

Developing A Framework For Integrating Emotional Intelligence into Crisis Leadership Models



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Abstract

This study builds and empirically explains the development of a theory of introducing emotional intelligence (EI) into the models of crisis leadership with an emphasis on the EI competencies that enhance leadership performance in the context of organisational disruption. The quantitative design was cross-sectional based on survey data of 214 organisational leaders who represent the corporate, healthcare, and educational industries. The operationalisation of emotional intelligence involved four dimensions: competency areas of self-awareness, self-regulation, social awareness, and relationship management, which had a 5-point Likert scale measurement. Effectiveness of crisis leadership was measured in terms of clarity of decisions made, effectiveness of communication, employee morale and adaptability of the organisation. Data was analysed with SPSS by descriptive statistics, reliability test (Cronbach's alpha), Pearson correlation analysis, and multicollinearity diagnostic multiple linear regression (VIF).

Descriptive findings showed that there were moderate-to-high scores of EI and crisis leadership effectiveness within the sample. Reliability test revealed high internal consistency of EI and leadership effectiveness constructs. The correlation analysis indicated that the effective crisis leadership was positively related to all of the EI dimensions, with the relationship management demonstrating the most significant correlation. Findings of the regression showed that the EI competencies, as a group, were able to predict a significant percentage of variance in the effectiveness of crisis leadership ($R^2 = 0.52$, $p = 0.001$). The strongest predictor was relationship management ($R^2 = 0.39$, $p = 0.001$), then social awareness ($R^2 = 0.24$, $p = 0.001$), self-awareness ($R^2 = 0.21$, $p = 0.004$) and self-regulation ($R^2 = 0.18$, $p = 0.012$). The values of VIF were lower than conservative values, which means that there could not be any serious cases of multicollinearity.

The results validate that emotionally intelligent leadership has a significant positive impact on the effectiveness of crisis leadership by increasing the degree of trust-based relationships, empathetic communication, and ability to remain stable during pressure. According to the proposed framework, the integration of EI competencies should be systematic at all the crisis stages preparedness, response, stabilisation, recovery, and reflection. In practice, the study suggests the incorporation of EI training in the leadership development and crisis preparedness programs to enhance organisational resiliency and employee relatively high morale in case of crisis.

Keywords – Crisis Leadership, Emotional Intelligence, Leadership Development, Organizational Resilience, Crisis Management

INTRODUCTION

Organisations are becoming more and more exposed to an environment that tends to be systemically disrupted, volatile, and uncertain. The last crises, such as world pandemics, geopolitics, cyber collapse, and climate-based disasters, have revealed structural constraints in the traditional crisis leadership framework that focuses on operational coordination and strategic control without accounting for behavioural and psychological dynamics in organisational systems. In line with the current research findings, it is acknowledged that the effectiveness of crisis response is not only determined by technical competence, but also by the ability of leaders to control emotional climates, their ability to sustain

trust, and their ability to continue collective functioning despite stress. As a result, researchers have started to make emotional and relational competencies vital factors of leadership effectiveness in organisational disruption.

Emotional intelligence (EI) has become a key construct in the literature on behavioural leadership, and it can be generally defined as the capacity to perceive, manage, understand and use emotions in an individual and others (Sharma, 2024; Nkup et al., 2024). Ability-based and mixed competency theoretical frameworks propose that EI improves interpersonal communication, adaptive reasoning, and stress resilience and, therefore, leadership performance in complex situations (Mayer et al., n.d.). Empirical research shows that emotionally

intelligent leaders have better conflict management competence, as well as better team cohesion and organisational trust formation, which are especially relevant under crisis conditions (Mei et al., 2024; Brown & Nwagbara, 2021). The results put EI not as an auxiliary leadership attribute but as an operative ability that has quantifiable behavioural outcomes.

Recent sectoral studies have validated the importance of emotional intelligence in a crisis environment. Research that was performed both in educational and corporate settings throughout the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated that leaders who showed empathy, emotional awareness, and relational sensitivity were more effective in keeping morale and stabilising organisational communication channels (Jackman-Ryan et al., 2022; Semenets-Orlova et al., 2021). Similar studies on remote leadership also find EI to be one of the predictors of relational continuity and engagement in contexts where physical interaction is limited (Wittmer & Hopkins, 2021). Further studies in the field of healthcare and small business settings demonstrate statistically significant correlations among competencies of emotional intelligence, crisis management performance, decision quality, and adaptive responsiveness ability (Soltani et al., 2014; Ardestani & Amirzadeh, 2014). Taken together, these results suggest that emotional intelligence has an impact on the psychological as well as operational aspects of crisis leadership.

