







# “Emotional intelligence in leadership: Its role in fostering employee engagement in Palestine’s ICT sector”

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<b>ARTICLE INFO</b>	Marwan Milhem, Mohannad Moufeed Ayyash, Ali Ateeq, Qadri Alzaghal and Mohammed Alzoraiki (2024). Emotional intelligence in leadership: Its role in fostering employee engagement in Palestine’s ICT sector. <i>Problems and Perspectives in Management</i> , 22(1), 338-352. doi: <a href="https://doi.org/10.21511/ppm.22(1).2024.28">10.21511/ppm.22(1).2024.28</a>
<b>DOI</b>	<a href="http://dx.doi.org/10.21511/ppm.22(1).2024.28">http://dx.doi.org/10.21511/ppm.22(1).2024.28</a>
<b>RELEASED ON</b>	Thursday, 08 February 2024
<b>RECEIVED ON</b>	Saturday, 26 August 2023
<b>ACCEPTED ON</b>	Friday, 29 December 2023
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<b>JOURNAL</b>	"Problems and Perspectives in Management"
<b>ISSN PRINT</b>	1727-7051
<b>ISSN ONLINE</b>	1810-5467
<b>PUBLISHER</b>	LLC “Consulting Publishing Company “Business Perspectives”
<b>FOUNDER</b>	LLC “Consulting Publishing Company “Business Perspectives”



NUMBER OF REFERENCES

61



NUMBER OF FIGURES

2



NUMBER OF TABLES

7

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## BUSINESS PERSPECTIVES



LLC "CPC "Business Perspectives"  
Hryhorii Skovoroda lane, 10,  
Sумы, 40022, Ukraine  
[www.businessperspectives.org](http://www.businessperspectives.org)

**Received on:** 26<sup>th</sup> of August, 2023

**Accepted on:** 29<sup>th</sup> of December, 2023

**Published on:** 8<sup>th</sup> of February, 2024

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### **Conflict of interest statement:**

Author(s) reported no conflict of interest

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# EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN LEADERSHIP: ITS ROLE IN FOSTERING EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IN PALESTINE'S ICT SECTOR

## Abstract

This paper aims to explore the nexus between leadership emotional intelligence and employee engagement within Palestine's information and communication technology sector. It seeks to fill a research gap by highlighting the impact of leaders' emotional intelligence on fostering a committed workforce. The study used a quantitative approach and a descriptive research design. Its target population was 5,281 full-time employees in Palestine's ICT sector, and 328 employees were sampled through probability multistage random sampling. The sample was split into groups based on job types and companies with more than 50 employees. The study's findings corroborate the hypothesized positive effect, with statistical analysis revealing that emotional intelligence directly influences employee engagement levels within the ICT context (Beta = 0.302; P-value = 0.000). Although highlighted as a crucial element, emotional intelligence is designated as only part of a complex engagement equation that requires further investigation into additional contributing factors, such as different dimensions of emotional processing.

## Keywords

emotional intelligence, employee engagement,  
leadership, ICT, Palestine

## JEL Classification

D22, M14, M19

## INTRODUCTION

Employee engagement and emotional intelligence are two critical factors that are vital foundations of organizational efficiency. These factors are crucial in determining an organization's performance and effectiveness. Even though each of these characteristics has been the subject of in-depth study, there is still a significant knowledge gap in the academic community on how they are connected (Al Marshoudi et al., 2023; Wang & Shaheryar, 2020). More specifically, a noteworthy lack of empirical research thoroughly explores how a leader's emotional intelligence directly impacts an organization's levels of employee engagement (Amah, 2023).

In the dynamic landscape of modern organizations, effective leadership plays a pivotal role in shaping employee engagement and driving organizational success (Zuniga, 2023). Emotional intelligence, the ability to understand, manage, and express emotions effectively, has emerged as a critical leadership competency, influencing interpersonal relationships and the broader organizational climate (Habib et al., 2023). Thus, it is applicable to delve into the intricate connection between emotional intelligence and employee engagement, exploring how emotionally intelligent leaders foster a positive, supportive, and motivating work environment that cultivates employee satisfaction, loyalty, and commitment.

Emotional intelligence and its multifaceted components highlight the significance of empathy, a core element of emotional intelligence, as a catalyst for fostering an emotional connection between leaders and their employees (Saha et al., 2023). Additionally, Saari (2023) emphasizes the role of effective communication in building trust, aligning expectations, and creating a sense of shared purpose. Anuyahong et al. (2023) underscore the importance of conflict resolution and team-building skills in promoting a collaborative and harmonious work environment.

Although there has been progress in connecting emotional intelligence with employee engagement, there are still significant gaps in the research, particularly concerning specific sectors and cultural settings (Segers, 2023). The Middle East, specifically Palestine, is still underrepresented despite having distinct cultural implications for the relationship between employee engagement and leadership emotional intelligence. The need for longitudinal research exacerbates the inability to comprehend the long-term dynamics of this connection.

