

**Emotional Intelligence of Leaders and Its Impact on Employee Engagement and Retention**

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**Abstract**

In the modern competitive and fast changing organizational style, employee engagement and retention has become an important factor of organization success. Among the many leadership qualities that determine these outcomes, emotional intelligence (EI) has attracted a lot of academic and practical consideration. The present study examines the impact of leaders' emotional intelligence on employee engagement and retention, with a particular focus on key EI dimensions such as self-awareness, motivation, and empathy. A quantitative research design was adopted, and data were collected from 250 employees using a random sampling technique across different organizational levels. A structured questionnaire was employed as the primary research tool to measure employees' perceptions of leaders' emotional intelligence and related workplace outcomes. The reliability of the instrument was established prior to analysis. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the data, while One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was applied to examine differences in perceived emotional intelligence of leaders across employee designations and years of work experience. The findings revealed significant differences in perceptions of leaders' self-awareness and motivation across groups, while empathy showed partial variation depending on demographic factors. Overall, the results suggest that leaders' emotional intelligence plays a vital role in shaping employee engagement and retention, particularly across hierarchical and experiential differences. The study highlights the importance



of developing emotionally intelligent leadership practices to enhance employee commitment, reduce turnover intentions, and foster a positive organizational climate.

**Keywords:** Emotional intelligence, leadership, employee engagement, employee retention and organizational performance

## Introduction

Businesses in all sectors of the industry are realizing the fact that human capital is their greatest asset. Although technological development and strategic innovation are essential, engaged, committed and retained employees in the end determine the sustainable organizational performance. Nevertheless, most organizations still deal with a low level of engagement, high turnover rates, and low morale among employees. These issues have been exacerbated by the environment of globalization, digital transformation, remote work, and increased employee demands to do meaningful work and have an effective leadership. Leadership is key to the formulation of employee attitudes, behavior, and intentions. The classical models of leadership emphasized more on technical skills, power, and task oriented behaviors. On the contrary, modern leadership views attach importance to interpersonal efficacy, empathy, flexibility, and emotional sensitivity. In this context, emotional intelligence has been identified as a very critical leadership skill. The leaders who have emotional intelligence are in a better position to comprehend the needs of the employees, cope with emotions at the workplace, and respond positively to stress, conflict and change. It is possible to establish such a setting where employees feel appreciated, honored, and they do not fear to express themselves in a negative way. This paper examines how emotional intelligence can be effective in leadership and how it can impact on employee engagement and retention. The presentation incorporates theoretical