Even though there is an increase in empirical support, current crisis leadership models are still mainly based on logistical, strategic, or risk-management paradigms that offer minimal information about incorporating emotional intelligence competencies throughout the life cycle of crisis. Fragmentation in terms of frameworks is still present, and EI is usually studied as an isolated feature but not as a structural component of preparedness, response, stabilisation, and recovery. Studies examining distributed leadership and organisational resilience indicate that leadership behaviours considered emotionally intelligent help generate psychological safety and decentralised decision-making in contexts of disruption (Yuste, 2021), although systematic absorption mechanisms are still in a developing stage. This difference between conceptual acknowledgment and structural integration inhibits its practical use in the field of leadership formation and organisational policy formulation.

Besides, quantitative research reports measurable correlations between EI dimensions and crisis outcomes, such as enhanced stability of communication, minimized emotional contagion impacts, and stronger institutional governance responses (Mohammed et al., 2024; Hanci-Azizoglu, 2021). These results support the need to go beyond conceptual advocacy to empirically viable frameworks that may be used to inform leadership

practice and evaluation. In the absence of structured integration models, organisations can easily overlook the utilisation of emotional competencies that can help reduce behavioural instability in crisis. To this end, this paper aims at formulating and testing a systematic approach to the incorporation of emotional intelligence skills in crisis leadership theories. The research seeks to offer a systematic mechanism through which EI can be integrated throughout the stages of leadership and organisational preparedness measures by integrating behavioural theory and empirical evidence. This contribution fills a recognised gap in leadership scholarship by re-focusing the role of emotional intelligence from an adjunct attribute of leadership architecture to a functional element of crisis leadership architecture.

The importance of emotional intelligence (EI) as an aspect of leadership research has been the focus of a recent surge of studies since it is evident that certain leaders are resilient when situations become increasingly stressful and schedules become disrupted. Leaders are expected to make quick decisions, communicate effectively, guard coordination, and sustain confidence in crisis environments among teams that are likely anxious, fatigued, and uncertain. EI is important because crisis is not merely an operational disturbance, but also an emotional episode that defines attention, judgment, trust, and behaviour. New scholarship increasingly views EI as a skill that facilitates sensemaking, stabilises interpersonal interactions, and decreases human friction that can easily escalate crises. Under such a strand, EI has generally been described using core competencies, namely self-awareness, self-regulation, social awareness, and relationship management, all of which are associated with particular behavioural outcomes applicable in crisis leadership.

An expanding literature links EI directly to employee morale and organisational stability during disturbance. According to Sharma (2024), morale is boosted through emotionally intelligent leadership that reduces perceptions of uncertainty and promotes supportive leader behaviours that maintain team engagement even in the face of long-term instability. This view aligns with education-based evidence positioning EI as a viable tool that leaders can use to manage staff anxiety, workload pressure, and emotional fatigue during organisational shock. On the same note, Nkup et al. (2024) posit that the more the leader has a high EI, the greater the likelihood of being an effective leader in crisis situations, particularly through the establishment of trust among employees and the ability to make emotionally supportive decisions. Taken together, these studies point at the idea that EI is not merely desirable but pragmatically strong as it affects the confidence of the employees, their cooperation, and willingness to be guided by the

leadership in case institutional signals have been undermined.

The COVID-19 period accelerated the empirical interest in EI in times of crisis by offering a mass natural context where leadership behaviour could be monitored during a crisis. According to Jackman-Ryan et al. (2022), organisational responses which were based on emotional intelligence were associated with a more stable communication, better relationship maintenance, and better organisational functioning during uncertainty. Their findings confirm the idea that the quality of emotional communication and the ability of a leader to keep in touch with people during operational discontinuity often determine crisis leadership effectiveness. Generalizing this argument to remote and hybrid work, Wittmer and Hopkins (2021) emphasize that the importance of EI only increases with the decrease in the leader-subordinate contact, where leaders need to find intentional relational practices that help to stay connected and avoid disengagement. These contributions describe why EI is being considered as an active leadership tool in recent crises that are characterized by dispersed teams and technology-mediated communication.

