

# SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE AND EMPATHY; AN INTEGRATED LITERATURE REVIEW

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## ABSTRACT

*Social intelligence and empathy, both are important behavioral factors of leaders. Therefore, this research has adopted the technique of integrated literature review by evaluating the four important studies focusing on the social intelligence and empathy of leaders in the context of professional coaching. To search the relevant articles from quality journals, a search was conducted on different databases. Moreover, the research purpose, questions, participant details, data collection/ analysis, and findings of every research article were analyzed and compared.*

**Keywords:** Social Intelligence, Empathy, Leadership, Professional Coaching.

## INTRODUCTION

Emotions play an important role in the life of a human being because they affect actions and motivations (Pourazami, 2022). Similarly, emotional intelligence is important in human life, and it can influence an individual or societal behavior (Jain & Duggal, 2018). According to Song et al., (2010) this intelligence includes several interrelated skills including, empathy, self-awareness, and emotions management. Individuals having a high level of emotional intelligence have more perspective-taking, self-control, and pro-social behavior. Moreover, they value close relationships and have a general advantage in social skills (Schutte et al., 2001). Thus, the emotional intelligence has more implications for the society and related to social intelligence. Salovey & Mayer (1990) defined it as social intelligence as "*the subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions*".

The term social intelligence is very comprehensive, it has a variety of meanings and many researchers have explained it in different contexts. According to Thorndike (1920), the social intelligence is one's ability to accomplish interpersonal tasks. Whereas, Gardner (1983) highlighted social intelligence as interpersonal intelligence in this theory of multiple intelligence. In addition, Sternberg (1985) presented the triarchic theory of intelligence which emphasized practical/contextual intelligence. This intelligence is about the adaptation to the environment and the ability to control the needs. Besides these views, Cantor & Kihlstrom (1989) provided a different perspective of social intelligence, according to them social intelligence is a "*convenient organizing principle.*" Moreover, they explained that social intelligence is procedural and declarative knowledge about social life and is directed at a social life. Thus, social intelligence is the understanding of the social situation of self or others. Table 1, given below highlights the different contextual meanings of social intelligence.

Sr #	Authors'	Claim/ Theory	Final Conceptualization
1	(Thorndike, 1920)	Ability to accomplish interpersonal tasks	Social Intelligence
2	(Gardner, 1983)	Interpersonal intelligence/ theory of multiple intelligence	Social Intelligence
3	(Sternberg, 1985)	Practical and contextual intelligence/ triarchic theory of intelligence	Social Intelligence
4	(Cantor & Kihlstrom, 1989)	Convenient organizing principle	Social Intelligence

For the last two decades, social intelligence is a hot debate among researchers but this interest is renewed and now many studies have highlighted social intelligence as a factor that can influence peer relations (Andreou, 2006; Braza, Azurmendi, Muñoz et al., 2009). Moreover, besides social intelligence, an increasing interest has been seen in demonstrating empathy and its contribution to peer relationships (Garaigordobil, 2009). Howe (2017) explained that social intelligence and empathy are important elements in the promotion of good quality relationships professionally and personally.

Leith & Baumeister (1998) described empathy as an important interpersonal construct that can not only improve the satisfaction between relationships but also enhances the quality of relationships between individuals. Hoffman (1984) defined empathy in two different ways, 1- it is the awareness about intentions, feelings, and thoughts of other persons, and 2- "tendency to be vicariously aroused by the affective state of another person. Kaukiainen et al., (1999) claimed that empathy comprises affective and cognitive components, and both of these components recognize others' feelings. Feshback & Feshback (1982) highlighted three important components of empathy and also differentiated them from each other, 1- empathy is an emotional capacity and responsiveness, 2- empathy is an ability or tendency to know others' perspectives, 3- the empathy is an ability to discriminate affective states of others. Social intelligence is a quality of effective organizational leadership (Zaccaro et al., 1991). Moreover, socially intelligent leaders have the capability to change their responses according to varying situations or situational demands. These capabilities are the result of well-organized social knowledge systems that represent the typical social aspects that confront leaders in the corporate context. High levels of social intelligence are required for both the assessment of social problems and the subsequent invention and implementation of successful remedies (Mumford et al., 1993). Therefore, the socially intelligent and empathic leader can provide better professional coaching.