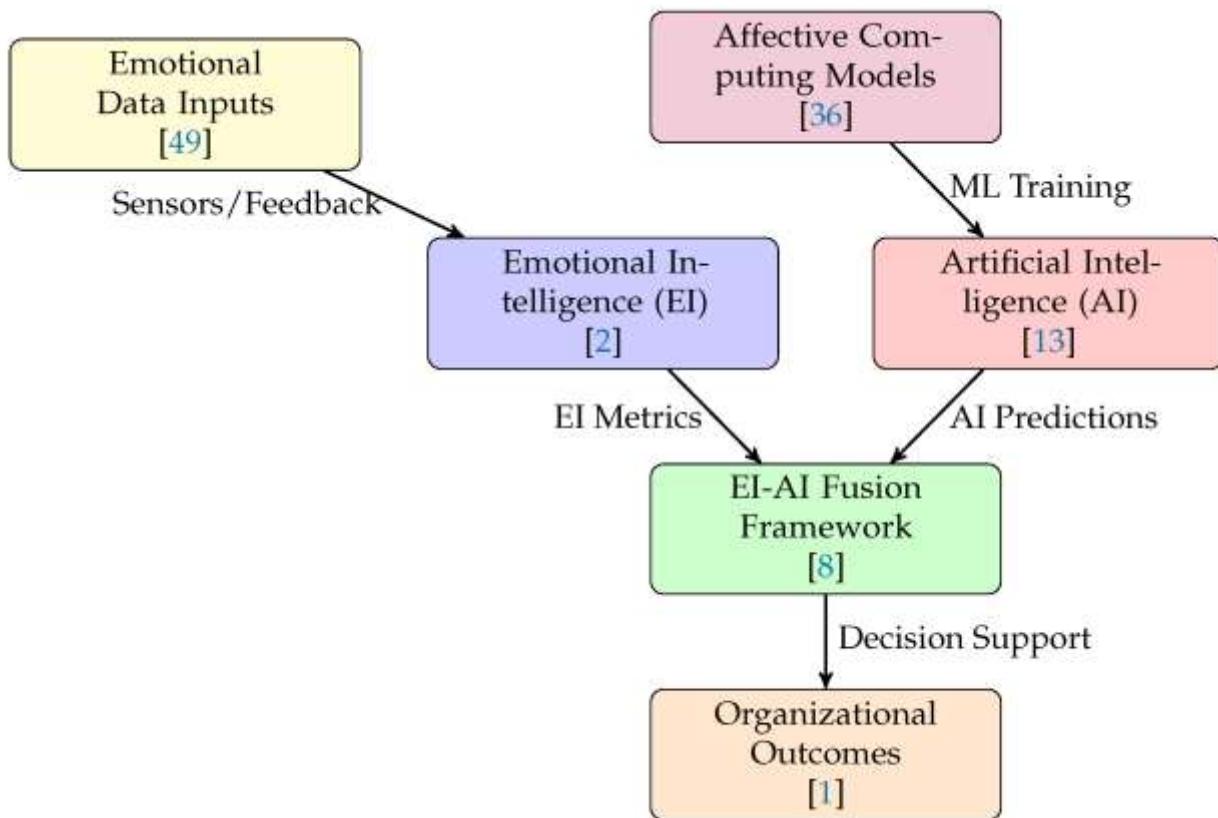


knowledge and empirical evidence to show why emotional intelligence is no longer an option, but a major ingredient in successful leadership.

The emotional intelligence is the skill of the leader to identify, comprehend, control and apply emotions in both self and others. The paper will discuss emotional intelligence in leadership and its effects on employee engagement and retention. Based on the developed theoretical concepts and empirical studies, the paper justifies how emotionally intelligent leadership leads to positive working climates, builds up the relations between leaders and employees, boosts motivation and decreases turnover intentions. Practical implications of the article to organizations willing to develop emotionally intelligent leaders are also discussed along with the future research directions. Emotional intelligence (EI) of leaders has emerged as a critical factor influencing employee engagement and retention in contemporary organizations.

Figure: 1

### Convergence of Artificial Intelligence and Emotional Intelligence



#### Definition of Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence is also widely described as an aptitude that is capable of discriminating, recognising, controlling, and utilising emotions both in self and others. The notion became famous because of the works of Salovey and Mayer, who have defined EI as a complex of



cognitive skills in the area of emotional processing. The concept was popularized later by Goleman, who made the connection of emotional intelligence to leadership performance and success at the workplace.

Goleman says that emotional intelligence is competencies that help individuals in the management of themselves and the relationship with others. Emotional intelligence is the opposite of cognitive intelligence (IQ) and therefore, focuses on emotional awareness, regulation, and social skills, which are crucial in leadership situations.

### Dimensions of Emotional Intelligence

Self-awareness: Self-awareness is the capacity of a person to identify and appreciate his or her feelings and capabilities, flaws, values, and behavioral patterns. High self-awareness allows the leader to be aware of the effect of their emotions on their thoughts, judgments, and relationships with others. This awareness helps them to determine their strengths and weaknesses properly and therefore develop humility and self enhancement. Self-aware leaders in the organizational setting are more open to feedback and they are more prepared to control emotional reactions in difficult circumstances. They are very genuine and consistent in behavior, a factor that promotes trust and credibility by the employees. Moreover, self awareness promotes good decision making because it enables the leaders to match the action with the organizational values and objectives. Self-awareness as a core element of emotional intelligence preconditions the emergence of other skills, including self-regulation and empathy, and eventually, it leads to successful leadership, better engagement of employees, and better organizational climate.