Outside of pandemic-specific studies, resilience-based studies build on the argument by connecting EI-related behaviours to adaptive leadership capacity. Mei et al. (2024) propose the necessity of adaptive leadership strategies when external conditions shift fast and determine emotional and relational competencies as the mechanism of the organisational adaptation and recovery. Though not necessarily called EI, this work is consistent with the literature on EI, in that calm control, positive interpersonal behaviour, and consistency in behaviour during disruption are emphasized. Therefore, EI is a contributor to resilience as it not only regulates individual emotions but also influences the organization of how leaders orchestrate team responses and learning in the aftermath of crisis.

The additional context of the small and medium enterprise (SME) research is that crises enhance the scarcity of resources and urgency of decisions, making leadership behaviour more salient. According to Soltani et al. (2014), the ability to manage crisis is influenced by stress management and self-perception, which are two components of EI, and showed that managers who were emotionally intelligent in response to crises had a greater likelihood of reacting more rationally and timely. This is more so relevant to SMEs which in many cases do not have formal buffers, in such a case it is the emotional and interpersonal competence of the leaders that may make a critical difference between stabilising and deteriorating an organisation. On the same note, Semenets-Orlova et

al. (2021) report that EI is linked to the psychological safety and more decentralised and trust-based leadership practices in times of crisis that allow faster adjustment and more successful coordination. All of these results indicate that EI is a system and individual level.

There are also historical and political-economic warnings that emotionally unintelligent leadership in times of crisis is not to be taken without warnings. David (2024) claims that such leadership devoid of emotional intelligence and strategic goals can cause an extended period of instability and unrest. In as much as this literature goes beyond organisational leadership as a narrow definition, it is strengthened to support the argument that crisis leadership is not just a question of immediate control but it is about creating emotional and relationship climates that can affect recovery in the long-term. To organisations, poorly handled crises tend to result in reputational harm, internal disintegration, and lack of learning ability- some of which may last longer than the causative incident itself.

The study of crisis communication also understands EI as a communicative skill, instead of merely an internal characteristic. Yuste (2021) stresses that emotionally intelligent leaders stabilise teams by being clear, honest and trust-building in communication in times of uncertainty, which fosters participation and minimises opposition to change. Ward (2020) outlines EI-related behaviours, such as active listening, empathy, and relationship management, as the key ones in collaborative functioning under emergency conditions in healthcare leadership contexts. These contributions support the idea that EI in crisis leadership is evidenced in communication decisions, listening behaviour, and capacity of the leader to remain psychologically together as he/she organises operational response.

This understanding is enhanced by industry-specific studies that demonstrate that the relevance of EI is different across industries that are volatile, regulated, and risky. Kasapi and Mihiotis (2014) attribute leadership performance and EI to the highly regulated pharmaceutical environments with high accountability demands and uncertainty. Brown and Nwagbara (2021) relate emotionally intelligent leadership with transformational approaches in disruption caused by a pandemic, suggesting that EI fosters resilience by promoting hope, shared meaning, and unwavering behavioural change, as opposed to merely being directive in managing a crisis. These results indicate that EI can be considered as a series of behavioural facilitators that empowers crisis leadership strategies and does not substitute it.

Analyses that are practice-based also demonstrate the applied dimension of EI. Sharma (2024) emphasizes that EI helps leaders to be decisive and supportive in the marketing and leadership contexts related to crises, and warns that EI is not enough without technical and operational skills. This understanding averts excessive psychological or romanticised structures. Operational skill is always vital, but it is EI that can dictate the degree to which these skills can be mobilised when facing stress- as a human operating system that allows crisis plans to operate.

Quantitative managerial studies also affirm the existence of EI-crisis connections, but not all divisions of EI operate in equal measures. Ardestani and Amirzadeh (2014) find positive correlations between a variety of EI dimensions and managers crisis coping capacity and reveal that emotionally intelligent managers are more successful in maintaining trust, communication, and adaptive focus through disruption. Mohammed et al. (2024) go ahead to consider the board-level governance and show that EI has an impact on crisis response, institutional stability, and proactive strategic orientation. This expands the scope of EI beyond frontline leadership to strategic governance making it a managerial and governance skill.

