















ORIGINAL

Emotional intelligence in leadership styles of human resources managers in Peruvian retail companies

Inteligencia Emocional en los Estilos de Liderazgo de los Administradores de Recursos Humanos en Empresas Retail Peruanas

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ABSTRACT

In the post-pandemic era, organizational challenges have intensified, particularly in leadership and management within the retail sector. This study focuses on the pivotal role of Emotional Intelligence (EI) in shaping leadership styles among human resource managers. Given the complexities introduced by the pandemic, which include managing remote teams and addressing heightened emotional stressors, the study argues that leaders must possess a profound understanding of both their own and their team members' emotional dynamics. Employing a quantitative approach, the study surveyed 385 human resource managers across Peruvian retail companies to assess how EI influences their leadership styles. The analysis utilized ordinal logistic regression, revealing that EI significantly affects leadership modalities, accounting for 27,2 % of the variation in leadership styles. This suggests that EI is a critical predictor of effective leadership. The findings underscore the necessity for HR leaders to excel in emotional management, which is essential not only for improving team cohesion and workplace atmosphere but also for enhancing overall business profitability. The study concludes that in the evolving retail landscape, fostering leaders with high EI could be the key to navigating post-pandemic challenges effectively.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence (EI); Leadership Styles; Transformational Leadership; Workplace Adaptability; Emotional Management.

RESUMEN

En la era pospandemia, los desafíos organizacionales se han intensificado, particularmente en liderazgo y gestión dentro del sector minorista. Este estudio se centra en el papel fundamental de la Inteligencia Emocional (IE) en la configuración de los estilos de liderazgo entre los gerentes de recursos humanos. Dada la complejidad introducida por la pandemia, que incluye la gestión de equipos remotos y el abordaje de estresores emocionales elevados, el estudio sostiene que los líderes deben poseer una comprensión profunda tanto de sus propias dinámicas emocionales como las de los miembros de su equipo. Empleando un enfoque cuantitativo, el estudio encuestó a 385 gerentes de recursos humanos de compañías minoristas peruanas para evaluar cómo la IE influye en sus estilos de liderazgo. El análisis utilizó la regresión logística ordinal, revelando que la IE afecta significativamente las modalidades de liderazgo, explicando el 27,2 % de la variación en los estilos de liderazgo. Esto sugiere que la IE es un predictor crítico de un liderazgo efectivo. Los hallazgos subrayan la necesidad de que los líderes de RR.HH. se destaquen en la gestión emocional, lo cual es esencial no solo para mejorar la cohesión del equipo y el ambiente laboral sino también para aumentar la rentabilidad general del negocio. El estudio concluye que, en el panorama minorista en evolución, fomentar líderes con alta IE podría ser la clave para navegar efectivamente los desafíos pospandémicos.

Palabras clave: Inteligencia Emocional (IE); Estilos de Liderazgo; Liderazgo Transformacional; Adaptabilidad en el Lugar de Trabajo; Gestión Emocional.

INTRODUCTION

The context of this study is framed in the global pandemic transition from COVID-19 to a new normality. The pandemic has generalized uncertainty, losses, and changes. In response to this situation, the measures taken, and the economic, physical, and emotional impacts have manifested in all spheres of our society.

The labor market demands emotional skills. In this regard, Emotional Intelligence (EI) is an invaluable tool for understanding leadership conducive to the success of businesses.⁽¹⁾ For this reason, interaction dynamics and communication channels have been adapted or redesigned according to new circumstances. In Peru, this scenario has exposed the lack and structural deficiencies at all levels. Thus, it has revealed weak institutionalism. Moreover, socioeconomic gaps have increased, as well as the vulnerability of households and businesses.^(2,3) Additionally, there have been effects on mental health, such as depression, stress, anxiety, and exhaustion, resulting from extended periods of confinement and restrictive measures.^(4,5,6)

Organizations have had to adjust or create new processes to adapt to this new normality, considering the human factor and the business by offering differentiated products or services compared to the competition. In this aspect, employees have experienced challenges and situations where they had to manage their emotions until finding a balance in the various facets of their life.^(7,8,9)