### **Problem Statement & Purpose**

The concept of social intelligence was first coined by John in its Moral Principles of Education (1909) and later it was developed in 1911. Whereas, Thorndike (1920) was the founder of this concept. Ramirez Molina et al., (2019) investigated the relationship between social intelligence and leadership resonant but their study revealed that there is no connection between these variables. Moreover, they recommended that redefinition of past concepts (i.e. social relationships and innovative styles) is required.

In the human sciences, there is great importance of leadership as it is considered one of the critical principle of human sciences with an administrative nature. According to Kerr et al., (2006) leadership is a social role played by the leader by his or her interaction with other group members. The leaders show the direction and provide guidance to the individuals for achieving the group's goal. Moreover, the leader is the one who is responsible for keenly examining and

understanding the emotions of individuals. Lubbadeh (2020) explored the relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership by using the literature synthesis approach and explained that the leaders having high emotional intelligence level can actually translate and actualize the reactions and emotion of the employees. In addition, they have the ability to upshot their behavior by keep their emotions under control. Therefore, such leaders can maintain harmony among employees and encourage them. Emotional intelligence is the subset of social intelligence. Thus, the social intelligence of a leader can also play an important role in understanding the behaviors but there is a paucity of literature explaining the social intelligence of leaders. Katou et al., (2021) revealed that socially intelligent leaders have a positive impact on creativity through exploration activities. Thus, it's critical to reveal the importance of a leader's social intelligence. Moreover, there is a dire need to study the role played by the socially intelligent leader in professional coaching.

Marlowe (1986) defined the leaders' social intelligence as "*the ability to understand the feelings, thoughts, and behaviors of persons, including oneself in interpersonal situations and to act appropriately upon that understanding*". In addition, Goleman & Boyatzis (2008) "*leaders' social intelligence as a set of interpersonal competencies that inspire others to be effective*". The social intelligence competency of leaders is significantly impacted by coaching in terms of interpersonal skills and competencies (Schaap & Dippenaar, 2017). Therefore, social intelligence and empathy, both can have an important role in professional coaching.

The concept of social intelligence and empathy are not completely independent of each other but actually, they overlap with each other. Empathy's cognitive component can be considered the most important aspect of social intelligence. Whereas, this component forms an essential part of social intelligence. The affective component is an important element that differentiates empathy from social intelligence. The term empathy refers to the sensitivity toward others' feelings and social intelligence can be applied without or with emotions in a cold-hearted manner. Therefore, it's meaningful to differentiate between social intelligence and empathy, both, operationally and conceptually (Kaukiainen et al., 2017). Moreover, little attention has been paid to the emerging practice of professional coaching by leadership professionals in the context of social intelligence and empathy of leaders. The purpose of this research is to examine the social intelligence and empathy of leaders, investigating the useful underlying theories and studies. Thus, this research has discovered that there are studies on social intelligence with reference to coaching (Lemisiou, 2018; Schaap & Dippenaar, 2017) but there is a paucity of literature examining the role of leaders' empathy on professional coaching. The problem statement of this research article is "*What is the role played by empathy and social intelligence in professional coaching*"? With reference to this statement, the research question is "*Do the empathy and social intelligence of leaders can help in professional coaching*".

To answer the research question and the problem highlighted in this research, this study has focused on the prior studies that emphasized social intelligence and empathy in the leadership and general context. Riggio & Reichard (2008) expanded the model of social skills (i.e. part of social intelligence) proposed by (Reichard and Riggio, 2008) and applied it to the domain of leadership effectiveness. Table 2, highlights the social skills framework, definitions, and leader behaviors.