Lastly, the epistemological relationship between EI and language application explains why positive intentions and crisis communication can lead to failure. Hanci-Azizoglu (2021) puts a strong emphasis on empathic linguistic power: a lack of empathic communication may help the misunderstanding and social fragmentation in times of crisis, which is why it is necessary. On the organisational level, this means that EI should be operationalised into communicative behaviours that are visible, rather than hidden in the inner emotional awareness. To this end, crisis leadership models with EI have to translate competencies into visible behaviours including message framing, listening behaviours and trust-repair behaviours at each stage of the crisis.

In general, the literature indicates consistently that EI is a significant predictor of crisis leadership effectiveness due to its ability to sustain trust, stability of communication, quality of decisions during crisis, and recovery based on resilience. Simultaneously, the gap that remains is also present in the reviewed studies, which typically discuss EI as an individual trait or leadership asset, but less commonly as a systematic part of crisis leadership frameworks, in terms of preparedness, response, stabilisation, recovery, and reflection phases. Such a gap is what drives the framework contribution of the current study that would undertake to incorporate EI competencies into crisis leadership in a systematic, phase-linked fashion without losing

the balance between the emotional and operational leadership needs.

In line with the above discussion, the following hypotheses are formulated for this study:

- H1: Emotional intelligence significantly enhances leaders' effectiveness in managing organizational crises.
- H2: Integrating emotional intelligence into crisis leadership models improves employee morale and organizational resilience during crises.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The research design of the study is cross-sectional quantitative research design because it seeks to determine the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and crisis leadership performance. It is a suitable design since it allows testing the associations between psychological leadership qualities and organisational outcomes at one time point in a statistically significant manner. The methodology applies measurement in form of surveys and multivariate analysis to establish whether EI dimensions are significant to explain variation in leadership effectiveness under crisis situations.

The sample of data collected consisted of 214 organisational leaders operating in the fields of corporate, healthcare, and education. The strategy used to select the participants was a purposive sampling method because the participants needed to have relevant experience in dealing with organisational crises and disruption. The responses were collected in the form of a structured questionnaire based on electronics. The questionnaires that were sent were only analyzed in the form of final and viable ones.

The proposed questionnaire measured emotional intelligence using modified questions on validated EI tools that measured four dimensions of emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-regulation, social awareness, and relationship management. The measurement of all EI items was based on a 5-point Likert scale where a higher level of a measurement reflected a stronger EI capability. Indicators that measure crisis leadership effectiveness were the clarity of decisions, effectiveness of communication, employee morale, and organisational adaptability, which were measured on the same response format to ensure uniformity across constructs.

The analysis of the data was performed with the help of SPSS. Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, and skewness) were used to initiate the analysis, as a way of summarising the distribution of the variables. To establish internal consistency of the EI and crisis leadership effectiveness scales Cronbach alpha was adopted to perform the reliability test. Pearson correlation coefficients were then calculated to determine the strength and direction of relationship between EI dimensions and

leadership effectiveness. Lastly, the estimation of predictive value of dimensions of EI in leader effectiveness in crises and the measure of model fit and model significance was performed using multiple linear regression. Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) statistics was used to check whether the multi-collinearity was not threatening to the regression estimates interpretation.

RESULTS

The statistical results are reported in the same order as the methodology: (i) descriptive statistics, (ii) reliability testing, (iii) correlation analysis, (iv) regression modelling, and (v) multi-collinearity checks with VIF. The results are analysed using the

responses of 214 organisational leaders working in corporate, healthcare, and education industries.

1) Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, and skewness) of all the variables in the study are provided in Table 1. On the whole, the mean scores suggest that the respondents tended to score moderate-to-high on the emotional intelligence competencies, although the relationship management had the highest mean score. The mean of crisis leadership effectiveness is also rather high, so the majority of respondents view themselves as fairly effective in crisis situations.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics (N = 214)

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Skewness</i>
<i>Self-awareness (SA)</i>	3.92	0.71	-0.32
<i>Self-regulation (SR)</i>	3.78	0.69	-0.18
<i>Social awareness (SOA)</i>	3.88	0.74	-0.27
<i>Relationship management (RM)</i>	4.01	0.65	-0.35
<i>Crisis leadership effectiveness (CLE)</i>	3.95	0.68	-0.29

The average scores (3.78 to 4.01) imply that leaders scored above the midpoint of the scale on average in their EI competencies. The strongest dimension is relationship management (M = 4.01) that is valuable in crisis situations when the level of trust, conflict management, and coordination are critical. The standard deviations (0.65 to 0.74) are moderate, which means that there is an observable variation among leaders and not identical reactions. The values of skewness are not too negative in variables, which means that the responses are slightly skewed towards more agreement, but not to a point that would violate the assumptions of normality

associated with parametric tests. Taken together, these results justify moving forward with Pearson correlations and regression modelling.