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## 1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Employee engagement is a basic idea in today's workplace, widely acknowledged for its essential role in increasing productivity, job happiness, and corporate success (Dubey & Rana, 2023). Engaged individuals are likelier to exhibit higher performance levels, a stronger connection to their firm, and favorably contribute to workplace morale (Ghani et al., 2023; Kumar & Hetvi, 2023). Furthermore, engaged employees frequently have lower turnover rates, which lowers the expenses and interruptions associated with staff replacement (Paredes, 2023). This emphasis on engagement is significant in fast-paced industries such as information and communication technology (ICT), where employee creativity and innovation are critical for competitive advantage. Moreover, employee engagement, widely recognized as a vital factor in workplace productivity and success, refers to employee commitment and involvement in the organization and its values (Negros, 2022). Engaged employees are often more motivated, contribute more effectively, and are less likely to leave their organization. This concept has been the subject of extensive research, indicating that higher engagement levels lead to better job performance, increased productivity, and improved organizational outcomes (Shuck & Wollard, 2010; Viterouli et al., 2022).

Emotional intelligence plays a crucial role in fostering meaningful engagement between individuals. It allows individuals to understand and manage their emotions and empathize with others, leading to better communication and stronger

relationships (Estrada et al., 2020). Furthermore, emotional intelligence helps individuals navigate conflicts and challenges with empathy and resilience, ultimately enhancing overall engagement and collaboration within teams and organizations (Levitats et al., 2019). Individuals in leadership positions and employees with high emotional intelligence create a pleasant work atmosphere, promoting more significant employee involvement and commitment (Veshne & Munshi, 2020; Wang & Shaheryar, 2020). Therefore, emotional intelligence facilitates proficient communication, resolution of conflicts, and empathy, all of which are crucial for establishing a supportive and captivating work environment (Koutsoumpa, 2023). Thus, the association between emotional intelligence and engagement underscores the imperative for firms to prioritize cultivating emotional intelligence abilities among their employees and leaders.

### 1.1. Emotional intelligence in Palestine's ICT sector

Emotional intelligence plays a crucial role in Palestine's ICT sector, enabling professionals to navigate the challenges and dynamics of the industry effectively (Naz et al., 2019; Egbaria, 2023). By understanding and managing their emotions, individuals can build strong relationships with colleagues and clients, fostering collaboration and innovation (Guan & Jepsen, 2024). Moreover, emotional intelligence allows professionals to empathize with others' perspectives and adapt their communication styles accordingly, leading to more effective teamwork and problem-solving.

Integrating emotional intelligence in Palestine's ICT sector is essential for fostering a positive work environment (Giménez-Espert et al., 2020).

The growing ICT sector in Palestine requires skilled leaders who can tackle challenges and foster a strong workforce. Consequently, the significance of intelligence in shaping leadership and fostering employee engagement has garnered increased attention (Almadhoun, 2017). Emotional intelligence in leadership contributes to cultivating a motivated, dedicated, and productive workforce. Effective leadership fosters sustainable organizational success in Palestine's ICT landscape (Egbaria, 2023).

Thus, these concepts take on unique significance when considering the Palestinian ICT sector due to the region's socioeconomic and political challenges. The ICT sector in Palestine has been identified as a critical area for economic growth and development (UNCTAD, 2012). Political unrest, financial limitations, and a lack of resources impact employee engagement in this industry. Understanding the role of emotional intelligence in this context is crucial, as it may offer insights into strategies for enhancing employee engagement under challenging conditions (Pooja & Krishnan, 2023). This focus is particularly relevant given the rapid growth and evolving nature of the ICT sector in Palestine, which requires a highly skilled and engaged workforce to sustain its development (Amah, 2023).

## 1.2. Emotional intelligence and employee engagement

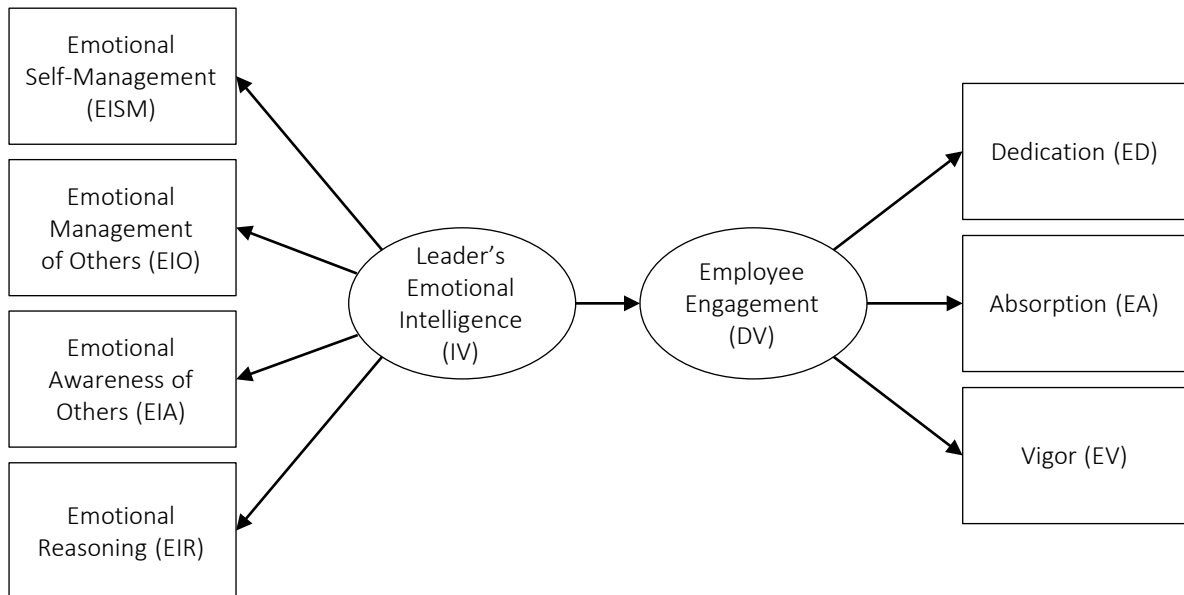
The intricate, interdependent association between leader's emotional intelligence and employee engagement is widely discussed. Even with the growing body of empirical evidence substantiating the significance of emotional intelligence in fostering employee engagement, the scholarly consensus on the extent of this relationship remains elusive. Khan et al. (2023) posit that the dimension of emotional self-regulation within emotional intelligence is a potent catalyst for heightened engagement within occupational contexts. Ravichandran et al. (2011) and Parent and Lovelace (2018) suggest that the emotional intelligence of long-tenured employees is more profoundly connected to their