Figure: 2

### Conceptual Framework

#### Emotional Intelligence of Leaders and Its Impact on Employee Engagement and Retention



**Self-regulation:** Self-regulation refers to the skills to control and regulate the emotions, impulses and responses especially to stress or situations that cannot be predicted. Strong self-regulation also helps the leader to stay calm, composed and objective in the face of pressure, conflict, or uncertainty. They do not just react, but they act differently, in a way that would be consistent



with the organization values and ethics. Such emotional regulation creates a predictable and stable work environment and improves trust and psychological safety of employees. Self-regulated leaders also become more timber-bending to change because they are able to handle emotional uneasiness that comes along with emerging difficulties. Such leaders lead through emotional discipline, inspiring the employees to embrace positive coping strategies and responsible actions. Over the long run, self-regulation will lead to lower workplace conflict and decision-making and organizational resilience, which is an essential element of emotionally intelligent

**Motivation:** Motivation is a subdivision of emotional intelligence which can be described as the personal desire towards accomplishing objectives with zeal, dedication and determination. The inherent values that emotionally intelligent leaders are driven by include personal development, excellence and organizational prosperity and not by the external rewards. This intrinsic drive helps them to be focused and tough even after being set back or hindered. Inspirational leaders have high but not impractical expectations and motivate the employees by showing excitement and enthusiasm. Their dedication promotes the culture of performance whereby the employees are motivated to perform even better and do their best. Also, these leaders inspire a sense of direction through matching personal interests with the goals of the organization. Motivation is high among the leaders and employees who lead to high productivity, job satisfaction and performance at the organization. Motivation is, therefore, an important factor to maintain interest, innovation and success in organizations over the long term.

**Empathy:** Empathy refers to the skill to appreciate and feel the emotions, attitudes, and experiences of other people. The empathetic leaders are aware of the emotional needs of employees, and they can react to them compassionately and understandingly. This skill will help the leaders establish good relationships with others and lead various teams. Empathic leaders create a workplace where people can trust, feel included, and safe by valuing concerns and perspectives of the employees. Empathy has also been found to be useful especially in resolving



conflicts as leaders treat others fairly and constructively. Additionally, empathetic leadership improves the life of employees, engagement, and job satisfaction as employees feel respected and valued. Empathy is also essential in managing the process of change in the dynamic organizational settings as the staff members are able to foresee emotional responses and offer them the necessary support. In general, empathy reinforces the relations between a leader and subordinate employees and leads to a positive and cooperative organizational culture.

**Social Skills:** Social skills are skills of relationship management, effective communication ability and positive influences on other people. Leaders that have high social skills are good collaborators, conflict managers and team builders. They are articulate, active listeners, and are able to use their style of communication to fit various situations and people. Such leaders are good at networking, developing collaboration, and promoting knowledge exchange within and between teams. The managers are also able to motivate, influence, and lead employees towards a common objective with proper social skills. Socially skilled leaders can foster an encouraging workplace by encouraging open communication and respecting each other, which ensures engagement and improved performance. Also, good interpersonal skills ease the process of change implementation and better relationships between stakeholders. Social skills in organizations enhance the effects of other emotional intelligence factors in that leadership will become more effective and organizational success will be sustainable.