Similarly, managers adopted leadership styles that have had a significant impact throughout this process of change due to the influence they have on the functioning of organization members.⁽¹⁰⁾ Likewise, leadership styles help develop policies and strategies that will improve the quality of work life of employees and commitment and contribute to their emotional stability. Therefore, companies should focus on factors such as leadership styles and emotionality to enhance the organizational commitment of employees.⁽¹¹⁾

In this context, the human resources area has been one of the most demanded during this process of change, as it is expected that those in charge of human management can outline steps that develop the emotional intelligence of their employees and managers, instructing them in the ability to recognize, accept, and channel emotions. Furthermore, companies that wish to be at the top should consider their Human Resources (HR) departments as a fundamental part of the business, which allows analyzing the results of their strategies and the climate, as well as carrying out the necessary adjustments and modifications and implementing them. Primarily, in unforeseen situations like the current one, which has forced all sectors of society to adopt new measures in record time.⁽¹²⁾

In light of the above, this article aims to explain the influence of Emotional Intelligence (EI) on the leadership style adopted by HR area employees in Peruvian retail companies, as emotional management and correct direction can facilitate a better understanding and execution of activities by individuals at their workplace, which impacts organizational performance and profitability.⁽¹³⁾

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional Intelligence was formally defined and assessed in 1990⁽¹⁴⁾ and shortly after the initiation of the first scientific works, a book on the subject was published that popularized the term to the extent of becoming a best-seller.⁽¹⁵⁾ In his book, Goleman challenged the classic concepts of success, ability, and talent, arguing that the excessive importance always given to the intelligence quotient for classifying people as more or less intelligent was of little use in predicting the future. It also describes emotional intelligence as the potential ability that determines the learning of practical skills based on one of the following five compositional elements: self-awareness, motivation, self-control, empathy, and relationship skills. On the other hand, emotional competence shows to what extent we have been able to transfer this potential to our work environment.

Among the concepts, emotional intelligence (EI) is defined as the skill to monitor emotions, our own feelings, and those of others, to identify and manage them effectively, so that we can solve problems in our environment.⁽¹⁶⁾ Furthermore, pioneers conceptualize EI as a set of skills that explain individual differences in the way we perceive and understand our emotions. More formally, it is the ability to perceive, evaluate, and accurately express emotions; the ability to access and/or generate feelings that facilitate thought; to understand emotions and to reason emotionally; and finally, the ability to regulate one's own and others' emotions including self-control, enthusiasm, persistence, and the ability to motivate oneself.^(14,15,17)

Several current models on emotional intelligence are presented below: Cognitive Ability-Performance Model,⁽¹⁴⁾ whose skills include: "Perception, evaluation, and expression of emotions," "Assimilation of emotions into our thought," "Understanding and analysis of emotions," "Reflective regulation of emotions." The Personality and Non-Cognitive Adjustment Model⁽¹⁷⁾, which includes skills such as: "Intrapersonal skills," "Interpersonal skills," "Adaptability," "Stress management," "General mood state"; and the Mixed Model Type⁽¹⁵⁾, which includes

skills such as: "Awareness of one's own emotions," "Emotional management," "Self-motivation," "Recognition of emotions in others," "Management of interpersonal relationships" (Table 1).

Tabla 1. Emotional Intelligence Models		
Mayer & Salovey (1997)	Bar-On (1997)	Goleman (1996)
Model Type: Cognitive Ability-Performance Model	Model Type: Cognitive Ability-Performance Model	Model Type: Cognitive Ability-Performance Model
Note: adapted from Mayer, Salovey & Caruso (2000)		

There are several questionnaires on EI, each assessing different components of it. One of the first questionnaires is the Trait-Meta Mood Scale (TMMS), which provides a personal estimation scale on the reflective aspects of our emotional experience. The TMMS includes three key dimensions of intrapersonal emotional intelligence: attention to one's feelings, emotional clarity, and repair of one's emotions. It is available in three versions: 48 items, 30 items, and 24 items.⁽¹⁾

Subsequent research has found that this scale can be divided into four sub-factors: 1) emotional perception; 2) management of one's emotions; 3) management of others' emotions; and 4) utilization of emotions. Another instrument is the EQ-i inventory by Bar-On (1997, adapted to Spanish by MHS, Toronto, Canada). This measure contains 133 items and is composed of five general factors, which are broken down into a total of 15 sub-scales; these factors are: 1) intrapersonal intelligence; 2) interpersonal intelligence; 3) adaptability; 4) stress management; 5) general mood.

