The role of emotional intelligence in effective corporate social responsibility leadership

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to reviews some of the learnings, challenges and solutions suggested by the article author regarding the role of implementing emotional intelligence by corporate social responsible (CSR) leaders and offers ideas for future research. The aim is to offer a positive conclusion to the problems and their solutions.

Design/methodology/approach – The study investigates the relationship between emotional intelligence and effective CSR leadership. The author evaluates the body of research on the issue and provides a reassuring assessment of the problems and recommendations.

Findings – Having emotional intelligence is essential for executives who wish to implement successful CSR initiatives. It allows CEOs to create a culture of social responsibility inside their organizations, highlight the importance of CSR initiatives and strengthen relationships with stakeholders. Key emotional intelligence traits, including self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills, are necessary for effective CSR leadership.

Originality/value – The study focuses on the role of emotional intelligence in corporate social responsibility leadership, offering a unique perspective on the subject. It also explores practical solutions and ideas for future research, adding originality and value to the existing body of literature on emotional intelligence and CSR leadership.

Keywords Corporate social responsibility, Emotional intelligence, Effective leadership

Paper type Viewpoint

1. Introduction

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) has become an increasingly important component of contemporary business. Organizations are expected to not only generate profits, but also have a positive impact on the environment and society (Du *et al.*, 2010; Haigh and Hoffman, 2011). However, implementing effective CSR activities is not simple. This demands leaders who can understand the requirements of stakeholders, respond to those needs and help the business develop a culture of social responsibility (Pastrana and Sriramesh, 2014). Developing emotional intelligence (EI) can be essential for leaders to effectively contribute to society and the environment while generating profits.

According to Goleman (1998), EI is the ability to recognize, understand and manage one's own emotions, as well as those of others. EI comprises various components, including

self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills. Self-awareness refers to the ability to recognize and understand one's emotions, values, strengths and weaknesses. Self-regulation involves managing one's emotions, thoughts and behaviors in a way that aligns with one's values and goals. Motivation is driven by internal rather than external factors, such as a sense of purpose or personal growth. Empathy involves understanding and sharing others' feelings. Social skills refer to an individual's ability to communicate effectively, resolve conflicts and build relationships with others.

Leaders with strong EI have the ability to model exemplary behavior for their teams and cultivate a positive workplace culture, which has the potential to enhance both organizational effectiveness and employee well-being (Saeed *et al.*, 2014). Leaders with high EI are more effective at comprehending and addressing the requirements of stakeholders related to CSR (Metcalf and Benn, 2013). They have the capacity to recognize social and environmental concerns that are significant to stakeholders and create CSR programs that address these issues. They may also relate to and inspire employees and other stakeholders while explaining the significance of these activities to them. This capability of leaders to effectively address the CSR requirements of stakeholders can help build and maintain positive relationships between the organization and its stakeholders, leading to long-term sustainability and growth (Edmonds, 2011).

EI is an essential trait for leaders in top positions who aim to implement successful CSR programs. It enables leaders to understand and address the needs of stakeholders and cultivate a culture of social responsibility within the organization. By possessing EI, leaders in top positions can effectively communicate the significance of CSR activities and inspire their teams to actively participate, resulting in increased buy-in and support for programs. Leaders with high EI are better equipped to recognize and address stakeholders' social and environmental issues, which is essential for the creation of effective CSR projects (Druskat and Wolff, 2001; Leban and Zulauf, 2004).

This study contributes to the body of research on EI and its effects on leadership by examining the role of EI in effective CSR leadership. By offering evidence of the importance of EI for successful CSR leadership and identifying the key components of EI necessary for leaders to put CSR initiatives into action, this study enhances current theories on EI and its effects on leadership. The findings of this study can serve as a theoretical basis for further research in this field. Ultimately, the study's results could have practical implications for organizations that wish to foster a culture of social responsibility and help their leaders develop the EI needed to achieve this goal.

To clarify the objective of this study, this conceptual study examines the role of EI in CSR leadership. To achieve this, we identified six propositions based on our literature review. These propositions will guide our discussion and analysis throughout the paper and ultimately contribute to a better understanding of the relationship between EI and CSR leadership.