levels of engagement, indicating a cumulative effect across an employee's organizational lifecycle. Webb (2013) and Al-refaei et al. (2023) indicated a potential link between emotional intelligence and leadership satisfaction; but their findings were inconclusive regarding the precise emotional intelligence skills that hold the utmost significance. On the other hand, Thor (2013) and Sarangi and Vats (2015) contend that emotional intelligence may not be entirely explained by emotional intelligence, indicating that other factors may also be at play.

Moreover, numerous studies have examined the value of emotional intelligence in various fields. The IT and hotel sectors in India and China, respectively, were the focus of Ravichandran et al. (2011) and Liu and Cho (2018), who cautioned that their results may not be generalizable. Zhu et al. (2015) and Gong et al. (2020) showed how important emotional intelligence is in the healthcare industry, especially for nurses. The discussion was furthered by Naz et al. (2019) and George et al. (2022), who looked at mediating factors, including work satisfaction and perceptions of organizational support. These results suggest that other organizational and psychological elements may condition the effect of emotional intelligence on employee engagement, which calls for more complex models that consider these issues.

Selvi and Aiswarya (2023) draw attention to the impact of demographic and generational factors. Age, education, and income may strongly moderate the connection between emotional intelligence and employee engagement. Geraci et al. (2023) provide a contemporary perspective, arguing that emotional intelligence served as a buffer against the detrimental effects of the COVID-19 epidemic on teacher burnout and self-efficacy. Last, Barragan Martin et al. (2021) and Junça Silva and Almeida (2023) concentrate on high school and online learning environments and highlight the importance of emotional intelligence in education.

Webb (2013) and Al-refaei et al. (2023) have shown a potential link between leadership and emotional intelligence. However, the need for more thorough models that consider a wider variety of variables contributing to employee engagement beyond emotional intelligence alone has been emphasized by Thor (2013) and Sarangi and Vats (2015).



**Figure 1.** Conceptual framework

As shown by the conclusions of Liu and Cho (2018) in the hotel industry and Ravichandran et al. (2011) in the IT sector, most research provides industry-centric insights. The studies warn against drawing too much from their findings, which begs the question of how industry-specific quirks affect the contribution of emotional intelligence to employee engagement.

Furthermore, there is a lack of knowledge on the interaction between emotional intelligence and demographic variables. A thorough understanding of these dynamics is still challenging, despite Selvi and Aiswarya (2023) suggesting that age, educational background, and income levels may influence this connection. Geraci et al. (2023) highlighted the significance of emotional intelligence in times of crisis, like the COVID-19 pandemic, but this field still lacks knowledge.

Barragan Martin et al. (2021) and Junça Silva and Almeida (2023) highlight the importance of emotional intelligence in academic settings, particularly its impact on student engagement as opposed to that of educators or other stakeholders. The educational sector, too, deserves more attention.

This study endeavors to discover the pivotal role of leader's emotional intelligence in shaping subordinates' engagement. Drawing upon

the empirical studies of Amah (2023) and Arif et al. (2023), there is an emerging consensus that leaders with elevated levels of emotional intelligence are more likely to cultivate loyalty and higher levels of engagement among their employees. Although Prati and Karriker (2018) have illuminated a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and employee engagement, the magnitude of this relationship has been variably categorized as weak to moderate. Moreover, the direct effects of emotional intelligence on employee engagement remain underexplored, reinforcing the need for further empirical research, as called upon by Pradhan et al. (2023). By concentrating on the ICT sector in Palestine and investigating the relationship between leaders' emotional intelligence and employee engagement levels, this empirical study seeks to overcome these deficiencies.