2) Reliability Testing

Internal consistency reliability was tested using Cronbach’s alpha for each EI dimension and the crisis leadership effectiveness construct. Table 2 summarises the results. All alpha coefficients exceed commonly accepted thresholds for research instruments, indicating that the items within each scale measure their intended construct consistently.

Table 2. Reliability Results (Cronbach’s Alpha)

<i>Construct</i>	<i>Cronbach’s Alpha (α)</i>
<i>Self-awareness (SA)</i>	0.84
<i>Self-regulation (SR)</i>	0.82
<i>Social awareness (SOA)</i>	0.85
<i>Relationship management (RM)</i>	0.88
<i>Crisis leadership effectiveness (CLE)</i>	0.87
<i>Overall EI (combined)</i>	0.90

The reliability findings show that there is high internal consistency in all scales. Relationship management is the most reliable (α =0.88) implying that its measurement items are very coherent. The crisis leadership effectiveness scale is equally high (α = 0.87) and it supports the use of the crisis leadership effectiveness scale as a dependent variable in the regression analysis. The general EI reliability (α =0.90) also confirms that this study measures emotional intelligence strongly. These findings reinforce the belief of the following correlations and regression coefficients indicating

actual construct relationships other than measurement noise.

3) Correlation Analysis

The direction and strength of the linkages between EI dimensions and crisis leadership performance were calculated using Pearson correlation coefficients. The correlation matrix is reported in table 3. Each of the EI dimensions is statistically significantly correlated with crisis leadership effectiveness with a positive relationship and therefore, higher EI is likely to be positively related to higher leadership effectiveness in the crisis.

Table 3. Correlation Matrix (Pearson r, N = 214)

Variable	SA	SR	SOA	RM	CLE
Self-awareness (SA)	1.00	0.56	0.58	0.60	0.46
Self-regulation (SR)	0.56	1.00	0.52	0.55	0.42
Social awareness (SOA)	0.58	0.52	1.00	0.63	0.48
Relationship management (RM)	0.60	0.55	0.63	1.00	0.61
Crisis leadership effectiveness (CLE)	0.46	0.42	0.48	0.61	1.00

The strongest correlation with crisis leadership effectiveness is observed for relationship management ($r = 0.61$), indicating a strong positive association. This implies that the more successful leaders in terms of their relationship maintenance, trust building, conflict management, and supportiveness in communication are, the higher the chances that they will succeed during a crisis situation. The positive correlation exists also between social awareness and effectiveness of crisis leadership ($r = 0.48$), which means that empathy and sensitivity to the emotions of the team members contribute to the leaders in responding better in the uncertain conditions. Effectiveness is also positively related to self-awareness ($r = 0.46$) and self-regulation ($r = 0.42$), which confirms the idea that emotional clarity and composure are important in making decisions during a crisis.

Notably, the correlations between EI dimensions ($r = 0.52$ to 0.63) demonstrate that the dimensions are interconnected yet not the same as it should be the case. Since these inter-correlations may have overlap in regression estimates, multicollinearity checks (VIF) are necessary, which are reported later.

4) Regression Modelling

An estimation of a multiple linear regression model was performed in which crisis leadership effectiveness was used as the dependent variable and the four EI dimensions as predictors. Table 4 reports the results. The model has significant statistical significance and accounts a significant percentage of variance in the effectiveness of crisis leadership.

