IQ) are no longer considered sufficient indicators of success, both in personal and professional life. In this context, emotional intelligence (EI) — the ability to recognize, understand, and constructively manage emotions — is gaining a central place in psychological research and application.

Interpersonal relationships, as a complex set of interactions between individuals, depend not only on rational processes but also on emotional competencies. The quality of communication, the ability to empathize, and effective conflict resolution are significantly influenced by the level of emotional competence of an individual. In the workplace, these skills become even more important, as they affect teamwork, organizational climate, leadership, and overall professional effectiveness.

Professional success, although a multidimensional and complex concept, is increasingly analyzed through the lens of psychological skills, with emotional intelligence occupying a special position. Numerous studies indicate that employees with developed emotional intelligence are more satisfied with their jobs, achieve better performance, cope with stress more effectively, and build productive professional relationships more easily.

This paper aims to provide a theoretical and empirical overview of the relationship between emotional intelligence, interpersonal relationships, and professional success. Special emphasis is placed on the psychological mechanisms through which emotional intelligence acts as a predictor or mediator in these areas, along with a discussion of the possibilities for its systematic development and application in various contexts.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

The concept of emotional intelligence (EI) was first systematically defined by Salovey and Mayer, who described it as the ability to accurately perceive, assess, and express emotions, the capacity to generate emotions that facilitate thinking, and the ability to regulate emotions for emotional and intellectual growth [1]. Their model of EI includes four key ability groups: perception of emotions, using emotions to facilitate thinking, understanding emotions, and managing emotions. Later, Mayer

¹ PhD in psychology, professor of applied studies, Toplica Academy of Applied Studies Prokuplje, Ćirila i Metodija 1, Serbia, markost79.mk@gmail.com

and colleagues developed the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT) as a standardized measure of emotional intelligence abilities [2].

Parallel to this, so-called mixed models of emotional intelligence were developed, among which Goleman's model is the most well-known, defining EI as a combination of emotional and social skills, personality traits, and motivational factors [3]. Goleman specifically emphasizes five core domains: self-awareness, self-regulation, internal motivation, empathy, and social skills.

Bar-On developed one of the most influential mixed models of emotional intelligence, presenting EI as a set of interconnected emotional and social competencies that influence our ability to effectively cope with the demands and pressures from the environment [4].

Empirical research has shown that different approaches to measuring EI yield consistent findings regarding its significance for adaptive behavior and social functioning [5], [6]. Ability models are often associated with more objective measures of success in work and academic contexts, while mixed models better predict subjective satisfaction and social outcomes [7].

Comprehensive portrayals of emotional intelligence indicate its multidimensional nature and importance in predicting interpersonal competencies, leadership, work performance, and psychological well-being [8], [9]. Contemporary research trends suggest the need for the integration of abilities and traits in understanding emotional intelligence, with an emphasis on the importance of situational factors in the expression of emotional competencies [10].

2.1. Dimensions of emotional intelligence

Understanding the dimensions of emotional intelligence is crucial for grasping its impact on interpersonal relationships and professional success. As previously mentioned, according to Goleman's model, EI consists of five core components: self-awareness, self-regulation, internal motivation, empathy, and social skills, which together shape emotionally competent behavior in various contexts [11].

Self-awareness refers to an individual's ability to recognize and understand their own emotional states, which enables a more realistic assessment of personal abilities and reactions in interpersonal relationships. Research shows that a higher level of self-awareness positively correlates with more effective communication, greater interpersonal trust, and the ability to collaborate successfully within teams [12].

Self-regulation involves impulse control, the ability to manage stress, and maintaining emotional stability. Individuals with well-developed self-regulation exhibit greater resilience in conflict situations, better adaptation to changes in the professional environment, and more effective problem-solving [13].

Internal motivation, as the third dimension, refers to the ability to maintain inner passion and commitment to goals, independent of external rewards. Studies suggest that emotional intelligence fosters intrinsic motivation, which directly contributes to higher work performance and greater professional satisfaction [14].

Empathy is the foundation of successful interpersonal relationships as it allows for understanding the emotions and perspectives of others. A high level of empathy is associated with better team dynamics, more effective leadership, and a reduction in interpersonal conflicts within the workplace [15].

Social skills encompass the ability to build and maintain interpersonal relationships, manage teams, and negotiate effectively. Empirical research shows that individuals with developed social skills are more successful in organizational structures that require a high degree of collaboration and communication [16].

Through the synergistic functioning of these dimensions, emotional intelligence enables individuals to appropriately respond to emotional challenges, enhance interpersonal dynamics, and achieve professional goals in complex and demanding environments.

