School Principals’ Awareness of Their Emotional Intelligence and Connections to Leadership

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SCHOOL PRINCIPALS’ AWARENESS OF THEIR EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND CONNECTIONS TO LEADERSHIP

by

Lourdes M. Pimentel Soto

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy Educational Leadership, Research, and Technology Western Michigan University December 2021

Doctoral Committee:

Brett Geier, Ed.D., Chair
Louann Bierlein Palmer, Ed.D.
Kevin Ivers, Ph.D.
Leaders set the tone and mood of the organization through their attitudes and actions. This emotional climate set by the leader has been found to influence employee’s performance, including their sense of job satisfaction and commitment. In other words, what sets great leaders apart from their peers is their ability to drive the emotions of those they lead in the right direction. This ability to understand and manage one’s and other’s emotions is what is known as emotional intelligence (EI).

This qualitative study explored the perceptions of K-12 principals’ awareness of their EI in relation to how they lead, and how their EI competencies can be used to enhance their leadership practice. The sample consisted of ten K-12 principals within a Midwestern state who had at least three consecutive years serving in their position. Data was collected through virtual interviews using open-ended questions. The interview questions were developed based on Goleman et al.’s (2013) Emotional Intelligence model, which consists of 18 EI competencies clustered within four major domains: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. To analyze the data, qualitative coding techniques were used to develop themes and sub-themes to represent the main ideas shared by the principals.

The four major themes that emerged from the data revealed principals’ awareness of how their EI competencies play a significant role in their ability to fulfill their daily responsibilities as
leaders, to the extent that principals perceive these competencies as essential to effective school leadership. As so, principals recognize that, beyond their technical and academic skills, their success as leaders is directly associated to their ability to manage themselves and relate to others, including their ability to inspire, motivate, and support individuals in the process of accomplishing goals. Furthermore, the data also revealed how principals utilize self-development strategies that require EI competencies, such as accurate self-assessment, emotional self-control, empathy, and adaptability, to enhance their leadership.
DEDICATION

My work is dedicated to my family, the greatest support in my life. I especially want to dedicate this dissertation to my parents for always believing in me and for supporting my decisions to pursue my dreams. I appreciate all the sacrifices you made to provide as many educational opportunities as possible during my upbringing.

I also want to mention my sisters, Claudia and Rosaura, who have always encouraged me to accept new challenges and adventures, including seeking a graduate education in a foreign country. I am very grateful for all of you and I’m proud to be part of such an amazing family.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would first like to thank my advisor, Dr. Brett Geier, for his patient support and valuable guidance throughout my research and graduate studies. You provided the emotional support and the academic tools that I needed to choose the right direction and successfully complete my dissertation. You also encouraged me to complete the required principal internships to obtain my School Administrator Certificate. This experience allowed me to enhance my awareness of the everyday challenges K-12 principals encounter, as well as the leadership attitudes that facilitate navigating these events.

I also would like to acknowledge Dr. Louann Bierlein Palmer, whose insightful feedback pushed me to sharpen my skills as a researcher and to bring my work to a higher level. I have always admired you as a professor and researcher and your feedback was always appreciated. Thank you for accepting being part of my committee!

As well, I want to thank Dr. Kevin Ivers for his enthusiasm in joining my dissertation committee, and for his support and assistance. You played an important part of this process and your suggestions allowed me to enhance my final work. Thank you!

Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends for always being there for me. I especially want to acknowledge my parents for always encouraging me. Thank you for your unconditional love and support!

Lourdes M. Pimentel Soto
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Today, we know more about leadership than ever in history. With the organizational mood set by the leader and being associated with employees’ satisfaction, performance, and attitudes, it has been found that leaders who are cheerful, enthusiastic, and positive have more productive employees (Goleman et al., 2013; Stein, 2017). Yet, many organizations report finding effective leaders as one of their major needs, and school districts are no exception. School leaders have the responsibility to serve as a change agent, foster shared beliefs and a sense of belonging, and inspire, lead, and work in collaboration with the school and broad community in which they serve (Marzano, 2006). Therefore, principals must have the ability to manage their emotional reactions and their relationship with others in ways that will influence employees, students, and stakeholders’ emotional attitudes in the process of accomplishing the desired goals (Gray, 2009). This ability is what is known as emotional intelligence (EI) (Goleman et al., 2013).

EI refers to the capacity to understand one’s own emotions, preferences, abilities, strengths, and limitations (Goleman et al., 2013). Additionally, it refers to the ability to perceive other’s emotions and regulate one’s behaviors to influence other’s responses. EI leaders understand how their emotions impact those around them, especially negative ones. This ability to recognize one’s emotions and the emotions of others, and to understand how one’s emotions impact one’s actions compromises four domains: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management (Goleman et al., 2013). Researchers in the field of psychology have suggested that EI is a key aspect to effective leadership and life success.
depends more on one’s levels of EI than on one’s intelligence quotient (IQ) (Goleman et al., 2013; Stein, 2017).

Knowledge about EI and its link to effective leadership has prompted exploration of the relationship between school leaders’ EI and school performance. Research has found that school leaders’ EI has a significant impact on their decision-making, attitudes, and interpersonal relationships (Moore, 2009), and that the principals’ EI has a significant impact on their success as leaders (Gray, 2009; Moore, 2009). Indeed, research studies demonstrate a positive association between school principals’ EI and their performance as leaders (Ayiro, 2014; Berkovich & Eyal, 2017; Hebert, 2011; Segredo et al., 2017; Taliadorou & Pashiardis, 2014). More importantly, research studies suggest that a lack of EI in school principals can result in underperforming schools (Arif & Sohail, 2009; Bipath, 2008).

Considering that successful principals exhibit high EI behaviors while underperforming principals exhibit low EI behaviors (Bipath, 2008; Bower et al., 2018), one factor making a positive difference in school performance can be attributed to the leaders’ EI. However, at the time of this study, previous studies had not yet explored school principals’ understanding of their own EI, and how such an understanding might be used to enhance their leadership practice.

Problem Statement

Organizational change may unleash a roller-coaster of emotions in faculty, students, and staff that can contribute or sabotage the achievement of desired goals (Moore, 2009). Therefore, principals’ lack of ability to understand and manage their own emotional reactions and their ability to influence the emotions of others could potentially lead to poor school performance. School principals must be aware of how their emotions and the emotions of others may impact their leadership, as their role as leaders plays a strong emphasis on social interactions.
**Researchable Problem**

Research studies have shown that a lack of EI in principals can negatively impact teachers’ attitudes toward schoolwork, which may result in underperforming schools (Arif & Sohail, 2009; Bipath, 2008). Researchers believe that one solution to improving schools’ outcomes can be found in having principals who demonstrate high levels of EI (Cai, 2011; Moore, 2009). However, the first step to developing one’s EI is awareness of ones’ behaviors (Goleman et al., 2013). Therefore, if principals are not even aware of their own EI attitudes and how their EI might be used to enhance their leadership practice, they may be less likely to consciously consider developing their EI competencies.

**Studies Addressing the Problem and Deficiency Statement**

EI has been identified as a key aspect to effective leadership to the extent that it has been suggested that leaders’ EI is a better predictor of success than leaders’ IQ (Goleman et al., 2013; Stein, 2017). Researchers in the field of educational leadership have explored how school leaders’ EI is associated with their leadership, concluding that EI may be an indicator of principals’ leadership effectiveness and therefore, principals’ EI development should be encouraged (Cai, 2011; Moore, 2009).

For example, after reviewing the literature to explore the relationship between the EI of principals and the turnaround of low-performing schools, Cai (2011) stated that school leaders’ EI might be linked to leadership attitudes that contribute to successful school improvement. Cai also suggested that principals’ EI might be linked to the principals' abilities to develop effective principal-teacher relationships. Cai’s study aligns with Moore’s (2009) review of the literature, which suggests that school leaders need high levels of EI in order to make significant
contributions to their schools. According to Moore, EI provides leaders with the awareness they need to connect with their staff and develop a school culture based on trust and respect.

Bower et al.’s (2018) study also supports the idea of a positive relationship between principals’ EI and their leadership. In their qualitative study, Bower and colleagues found that teachers perceived school leaders to be more successful when displaying EI behaviors, such as self-awareness, impulse control, and effective social skills, and less successful when they failed to display EI behaviors. For example, teachers perceived those principals who displayed negative moods and exhibited a lack of empathy as the worst leaders with whom they have worked. In addition, teachers expressed that the lack of emotional self-management in their principals resulted in staff members isolating themselves from their leader rather than working in collaboration as a team. Bipath (2008) also conducted a study that resulted in similar findings.

Bipath’s (2008) qualitative study explored the behaviors of two principals in South Africa whose schools had the same political, environmental, social, and technological environment, and whose educators had similar qualifications and work experience. However, one school was rated as functional and the other one as difunctional based on South Africa’s education system parameters, which includes students’ scores in their common written examinations after 12 years of schooling (grade R-12). Bipath’s examination of the data led to the conclusion that the principal in the functional school exhibited a leadership approach that aligned with EI behaviors, while the principal leading the dysfunctional school displayed behaviors that suggested a lack of EI. For example, the principal in the dysfunctional school failed in getting his staff and students to follow rules and procedures and to work in collaboration toward a common school vision. Furthermore, the school principal in the dysfunctional school failed in developing a school environment that fostered and promoted a learning culture.
Another qualitative case study showed that a lack of a principal’s EI behaviors can result in staff experiencing exhaustion, a decrease in motivation, and an absence of collaboration among employees (Arif & Sohail, 2009). These researchers gathered data from the administrative staff and teachers at a private school using semi-structured interviews and observations. The researchers concluded that the principal’s leadership behaviors reflected a lack of EI. For example, the principal exhibited micromanaging behaviors instead of coaching behaviors. In addition, the principal failed in delegating and empowering teachers, building trusting relationships with employees, inspiring and motivating staff, and sustaining long-term results. Furthermore, the principal failed in considering employees’ needs and wants and in providing meaningful opportunities for growth. Arif and Sohail (2009) argued that the behaviors exhibited by the principal align with what Goleman et al. (2013) refer to as dissonant leadership. Dissonant leadership is characterized by the absence of EI behaviors. For example, dissonant leaders are not attuned to employees’ emotional needs. In addition, dissonant leaders avoid democratic leadership, and their autocratic approach can result in employee burnout, exhaustion, and staff turnover.

Two more previous studies need to be mentioned here, whereby the perception of principals’ regarding EI and school leadership was explored (Keith, 2009; Singh & Dali, 2013). Keith’s (2009) study explored the lived experiences of principals and their perceptions of the effects of EI on their leadership behaviors; this study is similar to my study. However, Keith’s population consisted only of secondary principals who scored high on an EI questionnaire, and not of a broader group of principals regardless of their EI scores. In addition, Keith’s research focused on exploring how principals understood their EI influence their leadership and not on how principals could use their EI to enhance their leadership.
Singh and Dali (2013) also conducted a study similar to mine as they explored principals’ perception of the significance of EI in school leadership. However, their population consisted of principals who participated in an advanced certificate program in education that integrated EI learning, while my research does not require experience with the construct of EI. Therefore, my study explores how principals, regardless of their previous experience with the construct of EI, perceive and describe their own EI in relation to their leadership, and how they understand their EI might be used to enhance their leadership practices. Before we look at my specific purpose and research questions, let us review some important constructs that are examined in my study; these are covered in the next section offering my theoretical framework.

Theoretical Framework and Narrative

The theoretical framework of my study is based on Goleman et al.’s (2013) EI model. According to Goleman et al., EI refers to the capacity to understand one’s own emotions, preferences, abilities, strengths, and limitations. Additionally, it refers to the ability to perceive others’ emotions and regulate one’s behaviors to influence others’ responses. In short, EI refers to the ability to recognize one’s own and other’s emotions and to use this information to guide one’s thoughts and actions. Goleman et al.’s EI model is composed of four domains: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management.

Figure 1 presents the definition of EI and its domains with their respective competencies. The first domain, from left to right, is self-awareness, and it encompasses three competencies: emotional self-awareness, accurate self-assessment, and self-confidence (Goleman et al., 2013). Self-awareness refers to the ability to recognize one’s emotions as they happen, including understanding their impact on one’s actions. It also refers to the ability to recognize emotions in others. A self-aware leader is characterized as being honest about themselves, including being
honest about their strengths and limitations. In addition, a self-aware leader recognizes how their feelings affect their own and others’ performance and seeks for constructive criticism as a tool for growth. Self-awareness is the first step to self-management.

**Figure 1**

*Framework for Pimentel Soto’s (2021) Study, Based on Goleman et al.’s (2013) EI Model*

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<td>• Emotional Self-Awareness</td>
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<td>• Self-Confidence</td>
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<td>• Emotional Self-Control</td>
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<td>• Inspirational Leadership</td>
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<td>• Developing Others</td>
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<td>• Building Bonds</td>
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<td>• Teamwork and Collaboration</td>
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The second EI domain is self-management. Self-management encompasses six competencies: emotional self-control, transparency, adaptability, achievement orientation, initiative, and optimism (Goleman et al., 2013). Self-management refers to the ability to manage emotions appropriately for the situation at hand. It includes the ability to anticipate consequences of acting impulsively and the capacity to calm oneself and move from a negative state to a positive one. Leaders are routinely challenged to face ambiguity and organizational change in order to adapt to the demands of today’s society. Leaders’ self-management competencies assist
them in controlling emotional impulses, so they can quickly adapt to new changes and stay motivated during challenging situations.

Self-management is followed by social awareness, which consists of three competencies: empathy, organizational awareness, and service (Goleman et al., 2013). Social awareness refers to the ability to recognize and understand others’ perspectives, feelings, and needs. Social awareness competencies are essential to understand and consider employees’ feelings and needs in the process of making decisions.

Finally, the fourth domain is relationship management. Relationship management encompasses seven competencies: inspirational leadership, influence, developing others, change catalyst, conflict management, building bonds, and teamwork and collaboration (Goleman et al., 2013). Relationship management competencies are applied in building rapport with others, in finding common ground with people of all kinds, and in persuading others to move with purpose in the desired direction.

Goleman et al. (2013) suggest that leaders who are emotionally intelligent master at least half a dozen EI competencies distributed within all 4 domains. Goleman et al. refer to these individuals as resonant leaders. Resonant leaders are attuned to their team’s feelings and use emotional information to influence employees’ emotional state in a positive and productive way, resulting in a team that works in harmony and collaboration.

By contrast, leaders with underdeveloped EI competencies struggle to manage emotional reactions and lack the skills to build healthy relationships with those they serve. Goleman et al. (2013) refer to these individuals as dissonant leaders. Dissonant leaders are characterized by being out of touch with their team’s feelings and lack the emotional awareness to perceive how their actions impact the organizational mood and, as a result, employees’ productivity. In the
long haul, employees of dissonant leaders are more likely to experience burnout, exhaustion, disengagement, and turnover intentions.

**Purpose Statement and Research Questions**

In alignment with my problem statement, including previous related research and my conceptual framework, the purpose of my qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of K-12 principals’ awareness of their EI in relation to how they lead, and how their EI competencies can be used to enhance their leadership practice. My specific research questions are:

1. How do school principals perceive and describe their experiences with the following EI domains in relation to how they lead: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management?

2. What are principals’ understandings of how such competencies might be used to enhance their leadership practice?

**Significance of the Study**

In the field of educational leadership, research studies suggest an existing relationship between principals’ EI and their leadership (Ayiro, 2014; Bower et al., 2018; Muslihah, 2015). Therefore, it is important to explore principals’ awareness of their EI and how their understanding of EI competencies might be used to enhance their leadership practices. The findings of this study contribute to the literature by illustrating whether and how principals are taking advantage of emotional and behavioral qualities that characterize an effective school leader. If principals are not aware of their own EI and how their EI competencies might be used to enhance their leadership practices, they will be less likely to reflect on their leadership behaviors and, as a result, will lack the knowledge to develop the skills that may enhance their leadership.
The results of this study can also be used by school districts and educational institutions when planning for future professional development and preparation programs for their school principals. If principals lack a clear understanding of EI and its relationship with their leadership, school districts and educational institutions may consider implementing EI training in principals’ preparation programs.

Methods Overview

The methodology of my study is qualitative. Qualitative research is used to study how people make sense of the world and their experiences in it (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Further, it seeks an in-depth understanding of social phenomena and it relies on people’s experiences in their natural setting (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Basic qualitative is the specific approach used in my study. This is the most common approach used in qualitative research and its objective is to explore the perceptions and understandings of individuals in relation to a phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The phenomenon explored in this study is principals’ awareness of their EI in relation to how they lead.

My study involved principals in one Midwestern state in the United States. The data was collected through virtual interviews. The data analysis consisted of identifying common emerging themes within all interviews to answer the research question and sub-questions.

Chapter 1 Closure

In the field of educational leadership, EI has been associated with principals’ leadership performance and organizational outcomes. EI refers to the ability to recognize one’s own and others’ emotions and to use this emotional information to guide one’s thoughts and actions. Principals, as change agents and role models, must manage their emotional reactions and their relationships with others in ways that will influence employees, students, and stakeholders’
emotional attitudes in order to accomplish desired goals. In other words, the more developed principals’ EI competencies, the better their leadership outcomes may be.

Research tells us that principals who score high in EI or exhibit EI competencies within each of the EI domains develop healthier relationships with their staff, students, and the different stakeholders within their community. On the other hand, principals who score low in EI or exhibit behaviors that suggest a lack of EI competencies have been associated with underperforming schools. Even though research points out the advantages of having emotional intelligent leaders, after examining the extant literature in the field of educational leadership, there was not much evidence of how school principals perceive and describe their own EI in relation to their leadership. Therefore, this qualitative study explored the perception of K-12 principals’ awareness of their EI, and how their EI might be used to enhance their leadership practices.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of my qualitative study is to explore the perceptions of K-12 principals’ awareness of their emotional intelligence (EI) in relation to how they lead, and how their EI competencies can be used to enhance their leadership practice. In order to understand the construct of EI and its relationship with leadership, the following review of literature is offered.

The information is presented in six major sections. The first section provides an overview of EI. The second section focuses on describing the construct of leadership, including leadership styles and frameworks. The third section illustrates the relationship between EI and leadership. The fourth section narrows the literature review to the relationship between EI and educational leadership. The fifth section narrows the topic of educational leadership even further by focusing only on presenting research findings regarding EI and K-12 principal leadership. This chapter ends with a summary of the research gaps which illustrate similar studies that have explored school principals’ perception of EI in relation to school leadership, and the existing gap that my research study aims to address.

**Emotional Intelligence Overview**

Psychologists Mayer and Salovey (1990) coined the term EI and defined it 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” (p. 189). Mayer and Salovey’s work was subsequently developed and interpreted by Goleman (1995), who is the psychologist who popularized the term EI with his book *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Matters More Than IQ*. 
Goleman (1995) describes EI competencies as fundamental for overall life well-being. Goleman argued that one’s IQ accounts for 20% or less of one’s success in life. The remaining 80% depends on other factors, including one’s ability to self-motivate, persist despite obstacles, control impulses, and relate to others. Goleman describes EI as the ability to understand one’s own emotions, preferences, strengths, and limitations. Furthermore, EI consists of the ability to perceive others’ emotions and regulate one’s behaviors to influence others’ responses. However, Goleman, Mayer and Salovey were not the first psychologists to present the idea of a different form of intelligence other than IQ. This idea can be traced back to the work of Thorndike (1920) in the early 1920s (Maulding, 2002).

Thorndike (1920) described three types of intelligence: abstract intelligence (ability to understand and manage ideas), mechanical intelligence (ability to understand and manage concrete objects), and social intelligence (ability to understand and manage people). According to Thorndike, social intelligence is an intellectual ability to manage people, which requires cognitive and behavioral capacities. Later on, others added to the notion of such social intelligence (Moss & Hunt, 1927; Vernon, 1933). For example, Moss and Hunt (1927) argued that one’s success in life was best determined by one’s social intelligence, which they defined as the ability to get along with others. Vernon (1933) offered a broader definition stating that social intelligence includes the ability to get along with people in general with the use of social techniques, knowledge of social matters, susceptibility to stimuli from other members of a group, as well as insight into the temporary moods or the underlying personality traits of friends and strangers.

In 1983, Gardner built upon this earlier work by proposing that human intelligence is composed of different autonomous cognitive processes, and therefore, human intelligence is
multidimensional. Gardner’s different areas of intelligence include linguistic, musical, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, and personal intelligence. The last form of intelligence, personal intelligence, is reflected in the construct of EI. Gardner referred to personal intelligence as a core capacity to access and label one’s own feelings and one’s range of affects or emotions. Personal intelligence is further broken down into two forms of intelligence: intrapersonal intelligence (the ability to understand oneself) and interpersonal intelligence (the ability to understand others).

These definitions of social and personal intelligence were the foundation of Mayer and Salovey’s (1990) work. Mayer and Salovey used the term EI for the first time to illustrate the role that intrapersonal and interpersonal skills play in one’s life. However, the construct of EI goes beyond the characteristics describe by Thorndike (1920), Vernon (1933), and Moss and Hunt (1927). For example, Mayer and Salovey introduced the construct of EI as a set of abilities to identify and express emotions, regulate and manage emotions, and reason with emotions in thought. Later on, Mayer and Salovey (1997) developed an EI model, which splits the construct of EI into the following interconnected four areas:

- perceiving emotions in faces and pictures;
- using emotions to prioritize importance information;
- understanding emotions and their impact; and
- regulating emotions in oneself and others.

Later, Goleman (1998) built on the work of Mayer and Salovey with his EI framework that consisted of five essential elements: self-expression (ability to recognize and understand emotions), self-regulation (ability to manage and express emotions appropriately), motivation (internal motivation to pursue a goal), empathy (ability to understand how others are feeling),
and social skills (ability to navigate social interactions). Subsequently, Goleman et al. (2013) refined his model of EI to fit business and organizational leadership. This leadership model consists of four domains: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management.

According to Goleman et al. (2013), self-awareness refers to the ability to understand oneself in a deep level. For example, self-aware individuals are realistic and honest about themselves and have a clear understanding of their values, goals, and dreams. In addition, they take time to practice self-reflection, which allows them to think things over instead of acting impulsively. Without self-awareness, one cannot manage emotions appropriately, therefore, self-awareness is essential for self-management. Self-management refers to the ability to manage emotions, including the ability to anticipate consequences of acting impulsively (Goleman et al., 2013). According to Goleman et al., self-managed individuals know how to calm themselves down and maintain a confident and enthusiastic attitude even during stressful events. Social awareness builds on self-management.

Social awareness refers to the ability to recognize and understand others’ perspective, feelings, and needs (Goleman et al., 2013). Social awareness allows individuals to be attuned with others’ feelings so they can adopt a productive behavior to guide others. Finally, the combination of self-awareness, self-management and social awareness competencies facilitate relationship management. Relationship management refers to the ability to effectively manage relationships, including the ability to inspire others and influence their responses. Relationship management competencies allow an individual to use emotional information about themselves and others to find common ground, build rapport, and smoothly establish mutually beneficial connections with people of all kinds.
According to Goleman et al. (2013), what sets great leaders apart from the rest is their ability to drive the emotions of those they lead in the right direction, which require EI competencies. However, to better appreciate the relationship between the EI and leadership behaviors, it important to first understand the construct of leadership and what behaviors characterize an effective leader.

**Leadership**

Burns (1978) was a political scientist who dedicated his career to understand and describe the nature of leadership. Burns described the art of leading “as leaders inducing followers to act for certain goals that represent the values and motivations – the wants and needs, the aspirations and expectations – of both leaders and followers” (p. 19). In other words, leaders do not impose their desires on others. Leaders seek to build genuine relationships with their followers to understand their motives and utilize that information to influence their actions. Burns was the first scientist who made the distinction between two forms of leadership, transactional and transformational leadership.

Burns (1978) describes transactional leadership as an exchange of valued things. In other words, transactional leaders motivate their followers by providing rewards for their services or performance. It is task and outcome centered. Followers tend to have a specific role within the organization and are rewarded based on performance and services provided. The relationship between leaders and followers is based on clear expectations and boundaries. On the other hand, transformational leadership is characterized by the leaders’ ability to intrinsically inspire employees to work toward a common goal. As stated by Burns, “the transforming leader looks for potential motives in followers, seeks to satisfy higher needs, and engage the full person of the follower” (p. 4). The internal motivation of the followers come from finding a sense of self
within the organizational values. Transformational leaders have the ability to inspire followers to push themselves to get the job done.

While transactional leadership is the most common form of leadership, transformational leadership has been considered the most powerful type (Burns, 1978; Northouse, 2016). Burns (1978) states that “the result of transforming leadership is a relationship of mutual stimulation and elevation that convert followers into leaders and may convert leaders into moral agents” (p. 4). Other authors in the field of leadership agree with Burns’ concept of transformational leadership. For example, Northouse (2016) states that transformational leadership “includes assessing followers’ motives, satisfying their needs, and treating them as full human beings” (p. 161). Northouse argues that the main role of the leader is to be a catalyst for change. As the name implies, the purpose of transformational leadership is to transform people. Transformational leaders create opportunities for employees to assume leadership roles and participate in the decision-making process. As a result, leaders and followers enhance each other’s strengths, weaknesses, and commitment.

Northouse (2016) also recognizes specific differences between transformational and transactional leadership. He identified four factors of transformational leaders and two factors of transactional leaders. Northouse stated that transformational leaders: (a) act as role models, (b) inspire followers to become committed to a shared vision, (c) stimulate followers to be creative and to innovate, (d) and pay attention to followers’ individual needs. In contrast, transactional leadership consists of (a) an exchange of valued things between the leader and the follower and (b) leaders overseeing followers’ performances to provide feedback and corrective criticism if needed. Research studies have shown that, even though transactional leadership is more
common, transformational leadership has a greater positive impact on employees' attitudes and performance (Al-Mailam, 2016; Zhu et al., 2011).

Zhu et al. (2011) studied the effects of transformational versus transactional leadership behaviors on followers’ moral identity. According to Zhu et al., an individual’s moral identity determines the reasons behind his/her ethical or unethical behaviors, and the reasons why he or she engages in activities that serve the best interest of a group or a community. Zhu et al. collected data utilizing a moral identity scale that was positively associated with other leadership factors such as ethical and authentic leadership. The scale was completed by 672 participants holding a variety of managerial positions. The researchers evaluated transformational and transactional leadership separately using a multifactor leadership questionnaire. The data analysis revealed that both leadership styles had a positive effect on followers’ moral identity. However, the results showed that transformational leadership behaviors have a larger positive effect on follower moral identity than transactional leadership. These findings align with Al-Mailam's (2016) study, which showed that employees perceive leaders who exhibit a transformational approach as more effective than leaders who exhibit a transactional approach.

Al-Mailam’s (2016) study had the objective to determine what leadership style, between the transactional and the transformational, employees perceive as more effective. The researcher’s quantitative study collected data through the Multifactorial Leadership Questionnaire to obtain the scores for transformational and transactional leadership. The questionnaire was completed by 266 participants from two private (53.4% of respondents) and two public hospitals (46.6% of respondents) in the Middle East. Utilizing a quasi-experimental method, the data analysis consisted of a variance and regression analysis. The results showed that
the transformational leadership style was perceived by employees as more efficient than the transactional style.

Even though transformational leadership has become considerably popular, some argue that transactional leadership is a more effective approach to preserve work-life balance (Carrison, 2016). According to Carrison (2016), managing work time is easier with a system that rewards clear outcomes and that honored the traditional 9 to 5 hours of the workday. In contrast, transformational leadership is characterized by inspiring employees to go the extra mile, which can translate into working until late and even during the weekends. Carrison believes that the transactional leadership approach is a fair system that exchanges performance for rewards, and it is based on clear goals that make the management of time possible. On the other hand, transformational leadership praises the virtues of self-sacrifice for higher organizational goals. This self-sacrifice is not necessarily being monetarily compensated and can negatively impact employees’ personal life.

Carrison’s (2016) perspective brings to light that leadership is a complex task and therefore, leaders should be able to see things from different perspectives before adopting an approach. This idea was developed by Bolman and Deal (2017) who present four leadership frameworks that can help leaders perceive organizational issues from different lenses. These frameworks are the structural, human resource, political, and symbolic framework. According to Bolman and Deal, when using the structural framework, leaders pay attention to the organizational structure, the processes that are in places, the resources, the facts and data, and the organizational goals. However, leaders do not consider the emotional impact of their actions or how others perceive an issue. On the other hand, when using the human resources framework, leaders see a situation from a human perspective. This framework emphasizes the importance of
supporting and empowering employees. In other words, leaders consider how a situation may impact their employees and they look for ways to work together to solve the problem as a team.

Bolman and Deal (2017) also recognize that organizations are formed by different departments, groups, and subgroups that may have separate agendas, forcing leaders to compete and negotiate for resources. As a result, Bolman and Deal also developed the political framework, which focuses on the political aspects of an organization, including the distribution of its scarce resources. Finally, the symbolic framework recognizes that people need something to believe in. Leaders recognize that employees need to feel they are part of something important and meaningful. Therefore, leaders need to create a strong vision and mission based on organizational traditions and values. To do so, leaders utilize symbols, themes, and stories to illustrate the meaning of their work.

Aligned to Bolman and Deal’s (2017) idea of presenting different frameworks for leading, Goleman et al. (2013) also recognize different leadership styles where effective leaders alternate from; depending on the actual needs of the organization. The ability to intuitively select the most effective leadership style on specific situations and circumstances, strongly depends on the leader’s emotional competencies rather than their intellectual capacities. To illustrate this idea, the following section presents how experts in the field of psychology relate this construct to leadership.

**Emotional Intelligence and Leadership**

Organizations, be it a company, a school or even a nonprofit foundation, seek to establish, maintain, and enhance high performance among all of its members, with the purpose of increasing productivity and success. Goleman et al. (2013) argue that the most effective way to achieve this goal is by perpetuating an ambiance where people feel content, gratified, and
enthusiastic. In such environments, a strong sensation of trust and unity emanates as people work together in teams to achieve a particular goal or mission.

According to Goleman et al. (2013), achieving a pleasant and cooperative climate relies on the leadership. Leaders are the centerpiece of every organization; therefore, every aspect of their leadership will be reflected on the entire working party. In other words, their behaviors can motivate people or can bring them into antagonism and hostility. Notwithstanding, leaders’ performance, and ergo the success of an organization, strongly depends on the quality of their relationships. It is the key and most indispensable part of the ‘success puzzle.’

That being said, leaders’ success depends on the impact they have on others (Goleman et al., 2013). Their ability to guide and/or redirect people into the right pathway will successfully lead to the completion of the organization’s mission. In order to achieve this, they must be experts in setting appropriate emotional climates as well as transforming and driving the emotions of their subordinates. For this they need to attain high levels of EI and hence, be able to “act as the group’s emotional guide” (p. 5).

Similarly, researchers in the field of psychology believe that what differentiates effective leaders from ineffective ones is leaders’ EI rather than their intelligence quotient (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009; Goleman, 1995; Stein, 2017). For example, when an individual enters the workforce, he/she might know how to write, read, collect data, or crunch numbers; however, if the individual lacks the ability to manage emotions in the heat of a challenging situation, his/her cognitive abilities will be compromised (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009). According to Bradberry and Greaves (2009), 90% of high-performance employees are also high in EI. In addition, Bradberry and Greaves argue that one’s EI accounts for 58% of one’s performance in all types of
jobs. Other researchers argue that one’s IQ just accounts for 20% of one’s success in life (Goleman, 1995; Stein, 2017).