They distinguish four main cores of the construct: emotional knowledge, emotional aptitude, emotional depth, and emotional alchemy. Moreover, EI is a variable related to multiple variables such as the gender of collaborators, according to which EI can vary and impact their work performance^(18,19,20,21,22,23) because it can be associated with trust and cohesion as ways to establish a "connection" with self-esteem.^(19,24,25,26,27)

EI influences the quality of service and the established direction.⁽²⁸⁾ Additionally, professional trajectories and personality can affect the level of EI.⁽¹³⁾ On the other hand, it impacts leadership style, creativity; in burnout from work activity and job satisfaction.^(29,30,31,32,33,34,35) After considering these studies, it is necessary to emphasize that the analysis of EI, conducted in the mentioned research, was completed from a quantitative approach.⁽³⁶⁾ Also, a relationship of EI with job satisfaction⁽²⁸⁾ and job performance was found. In this case, it reduces potential conflicts between internal and external customers based on various strategies used, one of them being leadership. Thus, it improves results and meets the outlined objectives.^(37,38,39,40,41,42,43)

Furthermore, it can be added that not regulating and not controlling emotions produces work burnout.⁽⁴⁴⁾ Finally, studies indicate that EI in human resource professionals, in whom emotional competencies are recognized, perform well and improve their behavior at work; likewise, human resource professionals value the selection and training of a more emotionally intelligent workforce.^(45,46)

Finally, the Trait-Meta Mood Scale (TMMS) questionnaire, which has 24 items, provides a personal estimation on the reflective aspects of our emotional experience.

Leadership Styles

Indeed, leadership is considered a principal element in an organization, through which leaders can achieve objectives and enhance the productivity of organizations. It is an essential component that influences the work environment and the way individuals perceive their jobs.^(47,48) Regarding the leadership styles that a manager adopts in companies, this study operates from the comprehensive or emerging theory where the three main styles based on the full-range model are located: transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and laissez-faire leadership, each with its own characteristics.^(49,50) Transactional leadership values results and compensation of rewards with followers aimed at achieving objectives.

Transformational leadership cares about the follower, their needs, and their personal and professional transformation aligned with organizational objectives. Laissez-faire leadership represents the absence of leadership, a non-transaction, and plays a passive role in the organization.⁽¹⁰⁾ The dimensions used are transactional leadership, transformational leadership, and laissez-faire leadership.⁽⁴⁹⁾ Additionally, there are multiple instruments to measure leadership, including the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ-5X) by Bass and Avolio, which contains 5 factors of transformational leadership, 3 factors of transactional leadership, and one laissez-faire leadership.

The measurement of the 22 items of transformational leadership style is loaded with factors of idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Meanwhile, the transactional leadership style is loaded in 3 factors: contingent reward, management by exception (active), and management by exception (passive). And finally, there is the laissez-faire leadership. The questionnaire is based on a 5-point Likert scale.^(51,52,53)

Furthermore, there are specific qualities in leadership that allow leaders to work in any context and achieve

excellent performance from their collaborators, characteristics such as communication, the use of efficient language, being drivers of changes in organizational culture that allow adapting their teams, and fostering social relationships. In essence, the management of emotions, human skills, self-motivations, motivations, and commitment are characteristics that play a predominant role when leading work in any context.⁽⁵⁴⁾

