Article

Being an Emotionally Intelligent Leader through the Nine-Layer Model of Emotional Intelligence—The Supporting Role of New Technologies

Athanasios Drigas 1,* , Chara Papoutsi 1,2 and Charalabos Skianis 2

1 Net Media Lab & Mind & Brain R&D, N.C.S.R. ‘Demokritos’ Athens, 15341 Agia Paraskevi, Greece; papoutsi.xara@yahoo.com
2 Information and Communication Systems Engineering Department, University of Aegean, 82300 Samos, Greece; cskianis@aegean.gr
* Correspondence: dr@iit.demokritos.gr

Abstract: Several years ago, a characteristic of leadership was the intelligence index, but in recent years this has changed, and emotional intelligence is considered an important parameter for a leader. A leader who shows a high index of emotional intelligence can activate his/her human potential and subsequently others. There is a large body of literature on “what” great leaders should do, but more emphasis needs to be placed on “how” to develop such leaders by focusing on detailed individual behavior change and self-development. The current article aims to investigate the concept of emotional intelligence and describe the levels of the emotional intelligence pyramid model and how these are reflected in the role of leadership. The theoretical model is complemented by a set of metacognitive and metaemotional strategies while emphasizing the role of technologies to provide fertile ground for the implementation of emotional intelligence skills in leadership. The strategies framework provides a training paradigm for implementation in education and working environments. The results of this article provide a new theoretical framework of the emotional skills a leader must possess, and they also provide a useful framework for cultivating them, which will promote long-term human capital development and help everyone achieve educational and professional success. The pyramid model of emotional intelligence and its strategies can have practical applications in any form of leadership, as research has shown a positive correlation between these two concepts.

Keywords: emotional intelligence; leadership; leaders; students; pyramid model of emotional intelligence; strategies; new technologies; serious games; brain rewiring; virtual reality

1. Introduction

For many years, there was the impression that emotions in the workplace were something negative. Experiencing, recognizing, and expressing emotions was a sign of weakness, a source of confusion, and a diversion from the path of rationality and correct decisions. In recent decades, however, things have changed. The business world has begun to recognize that emotion can act as a valuable source of information that, if properly recognized and harnessed, can lead to spectacular results.

Because of a global economy that is becoming more prevalent due to the massive flood of information and new technology, work settings are becoming more demanding and competitive. Leaders and managers face severe competition and pressures today, and the quality required to thrive in their businesses depends on learning, cooperation, and healthy intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships. Leaders are required to develop a variety of digital skills to meet the challenges posed by digital transformation. These skills are primarily related to the capacity to communicate effectively in a digital context, take the initiative, quickly adapt to new situations and behaviors, and deal with pressing complex problems [1]. Beyond cognitive intelligence and specialized expertise, other leadership...
abilities are essential. By developing their emotional intelligence (EI) skills, leaders can broaden the scope of their inclusive leading abilities [2]. As a result, there is a greater emphasis on emotional intelligence in leadership when it comes to managing the change process [3]. Companies of all stripes require organizational and leadership qualities that are different from those that made them successful in the past, according to Moldoveanu and Narayandas (2019) [4]. Therefore, they must have the necessary technical, interpersonal, and communication skills.

Researchers have attempted to illustrate the emotional competencies required for leadership in studies. Flexibility, self-assurance, self-awareness, invention, and initiative are emotional abilities that leaders must have to be catalysts for change [5]. Mumford, Campion and Morgeson (2007) created a model with four groups of leadership skills: cognitive skills, interpersonal skills, business skills, and strategic skills [6]. These four groups of leadership skills are made up of other related skills, with some of them directly related to emotional intelligence, such as active listening, social perceptiveness, and management of personnel resources. Emotional expressiveness, emotional sensitivity, emotional control, social expressiveness, social sensitivity, and social control are some of the crucial emotional skills for leadership, according to Riggio and Reichard (2008) [7]. As stated by Issah (2018), a leader needs to be able to demonstrate self-awareness, self-regulation, self-motivation, empathy, and social ability [3]. According to a different study, a leader’s emotional accountability is crucial to the management process [8]. Moreover, in the same study, the four components of emotional intelligence—self-awareness, self-control, social awareness, and relationship management—are the foundation of effective leadership [8].

For leaders to be able to create a performance-enhancing culture in their organizations, emotional intelligence skills are required, but they also need to raise the consciousness of their ideals to develop a culture that is ethical, compassionate, and sustainable. Research has shown that they must possess the following qualities: radical thinking, authenticity, leadership that transcends ego, self-determination values, and a commitment to the organization’s whole stakeholder base, which includes the globe [9]. Without ongoing personal and professional development, nobody can accomplish that. The objective is to create as many leaders as possible who exhibit these traits at an early age. To do this, leaders should actively rewire their brains as well as the insights they generate, practice, and reflect frequently [9,10].

Throughout their academic careers, students should have the chance to take on leadership roles to develop their interpersonal skills, sense of self, and ability to do work efficiently. Additionally, it offers a chance to develop and demonstrate good interpersonal and communication skills. Students should be prepared to gain leadership skills and develop emotional intelligence, developing a better knowledge of their mental processes and problem-solving techniques. Understanding one’s personality type can help students reach their full leadership potential and self-development. Leadership that is based on emotional intelligence promotes a positive rewiring of the brain [9].