Stein (2017) illustrates that many organizations are still selecting their leaders based on their IQ. The problem is that IQ focuses just on memory, mathematical, visual-motor coordination, and vocabulary skills. Leadership requires the ability to communicate effectively, manage oneself and others’ emotional reactions, work in collaboration, motivate oneself and others, and provide guiding and coaching (Stein, 2017). These are all factors related to EI competencies rather than IQ. Similarly, Goleman et al. (2013), understand that a leader’s success depends on how they manage themselves and their relationship with others. Based on their research, they argue “EI contributes 80 to 90 percent of the competencies that distinguish outstanding from average leaders – and sometimes more” (p. 251).

For this research study, I chose to utilize the EI model presented in the book Primal Leadership: Unleashing the Power of Emotional Intelligence by Goleman and his colleagues. In this book, Goleman et al. (2013) explain the connection between EI competencies and effective leadership. A summary of this EI model is presented in the following section.

Primal Leadership

According to Goleman et al. (2013), 50 to 70% of how employees perceive the organizational climate is linked to the actions of the leader. Just given the position, leaders set the tone and mood of the organization. This emotional climate set by the leader has been found to influence the performance of the entire organization and can predict employees’ satisfaction and retention. For example, upbeat moods make people perceive others or events in a more positive light, boosting cooperation, fairness, and performance among a team. On the other hand, distressful emotions can decrease motivation, attention to details, and the ability to make
decisions. Moreover, negative moods can take hours to fade away and, as a result, take a toll on people’s personal lives. This explains why people prefer to work with leaders who are optimistic, enthusiastic, and empathetic than with leaders who come across as irritable, touchy, or domineering.

As a leader’s main responsibility is to get things done through people, their success is influenced by the quality of their relationships with those they lead (Goleman et al., 2013). For example, people look for support, assurance, and clarity in their leaders, especially in times of uncertainty and/or change. This said, what sets great leaders apart from the rest is their ability to drive the emotions of those they lead in the right direction. This ability to understand and manage one’s and other emotions is what is known as EI.

According to Goleman et al. (2013), EI refers to the ability to recognize one’s own and other’s emotions and to use this information to guide one’s thoughts and actions. In short, EI refers to how one manages oneself in life and one’s relationships with others. Goleman et al.’s model recognizes 18 EI competencies clustered into four domains: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. Following, I provide a description of each of the domains and its competencies, illustrating how these domains are closely intertwined with a dynamic relation among them.

**Self-Awareness**

In Goleman et al.’s (2013) words, “self-awareness means having a deep understanding of one’s emotions, as well as one’s strengths and limitations and one’s values and motives” (p. 40). This self-understanding is determined by the capacity of self-reflecting, which is defined as the ability to think things over in a quiet and peaceful time alone and sometimes even in a spiritual
manner. Some leaders may rely on prayer or meditation, while others may view this self-reflecting under a much more philosophical perspective.

Once leaders achieve the ability to connect with their deeper selves through self-reflecting, they develop an ability of awareness that allows them to understand their surroundings better. As they acquire experience within the organization, their brains start to automatically extract appropriate approaches to specific situations in the workplace and learn to operate in an emotional and intuitive level. In this way, “the brain continually learns in a tacit mode, and begins to accumulate wisdom from a life’s on-the-job experience” (Goleman et al., 2013, p. 44). The ability to connect experience with one’s emotional side makes self-awareness the main foundation for all the other domains. This domain is characterized by three competencies:

- **Emotional self-awareness**: Identifying one’s own emotions and recognizing their impact; using emotions to guide decisions.
- **Accurate self-assessment**: Knowing one’s strengths and limitations.
- **Self-confidence**: Having a sense of self-worth and capabilities.

**Self-Management**

Self-management refers to the ability to manage emotions appropriately for the situation at hand (Goleman et al., 2013). It includes the ability to anticipate consequences of acting impulsively and the capacity to calm oneself and move from a negative state to a positive one. Self-management surges from self-awareness because having a deep understanding of emotions provides a strong guideline on how to self-manage them. Nevertheless, a self-aware leader learns to acquire control of their emotions by understanding them. This strong grip of emotions helps them maintain an unbreakable posture during situations that can easily induce stress, anxiety, anger, or frustration.
As Goleman et al. (2013) state, “emotions are contagious, especially from leaders. Leaders cannot effectively manage emotions in anyone else without first handling their own” (p. 46). This ability is crucial in a leader because people look for support and assurance through their leaders, especially during difficult times. By exuberating calmness and optimism during moments of distress, a leader can redirect the energy and turn around dim atmospheres that lead to resoluteness. This domain is characterized by six competencies:

- Emotional self-control: Maintaining control of disruptive emotions and impulses.
- Transparency: Displaying honesty and integrity.
- Adaptability: Flexibility to adapt to change and to overcome obstacles.
- Achievement: Inner drive to continually improve and meet standards.
- Initiative: Recognizing opportunities and taking action.
- Optimism: Maintaining a positive attitude and seeing the positive side of events.

**Social Awareness**

Social Awareness refers to the ability to recognize and understand others’ perspectives, feelings, and needs (Goleman et al., 2013). Once a person is able to understand their emotions and how to handle them, it can easily extend to the understanding of emotions in others. A leader with social awareness does not only understand others’ emotions, but also connects with them at a deeper level. This is called empathy, which can translate into an instant and proper maneuver of difficult emotional situations. According to Goleman et al., by being attuned to how others feel in the moment, a leader can say and do what’s appropriate, whether it be to calm fears, assuage anger, or join in good spirits. That being said, the competencies of social awareness are as follow:
• Empathy: Understanding and taking an active interest in others’ emotions and perspectives.
• Organizational awareness: Understanding the organization, including its network and politics.
• Service: Recognizing and meeting others’ needs, including employees’ and customers’ needs.

**Relationship Management**

Relationship management refers to the ability to effectively manage relationships, including the ability to inspire others and influence their responses. The combination of competencies within the domains of self-awareness, self-management, and social awareness give way to the ability to manage relationships. Relationship management competencies allow an individual to use emotional information about themselves and others to find common ground, build rapport, and smoothly establish mutually beneficial connections with people of all kinds. As Goleman et al. (2013) put it, “relationship management is friendliness with a purpose: moving people in the right direction” (p. 51). This domain is characterized by seven competencies:

• Inspirational leadership: Guiding and motivating with a compelling vision.
• Influence: Wielding a range of tactics for persuading others.
• Developing others: Supporting and guiding others’ growth.
• Change catalyst: Managing organizational change.
• Conflict management: Resolving disagreement.
• Building bonds: Building and maintaining relationships.
• Teamwork and collaboration: Cooperation and team building.
According to Goleman et al. (2013), the effectiveness of a leader depends on the number of competencies that he or she may possess. It is important to point out that it is impossible to possess all 18 competencies; however, effective leaders portray at least half a dozen competencies distributed within all four domains. As a result, these competencies have a strong impact on the amount of resonance a leader imprints within the workplace’s atmosphere. As Goleman et al. state, “intellect alone will not make a leader; leaders execute a vision by motivating, guiding, inspiring, listening, persuading – and, more crucially, though creating resonance” (p. 27). Following, I present the characteristics of resonant leadership along with its four leadership styles.

**Resonant Leadership**

A resonant leader will accomplish two goals within the organization. On one hand, they will set a jovial and pleasant mood that will lead people to their most optimal levels. As Goleman et al. (2013) state, “when people feel good, they work at their best” (p. 14). On the other hand, they will establish strong emotional connections with their subordinates, which makes it possible to drive and guide them into the right direction. That being said, resonance is defined by Goleman et al. as the ability to mobilize people into a positive emotional direction by attuning and genuinely connecting with their moods and emotions. In other words, resonant leaders have emotional capacities that help them set the proper emotional climate in the workplace. These capacities are portrayed within their attitudes which consequently affect others and, therefore, impact productivity.

First of all, a resonant leader is self-aware of his or her values, goals and dreams, which are ideally intertwined with the organization’s mission (Goleman et al., 2013). He or she genuinely exuberates an aura of sheer determination that directly emanates from these vales,
which contagiously adheres to the atmosphere. In this way, a resonant leader is capable of encouraging and inspiring people in moments of uncertainty or distress. Goleman et al.’s term “synchronous vibration” perfectly exemplifies the harmoniously cohesive atmosphere that can be cultivated by a resonant leader.

Secondly, a resonant leader has a strong sense of integrity. Integrity surges from having both self-awareness and self-management. An integral leader is a leader that is aware of their own feelings, beliefs, and actions, and that, in addition, can be transparent or authentically open about them. His or her self-management abilities allow them to be constant with their convictions, especially in moments where they need to have a strong domain over their impulses. This, therefore, leads to an authentic and trustful environment.

Lastly, a resonant leader is able to verbally express these authentic inner messages in a way that inspires others; “Resonance flows from a leader who expresses feelings with convictions because those emotions are clearly authentic, rooted in deeply held values” (Goleman et al., 2013, pp. 48-49). In that way, resonance is cultivated implicitly and explicitly within the work environment. However, there is not just one way that resonance can be transmitted. There are several resonant styles, and for best results, effective leaders automatically and continuously alternate between these styles according to the present needs of the organization. The following are the four resonant leadership styles recognized by Goleman et al. in their EI model:

**Visionary Style.** The visionary style is the most effective of all resonant styles but most specifically when the organization needs a strong turnaround. An effective leader will use this style when people within the organization have lost their sense of purpose and have detached from the main goal or mission.
The visionary leader sets its people back into the right track by articulating where they’re headed, without delineating the right path toward the main goal. In order for this approach to really function, the leader must be inspirational, transparent, and empathetic. By combining these emotional intelligence competencies, the visionary leader is able to really understand everyone’s perspective. Consequently, they are able to truly connect with them to articulate an authentic inspirational vision that would nudge them into innovating and experimenting.

Visionary leaders are strong catalysts of inspiration and motivation. They “help people see how their work fits into the big picture, lending people a clear sense not just that what they do matters, but also why” (Goleman et al., 2013, p. 57). However, a visionary style may be counterproductive if the subordinates are much more experienced than the leader. They may perceive the leader as pompous or out of tune and, therefore, lead to cynicism and poor performance.

The Coaching Style. The main base of the coaching style is to connect individually with each and every member of the staff, with the purpose of enhancing a sense of belonging and trust. In addition, coaches are able to “help people identify their unique strengths and weaknesses” (Goleman et al., 2013, p. 60). In that way, these leaders motivate their staff by helping them establish long term goals that are attuned to their own capabilities.

Self-awareness and empathy are the main components of an effective coaching style. These EI competencies help coaches provide assertive guidance based on others’ true interests and motivations. Since coaching focuses on personal development, it is most effective with subordinates that show initiative and a strong need to grow professionally. Concomitantly, this style could easily backfire if subordinates lack motivation or need constant feedback and direction. It could be misinterpreted as micromanaging or need to excessively control staff.
The Affiliative Style. Leaders within the affiliative style are very in touch with their emotions and those of others. They value their staff’s emotional needs and put much less emphasis on the realization of goals and accomplishments. These leaders take in consideration their employees’ emotional lives and will function as a strong emotional support if someone within their staff is undergoing through personal difficulties. This is why the main emotional competencies within an affiliate leader are empathy and conflict management. In that manner, a strong connection is established with their staff, where loyalty and trust are constantly nurtured.

That being said, an affiliate leader is a strong positive impact on the organization’s climate and is able to “heighten team harmony, increase morale, improve communication, or repair broken trust in an organization” (Goleman et al., 2013, p. 64). However, its sole aim on praising and boosting morale may disregard poor performance, and staff members may not feel the urge to strive for excellency. This is why, for effective results, it is recommended alongside the Visionary Style.

The Democratic Style. An effective leader may turn into a democratic leader whenever they need fresh ideas and some direction as how to approach certain manners. They would then ponder on their staff’s inputs and would encourage teamwork and cooperation. This approach builds feelings of trust, respect, and commitment. However, it is only recommended when the correct approach is uncertain and when staff members have proven to be highly competent.

The EI competencies of a democratic leader are teamwork and collaboration, conflict management, empathy, and influence. Along these lines, a great democratic leader is able to listen to all of its staff members and is humble enough to momentarily put aside its leadership role and work as part of the team. Their high empathy levels allow them to connect with their
staff members and gives them the ability to exert strong influence within them. Simultaneously, they are able to handle conflicts as they arise, especially when the group is strongly diverse.

As Goleman et al. (2013) state, “gifted leadership occurs where the heart and the head – feeling and thought – meet” (p. 26). On that note, effective leaders intuitively and automatically tune into the most effective leading style, according to the current need of the organization. That being said, the combination of all four resonant styles of leadership determine performance and hence, success of an organization. On the other hand, as illustrated in the next sub-section, leaders can also cause dissonance, meaning leaders’ behaviors can also send upsetting messages that make people feel off balance and, consequently, lead them to poor performance. Following, I present the characteristics of dissonant leadership along its two leadership styles.

**Dissonance Leadership**

Dissonant leaders’ lack of EI competencies makes them unable to establish a resonate climate. Self-awareness and therefore empathy, are not qualities that they possess, therefore they’re unable to emotionally connect with their subordinates. Without an emotional connection, dissonant leaders are unable to lead by driving their subordinates’ emotions into the right path. Instead, they must resort to manipulative and abusive tactics.

That being said, a dissonant leader creates a destructive and toxic environment. They “dispirit people, burn them out, or send them packing” (Goleman et al., 2013, p. 22). As a consequence, productivity levels drop, and success becomes a distant possibility. Some dissonant leaders, however, create dissonance at a distinct and lower level. Their lack of awareness may not allow them to really reach their subordinates, and in return, they may be trying to extenuate an upbeat mood that currently resonates with no one.
On other cases, some dissonant leaders’ levels of self-absorbedness do not let them see past themselves and, therefore, are unaware of the present needs of the organization. Either way, dissonant leaders’ lack of EI elicits disruptive behaviors that lead to fear and hatred. Nevertheless, there are specific attitudes and behaviors grouped into dissonant styles of leadership that when used properly and moderately, may have a strong positive impact on the organization’s climate. The following are the two dissonant leadership styles recognized by Goleman et al. in their (2013) EI model:

**Pacesetting.** The pacesetting leadership style can and must be used during an entrepreneurial phase of a company’s life cycle, when growth is essential. If established correctly, this style can enhance motivation and high competency. In fact, the pacesetting leadership style works like a charm in combination with resonant styles, such as the visionary and the affiliative style.

A leader that follows a pacesetting leadership style is very demanding and establishes very high standards of performance. But in order to institute resonance instead of dissonance, some considerations must be taken in account. First of all, the pacesetting leader must become self-aware of their own failings. In that manner, it becomes possible for them to constantly seek for opportunities that will improve their performance as well as the performance of others.

Secondly, the pacesetting leader must have high levels of empathy, because if not, their relentlessness may cause them to easily disregard others. Furthermore, this type of leader needs to have a domain of effective communication skills. Their guidelines must be specific and clear. In that manner, they are able to properly guide their subordinates into challenging tasks. Expecting others to know what they need to do and pushing them to achieve a goal without a proper set of guidelines may crush morale and may actually create a contrary desired effect of
hard work and high performance. Self-management is an essential skill; without it, one may pass as micromanaging or impatient and, therefore, may be perceived as dissonant.

**Commanding.** Leaders within this style, which is also called the coercive style, demand immediate obedience without offering explanations of their decisions. They have a “do it because I say so” type of approach that extenuates a cold and intimidating stance. In addition, these leaders rarely offer any type of praise or congratulations. Instead, they are prone to criticize their employees and therefore undermining the environment’s spirit and morale.

Needless to say, if the commanding style is used to these extremes, it may result as the most ineffective and dissonant of all styles. If, on the other hand, this style is used properly, it could enact strong changes within a company that is going through crisis. People tend to respond if they are commanded authoritatively for a determined amount of time. In that way, people are instantly directed into a new way of doing things. But, in order to achieve this, the leader must have some essential EI competencies.

First of all, these types of leaders must be influential. With their influence, they must also have a strong drive of achievement in order to “exert a forceful direction in the service of getting better results” (Goleman et al., 2013, p. 79). With their “commanding” tone they are able to request instant compliance and hence guide for things to get done as soon and effective as possible.

Secondly, these leaders must also have self-awareness, emotional self-control, and empathy. In this way, it is possible to keep this “authoritarian style” on check. Taking that under consideration, a leader with emotional self-control is able to steam off the amount right of anger that will help set the proper mood that will properly alter the climate in order to achieve the
desired results. In this way, a company on the verge of enacting a hostile take-over complies can therefore be directed toward the right path.

Even though leadership authors, such as Burns (1978) and Bolman and Deal (2017), do not utilize the concept of EI in their work, they recognize that leaders must demonstrate affection, recognition, and appreciation to their employees. Moreover, leadership is based on social interactions, and therefore, leaders must have social competencies such as the ability to listen and communicate effectively, work in collaboration, and empathize with the needs of those around them. This relationship between individuals’ EI and leadership has been supported by a number of research studies (Allen et al., 2012; Ayiro, 2014; Berkovich & Eyal, 2017; Gawali, 2012; Hafsa, 2015; Muslihah, 2015; Parrish, 2015; Valeriu, 2017). For the purpose of this study, the following section is focused on the relationship between EI and educational leadership.

**Emotional Intelligence and Educational Leadership**

This section presents research studies that illustrate the relationship between educational leaders’ EI and their attitudes and performance. The information has been subdivided into two subtopics, the first one focused on higher education, and the second on K-12 education.

**Emotional Intelligence and Leadership in Higher Education**

Often, academic leaders are appointed in their leadership position as a result of their academic-related achievements, and not because of their leadership expertise (Parrish, 2015). However, in higher education, effective leadership has been associated with EI competencies such as the ability to manage one’s emotional reactions, the ability to be empathetic, and the ability to inspire others. For example, in a qualitative study conducted in 11 Australian universities, Parrish (2015) found that EI was recognized by faculty/department level participants, as highly relevant for academic leadership in higher education.
Parrish’s (2015) research utilized a mixed-mode case-study approach. Semi-structured interviews, with a focus on EI, were conducted pre and post participants’ engagement in a leadership capacity development initiative. The pre-interview gathered data about the participants’ experiences and insights into academic leadership and the post interviews explored participants’ perceptions of how EI can enhance leadership practices. The results showed that EI was recognized by all of the participants as an important requirement for academic leadership. Participants considered that leaders in higher education who possessed strong EI were more respected by peers, colleagues, and subordinates, and performed more effectively as leaders. Furthermore, the study revealed that EI competencies, such as empathy and the ability to inspire and guide others, were considered the most relevant for academic leadership. According to Parrish, these EI competencies have a strong link with aspects of transformational leadership.

Indeed, as noted earlier, the transformational leadership style is characterized by the leaders’ ability to influence, inspire, and empower followers to work toward a goal. A study by Valeriu (2017) examined the significance of EI on transformational leadership for leaders within seven public universities in Romania. The study’s sample included staff members in management, teaching, middle level, and junior level positions, and the researcher collected data utilizing a structured questionnaire created based on an EI inventory and the domains and elements of transformational leadership such as teamwork, trustworthiness, optimism, social orientation, among others. The data revealed that employees perceived leaders with high EI as more effective than those with low EI; the participants also reported that the leading style of those leaders they considered to have high EI align with the transformational leadership approach. Overall, Valeriu’s study found conceptual and empirical evidence that shows a
positive relationship between the EI of higher education leaders and the transformational leadership style.

Furthermore, higher education faculty and staff with high EI have been found to be more effective at teaching, as revealed by Allen et al. (2012), who found a positive relationship between EI and teaching effectiveness in faculty members. Allen et al.’s quantitative study utilized a sample of female nursing faculty staff in an undergraduate nursing program. The data were collected using a cross-sectional survey composed of the BarOn Emotional Quotient Inventory: Short (EQ-i:S), and the Nursing Clinical Teacher Effectiveness Inventory (NCTEI). The researchers found a positive relationship between the EQ-i:S and NCTEI scores. This suggests that faculty members with high scores in EI are perceived as more effective in their teaching practice. The study did not show any relationship between EQ-i:S and the faculty demographic, suggesting that variables such as race, age, gender, highest degree obtained, courses taught, and/or teaching responsibilities are not predictors of EI scores.

Research has also shown that higher education faculty and staff with high EI are more effective at teaching and also experience higher job satisfaction than those with lower EI (Hafsa, 2015). In a quantitative study, Hafsa (2015) found a positive correlation between university instructors’ EI and their job satisfaction. Hafsa’s study describes job satisfaction as the degree of fulfillment an individual finds in their job. Hafsa’s study comprised 50 male and 50 female instructors from two public and two private universities in Islamabad, Pakistan. To collect the data the researcher utilized two questionnaires, one to measure participants’ job satisfaction and another to measure their EI. The data revealed that the higher the EI of the participants, the higher their level of job satisfaction.
Considering that the teaching profession greatly depends on social interactions and the ability to manage one’s emotional reactions, it is not surprising to see that higher education teachers with high EI are better at coping with uncomfortable emotions than those with low EI (Gawali, 2012). In this quantitative study, 413 university instructors from different suburbs of Mumbai completed an EI and a coping inventory (Schutte’s self-report inventory of EI and the Brief COPE inventory). Gawali’s study presents emotional coping as the ability to remove or circumvent the stressor or ameliorate its effects. The results of the study showed a significant positive relationship between EI and coping mechanisms in teachers. Gawali noticed that those instructors who score high in EI seem to use emotional management strategies such as self-disclosure, venting with close ones, gathering emotional support, and using humor to dissipate negative emotions. Gawali suggests that EI individuals are better skilled to manage emotions during stressful situations and managing relationships, and therefore EI can predict instructors’ positive coping abilities. The results also suggest that EI can be used to predict university instructors’ mental health.

Overall, these sample studies from within higher education have shown that leaders with higher EI are more effective in their role and preferred by their employees. Research has shown similar findings in K-12 education, with information on such studies related to K-12 teachers covered in the next section. Studies related to K-12 principals, the focus of my study, will be presented after that.

**Emotional Intelligence and Leadership in K-12 Education**

Within the K-12 world, research studies have revealed that emotional intelligent teachers feel a greater job commitment and satisfaction (Anari, 2012; Yin et al., 2013). In addition,
teachers are better able to build effective relationships with their students, including students from a cultural background different from their own (Mocanu & Sterian, 2013, Yigit, 2016).

Let us look at the details of such studies.

According to Mocanu and Sterian (2013), EI has become one of the main professional skills for teachers. Teachers are responsible for structuring the conditions for the teaching and learning process to take place. In addition, they are responsible for customizing the learning process and modifying the teacher-student rapport based on the students’ needs. Furthermore, teachers are responsible for integrating educational technology, working in collaboration with the school, and building relationships with the community. All these responsibilities require a certain degree of EI (Mocanu & Sterian, 2013).

Mocanu and Sterian’s (2013) review of the literature aimed to examine the relationship between EI and teachers’ personality and role as educational leaders. The researchers concluded that EI is fundamental for the teacher’s process of self-examination and transformation. In addition, EI skills, such as self-management, are essential to model self-control and the appropriate way to solve conflicts in the school. Mocanu and Sterian also point out that teachers are challenged to manage the cultural differences the growing multicultural student population brings to the classroom, and in order to do so, teachers must work on their own prejudices and recognize how their identity may affect the students’ learning process. These actions require EI skills such as self-awareness, self-management, and social awareness. Mocanu and Sterian argued that developing teachers’ EI skills can lead to enhance teachers’ professional performance and, as a result, students’ engagement in the classroom.

Indeed, research has found a positive relationship between teachers’ EI and job satisfaction and commitment. In a quantitative study that took place in Kerman Schools in
California, Anari’s (2012) research examined the relationship between high-school English teachers’ EI, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. Furthermore, the researcher aimed to examine if gender and age played a role in any of these examined aspects. The researcher utilized a self-report EI test, a self-report job satisfaction survey, and a self-report organizational commitment questionnaire to collect data from 84 participants. To determine if a relationship exists between teachers’ EI and job satisfaction, teachers’ EI and organizational commitment, and between job satisfaction and organizational commitment, a correlation test using SPSS software for quantitative analysis was run. The results showed a positive significant correlation between teachers’ EI and job satisfaction, teachers’ EI and job commitment, and between job satisfaction and job commitment. No relationship was found between participants’ age and levels of EI, job satisfaction, or commitment. However, the study showed higher levels of EI in females compared to males. These findings suggest that teachers with higher EI will experience higher job satisfaction and commitment than teachers with lower EI. Based on the findings, Anari argued that enhancing employees’ EI through professional development could positively impact teachers’ retention. Anari’s (2012) study aligns with Yin et al.’s (2013) study, which found that EI teachers experience higher teaching satisfaction than those teachers with lower EI.

The purpose of Yin et al.’s (2013) quantitative study was to explore the relationship between teachers’ EI, emotional labor strategies, and teaching satisfaction. Yin et al. defined emotional labor strategies as the teachers’ approach to managing their emotions to fit the behavioral expectations of their teaching profession, while they defined teaching satisfaction as the extent to which teachers like teaching. Yin et al collected data using a survey that consisted of three scales (an EI, a teacher emotional labor, and a job satisfaction scale), which was completed by 1,281 Chinese schoolteachers. They found EI had a significant impact on the
participants’ job satisfaction. In addition, the researchers found a positive relationship between teachers’ EI and their emotional labor strategies, such as managing and expressing emotions appropriately. Yin et al. argued that teachers’ EI influences their ability to express naturally felt emotions and their ability to modify self-emotions to display more productive ones. Overall, Yin’s study illustrates that teachers’ emotions and their ability to regulate them can impact their performance in the classroom and their sense of job satisfaction.

Research has also found that teachers’ EI has been associated with the ability to connect with multicultural students. Arslan and Yigit (2016) conducted a quantitative study to examine the relationship between EI and multicultural attitudes in teachers. The researchers utilized a correlational survey model. The population of the study consisted of 315 primary school teachers from four cities in Turkey who completed an EI and a multicultural attitude scale during the 2015-2016 academic year. The results of the study showed a positive and significant relationship between participants’ EI and their multicultural attitudes. The researchers concluded that teachers’ EI can predict teachers’ dispositions and ability to develop healthy and effective relationships with students from a cultural background different from their own. These findings show the benefits of having teachers who demonstrate EI competencies as these teachers tend to be more committed and satisfied with their job and are better able to build effective relationships with students and the broad community to which they serve.

Furthermore, research has revealed that enhancing teachers’ EI is possible as there is evidence that it can be done through training programs. Joshith’s (2012) study aimed to demonstrate that EI can be taught and improved in teachers with practice. The researcher developed an EI program based on EI competencies such as self-awareness, managing emotions, motivating oneself, empathy, and handling relationships. The study methodology consisted of an
experimental design with a sample of 50 prospective teachers enrolled in a higher education institution in Ottapalam, India. The teachers completed an EI test, a teaching competency inventory, and a proforma for assessing teaching competency before the training and after completing the training. The results showed that the program helped the participants enhance their EI skills. Additionally, the results showed a positive relationship between teachers’ EI and their teaching skills.

Joshith (2012) argues that the way teachers manage themselves in the classroom and their relationship with students can have an impact on students’ performance, and therefore, attention should be paid to teachers’ levels of EI. In addition, Joshith states that teachers are challenged daily in regulating their emotions as teaching places a strong emphasis on social interaction. Teachers must navigate the emotions of students, parents, and coworkers on a daily basis in order to foster effective relationships within the school community. Joshith argues that any individual can improve their job performance and overall well-being by enhancing their EI. Therefore, supporting teachers in developing EI competencies will in turn positively influence teachers’ performance and attitudes, and consequently student outcomes.

However, not all studies have revealed a positive relationship between teachers’ EI and aspects of the teaching profession. In a quantitative study conducted in Pakistan, Abiodullah et al. (2020) examined if secondary teacher engagement levels in the classroom can be predicted by their level of EI. The researchers define teacher engagement as teachers’ ability to provide a high level of attention to students during the learning process. The data was collected using a closed-ended questionnaire composed of two self-reported scales (a scale to measure teachers’ EI and a scale to measure teachers’ engagement). The questionnaire included questions about teachers’
emotional engagement with the school environment, colleagues, and students, and the emotional level of student-teacher interaction.

Abiodullah et al. (2020) did not find a significant relationship between teachers’ EI and their engagement in the classroom. However, the researchers argue that EI has a very important role in teaching and illustrate that EI competencies help teachers understand students’ emotions and needs. For example, teachers’ EI competencies such as empathy, and the ability to influence students’ behaviors and inspire them to pursue a desired goal are fundamental for students’ success. EI skills can help teachers enhance their relationship with the students and as a result improve the students’ academic achievement.

As I close this section on EI research that looked at K-12 teachers, it is important to note that the same way teachers serve as role models in their classrooms, school principals serve as role models to their school community (Marzano et al., 2006). As the focus of my research study is principals’ EI and the influence their EI have over their leadership, I will now turn to research that specifically looks at EI and K-12 principals, as covered in this next major section of my literature review.

**Emotional Intelligence and K-12 School Principals**

School success has been associated with effective leadership and it has been suggested an existing relationship between the principals’ behaviors and students’ outcomes. Marzano et al. (2006) identified 21 leadership behaviors that can positively impact students’ achievement. Among these behaviors are establishing strong lines of communication, being aware of the personal aspects of teachers and staff, promoting change and growth, and involving teachers in decision making. Marzano et al.’s leadership behaviors align with the four domains of Goleman

Unfortunately, most leadership research is focused on the leaders’ cognitive abilities, putting aside the influence of emotions in leaders’ performance. Gray (2010) argues that our moods and feelings are connected to our thoughts processes and behaviors and, therefore, feelings play an important role in school leaders’ performance. For example, practicing empathy and caring for others allows principals to manage their own emotions and influence the emotions of others, which in turn can lead to improving organizational morale, collaborative work, and reduced stress. EI competencies play an important role in K-12 leadership as implementing change can lead to an arousal of emotions in school leaders and their staff; therefore, principals can benefit from learning how to understand and handle their emotions and the emotions of others (Cai, 2011; Moore, 2009).

Moore's (2009) review of the literature in regard to EI and school leadership puts forth that principals need high levels of EI in order to support their staff in the process of implementing change. According to Moore, EI competencies provide leaders with the awareness they need to connect with their staff and develop a school culture based on trust and respect. Moore believes that enhancing school administrators’ EI will help them in building strong relationships with their colleagues, teachers, students, and parents and to be more effective at leading innovation and change.

Similarly, Cai’s (2011) literature review suggests that school leaders’ EI might be linked to variables conductive to successful school improvement such as principals’ turnaround actions, transformational leadership style, and principals’ ability to enhance principal–teacher relationship. Cai argues that the higher the principal’s EI, the more likely they will successfully
lead school turnarounds. The researcher also suggests that leaders’ EI should be used as an indicator of leadership effectiveness when assigning principals to low-achieving schools. Yet, Cai also claims that empirical data is needed to support these arguments.