Therefore, this study aims to examine the impact of emotional intelligence on employee engagement. It elucidates how emotionally intelligent leaders recognize employee achievements, provide growth opportunities, and encourage contributions, nurturing a sense of purpose and significance among employees. In light of the discussion and to address identified gaps in the academic literature, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

*H1: A leader's emotional intelligence significantly affects employee engagement.*



## 2. METHODOLOGY

The present study develops a conceptual model that includes two fundamental constructs: emotional intelligence as the independent variable and employee engagement as the dependent variable, as shown in Figure 1. This model clarifies the causal relationships between these components. The study proposes leadership emotional intelligence as a multi-dimensional construct comprising four complex dimensions: emotional self-management, emotional self-awareness, emotional awareness of others, and emotional reasoning, to broaden the scope of leadership scholarship. Affective self-regulation and cognitive empathic processes are only a couple examples of the emotional intelligence domains these aspects jointly cover.

On the other hand, employee engagement is defined as the independent variable and is represented by the three integral dimensions of dedication, absorption, and vigor. These conceptual facets give a thorough understanding of the psychological capital workers devote to their jobs by combining emotional, cognitive, and physical components. The developed conceptual model is an effective heuristic to clarify the complex connections between leader's emotional intelligence and employee engagement. The model is designed to give an empirical framework for analysis, advancing scholarly debate and practical organizational behavior applications. The theoretical foundations operationalized in this way offer significant implications for strategic organizational development and human capital management, opening the door for further empirical validations.

The study adopted a quantitative methodology and a causal effect-based strategy. 5,281 full-time workers from Palestine's ICT sector were included in this study. In total, 439 questionnaires were given to the chosen workers. Since 328 questionnaires were returned, 75% of the total were returned by respondents. The decision to use a sample size of 328 was based on statistical considerations and practical limitations (Creswell, 2014). While a larger sample size would have been desirable, resource and time constraints prevented including more participants (Hair et al., 2019).

Despite the limitations, the sample size of 328 is still considered robust and provides adequate statistical power to draw meaningful conclusions (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). Probability multistage random sampling aimed to minimize bias and enhance the external validity of the findings (Babbie, 2016). Ensuring that each population member had an equal chance of being included, the study's results can be generalized to the broader population of ICT employees in Palestine (Casteel & Bridier, 2021).

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), structural equation modeling (SEM), and IBM SPSS AMOS 21 (Analysis of Moment Structures) were used to analyze the field study data to assess the hypothesis. Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) created the Utrecht Work Participation Scale (UWES) to gauge employee participation in the workplace. The notion under discussion is a second-order construct evaluated using the three sub-constructs of dedication, vigor, and absorption. Seven components make up the evaluation of dedication, three items make up the evaluation of vigor, and four more

**Table 1.** Employee engagement items

No.	Sub-construct	Item Code	Item statement
1	Dedication	EV	I have so much energy at work.
2	Dedication	EV	I work hard and am physically fit.
3	Dedication	EV	Every day, I am eager to go to work.
4	Dedication	ED	My work is meaningful to me and has a purpose.
5	Dedication	ED	I am passionate about what I do.
6	Dedication	ED	My profession inspires me.
7	Dedication	ED	I am pleased with the work I have accomplished.
8	Vigor	EV	I keep working for extended periods.
9	Vigor	EV	In my work, I possess mental toughness.
10	Vigor	EV	Even when things do not go well at work, I persist.
11	Absorption	EA	When I am working, I pay no attention to anything else.
12	Absorption	EA	When I am working hard, I am content.
13	Absorption	EA	While working, I tend to become irrational.
14	Absorption	EA	It is difficult to separate myself from my work.

**Table 2.** Emotional intelligence items

No.	Subcontract	Item code	Item statement
1	Emotional Self-Awareness	EIA	My manager knows how his or her emotions influence how they act at work.
2	Emotional Self-Awareness	EIA	My manager finds it simple to express how he or she feels about workplace problems.
3	Emotional Self-Awareness	EIA	My boss is aware of how I am feeling at work.
4	Emotional Self-Awareness	EIA	My manager is conscious of how his or her emotions affect the choices he or she makes at work.
5	Emotional Awareness of Others	EIO	My manager is aware of how individuals react to him or her while developing a relationship.
6	Emotional Awareness of Others	EIO	The elements that contribute to a pleasant work environment are known to my managers.
7	Emotional Awareness of Others	EIO	My boss is aware of the factors that influence how valued workers feel at work.
8	Emotional Awareness of Others	EIO	My manager has no trouble figuring out what drives workers to be productive.
9	Emotional Awareness of Others	EIO	My manager finds it easy to identify the things that motivate employees at work.
10	Emotional Awareness of Others	EIO	My manager is aware of the factors influencing workers' feelings of engagement at work.
11	Emotional Awareness of Others	EIO	My manager shows others that while making judgments at work, he or she has considered their emotions.
12	Emotional Awareness of Others	EIO	My manager takes into account the reactions of others while communicating choices.
13	Emotional Awareness of Others	EIO	My manager promotes a good work environment for everyone.
14	Emotional Reasoning	EIR	My boss supports staff in resolving problems that make them frustrated at work.
15	Emotional Reasoning	EIR	My manager is good at drawing the attention of the staff while communicating choices at work.
16	Emotional Reasoning	EIR	My manager informs stakeholders of choices promptly.
17	Emotional Reasoning	EIR	My manager at work can properly communicate his or her sentiments when someone offends them.
18	Emotional Self-Management	EISM	My manager has not had any issue finding the perfect phrases to describe how he/she feels at work.
19	Emotional Self-Management	EISM	When solving problems at work, my manager asks the team members how they feel about various options.
20	Emotional Self-Management	EISM	When anything irritates my manager, he or she replies properly.
21	Emotional Self-Management	EISM	My manager accepts criticism from colleagues.
22	Emotional Self-Management	EISM	My manager is good at handling difficult work circumstances.
23	Emotional Self-Management	EISM	My manager is open to suggestions from other employees.
24	Emotional Self-Management	EISM	My manager deals with coworkers who irritate him or her at work in an acceptable manner.
25	Emotional Self-Management	EISM	My manager handles sensitive issues at work skillfully.
26	Emotional Self-Management	EISM	When coworkers become irate at work, my manager understands what to say or do.
27	Emotional Self-Management	EISM	My management encourages staff to strive for company-related objectives.