**Most leadership-oriented EI models identify the following core dimensions:**

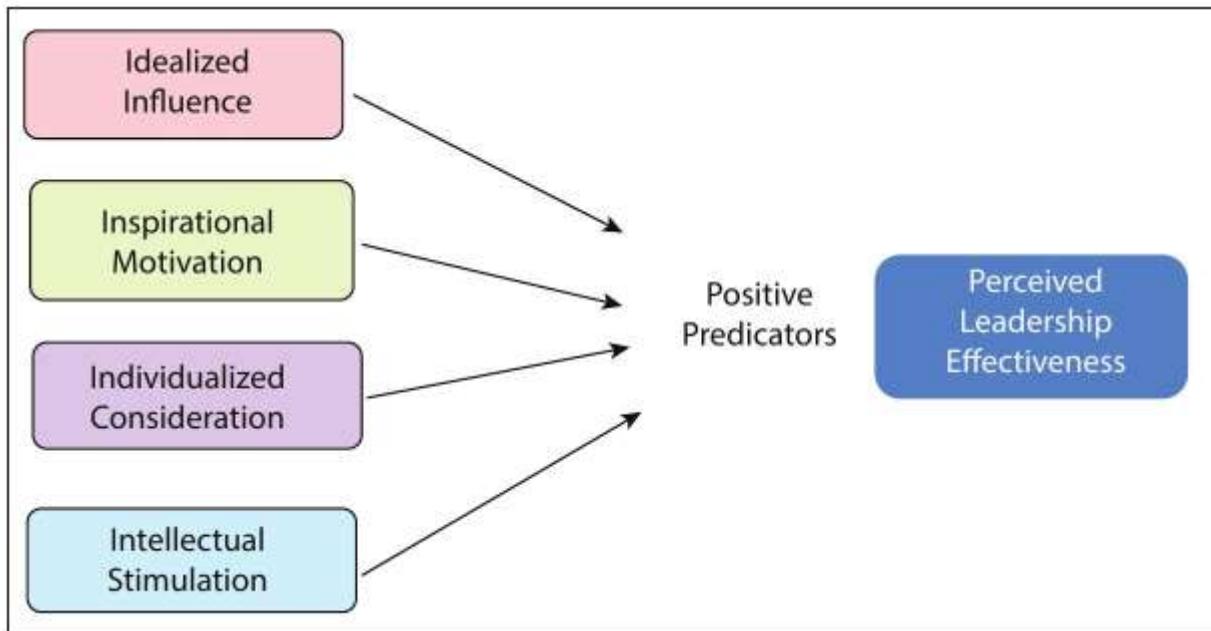
**Emotional Intelligence in Leadership:** Emotionally intelligent leadership is a term used to describe a situation where emotional intelligence skills were applied to lead, influence, and support employees. Such leaders are sensitive to both work requirements and emotional demands in the workplace. They are aware that emotions affect the decision-making process, creativity,



teamwork, and performance. Leaders who are emotionally intelligent exhibit integrity, compassion, and judgment when dealing with individuals. They can cope with their stress and emotions, which is a good example to the employees. These leaders build trust and credibility by reacting positively to the challenges and failures they face.

Comparison with traditional methods of leadership: The traditional leadership approaches were focused on command and control based hierarchical, authority and performance measures. These approaches may work in a stable environment but may not be applicable in a people-based and complex organization. On the other hand, emotional intelligent leadership resembles transformational, servant, and authentic leadership styles. It lays a heavy emphasis on inspiration, personalized approach and attachment. Research has conjectured that leaders who use emotional intelligence in their leadership styles are in better position to motivate workers and keep them committed in the long-run.

**Figure: 3****Emotional Intelligence in Enhancing Leadership Effectiveness**



### **Employee Engagement: Meaning and Importance**

Employee engagement is a measure of how the employees feel emotionally, cognitively, and behaviorally involved in the organization and work. Involved staff members are ambitious, committed and engrossed in their work. They would be ready to exceed job specifications and help in the success of an organization. Engagement is not similar to job satisfaction which indicates the level of contentment employees have with their jobs. Engagement is more intimate emotionally, and purposeful to cause discretionary effort.

Importance of Employee Engagement

### **Improved Job Performance and Productivity**



The most important organizational outcomes associated with the effective leadership, favorable working conditions, and employee engagement is improved job performance and productivity. Employees who have developed emotional attachment to their job positions have been reported to exhibit elevated degrees of concentration, productivity and responsibility to their duties. The committed workers will be more prone to ensuring that they have clear goals, time management and that they use their skills to the best in achieving organizational goals. Performance is also boosted through supportive leadership and effective communication which eliminates role ambiguity and work stress. Moreover, training and development opportunities help in equipping the employees with new competencies so that they can be able to meet the evolving requirements of a job. Intrinsic motivation also contributes to high productivity because the employees own the duties and they do not respond to the instructions. This leads to increased efficiency in operations, minimized rate of errors, and increased utilization of resources within an organization. In the long run, the long-term outcomes of such performance in the job would be an increase in the competitiveness of the organization, profitability, and long-term sustainability.