Let us now turn to studies that have specifically explored the impact of principals’ EI by studying how principals’ EI may relate to their leadership in the next section. Studies related to principals’ EI and teacher and student attitudes and performance will be presented after that.

**Principals’ Emotional Intelligence and Leadership**

Principals are perceived as one of the most important human resources to improve student academic achievement and skills (Muslihah, 2015). As principals have to assume various roles within their school, such as educators, administrators, supervisors, innovators, and coaches. Muslihah (2015) conducted a quantitative study to examine if there is a relationship between principals’ school-based management, EI, and performance in a region in Indonesia. In this study, school-based management consisted of the principals’ tasks of managing the staff and students, the curriculum and learning programs, the school finances and facilities, and the relationship of the school with the public. Moreover, in this study, principals’ performance was referred to as the leader’s capacity to achieve their objectives. The population for Muslihah’s study consisted of 180 teachers who rated their principals utilizing a school-based management, an EI, and a leadership performance questionnaire. The analysis of the data revealed a significant correlation between EI and principals’ performance. In addition, the data showed a positive correlation between the principals’ school-based management, EI, and performance.

Muslihah’s (2015) findings align with other studies that have found a relationship between principals’ EI and leadership style, especially with the transformational leadership approach (Ayiro, 2014; Berkovich & Eyal, 2017; Hebert, 2011; Segredo et al., 2017). For
example, Ayiro’s (2014) study revealed a positive relationship between principals’ EI and transformational leadership. Ayiro utilized a sample of 309 school leaders, including high school principals, assistant principals, and heads of departments in Kenya. The data was collected utilizing an EI, transformational leadership, and leadership effectiveness questionnaire, and a service climate and team effectiveness scale. Ayiro’s study found a significant relationship between EI and transformational leadership. Also, the researcher found that transformational leadership significantly predicted leaders’ effectiveness.

Similarly, Berkovich and Eyal’s (2017) study examined if principals’ EI makes them more effective transformational leaders, measured by the reframing of teachers’ emotions. In the study, the researchers focused only on the principals’ EI ability to recognize emotions in others as they argue that the recognition of emotions is a crucial ability to manage relationships effectively. The researchers examined principals’ ability to recognize emotions in others using a videotape recording-based methodology. Principals were required to watch video clips and identify the emotions the teacher in the video experienced. The principals’ responses were ranked based on their similarity to the emotions reported by the videotaped teacher. Researchers also measured principals’ leadership behaviors using a multifactor leadership questionnaire that teachers filled out based on the leadership behaviors they had observed in their principals. Finally, the researchers examined teachers’ experience of emotional reframing by principals using an emotional regulation questionnaire that was adapted to the study. The data revealed that the principals’ emotion recognition ability was positively related to transformational leadership. The data also showed a significant relationship between principals’ transformational leadership and teachers’ emotional reframing.
Hebert’s (2011) study also examined the relationship between EI, transformational leadership, and leadership effectiveness. The sample was from the states of Louisiana, Georgia, and Iowa and consisted of 30 elementary, middle, and high school principals and five to seven teachers who worked with each principal. The principals completed an EI test while the teachers completed a multi-factor leadership questionnaire. Hebert’s study showed a positive relationship between principals’ EI and transformational leadership, and a positive correlational relationship between principal’s effectiveness and both, EI and transformational leadership.

Segredo et al. (2017) also conducted a study that showed a positive relationship between principals’ EI and their leadership style. Segredo et al.’s quantitative study explored the association between EI, leadership style, and organizational culture in elementary schools in South Florida. To do so, the 57 principals and 850 teachers who participated in the study were surveyed. To collect the data the researchers utilized an EI and a multifactor leadership questionnaire, and a school district climate survey. Segredo et al. found a significant positive association between the principals’ EI and dimensions of both transformational and transactional leadership, and a negative association with passive-avoidant leadership. The results of the study also suggested a positive relationship between principals’ EI and the school culture.

On the other hand, Grunes and Gudmundsson’s (2014) study contradicts the many positive findings in the literature. Grunes and Gudmundsson’s study, which took place in Australia, did not find a relationship among school leaders EI, leadership style, and perceived leadership outcomes. The researcher replicated a previous research study that found a relationship between principals’ EI, leadership style, and perceived leadership outcomes. Grunes and Gudmundsson had a sample of 127 school leaders from which 66 were principals and 61 had other school leadership positions. To collect the data, the researchers utilized a leadership style
and perceived leadership outcomes scale, a personality factor and integrity scale, and the MSCEIT scale to measure EI. Grunes and Gudmundsson used a quantitative method and a cross-sectional design to analyze the data. The researchers found that none of the EI branches were related to transformational leadership or useful to predict leadership outcomes. However, the researchers pointed out that the EI instrument used to measure EI was not designed to identify leadership variables such as satisfaction, effectiveness, and extra effort.

Overall, transformational leadership is considered the most fitting model to manage the complexity of implementing change, and it has been found that transformational leaders tend to exhibit EI behaviors (Berkovich & Eyal, 2017). Transformational leadership is characterized by the leader’s ability to influence and motivate their followers to transcend their own personal goals for the accomplishment of the desired goal. This leadership approach has been linked to greater teacher motivation, commitment, and effort (Ayiro, 2014; Berkovich & Eyal, 2017; Hebert, 2011; Segredo et al., 2017). In addition, transformational leadership has a significant effect on promoting organizational effectiveness and student outcomes. It is believed that a leader’s approach affects teachers’ emotions and as a result teachers’ motivation toward their work. Teachers’ motivation impacts their performance in the classroom and therefore, indirectly impacts students’ learning (Berkovich & Eyal, 2017). Therefore, school leaders are called to pay attention to employees’ emotions as their approach can influence their subordinates’ positive moods.

Principals’ Emotional Intelligence and Teachers and Students’ Attitudes

Principals’ EI can influence teachers’ and students’ attitudes toward schoolwork and, as a result, their performance. For example, Bipath (2008) conducted a qualitative study in South Africa that consisted of comparing two principals’ behaviors in two neighboring schools. The
schools had the same political, environmental, social, and technological environments, and educators with similar qualifications and experience. Both principals in the study possessed teaching diplomas and have a similar number of years of experience. However, one school was rated as functional and the other one as difunctional based on South Africa’s education system parameters, which includes students’ scores in their common written examinations after 12 years of schooling (grade R-12). The study gathered data from observation, face-to-face interviews, and document analysis. The interviews were carried out with the principals, school governing bodies, groups of educators, and the representative council of learners.

The results in Bipath’s (2008) study showed that teachers and students in the functional school perceived their principal as a role model and as an inspiration. The students and teachers also felt a sense of responsibility for their schoolwork. Teachers had the opportunity to participate in the school development plan and were enthusiastic toward the school vision and mission. On the other hand, in the dysfunctional school, there was constant noise throughout the day. In the classrooms, windows, desks, and chairs were broken. In addition, teachers and students had the habit of arriving late and leaving early. Furthermore, students were often found using drugs during school hours. In the dysfunctional school, students and teachers did not perceive their principal as being in control and they felt like they could do whatever they wanted without consequences. This lack of administrative control was also evident in the staff meetings where more than half of the teachers did not attend.

Bipath’s (2008) examination of the data led to the conclusion that the principal in the functional school exhibited a leadership approach that aligned with EI behaviors competencies (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management), while the principal leading the dysfunctional school, displayed behaviors that suggested a lack of EI. For
example, the principal in the dysfunctional school failed in getting his staff and students to follow rules and procedures and to work in collaboration toward a common school vision. Furthermore, the principal in the dysfunctional school failed in developing a school environment that fostered and promoted a learning culture.

Bower et al.’s (2018) qualitative study conducted in Texas aligns with Bipath’s (2008) findings, as it shows that principals’ EI can impact teachers’ attitudes. Bower et al.’s study explored the perception of 12 veteran teachers of the influence of EI in the success of their principals. The researchers developed five research questions based on five competencies of an EI framework (self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills) to collect the data. The researchers found that teachers perceived school leaders to be more successful when they exhibited a high degree of EI behaviors and less successful when they failed to exhibit a high degree of EI behaviors. In addition, teachers perceived principals who exhibit higher EI to be more approachable, enthusiastic, and positive, and more capable to build a collaborative community atmosphere. On the other hand, teachers described those principals who exhibit a lack of EI by displaying negative moods and lack of empathetic behaviors as the worst leaders that they had ever worked for. In addition, teachers expressed that the lack of EI behaviors in principals resulted in staff members isolating themselves from their leaders rather than working in collaboration and as a team.

Arif and Sohail’s (2009) research is another qualitative study that showed that a lack of principal’s EI behaviors can result in staff experiencing exhaustion, a decrease in motivation, and an absence of collaboration among employees. Arif and Sohail gathered data from the administrative staff and teachers at a private school using semi-structured interviews and observations. The researchers concluded that the principal’s leadership behaviors reflected a lack
of EI. For example, the principal exhibited micromanaging behaviors instead of coaching behaviors. In addition, the principal failed in delegating and empowering teachers, building trusting relationships with employees, inspiring and motivating staff, and sustaining long-term results. Furthermore, the principal failed in considering employees’ needs and wants and in providing meaningful opportunities for growth. These researchers argued that the behaviors exhibited by the principal align with what Goleman et al. (2002) refer to as dissonant leadership. Dissonant leadership is characterized by the absence of EI behaviors. For example, dissonant leaders are not attuned to employees’ emotional needs. In addition, dissonant leaders avoid democratic leading, and their autocratic approach can result in employee burnout, exhaustion, and staff turnover.

In alignment with previous research, Berkovich and Eyal’s (2018) study that found a positive relationship between EI qualities and principals’ ability to connect with their teachers. Berkovich and Eyal explored the role of principals’ supportive communication strategies and emotional support for teachers. This quantitative study involved 190 schoolteachers who had to complete three subscales (principals’ emotional support, principals’ supportive communication strategies, and a teacher emotional reframing subscale). The researchers found that principals with effective communication strategies, such as emphatic listening and empowering messages, were able to support teachers in reframing their emotional state, resulting in lowering teacher’s stress and decreasing burnout.

Taliadorou and Pashiardis’s (2014) study also found a strong relationship among principals’ EI and teachers’ job satisfaction. Taliadorou and Pashiardis’ quantitative study examined whether EI and political skills of school principals influence their leadership practice and the job satisfaction of their teachers. The study had a sample of 182 principals and 910
teachers at Cyprus public elementary schools. The researchers collected data through multiple questionnaires. The findings indicated that principals’ EI and political skills are related to the educational leadership style they use and to teachers’ job satisfaction. The researchers reported that leadership is a process of social influence through which a leader affects employees’ feelings, perceptions, and behaviors (Taliadorou & Pashiardis, 2014). Educational institutions are inherently political and interactions in schools often include intense feelings. Educational leaders encounter a diversity of emotions that are associated with personal, professional, political, and cultural issues in their everyday leadership practice. Therefore, effective leadership and the capacity to influence other’s emotions go hand in hand (Taliadorou & Pashiardis, 2014).

Chen and Guo (2020) also found that principals’ EI may influence teachers’ performance in the classroom. Chen and Guo’s quantitative study examined the effect of school principals’ EI and instructional leadership on improving teachers’ performance in China. Instructional leadership refers to the ability to support and promote teachers’ instructional practice. The researchers had 534 primary teachers from 54 primary schools completing an EI and an instructional management scale to rate their principals in these areas. The teachers also completed a self-reported instructional strategy scale to measure how often they use specific empirically supported instructional classroom strategies. The results of the study revealed that principals’ EI was a key component for their effectiveness as instructional leaders. Chen and Guo also found that principals’ instructional leadership has a significant positive relationship with their teachers’ instructional practices in the classroom. In other words, principals’ EI has an impact on their effectiveness as instructional leaders and, as a result, their teachers’ performance in the classroom.
Finally, Grobler et al.’s (2017) study also aligns with these previous studies that showed that principals who are perceived to exhibit EI behaviors are also perceived to be more successful at leading teachers through curriculum change. Grobler et al.’s study took place in South Africa, to explore teachers’ perceptions of how EI was utilized by their principals to manage mandated curriculum change processes. The researchers developed a survey designed in line with an EI theoretical framework and the mandated change processes. A total of 400 teachers completed the survey to rate their principals’ EI and ability to lead change. The data showed a strong significant correlation between the principals’ EI behaviors and the implementation of the mandated changes. The results suggest that EI competencies allow principals to effectively respond to teachers’ emotional needs when going through organizational change.

In addition to the evidence found in relation to the impact of principals’ EI on teachers’ attitudes and performance, research has shown that students’ academic achievement can be also influenced by their principals’ EI. For example, Shank’s (2012) study suggests that school leaders’ EI may have an impact on students’ math scores. Shank’s study aimed to determine if a statistically significant relationship exists between the EI of school leaders and the level of students’ mathematics achievement. The study also aimed to examine the relationship between the leaders’ EI, gender, school level (elementary or secondary school), and the participants’ level of formal education. To collect the data, participants completed an EI inventory. In addition, participants were asked to provide information such as their gender, highest level of advanced education, the level of their school, and the yearly No Child Left Behind-Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) mathematics status for the 2010-2011 school year.
Shank’s (2012) study found that leaders whose schools made the AYP in mathematics reported higher EI compared to the leaders in schools that did not achieve the AYP. The researcher also found that female educational leaders had a statistically significant higher EI score than their male counterparts. In addition, the EI of respondents, their level of formal education, and the level of school in which they worked were not statistically significant, showing that these factors may not play a role in leaders’ EI competencies.

Overall, vast evidence reveals that principals’ EI can have a significant impact on their school performance. However, Maulding et al.’s (2010) study found no such relationship. Maulding et al.’s study examined the relationship between principals’ EI and their students’ performance, taking place in Mississippi with a total population of 261 K-12 principals. The principals were asked to complete an EI questionnaire online. The principals’ results were then compared to the level of performance of their schools. It is important to point out that Maulding et al.’s study did not consider the number of years principals lead their school and the school performance level before principals had taken their positions as school leaders. These are variables that may have influence the results of the study. Even though the researchers did not find a relationship between school principals’ EI and students’ achievements, they suggested that leaders EI impact students’ performance in an indirect way.

Indeed, Maulding et al. (2010) argued that an EI principal is able to build a positive relationship with teachers and staff members which can impact the school community as a whole. For example, teachers have a direct impact on students’ performance therefore, the way teachers feel about their principals and their school may influence their commitment and performance in the classroom. Consequently, enhancing principals’ EI should lead to an improvement in their school outcomes.
Fortunately, research studies have shown that not just principals’ awareness of their EI can be enhanced but also their ability to utilize EI skills to improve their leadership (Kearney et al., 2014; Singh & Dali, 2013; Schmidt, 2010). This will be examined in my next section.

**Principals’ Preparation Programs and Emotional Intelligence**

Researchers believe that EI training can help principals navigate the emotional aspects of their position as school leaders. Schmidt (2010) conducted a literature review that led him to conclude that leadership preparation programs should require school leaders to be trained in managing the vast emotional aspects of the profession. This researcher noted that different factors such as changes in curriculum and instruction, students’ demographic, the economy, and technology are constantly challenging principals’ leadership; in addition to principals’ administrative duties, they are also expected to support their staff and students’ work and development. The complex balance between leadership and management principals are expected to maintain can result in an increase in anxiety, emotional stress, and professional burnout. However, the studies Schmidt reviewed lacked evidence that EI can be improved.

Indeed, there are research studies that demonstrate that principals’ EI can be enhanced during their leadership preparation programs (Kearney et al., 2014; Singh & Dali, 2013). For example, Kearney et al.’s (2014) study examined if EI can be taught to aspiring principals. The researchers integrated EI training in a leadership program intended to prepare participants for a position as principals. The sample of the study consisted of 31 students in Texas. A pre-test/post-test design was selected to measure the difference between a control and an experimental group of aspiring principals. The results of the pre-test and the post-test were compared and revealed a significant improvement in the experiment group of inspiring principals’ social awareness and time management skills. These skills are essential to effectively communicate and relate to others.
and to maintain emotional impulses under control. On the other hand, Singh and Dali’s (2013) study showed that principals’ awareness of the importance of EI competencies can be enhanced through principals’ leadership programs.

Singh and Dali’s (2013) qualitative study explored the need for EI to be an integral part of the work-integrated learning competencies for principals in an advanced certificate in education in South Africa. The data was gathered in five focus group interviews, with ten principals in each group, and ten single in-depth interviews with each participant. Singh and Dali found that integrating EI into the principals’ program resulted in an enhancement of principals’ awareness of the importance of EI for effective leadership. For example, at the end of the program, the principals recognized that their success depends on how they work with others. Principals acknowledged that EI competencies such as empathy and social skills are necessary to be receptive to teachers and students’ feelings and needs. Principals also reported being more sensitive to recognize and value the diversity their staff brings to their school.

Singh and Dali (2013) argued that principals serve as emotional anchors, provide professional guidance, and are responsible for the improvement of their schools therefore, they should have the ability to relate and influence others. In other words, a high IQ is not enough to ensure an individual will be an effective school leader. Principals also need social skills which are part of the EI competencies. The researchers also argued that underdeveloped socials skills can lead to self-centered behaviors and a lack of empathy toward other’s feelings and needs. A key conclusion is that after receiving training through an advanced leadership certificate, principals were able to recognize the importance of utilizing EI competencies in their leadership practice.
Similarly, Keith’s (2009) study showed that EI principals perceive EI competencies as essential for effective leadership. Keith explored the perception of high EI principles of the influence of EI on leadership. The researcher used a narrative inquiry approach and a sample of eight secondary school principals who scored high on an EI self-reported scale. The data revealed that these high EI principals identified EI as an important component of leadership and decision-making. The principals acknowledged that, in their position as leaders, they need the ability to recognize emotions in others and understand the role emotions play in each situation and aspects of a decision. The recurring elements present in the principals’ stories included self-awareness, self-confidence, empathy, intuition, among others, which are all EI competencies.

Singh and Dali (2013) and Keith’s (2009) studies are similar to my study as they explored the perception of principals regarding EI and leadership. However, there are significant distinctions between their study and mine which are further explained within the next section.

**Research Gap**

Overall, research studies point to a positive relationship between principals’ EI, performance, and leadership style (Ayiro, 2014; Berkovich & Eyal, 2017; Hebert, 2011; Muslihah, 2015). These studies illustrate that principals’ EI influence the way they make decisions, interact with students and staff, manage conflict, and support organizational change.

Research has also shown that principals who exhibit EI competencies tend to have better performing schools (Bipath, 2008; Bower at al., 2018) and to exhibit a transformational leadership style (Ayiro, 2014; Berkovich & Eyal, 2017; Hebert, 2011; Segredo et al., 2017). Moreover, research on EI and school leadership has revealed that the way principals manage themselves can influence teachers and students’ attitudes and behaviors toward schoolwork (Arif
Even though some of these research studies have previously explored school principals’ perception of the role and significance of EI on school leadership (Keith, 2009; Singh & Dali, 2013), their criterion in selecting the sample, the research method used, and the main focus of their research, differ from my research study. For example, Keith’s (2009) population consisted only of secondary principals who scored high on an EI questionnaire. In my study, K-12 principals are from different school levels (elementary, middle, and high school) and previous EI scores and experience with the construct of EI are not considered. In addition, Keith’s research focused on exploring the lived experiences of school principals with respect to their perceptions of the influence of EI on their leadership. However, in my research study, I explored the principals’ perceptions of how they could use their EI to enhance their leadership.

Singh and Dali’s (2013) study also had a sample of principals who already had previous experience with the construct of EI. The researchers’ qualitative study explored principals’ perceptions of the significance of EI in school leadership. However, their population consisted of principals who participated in an advanced certificate program in education that integrated EI learning, while my research study did not require previous training or experience with the construct of EI. In addition, Singh and Dali’s data collection method included focus group interviews, while in my study all interviews were single interviews. Singh and Dali’s study also focused on the principal’s understanding of the significance of EI in principals’ leadership while my study encouraged principals’ self-reflection on their own leadership experiences and the use of their EI to enhance their leadership. Therefore, my study adds to the literature by exploring how principals, regardless of their previous experience with the construct of EI, perceive and
describe their own EI in relation to their leadership, and how they understand their EI might be used to enhance their leadership practices.

**Chapter 2 Closure**

Leadership is a complex task and, therefore, effective leadership depends mostly on leaders’ EI rather than their IQ. For example, leadership is based on social interactions, and therefore leaders must have the ability to listen and communicate effectively, work in collaboration, and empathize with the needs of those around them, which are all aspects of EI. Moreover, research has found a significant relationship between EI and transformational leadership. Transformational leadership is considered the most powerful form of leadership due to the leaders’ ability to build trusting and meaningful relationships with their employees. For example, transformational leaders understand the needs and wants of others and have the ability to influence employees’ attitudes toward work. Therefore, transformational leadership requires EI competencies such as self-awareness and social skills.

The relationship between individuals’ EI and leadership has been supported by a number of research studies, including studies in the field of educational leadership. For example, research studies have found a positive relationship between principals’ EI and their transformational leadership style. Moreover, research has shown that principals who exhibit EI competencies have better performing schools and are perceived by their teachers as more reliable than those who lack EI behaviors. Inspired by these previous studies, this study aimed to explore the perceptions of K-12 principals’ awareness of their EI in relation to how they lead, and how their EI competencies can be used to enhance their leadership practice. The research design and data analysis procedures for this study are discussed in Chapter 3.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of my study was to explore the perception of K-12 principals’ awareness of their emotional intelligence (EI) and how their EI competencies can be used to enhance their leadership practice. In this chapter, the research design, methodological approach, and the rationale for the design choice are described. In addition, this chapter offers my researcher reflexivity statement, a description of the sample, procedures for data collection and data analysis, trustworthiness, overview of standards of integrity in qualitative inquiry, the limitations and delimitations of the study, and the ethical considerations. My specific research questions are:

1. How do school principals perceive and describe their experiences with the following EI domains in relation to how they lead: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management?

2. What are principals’ understanding of how such competencies might be used to enhance their leadership practice?

Research Design, Methodological Approach and Rationale

To answer my research questions, a qualitative methodological approach was utilized. Qualitative research seeks to study how people make sense of the world and their experiences (Mirriam & Tisdell, 2016). It seeks to gain an in-depth understanding of social phenomena, and it relies on people’s experiences in their natural setting (Creswell & Poth 2018). There are many types of qualitative research designs such as phenomenological, grounded theory, narrative analysis, among others (Mirriam & Tisdell, 2016). For my study, I utilized a basic qualitative study approach. A basic qualitative study is the most common qualitative research design, and it seeks to understand how people construct knowledge or meaning from their experiences with the
social world (Mirriam & Tisdell, 2016). As such, the focus of this basic qualitative study was to understand school principals’ awareness of their EI and how they perceive their EI might be used to enhance their leadership practice.

In qualitative research, the researcher serves as the instrument to collect and analyze the data. The data is collected in the natural setting of the participants in open-ended forms, such as in the form of semi-structured interviews, observations, documents, and audiovisuals (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). These forms of collecting data allow the participants to freely express themselves about the phenomenon being studied, which in this case is the awareness of principals of their EI in relation to their leadership. During the process of data collection and analysis, the researcher uses a protocol to guide the process and minimize personal biases. The form of data collection used for this study was semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions (Creswell & Poth 2018). The data analysis procedure consisted of identifying common patterns in the data to be coded and classified into themes. These themes then were interpreted to answer the research questions.

**Reflexivity Statement**

A reflexivity statement refers to the researchers’ attempt to be open about their previous experience with the phenomena being studied that could potentially generate biases (Creswell & Poth 2018). I first learned about the construct of EI through a book called *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Matters More Than IQ* by Daniel Goleman (2005). This book awoke in me the curiosity to understand how emotions impact one’s overall performance in life. Researching about this matter, I found research studies that pointed out a positive relationship between EI an individual’s overall well-being, including leadership effectiveness in diverse professional settings and fields.
In my experience as a teacher, I noticed leadership problems in schools where I worked. For example, in one school, the principal would complain about her staff’s performance in front of other members of the school staff. The principal also used to lose her temper with her employees during meetings. I experienced these treatments myself, which resulted in a decrease in my motivation and organizational commitment due to feeling disrespected and embarrassed in front of other staff members. In addition, in this school, I never felt appreciated as the principal failed to acknowledge my efforts and accomplishments within the organization.

As my career goal is to become an effective administrative leader in the field of education, I have reflected on my past teaching experiences to recognize the competencies of school leaders who have inspired me and my students. Based on my experience, I came to identify the characteristics of those leaders who nurture in me and others a sense of belonging and a sense of commitment to the organization’s goals. I concluded that these inspirational leaders had qualities that align with EI behaviors and attitudes based on Goleman et al.’s (2013) EI model.

**Sample and Site**

The sample consisted of 10 K-12 principals from one Midwestern state in the United States. The number of participants chosen for this study is supported by Creswell’s (2013) recommendation of 5-25 participants and Morse’s (1994) recommendation of at least six participants when using a qualitative research design. The sample and site criteria for this study were selecting principals who had served for at least three consecutive years in their current schools. I made the conscious decision of choosing this criterion to ensure that all participants possess leadership experience, knowledge of their staff population, and an understanding of organizational challenges, as this study is focused on understanding the principals’ awareness of
their EI in relation to their ability to lead others. This criterion aligns with the logic of the intentional purposeful sampling approach. The intentional purposeful sampling approach consists of selecting a sample that can provide rich information on the phenomenon being studied (Patton, 1990), which is the principals’ awareness of their EI in relation to their leadership. In other words, the researcher determines the criteria based on prior information and exploratory work to identify those that can provide in-depth information on the phenomenon of interest.

For selecting the sample of this study, attention was not paid to participants’ previous experiences with the construct of EI as the purpose is to understand their current awareness of their EI. For all participants to be able to answer the interview questions, information on the construct of EI and its four domains, based on Goleman et al.’s (2013) EI model, was provided and discussed during the interview process. This information was shared prior to the interview. In addition, the definition of EI and its domain and competencies were discussed with the principals during the interview, after addressing the interviewees’ background information. For the purpose of this study, in selecting the sample, attention was not paid to participants’ gender, age, educational background, or any other qualification. Nevertheless, participants’ educational background was recorded and presented in Chapter 4.

**Procedures**

The initial step of the research study was to obtain the necessary approval from Western Michigan University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) (See Appendix D). After obtaining their approval, principals within the school districts in a Midwestern State of the United States were contacted via phone calls and email to inform them about the study. The principals’ email addresses and phone numbers were taken from the school districts’ websites. The potential identified participants received a recruitment letter (see Appendix A) via email. Those who
expressed interest in participating in the study, received the informed consent (see Appendix B). This consent outlines the purpose of the study, the eligibility criteria, and the commitment involved. In addition, the consent includes a discussion of the risks and benefits associated with participation and the confidentiality of the study. A meeting was scheduled to review the consent document and to answer questions regarding the study. The potential participants who agreed to participant were asked for a virtual interview of about 45-60 minutes. Interviews were transcribed to be coded and organized into themes that reflect the different perspectives of the participants in relation to their EI.

**Data Collection**

I collected the data through semi-structured interviews using open-ended questions designed to explore the perception of K-12 school principals’ awareness of their EI and how they perceive their EI relates to their leadership. Open-ended questions allowed participants to freely describe their personal experiences with the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Participants were asked for a one time 45-60 minute virtual interview. The interviews were audio recorded for later transcription and analysis. The participants received a copy of their transcribed interview for review and asked to verify the correctness and clarify any inconsistencies. This was done to ensure accuracy. Clarifications were requested to be completed within two weeks after receiving the transcribed interview.

**Instrumentation**

I served as the human research instrument to collect the data thought virtually interviewing the participants. Data collection for this project occurred through the use of an interview protocol instrument (see Appendix C) designed to further explore the perceptions of K-12 principals’ awareness of their EI and how their EI might be used to enhance their leadership.
The interview protocol was designed based on the Goleman et al. (2013) EI model. This instrument was pilot tested by two, current public-school principals in a Midwest state in the United States who were then not part of the research sample. The purpose of the pilot testing was to ensure clarity with the selected questions and to ensure the interview protocol would elicit answers to the research questions and sub-questions, as well as to improve the protocol prior to being used (Glesne, 2016).

The introduction of the interview protocol consisted of expressing appreciation for the principal’s participation in the study, communicating that the interview was going to be recorded, and that they could require at any time the recording to be turned off. Participants were also informed that they could withdraw from the study at any point. In addition, the principals were reminded of the purpose of the study. After the introduction, Section A of the protocol was used to gather information about the interviewee’s background. This section included questions regarding their time in the position, their responsibilities as principals, their academic background, their motivation to obtain a leadership position, and their current understanding of EI in relation to leadership.

Section B started by providing a definition of EI and its domains based on Goleman et al.’s (2013) EI model. The definition of EI was followed by questions to collect information regarding participants’ understanding of their EI, the role EI plays in their daily responsibilities as principals, their understanding of how EI might be associated with leadership practices, among other things. Section C (self-awareness), D (self-management), E (social awareness), and F (relationship management) were designed to collect data regarding the principals’ awareness of the EI domains and their competencies and how principals might use this awareness to enhance their leadership. Each of these sections began with a definition of the EI domain and
competencies to be addressed. The interviews ended by thanking the participants for their cooperation and requesting their permission to contact them in case a follow up interview was needed or to clarify their responses.

**Data Analysis**

To explore the perception of K-12 school principals’ awareness of their EI and how they perceive their EI competencies might enhance their leadership practices, a thorough analysis of the data was conducted. The first step, before analyzing the data, was to transcribe the digital recorded interviews. This was followed by the participants’ review of their respective transcribed interviews. Participants were asked to verify the correctness and clarify any inconsistencies. This was done to ensure the accuracy of the transcription. After the data was transcribed and revised by the participants, the formal process of coding the data began.

As recommended by Creswell and Creswell (2018), first, I read each of the interview transcribes to gain a general sense of the information and to start recording my general thoughts about the data. Second, I created codes by identifying common patterns in the data. Codes are words used to represent chunks of data that illustrate the main ideas and statements of the participants. Codes then were organized into categories to create themes. These themes represent the major findings of the study. Each of the themes included different perspectives provided by the school principals. These themes were then used to answer the research questions. Finally, the findings were compared with Goleman et al.’s (2013) EI model presented in the conceptual framework in Chapter 1 and to the literature review in Chapter 2.

According to Glesne (2016), displaying the data helps to identify concepts, processes, and relationships within the study. I displayed the data in tables that have the major themes, including the theme counts, associated with the interview and research questions.
Trustworthiness

According to Glesne (2016), “trustworthiness is about alertness to the quality and the rigor of a study, about what sort of criteria can be used to assess how well the research was carried out” (p. 53). In other words, the researcher has the responsibility to demonstrate the findings can be trusted. In order to ensure trustworthiness, I engaged in various processes such as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Following, I provide a description of each of these processes.

Credibility

In qualitative research, credibility refers to how congruent the findings are with reality (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The researcher collects the data through the use of interviews and observations among other methods. However, the data does not speak by itself, and it has to be interpreted by someone. To ensure credibility, I used the persistent observation and member checking strategies (Korstjens & Moser, 2017). Persistent observation consists in constantly coming back to the data to identify and categorize important statements. I practiced persistent observation by constantly reading and rereading the data to code and relabel codes to capture the experiences of the participants with the phenomenon that was studied.