Emotional Intelligence in Leaders

Multiple studies have confirmed the relationship between EI and leadership styles. Authors⁽⁵⁵⁾ explained the effect of emotional intelligence (self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, motivation, and social skills) on leadership exercised in operational teams, especially the dimensions of motivation and social skills because they have a greater effect on task performance and contextual performance levels. Other studies reveal that EI is related to leadership styles and that it affects their teamwork management, emotional management, and respect for organizational decisions, enabling leaders to navigate challenges of a changing context or crisis by leading calmly and orderly, thus ensuring the success of the projects they undertake.^(56,57)

Additionally, properly conducting human skills allows the leader to engage deeply, highlighting their performance when directing work teams, enabling staff to commit to work in any context, and finally, leaders are those who use advanced skills in communication, organization, problem-solving, analysis, and personal skills that allow them to influence the actions of others.^(54,58)

METHODOLOGY

The research was framed within a quantitative approach, causal correlational scope, and non-experimental design.⁽⁵⁹⁾ To measure EI, the Salovey and Mayer TMMS-24 questionnaire (24 items) was used; whereas, for leadership styles, a questionnaire was developed, which was validated by experts from the Spanish-translated version of the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire - 5X, which contains 22 items. Both instruments were Likert-type. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistic tested the normality of the sample. Information was analyzed through the ordinal logistic model; all through the statistical program SPSS 26. Additionally, the reliability was 0,928. The identified population amounts to 109 778 collaborators within 5 000 retail companies;⁽⁶⁰⁾ the inclusion criterion of the sample is to belong to the human resources area. The sample is probabilistic, determined with a margin of error of 5 % and a confidence level of 95 %. As a result, a sample of 385 was obtained.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Regarding the general hypothesis proposed: Emotional Intelligence (EI) significantly influences the leadership styles adopted by human resource managers in Peruvian retail companies, 2023.

Ho: The model is only adequate with the constant.

H1: The model is not adequate only with the constant.

Model	Log Likelihood -2	Chi-Square	gl	Sig.
Final Intercept Only	119,636			
	37,591	82,046	2	0,000

Note: the table displays the ordinal logistic regression statistics from the survey applied, processed in SPSS.

In table 2, it is observed that the Chi-square statistic is 82,046 with a p-value of 0,000 (less than 0,05), leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis; this implies that the estimation of leadership styles through EI has a significant fit with the ordinal logistic regression model.

	Estimation	Desv. Error	Wald	gl	Sig.	95 % Confidence Interval		
						Lower Limit	Upper Limit	
Threshold	[Leadership Styles = 1,00]	-2,762	0,324	72,854	1	0,000	-3,396	-2,128
	[Leadership Styles = 2,00]	-0,265	0,272	0,946	1	0,331	-0,799	0,269

Locationn	[IE=1,00]	-3,051	0,387	62,125	1	0,000	-3,810	-2,293
	[IE=2,00]	-1,052	0,312	11,342	1	0,001	-1,665	-0,440
	[IE=3,00]	0 ^a			0			

Link Function: Logit.

a. This parameter is set to zero because it is redundant.

Note: the table displays the ordinal logistic regression statistics from the survey applied, processed in SPSS.

In table 3, the estimated regression coefficients for the Ordinal Logistic model are shown. It has been found that the p-values (sig) are less than 0.05; therefore, there is a significant influence of EI on leadership styles. Regarding the Nagelkerke R-squared coefficient, which is 0,272, it indicates that 27,2 % of the variation in the data of leadership styles is explained by the ordinal logistic regression model, including the IE variable.

The results of the table regarding estimation and goodness of fit confirm the general hypothesis, i.e., EI significantly influences the leadership styles adopted by human resource managers in Peruvian retail companies, 2023. Considering that EI is the ability to establish mechanisms to regulate oneself emotionally in various situations in order to respond appropriately to such stimuli and contexts.^(14,15,17) In this line, the ways and dynamics in which a group of collaborators is motivated and led are influenced by the emotional intelligence that the person may have,⁽⁵⁵⁾ having proper management of the work team and being able to make appropriate decisions will depend on the control of emotions.^(56,57) When talking about the retail sector, where the volume of sales and the pressure to meet the estimated sales quotas is the goal to achieve, EI in team leadership is relevant.