items make up the evaluation of absorption. The scale elements pertinent to the chosen structures are displayed in Tables 1 and 2.

The Genos EI Inventory-concise (rater) scale was used to test emotional intelligence. It is a meticulously crafted instrument to evaluate the overall emotional intelligence score and several emotional intelligence subscales. According to Gignac (2008), this instrument comprises 27 unique components. Emotional self-awareness, emotional

reasoning, emotional management of others, and emotional self-management are the four sub-constructs that comprise the construct under analysis. Three different items are used in the evaluation of emotional self-awareness. Likewise, the assessment of affective thinking requires the use of four particular items. In addition, analyzing other people's emotional regulation requires including 10 specific elements. Last but not least, the evaluation of emotional self-management uses twelve recommended items.

### 3. RESULTS

The study leverages a combination of robust statistical methodologies, including exploratory factor analysis (EFA), principal component analysis (PCA), and structural equation modeling (SEM). It employs these rigorous statistical tools to discern nuanced patterns, latent variables, and intricate relationships that contribute to understanding emotional intelligence's role in shaping employee engagement within the unique cultural and professional landscape of the Palestinian ICT sector.

Table 3 presents the results of the KMO and Bartlett's test concerning the construct of emotional intelligence, which provides a statistically significant result with a P-value less than the traditional cutoff of 0.05. Because of its exceptional stochastic sampling sufficiency requirements, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test is an interesting technique that deserves significant attention. Awang (2010) found that the test result exceeded the 0.6 minimum allowable threshold. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) scores and Bartlett's test may be used to evaluate the suitability of the data for the data reduction procedure. When the KMO score exceeds 0.6, the data may be used with the selected technique. The appropriateness of the data for the data reduction approach is further supported if the significance of Bartlett's test is also substantial.

**Table 3.** KMO and Bartlett's test for emotional intelligence construct

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		.941
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	5292.139
	df	741
	Sig.	.000

The value for each component used Cronbach's Alpha coefficient to determine the internal reliability. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, which should ideally be greater than the cutoff of 0.7, must be computed to assess the internal consistency of a measuring tool. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficients for the four components that constitute the evaluation of the emotional intelligence concept are shown in Table 4. There was variation in the values of these coefficients, ranging from 0.68 to 0.96. From this, it may be concluded that

the individual parts of all four components have achieved the required degree of internal dependability. Awang (2010) states that Cronbach's values corresponding to the previously listed components are more than the predetermined cutoff point of 0.7, which results in the following finding.

**Table 4.** Reliability analysis for emotional intelligence components

Component Name	Sum of items	Cronbach's Alpha
Emotional Self-Management	12	.968
Emotional Management of Others	10	.968
Emotional Awareness of Others	4	.881
Emotional Reasoning	3	.685

*Note:* Cronbach's alpha: average internal consistency and item reliability; preferable with EFA for factor extraction; 0.7 acceptable. \* CR: measure scale reliability generally; recommended with CFA\* AVE: quantifies the variation a construct accepted at 0.5 may capture. Average Variance Extracted, or AVE. Composite Reliability, or CR.

With a P-value of less than 0.05, Table 5 presents the results of the KMO and Bartlett's test concerning the construct of employee engagement construct statistically significant result. Furthermore, it is generally acknowledged that a sample adequacy score greater than or equal to 0.6 on the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test indicates very high quality. Two statistical metrics may be used to evaluate the suitability of the data for the next data reduction technique: the significance of Bartlett's Test and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) score. When the KMO score exceeds 0.6, the dataset has enough sampling. In a similar vein, a substantial result from Bartlett's test indicates that the given data is appropriate for use with further reduction methods.

**Table 5.** KMO and Bartlett's test for employee engagement construct

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		.892
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1665.550
	Df.	136
	Sig.	.000

While considering the degree of linkage between many components while evaluating a shared construct or explanatory variable, the idea of internal nexus, or internal cognition, is relevant. Table 6 shows the Cronbach's Alpha coefficients for the three parameters considered while evaluating the



employee engagement construct. The internal consistency and dependability of the measuring device are shown by these coefficients, which range from 0.829 to 0.949. As a result, every item in the three components has reached the required degree of consistency. This indicates that each component's Cronbach's alpha value is more than 0.7.