The emotional competencies required for effective leadership have thus been the subject of numerous studies. The presentation of all necessary emotional skills, not just the most evident ones, and the presentation of techniques that will consistently and persistently contribute to the development of each emotional ability are areas where there may be a substantial gap. This study’s motivation is to present the nine-layered pyramid model of emotional intelligence in the context of leadership and to show how each level’s emotional skills should be mastered by each leader for them to be emotionally intelligent, successful, and effective. While avoiding remaining at the level of a simple skill reference without the reinforcement and strengthening of some crucial strategies, the goal is to simultaneously present those strategies that will lead practically and gradually to the achievement of this goal. Additionally, the mention of technological tools that support the growth of emotional intelligence aims to advance the conversation about the function of leadership in the contemporary and digital era.
To achieve this goal, the paper seeks to address the following questions: How does each level reflect in an emotionally competent leader? What strategies might develop his emotional skills? Can technologies complement each other in cultivating emotional intelligence?

2. Theoretical Background

2.1. Leadership

Leadership could be defined as the process whereby an individual (leader) influences a group of people in such a way that they voluntarily, willingly, and with appropriate cooperation give their best to attain effective goals arising from their group’s mission and its ambition for progress or a better future [11]. Leadership can also be defined as having a set of duties, responsibilities, attitudes, abilities, and behaviors that enable a person to sustainably bring out the best in others [12], influencing the thoughts, emotions, attitudes, and behaviors of a small or large formal or informal group of people.

Due to the complexity of society, leadership is becoming increasingly complex as well; in fact, “evolutions and revolutions in technology, globalization, company consolidation, and marketplace fragmentation have profoundly changed the structure of organizations.” [13]. The leader is the person who is called upon to find and provide the meaning the group is looking for, to offer a way out, and to guide the emotional responses to a given situation.

Good leaders can maximize team productivity, shape a positive culture, and promote harmony and open communication within the team. The inspiration and influence they generate are really important to the progress of any team or organization, in any context. A basic condition for leadership to be effective is the cooperation of the persons involved, communication, and the character of the leader.

In the literature, there is much reference to transformational leadership, which changes for the better of both the individual employee and the organization itself. Superior leadership performance—transformational leadership—occurs when leaders broaden and elevate the interests of their team members when they promote an understanding and acceptance of the goals and mission of the organization, and when they inspire their team members to put the group’s welfare ahead of their self-interest [14]. Empowerment is the term for this procedure. Transforming leaders support and uplift followers rather than using power over them. Leaders may clash with followers’ growing sense of efficacy and purpose when they push followers to rise beyond limited interests and work together for transcendent aims, making transformational leadership participatory and democratic [15]. Moreover, as López-Zafra et al. (2008) point out, a capable leader becomes a role model for employees, gains their trust, and connects with them on a deep level [16]. This connection is best achieved through the emotional route, as the leader conveys feelings of passion and enthusiasm often through the use of non-verbal emotional signs (eyes, speech style, etc.).

Today’s leaders must be adaptable enough to draw from a wide range of leadership styles, including both established and emerging ones as well as some that have not yet been formalized. Some of them are transactional, transformational, team, servant, situational leadership (SL), authentic, empathetic, awakened, resonant, and spiritual leadership [17,18]. The most effective leaders are adept at a variety of leadership philosophies (i.e., coercive, democratic, coaching, transformational, etc.) and have the versatility to change between them as needed [19].

2.2. Emotional Intelligence

Emotions are biologically grounded states that are converted into thoughts, feelings, and behavioral responses as a result of neurophysiological changes [20]. Emotions help us because they direct our behavior and our thought processes, especially when a quick response is required to sudden (and occasionally important) situations [21]. Additionally, emotions support intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships, situation management, and the ability to cope with difficulties in life.
The ability to recognize, evaluate, and control one’s own, other persons’, and group members’ emotions is referred to as emotional intelligence [22]. EI, according to Mayer and Salovey, is a cognitive skill that is distinct from yet related to general intelligence [23]. According to Mayer et al. (2003), it is facilitating thought with emotion, comprehending emotions, and controlling emotions [24]. Emotional and social skills, abilities, and facilitators make up emotional and social intelligence, in Bar-On’s perspective [25]. These components all link to one another and cooperate. They are crucial to how well we understand ourselves and others, how easily we express ourselves, and how we manage the demands of daily life. Additionally, EI has a small but significant predictive power for life satisfaction, according to Wong-Law, and it is related to but distinct from personality dimensions [26]. Based on Mayer’s and Salovey’s model, they in turn created a scale that measures emotional intelligence, mainly for work environments, to assess the expression and regulation of a person’s emotions, the recognition of emotions in others, and the use of emotions to help with performance [27].

Emotional intelligence can also be defined “as a set of abilities and skills that a person must train and develop gradually and hierarchically to reach emotional self-realization. It is the response to emotional stimuli, the recognition—the expression of emotions, the full awareness and management of our own emotions but also the emotions of others, the social skills for better intrapersonal, interpersonal, and working relationships, the empathy and compassion, the accurate discrimination of emotions with the ultimate aim of the emotional development of our potential, self–actualization, transcendence and finally the unity of emotions because humans are part of a united world” [28].

Understanding the different emotions one experiences, their different intensities, and their causes leads to emotional self-awareness. This gradually leads to the perception and understanding of the emotions of others, as well as their origin. The process and results of the development of emotional intelligence also include many components that are known to lessen stress for both individuals and organizations through conflict management, relationship building, stability, continuity, and harmony. Finally, it has deep connections to ideas about love and spirituality [29].