Regarding the specific hypotheses proposed, the first one: Emotional Intelligence significantly influences the transformational leadership style adopted by human resource managers in Peruvian retail companies, 2023.

Ho: The model is adequate with the constant only.

H1: The model is not adequate with the constant only.

Table 4. Information on the fit of the ordinal logistic model

Model	Log Likelihood -2	Chi-Square	gl	Sig.
Final Intercept Only	116,298			
Final Intercept Only	46,263	70,036	2	0,000

Note: The table displays the ordinal logistic regression statistics from the survey applied, processed in SPSS.

In table 4, it is observed that the Chi-square statistic is 70,036 with a p-value of 0,000 (less than 0,05), therefore the null hypothesis is rejected; this indicates that the estimation of transformational leadership styles through EI significantly fits with the ordinal logistic regression model.

Table 5. Parameter Estimates between EI and Transformational Leadership Style

		Estimation	Desv. Error	Wald	gl	Sig.	95 % Confidence Interval	
						Lower Limit		Upper Limit
Threshold	[Transformational Leadership = 1,00]	-3,441	0,353	95,101	1	0,000	-4,133	-2,750
	[Transformational Leadership= 2,00]	-0,684	0,289	5,597	1	0,018	-1,250	-0,117
Location	[IE=1,00]	-2,939	0,397	54,719	1	0,000	-3,718	-2,160
	[IE=2,00]	-1,254	0,327	14,689	1	0,000	-1,895	-0,613
	[IE=3,00]	0 ^a			0			

Link Function: Logit.

a. This parameter is set to zero because it is redundant.

In table 5, the estimated regression coefficients for the Ordinal Logistic Model are shown. It has been found that the p-values (sig) are less than 0,05; therefore, there is a significant influence of EI on the transformational leadership style. Regarding the Nagelkerke R-squared coefficient, which is 0,24, it indicates that 24 % of the variation in data of the transformational leadership style is explained by the ordinal logistic regression model, including the EI variable. The results of the table regarding the estimation and goodness of fit confirm the

general hypothesis, that is, EI significantly influences the transformational leadership style adopted by human resource managers in Peruvian retail companies, 2023.

Regarding the second specific hypothesis: EI significantly influences the transactional leadership style adopted by human resource managers in Peruvian retail companies, 2023.

Ho: The model is adequate with the constant only.

H1: The model is not adequate with the constant only.

Table 6. Information on the fit of the ordinal logistic model

Model	Log Likelihood -2	Chi-Square	gl	Sig.
Final Intercept Only	71,679			
	25,482	46,197	2	0,000

Note: The table displays the ordinal logistic regression statistics from the survey applied, processed in SPSS.

In table 6, it is observed that the Chi-square statistic is 46,197 with a p-value of 0,000 (less than 0,05), therefore the null hypothesis is rejected; this indicates that the estimation of the transactional leadership style through EI significantly fits with the ordinal logistic regression model.

Table 7. Parameter Estimates between EI and Transactional Leadership Style

		Estimation	Desv. Error	Wald	gl	Sig.	95 % Confidence Interval	
						Lower Limit		Upper Limit
Threshold	[Transformational Leadership = 1,00]	-3,270	0,341	92,065	1	0,000	-3,938	-2,602
	[Transformational Leadership l = 2,00]	-0,222	0,273	0,663	1	0,416	-0,758	0,313
Location	[IE=1,00]	-2,453	0,386	40,415	1	0,000	-3,209	-1,697
	[IE=2,00]	-1,049	0,315	11,092	1	0,001	-1,667	-0,432
	[IE=3,00]	0 ^a			0			

Note: the table displays the ordinal logistic regression statistics from the survey applied, processed in SPSS.

In table 7, the estimated regression coefficients for the Ordinal Logistic Model are shown. It has been found that the p-values (sig) are less than 0,05; therefore, there is a significant influence of EI on the transactional leadership style. Regarding the Nagelkerke R-squared coefficient, which is 0,167, it indicates that 16,7 % of the variation in the data of the transactional leadership style is explained by the ordinal logistic regression model, including the EI variable. The results of the table regarding the estimation and goodness of fit confirm the general hypothesis, i.e., EI significantly influences the transactional leadership style adopted by human resource managers in Peruvian retail companies, 2023.