On the other hand, member checking consists of allowing the participants to review their interview transcripts and provide feedback to ensure their ideas have not been misinterpreted or misrepresented. Member checking also consists of allowing the participants an opportunity to agree, disagree, and negotiate the emerging themes with me. For the process of member checking, I sent to the participants their transcripts and allowed them provide feedback regarding their content and the potential themes that emerge from their data. Clarifications were requested to be done within two weeks after receiving the transcribed interview.
Transferability

Transferability refers to the evidence provided to readers that demonstrate the study’s findings could be applicable to other contexts, situations, times, and populations (Korstjens & Moser, 2017). Transferability is accomplished through a thick and rich description of the study (Creswell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). As such, I provided a thick description of my participants (see Chapter 4) and the research process to allow readers to evaluate if my findings are transferable to their own setting.

Dependability and Confirmability

Dependability and confirmability refer to the transparency in the description of all the steps taken from the start of a research project to the development and reporting of the findings (Korstjens & Moser, 2017). In qualitative research, dependability and confirmability are necessary to verify that the analysis process aligns with the standards of an accepted research design. In addition, dependability and confirmability are necessary to ensure the findings are based on the participants’ contributions and not on the researcher’s preferences and viewpoints (Korstjens & Moser, 2017).

To ensure dependability and confirmability, I had an outside researcher conduct an inquiry audit of the research study (Korstjens & Moser, 2017). In an inquiry audit, a researcher, who did not participate in the data collection and data analysis process, examines the processes of data collection and analysis, and the findings of the research study.

Ethical Considerations

Informed Consent

The participants in this research study received an informed consent form that was reviewed with them at the beginning of the virtual session, set up for this purpose. If they
provided oral consent, then the interview was the next step. The consent outlined the purpose of the study, the eligibility criteria, and involved commitment. In addition, the consent included the discussion of risk and benefits associated with the interview and the confidentiality of the study.

**Risks and Costs of Participation**

Participation in this study was voluntary and participants had the option to withdraw at any time, therefore, this study presented minimal risk. The cost of participation consisted in the principals’ time to engage in the interview process and the review of their transcribed interview.

**Benefits to Participants and Others**

There were several expected benefits from participating in this study. First, the participants were contributing to the literature. Second, the participants had the opportunity to gain awareness of the construct of EI and its domains and competencies. Third, participants had the opportunity to associate their EI with their leadership practice. Lastly, at the end of the study, the participants had the opportunity to gain awareness of other principals’ understanding of EI and how their EI might be used to enhance their leadership practices. Participants did not receive any type of payment for participating in this research.

**Confidentiality**

Participants’ identifiers and responses are confidential. The personal names of the participants were immediately replaced by a pseudonym at the time of consent. Participants were responsible for choosing their pseudonyms. Participants’ recorded interviews and transcripts were stored in a password protected folder on the student researcher’s personal computer during the analysis process. The data will be retained at the principal investigator computer, located in his office at WMU, for at least three years after the close of the study.
Data Collection: Location and Rapport

The study took place in one Midwestern state, with interviews done virtually utilizing my university’s WebEx videoconferencing application. The data was collected through 45-60 minute virtual interviews. In order to build rapport, I started the interviews by introducing myself and explaining my role in the study. I also allowed the interviewees to talk about themselves by asking them about their schools and their experience as principals, among other things, to have bits of small talk with the purpose of breaking the ice.

To build trust with the participants, I became familiar with the participants’ background by learning about their educational and leadership philosophy statements and by studying their professional biography. Additionally, I dressed professionally to match my participants’ work environment. I also stayed aware of my body language by avoiding crossing my arms or legs, and by making sure I was facing the computer camera to show I was paying attention to what they were saying. Finally, I established credibility by allowing participants to review their interview transcripts and the themes that emerged from the data. This credibility strategy is known as member checking, and it offers participants the opportunity to provide feedback to ensure that their ideas have not been misinterpreted or misrepresented. Clarifications were requested within two weeks of receiving their transcribed interview.

Managing and Storing the Data

All interviews were recorded and transcribed using a transcription software compatible with WebEx videoconference app. The transcripts were labeled using the participants’ pseudonym to ensure confidentiality. Participants received a copy of the transcript and a two-week window to provide feedback on their transcription. The data was stored in a password protected folder on the student researcher’s personal computer during the analysis process. The
data will be retained at the principal investigator computer, located in his university office, for at least three years after the close of the study. Findings will be presented in Chapter 4 and the researcher’s discussion of the findings in Chapter 5.

Chapter 3 Closure

Chapter 3 presents a description of the methodology that was utilized in this research study, including how the data was collected and interpreted. This study utilized the basic qualitative study approach. The data was collected through open ended face-to-face interviews. The data was organized by coded chunks of information. This coded information was then categorized into themes that were used to answer the research questions. In addition, the processes to build trustworthiness were discussed in this chapter. These processes include utilizing persistent observation and member checking strategies to ensure credibility, providing a rich description of the study to ensure transferability, and having an inquiry audit to ensure dependability and confirmability. Finally, limitations and delimitations were presented to identify the potential weakness of the study and to inform the reader of the scope of a study. Next, Chapter 4 provides the summary of the main ideas shared by the principals and the themes and subthemes that emerged from the data.
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND RESULTS

This chapter provides: (a) participants’ background, (b) a summary of the main ideas shared by the principals, (c) the themes and subthemes that emerged from the data, and (d) Chapter 4 closure.

Participants’ Background

Section A of the interview protocol was used to gather information about the interviewee’s background. This section included questions regarding their time in the position, their responsibilities as principals, their academic background, their motivation to obtain a leadership position, and their current understanding of emotional intelligence (EI) in relation to leadership. In this section, the definition of EI and its domains and competencies were not discussed to ensure the principals answers were based on their own understanding of EI prior to this study. Following, I provide a description of the principals’ background based on the information provided by the participants.

The participants for my study consisted of 10 K-12 principals from a Midwestern state of the United States that have worked as principals for at least three consecutive years in their current schools. This criterion was established to ensure that all participants possess leadership experience, knowledge of their staff population, and an understanding of organizational challenges, as this study is focused on understanding the principals’ awareness of their EI in relation to their ability to lead others. For selecting the sample of this study, attention was not paid to participants’ previous experiences with the construct of EI as the purpose is to understand their current awareness of their EI. Furthermore, in selecting the sample, attention was not paid to participants’ gender, age, educational background, or any other qualification. Nevertheless,
participants’ gender, age, and educational background were recorded and considered within the
discussion of this study in Chapter 5.

Table 1

*Details of Participants (N=10)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>School Level</th>
<th>Years in Current Position</th>
<th>Highest Degree</th>
<th>Formal Training in EI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</tr>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>No</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Masters</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
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As is presented in Table 1, the participants in this study were mostly male (seven). In relation to the number of years in their current position, six of the principals had four to seven years of experience working for their schools, while four of them had 11 to 19 years at the time of this study. However, the number of years the participants worked at their school as principal does not equal the total number of years of experience they had as principals. For example, three of the participants had between four to seven years of experience as principals, while seven of the principals had between 13 to 25 years.

Regarding their school level, four of the principals were leading an elementary school, two a middle school, and four a high school. Furthermore, one of the principals had an educational specialist degree, one had a Ph.D. in curriculum and instruction, two a Ph.D. in
educational leadership, and the rest had a master’s degree in educational leadership. At the time of the study, none of the participants had received formal training in EI.

**Motivation for a Leadership Position**

When asked what motivated them to seek a leadership position as a principal, six of the principals expressed that their main motivation was the desire to have a greater impact on students and teachers. They believed they could do more for their students as administrators than as teachers. For example, Edward shared, “one of the things that I felt is that I wanted to have a bigger impact on all kids, and so that prompted me to move into administration.” Samash’s motivation was similar to Edward’s. He said, “I felt like I could be more efficient and effective impacting many students versus just one or two in a regular school, so I went the route of educational leadership.” Emerson was also moved by his desire to help the school community as a whole, and he knew he could have a greater impact as a school principal. He shared, “my motivation is to serve the community, improve learning of everybody within an organization, and also, you know, help everyone live in the world that we should be inhabiting and working.”

Lisa also realized she could do more for her students and even influence teachers if she were in a leadership position. She shared, “when I was a teacher in the classroom, I felt I wanted to increase my influence for more students and more teachers, and I was feeling stagnant as a teacher.” On the other hand, Barbara and Monica were inspired by leaders who believed in their ability to lead others. Barbara said:

> I was already highly motivated to teach and excited about teaching, and passionate for teaching. So, when the building leader was supportive of me, it just made me want to work even harder and do more. So, I thought, what kind of impact, if I were in that role, could I have on other people?
Similarly, Monica shared that she was a teacher-leader for many years, and that during that time, she had the opportunity to coach and mentor many new teachers in her school. When she was a teacher, she became motivated to seek a leadership position because her school principal and district leaders encouraged her to go into administration. She said, “I did a lot of mentoring at the district for new teachers and so it just seemed like the natural thing to do at the time, and so that’s why I decided to go into educational leadership.”

The remaining principals were motivated by other factors. For example, when Bob was a teacher, he had an opportunity to substitute for the principal during a medical leave. This experience allowed him to learn that this was a position he could handle, and therefore, he decided to prepare himself to become a principal. Bob shared, referring to the opportunity to temporarily lead his school, “I don’t know what it did, but it made me think that I could handle this. At first, I never thought I would be able to handle that type of scenario, but yeah.”

Even though Benjamin acknowledged being a principal can be challenging, he seemed to enjoy every aspect of it. As he stated, “it’s the most exhausting, ridiculously intense job, and I very much enjoy it. As good as an answer as I can give you… I enjoy it a great deal.” On the other hand, Moses was inspired to become a principal when he was seeking his second degree in curriculum and instruction. He said, “when I did my second degree in education, with this on curriculum and instruction, that’s when I knew I wanted to be in education working in administration.”

Similarly, David learned that he had the attitude and skills to be a principal when he went back to school to earn continuing credits for his teaching certification. He learned this from a placement battery test intended to help him get a clearer understanding of what he might like to do with an advance degree. His results showed that he had the potential to become a school
administrator. He shared, “the feedback that I got from that placement office was that I would either be a suitable officer in the armed forces or a school administrator, so I opted for school administration.”

**Prior Knowledge of Emotional Intelligence**

At the time of the study, none of the principals had received formal training in EI. When the principals were asked about what they knew about EI prior to this study, all of them expressed having some understanding of EI, which they acquired from reading books, articles, and/or from their social interactions. Based on their responses, it was clear that their understanding of EI varied among them and was influenced by their own personal interests and experiences. For example, Moses said:

In my comings and goings and all my trainings and studies, I can’t say that I’ve spent a lot of time probing into EI. It’s like, you know, that it’s out there but in terms of having a working knowledge of it, I can’t say that I do.

Similarly, Edward acknowledged, “I have not done research. I’ve heard about it in different applications, but not a great amount.” Emerson had also heard about EI before the study; however, he had never intentionally researched it. He said, “prior to the invitation to speak with you, I’ve known EI as a concept. To have done any sort of in-depth study on it, I wouldn’t say that that really crossed my professional repertoire a whole lot.”

For Lisa, her understanding of EI was based on her experience as a principal. In her description of EI, she explained that EI is about understanding the impact of her own and other’s emotions. She shared, “I know that EI is kind of being aware of your own emotions and the emotions of others, and how they impact decision making and planning.”
On the other hand, three principals expressed having some understanding of EI based on books and articles they had read. For example, Benjamin shared, “I’ve read about it. I’ve read books and I’ve read magazine articles. It’s something that I definitely understand but I have no formal training on it at all.” Similarly, Samash also shared, “I’ve read books on it and talked about that. I’m drawing a blank on those specific books now, but I’ve read things on it.”

David expressed participating in conferences and organizations where the topic of EI had been discussed. He said:

As far as EI goes, I think it was probably through professional journals through the MASSP (Michigan Association of Secondary School Principals) or American Society for Curriculum and Development…I try to stay on top of, you know, the latest practices and initiatives and such.

On the other hand, three principals expressed learning about EI from the social and emotional learning programs they were implementing in their schools. For example, Bob said, “I’ll be honest with you, a lot of the EI work that I’ve seen or been a part of is really for students. It’s more student-based, not as adult-based.” Barbara also expressed having had the opportunity to learn about the EI’s competencies in a similar way. She said, “I’ve participated in the social and emotional learning training that we’ve had, as we’re implementing that with the instruction for students now.” Monica communicated that in her building, EI was used daily as the staff were committed to supporting their students in developing the social and emotional skills they need to succeed. She said, “we use EI all the time here in our building just because it’s a lot to do with our social emotional learning.”
Emotional Intelligence and Its Relation to Leadership

When principals were asked what they knew about EI and its relation to leadership, most of the principals expressed that it consisted of the leaders’ ability to be aware of themselves and others, with some distinctions. For example, Barbara described it as the ability to be aware of oneself. She said, “It’s just really where you fall on this spectrum of knowledge of your own self… and so understanding how you are as an individual.” Samash described it as the ability to be aware of others and using that information to lead. He expressed:

I believe they go hand-in-hand. You have to be able to be aware of the surroundings and be keen as to what the staff needs, what the students need, and try to balance all of them, and that really requires awareness and management. It really requires people working together on it to figure that out and being able to measure what needs to be done.

Lisa’s description of the relationship between EI and leadership focused on the leaders’ ability to recognize how emotions impact their decisions. She said:

So, I feel like emotions guide a lot of decisions that are made, and as a leader, you are obviously making decisions all the time. So, you have to be able to clearly recognize what your emotions are at that state and how they’re going to impact the decisions you’re making, and the decisions you’re making impact so many other people because you are a leader.

On the other hand, two of the principals described EI and its relationship to leadership as leaders’ awareness of the impact they have on others. For example, Edward said, “how we respond as leaders to different situations is going to have an impact on how we relate to others, on how we lead them.” Aligned to Edwards’ understanding of the importance of EI competencies in leadership, Emerson shared that part of being a leader is “being supportive of all
those that are around you.” According to Emerson, to do so, a leader needs to be “very cognizant and aware of [their] skills and dispositions as a leader.”

Moses’ understanding of the relationship of EI and leadership was focused on the leaders’ ability to take care of themselves so they can take care of others. He explained:

It’s really, to me, being in tune with myself and then also making sure that I’m in tune with what’s going on with my folks. And when I say my folks, I’m talking about my students, my staff, and my family, and so I have to be able to know what's going on with me and taking care of me so that I can effectively see what’s going on with them and take care of them.

On the other hand, David believed that leadership is all about building relationships with others, and therefore, leaders need emotional and social competencies to do so. He said, “it has much to do with relationships and your own social emotional well-being as you seek to lead and or support others, whether that’s students, staff, and/or parents.”

Furthermore, Benjamin and Bob also acknowledged that a school principal needs EI to be an effective leader. For example, Benjamin stated:

I don’t know how someone can lead if they don’t have EI. That’s the only way I think this job works. In order to lead, your people must follow, and the only way people follow is that they feel understood, and a leader can’t understand unless they have EI, unless they have a connection with other human beings, unless they can empathize and develop those relationships. So those two words (referring to EI and leadership) are just about the same for me.

Similarly, Bob believed that EI is a key factor for school leadership. He said:
You need to have that EI. You need to be able to read people. You need to be able to be empathetic… Whether it’s in the classroom or building wide, you need to set the tone and you need to be able to handle those challenges that come your way and be able to show your perseverance when it comes to leading others.

Finally, Monica described the relationship between EI and leadership as the capacity a leader has in understanding themself so they can understand others. She cited a couple of times the phrase “seek first to understand then to be understood” by Stephen Covey to emphasize the idea that everything starts with oneself.

**Summary of Principals’ Responses as Connected to Research Questions**

Sections B through F of the interview protocol were used to gather information about principals’ awareness of EI in relation to leadership. Specifically, section B was focused on collecting data regarding their understanding and awareness of EI. Furthermore, sections C through F focused on collecting data regarding principals’ awareness of each individual EI domain with its competencies, including the preexisting role of these competencies within their everyday leadership. Each of these sections started by discussing the definition of EI or the domain explored therein. Therefore, the participants had the opportunity to gain awareness of the construct EI before answering the interview questions. That said, the following summaries are based on the key information shared by each of the 10 principals regarding their personal understanding and awareness of the connection between EI and their leadership, including their awareness of the role of EI competencies in fulfilling their responsibilities as leaders.

**Bob**

Bob perceived EI competencies as essential in leadership as he believes that one’s success depends more on how one reacts to life events. Therefore, he understands that principals
need EI competencies such as emotional awareness and self-control. As he put it, “there’s that old saying, life is 10% of what happens to you and 90% of how you react to it.” Referring to the relationship between EI and leadership, he stated, “I think it’s directly connected.” He illustrated the importance of EI competencies by explaining that leadership is about:

…being able to have a personality and a behavior that calms other people down. It doesn’t create stress. Your decisions and your actions aren’t stressors, but they’re more supportive… and being able to be aware of how your decisions impact others.

Bob further illustrated his understanding of the importance of EI competencies when he described an emotionally intelligent principal. He said, “an emotionally intelligent principal would be one that understands their own emotions… the staff they work with, and kind of the dynamics within the staff, along with being able to understand students and the families you’re with.” He also added that an emotionally intelligent principal is “culturally aware,” acknowledging the cultural diversity within their community. According to Bob, principals should use the awareness of their and other’s emotions to adapt their behaviors based on the situation at hand. This was evident when he added:

The emotional intelligent principal is one that kind of has their finger on the pulse of everyone who’s in the building, and can switch as needed to support those people, but also model appropriate behaviors of how to respond to situations and just how to conduct yourself.

According to Bob, a leader uses self-awareness competencies to understand how their behaviors are impacting those they serve. He described a self-aware principal “as somebody who understands the impact of their role. They understand that the decisions they make impact a large portion of [their] population.” To illustrate the importance of maintaining awareness of one’s
behaviors, he stated, “how you carry yourself and how you treat others is always being watched.”

Bob also expressed that self-awareness is needed for “being confident in the decisions you are making [and] being able to accurately describe why certain decisions are being acted on or why decisions are being made.” In addition, Bob explained that leaders can use self-awareness to identify their limitations to find ways to grow in those areas.

According to Bob, “self-management is about displaying the behaviors you want others to engage in.” He illustrated his understanding of the need of self-management competencies when he stressed that school leaders must be transparent about their actions, remain optimistic despite the challenges, adapt quickly to change, and be ready to take the initiative without passing on things just because they think is too much work. Bob also argued that a principal is the face of the school and therefore, should be “able to be emotionally calm” and “the most positive person in the room.” Bob provided an example of the use of self-management competencies when addressing disruptive students’ behaviors. He shared:

The emotional self-control comes when you’re disciplining students in dealing with inappropriate behaviors. How you respond to those students, who are maybe coming from trauma and having a really hard time, you need to be able to maintain that control. I think that’s one of the toughest things an educator can do.

According to Bob “a socially aware principal can put themselves in other people’s shoes and understand kind of where they’re coming from.” He also explained his understanding of organizational awareness. He said:

Organizational awareness would be understanding how things work where you are… knowing the group that you have, knowing the staff you have, and being able to organize them in a way that you’re playing to their strengths.
Bob understands that great leaders do a great job because they have awareness of the people they serve and the organization as a whole, and they use this information to make sound decisions on how to serve them. Bob also understands that part of being socially aware is “making sure you’re recognizing staff and recognizing students for what they are doing.” He especially emphasized the importance of recognizing their efforts during challenging situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic, which was taking place at the time of this study. Moreover, Bob related social awareness with his ability to be accurately aware of how others may be perceiving his actions. As he stated, “I’m always thinking, how is this looking from the other side? Am I showing the right emotions or empathy? Am I coming through in a sincere way?” He further emphasized this idea when he shared, “I think social awareness has a lot to do with sincerity too… if you don’t have sincerity with what you do, people are going to see through that.”

Bob illustrated his understanding of the importance of relationship management competencies by recognizing that leaders get things done through people. Therefore, they need to create connections and build strong relationships with others to get the support they need to move in a particular direction. He stated:

It’s hard, too hard, to move forward with anything… I really truly believe that when you have a relationship with people, things can be a lot easier… If you create those relationships, you’re gonna have some people who are gonna be in your corner, and you’re gonna have people who support your vision and support what you’re trying to do.

Bob described a principal with relationship management competencies as someone with a clear vision who influences other’s responses in a positive way. He also perceived a principal with relationship management competencies as someone with the ability to manage conflict
among stakeholders and who is able to have “courageous conversations,” which he described as the act of “letting people know about concerns that are out there” so they can work through them. Moreover, he believes that leaders must develop other leaders and consequently, create opportunities for the staff to gain leadership experience.

Bob also noted using his awareness of others to provide a safe space where people can express how they are feeling. As he stated, “sometimes people just need to vent a little bit and I’ve tried to create that open space to do that.” Furthermore, Bob shared that, to bring people together, he prepares activities for the staff to show appreciation and to offer a space where they can interact and get to know each other better. As he said:

> We make sure we do staff gifts about once a month. We make sure we do staff meals to recognize them for all the work they’re doing… We try to do whatever we can to get people to connect with each other.

Furthermore, another way Bob utilizes his relationship management competencies to enhance his leadership is by engaging his staff in the decision-making process. Even though, he stated having the last word about decisions, he understands that this approach encourages teamwork, collaboration, and builds a sense of empowerment. As he stated, “let people know they have some ownership.”

**Barbara**

Barbara perceived EI competencies as “highly associated” to her leadership practice as leaders have to deal with chaotic situations, and therefore, need awareness of their emotions to then decide how to respond. According to Barbara, “an emotionally intelligent principal would be an individual that is self-aware [and] knows what their triggers are.” She also emphasized that “an emotionally intelligent principal is cognizant of themselves, their environment, and the
people that they interact with.” To illustrate the need of EI competencies in her leadership, Barbara stated, “You’re going to have upset students, parents, staff, and sometimes even the central administration.” Therefore, she pointed out that leaders must manage their emotional reactions.

When talking about self-awareness, Barbara described a self-aware principal as someone who “knows their triggers or their own general responses to various situations.” She further explained:

    You don’t need to know what the situation is going to be, but you know yourself enough to know what state you need to be in to handle it… By having knowledge of how you as an individual respond to things, you at least have a starting point.

Barbara also explained that one’s emotions can interfere in the way one makes decisions, and therefore, “self-awareness plays a prominent role for a principal.” She said, “you have to acknowledge your feelings and then you decide how you respond accordingly.” Additionally, Barbara illustrated the importance of practicing self-awareness of one’s physical needs, as they also influence the way individuals behave. As she said, “don’t let yourself get too hungry; don’t let yourself get too tired because then your responses won’t be as balanced as they could be.”

A strategy Barbara uses to enhance her leadership is to first take care of her emotions before addressing the emotional needs of others. In other words, she utilizes her emotional awareness to dictate what to do. As she stated, “it’s about positioning myself so I’m ready for whatever is coming for me.” She gave an example by explaining that, before taking a phone call of an upset parent, she will make sure she is in a calm state of mind. As she said, “I’ll often dim the lights in my office, close the door, and sit down and, then, take the call. So, I’m in a relaxed state when I’m receiving someone.” She also shared that she may not respond to emails right
away. She will read the email, walk away or do something else, and then respond when she feels ready.

It is evident that Barbara understands that self-management begins with awareness of oneself. This awareness can then be used to prepare in advance for the challenges of the day. As she stated:

A self-managed principal would be one that has great knowledge of his/her own self… is one that is ready so that when things transpire and happen, they can take action, they can remain positive… and they can adapt and adjust what’s needed.

In the same sense, Barbara also reported using her self-awareness to review past experiences and use that information to prepare for future events. As she shared:

I do a lot of reflective practice on how I responded or how I could have responded, or what can I do next time, so that I’m planning ahead because you’re going to continue to have incidents and occurrences in any leadership setting… Even when a student is suspended, I’m reflecting on what else I could have done.

Furthermore, Barbara illustrated the importance self-management competencies when she acknowledged that her behaviors are a tool to influence the responses of others. As she stated, “I can’t control what someone else does, but I have control over my response and reaction, and so, that’s what keeps that mirror looking at me instead of other people.” She shared an example to illustrate her statement:

When I am walking the halls and I’m checking in on the students, if I see a student that’s pretty upset… I will not rush over. I’ll slowly come over, so I change my body language to show a relaxed state.
She also explained, “if a parent is upset and standing in my office, I don’t make them sit down. We stay standing because, at that point, they’re in that state.” Barbara will invite them to take a seat when she perceived they got to a point where they begin to relax enough to sit. She also uses her ability to stay in control of her emotions by reminding herself not to take things personally when parents are giving her ultimatums or use offensive words. As she stated, “let’s say they’re name-calling, you’re not listening to that, you’re listening to the heart of the matter of what’s really going on.”

Another way Barbara uses self-management competencies, such as emotional self-control, initiative, and achievement, to enhance her leadership is by consistently practicing a new skill until it becomes natural to her. As she stated, “it’s just like with dieting or saving money, the more you do something the better you get at strengthening that skill.” She also explained that, when a mistake is made, “you have to go back and say that wasn’t a good choice, but you have to keep practicing and make that really a part of you.”

Regarding social awareness competencies, Barbara emphasized “there’s lots of layers and pieces to empathy and individuals’ needs.” She perceived social awareness as the ability “to look beyond yourself and, by doing that, you see there’s a bigger world out there and it’s bigger than you.” Aligned to this statement, Barbara illustrated the role of empathy within her position when she reported to be mindful about what others are experiencing. She shared, “some folks have become homeless and they’re still student learners, right? And they’re trying to balance learning.”

Barbara also suggested that some people are confused with the concept of empathy. She believes that, if one has never experienced what someone else is experiencing, one should not pretend to understand what the other person is going through. She gave an example of a difficult
moment she was going through, and people will tell her that they understood her pain; however, Barbara did not feel or believe they did. She shared, “many times people think they are being empathetic, but really you don’t know what I’m feeling.” She further explained that, as a leader, she can acknowledge that someone may be going through a difficult moment and that they need support; however, empathy is not about pretending to understand the intensity of other’s emotions. She stated:

I can acknowledge and accept that I haven’t felt what you feel, but I can feel for the fact that you are feeling bad… I can, number one, be aware of that and, number two, be cognizant that your emotion is real.

In that sense, Barbara also illustrated using her organizational awareness to recognize and support other’s differences. She understands that individuals come from diverse backgrounds and, therefore, may have different values and beliefs. She shared:

I serve students that have multidimensional settings and family structures and understanding that this is family for them… It’s really having that understanding that there are differences, and that’s okay. I don’t have to be judgmental of that. I need to be supportive of that.

When talking about relationship management, Barbara explained that, just given the position, leaders always have an impact, “whether it’s good or bad,” on the attitudes and behaviors of those around them. As she stated, “remembering the power of influence is important” as “someone’s always watching.” In addition, Barbara understands that leaders have the responsibility to work their way out of their position by developing other leaders that can step up for them when they go. She provided the example of two of her staff members who were completing a degree in educational leadership. To support them, Barbara was providing
opportunities for them to lead. As she explained, with these opportunities, her staff “can get their feet wet and get comfortable and build confidence as they go.” In conclusion, Barbara stated:

A principal with good relationship management abilities is one that leads by example by modeling the desired behavior. It’s one that has a vision and makes that vision plain to those that [they] lead. It’s one that creates opportunities for collaboration to happen within the learning setting, and it’s one that develops leaders.

Lisa

According to Lisa, leaders need a certain degree of EI to be successful. When talking about EI in relation to her leadership, she said, “it’s pretty important in my leadership practice, especially the ability to read the emotions of others because that dictates how I respond to them.” She also said, “you would struggle in a leadership position if you didn’t have that.” Lisa considered EI competencies so necessary in school leadership that she stated, “EI, all around, is so important to have as a leader, and without that, I think that there would be a higher turnover rate of principals.”

As Lisa stated, “a principal that’s emotionally intelligent thinks about the feelings and emotions of others, and their own emotions and how that would impact what they decide to do with their school, students, and with their teachers.” She further explained this idea by adding: …the emotions of others, or what you think their emotions will be, can dictate how you make your decisions, how you choose to present your decisions, and how many people you choose to present your decisions to at one time to kind of get buy-in on things.

To illustrate how she uses her awareness of others to make decisions and get the support she needs from her staff, she shared:
If I have to make a decision, and I know it’s going to make people uncomfortable or upset, I want to maybe explain my decision a little bit more deeply, so that they can understand the why behind it, or I might bring it to my leadership team of teachers and get their buy-in first to help get buy-ins with my other teachers before I bring the decision to the whole staff.

Regarding self-awareness, Lisa defined it as “just really understanding yourself as a person emotionally.” She described a self-aware principal as “someone who knows what emotions impact them in a positive and a negative way, [and] also recognizes their emotional shortcomings.” According to Lisa, as a leader “you have to be aware of your emotions and what you are projecting to others.” She provided an example to emphasize her point:

If you are having a really bad day and you show that to your students, they are going to feed off of that and that could then, in turn, be them having a bad day or them reacting negatively to you.

Furthermore, Lisa also highlighted to use her self-awareness to identify “deficits” so she can work on those areas to enhance her leadership. Lisa illustrated the idea that self-awareness is what facilitates self-management. She shared:

I know that when I’m angry or upset, I may make decisions or say things that I don’t mean and wish I hadn’t done or said. So, I make sure that when I am in that awareness and emotion, I don’t make decisions or have conversations.

Lisa also perceives self-management as the “ability to regulate [one’s] own emotions based on the emotions of others.” She stated that self-management includes the ability to “read the emotions of others” and “to know how to respond to their emotions.” She shared the example of her K-4 students by explaining that students at that age “have big emotions and they don’t
know how to manage them” and therefore, she needs to exhibit behaviors that will calm the students down and avoid disruptive emotions to escalate.

Relative to social awareness, Lisa described this domain as the ability to be empathetic. She stated that “a socially aware principal has got to be able to put themselves in another person’s shoes and see whatever the situation may be from their perspective” and “to be cognizant of other’s emotions.” She illustrated this idea by giving the example of not having children of her own and, as a result, when she is addressing any situation regarding her students, she exercises empathy by “looking at it from the perspective of someone who does have a child.” She stated, “I try to imagine what it would be like if it were my child that this was happening to.”

Lisa further emphasized this idea by sharing:

I feel like if you weren’t socially aware it would be a very big challenge to be a leader because if you can’t see things from other people’s perspectives, you will not be able to help them through situations. You will not be able to support them.

Lisa also expressed using her social awareness to recognize personality differences among her staff so she can better support them. She provided an example when she shared, “I have thick skin… Not everybody has thick skin, and sometimes, I may need to step up as leader to better protect them from things that may upset them, that I know won’t upset me.”

Lisa also explained how all social awareness competencies (empathy, organizational awareness, and service) complement each other and how they play an important role in her leadership. She stated:

You need to have that empathy side to be able to put yourself in other people’s shoes, but you also have to be understanding of the school environment and the building and the district itself, and what things can and cannot be done within that perimeter.
Furthermore, Lisa places great value on the ability to build and maintain relationships as she perceives them as the cornerstone of her leadership. Moreover, she understands that the way leaders develop relationships with others is by caring for them. As she stated, “a principal with good relationship management abilities has the ability to support others, help them to grow, and be the best that they can be… Just really showing people that you care about them, genuinely care about them.”