2.3. Emotional Intelligence and Leadership

Leadership is about more than just having power and control; it is also about having emotional ties, being truthful, and having spiritual principles [17]. Emotional intelligence is closely related to leadership, as it reflects the leader’s ability to prepare and help others to develop. This can be achieved in a work environment where goals are clear; initiative, motivation, mutual respect, and trust flourish; and each individual’s distinct role and contributions are recognized.

According to numerous studies, EI is a crucial element of effective leadership, effective leadership styles, leader performance, and leader emergence [30–32] and can have a favorable impact on a variety of working variables such as job satisfaction, job performance, turnover intentions, stress, etc. [33].

In 2015, Shankman Allen and Haber Curran coined the phrase “emotionally intelligent leadership” to encourage intentional attention on three facets: consciousness of self, consciousness of others, and consciousness of context [34]. According to a growing body of research, EI is an underlying component linked to transformational leadership, active-transactional leadership, authentic leadership, and self-leadership [32,35–37].

An important element that supports the dynamic relationship between leadership and emotional intelligence is the primary responsibility of leadership itself, namely the development of emotions. More specifically, a primary task of leaders is to inspire good feelings in those they lead [38]. This happens when they cultivate harmony and coordination, creating a pool of positive energy that unleashes the best in people.

To have an impact on the group as a whole and ensure organizational performance, leaders need to be aware of their own emotions from a personal level to an organizational one. They also need to control their emotions and act in an emotionally intelligent manner in
interpersonal situations [39]. A leader’s positive affect has been shown to influence creative goal performance. The relationship between leadership and emotions is intertwined. Leaders who support and motivate their subordinates create in the latter more positive emotions, such as optimism, than negative emotions, such as frustration [40,41].

Leadership is a process of social interaction, with the leader influencing the behavior of his followers, in turn influencing their performance outcomes. In fact, according to Humphrey, leadership is an inherently emotional process, where leaders try to understand the emotional states that govern their followers and end up seeking their proper management [42].

3. Materials and Methods

The purpose of this study is to investigate the levels of the pyramid of emotional intelligence and to match them with the abilities that each leader should have to develop on the one hand his/her emotional intelligence and on the other hand the emotional intelligence of his/her employees for positive results at all levels—personal and professional. In addition, the present study emphasizes the importance of metacognitive–metaemotional strategies for the development of emotional skills according to the levels of the pyramid, with the help of new technologies.

The first part of this study is dedicated to the pyramidal model of emotional intelligence with nine levels, where every level is matched with the skills and characteristics that every leader should have or cultivate in order to develop and master each level and move on to the next. We describe each level step by step separately by exploring the literature on the emotional skills required at each level.

In the second part of this study, the strategies that can, if adopted, contribute to the cultivation of emotional capacities for better and more effective leadership are presented in detail. This can also happen in the professional field and in studies for those who wish to take up leadership positions in the future. For this purpose, the literature was extensively studied to identify such strategies and enrich them with new ones. As a result, studies that offered strategies for cultivating emotional intelligence for leadership were emphasized.

The last part of this study concerns the potential of new technologies for supporting emotional development in the professional field. We mainly investigated the effectiveness of serious games and virtual reality.

4. Leadership and the Correlation with the Pyramid Model of Emotional Intelligence

The pyramid model of emotional intelligence is a theoretical model with stratification that includes those skills that one must acquire hierarchically and gradually in order to cultivate one’s emotional abilities, reaching higher levels and by extension increasing one’s overall emotional intelligence [43]. This expands the concept of emotional intelligence by expanding the focus from more intimate and interpersonal interactions to the wider world.

Each of the nine levels of the emotional intelligence pyramid plays a leading role in a successful leadership model. At each one of these levels, a leader or a budding leader must have certain skills, demonstrate certain behaviors, and cultivate others to improve his/her emotional skills and those of the people around him.

This interdependence between the nine levels of emotional intelligence in the first phase, and subsequently between them and the leadership, are of great importance in practice since they constitute the key ingredient of effective genuine leadership—harmony (Figure 1). The stages of the pyramid levels are all traversed by the metacognitive abilities of self-regulation, self-monitoring, observation, attention, memory, and adaptability [44]. Metacognition in the context of emotional intelligence refers to how someone perceives their emotional abilities to monitor, assess, and manage emotional thoughts for a better emotional state and emotional reaction as well as for the development of their personality [45]. This can serve as motivation to assist others in this area for improved interpersonal interactions.
4.1. Emotional Stimuli

In the first level, the ability to decipher emotional information and stimuli can enable a leader to choose a meaningful line of work and be successful [46]. A leader is exposed to a lot of information and stimuli every day in the workplace. This knowledge and the many stimuli must be incorporated by a leader because they aid in a deeper understanding of the group of individuals that make up the organization [47]. A leader at that level must recognize the emotional triggers that precede breakdowns [48] in order to understand the feeling that is going to be experienced and consequently trigger an emotional response that could affect the occurrence of a behavior.