Regarding the third hypothesis, it is estimated that EI significantly influences the Laissez-faire leadership style adopted by human resource managers in Peruvian retail companies, 2023.

Ho: The model is adequate with the constant only.

H1: The model is not adequate with the constant only.

Table 8. Information on the fit of the ordinal logistic model

Model	Log Likelihood -2	Chi-Square	gl	Sig.
Final Intercept Only	104,445			
Final	26,584	77,861	2	0,000

Función de enlace: Logit.
Note: the table displays the ordinal logistic regression statistics from the applied survey, processed in SPSS.

In table 8, it is observed that the Chi-square statistic is 77,861 with a p-value of 0,000 (less than 0,05), therefore the null hypothesis is rejected; this indicates that the estimation of the Laissez-faire leadership style through EI significantly fits with the ordinal logistic regression model.

Table 9. Parameter Estimates between EI and Laissez-faire Leadership Style

		Estimation	Desv. Error	Wald	gl	Sig.	95 % Confidence Interval	
							Lower Limit	Upper Limit
Threshold	[Laissez-faire leadership = 1,00]	-5,666	1,020	30,851	1	0,000	-7,665	-3,667
	[Laissez-faire leadership = 2,00]	-3,935	1,002	15,430	1	0,000	-5,899	-1,972
Location	[IE=1,00]	-4,736	1,028	21,231	1	0,000	-6,750	-2,721
	[IE=2,00]	-3,056	1,016	9,050	1	0,003	-5,047	-1,065
	[IE=3,00]	0 ^a			0			

Note: the table shows the ordinal logistic regression statistics from the applied survey, processed in SPSS.

In table 9, the estimated regression coefficients for the Ordinal Logistic Model are displayed. It has been found that the p-values (sig) are less than 0,05; therefore, there is a significant influence of EI on the Laissez-faire leadership style. Regarding the Nagelkerke R-squared coefficient, which is 0,279, it indicates that 27,9 % of the variation in the Laissez-faire leadership style data is explained by the ordinal logistic regression model, including the EI variable. The results of the table regarding the estimation and goodness of fit confirm the general hypothesis, that is, EI significantly influences the Laissez-faire leadership style adopted by human resource managers in Peruvian retail companies, 2023. Considering the three leadership styles used,^(49,50) each style has different characteristics: transactional, where results and rewards sustain the relationship with the team; transformational prioritizes the team's needs to align with the objectives, while the laissez-faire style prefers to remain unobtrusive, giving freedom to collaborators.⁽¹⁰⁾ However, despite the differences, according to the results, the influence exerted by EI is similar across the leadership styles, having more or less control of the team to achieve the objectives, depends on how emotions are managed to then choose the best options regarding the work team.

CONCLUSIONS

Understanding EI as the ability to manage and understand our emotions effectively to make the best possible decisions, it can be concluded that it influences leadership styles, since it conditions the ways in which interaction with work teams occurs, creating spaces of motivation according to the emotional needs that need to be managed. From the results, it can be inferred that in the retail sector, the HR area requires leaders with high emotional management to guarantee a cooperative and harmonious work environment.

The transactional style, which values rewards and incentives to achieve the best performance, is influenced by EI insofar as to establish them, it is necessary to understand the emotional needs of the team which also helps manage potential internal conflicts so that the environment is positive and the objectives are achieved.

Regarding leadership styles, EI influences the transformational leadership style insofar as it involves motivating the team using charisma and emotionality, allowing it to connect with people to find the mechanism that allows achieving synergy in the pursuit of the set objectives.

The Laissez-faire style, characterized by granting freedom, delegating, and assuming the autonomy of team members to fulfill their role and achieve the proposed achievements. However, EI influences in the sense that the communication process must be effective and clear, this in turn will depend on the emotional control that is maintained, since the leader must be willing to intervene or guide when necessary, and this can be better identified if there is an empathetic capacity to provide emotional support.

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