When talking about relationship management, Lisa again emphasized about the need of EI leaders, as she understands principals will struggle if they lack EI competencies. As she stated, “I feel like if you don’t have relationships with your team, you’re not gonna last very long… it’s a high turnover rate if you can’t figure out how to build those relationships.” She believes that having strong relationships can help a leader gain support from their staff when a decision needs to be made or changes need to be implemented. She mentioned a couple of times that she could get the support of her staff as she has dedicated the time and effort to build strong and supportive relationships with them. In one of those statements, she shared:

I feel like I could probably get my staff on board with any decision I make because I’ve spent the time building those relationships with them, and supporting them, and helping them to continue to grow. So, I feel like if I haven’t done things, I probably wouldn’t even be at the school anymore.

Lisa illustrated how social awareness and relationship management competencies work together. For example, she understands that, to be successful in developing others and improving the overall outcomes of the organization, she first needs to understand how others are feeling and the reason behind it. This organizational awareness can be gained through interactions with the staff. To illustrate this point, she explained that, when she became the new principal at her
school, she first dedicated time to get to know her staff and learn from their experiences before making decisions. As she shared:

I was really just building relationships with my team, getting to know them, [and] doing some team building. I was looking for areas of change, but I was making sure that I wasn’t changing things right away unless it was extremely important or something that was supported by the whole staff… I asked each team member what they loved about the school and what they would like to see change, and I looked for patterns.

Edward

Edward illustrated that EI plays a “huge part” in his role as a leader as he has to be ready to manage relationships, including the emotional part of them. As he stated, “the cornerstone for any organization is how well you can relate to your folks and how well they can relate to what you do.”

In regard to the EI domains, Edward understands that awareness of his and other’s emotions is necessary in order to approach events productively. He shared:

I think the more we are aware of what we are experiencing emotionally and are able to keep it down an even keel, the more likely we are to positively impact others when we have those conversations. So, I think it’s crucial that we have that awareness of our own emotions as we go through any day.

When talking about self-management, Edward described a self-managed principal as someone who is “honest and transparent and have integrity because that’s a cornerstone of any relationship.” Aligned to this statement, Edward emphasized that, “principals set the tone and tempo” in their building and, as a result, it is their responsibility to create a culture that feels welcoming and positive. Furthermore, he understands that principals should take initiative to
make positive change within their community. He stated, “we have to look for opportunities that help us meet the needs of our staff and our students.” Moreover, he pointed out that the ability to quickly adapt to change plays an important role in his position as they are constantly redesigning the school as needed. As a result, Edward recognized that self-management “is a huge part of [his] day-to-day work.”

In relation to social awareness, Edward pointed out the importance of the use of social awareness competencies, such as empathy, to better support his staff. Edward illustrated this idea by giving the following example:

Our job is to be a relational leader and so empathy is a huge part of that… If I know that I have a staff member that’s struggling with family situations, being able to spend some time with them, being able to connect with them, being able to talk to them about situations, helps them move that forward.

He considers that this approach helps him build relationships with his staff, which in turn can result in their staff being more supportive of the school mission. He stated, “if they know that you care, they’re more willing to make sure that they are doing whatever they can to help us help our kids.”

Edward also perceived social awareness as the ability to gain awareness of others in order to better support their growth. He stated:

Each individual in our building is at a different point of comfort, safety, knowledge about what’s happening around them, and that puts a big factor in how they’re able to do their job and how they’re able to work effectively… So much of what we do is understanding where people are and their own comfort level. If we can do that, we can kind of raise the bar for them and help them go through things.
When it comes to relationship management, Edward emphasized that, in leadership, everything comes down to the relationships you have as you need people to get things done. As he stated, “relationship management is such a crucial part.” He also stated, “the better we are at those relationships, the better we are as leaders,” and explained that building relationships helps his team to tackle tough issues as people are more willing to collaborate.

Edward shared that he builds connections by creating a safe environment where his staff can share concerns and ask questions for clarity. His purpose is to “build bridges to get them past those hurdles that they see.” Moreover, he looks for ways to find common ground with the staff to influence them to move in a particular direction. As he stated, “if we have common points of interest, I think that helps us build the work we have to build, and it helps us with relationships too.”

In his experience as a leader, Edward shared having the opportunity to learn that building relationships is more than listening to others’ concerns, but also providing opportunities for others to participate in the decision-making process. He explained that in his early years as a school principal, the more he tried to manage people and tell them what to do, the more he found himself being the only one pushing to make things happen. However, he noticed that the more he started letting others participate, the more likely they were to continue to engage during the whole process. He shared:

I’ve found, over the past 10 years, [that] you really have to focus on how you help them get to the point where they’re pushing the lead… It has to be their idea. It has to be something that is important to them… So, it really has helped me become a better leader because I allow them to become leaders.
Emerson

When talking about the relationship between EI and leadership, Emerson made the distinction between leaders’ conceptual knowledge and their ability to manage themselves constructively. He said:

It’s one thing to conceptually know what it is a principal does or even what it is that school is all about, but it’s the application of that knowledge through your EI that I think makes the difference between a good leader and a highly effective leader.

Another way Emerson illustrated the importance of EI competencies within his role was by recognizing that leaders’ behaviors have an impact on the responses of others. Therefore, leaders need to manage themselves considering how others may react to their presence and approach. As he shared:

I think a principal who’s emotionally intelligent is aware of how their emotions or demeanor are impacting and influencing those around them. You know, it’s everything from how you present yourself, to what you wear, to how you say things, to how you respond to people in and out of certain particular moments… An emotionally intelligent principal is constantly aware of what they are giving off and what they need to be doing to get to an emotional and supportive place… Knowing how you happen to be and what you’re saying and how you are saying it… people take cues from that… You don’t want to rile someone else up in a negative way that’s going to take them out of them doing their best work.

According to Emerson, self-awareness is key and critical in leadership. He illustrated its importance by stating, “you have to know who you are and your demeanor. Those impact your attitudes and beliefs of what’s around you.” He argued that principals must “be aware of other’s
emotional states in order to effectively communicate and lead in that moment.” He further explained this with an example, “I need to be aware of checking myself before entering a meeting and engaging in that staff conversation to know that I’m giving off the right ties or saying the right things or supporting people the right way.”

Emerson also mentioned using his self-awareness to identify strengths and limitations to enhance his leadership. He said, “I think it’s helpful that, when you get into a situation, you know what you’re good at and what sort of things you need to continue to develop to get better.”

Emerson shared practicing self-reflection as part of his self-improve strategy. Also, he understands that “you have to constantly reflect on where you are… Seeking self-improvement comes with surrounding yourself with other mentors that strengthen and question who you are, but then, also lead to you becoming a better performed person.”

Regarding self-management, Emerson explained that a self-managed principal is one who knows how to communicate and interact with others without letting disruptive emotions get in the way. He stated, “a self-managed principal is that person that is leading with emotions but is not emotional.” He explained this idea by adding:

It’s okay to be a leader with emotion, but sometimes you don’t need to be the emotional leader…I think of people like Nelson Mandela, who you never saw riled up a lot, but what he did… He said things with conviction. He said things with purpose.

Emerson also considered optimism as a key competency in leadership due to all the different challenges principals need to address in any given moment. He said, “if you’re not the optimistic person in the building then you probably don’t fit in that role… I don’t think you can effectively lead an organization.”
When talking about social awareness, Emerson stated, “this job is so multi-faceted… this is a job where the social awareness is almost like a quintessential development of EI.” He explained that every stakeholder has a different perspective of what they consider important and therefore, “the socially aware principal is continually looking at things through multiple perspectives.” As Emerson stated:

You need to routinely understand things to the perspective of your students, of your teaching staff, of others in the building, whether it’s a custodian, your lunch crew, [or] your administrative support crew… You also have to understand the perspective of the superintendent. You have to understand the perspective of the community at large.

Moreover, to maintain balance within his school, Emerson emphasized the importance of “being connected and switched on to what the different perspectives are” particularly when “you are trying to make a decision.” In addition, he illustrated the importance of organizational awareness competencies when he shared, “you constantly need to know where the blind sides are or where are some deficiencies” to then use this awareness “to hire or bring people to enhance the group.”

Emerson’s perception of relationship management competencies was focused on the leader’s ability to have a clear vision of what they want to accomplish. He considers this the starting point to manage relationships with others. Emerson described a principal with relationship management competencies as one that has a set of values and beliefs that guide their thinking and motivate their actions to inspire others to go in that direction. He stated:

Good relationship abilities mean that you have a vision for what it is you’re trying to do… [and] you’re able to, through your words and actions, motivate others to get closer than further away to whatever that collective/individual vision is.
Emerson further explained that relationship management is about making sure that you are serving the best interest of those around you. According to Emerson, “the best interest of those around you is making sure they can do their best work.” However, he argued that the first step to help others do their best is to become self-actualized. In order to do so, Emerson engages in conversation with his staff to explore how they are feeling in relation to their work, and how he can support them to get where they need to be. For example, he will ask questions such as “where are you right now and where do you see yourself being in a year from now? What do I need to do now to support you to do your best work?” He will also use tools such as the staff evaluation process and professional development to support his staff growth. As he stated, “as a leader, you need to know what skills your staff need to develop.”

In addition, Emerson finds it helpful to understand why individuals make certain choices, especially when those choices are not aligned to what they, as an organization, want to accomplish. As he stated, “upon deciding and understanding some of those decisions and choices, you’re able to find where the common ground is to influence behaviors and decisions for something that’s closer to the vision than further.”

Samash

When talking about the relationship between EI and leadership, Samash said, “I believe that EI is a critical aspect of it.” He further emphasized that EI competencies, such as self-management, are fundamental as leaders set the tone for the rest of the staff. He made evident the need of EI competencies in his role as a leader when he explained:

Awareness of the faculty, the staff, [and] the parents, is critical in our roles… We have to balance all of the different stakeholders across the district and make sure that we’re doing
what’s best for the students… You have to be able to pick up on cues, you have to be able to figure out where the problems are and then fill in the holes.

According to Samash, emotionally intelligent leaders are characterized for “having an awareness of themselves and others and how it all works together.” He also believed that part of being an emotionally intelligent leader is “treating everybody with respect and kindness and being there to help them.” He further stated, referring to EI competencies, “an emotionally intelligent principal would be someone who would embody all of those skills and traits, and at the very least, if they’re low in an area, they would also be able to figure out a complement to that.”

When discussing the domains, Samash described a self-aware principal as “someone who’s aware of what’s going on, aware of their own actions and feelings and are always trying to gauge them to be appropriate.” Aligned to this statement, he explained that projecting negative emotions can influence the mood of the staff in an unproductive way, therefore, principals must keep awareness of how they are being perceived by others. He further stated, “what you permit you promote, so you always have to be aware of your actions.”

Moreover, Samash understands that his self-awareness can be used to identify areas of improvement to enhance his leadership. He shared “being aware of your strengths and weaknesses is critical towards self-improvement.” He provided an example of how he uses his self-awareness when he shared that he has a tendency to be “a people pleaser” and by keeping that in mind, he makes sure he does not “over give and over promise.” Another strategy Samash mentioned using to enhance his leadership is self-reflection. As he stated, “I really try to look at myself every day on how I am as leader and where I can improve.”
Samash perceived self-management as the ability to remain positive despite the circumstances and reduce the impact of negative emotions in oneself. According to Samash, principals are responsible for “setting the tone of outstanding and excellence,” therefore, they must have the ability to manage disruptive emotions. As he put it, “self-management would be to not show anger, frustration, or anxiety.” Aligned to this idea, he stated that “a self-managed principal is someone who’s able to help build a positive strong culture through being enthusiastic [and] it’s always trying to put out a positive spin on even things that are negative.”

Samash’s understanding of a socially aware principal is focused on the ability to recognize individual differences to help every individual succeed. He explained, social awareness is about “being aware and knowledgeable that there’s all sorts of different things going on. Everybody needs something slightly different… Then, being able to adjust based on those needs.” He also stated that as a principal, “you have to understand the politics of the organization, of the school district, and you have to be able to understand how all those pieces fit in.” Aligned with these statements, Samash described a socially aware principal as:

…someone who can put their feet in someone else’s shoes… Someone who can understand that everybody is dealing with problems, and then is able to solve the problems within the scope of the school, as well as being able to provide the service of helping the staff, the students, and the parents, and everyone be successful.

Samash also recognized that social awareness is an important aspect of his leadership, and therefore, he has developed strategies to ensure a lack of awareness of other’s needs does not get in the way of his responsibilities. As he stated, “social awareness is critical in enhancing leadership and it’s something that I always work on. I know that personally, this is my lower area.” One of his strategies is having his assistant principal support him in this aspect. He shared,
“she knows that social awareness is my least area, so she’ll try to point things out to me.”

Another strategy Samash mentioned using to gain awareness of other perceptions is seeking feedback. As he stated, “before we make the decision, we always try to ask at least five or six different people: What works? What doesn’t? What do you see are the flaws in it?”

According to Samash, relationship management competencies are a critical piece in his leadership that allow him to balance the needs of the different stakeholders while inspiring them to move in a particular direction. He understands that, with strong relationships, he can have a greater influence on others as they will be more willing to listen to his suggestions and to support new initiatives. For example, when referring to his staff, he stated, “by having strong relationships, I’m able to develop them into the teachers or the employees that we need.” He further illustrated this idea when he shared:

A principal with good relationship management abilities can connect with students, can connect with parents, and can connect with staff easily and like seamlessly [and] get people to do things that they didn’t think they could do or were willing to do.

Samash also understands that “when everybody works together, you get a better product,” therefore, he considers that growing and developing a solid team is a key part of his job and “it’s always a work in progress.” According to Samash, relationships can be built “by doing little things each day” such as walking around to have casual conversations with teachers and students and by showing interest in what they have going on in their life.

Monica

Monica made evident the need of EI competencies in her leadership, such as the ability to manage emotions, when she used the word “juggling” to illustrate the challenges of her position. She said, “you’re always juggling. You’re always balancing several different things on your
plate.” When describing an EI principal, she said, “I think it is understanding your own emotions and how you use them in order to solve problems within your organization.” She also added that part of being an emotionally intelligent leader “is not to be impulsive,” “to be a good listener,” and “to maintain control of your emotions.”

When talking about the relation between EI and leadership, Monica stated that, “your EI is associated with every aspect of your day… it’s at every phase of your leadership capacity.” Monica emphasized that, in her leadership position, one needs self-awareness, self-control, and social skills as “it’s about how you react to situations daily.” She explained:

I can’t be impulsive. I have to really be reflective. I have to know myself before I can really attack any problem… There are people that you are going to meet up with in life that you are definitely not going to be on the same page with, and that includes your staff at times, but you need to have an understanding of your emotions before you can handle their emotions.

According to Monica, “awareness of one’s emotions is key to be able to adapt to whatever situation you have to handle at any given moment.” She stated that, one is a self-aware principal when “you know yourself as a leader,” and you are “aware of your own emotions and how you can handle situations in a positive way.” Monica illustrated using her self-awareness to identify and take care of her needs first in order to better address others. As she stated, “I will be able to take care of your needs, once I can get a, b, and c settled. Then, I can give you my full attention.” She also mentioned using her self-awareness to identify and make use of her strengths, as well as to recognize areas of improvement. She shared, “I know what my weak areas are and so I try and minimize those.”
Monica described a self-managed principal as someone who stays in control of their day. However, she understands that the starting point to accomplish self-control is awareness of oneself. Therefore, she likes to practice reflective time in the morning and go over her notes from previous days. As she shared, “I’m a journaler, and everything I do in my day is here,” (pointing to her notebook) … It starts off with the date, and then, it basically just lists every conversation, every person I connect with, everything that I have to attend to.”

In addition, Monica shared that being adaptable, optimistic, and transparent are huge in her role as principals need to quickly adapt to change, create a positive culture, and be honest about what they can do and what is out of their limits. She shared, “we are not here to know all the answers. We’re simply here to lead.”

Monica also illustrated the role of emotional self-awareness and self-control when addressing individuals experiencing upsetting emotions. As she stated, “the number one thing is not to be impulsive; you have to be a good listener… and that goes along with maintaining that control of your emotions.” For example, when dealing with upset parents, Monica shared, “I can interrupt them and start giving excuses, or I can simply let them vent, rant, whatever they need to do, and when they’re ready, then I can step in and just ask questions.” As she stated, “you just have to be still and listen to what people are saying, no matter how angry they are.” When she is in this type of situation, she mentioned that, to maintain control of her emotions, she mentally repeats phrases to herself such as, “you’re going to be still, and you’re not going to feel that you need to take care of it right away.”

When talking about social awareness, it was evident Monica’s priority is to continually build her relationship with her staff to better support their professional development and advocate for them as needed. As she shared:
As a principal, I think the most important thing is that you are always there for your people. You don’t abandon them. So, if I go to a district meeting, I’m going to be the one that’s going to defend my staff and help support them in whatever way I can.

Aligned with this statement, Monica described a socially aware principal as someone who is empathetic and has the ability to understand the organization itself and the people within it. She emphasized, “you really need to have that basic understanding about the people you’re working with and seeking first to understand… If you don’t know who you’re talking to, then you’re at a deficit already.”

A strategy Monica mentioned using to continually strengthen their relationships and build a sense of trust within the organization was walking around the building in the morning to greet her teachers and students. She stated, “if you don’t have the trust with the people in your building, then you are really at a loss.” She explained that, by simply sticking her head in the door to wave and say hi, she is able to gauge the moods of the staff. She said, “I can tell if somebody is starting off on a bad note. It could be from their body language or maybe one or two words that they may say.”

When talking about relationship management, Monica shared that she has always strived to be an inspirational leader. She emphasized that she wants people to perceive her as a person who leads by example and with joy. Then she acknowledged that her relationship management competencies have helped her become a better leader as she understands that the quality of her relationships will influence her ability to inspire others to move in a particular direction. Therefore, she places value in connecting and building trust with those she serves.

Moreover, Monica illustrated the importance of relationship management competencies when she shared that, as a catalyst of change, she has to support and guide others as well as to
resolve disagreements that may develop among stakeholders. In addition, while leading change, she explained that she must stay in a problem-solving mode due to the uncertainty or obstacles that can arise. She shared:

There were things, when I came into this role, that needed to change… In order for me to see that goal come to fruition, I had to have relationships developed, and I had to strengthen relationships, and because of that, I really truly feel that we were able to achieve what we set out to do.

**Moses**

Moses understands that leadership is about “serving your people.” Therefore, an emotionally intelligent leader has the ability to perceive what other’s needs are at the moment and adapt their behaviors accordingly. However, he emphasized that to be able to help others effectively, one needs to take care of oneself first. Aligned to this idea, he described an emotionally intelligent principal as one who is aware of what is going on within themselves emotionally and physically. To describe how leaders may use EI competencies, he gave the following example:

When you are engaging with families, you have to be able to pick up on all of the different views that they’re giving off and make sure that you are listening, you are looking, and that you are affirming when you are engaged with them. Even if you have to give them some information that they don’t like, they still need to be able to walk away from that interaction that they had with you knowing that they were heard.

Moses illustrated the importance of self-awareness by stating “when it comes to self-awareness, you gotta’ be in tune with yourself, so you don’t let yourself get in the way of
progress being made.” To illustrate his statement, he gave an example of how he uses self-awareness:

I know that I’m stubborn, okay, and I have to be aware of that… My stubbornness can get me in trouble if I don’t have some balance to it. So, I have to understand when I’m feeling a certain way and all of a sudden, I want to get stubborn about something.

Moses also mentioned the importance of practicing self-awareness to recognize and address emotional and physical needs, so he can better serve others. As he stated, “I have to be aware of what’s going on with me, what’s going on with me emotionally, and how I’m feeling physically. Just know me as a whole person.” Aligned to this statement, he also shared, “when I know that I’m tired, I’m going to sleep,” also “I gotta’ make sure that I’m eating right” because “those are the little things that help you lead more effectively.” Furthermore, he encourages his staff to do the same. He said:

I preached to my staff, you got to take care of yourself and always make sure you put family first, and make sure that you’re getting some quiet time. Make sure you’re eating right. Make sure that you are hydrated with plenty of water. So that when it’s time for us to give instruction to the kids, we are ready.

One of the strategies Moses mentioned using to enhance his leadership is reflecting about his daily experiences, which requires self-awareness. He shared:

I’m constantly reflecting and playing back how something went… You want the experiences to help you grow, the good ones and the bad ones… I have to ask myself, was I transparent enough with my teacher? Did I give her enough examples? Was I honest enough with her with my recommendation?”
He also shared asking questions such as “what didn’t you like? What didn’t you understand? Tell me what you needed from me?” to gain feedback from his staff.

Regarding self-management, Moses illustrated the use of self-awareness competencies to achieve self-control. He said, “the role of understanding yourself should be at the top every day.” He further explained, “as you arrive to the school, you constantly have to be aware and manage yourself right because of the constant conflicts or situations that emerge throughout the day.” Moses further illustrated his perception of the role of self-management competencies when he shared:

Folks are looking for men and women in leadership positions to be kind, trustworthy, [and] honest… They are not looking for some dictator, they are looking for someone that will support them, be shoulder-to-shoulder with them… If you can’t manage yourself… [and] you think it’s okay to start talking out the side of your neck…you do not need to be in a leadership position.

Moses illustrated his perception of the significance of social awareness competencies by emphasizing that an organization, such as a school district, has multiple layers, and these layers are influenced by the different stakeholders’ interests. Therefore, principals need to understand the dynamic of individuals they serve and the politics within their organization. As he stated:

Anytime you have an organization with a lot of layers [and] people within those layers, you are going to have politics that go on, whether you like it or not. And so, as a principal, you have to be able to understand what’s going on socially and politically in your organization.

Moses also made evident the role of organizational awareness to support others growth. He stated:
I think our principals have to have a finger on the pulse of what’s going on with the people that they’re serving… They have to be in tune with how their heart beats, what they have going on… You have to be aware of how your people are wired… Like the back of your hand, you got to know their habits, their ideal ideologies, because when you know that, then you can play to their strengths, and that’s what you always want to do.

According to Moses, he uses his organizational awareness to support and coach his staff on how to navigate the system and on becoming teacher-leaders. He also stated that “as a principal, you have to know what is going on within and on the outside because what’s going on the outside, it does come in every day.” For example, he considers that social matters, such as White privilege and social inequality, may impact the way students behave and even relate with one another. Therefore, Moses uses this awareness to encourage teachers and students to have conversations about culturally relevant topics to learn from them and to find solutions together.

When talking about relationship management, Moses focused on the ability to coach and facilitate growth. He shared that he had experienced leaders that were micromanagers and that were constantly looking over his shoulders. Also, he had the opportunity to experience leaders who preferred to empower their staff and delegate responsibilities. Moses described this second group of individuals as “great leaders” and said, “I’m more wired that way.” He explained that leaders must trust their employees and get them out of their comfort zone as this is the only way they will grow. As he said, “it’s all about building people up.” He continued, while acting like he was talking to a staff member, “I’m going to build you. I’m going coach you. I’m going to delegate and empower you, and it’s going to make you mad because it’s going to get you out of your box.”
A strategy Moses uses to support his staff development, is to show them that he trusts their ability to get the job done and to empower them to do so. He said, “you are an expert at what you do, you are a professional, and I trust that you’re going to come to work every day and get it done, so I shouldn’t have to micromanage.” As he stated, “it’s my responsibility to coach you to help you become a more effective teacher leader, so that you know how to navigate not just with kids, but with families too, but not just with family, but administrators too.”

Moses also understands that leadership is situational, and as a result, his leadership will vary based on the person he is addressing and the circumstances. Even though he prefers empowering the staff, he provided an example of moments when he will have to micromanage due to the staff’s attitudes. He said, “if the situation called for me to constantly follow up because you don’t want to do your job, I’ll do that.” Moses also illustrated the importance of being assertive and clear with the decisions that are made as “some folks may try to manipulate” when they do not get their way.

**Benjamin**

Benjamin described the relationship between EI and leadership using the phrase “it’s the bread and the butter.” He also acknowledged the need of EI competencies when he stated, “this job get tense sometimes.” According to Benjamin, if you do not have certain degree of EI, it will be very hard to lead others. He said:

If you don’t know yourself, if you don’t know your biases, if you don’t know your handicaps, if you don’t know your blind spots, then there’s no way to really communicate well with others because you will get lost in your own difficulties rather than pay attention to the people who you need to develop a connection with, and from my perspective, only when you can develop that relationship, only when you can develop
those connections with people, only when you can build that trust with folks, do you stand achieved at helping lead them from wherever you are to wherever you need to be.

Benjamin pointed out the emotional aspects of his position by sharing, “you’re going to have students who are angry with each other, and that is natural, conflicts happen.” He also gave the example of parents’ responses, whether positive or negative, to decisions impacting their children:

Your parents are going to get emotional. They’re going to get angry. They’re going to get excited. They’re going to get happy because you have two of the most important things in their life: you have their money, in terms of taxes and so forth, and you have their children.

Therefore, Benjamin understands that to be effective in his position, he needs to be aware of his triggers, so he can manage them. In addition, he needs to recognize emotions in others and understand their different perspectives to respond in the most productive way possible.

Benjamin emphasized the importance of self-awareness when he stated, “without self-awareness, I don’t think anyone could do this job effectively… Self-awareness is everything. It’s in every part of my job.” According to Benjamin, his self-awareness competencies allow him to recognize when he is being triggered and even personality traits that can get in the way. He said, “I can recognize it myself, like, if I’m starting to feel anger, resentment, frustrations.” To give an example, he shared, “I have an ego the size of a barn… As long as you recognize the problems that a large ego has, you can figure out strategies over time to bring that ego down.”

When describing a self-managed principal, Benjamin focused on the ability to identify, what he called, “problem areas” with the purpose of working on those aspects, so they do not become a distraction or disruption to his leadership. He gave an example by sharing, “emotional
self-control and adaptability are two things that are hard for me.” Therefore, he described a self-managed principal as “first, a person who has a self-awareness to understand his or her own weaknesses and, second, works their tails off at getting better at those.”

Benjamin again illustrated the idea that self-management begins with awareness of oneself when he stated, referring to his emotions, “as soon as I can recognize them, then I can do some very practical things that help me calm those things down.” Benjamin also considered transparency an important component in leadership as he believes that “people tend to trust other people when you feel like they’re being transparent.” Therefore, Benjamin emphasized, “there’s no doubt in my mind that that aspect of self-management helps me be a better leader.”

Another way Benjamin mentioned using his emotional awareness and self-control is by adopting behaviors based on others’ emotions. Benjamin explained:

If you get angry with someone who’s angry with you, they’ll only get angrier, and if you build walls, they don’t listen, and they become angrier… If I give them simply the opportunity to express their anger and then let go of it, then, we stand a chance at solving whatever problem that we need to face in that particular moment.

When talking about social awareness, Benjamin focused on the role of empathy. He described the ability to be empathetic as having an authentic desire to understand things from others’ perspectives or realities. He stated, “a person serving in my role wants to have a strong empathy.” He continued to explain:

In my perspective, the foundation of empathy is listening... It is very important that you quiet yourself so that you can hear [others’] concerns, their anxieties, their frustrations, their worries about the future… By listening, you can usually pull together enough ideas within your organization to take whatever next step you have to take.
Benjamin expressed using his listening skills to seek ideas in others for decision making. As he stated, “it’s really me listening to all the collection of ideas to pull enough of those ideas so that you have a critical mass of people saying ‘yes, that makes sense.’” Benjamin also uses his self-management competencies to actively listen to understand the perspectives of others. As he stated, “as you’re talking to people one-on-one, as you’re talking to teachers, as you’re talking to parents, it’s really important that you really quiet yourself… Only when you have a grasp of those things, you can start to hold together a coalition of ideas to address all of those things.”

Benjamin acknowledged that organizational awareness was something that took him a number of years to learn and to figure out how to use to move from one point to another. He illustrated the need of social awareness competencies when he stated:

In my role you can’t control everything, so you have to have an organizational awareness and understanding of who the players are, what your needs are, what your goals are, and how do you connect all the dots to stitch all those different resources and human beings together to get to where you want to be.

Benjamin stated, “relationship management is an absolute must in my job.” He explained that as a principal, he is called to bring people together to work for a common cause. However, as he explained, “you have honest disagreements between parents and students and within parents and colleagues, and all and those disagreements can be emotional. They can be political.” Therefore, Benjamin believes that leaders should build relationships based on trust and respect to get people to follow “in wherever the direction you need to go as an organization.” He also shared that the only way relationships can be built is by first understanding the concerns of those he serves. Aligned to this idea, Benjamin believes that the power of decision-making must be
shared by allowing the different stakeholders to express their perspectives and concerns. He stated:

I would describe a principal who has those good relationship management abilities as someone who listens, who understands the issues involved, who can encourage people to share their ideas of the solutions, and then pull enough of those solutions together, so we can move forward in whatever work we need to do.

He also recognized that stakeholders will not always come up to a complete agreement. However, this approach provides the opportunity to consider different perspectives to make decisions based on what makes more sense to the majority.

**David**

David perceives EI competencies as “very critical in forming relationships and building trust between teachers and students and between the principals and the staff.” He believes that his success as a leader is influenced by the quality of his relationships with others. As he stated, “success really depends on creating a sense of family, a sense of team… Together, there isn’t anything we can’t accomplish, and alone, there’s not much we can get done.” Aligned to this statement, David illustrated his understanding of the importance of EI competencies when he stated:

An emotionally intelligent leader is one who seeks first to understand. It’s a good listener… [They] understand the necessity of building trust in a relationship that comes from empathy, that comes from your ability to see somebody else’s perspective, the ability to see what they need…whether that’s emotional support or resources or a combination of both.
According to David, self-awareness refers to the ability to get a sense of where you and others are on the spectrum of emotions. As he stated, “a lot of what we do as educational leaders can be emotionally charged situations. People get very passionate about their viewpoints when it comes to their children’s education.” Therefore, he described a self-aware principal as “one who is in the midst of their work, whether that’s with the staff or students or parents, [and] has a realistic sense of their own emotions and motivations as they’re working through things.” In addition, a self-aware principal is someone who has the ability to understand what is driving other’s emotions and recognizes when the situation can get emotionally charged. Based on his own experience, David illustrated the importance of self-awareness when he shared, “I have failed to self-monitor and be as self-aware as I could have been, and that typically shuts down communication rather than enhance it.”

According to David, “self-management goes hand-in-hand with self-awareness,” especially when you are experiencing, what he called, “the more volatile end of emotions.” Based on his leadership experience, David shared that in the heat of intense emotions is when “you really have to use your self-management and discretion as to how you will represent and speak to or engage in a discussion.” He further added, that in certain situations, “it’s better to leave things unsaid and to manage your emotional state at the moment, than to open your mouth and then regret it later.” David also mentioned that leaders must be optimistic. As he stated, “I think a good leader always looks for the best in people and in situations.”