4.2. Emotion Recognition—Perception–Expression of Emotions

The capacity and comfort of the leader in openly sharing thoughts and feelings by utilizing words and body language are key factors in successful personal and professional partnerships [49]. As a result of the leader’s ability to comfortably and openly communicate their emotions, others will also feel free to do the same, which frequently results in improved communication, understanding, and teamwork. Because leaders’ emotions affect how followers feel, think, and behave, a leader’s emotional expression is crucial in their interactions with followers [50]. Studies concentrating on leaders’ facial expressions have shown that perceivers’ emotional reactions are influenced by leaders’ facial expressions, which in turn influences a leader’s efficacy and attractiveness. This effect is likely the result of an emotional contagion process in which the leader’s positive emotions are linked with the fans’ positive feelings [51,52]. Better interaction outcomes result from the leader accurately assessing and recognizing the emotions of others [53].

4.3. Self-Awareness

Self-awareness is often characterized as conscious awareness of one’s personality, emotions, thoughts, capabilities, weaknesses, values, motivations, and desires. It is a psychological state in which one’s self becomes the center of attention [54]. A leader who recognizes their feelings is in tune with their own “inner signals” [19], reproduces their positive elements, and looks for ways to improve anything that might cause disharmony in their environment. Self-aware leaders accept responsibility for their flaws, blind spots, and hidden prejudices and routinely seek input to make improvements [55]. Self-aware leaders actively analyze how others will interpret their words and actions and work to improve any personal shortcomings so they can lead their peers more effectively [56]. The successful leaders of today must be conscious of their limitations and cognitive biases, as well as the impact that perceptions may have on their thoughts, emotions, actions, and

---

**Figure 1.** The nine-layered pyramid model of Emotional Intelligence.
strategic decisions [57]. Self-awareness may enable leaders to realize their potential as well as the potential of the companies they lead and the people they collaborate with [38]. The ability to understand oneself will enhance leadership skills and aid in navigating global issues [59].

4.4. Self-Management

The capacity to control one’s emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in various contexts is known as self-management. A person’s capacity for self-control stems from self-awareness. If one is not aware of one’s emotions, one cannot proceed and promote or contain them, depending on the occasion. A leader that possesses these qualities can learn, change, and modify along the road, and can be composed in the face of difficulty. Leaders who can control their emotions may find it simpler to make wise decisions, interact with people, and act reasonably in high-stress situations. Instead, they need to control their behaviors to make sure that the results they expect are in line with their internal standards [60]. A leader with self-control finds ways to manage disturbing emotions and stands out for his composure in difficult and demanding situations [61]. He openly admits his mistakes [9] and shortcomings, acts transparently, has adaptability, and is flexible in the face of new challenges. Self-restrained leaders tend to ponder and be thoughtful, tolerate change and uncertainty, enhance integrity, think more clearly and handle stress better, improve focus, and make better decisions [59,62]. Self-mastery involves developing a deeper understanding of both your internal and external environments as well as the ability to control distracting thoughts and emotions by paying closer attention to your interior states [59].

4.5. Social-Awareness—Empathy—The Discrimination of Emotions

Social awareness is a fundamental leadership quality that is vital to developing positive working connections. This makes leaders better socially aware individuals who are skilled at handling challenging individuals, understanding others’ emotions, and handling tense circumstances with tact and diplomacy [63]. The capacity to understand things from another person’s point of view is one of the most crucial characteristics of an empathic leader. Active listening skills are another trait of empathic leaders. To do this, one must not only pay attention to what is being said but also attempt to interpret the emotions that are being conveyed. This relationship enables a high degree of mutual trust, respect, open communication, and creativity [48]. Empathy allows people to share their thoughts with you, which produces fresh insights. Empathy does not mean adopting the feelings of others [64]; it means carefully considering their feelings and making intelligent decisions that allow for a positive response. Leaders with social awareness can identify and comprehend the emotions of their followers, then control and channel those feelings into a force for change [3], boosting others’ moods [38]. Leaders at that level frequently have a clear awareness of how their words and actions affect others, are sensitive enough to alter them when those effects are unpleasant [38], and understand the values and culture of the organization [48]. A leader also possesses organizational awareness, which is the capacity to interpret the circumstances surrounding emotions within an organization [48].

4.6. Social Skills—Expertise in Emotions

Social skills are defined in Goleman’s theory as our capacity to be visionary leaders, influence and develop others, communicate effectively, be a change catalyst, manage conflict, form relationships, work in teams, and collaborate [38]. A leader needs a broad range of social abilities. It shows trust when people know they can turn to leaders when times are tough, and being able to see the best in people and situations is a great approach for developing team relationships. Conflict resolution is a critical leadership skill that improves workplace harmony. Effective dispute-resolution techniques maintain employee morale and promote positive working relationships. An emotionally intelligent leader at this level manages conflict effectively, manages others’ emotions [65], can understand different practices and perspectives, finds the golden mean that satisfies everyone, creates
an atmosphere of friendly camaraderie, shows a willingness to cooperate, and tries to get others to show a willingness to cooperate too [64]. Additionally, managing relationships effectively entails dealing with people’s emotions [64]. Leaders employ these abilities to inspire others and resolve conflicts, frequently with humor and friendliness [38]. Building effective connections require having good social skills, which entails being aware of both our own and other people’s emotions [48].

4.7. Universality of Emotions—Self-Actualization

To be self-actualized is to reach your fullest potential [66]. A self-actualized individual has reached their full potential in life via personal development and peak experiences—moments of intense significance or emotion—and feels fulfilled [61]. Emotional intelligence and leadership should be viewed as leadership skill that calls for continual improvement and personal development throughout a person’s lifetime. Leaders at that level are motivated to establish higher goals for themselves through self-actualization. A self-actualized leader becomes one’s greatest self, upheld a standard of excellence, achieves personal objectives, persuades others, and gives all of one’s devotion, talent, energy, and skill [46,67]. The leader feels the desire to attain a more meaningful life, to cultivate to a greater extent the most positive elements he/she has been identified as possessing, and to enjoy more deeply the love and sense of accomplishment that work success brings. A self-actualized leader possesses the qualities of self-acceptance, self-awareness, and autonomy; follows their values, ideas, emotions, and beliefs; and comprehends the moral ramifications of their actions [68].