### **Improved Innovation and Creativity**

There is an increase in the level of innovation and creativity as organizations develop psychologically safe and inclusive working environment. When employees feel important and encouraged, they will be more eager to share their new ideas, test new strategies and methods, and question usual practices. A leadership style that promotes free communication and does not punish calculated risk-taking is very important in fostering creativity. Leaders with a high emotional intelligence especially are aware of individual strengths and provide the opportunity to work together in solving problems. Diversity of thought also contributes to innovation by providing employees with different backgrounds and thus with a different view. When creative work climate develops, continuous learning is also instigated and employees become inquisitive



and resilient to changing business conditions. Consequently, organizations are advantaged with enhanced products, services and processes that are sensitive to the market needs. Innovation in the long run improves the agility of an organization, boosts its growth and increases its capacity to stay ahead of its competition in the swiftly changing industries.

### **Customer Satisfaction and Service Quality**

The attitude, behavior, and level of employee engagement go hand in hand with stronger customer satisfaction and service quality. Motivated and emotionally identified employees with the organization are at a better position to provide polite, responsive and consistent service. The experience that employees get in a positive way is transferred to the customer, since when employees are satisfied; they exhibit empathy, patient behavior and problem solving capabilities towards the customers. Empowerment and leadership support will empower the front line employees to make decisions on time, which increases efficiency in service delivery and customer confidence. In addition, involved employees are eager to obtain feedback and they constantly advance service delivery processes. A high level of service is related to customer loyalty, repeat business, and good word of mouth, which are the key factors in organizational success. Companies that have good customer service are usually associated with high brand image and market share. Therefore, the investment in employee well-being and engagement is a strategic way of reaching the level of higher customer satisfaction and the long-term business results.

### **Minimized Absenteeism and Burnout**

Increased employee attendance and decreased turnover are great signs of a well organizational climate. When employees feel supported, valued, and understood, it is possible that they will not suffer chronic stress and emotional exhaustion. The work load management, recognition, and



emotional support are all effective leadership practices which enable employees to have a healthy work life balance. Employees who feel that the organizational policies are fair and empathetic, will be more committed and the rate of absenteeism among employees will reduce. Further, organizations that encourage mental health by offering counseling services, work flexibility programs, and stress management programs are in a better position to avoid burnout. Less burnout increases morale, focus, and general job satisfaction of the employees. The state of absenteeism is also minimized thus lowering workflow disruption and overtime expenses. In the long run, organizations with enhanced employee well-being enjoy the positive organizational culture, enhanced productivity, and a more resilient workforce that contributes to the long-term performance.

## Enhanced Organizational Reputation

Increased organizational reputation is a desirable intangible asset that determines the stakeholder trust and long-term success. Companies with ethical culture, good care of employees and good service earn talents and customers who are loyal to them. Supportive leadership and employee involvement are positive internal practices that usually result in positive external perceptions. A proud employee will be a brand ambassador and will generate a positive image through his or her interactions and networks with employees. Good reputation also enhances good relations with investors, partners and the regulators which will help in growing the business. Moreover, companies whose image is positive would have an advantage to deal with crises and retain stakeholder trust. Reputation is also a differentiator in competitive markets and it improves credibility and positioning in the market. In such a way, the enhanced work environment and engagement contribute to the organization not only to the better internal performance but also to the reputation and sustainability in the long term.



### **Emotional Intelligence and Leader Employee Relations.**

Leaders who are emotionally intelligent establish good working relationships with the employees which are highly based on trust. They show an active listening behavior and empathy towards the employees, thus showing that they care about their well-being. These relationships improve employees belonging and psychological safety which are vital elements of engagement. When they feel that they are heard, supported, employees can be more willing to share ideas and become initiative takers and dedicated workers. Highly emotionally intelligent leaders are also more effective in identifying the initial signs of disengagement and preventing underlying problems preemptively.