2.2. Emotional intelligence and interpersonal relationships

Emotional intelligence enables individuals to establish deeper, higher-quality, and more functional interpersonal relationships through emotional regulation and the expression of social sensitivity. Individuals with high emotional intelligence demonstrate the ability to adequately interpret verbal and non-verbal cues, adapt their communication style to the context of the situation, and anticipate the emotional reactions of their conversation partners, contributing to more harmonious interactions [17].

One of the key aspects of successful and quality interpersonal relationships is the ability to understand emotions, which facilitates the building of mutual trust. Research shows that individuals with developed emotional competencies are better at recognizing latent needs and feelings of others, leading to higher levels of satisfaction in relationships and greater stability in social dynamics [18].

In the context of conflict resolution, emotional intelligence stands out as a significant predictor of constructive behavioral patterns. Instead of escalating misunderstandings, emotionally intelligent individuals strive to find compromises and maintain relationships through the use of emotionally informed communication strategies [19].

In addition to interpersonal adaptation, emotional intelligence also contributes to overcoming social challenges, such as dealing with hostile behaviors, isolation, or various forms of social pressure. Its role is particularly emphasized in multicultural contexts, where the ability to understand and manage emotions helps overcome language, cultural, and normative barriers [20].

Empirical findings further confirm that emotional intelligence is not only a prerequisite for positive interpersonal relationships but also a resilience factor in challenging interpersonal situations, thus contributing to the long-term maintenance of social cohesion and individual psychological well-being [21].

2.3. Emotional intelligence and professional success

In contemporary work environments, emotional intelligence is increasingly recognized as a key factor for professional success, alongside technical competencies and cognitive abilities. Individuals with high emotional intelligence manage professional challenges more effectively, adapt better to changes, and maintain motivation in dynamic work conditions [22].

One of the most important advantages of emotional intelligence in the professional context is the ability to effectively manage stress. Employees who develop emotional resilience are better able to overcome workplace pressures, contributing to their own productivity and mental health, as well as organizational outcomes [23].

In the field of leadership, emotional intelligence is a prerequisite for effective team management. Leaders with well-developed emotional competencies demonstrate greater ability to inspire employees, build trust, and encourage collective cooperation, which directly impacts organizational culture and performance [24].

Furthermore, emotional intelligence plays a crucial role in decision-making in professional situations that involve uncertainty and complexity. The ability to integrate emotional information with rational analysis contributes to making more balanced and successful decisions [25].

Empirical research shows that emotional intelligence also has a significant impact on career advancement. Employees with developed emotional skills are more likely to achieve leadership positions, receive higher performance ratings, and are more likely to be recognized as key talents within organizations [26].

In addition to individual benefits, emotional intelligence also contributes to collective professional success by improving teamwork, enhancing internal communication, and strengthening organizational cohesion, thus creating a sustainable foundation for the long-term growth and development of companies.

2.4. Strategies for developing emotional intelligence

The development of emotional intelligence is a process that requires conscious effort through various educational, training, and organizational interventions. Modern strategies focus on strengthening key components of emotional intelligence through individual and group methods, aiming to achieve better adaptation, interpersonal efficiency, and professional success [27].

One of the basic approaches is the implementation of emotional literacy programs, which include training in recognizing and verbalizing emotions, active listening skills, and managing emotional impulses. These programs are particularly effective when implemented in early education and through continuous professional development [28].

Cognitive-behavioral techniques are also recognized as an effective tool for developing emotional self-regulation. By identifying and modifying irrational beliefs and automatic emotional reactions, individuals gain greater control over their behavior in challenging situations [29].

In the organizational context, strategies for developing emotional intelligence include coaching, mentoring, and social skills training. Individual coaching, based on feedback and reflection, allows employees to recognize emotional patterns and develop more effective strategies for interpersonal interaction [30].

One of the innovative approaches is the use of mindfulness programs, which help develop emotional awareness and resilience through attention and emotional regulation exercises. Contemporary research shows that regular practice of mindfulness techniques positively impacts emotional stability and professional performance [31].

Finally, an important aspect of emotional intelligence development is continuous self-analysis and introspective practice. Tools such as emotion journals, self-assessments of emotional competencies, and occasional evaluations of professional behavior enable individuals to actively manage their own emotional growth [32].

In the past decade, research has highlighted the growing role of digital tools and artificial intelligence in the development of emotional intelligence, particularly through personalized mobile applications for emotional monitoring, biofeedback, and reflective interventions [33]. These tools enable continuous evaluation of emotional responses and customized reminders for emotion regulation, thereby enhancing the everyday application of acquired skills in real-life contexts. Furthermore, neuropsychological interventions such as neurofeedback training and techniques aimed at modulating prefrontal brain activity have demonstrated positive effects on emotional self-regulation and social perception, especially in individuals facing challenges with empathy and impulsivity [34]. These methods are increasingly being integrated into professional development programs across healthcare, education, and leadership sectors.