4.8. Transcendence

Transcendent leadership involves leading at all levels—at the level of oneself, others, and the organization [57]. A transcendent leader can inspire their immediate followers to perform above and beyond expectations by giving them special attention, stimulating their minds, and influencing them according to their ideals by encouraging subordinates to be more inventive and come up with innovative solutions to problems or new strategies for achieving the objectives. [69,70]. The leader at that level can convey visions based on values that will result in a greater degree of competence [57]. Leaders with this competency recognize and reward others’ accomplishments, talents, and growth; provide insightful comments and pinpoint others’ areas that require improvement; mentor; provide timely coaching; help them understand their emotions; assign challenging tasks; and strengthen a person’s skills. Leaders at the transcendence level focus their attention and all their energy on achieving a goal and on completing a mission, without an egocentric character. The leader creates relationships by examining only the character of the person in front of them and how good someone is in certain fields of employment, without being interested in origins, social status, etc. Transcendent leaders encourage followers to look beyond their limited interests and join forces to achieve a greater good, giving them a sense of power and significance [71].

4.9. Emotional Unity

At the emotional unity level, leaders must concentrate on the heart and spirit of each member of the team or organization they lead if they want to create and preserve a winning team culture that fosters unity and harmony. Everything is interdependent on one another, but most important is unity with others—a sense of shared values, belonging, and working together [46]. On a global scale, as influential leaders change the perspectives of their followers; our communities, societies, and organizations will advance, grow, and have the good of the whole as their primary goal. Leaders at that level possess humility, gratitude, modesty, and spirituality [72] and create an organizational culture that is based on the principles of altruistic love and altruistic actions, allowing leaders and followers to experience a sense of belonging and be understood and valued [73]. A leader makes decisions based on what is best for all parties involved, including the environment [9].
That level is also covered by compassionate love where every individual is viewed as a whole person with needs, wants, and desires. The employee comes first for the leader who leads with compassion and love, followed by the individual’s skills, and lastly the organization as a whole [74]. Emotional unity is associated with greater emotional stability on a personal level and a sense of harmony with oneself and others, which is associated with more genuine happiness. As a result, there is a rise in followers’ engagement and feelings of personal independence [75]. A state of oneness is what is meant by the idea of unity. This unity may take the shape of numerical unity, institutional solidarity, harmonious coexistence, or emotional agreement [76].

5. Strategies for Leaders or Potential Ones to Master at Each Level

Organizations, universities, and academic institutions must reorient their training and education respectively to include the limbic system to improve emotional intelligence. They need to support people when changing their old behavioral patterns and establishing new ones, which sometimes calls for an individualized strategy and leads to brain rewiring [77]. In addition, beyond any education, everyone must individually try to develop their emotional skills.

5.1. Emotional Stimuli

Understand what is producing your emotions—responses—reactions [48]. Pay attention to others’ emotional triggers as well. By having conscious upbringing experiences, emotional stimuli can be developed [54,78]. There is time built in for introspection, and these activities mix emotional, cognitive, and sensory inputs. Keep track of how your body responds to various emotional triggers [44]. The senses can be activated for the recognition and interpretation of emotional stimuli through sensory stimulation interventions, body-mind training, and attention training [79].

5.2. Emotion Recognition—Perception—Expression of Emotions

Pay close attention to body language, tone of voice, and facial cues to recognize and perceive your own and others’ emotions. Express your own emotions when appropriate [48]. Make a plan for where you want to take your emotional expression quotient if you want to alter it. Monitor your progress. Express yourself openly outside and inside of the office. Train with facial recognition software exercises [46]. Increase the scope of your emotional vocabulary to consistently identify and name the right emotion [44].

5.3. Self-Awareness

Use self-observation [80] to understand your strengths, weaknesses, motivations, emotions, and behavior. Assess how your actions, behaviors, and emotions affect others at work by watching or thinking about how they react to you. Analyze if the business decisions taken were wise. Keep track of what you aim to accomplish and then monitor your progress. Ask for feedback [81] on particular attributes—not to criticize, but to comprehend your emotions. Practice self-reflection, self-questioning, and introspection [54,60,82,83]. Use self-assessment exercises [47,73]. Concentrate on strengthening the skills they need improvement in [18]. Ask “what” for self-insight [71]. Practice mindfulness [84]. Write out your daily emotions and reactions [48].

5.4. Self-Management

Assume accountability for personal performance. Halt, take a breath, and gather yourself. It can be beneficial to step away for a moment when you find yourself in a scenario that makes you feel emotionally charged [48]. You can restore your composure and practice your reflective abilities by physically removing yourself from a situation. Use breathing exercises, meditation, and mindfulness [48]. Monitor your emotional reactions. Avoid becoming overwhelmed by dividing your work into manageable chunks. Create and check strategic visions for the organizations and strategic plans for personal life [57]. Pick
your words wisely [77]. Pause and think about the causes of a failure [77]. Use optimistic self-talk [85].