David also shared the idea that self-management is about knowing how to use emotions in a productive way. He stated, “an emotional response is appropriate and/or will help convey the depth of your passion.” He explained his statement by sharing, “there’s no doubt I wear my heart on my sleeve, and my facial expressions and my tone of voice certainly convey the weight and/or
seriousness of my conviction when it comes to something that we’re dealing with.” However, David emphasized that this is “very effective when you have already established a relationship. Not very effective when people don’t know you.” In addition, David understands that part of self-management is taking advantage of one’s strengths rather than focusing on one’s weaknesses. He illustrated this idea by explaining:

I play a role to students. I play a role to parents. I play a role to my staff. So, understanding what my strengths are, naturally, and then making that decision to operate within those strengths… I think is a good example of that self-management piece… I’m not going to try to be something I’m not.

David believes that the success of principals depends on their ability to influence others to move in a particular direction. Therefore, they must build trusting relationships with others, which requires social awareness competencies, such as empathy. He stated:

Social awareness is extremely critical… A socially aware principal is one who exhibits that care and empathy for all of those around them, every stakeholder group, and seeks first to understand before being understood… It just really comes down to that empathy and compassion and the desire to want to understand the people you are working with to help them become the best they can be, whether that’s as a student or as a staff member… If you can’t do that, I don't think you’re able to effectively do the job of an educational leader.

David also illustrated that organizational change “starts with being socially aware of the stakeholders that you’re working with and what their needs are, and then building relationships based upon that.” He also emphasized the idea that learning about others and seeking to understand first helps in building a sense of trust and respect. As he stated, “in order to be
respected, I have to give it, and that helps to cement the relationship.” However, David also emphasized on the importance of helping others to understand his responsibilities as well. As he said, “we all have a job to do. Students have a job to do. Staff has a job to do. I have a job to do.”

David mentioned on multiple occasions that relationship management was “critical in his job” as he understands that a principal must “have that ability to make meaningful connections on a personal level with all stakeholders, regardless of who they are and what role they play.”

David believes that a principal should recognize what all members of the community bring to the table as everyone’s work is essential for the success of the entire school, including the work of custodians and other support staff. He said, “all of them have something worthy they bring to the table, and it needs to be affirmed.” He further explained that expressing appreciation and recognition becomes inspirational and motivational to all.

To build relationships, David intentionally looks for moments where he can have casual interactions with students and staff. For example, during recess time, he will shoot baskets with the students or sit at their tables to joke with them. He also tries to welcome the students and the staff every morning at the door. He shared, “I’d see probably 80 percent of the kids and staff members before the day even officially gets started.” According to David, this approach “communicates that you appreciate them” and, therefore, helps in building relationships. He emphasized that a principal has to take the initiative and learn people’s names and about their life.

On the other hand, David believes in teamwork and collaboration. Therefore, he encourages his employees to share their concerns and their feedback, so they can solve problems together. As he stated:
Even when the issue is uncomfortable to talk about, we just have to be transparent with it and give people a voice. Empower other people to be able to give feedback and input to whatever the issue we’re looking at. This approach helps David gain awareness of how others are perceiving events. As he stated, “trying to understand where somebody on the opposite end of an opinion may be and what’s driving that, and what is feeding that perception that those people have.”

David further illustrated his perception of the importance of relationship management competencies when he shared an example based on his own leadership experience. He explained that when he became the principal of his school, “job satisfaction was low, and people were beat down.” However, they brought in an organization specialized in helping schools improve their culture and climate. The organization accomplished its goal by helping the staff improve the way they were relating to each other. David stated, “we didn’t change curriculum. We didn’t change teaching strategies or anything like that. We just changed how people interact with each other,” and “in one year, we went from terrible to outstanding…from bottom quadrant to the top quadrant.”

Themes and Sub-Themes

As revealed in the data, the principals commonly emphasized their responsibility to serve their community. Furthermore, they recognized that their success in doing so is impacted by their ability to build relationships and work in collaboration with others. Therefore, the participants acknowledged the need of EI competencies such as the ability to recognize their triggers and manage their emotional responses, as well as the ability to recognize emotions in others to guide their actions.
In this section, I present the themes and subthemes that emerged from the data. These themes include a frequency table with the main ideas shared by the principals and the frequency with which they occurred. The following four major themes and sub-themes emerged from the data:

1. Emotional Intelligence is an Important Part to Effective School Leadership
2. Each Emotional Intelligence Domain is Present Through Specific Competencies in School Leadership
   2.1. Principals Recognize the Role of Self-Awareness in Leadership
   2.2. Principals Recognize the Role of Self-Management in Leadership
   2.3. Principals Recognize the Role of Social Awareness in Leadership
   2.4. Principals Recognize the Role of Relationship Management in Leadership
3. Emotional Intelligence Competencies Allow Principals to Enhance Their Leadership
   3.1. Principals Utilize Self-Awareness Competencies to Practice Self-Reflection
   3.2. Principals Utilize Self-Awareness Competencies to Identify Strengths and Weaknesses
   3.3. Principals Utilize Self-Awareness and Self-Management Competencies to Guide Their Actions
   3.4. Principals Utilize Self-Awareness Competencies to Take Care of Theirs Own Needs First to Better Serve Others
   3.5. Principals Utilize Social Awareness Competencies to Make Better Decisions
   3.6. Principals Utilize Relationship Management Competencies to Empower and Develop Others
3.7. Principals Utilize Social Awareness and Relationship Management Competencies to Build Quality Relationships

3.8. Principals Utilize Self-Management Competencies to Practice New Skills Consistently

4. Emotional Intelligence Competencies Develop Over Time

**Theme 1. Emotional Intelligence is an Important Part to Effective School Leadership**

Theme 1 reflects principals’ general understanding of EI and connections to their leadership. Table 2 displays the statements that represent the main ideas that led to this theme along with the number of principals out of 10 who provided data associate with each of these statements.

**Table 2**

*Emotional Intelligence is an Important Part to Effective School Leadership (N=10)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Ideas</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principals need EI competencies for effective leadership.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principals’ EI is directly associated to their leadership.</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 2, all the principals acknowledged awareness of the need of EI competencies to effectively carry out the responsibilities of their leadership position. For example, David perceives EI competencies, such as building bonds, as “very critical in forming relationships and building trust between teachers and students and between the principal and the staff.” Edward also said, “the cornerstone for any organization is how well you can relate to your folks and how well they can relate to what you do.”

Furthermore, Moses understands that leadership is about “serving your people,” and therefore, EI competencies assist principals in decision making by allowing them to understand their own self and capabilities, as well as the needs of those around them. Bob also illustrated his
perception of the need of EI competencies when he explained that leadership is about “being able to have a personality and a behavior that calms other people down. It doesn’t create stress.” He also perceived leadership “as being able to be aware of how your decisions impact others.”

When talking about the relationship between EI and leadership, Emerson was the only principal who pointed out the difference between understanding the role of a principal and the actual ability to fulfill the leadership responsibilities of a principal. He said:

It’s one thing to conceptually know what it is a principal does or even what it is that school is all about, but it’s the application of that knowledge through your EI that I think makes the difference between a good leader and a highly effective leader.

In that sense, nine out of 10 principals considered that a principals’ EI is directly associated to their ability to lead effectively. For example, Monica stated, “your EI is associated with every aspect of your day… It’s at every phase of your leadership capacity.” Similarly, Benjamin described the relationship between EI and leadership using the phrase, “it’s the bread and the butter.” He further acknowledged the need of emotional self-awareness and management when he stated, “this job get tense sometimes.” As David said, “a lot of what we do as educational leaders can be emotionally charged situations. People get very passionate about their viewpoints when it comes to their children’s education.”

As presented within this theme, principals were aware of EI competencies in their everyday leadership, including the role EI plays on their success as leaders. As Lisa stated, “you would struggle in a leadership position if you didn’t have that.” Moreover, the principals were able to make connections between specific EI competencies, as depicted by Goleman et al.’s (2013) EI model, in relation to their leadership. These are further discussed in the next theme.
Theme 2. Each Emotional Intelligence Domain is Present Through Specific Competencies in School Leadership

The present theme reflects principals’ awareness of each of the EI domains within their leadership practice. This theme emerges from the main ideas shared by the principals regarding their awareness and understanding of how EI competencies play a part on their everyday leadership. That said, this theme contemplates four major subthemes. Each of these subthemes is focused on one EI domain starting with self-awareness and follow by self-management, social awareness, and relationship management.

**Principals Recognize the Role of Self-Awareness in Leadership**

The present subtheme contemplates principals’ understanding of self-awareness and how this domain is present through specific competencies within their leadership. According to Goleman et al. (2013), self-awareness encompasses three competencies: emotional self-awareness, accurate self-assessment, and self-confidence. Table 3 displays the statements that represent the main ideas that support this subtheme along with the number of principals out of 10 who provided data associate with each statement. In addition, the statements are grouped into categories starting with self-awareness and followed by each of the competencies within this domain. As so, the statements are listed within each category in order from the highest to the lowest number.

As shown in Table 3, all the principals recognized the presence and role of self-awareness within their leadership. As Emerson acknowledged, “you have to know who you are and your demeanors. Those impact your attitudes and beliefs of what’s around you.” Moses also shared, “I have to be aware of what’s going on with me, what’s going on with me emotionally and physically.”
Table 3

*Principals Recognize the Role of Self-Awareness in Leadership (N=10)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Main Ideas</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-Awareness</td>
<td>Self-awareness is present in everyday school leadership.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leaders’ awareness of one’s and other’s emotions is fundamental to guide one’s own actions.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-awareness has a prominent role in leadership.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competencies</td>
<td>Emotional self-awareness allows leaders to understand their own emotions, including their emotional shortcomings and triggers.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Principals should have awareness of how their decisions and behaviors impact others.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Principals should have awareness of how their emotions influence their decisions and behaviors.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accurate Self-Assessment</td>
<td>Self-awareness allows leaders to understand their weaknesses.</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-awareness allows leaders to understand their strengths.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Confidence</td>
<td>Awareness of strengths lead to self-confidence.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this sense, all principals illustrated that self-awareness competencies allow them to recognize emotional information in themselves and in others to guide their actions. For example, Lisa stated, “a principal that’s emotionally intelligent thinks about the feelings and emotions of others and their own emotions and how that would impact what they decide to do with their school, students, and with their teachers.” Emerson also shared:

I think the more we are aware of what we are experiencing emotionally and are able to keep it down and even keel, the more likely we are to positively impact others when we have those conversations. So, I think it’s crucial that we have that awareness of our own emotions as we go through any day.
In alignment to these statements, four principals explicitly emphasized that self-awareness is crucial within their leadership skillset. As Barbara stated, “self-awareness plays a prominent role for a principal.” Benjamin also said, “without self-awareness, I don’t think anyone could do this job effectively… Self-awareness is everything. It’s in every part of my job.”

In relation to the competencies within self-awareness, the data reflects that emotional self-awareness ranks above all. Emotional awareness is defined by Goleman et al. (2013) as the act of “reading one’s own emotions and recognizing their impact” (p. 39). In that sense, all the principals recognized that emotional self-awareness allows leaders to understand their own emotions, including their emotional shortcomings. As stated by Monica, “awareness of one’s emotions is key to be able to adapt to whatever situation you have to handle at any given moment.” Barbara also stated, “leaders need self-awareness of their trigger and to be cognizant of other’s emotions to manage difficult situations. As she emphasized, “you’re going to have upset students, parents, staff, and sometimes even the central administration.”

Moreover, six principals described their self-awareness as the ability to perceive how one’s behaviors have an impact on others, while four of them described self-awareness as the ability to perceive how one’s emotions impact one’s behaviors. For example, Bob described a self-aware principal “as somebody who understands the impact of their role. They understand that the decisions they make impact a large portion of [their] population.” On the other hand, Lisa illustrated that, as a principal, “you have to be aware of your emotions and what you are projecting to others.”

In regard to accurate self-assessment, which refers to the awareness of one’s strengths and limitations (Goleman et al., 2013), none of the principals explicitly talked about this
competence. Nevertheless, it was noticeable that it is present in their leadership as seven principals talked about the importance of recognizing their weaknesses. As Samash stated, “being aware of your strengths and weaknesses is critical toward self-improvement… I really try to look at myself every day on how I am as a leader and where I can improve.” Benjamin also said, “first, a person who has self-awareness understands his or her own weaknesses and, second, works their tails off at getting better at those.” Furthermore, five of the principals emphasized about the need to be cognizant of their strengths as leaders. As Emerson said, “I think it’s helpful that, when you get into a situation, you know what you’re good at and what sort of things you need to continue to develop to get better.”

The third competence within self-awareness is self-confidence, the ability to have a sense of self-worth and capabilities (Goleman et al., 2013). Interestingly, none of the principals talked about self-confidence as a competence within their leadership, except by a slight reference made by Bob when he illustrated that self-awareness was needed for “being confident in the decisions you are making.” Finally, seven of the principals made the connection between emotional awareness and self-management. As David stated, “self-management goes hand-in-hand with self-awareness.” Based on Goleman et al.’s (2013) work, self-awareness leads to self-management. This idea is further illustrated within the next subtheme.

Principals Recognize the Role of Self-Management in Leadership

The present subtheme contemplates principals’ understanding of self-management and how this domain is present through specific competencies within their leadership. According to Goleman et al. (2013), self-management encompasses six competencies: emotional self-control, transparency, adaptability, achievement, initiative, and optimism. Table 4 displays the statements that represent the main ideas that support this subtheme along with the number of principals out
of 10 who provided data associate with each statement. In addition, the statements are grouped into categories starting with self-management and followed by each of the competencies within this domain. As so, the statements are listed within each category in order from the highest to the lowest number.

Table 4

*Principals Recognize the Role of Self-Management in Leadership (N=10)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Main Ideas</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-Management</strong></td>
<td>Principals’ success is influenced by how they react to events and manage their interactions with others.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>There is a relationship between self-awareness and self-management.</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-management surges from self-awareness.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Competencies</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Self-Control</td>
<td>Principals must be able to manage disruptive emotions and impulses.</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Principals must have general proper reactions according to the situation at hand.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Principals must be able to model proper behaviors.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transparency</td>
<td>Principals should be transparent.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adaptability</td>
<td>Principals should be able to adapt to change.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiative</td>
<td>Principals must take initiative in order to make positive changes.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optimism</td>
<td>Principals must remain optimistic, especially during challenging times.</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 4, all the principals recognized that their success is influenced by how they react to events and manage their interactions with others. As Bob stated, “life is 10% of what happens to you and 90% of how you react to it.” It was evident that all the principals had awareness of the presence of self-management competencies within their position. For example, Monica explained that in her position “the number one thing is not to be impulsive. You have to be a good listener…and that goes along with maintaining that control of your emotions.” David
also said, “it’s better to leave things unsaid and to manage your emotional state at the moment, than to open your mouth and then regret it later.”

Furthermore, seven of the principals implicitly illustrated a relationship between self-awareness and self-management. For example, Benjamin shared:

If you get angry with someone who’s angry with you, they’ll only get angrier, and if you build walls, they don’t listen, and they become angrier… If I give them simply the opportunity to express their anger and then let go of it, then, we stand a chance at solving whatever problem that we need to face in that particular moment.

However, only two principals explicitly illustrated how self-management begins with self-awareness. For example, Emerson stated that principals should “be aware of other’s emotional states in order to effectively communicate and lead in that moment.” Similarly, Lisa said, “the emotions of others, or what you think their emotions will be, can dictate how you make your decisions.” She also provided an example of how she uses her awareness of her own emotions to decide how to proceed. She shared:

I know that when I’m angry or upset, I may make decisions or say things that I don’t mean and wish I hadn’t done or said. So, I make sure that when I am in that awareness and emotion, I don’t make decisions or have conversations.

In regard to the competencies within self-management, most of the principals illustrated their awareness of the role of self-control within their leadership. For example, nine principals expressed that they should be able to manage disruptive emotions and impulses. Furthermore, five principals considered that they must have general proper reactions according to the situation at hand. As stated by Barbara, “I can’t control what someone else does, but I have control over my response and reaction, and so, that’s what keeps that mirror looking at me instead of other
people.” Furthermore, four principals expressed that a leader must be able to model proper behaviors. As Edward stated, “principals set the tone and temple.” Similarly, Bob said, “self-management is about displaying the behaviors you want others to engage in.”

When it comes to transparency, which refers to “an authentic openness to others about one’s feelings, beliefs and actions” (Goleman et al., 2013, p. 254), five principals mentioned this competency. However, they did not state in which ways they display transparency within their leadership. For example, Edwards said, “a self-managed principal is someone who is honest and transparent and has integrity because that’s a cornerstone of any relationship.” David also shared, “even when the issue is uncomfortable to talk about, we just have to be transparent with it.”

As shown in the data, the competencies of adaptability, achievement, and initiative were the least mentioned by the principals. For example, only four principals talked about adaptability as an essential competency in leadership. As well, only two principals mentioned in their narratives the importance of taking initiative in order to make positive changes. As Edward stated, “we have to look for opportunities that help us meet the needs of our staff and our students.” In regard to achievement, none of the principals talked about this competency, which refers to the one’s inner drive to continually improve (Goleman et al., 2013). However, it is important to note that, as reflected in the previous subtheme, most principals illustrated using their self-awareness competencies to recognize their areas of growth for self-improvement purposes.

Regarding the competency of optimism, seven of the principals mentioned that optimism plays an important role in their position, especially during challenging times. As Emerson stated, “if you’re not the optimistic person in the building, then you probably don’t fit in that role… I don’t think you can effectively lead an organization.” Samash also stated, “a self-managed
principal is someone who’s able to help build a positive strong culture through being enthusiastic [and] is always trying to put on a positive spin on even things that are negative.” That said, let us now explore how self-awareness and self-management lead to social awareness, the third EI domain on Goleman et al.’s (2013) model.

**Principals Recognize the Role of Social Awareness in Leadership**

The present subtheme contemplates principals’ understanding of social awareness and how this domain is present within their leadership. According to Goleman et al. (2013), social awareness encompasses three competencies: empathy, organizational awareness, and service. Table 5 displays the statements that represent the main ideas that support this subtheme along with the number of principals out of 10 who provided data associate with each statement. In addition, the statements are grouped into categories starting with the social awareness and followed by each of the competencies within this domain. As so, the statements are listed within each category in order from the highest to the lowest number.

**Table 5**

*Principals Recognize the Role of Social Awareness in Leadership (N=10)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Main Ideas</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Awareness</td>
<td>Social awareness competencies play a pivotal role in school leadership.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competencies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>Empathy is needed to understand other’s needs and connect with them.</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social awareness is perceived as empathy.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational</td>
<td>Principals need knowledge of others and the organization as a whole.</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>awareness</td>
<td>Leaders must understand groups’ dynamics.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leaders must have listening skills to connect to others.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>Principals should be available to support their staff as needed.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As shown in Table 5, all the participants’ responses illustrated the presence of social awareness competencies within their role, including how social awareness plays a pivotal role in their leadership. As David shared:

Social awareness is extremely critical… A socially aware principal is one who exhibits that care and empathy for all of those around them, every stakeholder group, and seeks first to understand before being understood… It just really comes down to that empathy and compassion and the desire to want to understand the people you are working with to help them become the best they can be, whether that’s as a student or as a staff member… If you can’t do that, I don't think you’re able to effectively do the job of an educational leader.

Similarly, Monica expressed, “you really need to have that basic understanding about the people you’re working with and seeking first to understand… If you don’t know who you’re talking to, then you’re at a deficit already."

In regard to the competencies within social awareness, nine principals either mentioned empathy as a critical component in the leadership repertoire or implicitly illustrated how they employ empathy in their roles as principals. As Benjamin stated, “a person serving in my role wants to have a strong empathy.” Edward illustrated this idea when he shared:

Our job is to be a relational leader, and so empathy is a huge part of that… If I know that I have a staff member that’s struggling with family situations, being able to spend some time with them, being able to connect with them, being able to talk to them about situations, helps them move that forward.

Aligned to this idea, Bob also shared, “a socially aware principal can put themselves in other people’s shoes and understand kind of where they’re coming from.” Interestingly, half of
the principals used the term empathy and social awareness as an interchangeable concept.

Regarding organizational awareness, eight principals recognized the need of having awareness of their staff and the organization as a whole in order to effectively lead. As Bob said:

Organizational awareness would be understanding how things work where you are…is kind of knowing the group that you have, knowing the staff you have, and being able to organize them in a way that you’re playing to their strengths.

Lisa also illustrated:

You need to have that empathy side to be able to put yourself in other people’s shoes, but you also have to be understanding of the school environment and the building and the district itself, and what things can and cannot be done within that perimeter.

Aligned to this idea, Emerson stated, “this job is so multi-faceted… This is a job where the social awareness is almost like a quintessential development of EI.” Emerson also explained that every stakeholder has a different perspective of what they consider important, and therefore, “the socially aware principal is continually looking at things through multiple perspectives.” Moses also stated:

Anytime you have an organization with a lot of layers, [and] people within those layers, you are going to have politics that go on, whether you like it or not. And so, as a principal, you have to be able to understand what’s going on socially and politically in your organization.

On a similar note, six of the principals illustrated that leaders must understand their groups’ dynamics. For example, Emerson shared:

You need to routinely understand things to the perspective of your students, of your teaching staff, of others in the building, whether it’s a custodian, your lunch crew, [or]
your administrative support crew… You also have to understand the perspective of the superintendent. You have to understand the perspective of the community at large.

In the words of Samash:

Awareness of the faculty, the staff, [and] the parents, is critical in our roles… We have to balance all of the different stakeholders across the district and make sure that we’re doing what’s best for the students… You have to be able to pick up on cues, you have to be able to figure out where the problems are and then fill in the holes.

In this sense, six of the principals understand that listening should be in a leader’s skill repertoire. As Benjamin stated:

In my perspective, the foundation of empathy is listening... It is very important that you quiet yourself, so that you can hear [others’] concerns, their anxieties, their frustrations, their worries about the future… By listening, you can usually pull together enough ideas within your organization to take whatever next step you have to take.

Similarly, Moses shared:

When you are engaging with families, you have to be able to pick up on all of the different views that they’re giving off and make sure that you are listening, you are looking, and that you are affirming when you are engaged with them. Even if you have to give them some information that they don’t like, they still need to be able to walk away from that interaction that they had with you knowing that they were heard.

In this sense, it can be deduced that the principals of this study are aware of the competency of organizational awareness within their leadership, which leads to service, the third competency within social awareness. According to Goleman et al. (2013), leaders who possess
the service competence make themselves available as needed. Aligned with this concept, four of the principals reported helping their staff whenever and however they can.

As revealed by the data, principals’ responses illustrated how self-awareness and self-management allow social awareness to take place. As Goleman et al. (2012) explain, the four EI domains complement each other. The next subtheme further illustrates how self-awareness, self-management, and social awareness facilitate relationship management.

**Principals Recognize the Role of Relationship Management in Leadership**

The present subtheme contemplates principals’ understanding of relationship management and how this domain is present through specific competencies within their leadership. According to Goleman et al. (2013), relationship management encompasses seven competencies: inspirational leadership, influence, developing others, change catalyst, conflict management, building bonds, and teamwork and collaboration. Table 6 displays the statements that represent the main ideas that support this subtheme along with the number of principals out of 10 who provided data associate with each statement. In addition, the statements are grouped into categories starting with the relationship management and followed by each of the competencies within this domain. As so, the statements are listed within each category in order from the highest to the lowest number.

As shown in Table 6, all the principals perceived that their success as leaders is influenced by the quality of their relationships with those they serve. As Edward stated, “the better we are at those relationships, the better we are as leaders.” In alignment with this idea, six principals recognized that leaders get things done through people, and therefore, the quality of their relationships can dictate the support they will receive from them. As Monica shared, “if you
don’t have the trust with the people in your building, then you are really at a loss.” Bob illustrated this idea when he explained:

I really truly believe that when you have a relationship with people, things can be a lot easier… If you create those relationships, you’re gonna have some people who are gonna be in your corner, and you’re gonna have people who support your vision and support what you’re trying to do.

**Table 6**

*Principals Recognize the Role of Relationship Management in Leadership (N=10)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Ideas</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Domain</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Management</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principals’ success is influenced by the quality of their relationships</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with those they serve.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaders get things done through people.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Competencies</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing Others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principals have the responsibility to develop others and create</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>opportunities for growth.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allow employees to participate in the decision-making to support their</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>growth.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delegate responsibilities to empower the staff and support their growth.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Bonds</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principals must be constantly building bonds with the community through</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>developing emotional connections and/or by finding common values and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>goals.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishing strong connections with others makes it possible to</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>motivate or persuade individuals to move in a particular direction.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishing strong connections with others makes it possible to</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>support their development.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork and Collaboration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork is what makes it possible to accomplish goals.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In regard to the competencies within relationship management, eight principals expressed perceiving that it is their responsibility as leaders to develop others. As Moses stated, “it’s all about building people up.” Barbara also shared:

A principal with good relationship management abilities is one that leads by example by modeling the desired behavior. It’s one that has a vision and makes that vision plain to those that [they] lead. It’s one that creates opportunities for collaboration to happen within the learning setting, and it’s one that develops leaders.

On that note, four of the principals reported accomplishing this by allowing their staff to participate in decision-making, whereas three shared developing others by delegating responsibilities to empower them. As Edward said:

I’ve found, over the past 10 years, [that] you really have to focus on how you help them get to the point where they’re pushing the lead… It has to be their idea. It has to be something that is important to them… So, it really has helped me become a better leader because I allow them to become leaders.

Furthermore, eight principals made evident the presence of the competency of building bonds through caring for others and/or finding common values and interests. As Edward shared, “if we have common points of interest, I think that helps us build the work we have to build, and it helps us with relationships too.” He also said, “if they know that you care, they’re more willing to make sure that they are doing whatever they can to help us help our kids.”

Within these eight principals, five principals specified perceiving these connections as their channel to motivate and/or persuade others to move in a particular direction. As Monica said:
There were things, when I came into this role, that needed to change… In order for me to see that goal come to fruition, I had to have relationships developed, and I had to strengthen relationships, and because of that, I really truly feel that we were able to achieve what we set out to do.

Lisa also shared, “I feel like I could probably get my staff on board with any decision I make because I’ve spent the time building those relationships with them, and supporting them, and helping them to continue to grow.”

Furthermore, two of these eight principals believe that building relationships is what makes developing their staff possible. For example, Samash shared, “by having strong relationships, I’m able to develop them into the teachers or the employees that we need.” He further illustrated this idea when he shared:

A principal with good relationship management abilities can connect with students, can connect with parents, and can connect with staff easily and like seamlessly [and] get people to do things that they didn’t think they could do or were willing to do.

Moreover, five principals emphasized that teamwork is fundamental to accomplish goals. As David stated, “success really depends on creating a sense of family, a sense of team… Together, there isn’t anything we can’t accomplish, and alone, there’s not much we can get done.” Samash also said, “when everybody works together, you get a better product.”

In regard to the competency of inspirational leadership, none of the principals directly talked about this competency except for the association they made between building bonds and their ability to gain the support of others. As Emerson stated:
Good relationship abilities mean that you have a vision for what it is you’re trying to do… [and] you’re able to, through your words and actions, motivate others to get closer than further away to whatever that collective/individual vision is.

Monica also mentioned always striving to be an inspirational leader. However, this desire those not illustrate her awareness of this competency within her role.

Similarly, none of the principals described their awareness of the competency of catalyst of change and conflict management, even though their narratives illustrate the presence of these competencies when they talk about how they use their self-awareness and self-management competencies to recognize emotions in others and adapt their behaviors accordantly.

**Theme 3. Emotional Intelligence Competencies Allow Principals to Enhance Their Leadership**

As illustrated in the previous themes, the principals in this study connected their understanding of EI to leadership, including what emotional competences they perceive to be present and essential to fulfill the responsibilities of their position. Another focus of this study was to determine how aware these principals were when it comes to building themselves as leaders through their EI competencies. As such, this theme explores principals’ awareness of how they utilized EI competencies, such as emotional self-awareness, self-control, and empathy to enhance their leadership. This theme is sub-divided into eight major subthemes. These subthemes represent self-development strategies reported by the principals that illustrate the need for EI competencies.

**Principals Utilize Self-Awareness Competencies to Practice Self-Reflection**

Practicing self-reflection is a strategy that illustrates principals’ perception of how they utilize self-awareness competencies to enhance their leadership. Table 7 displays the statements
that represent the main ideas that support this subtheme along with the number of principals out of 10 who provided data associate with each statement.

**Table 7**

*Principals Utilize Self-Awareness Competencies to Practice Self-Reflection (N=10)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Ideas</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Practicing self-reflection can aid to improve leadership.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-reflection can help prepare for future events.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 7, six of the principals reported practicing self-reflection. These principals understand that self-reflection can aid in improving leadership by throwing light on what behaviors are productive and which are not. As shared by Samash, “I really try to look at myself every day on how I am as leader and where I can improve.” Moses also illustrated practicing self-reflection when he shared:

I’m constantly reflecting and playing back how something went… You want the experiences to help you grow, the good ones and the bad ones… I have to ask myself, was I transparent enough with my teacher? Did I give her enough examples? Was I honest enough with her with my recommendation?

Similarly, Bob also stated, “I’m always thinking, how is this looking from the other side? Am I showing the right emotions or empathy? Am I coming through in a sincere way?”

In order to enhance awareness, Emerson also seeks feedback as others may be able to see aspects that oneself can miss. He shared, “you have to constantly reflect on where you are… Seeking self-improvement comes with surrounding yourself with other mentors that strengthen and question who you are, but then, also lead to you becoming a better performed person.”
Moreover, two of the principals specifically reported using self-reflection to prepare for future events. As Barbara shared:

I do a lot of reflective practice even on how I responded or how I could have responded or what can I do next time. So that I’m planning ahead because you’re going to continue to have incidents and occurrences in any leadership setting.

On that sense, Monica also likes to write about her experiences and review her notes to also prepare for future events. As she stated, pointing to her notebook, “I’m a journer, and everything I do in my day is here.” She uses this strategy to prepare for follow-up meetings or to remember important events. As she said, when explaining her journaling process, “it starts off with the date, and then, it basically just lists every conversation, every person I connect with, everything that I have to attend to.”

**Principals Utilize Self-Awareness Competencies to Identify Strengths and Weaknesses**

Identifying strengths and weaknesses is another strategy that illustrates how principals’ use self-awareness to enhance their leadership. Table 8 displays the statements that represent the main ideas that support this subtheme along with the number of principals out of 10 who provided data associate with each statement.

**Table 8**

*Principals Utilize Self-Awareness Competencies to Identify Strengths and Weaknesses (N=10)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Ideas</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recognizing areas of improvement to develop or seek for support.</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognizing and focusing on areas of strengths.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 8, seven principals expressed using their self-awareness competencies to recognize areas of improvement. This awareness is then used to close these gaps by working
on these areas or seeking support from other staff members. As Samash shared about her assistant principal, “she knows that self-awareness and social awareness is my least area, so she’ll try to point things out to me when I’m low in that area.”

In addition, five principals reported using their self-awareness competencies to identify strengths, including focusing on taking advantage of these strong areas. As Emerson shared, “I think it’s helpful that, when you get into a situation, you know what you’re good at and what sort of things you need to continue to develop to get better.”

**Principals Utilize Self-Awareness and Self-Management Competencies to Guide Their Actions**

Adapting behaviors based on others’ emotions is a strategy that illustrates principals’ perception of how they utilize self-awareness and self-management competencies to enhance their leadership. Table 9 displays the statements that represent the main ideas that support this subtheme along with the number of principals out of 10 who provided data associate with each statement.