Notably, there is an emerging emphasis on developing emotional intelligence within hybrid and virtual work environments, where interpersonal dynamics are altered by the absence of nonverbal cues and physical presence. In this context, training in digital emotional literacy, virtual empathy, and emotional adaptation in online teams represents a novel approach to EI development [35].

These contemporary strategies not only complement traditional methods but also emphasize the importance of flexibility and innovation in designing emotional development programs. The implications of such approaches include enhanced emotional resilience among employees, reduced stress levels, improved organizational climate, and higher-quality interpersonal relationships in professional settings [36].

3. CONCLUSION

Emotional intelligence is a fundamental element of the contemporary concept of success in interpersonal relationships and professional environments. Its significance goes beyond traditional cognitive abilities, as it enables individuals to effectively manage their own emotions, understand the feelings of others, and build quality interpersonal networks.

Based on the analyzed theoretical frameworks and empirical findings, it is clear that emotional intelligence has a multiple positive impact on professional performance, the quality of teamwork, leadership, and conflict resolution. Furthermore, it contributes to adaptability in demanding work conditions and long-term professional sustainability.

Modern approaches to the development of emotional intelligence indicate that this skill is teachable and improvable through targeted educational, cognitive-behavioral, and organizational interventions. This opens up space for systematic investment in the emotional competence of individuals and teams as a key resource in achieving personal satisfaction and organizational success.

Further research and the implementation of emotional intelligence development programs remain priorities for all sectors striving to improve the quality of interpersonal relationships, work performance, and overall psychological well-being of employees.

4. REFERENCES

- [1] Salovey P., Mayer J.D.: *Emotional intelligence, Imagination, Cognition and Personality* 9(3): 185-211, 1990, <https://doi.org/10.2190/DUGG-P24E-52WK-6CDG>.
- [2] Mayer J.D., Salovey P., Caruso D.R.: *Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT): User's Manual*, Multi-Health Systems, 2002.
- [3] Goleman D.: *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*, Bantam Books, 1995.
- [4] Bar-On R.: *Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i): Technical Manual*, Multi-Health Systems, 1997.
- [5] Mayer J.D., Roberts R.D., Barsade S.G.: *Human abilities: Emotional intelligence*, *Annual Review of Psychology* 59(1): 507-536, 2008, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.59.103006.093646>.
- [6] Petrides K.V., Furnham A.: *Trait emotional intelligence: Psychometric investigation with reference to established trait taxonomies*, *European Journal of Personality* 15(6): 425-448, 2001, <https://doi.org/10.1002/per.416>.
- [7] Joseph D.L., Newman D.A.: *Emotional intelligence: An integrative meta-analysis and cascading model*, *Journal of Applied Psychology* 95(1): 54-78, 2010, <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0017286>.
- [8] Côté S.: *Emotional intelligence in organizations*, *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior* 1(1): 459-488, 2014, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-031413-091233>.
- [9] Schlegel K., Mehu M., van Peer J.M., Bänziger T., Scherer K.R.: *Sense and sensibility: The role of cognitive and emotional intelligence in negotiation*, *Journal of Research in Personality* 66: 95-102, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2016.12.002>.
- [10] Zeidner M., Matthews G., Roberts R.D.: *What we know about emotional intelligence: How it affects learning, work, relationships, and our mental health*, MIT Press, 2009.
- [11] Goleman D.: *Working with Emotional Intelligence*, Bantam Books, 1998.
- [12] Eurich T.: *Insight: The Surprising Truth About How Others See Us, How We See Ourselves, and Why the Answers Matter More Than We Think*, Currency, 2018.
- [13] Gross J.J.: *Emotion regulation: Current status and future prospects*, *Psychological Inquiry* 26(1): 1-26, 2015, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1047840X.2014.940781>.
- [14] Ryan R.M., Deci E.L.: *Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being*, *American Psychologist* 55(1): 68-78, 2000, <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.55.1.68>.