5.5. Social-Awareness—Empathy—The Discrimination of Emotions

Pay attention to your surroundings by keeping yourself informed of the actual situation [86]. Keeping an eye on the atmosphere at your workplace can help you to decide the best course of action for fostering harmony among your staff. Focus on the speaker’s body language, tone of voice, facial expressions, and word choice as you engage in active listening [87]. To be sure you comprehend, repeat back what you have heard [48]. To receive more information and clarification, ask questions [87]. Consider things from the viewpoint of another person by placing yourself in their position. Seek advice from others on different approaches to challenges. Acknowledge the uniqueness of each person [46]. Explore, learn about others, and embrace similarities and differences [48]. Consider other people’s emotions and respond accordingly [48].

5.6. Social Skills—Expertise in Emotions

Use communication and collaboration to achieve common objectives [88] and conflict management. Apologize if necessary; then, change your behavior as necessary. Tell the truth and be honest with the people you interact with [48]. Become curious about new people and the contributions they can bring to the team’s objectives [46]. Give them a chance to express their thoughts/perspectives/emotions [88]. Show respect. Take on responsibility. Using nonverbal cues to show others that you are paying attention and actively listening. Say “Thank you”. Praise. Be a good listener [77], and ask questions [12]. Be approachable and have a positive attitude. Use laughter for a positive emotional state [87]. Be precise, easily understood language, and be as explicit and specific as you can [48].

5.7. Universality of Emotions—Self-Actualization

Accept yourself and the selves of others [89]. Listen to the inner voices of your emotions. Recognize your defenses and try to let them go. Go beyond your comfort zone. Set specific, attainable goals for your team and organization [86,90], determine what is feasible, what are the top priorities, and what you need to do to achieve them [46]. Identify what brings you joy. Celebrate team progress [90]. Make short-term or long-term goals for yourself, do your best to achieve them, and track your progress [44].

5.8. Transcendence

Recognize what others need in order to grow, and support them in that [67]. Create opportunities [46]. Enumerate the various types of personalities that exist. Use positive encouragement [86]. Use meditation to rise above ego and shift from problem solving to purpose finding. Consider your team’s potential. Use perseverance, effort, creation, and hard work when faced with a challenging task. Inspire your team with goals [90]. Accredit other people’s work. Giving someone a piece of valuable feedback to help them modify their behavior and emotions [48].

5.9. Emotional Unity

Use mindfulness. Identify the needs of each team member, and then have everyone work together to address those requirements. Use togetherness and enjoyment [46]. Spend time with the staff [46]. Focus on others, recognize others’ abilities and contributions, and be willing to learn [74]. Treat people with respect and consideration for their rights [91]. Use meditation, prayer, spiritual exercises, yoga, outdoor walks, journaling, and institutional settings (e.g., rooms for inner silence and reflection) [73]. Lead calls for concentration and for producing harmony [76].

All these strategies help modify several critical mental processes to enable more optimistic and positive thought patterns that can significantly affect an individual’s performance [92]. Emotional intelligence is an important leadership trait. The development and
cultivation of EI, taking into consideration the levels of the EI pyramid, and practicing the corresponding skills and strategies will lead to positive outcomes for the leaders or students who may have leadership roles in the future. These positive outcomes include personal and professional well-being, positive brain rewiring, and organizational climate/effectiveness and emotional climate (Figure 2). The organizational climate/effectiveness entails goal achievement, productivity, conflict management, organizational performance-satisfaction, turnover intentions, and all the other overly important working variables [33] that are equally important to the flourishing and survival of a company or organization, along with any other technical skills required. Moreover, emotional climate indicates a specific type of organizational climate [93], which focuses on the general attitude of the organizational members toward their peers, leaders, and the company as a whole [94]. The emotional development of the leader will influence and improve the emotional intelligence of the employees, increasing their effectiveness both professionally and personally.

![Figure 2](https://example.com/figure2.png)

**Figure 2.** Successive progressive steps for positive results from the development of EI.

### 6. New Technologies for Enhancing Emotional Intelligence in Leadership

ICT tools are now used to a great extent and leveraged everywhere in all sectors. One area is the development of emotional intelligence. Considerable research and efforts have been made to create technological tools that will cultivate skills in leaders or students studying to potentially lead in the future. Some of these tools also aim to develop emotional skills. In addition, virtual teams are now expanding and bringing together individuals from various cultural backgrounds [95]. To be able to track and oversee ongoing team performance, those in charge of managing virtual teams should develop their EI and must undertake several tasks within the team while also helping the members to become a single, cohesive entity [96]. This could be achieved through the adoption of strategies, but also through the use of technological tools.

Serious games can be a novel approach for assessing, training, and evaluating leadership abilities, according to research [97,98], and they could stimulate entrepreneurial learning [99]. Since all players experience the same decisions and challenges and base their judgments on the same facts, serious games may be a more effective way to assess and build leadership skills [100].

A game called “FLIGBY” is used to measure and improve emotional intelligence abilities in the context of an entrepreneurship discipline that multidisciplinary students from management and computer engineering schools attend. It refers to the effective administration of a winery—a business involved in the production of wine—and the realization of the best outcomes in terms of the economic spectrum. As a result, for the users to accomplish something similar, it is necessary to ensure an environment of harmony and positive emotions within the business, which enables the achievement of collaboration in a wider range of business contexts [101].