**Table 6.** Reliability analysis for employee engagement components

Name of Component	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha
Dedication (ED)	7	.949
Absorption (EA)	4	.858
Vigor (EV)	3	.829

The CFA's evaluation of leaders' emotional intelligence and employee engagement was intended to determine the importance of each component. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was used to validate the coherence and consistency of each dimension within the investigated constructs. The CFA method was carried out in line with the measurement model shown in Figure 2. Calculations of the factor loading, squared multiple correlations (R<sup>2</sup>), and the strength of the causal relationship between the constructs of a leader's emotional intelligence and employee engagement were done using the AMOS program.

Figure 2 demonstrates the relationship between employee engagement and emotional intelligence. Table 7, on the other hand, shows an increase of 0.302 units in employee engagement for every rise in emotional intelligence for every unit. It is also important to point out that the regression weight estimate, which measures the link between two variables, was found to be roughly 0.302. This estimate came with a standard error of around 0.088, indicating the uncertainty surrounding the estimate. The z-score was calculated by dividing the regression weight estimate by the estimated standard error. The regression weight estimate in this instance was 0.302, and the estimated standard error was 0.088. These numbers were

divided, and the resulting z-score was computed to be 3.447. In other words, it was discovered that the standard errors were higher than zero and that the estimate for the regression weight was 0.302.

Additionally, there is less than a 0.001 chance of obtaining an absolute value critical ratio of 3.447. A two-tailed test revealed that the regression weight of emotional intelligence in predicting employee engagement showed a significant departure from zero at the 0.001 level. The hypothesis is confirmed, given that the acquired P-value was discovered to be less than the preset significance threshold of 0.05. Thus, employee engagement is significantly and directly influenced by emotional intelligence.

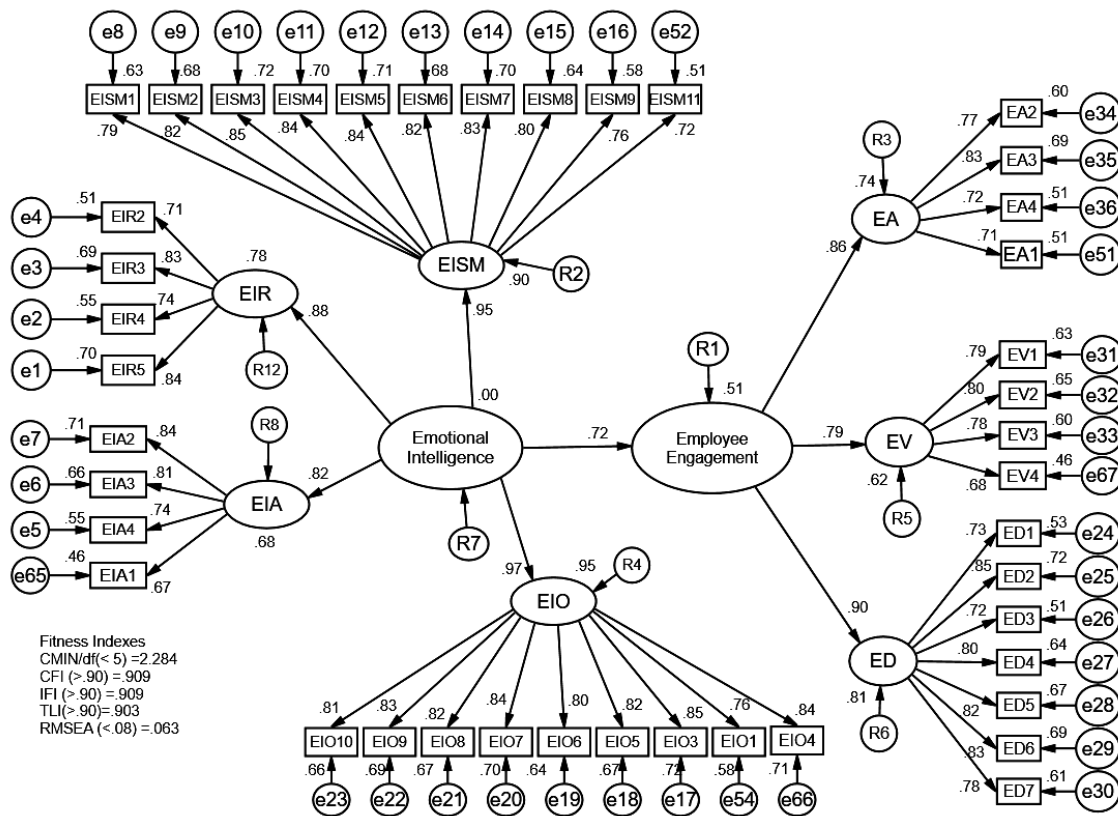
After computation, the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) comes out to be 0.06, suggesting that the model fits the data relatively well. The model matches the data rather well, as shown by the values of 0.90 for the incremental match index (IFI) and comparative fit index (CFI). Furthermore, the chi-square statistic represents the permissible range to degrees of freedom (CMIN/DF) ratio of 2.28. The "close fit" hypothesis states that the population-wide root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) is less than 0.05. This investigation looked at a sample RMSEA value of 0.080 to assess the plausibility of this hypothesis. According to the findings, there was a 0.063 chance of finding a sample RMSEA as high as 0.080. As shown in Figure 2, every last item had factor loadings higher than the recommended cut-off of 0.6. The study can conclude that the measuring model has entered a one-dimensional state.