- [15] Kellett J.B., Humphrey R.H., Sleeth R.G.: *Empathy and the emergence of task and relations leaders*, Leadership Quarterly 17(2): 146-162, 2006, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2005.12.003>.
- [16] Riggio R.E.: Social Skills at Work, in: Riggio R.E. (ed.): *Social Skills in the Workplace*, Routledge, 2010.
- [17] Zeidner, M., Matthews G., Roberts R.D.: *Emotional intelligence in the workplace: A critical review*, Applied Psychology 53(3): 371-399, 2004, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1464-0597.2004.00176.x>.
- [18] Lopes P.N., Salovey P., Straus R.: *Emotional intelligence, personality, and the perceived quality of social relationships*, Personality and Individual Differences 35(3): 641-658, 2003, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0191-8869\(02\)00242-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0191-8869(02)00242-8).
- [19] Jordan P.J., Troth A.C.: *Emotional intelligence and conflict resolution: Implications for human resource development*, Advances in Developing Human Resources 4(1): 62-79, 2002, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1523422302004001005>.
- [20] Moon T.: *Emotional intelligence correlates of the four-factor model of cultural intelligence*, Journal of Managerial Psychology 25(8): 876-898, 2010, <https://doi.org/10.1108/02683941011089134>.
- [21] Kafetsios K., Zampetakis L.A.: *Emotional intelligence and job satisfaction: Testing the mediatory role of positive and negative affect at work*, Personality and Individual Differences 44(3): 712-722, 2008, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2007.10.004>.
- [22] O'Boyle E.H., Humphrey R.H., Pollack J.M., Hawver T.H., Story P.A.: *The relation between emotional intelligence and job performance: A meta-analysis*, Journal of Organizational Behavior 32(5): 788-818, 2011, <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.714>.
- [23] Slaski M., Cartwright S.: *Health, performance and emotional intelligence: An exploratory study of retail managers*, Stress and Health 18(2): 63-68, 2002, <https://doi.org/10.1002/smi.926>.
- [24] Barling J., Slater F., Kelloway E.K.: *Transformational leadership and emotional intelligence: An exploratory study*, Leadership & Organization Development Journal 21(3): 157-161, 2000, <https://doi.org/10.1108/01437730010325040>.
- [25] Lerner J.S., Li Y., Valdesolo P., Kassam K.S.: *Emotion and decision making*, Annual Review of Psychology 66: 799-823, 2015, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-010213-115043>.
- [26] Mayer J.D., Salovey P., Caruso D.R.: *Emotional intelligence: New ability or eclectic traits?*, American Psychologist 63(6): 503-517, 2008, <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.63.6.503>.
- [27] Clarke N.: *Developing emotional intelligence through workplace learning: Findings from a case study in healthcare*, Human Resource Development International 13(5): 529-545, 2010, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13678868.2010.520480>.
- [28] Brackett M.A., Rivers S.E., Reyes M.R., Salovey P.: *Enhancing academic performance and social and emotional competence with the RULER feeling words curriculum*, Learning and Individual Differences 22(2): 218-224, 2012, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lindif.2010.10.002>.
- [29] Gross J.J.: *Emotion regulation: Current status and future prospects*, Psychological Inquiry 26(1): 1-26, 2015, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1047840X.2014.940781>.
- [30] Grant A.M.: *Enhancing coaching skills and emotional intelligence through training*, Industrial and Commercial Training 39(5): 257-266, 2007, <https://doi.org/10.1108/00197850710761981>.
- [31] Glomb T.M., Duffy M.K., Bono J.E., Yang T.: *Mindfulness at work*, Research in Personnel and Human Resources Management 30: 115-157, 2011, [https://doi.org/10.1108/S0742-7301\(2011\)0000030005](https://doi.org/10.1108/S0742-7301(2011)0000030005).
- [32] Schutte N.S., Malouff J.M., Thorsteinsson E.B., Bhullar N., Rooke S.E.: *A meta-analytic investigation of the relationship between emotional intelligence and health*, Personality and Individual Differences 42(6): 921-933, 2007, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2006.09.003>.
- [33] Villani D., Sorgente A., Iannello P., Antonietti A.: *The role of interactive media in enhancing emotional intelligence development: A systematic review*, Computers in Human Behavior 121: 106793, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2021.106793>.
- [34] Zotev V., Phillips R., Yuan H., Misaki M., Bodurka J.: *Self-regulation of human brain activity using simultaneous real-time fMRI and EEG neurofeedback*, NeuroImage 85(3): 985-995, 2014, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.neuroimage.2013.04.126>.

- [35] Garcia-Buades M.E., Peñalver J., Ferreres M., Ramos-Villagrasa P.J.: *Emotional intelligence in virtual teams: A systematic review*, Journal of Business Research 147: 268–280, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2022.03.011>.
- [36] Schlegel K., Mehu M., van Peer J.M., Scherer K.R.: *The role of emotional intelligence in interpersonal interaction: A meta-analytic investigation*, Personality and Social Psychology Review 24(3): 203–226, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1088868320913175>.