### **Objectives and Methodology**

The article examined the impact of leaders' emotional intelligence on employee engagement and retention, with a particular focus on key EI dimensions such as self-awareness, motivation, and empathy. A quantitative research design was adopted, and data were collected from 250 employees using a random sampling technique across different organizational levels. A structured questionnaire was employed as the primary research tool to measure employees' perceptions of leaders' emotional intelligence and related workplace outcomes. The reliability of the instrument was established prior to analysis. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the data, while (ANOVA) was applied to examine differences in perceived emotional intelligence of leaders across employee designations and years of work experience.

### **Analysis and Results**

To examine differences in employees' perceptions of leaders' emotional intelligence across organizational hierarchies, the study categorized respondents into three designation levels: Junior, Middle, and Senior. These categories reflect varying degrees of responsibility, experience, and exposure to leadership practices within the organization. The analysis focuses on



three core dimensions of leaders' emotional intelligence—Self-Awareness, Motivation, and Empathy—as perceived by employees at each designation level. By comparing mean scores and variability across these groups, the study aims to identify whether perceptions of leadership emotional intelligence differ according to organizational position. Such comparisons provide insights into how leadership behaviors are experienced across hierarchical levels and help determine whether emotional intelligence competencies are consistently demonstrated throughout the organization. The following table presents the descriptive statistics for each emotional intelligence dimension across junior, middle, and senior employee levels, forming the basis for subsequent inferential analysis.

**Null Hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>):** There is no significant difference in Self-Awareness, Motivation, and Empathy of leaders across different employee designations.

**Alternative Hypothesis (H<sub>1</sub>):** There is a significant difference in Self-Awareness, Motivation, and Empathy of leaders across different employee designations.

**Table: 1**

**Impact on leaders' emotional intelligence and Designation levels**

Factors/ Designation levels		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	Sig
<b>Self-Awareness</b>	Junior Level	114	17.2353	3.62050	1.701	0.002
	Middle Level	77	17.7215	2.12759		
	Senior Level	59	18.3684	3.74478		



	Total	250	17.6800	2.45961		
<b>Motivation</b>	Junior Level	114	15.0588	4.96520	0.659	0.009
	Middle Level	77	19.1671	2.71524		
	Senior Level	59	19.7895	3.34297		
	Total	250	18.6320	3.43922		
<b>Empathy</b>	Junior Level	114	22.4118	3.58369	1.773	0.000
	Middle Level	77	23.6634	2.99766		
	Senior Level	59	23.9474	4.27491		
	Total	250	23.5040	3.16132		

The ANOVA results for Self-Awareness indicate a statistically significant difference among the three designation groups ( $F = 1.701$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The mean scores show that senior-level employees (Mean = 18.37) perceived higher self-awareness in their leaders compared to middle-level (Mean = 17.72) and junior-level employees (Mean = 17.24). Therefore, the null hypothesis for self-awareness is rejected, suggesting that employee designation significantly influences perceptions of leaders' self-awareness.

Similarly, the results for Motivation reveal a significant difference across employee designations ( $F = 0.659$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Senior-level employees reported the highest mean score (Mean = 19.79), followed by middle-level (Mean = 19.17) and junior-level employees (Mean = 15.06). This indicates that leaders' motivational behaviors are perceived more positively by employees at higher designation levels. Hence, the null hypothesis for motivation is rejected.

For Empathy, the ANOVA results also demonstrate a statistically significant difference among the three groups ( $F = 1.773$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Senior-level employees reported the highest perception of



leaders' empathy (Mean = 23.95), followed by middle-level (Mean = 23.66) and junior-level employees (Mean = 22.41). Accordingly, the null hypothesis for empathy is rejected.

Overall, the findings suggest that employee designation plays a significant role in shaping perceptions of leaders' emotional intelligence dimensions. Senior-level employees consistently reported higher perceptions of self-awareness, motivation, and empathy compared to junior and middle-level employees. These results highlight the importance of leadership emotional intelligence in fostering positive employee perceptions across organizational hierarchies.