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was successfully implemented, as shown by the satisfaction with the fitness index produced. Before moving on to the next stage of structural modeling, it was deemed critical to complete this milestone. The factor analysis results showed that every item satisfied the requirements for Composite Reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE), demonstrating that the set standards were fulfilled. The emotional intelligence component

**Table 7.** Path analysis

Construct	PATH	Construct	Beta Estimate	Standard Error	Critical Region	Significance Value (P)	Result
EE	←	EI	.302	.088	3.447	***	Significant

Note: Beta ( $\beta$ ); Range: -1 to +1. It analyzes confidence intervals and significance. *p*-values; *p* 0.05 is the significance level based on the degrees of freedom (Cheah, et al., 2023). EE = employee engagement; EI = emotional intelligence.



Note: EIR = Emotional Reasoning; EISM = Emotional Self-Management.

**Figure 2.** Hypothesized link between employee engagement and emotional intelligence

had high internal consistency, as seen by its composite reliability (CR) score of 0.94. The emotional intelligence construct's average variance extracted (AVE) was found to be 0.80, suggesting that it captures and explains the variance in its corresponding indicators well. A composite reliability (CR) grade of 0.88 for employee engagement demonstrated a respectable internal consistency. The computed average variance extracted (AVE) for the employee engagement construct was 0.72, suggesting that this specific construct accounts for significant variability in its indicators. All of the items included in this study achieved the required composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE) values show how reliable and strong the measurement model used in this investigation is.

#### 4. DISCUSSION

The results of this empirical analysis carried out in Palestine's ICT industry reveal a strong link between leaders' emotional intelligence and their employees' engagement. It supports the findings

of Thor (2013), Ravichandran et al. (2011), and Webb (2013). The research goal was to investigate the specific effects of emotional intelligence on employee engagement, in contrast to Webb (2013), who found a link between organizational happiness and leadership satisfaction.

Though relevant, emotional intelligence only partially captures the complex dynamics of employee engagement. Emotional intelligence was shown to be inadequate to fully account for all the variables in work engagement (Thor, 2013), which is consistent with this study. Current theories of emotional intelligence lack a holistic and all-encompassing approach, according to Chopra and Kanji (2010). The advocates argue that many factors, including interpersonal ability, socioeconomic background, learned proficiencies, and natural skills, affect emotional intelligence. This idea adds another level of complexity to the findings by arguing that although emotional intelligence is essential in promoting employee engagement, it is just one aspect of a complicated system that includes many other aspects.

There is still a lot to learn about how to understand emotional intelligence in the workplace, according to Joseph and Newman (2010). The study specifically draws attention to the need for further research on the unique roles that emotion perception, understanding, and regulation factors play in illuminating work performance. By examining the complex link between emotional intelligence and employee engagement within Palestine's unique socio-cultural and industrial ICT setting, the current paper adds to the body of knowledge already in existence. The addition of unique features relating to the Palestinian ICT industry strengthens the assertion of the crucial function of emotional intelligence and furthers the understanding of this topic. This study helps to underline how important emotional intelligence is for boosting employee engagement. Additionally, it recognizes the complex and diverse character that both structures possess. Adding a more complex component and providing direction for potential research into the link between emotional intelligence and employee engagement contributes to the body of current literature.

The results of this study significantly advance the theoretical frameworks for employee engagement and emotional intelligence, particularly in Palestine's ICT sector. This study attempts to validate and improve pre-existing ideas about leadership and organizational behavior by providing empirical support for a link between employee engagement and emotional intelligence. Adding a culturally specific and industry-focused viewpoint adds complexity to the corpus of literature already in existence, therefore establishing a strong case for applying these theoretical frameworks across many cultures and industries.

Given the well-documented relationship between a leader's emotional intelligence and the degree of employee engagement within an organization, it is crucial for businesses to strategically align their training, development, and hiring procedures to give emotional intelligence skills development a top priority. The expression of emotional intelligence can be seen in various organizational contexts, such as during the selection process for leadership positions or as part of comprehensive employee development programs that include specialized training modules aimed at enhancing emotional intelligence. The ensuing improvement in energy efficiency may

significantly affect an organization's productivity, its workforce's well-being, and its workers' overall job satisfaction.

The results of this study support the hypothesis that, in Palestine's ICT sector, a leader's emotional intelligence has a major impact on employee engagement. This finding is consistent with an increasing amount of literature that highlights the critical role that emotional intelligence plays in both organizational success and effective leadership. Goleman (1998), for example, makes the noteworthy claim that emotional intelligence plays a crucial role in leadership performance. He suggests that leaders with high levels of emotional awareness and management can create more favorable work environments, which in turn increases employee engagement. Further evidence for this comes from George et al. (2022), who define emotional intelligence as the ability to recognize, understand, and manage one's own emotions and the emotions of others, highlighting its importance in creating emotionally intelligent leadership practices that can improve employee satisfaction and commitment.