Another serious game is “Systems Snapshot” which was created to improve knowledge of complex organizational models, specifically leadership and communication in complex systems. It is presented as a real-time role-play. Learning with System Snapshot includes both experiential co-creation of practice and imaginative co-creation of knowl-
edge. Empathy, which entails acting simultaneously as the role-player and as themselves, increases mutually developing knowledge [102].

Young people are also encouraged to enhance their emotional competence in order to be able to recognize and express their feelings and to establish effective online and offline communication through the League of Emotions Learners (LoEL) initiative [21]. People could benefit from this gaming app by becoming more aware of their emotional intelligence, by being able to recognize the advantages of managing their emotions, and by learning how to express emotions and communicate through videos, pictures, and audio. The project is particularly focused on professional environments. They can also gain from understanding how new technologies, as well as their behavior and non-verbal signs, can be used to convey emotions and influence interaction.

The Dharma Life Program is a cutting-edge method for raising emotional intelligence that targets personality flaws and stimulates neuroplasticity using a smartphone application and coaching [103]. Through the program’s use of neuroplasticity, users can make their maladaptive traits more adaptive, raising their emotional intelligence. The Dharma Life Program was administered to 26 participants in a leadership development context. According to the research, completing the Dharma Life Program opens up a new door for enhancing emotional intelligence skills.

Furthermore, virtual reality games may examine the impact of a leader’s emotional intelligence and transformational leadership on the efficiency of a virtual team through Massively Multiplayer Online Games (MMOGs) [104]. Numerous studies of MMOGs have shown similarities in skills across the game and organizational environments and the cultivation of emotional and social skills [105,106].

Finally, chatbots, another smart technology, can feel, comprehend, and interpret human emotions, and they are getting better at distinguishing emotions during team communication. Systems having these capabilities—sensing emotive signals as well as contextual data—have been seen as more gratifying and stimulating. To enable a more advanced observation of interpersonal communication skills and the development of EI capabilities, efforts have been made to construct intelligent conversational agents (chatbots) [107–109].

7. Discussion

In general, emotional intelligence is not a new concept. It is based on a long history of theory and research by sociologists, psychologists, and other scholars and researchers. From the studies that have been conducted so far, there seems to be evidence linking emotional intelligence to both effective leadership and a person’s overall success in life. A leader must possess a broad set of emotional intelligence skills to be able to deliver results, achieve a vision, act as a vehicle for creativity and entrepreneurship, create a fertile organizational climate for happy and productive employees, and generally lead the organization to multifaceted success.

Authentic leadership requires putting emotional intelligence into action. A fundamental task of the leader is to generate enthusiasm, optimism, and passion for work, as well as to cultivate a climate of teamwork, cooperation, and trust. The development of Emotional Intelligence is quite a challenging prospect, ensuring not only professional success but also a better and more meaningful relationship with ourselves, as well as personal satisfaction and fulfillment.

Ascending the levels of the emotional intelligence pyramid leads to an increase in a leader’s emotional intelligence and simultaneously leads to the cultivation of many cognitive, metacognitive, and metaemotional skills necessary for life. There is extensive reference and analysis to the specific pyramid model and its stratification structure, skills, and strategies that can be adopted and trained [43,44], as the overall goal is the evolution and development of the individual. Most importantly, students and adults must comprehend that the brain has to practice new skills repeatedly for them to be rewired for the development of new brain connections to take on a new behavior.
This article shows how each level of the pyramid of emotional intelligence is reflected in a leader, and it shows what those characteristics are that he/she should have at each level to increase his/her emotional skills and be emotionally intelligent. At the same time, strategies and techniques were presented that, through practice and training, can strengthen each level of the pyramid and, by extension, lead to self-improvement and self-determination. All this effort could be supported by technological tools in the leadership field that, in the future, may be more and more easily available.

Since research has demonstrated a positive correlation between emotional intelligence and leadership in a variety of disciplines, emotional intelligence skills based on the pyramid model of EI and its strategies to improve it can have practical implications in all types of leadership styles. Organizations need to develop their emotional capital to deal with problems such as poor morale, organizational stress, high staff turnover, and a lack of work–life balance. This is necessary for effective corporate governance [110]. In addition, studies have shown that the everyday practice of prioritizing the welfare of others has a reciprocal impact on business relationships and on how clients, partners, employees, and customers are handled [111]. Furthermore, leadership is regarded as both a science and an art in the field of education because someone in charge of a school unit must have a thorough understanding of the human element [112,113]. The head of the school must be a strong advocate for emotional intelligence in leadership, while also being adaptable, fluid, self-aware, flexible, and empathetic. According to studies, emotional intelligence is also recognized as a crucial and highly relevant prerequisite for academic leadership in higher education [114]. Academic leadership also benefits most from emotional intelligence skills linked to empathy, motivating and guiding others, and effectively managing oneself. Additionally, emotional intelligence is strongly supported as a component of programs for developing physician leaders to improve doctors’ leadership abilities over the course of their careers [115]. Studies’ findings supported the idea that clinical governance can help doctors use their emotional intelligence and ethical corporate social responsibility as catalysts for knowledge sharing [116]. Clinical governance is a transcendent power that directs clinicians in healthcare organizations toward patients and other clinicians.