### **Years of Work Experience**

A One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to examine whether employees' perceptions of leaders' emotional intelligence—specifically **Self-Awareness, Motivation, and Empathy**—differ significantly across various levels of **work experience** (less than 5 years, 5–10 years, 11–20 years, and more than 20 years).

**H<sub>0</sub>:** There is no significant difference in perceived leaders' emotional intelligence of leaders across different levels of work experience.

**H<sub>1</sub>:** There is a significant difference in perceived leaders' emotional intelligence across different levels of work experience.

**Table: 2**

### **Impact on leaders' emotional intelligence and Years of Work Experience**



Years of Work Experience		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	Sig
<b>Self-Awareness</b>	Less than 5 years	101	17.2090	3.62039	3.233	.011
	5–10 years	64	17.4032	2.41253		
	11–20 years	35	17.9844	2.19585		
	More than 20 years	50	18.1273	1.34790		
	Total	250	17.6800	2.45961		
<b>Motivation</b>	Less than 5 years	101	15.7164	4.03697	4.054	.000
	5–10 years	64	18.1452	3.75253		
	11–20 years	35	19.5156	2.41500		
	More than 20 years	50	20.7455	1.35015		
	Total	250	18.6320	3.43922		
<b>Empathy</b>	Less than 5 years	101	22.5224	3.69831	2.714	.056
	5–10 years	64	22.7581	3.73740		
	11–20 years	35	24.0833	2.13506		
	More than 20 years	50	25.2000	2.10291		
	Total	250	23.5040	3.16132		

### **Self-Awareness**

The ANOVA results reveal a statistically significant difference in perceived leaders' self-awareness across different levels of work experience ( $F = 3.233$ ,  $p = 0.011$ ). The mean scores indicate a gradual increase in perceived self-awareness as work experience increases, with employees having more than 20 years of experience reporting the highest mean score (Mean = 18.13), compared to those with less than 5 years of experience (Mean = 17.21). Therefore, the



null hypothesis for self-awareness is **rejected**, indicating that years of work experience significantly influence perceptions of leaders' self-awareness.

## Motivation

The results for motivation show a highly significant difference across experience groups ( $F = 4.054$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Employees with greater work experience reported substantially higher perceptions of leaders' motivation, with the highest mean score observed among employees with more than 20 years of experience (Mean = 20.75). In contrast, employees with less than 5 years of experience reported the lowest mean score (Mean = 15.72). Hence, the null hypothesis for motivation is **rejected**, confirming that perceived leader motivation varies significantly with employees' years of experience.

## Empathy

For empathy, the ANOVA results indicate **no statistically significant difference** across the four experience groups at the 5% significance level ( $F = 2.714$ ,  $p = 0.056$ ). Although the mean scores suggest an increasing trend in perceived empathy with higher levels of work experience, the difference is not statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis for empathy is **accepted**, indicating that employees' perceptions of leaders' empathy do not differ significantly based on years of work experience.

## Conclusion

The findings demonstrate that years of work experience significantly influence employees' perceptions of leaders' self-awareness and motivation, but not empathy. More experienced employees tend to perceive higher levels of emotional intelligence in leaders, particularly in



motivational and self-awareness dimensions. These results highlight the importance of considering employee experience when evaluating leadership effectiveness and emotional intelligence within organizations. The findings reveal that self-awareness and motivation of leaders vary significantly across employee designations and years of work experience, indicating that leadership behaviors are perceived differently depending on employees' hierarchical position and exposure to organizational practices. Employees at senior levels and those with greater work experience consistently reported higher perceptions of these emotional intelligence dimensions. Although empathy demonstrated comparatively fewer statistically significant differences, it remained an important component of emotionally intelligent leadership, contributing to positive workplace relationships and employee well-being. The study underscores the importance of developing emotional intelligence competencies among leaders to foster higher levels of employee engagement and retention. Organizations are encouraged to invest in leadership development programs focusing on emotional awareness, intrinsic motivation, and empathetic behavior. Strengthening these competencies can enhance employee commitment, reduce turnover intentions, and contribute to sustainable organizational performance.

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