**Table 9**

*Principals Utilize Self-Awareness and Self-Management Competencies to Guide Their Actions (N=10)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Ideas</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Awareness of others’ emotions to guide one’s own behaviors.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allow people a safe space for venting.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintaining calm when others are exhibiting disruptive emotions, such as being upset, or behaviors, such as yelling and calling names.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness of others’ emotions to prepare in advance.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 9, six principals reported utilizing their awareness of other’s emotions to adapt their behaviors accordingly. As Lisa stated when addressing upset students, “I will
modify my response to them to make sure that I get the response out of them that I want.” She gave the example of how she uses this strategy to show support and build relationships with her staff. She shared:

If someone is having a bad day, I know I need to be a strong listener, and I need to convey to them, with my facial expressions, that I’m open to what they are saying, and I care about them.

Within this strategy, four of these six principals expressed allowing others to vent about their emotions as they understand that this approach may result in a much more desirable outcome. As Bob also stated, “sometimes people just need to vent a little bit, and I’ve tried to create that open space to do that.”

Four of these six principals also reported utilizing their self-awareness and self-management competencies by not allowing others’ disruptive behaviors, such as yelling and calling names, influence their own behaviors. For example, Barbara explained that she adapts her behavior based on the emotions she perceives in others. She said, “if a parent is upset and standing in my office, I don’t make them sit down. We stay standing because, at that point, they’re in that state.” She will invite them to take a seat when she perceived they got to a point where they are relaxed enough to sit down. She also expressed staying in control of her emotions by reminding herself not to take things personally when parents are upset. As she stated, “let’s say they’re name-calling; you’re not listening to that, you’re listening to the heart of the matter of what’s really going on.”

Monica also illustrated how she adapts her behavior to avoid getting triggered by other’s emotions or react in a way that may trigger them even more. For example, when addressing upset parents, she explained, “I can interrupt them and start giving excuses, or I can simply let them
vent, rant, whatever they need to do, and when they’re ready, then I can step in and just ask questions.” She also stated, “you just have to be still and listen to what people are saying, no matter how angry they are.”

Three of the principals also reported utilizing their awareness of other’s emotions to prepare in advance for future events. For example, Emerson stated, “I need to be aware of other’s emotional state to effectively communicate and lead in that moment… So, anticipating what some of those questions or anxieties might be, you know, helps me become aware of how best I support those around me.”

**Principals Utilize Self-Awareness Competencies to Take Care of Their Own Needs First to Better Serve Others**

Taking care of one’s needs to better serve others is a strategy that illustrates principals’ perception of how they utilize self-awareness and self-management competencies to enhance their leadership. Table 10 displays the statements that represent the main ideas that support this subtheme along with the number of principals out of 10 who provided data associate with each statement.

**Table 10**

*Principals Utilize Self-Awareness Competencies to Take Care of Theirs Own Needs First to Better Serve Others (N=10)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Ideas</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leaders need to take care of their needs before addressing events.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaders must take care of their physical needs as they can have an impact on one’s behaviors.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 10, four principals understand that they must take care of themselves first before serving others. As Monica stated, “I think understanding what my needs are in order
to handle every situation is most important.” She further expressed, “I will be able to take care of your needs once I can get a, b, and c settled. Then, I can give you my full attention.”

On the other hand, Lisa uses what she called, “The 24-Hour Rule.” This strategy consists of allowing herself enough time to calm disruptive emotions before addressing others or making important decisions. As she explained, “I always make sure that I sleep on it, so that I’m not making decisions that I’m going to regret.”

Barbara also reported taking care of her emotional needs before addressing others. For example, before taking a phone call of an upset parent, she will make sure she is in a calm state of mind. As she said, “I’ll often dim the lights in my office, close the door, and sit down and, then, take the call. So, I’m in a relaxed state when I’m receiving someone.” She also shared that she may not respond to emotionally challenging emails right away. She will read the email, walk away and distract herself, and then respond when she feels ready.

Furthermore, two of these four principals explained that leaders must take care of both, their emotional and physical needs, as they can have an impact on one’s behaviors. For example, Moses said, “I have to be aware of what’s going on with me, what’s going on with me emotionally, and how I’m feeling physically. Just know me as a whole person.” Moses also mentioned encouraging his staff to take care of their needs first. He said:

I preached to my staff, you got to take care of yourself and always make sure you put family first and make sure that you’re getting some quiet time. Make sure you’re eating right. Make sure that you are hydrated with plenty of water. So that when it’s time for us to give instruction to the kids, we are ready.

Barbara also illustrated the importance of practicing self-awareness of one’s physical needs as they influence the way individuals behave. As she said, “don’t let yourself get too
hungry; don’t let yourself get too tired because then your responses won’t be as balanced as they could be.”

**Principals Utilize Social Awareness Competencies to Make Better Decisions**

Gathering information to make smart decisions was another strategy described by the principals to enhance their leadership. Organizational awareness is the competency mainly used for this strategy. Table 11 displays the statements that represent the main ideas that support this subtheme along with the number of principals out of 10 who provided data associate with each statement.

**Table 11**

*Principals Utilize their Social Awareness Competencies to Make Better Decisions (N=10)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Ideas</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gaining organizational awareness by asking staff for feedback to make decisions.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaining organizational awareness by collecting information from staff evaluations reports.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaining organizational awareness by spending time with the staff to get to know them.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 11, five of the principals reported seeking organizational awareness to make decisions. These five principals commonly accomplish this by asking the staff directly for feedback. As Samash shared, “before we make the decision, I always try to ask at least five or six different people: What works? What doesn’t? What do you see are the flaws in it?” As David stated, seeking feedback helps in “trying to understand where somebody on the opposite end of an opinion may be and what’s driving that, and what is feeding that perception that those people have.”

Benjamin also reported seeking ideas in others for decision-making. As he stated, “it’s really me listening to all the collection of ideas to pull enough of those ideas so that you have a
critical mass of people saying, ‘yes, that makes sense.’” According to Benjamin, it is essential to practice active listening to understand the perspectives of others. As he stated:

As you’re talking to people one-on-one, as you’re talking to teachers, as you’re talking to parents, it’s really important that you really quiet yourself so that you can hear their concerns, their anxieties, their frustrations, their worries about the future. Only when you have a grasp of those things, you start to hold together a coalition of ideas to address all those things.

Emerson uses his organizational awareness to make decisions of how to support his staff growth. He was the only principals who shared gaining this awareness by gathering information from the staff evaluation tools and by learning directly from his staff about their concerns. As he stated, “as a leader, you need to know what skills your staff need to develop.” He gave the example of some questions he will ask, such as “where are you right now and where do you see yourself being in a year from now? What do I need to do now to support you to do your best work?”

Lisa uses a different strategy to gain organizational awareness. For example, when she became a principal, she focused on building relationships with her staff to learn about them and about the school. As she shared:

I was really just building relationships with my team, getting to know them, doing some team building. I was looking for areas of change, but I was making sure that I wasn’t changing things right away unless it was extremely important or something that was supported by the whole staff… I asked each team member what they loved about the school and what they would like to see change, and I looked for patterns.
Empowering and developing others is a strategy that illustrates principals’ perception of how they utilize relationship management competencies to enhance their leadership. Table 12 displays the statements that represent the main ideas that support this subtheme along with the number of principals out of 10 who provided data associate with each statement.

Table 12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Ideas</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principals have the responsibility to develop leaders.</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principals support their staff growth by encouraging their staff to collaborate in the decision-making process and by delegating leadership responsibilities.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 12, eight of the principals understand that it is part of their responsibility to develop their staff members. As Moses stated, “it’s my responsibility to coach you to help you become a more effective teacher-leader, so that you know how to navigate not just with kids, but with families too, but not just with family, but administrators too.” A strategy Moses uses to support his staff development is to show them that he trusts their ability to get the job done and to empower them to do so. He said, “you are an expert at what you do, you are a professional, and I trust that you’re going to come to work every day and get it done.”

In that sense, four of the principals reported encouraging their staff to collaborate in the decision-making process. As David stated, “even when the issue is uncomfortable to talk about, we just have to be transparent with it and give people a voice. Empower other people to be able to give feedback and input to whatever the issue we’re looking at.” Edward also admitted that when his staff’s viewpoints were considered, they were more likely to continue to engage during the whole process of implementing change.
Similarly, Bob recognized that letting his team collaborate in the decision-making process encourages teamwork and collaboration and builds a sense of empowerment. He shared, “you have to let people know they have some ownership.” Bob also shared:

I really like to see other people thrive in the leadership because that means that they’re gonna eventually lead and have that opportunity. Because someone did that for me, I need to do that for them. It’s almost like paying it forward.

Furthermore, Barbara understands that leaders have the responsibility to build new leaders that can step up for them when they leave the position. As she stated, “a leader should always work his or her way out of a job.” Barbara encourages and supports her staff growth by providing opportunities for them to lead projects. As she explained, with these opportunities, her staff “can get their feet wet and get comfortable and build confidence as they go.”

Principals Utilize Social Awareness and Relationship Management Competencies to Build Quality Relationships

Building quality relationships is a strategy that describes principals’ perception of how they utilize their social awareness and relationship management competencies to enhance their leadership. Table 13 displays the statements that represent the main ideas that support this subtheme along with the number of principals out of 10 who provided data associate with each statement.

As shown in Table 13, eight of the leaders recognize the importance of building bonds with the community. The most common strategy to build relations, reported by five principals, was walking in the hallways to greet students and staff members. According to the principals, walking in the hallways and different areas of the school building also serves to check on the staff and have casual conversations. For example, Monica shared using this strategy to
continually strengthen her relationships with her staff as well as to build a sense of trust within the organization. As she stated, “if you don’t have the trust with the people in your building, then you are really at a loss.” She also shared:

I want everyone’s day to start with some joy. So, one thing I feel is very important is to try and connect with people the first thing in the day… I can tell if somebody is starting off on a bad note. It could be from their body language or maybe one or two words that they may say.

Table 13

*Principals Utilize Social Awareness and Relationship Management Competencies to Build Quality Relationships (N=10)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Ideas</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principals must develop quality relationships with the community they serve in terms of emotional connections or values, goals, and/or missions.</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greeting, having casual conversations, and checking on the staff.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring about the staff’s overall wellbeing.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognizing and supporting differences among the staff. Could be in terms of background and/or personality differences.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparing teambuilding and gathering activities to recognize and appreciate staff and students’ effort.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

David also looks for moments where he can have casual interactions with students and staff. For example, during recess time, he will shoot baskets with the students or sit at their tables to joke with them. He also tries to welcome the students and the staff every morning at the door. As he shared, “I’d see probably 80 percent of the kids and staff members before the day even officially gets started.” Furthermore, he emphasized that a principal should take the initiative and
learn people’s names and about their background. According to David, this approach “communicates that you appreciate them” and, therefore, helps in building relationships.

Samash also mentioned implementing the strategy of greeting students and staff by name and having small casual conversations in the hallways and the cafeteria on a daily basis. Another strategy he uses to build relationships is showing his staff that he cares about them. For example, he talked about an employee whose family member recently died. To show his support, he sent her a little flower with the message “we’re thinking of you.” As he stated, “it’s doing little things each day which leads to bigger things.”

Lisa also understands that to build strong relationships with her staff she must demonstrate that she cares for them on a personal level. She gave an example of this approach when she explained:

If one of my team members is sick, I make sure that I’m checking in on them to see how they’re feeling, because I care about them not only as a teacher, but as a human being as well, and I want that relationship to continue to grow between us.

Similarly, Edward reported building relationships with his staff by gaining awareness of what others are going through emotionally. He gave an example of a conversation he had with one of his teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic. He said, “I had conversations with a teacher that is very concerned about safety and the safety of her family, given the nature of the pandemic, and so being able to walk through what that looks like for them, for their individual situations.” Edward also shared building connections with others by creating a safe environment where his staff can share concerns. The purpose of this approach, as he stated, is to “build bridges to get them past those hurdles that they see.”
Another strategy shared by two of the principals was to be cognizant of people’s differences, including differences in background and personality traits. For example, Barbara explained that in order to serve her community she needs to understand their motive and needs. She acknowledged that the values and perceptions of those she serves may differ from hers as they come from different backgrounds and settings. Furthermore, she shared, to use her awareness of other’s differences is to be supportive of those differences. As she stated, “it’s really having that understanding that there are differences, and that’s ok.”

Lisa also explained that she understands that every person is different, and therefore, the way they experience things may differ with the way she does it. She shared the example, “I have thick skin… Not everybody has thick skin, and sometimes, I may need to step up as a leader to better protect them from things that may upset them, that I know won’t upset me.”

Another strategy mentioned by Bob was recognizing and appreciating staff and students’ effort. Bob reported preparing teambuilding and social gathering activities, such as staff lunch, so the staff can interact and build relationships among them. In his words, “it’s about making sure that that you’re recognizing staff and recognizing students for what they’re doing.” He also shared:

We make sure we do staff gifts about once a month. We make sure we do staff meals to recognize them for all the work they’re doing… We try to do whatever we can to get people to connect with each other.

**Principals Utilize Self-Management Competencies to Practice New Skills Consistently**

Practicing new skills consistently is a strategy that illustrates principals’ perception of how they utilize self-management competencies to enhance their leadership. Table 14 displays
the statements that represent the main ideas that support this subtheme along with the number of principals out of 10 who provided data associate with each statement.

**Table 14**

*Principals Utilize Self-Management Competencies to Practice New Skills Consistently (N=10)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Ideas</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Practice a new skill consistently until it becomes natural.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Surprisingly, only Barbara talked about the importance of consistency to develop new skills. Barbara stated, “the only way to get better at something is by consistently practicing that skill until it becomes natural in you.” She even utilized a metaphor to emphasize her point. She shared, “it’s just like with dieting or saving money; the more you do something, the better you get at strengthening that skill.” She also explained that when a mistake is made, “you have to go back and say, oh, that wasn’t a good choice, but you have to keep practicing and make that really a part of you.”

**Theme 4. Emotional Intelligence Competencies Develop Over Time**

Interestingly, five of the principals spontaneously expressed their belief that their EI competencies have improved over time. Table 15 displays the statements that represent the main ideas that support this theme along with the number of principals out of 10 who provided data associate with each statement.

According to five of the principals’ narratives, as they experienced the challenges of their leadership position, they started to connect poor results in solving problems and managing others to their leadership behaviors. As Bob shared, “when I was newer to the role, I wasn’t aware of how transparent the emotions I was having are… I think my own self-awareness has increased exponentially since when I started.” Edward also illustrated:
I was a little bit more about, okay! We got a job, let’s get it done, let’s go! Let’s go! Let’s go! And in some ways, what I found over my earlier administration, the more I did that, the more I was the only one out on the front. So, what I’ve found over the past 10 years is that you really have to focus on how you help get them to the point where they’re pushing the lead. This has helped me become a better leader because I’ve allowed them to become leaders.

**Table 15**

*Emotional Intelligence Competencies Develop Over Time (N=10)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Ideas</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principals experienced awareness in their earlier years in their leadership position of the connection between their leadership behaviors and outcomes.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-improvement process is a continuous journey.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Benjamin also shared some experiences that led him to the understanding that his EI competencies have developed overtime. In one of his examples, he illustrated:

> When I was a young man in this role, when that anger was directed toward me, I made mistakes because I wasn’t a good self-manager. When anger came toward me, it was easy for me to either defend myself by putting up a wall or to respond to anger with anger, and what I’ve learned, as I got older, is that neither of those approaches work.

Moses also acknowledged mistakes he made in his early years as a leader, such as getting angry and exhibiting passive aggressive behaviors toward his mentor when she pointed out his areas of improvement. As he said, “I was young at the time, and I wasn’t as mature.” Therefore, he could recognize that his mentor was trying to help him grow as a leader.

As principals experienced these moments of awareness, they started practicing new behaviors in order to enhance their leadership. However, only two of the principals
acknowledged that self-improvement is a continuous journey without an end. As Moses put it, “it’s something that doesn’t happen overnight… It’s been a journey for me.” Aligned to this idea, Barbara also shared, “we are always changing, and change requires constant review and reflection.”

**Chapter 4 Closure**

In this chapter, a summary of details of the participants’ profile and responses and the themes and subthemes that emerged from the data were provided. The findings are based on an analysis of the data that was collected through the virtual interviews with the principals. The qualitative analysis process led to four major themes that reflect principals’ awareness of EI competencies within their leadership and how they use these competencies to further enhance their practice.

After analyzing the data, it can be concluded that the principals of this study were able to make connections between EI and their leadership, demonstrating awareness of how EI competencies play a role in their everyday responsibilities. It is evident that the principals seem to understand what each EI domain entails, even though their perception and use of the EI competences may differ. The relationship of the major results as connected to the research questions, including the relation to the research theoretical framework, are further discussed in Chapter 5.
Leaders set the mood of the organization, including employee’s job satisfaction, performance, and attitudes (Goleman et al., 2013). In school leadership, principals have the responsibility to serve as a change agent, foster shared beliefs and a sense of belonging, inspire, lead, and work in collaboration with the school and broad community in which they serve (Marzano, 2006). Therefore, principals must have the ability to understand how their emotions impact their actions and, as a result, how their actions impact those around them. This ability to manage oneself and one’s relationships with others is what is known as Emotional Intelligence (EI), which comprises four competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management (Goleman et al., 2013).

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perception of K-12 principals’ awareness of their EI in relation to how they lead and how their EI skills can be used to enhance their leadership practice. My specific research questions are:

1. How do school principals perceive and describe their experiences with the following EI domains in relation to how they lead: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management?

2. What are principals’ understanding of how such competencies might be used to enhance their leadership practice?

This chapter answers the research questions using the themes that emerged from the data. When the two research questions and the four themes are matched according to relevance, the following rough alignments emerge:
1. How do school principals perceive and describe their experiences with the following EI domains in relation to how they lead: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management?

Theme 1. Emotional Intelligence is an Important Part to Effective School Leadership

Theme 2. Each Emotional Intelligence Domain is Present Through Specific Competencies in School Leadership

2.1. Principals Recognize the Role of Self-Awareness in Leadership

2.2. Principals Recognize the Role of Self-Management in Leadership

2.3. Principals Recognize the Role of Social Awareness in Leadership

2.4. Principals Recognize the Role of Relationship Management in Leadership

2. What are principals’ understanding of how such competencies might be used to enhance their leadership practice?

Theme 3. Emotional Intelligence Competencies Allow Principals to Enhance Their Leadership

3.1. Principals Utilize Self-Awareness Competencies to Practice Self-Reflection

3.2. Principals Utilize Self-Awareness Competencies to Identify Strengths and Weaknesses

3.3. Principals Utilize Self-Awareness and Self-Management Competencies to Guide Their Actions

3.4. Principals Utilize Self-Awareness Competencies to Take Care of Theirs Own Needs First to Better Serve Others

3.5. Principals Utilize Social Awareness Competencies to Make Better Decisions
3.6. Principals Utilize Relationship Management Competencies to Empower and Develop Others

3.7. Principals Utilize Social Awareness and Relationship Management Competencies to Build Quality Relationships

3.8. Principals Utilize Self-Management Competencies to Practice New Skills Consistently

Theme 4. Emotional Intelligence Competencies Develop Over Time

Following, the research questions are answered from the major themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data. Then, the relationship between the results and the research framework are discussed.

**Results as Connected to Research Theoretical Framework**

At the time of the study, none of the principals had received formal training in EI, however, all of them expressed having some understanding of what EI stands for and represents. According to the principals, they acquired their understanding of EI from reading books, articles, and/or from their social interactions. Nevertheless, it was evident that their interest on learning about EI varied among them and, as a result, their understanding of EI as a construct and as a form of intelligence.

To ensure all principals were able to answer the research questions, the definition of EI and its domain and competencies, based on Goleman et al.’s (2013) EI model, was discussed with the principals before the interview questions were asked. Therefore, principals had the opportunity to relate their leadership experiences with their understanding of EI. Following, I answer the research questions based on the themes that emerged from the data.
Research Question 1

How do school principals perceive and describe their experiences with the following EI domains in relation to how they lead: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management?

Qualitative data analysis revealed that principals were aware of the role self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management competencies play in their ability to effectively fulfill their daily responsibilities. Furthermore, all the principals described leadership experiences that require the use of these competencies, such as the need of managing their emotional reactions, supporting staff growth, and working in collaboration with the different stakeholders within their district.

According to Goleman et al. (2013), EI is a key aspect to effective leadership. EI refers to the ability to recognize one’s own and other’s emotions and to use this information to guide one’s thoughts and actions. In short, EI refers to how one manages oneself in life and one’s relationships with others. In alignment to this idea and, as presented in Theme 1, all the principals perceive their EI is directly associated to their ability to lead effectively. Therefore, it can be inferred that the principals in this study recognize that emotions play a pivotal role in how they make decisions, including how they address events and manage their interactions with those they serve. As Goleman et al. emphasize, understanding emotions in general is what makes effective leaders stand out.

As presented in Theme 2, all the principals illustrated their awareness of each of the EI domains within their leadership. For example, all the principals make a point that awareness of other’s emotions can be used to guide their own actions (self-awareness). As well, all the principals recognized that their success as leaders depends on how they react to events and
manage their interactions with others (self-management). They also recognized that empathy is a necessary skill for establishing strong connections (social awareness), and that their success as principals is influenced by the quality of their relationships (relationship management). However, it is important to point out that there are several areas omitted, or rarely used by these principals, within the aforementioned domains.

**Self-Awareness**

Self-awareness is what allows leaders to have a deep understanding of their emotions, strengths, limitations, values, and motives, as well as awareness of how their actions impact those around them (Goleman et al., 2013). This domain encompasses three competencies: emotional self-awareness, accurate self-assessment, and self-confidence competencies.

As the data revealed, emotional self-awareness was the only competency that all principals acknowledged within their leadership. This competency is defined by Goleman et al. (2013) as the act of “reading one’s own emotions and recognizing their impact” (p. 39). In that sense, all the principals recognized that emotional self-awareness is fundamental to guide one’s own actions as it allows them to understand their own emotions, including their emotional shortcomings.

However, it is important to point out that most principals correlated the idea that their decisions and behaviors have an impact on others, omitting the connection between their emotions and behaviors. To a lesser extent, less than half of the principals correlated the idea that their emotions influence their decisions and behaviors, which further influences how they respond to others. This may suggest that most principals’ attention is on the relationship between behaviors and results, instead of on the relationship between emotion and responses. This differs
with Goleman et al.’s (2013) idea of a self-aware leader, which is one with the ability to recognize how their feelings affect their own and others’ performance.

Regarding accurate self-assessment, which refers to the awareness of one’s strengths and limitations (Goleman et al., 2013), none of the principals explicitly talked about this competency. However, most principals illustrated how they utilize their awareness of their failures and successes to recognize strengths and areas of improvement. Principals’ responses are aligned with Goleman et al.’s (2013) work, which describes a self-aware leader as one that is honest about themselves, including their strengths and limitations.

Even though the competency of self-confidence was shared prior and during the interview, it was not mentioned by the principals, except by a slight reference made by Bob when he illustrated that, self-awareness is needed for “being confident in the decisions you are making.” This may suggest that none of the principals made a connection between their ability to have a deep understanding of themselves, including their strengths, limitations, values, and motives, with their sense of self-worth and capability as effective leaders.

**Self-Management**

In relation to self-management, it was evident that principals recognized that their success as leaders depends on their ability to manage themselves and their relationship with others appropriately. For example, principals acknowledged the presence of self-control to manage disruptive emotions that can impact their ability to make good decisions, provide emotional support to their staff, and serve as role models for their school community. As in the words of Goleman et al. (2013), “self-management is the emotional intelligence component that frees us from being a prisoner of our feelings” (p. 46).
Self-management competencies allow leaders to manage emotions appropriately for the situation at hand, including anticipating consequences of acting impulsively (Goleman et al., 2013). It encompasses six competencies: emotional self-control, transparency, adaptability, achievement, initiative, and optimism. Nevertheless, self-management surges from self-awareness as having a deep understanding of emotions provides a strong guideline on how to self-manage them. In that sense, most principals implicitly and explicitly recognized a relationship between self-awareness and self-management, since they understand that the only way to acquire self-management is by first having a deep understanding of themselves.

Furthermore, principals mainly attributed self-management to maintaining calm in moments of distress (emotional self-control). According to Goleman et al. (2013), leaders are routinely challenged to face ambiguity and organizational change. Leaders’ self-management competencies assist them in controlling emotional impulses, so they can quickly adapt to new changes and stay motivated during challenging situations. This strong grip of emotions helps them maintain an unbreakable posture during situations that can easily induce stress, anxiety, anger, or frustration. In addition, Goleman et al. explain that “emotions are contagious, especially from leaders. Leaders cannot effectively manage emotions in anyone else without first handling their own” (p. 46).

In relation to the competency of achievement, most principals emphasized the importance of working on their weaknesses to become better leaders, and half of them talked about the benefits of focusing on their strengths. As Goleman et al. (2013) state, “leaders with strength in achievement have high personal standards that drive them to constantly seek performance improvements – both for themselves and others” (p. 254). In other words, most principals recognized they have areas in which they excel and others that could use some work, and relying
on strengths to bring a better sense of fulfillment and working on one’s weaknesses can lead to a more well-rounded and diligent leader.

Regarding the competency of optimism, most principals mentioned that optimism plays an important role in their position, especially during challenging times. However, none of them provided examples or illustrated how optimism takes place within their everyday leadership. Similarly, but at a lesser extent, less than half of the principals attributed value to transparency and adaptability, and even a lower number of them mentioned the importance of taking initiative to make positive change. However, none of them provided concrete examples of these competencies within their own experiences as leaders. This may reflect that principals recognize these competencies as valuable traits but were not able to make connections with tangible actions within their daily responsibilities.

In conclusion, self-control and achievement were the most acknowledged self-management competencies by the principals. In reference to Goleman et al. (2013), effective leaders act as emotional guides driving emotions in a right direction. To be able to achieve this, leaders must be socially aware and, as so, use this awareness to respond to the emotional climate of the workplace. This ability to self-manage can easily turnover an emotionally charged or tense climate into an environment where people feel comfortable and therefore at ease to thrive and work much more effectively. However, to make this happen, leaders must understand the population they serve (Goleman et al., 2013), which leads us to social awareness, the third EI domain.

**Social Awareness**

Social awareness refers to the ability to recognize and understand others perspective, feelings, and needs (Goleman et al., 2013). It encompasses three competencies: empathy,
organizational awareness, and service. As the data revealed, all the participants recognized the presence of social awareness competencies within their role, including how social awareness plays a pivotal role to form relationships. That being said, Goleman et al. (2013) state that a leader with social awareness is one that is supportive, empathetic, and cognizant of the different stakeholders within their organization and how they affect each other.

Within this domain, half of the number of the principals used the term empathy and social awareness as an interchangeable concept. In that sense, empathy was the most commonly acknowledged competency and considered critical for building relationships. According to most principals, empathy is the skill that allows them to understand others’ perspectives and needs. This idea might explain why most principals also considered listening skills as a must have in their skill repertoire. Indeed, “empathy, which includes listening and taking other people’s perspective – allow leaders to tune into the emotional channels between people that create resonance” (Goleman et al., 2013, p. 49). In addition, empathy is considered the main foundation and the most important social awareness competency.

Furthermore, organizational awareness was also commonly acknowledged by the principals as they recognized the need of having awareness of the organization as a whole when making decisions. In other words, they recognized that organizations are political, and individuals within the organization, whether they are parents, students, faculty, and/or administrative staff, may have different agendas and interests. Therefore, principals need to be aware of the differences within their community, including the resources they have and their own ability to accomplish goals. As depicted by Goleman et al. (2103), organizational awareness allows leaders to understand the organization, including detecting crucial social networks and guiding values within the community.
The ability to understand others perspective and the organization as a whole is what makes service, the third social awareness competency, possible. However, less than half of the principals reported helping their staff in whatever they can, including advocating for them as needed, which aligns with Goleman et al.’s (2013) definition of service. Nevertheless, a good number of principals recognized developing others as part of their responsibilities as leaders, and even though developing others is a relationship management competency, it can be considered a service as the intention behind it is to support and guide others’ growth.

As reflected in the data, principals’ responses illustrate how self-management and social awareness complement each other. For example, one needs awareness of one’s and other's emotions, as well as self-control to manage behaviors while listening. This leads to organizational awareness for decision-making. As Goleman et al. (2013) explain, self-management is closely intertwined with empathy as it would be impossible to constructively adjust to the overall organizational environment without understanding the emotional climate. As so, “leaders with empathy are able to attune to a wide range of emotional signals, letting them sense the felt, but unspoken, emotions in a person or group” (Goleman et al., 2013, p. 255). This interaction among all EI domains is further illustrated within relationship management.

**Relationship Management**

As revealed by the data, principals recognized how competencies within other domains, such as self-management and social awareness, are crucial to build relationships. As depicted in Goleman et al.’s (2013) words, “self-awareness, self-management, and empathy all come together in the final EI ability: relationship management” (p. 51). Relationship management allows principals to effectively manage relationships, including inspiring and influencing others’ responses (Goleman et al., 2013). It encompasses seven competencies: inspirational leadership,
influence, developing others, change catalyst, conflict management, building bonds, and teamwork and collaboration.

Within relationship management, the competencies of building bonds and developing others were the most commonly acknowledged by the principals. However, even though most competencies within this domain were barely mentioned, when looking at the data as a whole, it is evident that these competencies are simultaneously used by the principals as they all influence each other in the process of supporting and coaching the staff, getting stakeholders on board with new initiative, and in creating a sense of belonging and trust among the community.

In that sense, principals perceived that their success as leaders is impacted by the quality of their relationships with those they serve as leadership is about motivating people to work together toward a common goal (inspirational leadership and influence). Also, they commonly recognized the need of building and maintaining trusting and supporting relationships with the different members of their school community (building bonds). As so, the principals reported different strategies, such as walking in the hallways to greet students and teachers and intentionally start casual conversations to learn about them. These strategies are further discussed in the second research question.

Furthermore, principals perceive that having strong connections with others makes supporting their development easier as the more they know about their staff, the better they know the type of support and experiences they need to provide. In that sense, most principals recognize it as their responsibility to build other’s growth, including forming new leaders that could take their place when they leave the position (developing others). They reported doing so through delegating responsibilities and empowering the staff by allowing them to participate in decision-making.
As well, they expressed that establishing mutually supportive relationships with their staff makes implementing new initiative smoother as the staff is more likely to collaborate (change catalyst and teamwork and collaboration). Surprisingly, only half of the principals talked about the importance of teamwork and collaboration for the accomplishment of their school mission. However, principals’ awareness of the need of building connections with others and influencing people to work toward a particular goal, illustrates their awareness of the need of creating an environment where people collaborate with each other.

In relation to change catalyst, which refers to a leader’s ability to turn an organization around as needed (Goleman et al., 2013), none of the principals explicitly talked about this competency. However, in their narratives they recognized that schools are constantly going through changes. An example of the need of change and quick adaptation, as well as the ability to support staff and students in the process, was the COVID-19 pandemic that took place during this study. All the principals had to support their staff and students to switch from face-to-face interactions to virtual learning which may have caused disruptive emotions, such as anxiety and stress, to those they lead.