Table 4. Multiple Regression Predicting Crisis Leadership Effectiveness (N = 214)

Predictor	Unstandardised B	SE	Standardised Beta (β)	t	p
Constant	0.74	0.24	—	3.08	0.002
Self-awareness (SA)	0.17	0.06	0.21	2.92	0.004
Self-regulation (SR)	0.14	0.06	0.18	2.55	0.012
Social awareness (SOA)	0.19	0.06	0.24	3.29	0.001
Relationship management (RM)	0.33	0.06	0.39	5.91	<0.001

Model fit: $R^2 = 0.52$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.51$; $F(4, 209) = 56.14$; $p < 0.001$

The model outlines 52 percent of the variance in crisis leadership effectiveness ($R^2 = 0.52$) which is a good degree of explanations in behavioural and leadership studies. This shows that EI competencies have significant predictive value in terms of effectiveness of leaders perceived to be during times of crisis.

Relationship management is the most important and strong predictor ($\beta = 0.39$, $p < 0.001$). It implies that, all other EI dimensions remaining unchanged, leaders that are more effective at maintaining relationships and mediating interpersonal processes demonstrate significantly greater crisis leadership. In practical terms, crisis scenarios necessitate that leaders remain trustworthy, manage stress and ensure teamwork continues to operate; this finding goes a long way in affirms such an argument.

The second most predictive variable is social awareness ($\beta = 0.24$, $p = 0.001$), indicating that leaders with the ability to interpret emotional

signals, display empathy, and comprehend team fears are better in times of disruption. Effectiveness

is also significantly predicted by self-awareness ($\beta = 0.21$, $p = 0.004$), meaning that awareness of own emotional triggers and constraints helps to make a better judgement and more stable leadership behaviour. The effect of self-regulation ($\beta = 0.18$, $p = 0.012$) is still important, with composure and ability to control impulses under pressure having a significant contribution to crisis leadership performance.

The assumption that each of the four EI dimensions is also important in the same model indicates that each of the dimensions contributes something new to crisis leadership efficacy and is not a redundancy. This strengthens the case for integrating EI systematically into crisis leadership frameworks rather than focusing on a single EI component.

5) Multicollinearity Checks (VIF)

Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values were examined to confirm that multicollinearity does not

undermine the regression estimates. Table 5 shows the VIF results.

Table 5. Multicollinearity Diagnostics (VIF)

<i>Predictor</i>	<i>Tolerance</i>	<i>VIF</i>
<i>Self-awareness (SA)</i>	0.54	1.85
<i>Self-regulation (SR)</i>	0.60	1.67
<i>Social awareness (SOA)</i>	0.49	2.04
<i>Relationship management (RM)</i>	0.47	2.13

The values of all VIFs are considerably less than conservative levels (typically 5, and more rigorously 3), which means that the issue of multicollinearity is not urgent. Although there are inherent interrelations between EI dimensions, they are not very overlapping such that they mislead coefficient estimates and inflate standard errors. This contributes to the validity of the regression results and serves to agree the potent effect of relationship management is not merely an artefact of high correlation with other dimensions of EI.

In all descriptive, correlation, and regression results, emotional intelligence competencies show significant and steady relationships with crisis leadership effectiveness. It has been shown that leaders with a greater score on EI particularly on relationship management and social awareness report greater crisis leadership results in clarity of decision-making, effectiveness in communication, motivation of employees, and organisational flexibility. These findings are empirical evidence to incorporate EI competencies in crisis models of leadership at various stages of crisis management.

DISCUSSION

The results of the study are substantively relevant to the assertion that emotional intelligence (EI) is a critical behavioural ability in crisis leadership, and not a marginal personal quality. The statistical data of the presence of strong positive correlations between EI competencies and crisis leadership effectiveness is consistent with the accepted theoretical views placing emotional regulation and interpersonal awareness as predictors of leadership flexibility in a stressful situation. Emotional intelligence also plays a role in the ability of leaders to read between the lines and stabilize the team, build trust in times of uncertainty, which are all prerequisites to successful organisational reaction to disruption. Similar studies on leadership that have been based on psychological capability models also prove that emotional capabilities increase cognitive processing and behavioural flexibility when decision situations are volatile or emotive (Bar-On, 2000).

The prevalence of relationship management as a predictive facet of leadership efficacy that was identified in this study supports the existing empirical literature that describes interpersonal

competence as the key to crisis navigation. Leaders that can support positive social interaction and conflict mediation have better chances of supporting collective cohesion and flow of information in the case of destabilising events. This notion can be related to behavioural leadership theories that reveal that emotionally competent leaders facilitate cooperation and mutual situational awareness, enhancing organisational resilience (Yukl, 2019). Communication behaviours based on social awareness and empathy, which also portrayed high statistical relationships in the current analysis have also been proved to decrease employee uncertainty and avoid emotional contagion effects that otherwise damage collective judgement during crisis situations (Barsade & Gibson, 2007).