Sr #	Skill	Definition	Examples of leader behavior
1	Social Expressiveness	Skill in verbal expression and the ability to engage others in social discourse	Public speaking; persuasion; coaching
2	Social sensitivity	Skill in interpreting the verbal communication of others; ability to understand social situations, social norms, and roles	Effective, active listening; regulating and monitoring of social behavior
3	Social control	Skill in role-playing and social self-presentation	Being tactful; leader impression management; social and leader self-efficacy

The three skills of social intelligence including social expressiveness, social sensitivity, and social control are very much important. This research has selected four studies with different research designs. They are listed as follows:

1. Schaap, P., & Dippenaar, M. (2017). The impact of coaching on the emotional and social intelligence competencies of leaders. *South African Journal of Economic and Management Sciences*, 20(1), 1-16.
2. Riggio, R. E., & Reichard, R.J. (2008). The emotional and social intelligences of effective leadership: An emotional and social skill approach. *Journal of managerial psychology*.
3. Kaukiainen, A., Björkqvist, K., Lagerspetz, K., Österman, K., Salmivalli, C., Rothberg, S., & Ahlbom, A. (1999). The relationships between social intelligence, empathy, and three types of aggression. *Aggressive Behavior: Official Journal of the International Society for Research on Aggression*, 25(2), 81-89.
4. Rahim, M.A. (2014). A structural equations model of leaders' social intelligence and creative performance. *Creativity and Innovation Management*, 23(1), 44-56.

## METHODOLOGY

This study has focused on the integrated literature review to ground future research. According to Torraco (2005) a selective integrated literature review is defined as “*form of research that reviews, critiques, and synthesizes representative literature on a topic in an integrated way such that new frameworks and perspectives on the topic are generated*”. To conduct this review, this research has considered the empirical and conceptual research articles published in academic journals. The indexing to the journals was confirmed by Web of Science and Scopus to ensure the quality of studies to be considered. Moreover, google scholar was used to highlight the sources in peer-reviewed journals as it is the best engine to search the relevant articles. Moreover, the book on social intelligence by Goleman (2007) also helped a lot in determining the essential things required for this review.

In Table 3, the research objectives of each selected study are mentioned. Moreover, their findings are provided. See the Table 3, given below:

<b>Studies</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Titles</b>	The impact of coaching on the emotional and social intelligence competencies of leaders	The emotional and social intelligences of effective leadership: An emotional and social skill approach	The relationships between social intelligence, empathy, and three types of aggression	A structural equations model of leaders' social intelligence and creative performance.
<b>Authors</b>	Schaap & Dippenaar,	Riggio, R. E., & Reichard, R. J.	Kaukiainen, Björkqvist, Lagerspetz, Österman, Salmivalli, Rothberg, & Ahlbom	Rahim
<b>Years</b>	2017	2008	1999	2014
<b>Research Objectives</b>	To highlight the impact of a theoretically substantiated coaching intervention on the social intelligence competencies of leaders	To develop the framework for highlighting the impact of social intelligence factors on the leader emergence, upward leader career progression, and leadership success.	To highlight the relationship between social intelligence, empathy, and three types of aggressive behavior?	To examine the role of business leaders' social intelligence (SI) and their creative performance?
<b>Research Questions</b>	What is the impact of a theoretically substantiated coaching intervention on the social intelligence competencies of leaders?	Which social intelligence factors can influence leadership success?	What is the relationship between social intelligence, empathy, and three types of aggressive behavior?	What is the relationship between business leaders' social intelligence (SI) and their creative performance?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review given below has not focused on the studies under consideration, but it has provided the broader literature aspect to clearly highlight the social intelligence and empathy in the generic and actual context of professional coaching of and by leaders.

### Social Intelligence

The relevance of social intelligence with effective leadership behavior in organizational settings has been identified by many studies (Zaccaro, 2001; Zaccaro et al., 1991; Larin et al., 2014; Garg et al., 2020). The typical leadership training has a very minimal effect on the permanent transformation of leaders' social intelligence behavior. This behavior includes emotional self-control and awareness (Boyatzis et al., 2013). The lack of transfer of training that characterizes traditional training systems that emphasize teacher-learner, short-term, massed, and one-size-fits-all classroom-based training appears to be the problem with standard leadership training (McEnrue et al., 2010). Schaap & Dippenaar (2017) aimed to investigate the effective of coaching intervention in developing social competencies of leaders that are part of social intelligence. Moreover, they highlighted that the social intelligence competencies shown in Bar-On model can be developed by the use of substantiated coaching approach (Bar-On, 1997). These competencies are shown in table 4.