Even though that most of the principals illustrated the need of the awareness of others’ emotions to make decisions and address students, parents, and staff, including administrative personnel and the different stakeholders within the community, none of the principals made a direct acknowledgement of the competency of conflict management. However, it is evident that principals are challenged to manage conflict, and that they implement different EI competencies to do so.

In alignment to the principals’ awareness and understanding of relationship management competencies, Goleman et al. (2013) state that being able to establish strong connections
between staff members consequently leads to smooth collaboration where they can share information easily and coordinate effectively. In addition, leaders’ main responsibility is to get things done through people, and therefore, their ability to manage their relationships have a direct impact on how others respond to them.

Goleman et al. (2013) also argue that the most effective way to achieve goals is by perpetuating an ambiance where people feel content, gratified, and enthusiastic. In such environments, a strong sensation of trust and unity emanates as people work together in teams to achieve a particular goal or mission. Furthermore, leaders’ behaviors can motivate people or can bring them down, impacting the school environment and productivity. Therefore, leaders’ interactions with those they serve is the most indispensable part of the “success puzzle.”

That being said, the principals in this study demonstrated awareness of the use of EI competencies in their everyday responsibilities and the role these competencies play in allowing leaders to successfully lead. Following, I present the data that suggests principals use their EI competencies to enhance their leadership.

Research Question 2

What are principals’ understanding of how such competencies might be used to enhance their leadership practice?

As the data illustrates, principals made connections between their EI competencies and leadership by identifying and providing examples of concrete moments where they make use of these competencies. Furthermore, principals were able to recognize how each of the EI domains depends on each other to ultimately have interactions with others that lead to healthy and mutually beneficial relationships to accomplish goals. As so, qualitative data analysis revealed strategies principals reported implementing to enhance their leaders, which require the use of
specific EI competencies. The data also revealed that half of the number of principals were aware of how their EI competencies have improved over the years as they gained awareness of the connection between their leadership behaviors and outcomes.

The most reported strategies to enhance leadership were building quality relationships and developing others. As illustrated by the principals’ responses, they believe that leading others is easier when people feel a sense of respect and appreciation from the part of the leader. As well, principals understand that their ultimate goal is to support the development of others, whether of students or staff. As Goleman et al. (2013) state, leader’s main responsibility is to get things done through people, and their success in accomplishing this is influenced by the quality of their relationship with those they lead.

Regarding building quality relationships, principals shared activities such as walking around the school and greeting students and staff members, especially in the morning. Some of them also reported doing so during recess time. According to the principals, these activities serve to check on people and to initiate casual conversations to learn about them. In a lesser extent, principals also reported building relationships with others by recognizing and appreciating differences within their school community in background and personality traits. As well, some principals mentioned taking the time to verbally recognize their staff and students’ efforts in fulfilling their responsibilities. These activities require EI competencies, such as emotional awareness and adaptability, to recognize emotions in oneself and others and to adapt behaviors as needed. In addition, it requires recognizing opportunities and taking initiative to relate to others, which ultimately leads to building bonds to maintain relationships in the long term.

Regarding empowering and developing others, most principals recognized that it is their responsibility to assist others’ development. Some of the strategies they mentioned were
demonstrating trust by delegating responsibilities and allowing staff to participate in the decision-making process. As Goleman et al. (2013) illustrate, by stretching simple assignments or pushing people beyond their abilities, rather than emphasizing only in tasks that get the job done, leaders improve their employee’s moods significantly. In that sense, according to the principals, staff’s commitment and sense of responsibility in implementing change increase when they have a voice and the opportunity to take part of the process. In addition, principals perceive that this approach encourages teamwork and collaboration and builds a sense of empowerment.

The process of developing others requires EI competencies such as emotional awareness, empathy, organizational awareness, self-control, and adaptability to understand others’ needs and manage behaviors considering their inputs. As well, this strategy requires competencies such as developing others by supporting and guiding their growth, conflict management to resolve disagreement that may occur, building bonds to build and maintain relationships, and teamwork and collaboration to build a team that cooperate with each other.

Another strategy most principals reported was practicing self-reflection. According to them, reflecting about their experiences can throw light on what behaviors are productive and which are not, which leads to make changes in their approach in order to obtain better results in future events. As Goleman et al. (2013) state, “by uncovering an ideal vision of yourself, you feel motivated to develop your leadership abilities” (p. 109). Principals reported practicing self-reflection by doing prayers, keeping a journal of their everyday activities, and/or taking time to go over their head about their experiences and the things they could do differently. As Goleman et al. (2013) describe, the act of self-reflection is a strategy to enhance your awareness of your surroundings as well as to think things over instead of acting impulsively. The process of self-reflection mainly requires emotional awareness of oneself and others, including awareness of
how one’s approach impact others’ responses. In addition, it requires accurate self-assessment of one’s capabilities, which leads to another commonly reported strategy to enhance leadership, identifying strengths and weaknesses.

As revealed by the data, identifying strengths and weaknesses was another behavior most principals’ practice to enhance their leadership. Within this strategy, principals reported focusing on identifying areas of improvement to work on developing them as well as to seek for the appropriate support. Furthermore, some of these principals also reported focusing on identifying strengths to take advantage of their strong areas. As Goleman et al. (2013) state, the real starting point of self-directed learning is taking stock of the parts of yourself that you relish and want to preserve, versus those you’d like to change or adapt to your new circumstances.

Goleman et al. (2013) also emphasize that leaders must seek constructive criticism as a tool for growth. Identifying strengths and weaknesses requires a previous mentioned strategy, self-reflection, as well as gathering feedback from others. Some of the EI competencies needed for this activity are accurate self-assessment, self-control, adaptability, and achievement to identify areas of growth, develop new behavioral habits, and to continually seek improvement.

Adapting behaviors based on others’ emotions is a strategy that reflects principals’ awareness of how their responses influence the emotional state of those around them. As Goleman et al. (2013) illustrate, it is imperative that leaders are able to maintain their composure in moments of tension or distress since negative emotions have the power to cloud the thinking brain and, as a result, the capacity to focus and to think rationally. Additionally, leaders who lose their tempers, “have employees that become defensive, evade responsibility and avoid contact with the manager in question” (p. 22).
As reflected in the data, principals are challenged to manage emotional charged situations where people exhibit behaviors such as yelling and calling names. In order to avoid disruptive emotions to escalate, principals reported providing the opportunity for people to express themselves while they listen attentively. In order to maintain control of their behaviors, EI competencies, such as emotional self-awareness, empathy, and self-control, need to come into action. These competencies assist principals in maintaining awareness of their triggers and the emotions of others, as well as maintaining control of their responses by considering the consequences of reacting impulsively.

Gathering information to make smart decisions was another strategy described by the principals to enhance their leadership. The actions taken by the principals to implement this strategy are asking the staff for feedback to learn about their perceptions and concerns and/or reviewing the staff evaluation tools to gain awareness of areas in which they need support. According to the principals, this information can be used to make better decisions for their schools. Aligned to this, Goleman et al. (2013) state that leaders who take the time to have personal conversations with their employees are therefore able to establish rapport and trust. Consequently, employees are more receptive when it comes to “listen to performance feedback more openly, seeing it as serving their own aspirations, not just the boss’s interest” (p. 60). For this strategy, principals need EI competencies, such as empathy, organizational awareness, and initiative, to understand the organization as a whole, recognize opportunities for growth, and take action.

Finally, one school principal reported the strategy of consistently practicing a new skill until it becomes natural in you. According to this principal, improving oneself requires time, commitment, and the internal motivation to keep going despite setbacks. In that sense, Goleman
et al. (2013) state, “the key to learning new habits for leaders lies in practicing to the point of mastery” (p. 157). This EI strategy requires EI competencies such as emotional and accurate self-assessment of one’s emotions, strengths, and limitations. It also requires self-control, adaptability, achievement, initiative, and optimism to manage disruptive emotions, adapt to changes while overcoming obstacles, and take initiative to continually improve while maintaining a positive outcome.

Every one of the strategies presented in this section were identified by the principals as conscious actions they take to become better leaders. However, as illustrated by half of the principals’ narratives, they perceived their leadership has naturally improved over time. They attributed this improvement to the connection they were perceiving between poor outcomes and their leadership behaviors in their early years as principals. As they experienced these moments of awareness, they started making changes to obtain better results. However, it seems that this enhancement in their leadership practice naturally happened without being intentionally planned by the principals. As Goleman et al. (2013) state, “over the course of a career, people tend naturally to develop more strength in EI competences - they get better with age” (p. 101).

**Other Connections to Previous Research**

In alignment with the findings in my study, in Chapter 2 the literature review presents qualitative studies that suggest that EI may be a major indicator of principals’ leadership effectiveness (Cai, 2011; Moore, 2009). For example, when principals display EI behaviors, such as self-awareness, impulse control, and effective social skills, principals are perceived by teachers as more successful (Bower et al., 2018). However, those principals who have the tendency to displaying negative moods and a lack of empathy are perceived by teachers as ineffective leaders.
As so, the results of my study are aligned with two similar studies that explored the perception of principals’ regarding EI and school leadership (Keith, 2009; Singh & Dali, 2013). Keith’s (2009) study explored the lived experiences of secondary principals, who scored high on an EI questionnaire, in relation to the effects of EI on their leadership behaviors. Keith’s study found that these principals perceived EI competencies as essential for effective leadership and decision-making. For example, the principals acknowledged the need of recognizing emotions in others and understanding the role emotions play in each situation and aspects of a decision.

The study conducted by Singh and Dali (2013) explored the perception of the significance of EI in school leadership of a group of principals who participated in an educational program that integrated EI learning. Singh and Dali found that integrating EI into the principals’ program resulted in an enhancement of principals’ awareness of the importance of EI for effective leadership. For example, at the end of the program, principals recognized that their success depends on how they relate and work with others. They further acknowledged that EI competencies, such as empathy, are necessary to be receptive to teachers and students’ feelings and needs. Principals also reported being more sensitive to recognize and value the diversity their staff brings to their school.

These studies, as well as my study, suggest that principals’ IQ and/or academic knowledge alone does not guarantee their success as leaders. Therefore, other variables, such as a principal’s ability to maintain calm in moments of distress and motivate others to move in a particular direction despite the challenges, may be a better predictor of their ability to effectively lead a school.
Implications and Recommendations

This study was conducted to explore the awareness of K-12 school principals of their EI in relation to how they lead, including how they use EI competencies to enhance their leadership. As previous awareness or knowledge of EI was not a requirement to participate in this study, the definition of EI and its domains and competencies were shared with the principals prior to their interview. As well, the definition of EI and its domains and competencies were discussed with the principals before asking the interview questions. Therefore, the principals had the opportunity to gain awareness of the construct of EI in order to answer the interview questions. As a result, those principals that did not have experience with EI may have gained their awareness from participating in this project.

That said, none of the principals in this study reported having received any type of formal training in EI prior to this study. As reflected in the principals’ responses, their previous understanding of what EI entails varied according to their own personal experiences and interests. For example, less than the half of the number of principals reported having read books and articles about EI, while others just had casually heard the term of EI in social interactions. Furthermore, three of the principals in this study reported that their awareness of EI competencies came from the social and emotional learning programs they were providing to their students in their schools. Interestingly, the principals and school staff, who were implementing these programs to help student develop emotional competencies, were not beforehand trained to enhance their own EI competencies.

Nevertheless, the school principals in this study recognized a direct association between their EI and their performance as leaders and even acknowledged that an individual without EI competencies would not be able to fulfill the responsibilities of the position. Furthermore, the
principals were able to recognize how most of the competencies within all four domains are employed into their everyday leadership. However, some EI competencies were not directly mentioned by any of the principals, yet based on the principals’ narrative, it was evident that these unmentioned competencies are present within their leadership. A good example is the competency of service. Even though none of the principals explicitly talked about this competency, they illustrated its presence within their leadership when they talked about perceiving as one of their main responsibilities to support others’ growth, including providing coaching and guidance.

Goleman et al. (2013) explain how effective a leader may be is influenced by the number of EI competencies that they may possess. Nevertheless, they argue that it is impossible to possess all 18 EI competencies within their model. As so, they have found that effective leaders portray at least half a dozen competencies distributed within all four domains. In other words, mastering one or two competencies from each of the EI domains seems to be what an individual needs to navigate the complexity of leadership, including having a strong impact on the amount of resonance they imprint within the workplace’s atmosphere.

Moreover, as the data revealed, principals were able to recognize these competencies in the actions they take to enhance their performance, whether it is through self-reflecting about their leadership approach in relations to their outcomes or through adjusting their behaviors based on others’ needs. As it was evident, principals acknowledged the most important aspect of leadership – leaders get things done through people, and therefore, their success as leaders is directly associated to their ability to manage their emotions and relate to others, including their ability to inspire, motivate, and support individuals in the process of accomplishing goals. As Goleman et al. (2013) state, “intellect alone will not make a leader; leaders execute a vision by
motivating, guiding, inspiring, listening, persuading – and, more crucially, through creating resonance” (p. 27).

However, it is important to point out that the connections principals made between their EI and their leadership does not determine principals’ level of EI or even their effectiveness as leaders. In other words, their understanding of EI does not translate into having developed EI competencies or into being effective at managing themselves appropriately, including developing trusting and mutually beneficial relationships with those they serve. For example, when principals reported walking around the hallways to greet staff and students first thing in the morning to build relationships, it is not possible to confirm if their behaviors are perceived by others as friendly, empathetic, and/or genuine. In addition, when principals shared that they allow their staff to vent their frustrations and share their feedback for decision making, it is not possible to confirm how the information shared by the staff is received and processed, including how successful principals are in handling these situations.

That said, as Goleman et al. (2013) report, most leaders are bias in their perception of themselves compared to how others perceive them. For example, the Emotional Intelligence View 360 assessment, specially designed to assess social competencies, has revealed a tendency of more than one-third of leaders scoring themselves higher than how their employees may rate them. Similarly, around one-third of leaders tend to score themselves lower than how their employees may rate them, while only about 30% of the leaders may score themselves similarly to how their staff may score them.

Furthermore, it is also important to mention that half of the number of principals in this study recognized making mistakes in their earlier years as principals such as behaving as ‘people pleasers’, reacting to their emotional triggers, not having the social awareness to understand the
needs of others, and/or letting their ego get in the way of their decisions. This can be interpreted as these principals not having the emotional tools to deal with the responsibilities of the position and having to work on their areas of improvement as they were becoming aware of the connection between their actions and their results.

That said, I agree with previous researchers in the feel of educational leadership who have pointed out that the answer to improve K-12 schools’ performance may be found in having more EI leaders, and therefore, I recommend that EI training should be part of principals’ preparation programs and/or professional development. These EI programs should be focused on enhancing participants’ awareness of their EI competencies in relation to leadership and on providing research-based strategies to enhance these competencies.

Limitations

The present study presented several limitations. For example, the interviews were conducted virtually and at moments the internet connection failed. When this happened, I had to ask principals to repeat themselves, which could have influenced their mood and responses.

Another limitation was that the results of this study heavily depended on my skills, as a researcher, to collect and analyze the data. Therefore, my presence and behaviors during the data collection could have influenced the participant’s responses. In addition, the findings could easily be influenced by my personal biases regarding EI and leadership practices. Furthermore, some participants had previous experience and a clearer understanding of the construct of EI than others.

The criterion of interviewing principals with at least three years leading their school is another limitation as the sample may be less than representative of the K-12 principals from this Midwest state in the United States. One more limitation was the time constraints to collect and
analyze the data, which could result in overlooking important details during the interview process and analysis.

**Delimitations**

To explore the perception of school principals’ awareness of their EI and how their EI might be used to enhance their leadership, I chose to engage in a basic qualitative study. I chose this research method as I considered it the most appropriate based on the purpose of my study. This method allowed the data to be collected through open-ended questions, which allowed the participants to freely express their understanding of the phenomenon being studied.

Another delimitation for this study was the sampling method. I chose to interview a total of 10 school principals with at least three years serving as principals in their schools. I made the conscious decision of choosing these criteria so all participants will possess leadership experience as a principal. Furthermore, prior to the interview, the participants received the interview questions and the definition of EI and its competencies. Therefore, some participants may have prepared their answers in advance. I made the decision to share this information with them so all participants could be able to answer the research questions, in case they had no experience with the construct of EI before.

I also decided not to consider criteria such as participant’s gender, age, background, or any other demographic, among others as my main interest was the participants’ understanding of EI and how they understand EI can be used to enhance leadership. These factors narrow the transferability of the study’s results, particularly to other educational leaders who do not hold a position as a principal or that are new in the position.
Future Research in Emotional Intelligence and School Leadership

As presented in the literature review, research has shown a positive association between school principals’ EI and their performance as leaders. In addition, research has also found a positive relationship between principals’ EI and the transformational leadership style, which has been recognized as the most effective leadership approach. Furthermore, research has shown that when school principals participate in EI trainings, their awareness of the significance of EI to succeed as leaders enhanced, which may lead to taking action to improve their EI competencies.

That said, future qualitative research should focus on comparing principals’ perception of their own EI and leadership effectiveness with the behaviors they exhibit in their schools. In addition, quantitative research can take place to measure principals’ EI with a EI questionnaire. Principals’ scores can then be compared to their own prior perception of their EI competencies. This type of study can show if principals’ awareness of their EI competencies is directly related to their actual EI level. I would also recommend qualitative and/or quantitative research, or a combination of both, to explore or assess principals’ perception of their own EI competencies to then compare the results with the perception of those they lead. This research study can show if principals are being perceived by others as they are perceiving themselves.

Concluding Thoughts

The purpose of this study was to explore if K-12 principals were aware of their EI competencies and how their EI competencies are used in their everyday leadership. My study was inspired by the vast research that points to EI as an important aspect to effective leadership. However, after more than two decades of research findings showing a positive relationship between leaders’ EI and their leadership outcomes, it seems that these findings have not yet being considered in the process of preparing school administrators.
Interestingly, reported by some of the principals, schools are starting to implement social and emotional learning programs to assist students in developing the emotional skills needed to navigate the challenges of their individual reality. This demonstrates that some leaders recognize the influence of emotional competencies in one’s life outcomes. However, it seems that school leaders are missing the most important part of the process—working on their own EI first, so they can better support their students, and even teachers, in developing their EI competencies.

Furthermore, considering that none of the principals reported having received formal training in EI prior this study, the awareness they illustrated should not replace the recommendation of having school leaders complete formal training in EI. This training should be part of their requirements for their school administration certification as this may enhance the ability to manage the emotional aspects of leadership.
REFERENCES


Appendix A

Human Subjects Institutional Review Board Letter of Approval
Date: December 23, 2020

To: Brett Geier, Principal Investigator
   Lourdes Pimentel Soto, Student Investigator for dissertation

From: Amy Naugle, Ph.D., Chair

Re: IRB Project Number 20-12-10

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project titled “School Principals' Awareness of Their Emotional Intelligence and Connections to Leadership” has been approved under the expedited category of review by the Western Michigan University Institutional Review Board (IRB). The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application.

Please note: This research may only be conducted exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes to this project (e.g., add an investigator, increase number of subjects beyond the number stated in your application, etc.). Failure to obtain approval for changes will result in a protocol deviation.

In addition, if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the IRB for consultation.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

A status report is required on or prior to (no more than 30 days) December 22, 2021 and each year thereafter until closing of the study. The IRB will send a request.

When this study closes, submit the required Final Report found at https://wmich.edu/research/forms.

Note: All research data must be kept in a secure location on the WMU campus for at least three (3) years after the study closes.
Appendix B

Recruitment Letter
Appendix B
Recruitment Letter

Dear Principal,

My name is Lourdes Pimentel, and I am a doctoral student at Western Michigan University. I am writing to ask you to be part of a qualitative research study on the perception of principals’ awareness of their emotional intelligence. This is part of the requirements for a doctoral degree in Educational Leadership. I hope you will agree to participate.

Participating in this study will include a virtual interview conversation that should last approximately 45-60 minutes and that will be conducted after or during school hours (based on your convenience). This conversation will be recorded, and I will also be taking written notes.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary, and there is no penalty for not participating or for withdrawing from the study. If you agree to participate in this study, your identity will be kept strictly confidential. Your answers will be referenced by a pseudo name chosen by you.

Please contact me by replying by email to lourdesmaria.pimentelsoto@wmich.edu or you may feel free to contact me by phone at (269) 532-5013.

Sincerely,

Lourdes Pimentel-Soto
Appendix C

Consent Document
Consent Document

Western Michigan University
Department of Educational Leadership Research and Technology

Dissertation Committee Chair: Brett Geier, Ed.D.
Student Investigator: Lourdes Pimentel-Soto
Title of Study: School Principals’ Awareness of their Emotional Intelligence and Connections to Leadership

You are invited to participate in this research project titled “School Principals’ Awareness of their Emotional Intelligence and Connections to Leadership”

STUDY SUMMARY: This consent form is part of an informed consent process for a research study and it will provide information that will help you decide whether you want to take part in this study. Participation in this study is completely voluntary. The purpose of the research is to explore the perceptions of principals’ awareness of their emotional intelligence and how their emotional intelligence might be used to enhance their leadership practice: “will serve as Lourdes Pimentel-Soto’s dissertation project for the requirements of the Degree Doctor in Educational Leadership. If you take part in the research, you will be asked to participate in a 45-60 minutes virtual interview. Possible risk and costs to you for taking part in the study may be experiencing discomfort from being audio recorded when answering the interview questions and the time dedicated to participating in the interview process interview. The potential benefits of taking part may be 1) contributing to the literature, 2) gaining awareness of the construct of emotional intelligence and its domains and competencies, 3) associating emotional intelligence with leadership practice, 4) gaining awareness of other principals understanding of emotional intelligence and how their emotional intelligence might be used to enhance their leadership practices. Your alternative to taking part in the research study is not to take part in it.

The following information in this consent form will provide more detail about the research study. Please ask any questions if you need more clarification and to assist you in deciding if you wish to participate in the research study. You are not giving up any of your legal rights by agreeing to take part in this research or by signing this consent form. After all of your questions have been answered and the consent document reviewed, if you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to sign this consent form.

What are we trying to find out in this study?
The purpose this study is to explore the perceptions of K-12 principals’ awareness of their EI in relation to how they lead, and how their EI skills can be used to enhance their leadership practice.

Who can participate in this study?
The participants must be K-12 principals from within a Midwestern region of the US who have served for at least three consecutive years in their current schools.
Where will this study take place?
The study will take place in the State of Michigan. However, interviews will take place virtually utilizing WMU WebEx videoconferencing applications.

What is the time commitment for participating in this study?
The time commitment is 45-60 minutes interview. After the interviews, principals will receive their interview transcript for revision. Principals’ revision of their transcript is not mandatory. However, those who decide to review their transcript will dedicate additional time to the study.

What will you be asked to do if you choose to participate in this study?
You will be asked to answer questions relate to your awareness of the construct of EI in relation to leadership and your perception of how EI competencies can be used to enhance your leadership practice.

What information is being measured during the study?
Common patterns in the data will be identified to organize the data into codes. Codes are words used to represent chunks of data that illustrate the main ideas and statements of the participants. Codes then will be organized into categories to create themes. These themes will represent the major findings of the study. Each of the themes will include different perspectives provided by the school principals. These themes will then be used to answer the research questions. Finally, the findings will be compared with an EI model.

What are the risks of participating in this study and how will these risks be minimized?
Participation in this study is voluntary and participants may withdraw at any time. In addition, participants’ identifiers and responses will be confidential. The name of the participants will be replaced by a pseudonym. Therefore, this study presented minimal risk.

What are the benefits of participating in this study?
There are several expected benefits from participating in this study. First, the participants will be contributing to the literature. Second, the participants will gain awareness of the construct of EI and its domains and competencies. Third, participants will have the opportunity to associate their EI with their leadership practice. Lastly, at the end of the study, the participants will have the opportunity to gain awareness of other principals’ understanding of EI and how their EI might be used to enhance their leadership practices. There will not be any compensation or any type of payment for participating in this research.

Are there any costs associated with participating in this study?
The cost of participation consists in the principals’ time to engage in the interview process and the revision of the copy of their transcribed interview.

Is there any compensation for participating in this study?
There will not be any compensation or any type of payment for participating in this research.
Who will have access to the information collected during this study?
The student investigator, the chair committee, and an outside researcher to conduct an inquiry audit on the research study will have access to the data. In an inquiry audit, a researcher who did not participate in the data collection and data analysis process, examines the processes of data collection and analysis, and the findings of the research study.

The confidentiality of school principals’ identity will be maintained to those with access to the data, besides the student investigator.

What will happen to my information or biospecimens collected for this research project after the study is over? (Required under 45 CFR 46).
The information collected about you for this research will not be used by or distributed to investigators for other research.

What if you want to stop participating in this study?
You can choose to stop participating in the study at any time for any reason. You will not suffer any prejudice or penalty by your decision to stop your participation. You will experience NO consequences either academically or personally if you choose to withdraw from this study.

The investigator can also decide to stop your participation in the study without your consent.

If you have any questions about this study, please contact Lourdes Pimentel, the student investigator at (269) 532-5013 (cell) or via email at lourdesmaria.pimentelsoto@wmich.edu. You may also contact Ed.D. Brett Geier (the committee chair) at (269) 387-3490 or via email at brett.geier@wmich.edu, the WMU Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB) at 269-387-8293 or via email at hsrirb@wmich.edu, or the Vice President for Research 269-387-8298 if any questions or issues arise during the course of the study.

This consent document has been approved for use for one year by the Western Michigan University Institutional Review Board (WMU IRB) as indicated by the stamped date and signature of the board chair in the upper right corner.

I have read this informed consent document. The risks and benefits have been explained to me. I agree to take part in this study.

Please Print Your Name

Participant’s signature

Date
Appendix D

Interview Protocol
Appendix D
Interview Protocol

Project: School Principals’ Awareness of their Emotional Intelligence and Connections to Leadership.

Time of interview: ________________________________
Date of interview: ________________________________
Location: ________________________________
Interviewer: ________________________________
Interviewee: ________________________________

Introduction
Thank you for consenting to participate in this study. I would like to record the interview, so the study can be as accurate as possible. You may request the audio recording to be turned off at any point of the interview.

You have been selected to speak with me today because you have been identified as a K-12 school principal who has served for at least three consecutive years in your current position. I wanted to interview principals with at least three consecutive years working in their schools as principals to ensure the participants had leadership experience, knowledge of their staff population, and understanding of the organizational challenges school leaders face in supporting their staff.

My research project purpose is to explore the perception of K-12 principals’ awareness of their emotional intelligence (EI) and how they understand their EI might be used to enhance their leadership practice. Previous knowledge and experience with the construct of EI is not a requirement for this interview, as a definition of the construct of EI, its domains, and competencies will be provided during the interview.

A. Interviewee Background

1. How long have you been in your present position?
2. What had you done prior to this position?
3. What is your highest degree?
4. What motivated you to seek a leadership position as a principal?
5. Prior to this interview, what have you heard about the construct of EI?
6. What do you know about EI and its relation to leadership?
B. Emotional Intelligence

Before continuing, I will provide the definition of the construct of EI based on Goleman et al.’s (2013) EI model.

EI refers to one’s capacity to understand one’s own emotions, preferences, abilities, strengths, and limitations. Additionally, it refers to the ability to perceive other’s emotions and regulate one’s behaviors to influence other’s responses. EI is composed by four domains. These domains are self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management.

Now I will continue with the questions.

1. Within your role as a principal, how would you describe an EI principal?
2. To what extent do you believe your EI is associated with your leadership practice?
3. How do you understand your EI can be used to enhance your leadership?

C. Self-awareness

Now, I will ask you some questions in relation to the first domain of EI, self-awareness. Before continuing, I will provide the definition of self-awareness and its competencies.

Self-awareness refers to the ability to recognize one’s emotions as they are happening and understand their impact on one’s actions. It also refers to the ability to recognize emotions in others. The following are the three self-awareness competencies:

- Emotional self-awareness: Identifying one’s own emotions and recognizing their impact; using emotions to guide decisions.
- Accurate self-assessment: Knowing one’s strengths and limitations.
- Self-confidence: Having a sense of self-worth and capabilities.

Now I will continue with the questions.

1. Within your role as a principal, how would you describe a self-aware principal?
2. How would you describe your own experience with self-awareness in relation to how you lead?
3. Considering the competencies of self-awareness, what role do you understand self-awareness plays in your daily responsibilities as a principal? Can you provide examples?
4. How do you understand your self-awareness can be used to enhance your leadership?

D. Self-management

Now, I will ask you some questions in relation to the second domain of EI, self-management. Before continuing, I will provide the definition of self-management and its competencies.
Self-management refers to the ability to manage emotions appropriately for the situation at hand. It includes the ability to anticipate consequences of acting impulsively and the capacity to calm oneself and move from a negative state to a positive one. The following are the six self-management competencies:

- Emotional self-control: Maintaining control of disruptive emotions and impulses.
- Transparency: Displaying honesty and integrity.
- Adaptability: Flexibility to adapt to change and overcome obstacles.
- Achievement: Inner drive to continually improve and meet standards.
- Initiative: Recognizing opportunities and taking action.
- Optimism: Maintaining a positive attitude and seeing the positive side of events.

Now I will continue with the questions.

1. Within your role as a principal, how would you describe a self-managed principal?
2. How would you describe your own experience with self-management in relation to how you lead?
3. Considering the competencies of self-management, what role do you understand self-management plays in your daily responsibilities as a principal? Can you provide examples?
4. How do you understand self-management might be used to enhance your leadership?

E. Social Awareness

Social awareness refers to the ability to recognize and understand others' perspective, feelings, and needs. The following are the three social awareness competencies:

- Empathy: Understanding and taking an active interest in others' emotions and perspectives.
- Organizational awareness: Understanding the organization, including its network and politics.
- Service: Recognizing and meeting others' needs, including employees' and customers' needs.

Now I will continue with the questions.

1. Within your role as a principal, how would you describe a socially aware principal?
2. How would you describe your own experience with social awareness in relation to how you lead?
3. Considering the competencies of social awareness, what role do you understand social awareness plays in your daily responsibilities as a principal? Can you provide examples?
4. How do you understand social awareness might be used to enhance your leadership?
F. Relationship Management

Now, I will ask you some questions in relation to relationship management, the fourth and last domain of EI according to the framework used in this research study. Before continuing, I will provide the definition of relationship management and its competencies.

Relationship management refers to the ability to effectively manage relationships, including the ability to inspire others and influence their responses. The following are the seven relationship management competencies:

- Inspirational leadership: Guiding and motivating with a compelling vision.
- Influence: Persuading others.
- Developing others: Supporting and guiding others growth.
- Change catalyst: Managing organizational change.
- Conflict management: Resolving disagreement.
- Building bonds: Building and maintaining relationships.
- Teamwork and collaboration: Cooperation and team building.

Now I will continue with the questions.

1. Within your role as a principal, how would you describe a principal with good relationship management abilities?
2. How would you describe your own experience with relationship management in relation to how you lead?
3. Considering the competencies of relationship management, what role do you understand relationship management plays in your daily responsibilities as a principal? Can you provide examples?
4. How do you understand your relationship management can be used to enhance your leadership?

Thank you for participating in this interview. If necessary, may I contact you for a follow up interview or to clarify some of your responses?