First, leadership training programs and courses that include the pyramid model and its strategies that prepare adults and students to lead effectively in organizations to improve their strengths further and build a self-development plan should be developed. Students’ capacities to strategically map their careers and evaluate and build key leadership qualities that are essential to job success are more crucial than ever in today’s dynamic and uncertain global and technological surroundings. Some leadership courses emphasize “whole person” development and are grounded in the idea that adult sustainable behavioral change needs to be intentional [117]. Students who are taught emotional intelligence techniques in MBA programs reflect more favorably on their leadership potential and demonstrate how these techniques improved teamwork [118]. It is preferable to make a more global and complete effort for their strategies, techniques, and adoption. By putting the proposed theoretical pyramid model and its strategies into practice by including them in courses, active personal participation provides a crucial dimension for teaching pupils about these subjects. Both inside and outside of business schools, colleges, and universities, developing student leadership should be a top priority. This could include ethics, values, social–emotional skills, decision making, growth, empowerment, and problem-solving [119]. The development of leadership skills can be carried out even in teenagers, as has already been achieved through various programs [120], but with the inclusion of emotional–social skills such as those of the pyramid of emotional intelligence.

Moreover, leadership training workshops, seminars, and organizational activities in professional environments can be designed that include the strategies mentioned for each level to improve emotional intelligence. These workshops could also include a mix of performance-based assessments, self-reports, and 360-degree measures [121–123].

In addition, more mobile applications and corporate serious games could be created that would be solely aimed at cultivating emotional intelligence by taking into account the
skills and strategies that have been reported in this study. Finally, smart technologies such as artificial intelligent agents, affective chatbots, and virtual immersive technologies could be developed and be available for use in targeting the aforementioned emotional abilities and techniques for improving the EI of leaders and teams.

The behavior of leaders and managers can make a difference in the happiness and well-being of employees by influencing their emotional lives. That is, the leader should be emotionally intelligent (not emotional) and act as an emotional guide for the team. Leaders should manage with emotion and logic at the same time, since they can achieve better organizational results.

Without assistance from others, we cannot change our leadership style or increase our emotional intelligence. We must receive input on how our behavior affects others, and we must monitor our development concerning our learning agenda. Leadership with emotional intelligence is not a result. It is a never-ending process of learning, trying new things, failing, succeeding, and feeling satisfied. Technical know-how and intelligence are crucial components of effective leadership, but emotional intelligence pyramid skills, the aforementioned strategies, personal conscience, and self-determination are necessary ingredients that are missing from the formula.

8. Conclusions

This study presented the nine-layered pyramid model of EI and the emotional skills that each level encompasses to help leaders or future student-leaders gradually move to the next levels of emotional intelligence. The proposed model has already examined and integrated the knowledge derived from established emotional theories [48] and from the study of the existing literature that includes skills and strategies that a leader must possess and adopt gradually and hierarchically to be emotionally intelligent for beneficial results in personal–professional well-being and team effectiveness. The pyramid of emotional intelligence and its correspondence in the field of leadership was based on the need to upgrade leaders with the emotional skills required for personal well-being and for a better and more effective professional environment. The research showed that the skills and strategies mentioned have the potential to cultivate and enhance the emotional intelligence of leaders and potential leaders. In addition, studies have shown that new and smart technologies can be a helpful tool for the development of leaders’ EI and team effectiveness. To maximize the advantages of these strategies, more research is needed on how to integrate the pyramid of emotional skills and strategies into programs, seminars, courses, and workshops for a comprehensive and holistic approach. Finally, it is crucial to conduct more research on cutting-edge technologies that can support the training of EI in leadership. This is important for raising the standard of leadership in education and working environments.

Author Contributions: A.D., C.P. and C.S. contributed equally to the conception, development, writing, editing, and analysis of this manuscript. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: Not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

3. Issah, M. Change leadership: The role of emotional intelligence. *Sage Open* 2018, 8, 2158244018800910. [CrossRef]
6. Mumford, T.V.; Campion, M.A.; Morgeson, F.P. The leadership skills strataplex: Leadership skill requirements across organizational levels. Leadersh. Q. 2007, 18, 154–166. [CrossRef]
11. Bourantas, D. (Δημήτρης Μπουραντάς), LEADERSHIP, the Road to Lasting Success (ΗΓΕΣΙΑ, Ο δρόμος της διαρκούς επιτυχίας); Κριτική: Athens, Greece, 2005.
41. Lyons, J.B.; Schneider, T.R. The effects of leadership style on stress outcomes. Leadersh. Q. 2009, 20, 737–748. [CrossRef]
42. Humphrey, R.H. The many faces of emotional leadership. Leadersh. Q. 2002, 13, 493–504. [CrossRef]
43. Drigas, A.S.; Papoutsi, C. A new layered model on emotional intelligence. Behav. Sci. 2018, 8, 45. [CrossRef]
50. Eberly, M.B.; Fong, C.T. Leading via the heart and mind: The roles of leader and follower emotions, attributions and interdependence. Leadersh. Q. 2013, 24, 696–711. [CrossRef]
72. Fry, L.W. Toward a theory of spiritual leadership. Leadersh. Q. 2003, 14, 693–727. [CrossRef]
74. Van Dierendonck, D.; Patterson, K. Compassionate love as a cornerstone of servant leadership: An integration of previous theorizing and research. J. Bus. Ethics 2015, 128, 119–131. [CrossRef]


118. Lawrence, E.; Dunn, M.W.; Weisfeld-Spolter, S. Developing leadership potential in graduate students with assessment, self-awareness, reflection and coaching. J. Manag. Dev. 2018, 37, 634–651. [CrossRef]


Disclaimer/Publisher’s Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MDPI and/or the editor(s). MDPI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.