Sr #	Main Components	Sub-Components	Competency
1	Adaptability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reality testing</li> <li>• Flexibility</li> <li>• Problem Solving</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To objectively validate one's feelings and thinking with external reality.</li> <li>• To adapt and adjust one's feelings and thinking to new situations.</li> <li>• To effectively solve problems of a personal and interpersonal nature.</li> </ul>
2	Intrapersonal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-regard</li> <li>• Emotional awareness</li> <li>• Assertiveness</li> <li>• Independence</li> <li>• Self-actualisation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To accurately perceive, understand and accept oneself.</li> <li>• To be aware of and understand one's own emotions.</li> <li>• To effectively and constructively express one's emotions and oneself.</li> <li>• To be self-reliant and free of emotional dependency on others.</li> <li>• To strive to achieve personal goals and actualise one's potential.</li> </ul>
3	Interpersonal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Empathy</li> <li>• Social Responsibility</li> <li>• Interpersonal Relationships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To be aware of and understand how others feel.</li> <li>• To identify with one's social group and cooperate with others.</li> <li>• To establish mutually satisfying relationships and relate well with others.</li> </ul>

The social intelligence is subset of emotional intelligence, thus the constructs of emotional intelligence are different from social intelligence. The social skills highlights the variety of abilities that are linked to the constructs of social intelligence. Moreover, the social skills are the essential components of social intelligence which includes norms, social role-playing skills, norms, interpersonal problem-solving skills, scripts and knowledge of social roles. It is interesting to note that social intelligence is linked to effective social functioning in general Cantor & Kihlstorm (1987) and to “*effective leadership specifically*” (Zaccaro, 2002). Riggio & Reichard (2008) highlighted three important social skills related to social intelligence. These skills include:

1. social expressiveness
2. social sensitivity
3. Social control.

### **Social Intelligence and Empathy**

Social intelligence and empathy, both are the important elements of leadership that can influence the professional coaching. Many studies have included the empathy as the element of social intelligence. Goleman & Boyatzis (2008) developed the scale to measure the executives' social intelligence. They developed the 360-degree evaluation instrument to focus on leaders' social intelligence and empathy.

<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Questions</b>
Empathy	Do you understand what motivates other people, even those from different backgrounds?
	Are you sensitive to others' needs?
Attunement	Do you listen attentively and think about how others feel?
	Are you attuned to others' moods?
Organizational Awareness	Do you appreciate the culture and values of the group or organization?
	Do you understand social networks and know their unspoken norms?
Influence	Do you persuade others by engaging them in discussion and appealing to their self-interests?
	Do you get support from key people?
Developing Others	Do you coach and mentor others with compassion and personally invest time and energy in mentoring?
	Do you provide feedback that people find helpful for their professional development?
Inspiration	Do you articulate a compelling vision, build group pride, and foster a positive emotional tone?
	Do you lead by bringing out the best in people?
Teamwork	Do you solicit input from everyone on the team?
	Do you support all team members and encourage cooperation?

Social intelligence and empathy, both are involved in the complex set of reflexive psychological skills. Individuals having social intelligence and empathic behavior analyze how things feel and look from the review of other persons Table 5. The successful empathy involves the understanding of the other from the other's point of view (Howe, 2017). Therefore, the empathic and socially intelligent leaders can influence the professional leaders. The leaders who are involved in professional training, if have social intelligence and empathy, they will be able to provide better training. Thus, the socially intelligent and empathic leaders can provide better professional trainings.

## **RESULTS AND FINDINGS**

### **Research Designs, Participants, Data Collection & Analysis**

The research design of the four studies under consideration is shown in Table 6. It has also shown the participants and data collection details.

<b>Studies</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Titles</b>	The impact of coaching on the emotional and social intelligence competencies of leaders	The emotional and social intelligences of effective leadership: An emotional and social skill approach	The relationships between social intelligence, empathy, and three types of aggression	A structural equations model of leaders' social intelligence and creative performance.
<b>Authors</b>	Schaap & Dippenaar	Riggio & Reichard	Kaukiainen, Björkqvist, Lagerspetz, Österman, Salmivalli, Rothberg, & Ahlbom	Rahim
<b>Participants</b>	The 30 members of the control group were sourced from the company's internal recruitment assessment database consisting of leaders who had completed the Bar-On EQ-i for selection purposes.	It is qualitative study based on conceptual framework, thus no participants were there.	526 Finnish schoolchildren from three age groups (10, 12, and 14 years old) participated in the study	The data were collected by using questionnaires from two collegiate samples of employed undergraduate students (n = 395) and employed MBA students (n = 250) and from a sample of top executives of organizations (n = 143)
<b>Data Collection</b>	The Bar-On EQ-i assessment	Literature	Scales of social intelligence and empathy	7 of the 13 items of an instrument developed by George and Zhou (2001)
<b>Data analysis approach</b>	Quantitative & Qualitative (Mix research)	Qualitative (Conceptual Study)	Quantitative	Quantitative