Furthermore, George et al. (2022) highlight the direct relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership styles, pointing out that emotionally intelligent leaders are able to effectively influence the attitudes and behaviors of their followers, which enhances organizational climates and increases employee engagement. This is especially important in light of the ICT sector in Palestine, where the demands of a fast-paced, dynamic industry call for leadership that is both technically and emotionally astute. This is further supported by research by Habib et al. (2023), which shows via a number of studies that emotional intelligence – more so than conventional intelligence measures – is a crucial factor in determining good leadership. These references collectively support the study's conclusion that emotional intelligence in leadership plays a crucial role in fostering employee engagement, suggesting that organizations, especially in sectors as critical as ICT in regions like Palestine, should prioritize the development of emotional intelligence competencies among their leaders.

The findings highlight the value of emotional intelligence as leadership ability, demonstrating its significance beyond being considered a just soft skill. Since emotions substantially impact emotional intel-

ligence, a manager's understanding, control, and use of emotions is a valuable strategic resource for any firm. The development of a high degree of emotional intelligence among managers can support improved interpersonal connections and eventually result in beneficial work results in Palestine's diverse cultural environment. As a result, emotional intelligence becomes increasingly crucial for enhancing team dynamics, facilitating organizational change, and deftly navigating the complex webs of social interactions that frequently characterize the modern workplace.

Though the research on leaders' emotional intelligence and its impact on employee engagement in Palestine's ICT industry offers valuable new information in a field that has not received much attention, it is crucial to recognize its limitations. Its unique geographical and industrial qualities are the source of one of the main limitations. The focus on Palestine's ICT industry might restrict the research findings' external validity and their capacity to be applied to various cultural or industrial contexts. The use of a quantitative technique may lead to the emergence of yet another possible limitation. While qualitative methodologies excel at capturing the nuanced opinions and daily lives of employees and leaders, quantitative research, famed for its statistical precision, may need to catch up in this area.

Additionally, even if a probability multistage random sampling approach is robust, some sampling error may still be introduced. The study uses self-reported metrics, concentrating on employee engagement and emotional intelligence. It is crucial to remember that self-reported assessments are subject to possible biases, such as social desirability and errors in self-evaluation. Next, it is assumed that the study's use of IBM SPSS AMOS to conduct confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural equation modeling (SEM) correctly depicts the complexities of human behavior and relationships within an organization-

al setting. It is vital to recognize that this technique might not always adequately portray the complex nature of these events.

Given the present constraints, it is appropriate to provide a few recommendations for prospective directions of further research. By expanding the study's scope to include various industrial sectors and nations, it may be possible to increase the generalizability of the results. A mixed-method approach and quantitative statistical analysis with qualitative data can improve future research projects. This blending of techniques enables a thorough and all-encompassing view of the issue. Future research must include alternate sampling techniques that can reduce biases and mistakes in the sample area more effectively and efficiently. It is also worthwhile to consider peer assessments or supervisor evaluations to validate the results obtained from self-reported measures. Compared to traditional statistical methods like SEM, the use of advanced analytics or machine learning algorithms offers the chance to get alternate viewpoints and achieve more thorough model fits. Additionally, other variables like organizational culture, leadership philosophies, and socioeconomic issues offer a comprehensive and multifaceted perspective beyond this study's restricted scope.

In summary, this study contributes to the body of literature by offering concrete data from Palestine's ICT industry, highlighting the importance of emotional intelligence in leadership as a means of raising worker engagement. It supports the ideas of Goleman (1998), George et al. (2022), Habib et al. (2023), and Amah (2023), who all support the inclusion of emotional intelligence in leadership development programs. Cultivating emotionally intelligent leadership may be a critical lever for improving organizational performance and employee engagement as businesses grapple with the difficulties of the modern workplace.

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## CONCLUSION

This study focused on the Palestinian ICT sector, testing a relationship between a leader's emotional intelligence and the level of employee engagement. The findings emphasize the criticality of emotional intelligence as a directly influential factor in levels of employee engagement. This not only reinforces but also extends the existing scholarly conversation that usually centers around the cognitive abilities of leaders. The data underline the increasing necessity for leaders equipped with high levels of emotional intelligence, especially given the complex, ever-changing landscape of international busi-

ness. Moreover, emotional intelligence is not a singular skill but a composite of various emotional and social competencies that enhance leadership effectiveness. Previous research has often prioritized the examination of the skills and behaviors of leaders. This study enriches this perspective by examining how these emotional intelligence behaviors resonate with employees, thereby substantially affecting their level of engagement.

Given the empirical validation of the study's hypothesis, organizations should consider incorporating emotional intelligence as a cornerstone in their leadership development programs. Doing so will likely not only result in a more engaged workforce but also yield benefits in productivity and adaptability. As the data suggest, a slight increase in a leader's emotional intelligence can have a measurable positive impact on employee engagement, affecting the organization's overall performance and sustainability. This study contributes significantly to the existing body of literature by providing empirical evidence for the integral role of a leader's emotional intelligence in influencing employee engagement. It is a valuable resource for organizational leaders aiming to refine their internal strategies to enhance employee engagement and productivity. Finally, this study not only verifies its initial hypothesis but also provides actionable insights for academic and corporate audiences aiming to better understand the dynamics of leadership and employee engagement.

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors express their gratitude to Gulf University for the significant financial resources that facilitated the publication of this work.

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