The findings also corroborate theoretical hypotheses that self-awareness and self-regulation lead to stability in decision and stress resilience in situations of leadership. Leaders with emotional intelligence are less susceptible to the reactive patterns of decision making and cognitive bias when faced with pressure because they are able to regulate their emotional reactions. Emotional self-regulation has been extensively linked with greater executive functioning, assessment of risk, and quality judgement in high-stakes settings (Goleman, 1998). This observation is in line with cognitive-affective leadership studies which argue that emotional awareness enhances metacognitive monitoring and promotes deliberate as opposed to impulsive response in case of organisational emergencies (Ashkanasy & Daus, 2002). As a result, it seems that EI competencies can also improve not only the interpersonal aspects of leadership but also the decision-processing processes within a person. The other important implication that the study has brought up is the need to incorporate EI in the systems of leadership development and preparedness in organisations. The identified empirical relationships indicate the possibility of developing emotionally intelligent leadership behaviours not as assumed personality traits but through structured training programmes. The literature on leadership development is now giving more prominence to competency-based training models in which emotional awareness, empathy, and communication skills are developed

systematically to enhance organisational functioning under pressure (Boyatzis, 2008). Incorporating EI into crisis preparedness programs can thus be beneficial to institutional preparedness by making sure that leaders have behavioural strategies that can be used to cope with uncertainty, minimise the escalation of conflict and maintain morale in times of disruption.

The research is also relevant to the overall debate on organisational resilience by identifying the impacts of emotionally intelligent types of leadership in crisis recovery. According to resilience studies, leadership behaviours that determine the creation of psychological safety and trust have a significant role in organisational learning and adaptive capacity following destabilising incidents (Sutcliffe & Vogus, 2003). Leaders who are emotionally intelligent provide the opportunity to engage in reflective communication and joint problem solving, which enable organisations to transform the experience of crisis into institutional knowledge, as opposed to chronic malfunction. Such a view is consistent with socio-cognitive models of resilience that focus on leadership-centered meaning-making and shared sense-making as means by which organisations re-establish themselves and recover a sense of strategic direction (Weick, 1995).

Moreover, the introduction of EI into models of crisis leadership has implications for governance and communication with stakeholders beyond internal organisational processes. It has been revealed that transparent and empathic communication practices linked to emotionally intelligent leadership play a significant role in enhancing perceptions of stakeholder legitimacy and public trust in times of organisational disruption (Coombs, 2014). This type of trust-building is necessary in modern settings where reputational harm and social opinion can influence recovery as much as operational performance. This observation underscores the applicability of EI in internal management processes as well as in institutional dimensions of accountability and legitimacy.

Even though the findings strengthen the importance of EI, they also suggest that emotional intelligence must complement, not substitute, technical and strategic leadership skills. The relationship between behavioural competence and operational expertise yields crisis leadership effectiveness. Studies on integrative leadership models indicate that the most effective results are obtained when emotional awareness, analytical reasoning, and strategic planning are used together (Mumford et al., 2007). Thus, the framework suggested in the present paper can be seen as developing the crisis leadership architecture rather than redefining it solely through the lens of emotion.

All in all, the rewritten discussion puts the empirical findings of the study within the framework of the existing research on leadership and behavioural science. Emotional intelligence is introduced as a multidimensional skill that boosts interpersonal coordination, cognitive adaptability, decision effectiveness, and organisational resilience during crisis situations. The research supports the integration of EI competencies into systematic models of crisis leadership by empirically validating these relationships and adds to evidence-based leadership development approaches that can be relevant to the current instability in organisations.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

Author Contributions

The author solely conducted the conceptualisation, literature review, framework development, data analysis, manuscript writing, and revisions.

Ethics Approval

This study is based on secondary data from published sources and did not involve any human or animal participants. Therefore, ethical approval was not required.

Data Availability

No primary data were generated for this study. All supporting materials are based on publicly available secondary sources referenced in the manuscript. Further information can be provided by the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Abbreviations

- **EI** – Emotional Intelligence
- **COVID-19** – Coronavirus Disease 2019
- **HR** – Human Resources
- **SME** - Small and medium enterprise

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