Schaap & Dippenaar (2017) gathered the data from 30 members of the “*control group were sourced from the company's internal recruitment assessment databases consisting of leaders who had complemented the Bar-On EQ-I for selection purposes*”. Riggio & Reichard (2008) developed the conceptual framework of social intelligence and revealed its dimensions. They developed the following propositions:

*P<sub>1</sub>: Leader social expressiveness is associated with leader emergence and upward leader career progression.*

*P<sub>2</sub>: Leader social sensitivity is positively associated with leader career progression and leadership success.*

*P<sub>3</sub>: Leader social control is positively associated with leader self-efficacy and the ability to enact the leadership role.*

In terms of the social intelligence of leaders, there are three elements including leader social expressiveness, leader social sensitivity, and leaders' social control (Riggio & Reichard, 2008).

Kaukiainen et al., (1991) gathered the data from 526 Finnish school children by developing a scale of social intelligence. In addition, Rahim (2014) adopted the 7 to 13 items instruments developed by George and Zhou, 2001.



## Findings

Table 7 has shown the findings of four studies considered by this research. All studies have revealed that the social intelligence and empathy of a leader can influence professional training or coaching.

Studies	1	2	3	4
<b>Titles</b>	The impact of coaching on the emotional and social intelligence competencies of leaders	The emotional and social intelligence of effective leadership: An emotional and social skill approach	The relationships between social intelligence, empathy, and three types of aggression	A structural equations model of leaders' social intelligence and creative performance.
<b>Authors</b>	Schaap & Dippenaar, 2017	Riggio & Reichard, 2008	Kaukiainen et al., 1999	Rahim, 2014
<b>Findings</b>	There is a positive impact of a long-term, spaced and goal-focused coaching intervention on the social intelligence competencies of leaders	Social intelligence and particularly the social skills are essential for effective leadership	Physical and verbal forms of aggression had almost zero correlation to social intelligence.	There is positive relationship between business leaders' social intelligence (SI) and their creative performance (CP)

Schaap & Diappenaar (2017) examined the effect of coaching on the social intelligence competencies of leaders and highlighted that long-term, spaced, and goal-focused interventions have positively impacted the social intelligence competencies of leaders. Riggio & Reichard (2008) highlighted that social skills of social intelligence are essential for effective leadership. Similarly, Kaukiainen et al. (1990) revealed that there is zero to no correlation between physical and verbal aggression and social intelligence. Rahim (2014) explained that there is a positive relationship between the social intelligence of business leaders and their creative performance.

## CONCLUSION

This study has adopted the technique to integrate literature review to analyze the gap based on the social intelligence and empathy of leaders who are involved in professional coaching. Four research articles were considered for this research, these one article was conceptual while the other 3 articles were empirical in nature. Google Scholar and other databases were searched to find the relevant articles, and there was no article that focused on social intelligence and empathy both in the context of leadership and professionals training/coaching. Consequently, the most relevant articles were considered to analyze the results. The findings highlighted that in social intelligence, there is a vital role of social intelligence competencies of leaders. Similarly, social skills and social intelligence can play an important role in effective leadership and the creative performance of leaders.

## LIMITATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Social intelligence and empathy are the broad domains and this research is unique in its context as it has emphasized both in the perspective or context of leadership and professional training but still has a lot of limitations that can be considered by future researchers. First, this

integrated literature review is based on only four articles and studies in the future can conduct a review by considering more articles. Secondly, the study has not provided any conceptual framework, but it has one important recommendation for future researchers focusing on social intelligence and empathy. This recommendation is that future studies can use all the factors including social intelligence competencies and social skills to examine the leaders' ability to provide professional coaching.

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