2. Literature review

2.1 Emotional intelligence

EI has been a topic of interest and discussion in the academic and business worlds over the past few decades. Despite numerous studies and definitions, there is no universally accepted definition for EI. However, there is a general consensus that EI is a set of abilities related to the processing and management of emotions, both in oneself and others.

Salovey and Mayer (1990), who are considered to be the pioneers of EI, defined it as "the ability to perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions to

promote emotional and intellectual growth" (p. 189). This definition highlights that EI involves both the ability to recognize and understand emotions in oneself and others as well as the ability to regulate one's own emotions for personal and professional growth.

Another influential definition of EI is provided by Goleman (1995), who defined it as "the ability to recognize and understand one's own emotional reactions, and those of others, and to use this knowledge to guide one's thinking and actions" (p. 286). This definition emphasizes the importance of using emotional awareness to guide decision-making and behavior.

Petrides and Furnham (2001) proposed a trait model of EI, which views it as a set of personality traits related to emotional processing and regulation. They identified four dimensions of EI: emotional perception, emotional understanding, emotional regulation and emotional utilization. This model suggests that individuals possess different levels of these traits that may affect their emotional processing and expression.

Another influential model of EI is the mixed model proposed by Bar-On (1997), which includes five dimensions: intrapersonal, interpersonal, adaptability, stress management and general mood. This model emphasizes the importance of understanding one's own emotions and those of others, as well as the ability to adapt to changing situations and effectively manage stress.

In this article, we will use the definition of EI as proposed by Goleman (2017), which includes four components: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management. This model emphasizes the ability to recognize and regulate emotions in oneself and others as well as the importance of social skills in effective EI.

2.2 Components of emotional intelligence
2.2.1 Self-awareness. Self-awareness is a fundamental element of EI, which is the capacity to comprehend one's own emotions, the effects they have on one's ideas and behaviors and the effects of one's actions on others (Bratton *et al.*, 2011). Leaders who possess the ability to recognize and regulate their emotions, prejudices and motives are better equipped for successful CSR leadership. This capability allows them to make well-informed decisions that consider stakeholders' needs and perspectives (Pruzan, 2001). According to Saeed (2014), self-awareness is critical for effective CSR leadership. Leaders who possess self-awareness are better equipped to understand the underlying motivations and emotions that drive their behavior and decision-making, and are more likely to identify areas for personal growth and development in relation to CSR initiatives (Hall, 2004). This understanding may help a leader make decisions that are more in accordance with the organization's CSR objectives and also consider how such actions will affect stakeholders. Self-awareness can also help leaders communicate more effectively because it improves their capacity to comprehend and address stakeholders' requirements (Hall, 2004).

Despite the growing importance of self-awareness in the field of CSR leadership, limited research has investigated the relationship between self-awareness and successful CSR leadership (Shapiro and Stefkovich, 2016; Showry and Manasa, 2014; Tekleab *et al.*, 2008). These studies have covered topics such as the function of self-awareness in ethical leadership and decision-making as well as the effects of self-awareness on stakeholder involvement and relationships (Shapiro and Stefkovich, 2016). Self-awareness is constantly mentioned in all these studies as one of the essential component of effective CSR leadership and is considered necessary for leaders who want to have a good influence on society and the environment (Carden *et al.*, 2022; Tekleab *et al.*, 2008).

2.2.2 Self-regulation. Self-regulation is the capacity of a person to exert self-control over their ideas, emotions and actions to fulfill their objectives and maintain a high level of

functioning (Boekaerts *et al.*, 1999). Self-regulation is an important element for leaders to successfully implement CSR projects and has a strong influence on society and the environment in the context of EI and effective CSR leadership (Bandura and Simon, 1977).

The literature on EI and CSR includes several studies that have shown a direct association between self-regulation and CSR leadership. For example, Pruzan (2001) found that self-regulation is crucial for leaders to make well-informed decisions that consider stakeholders' requirements and views. Another study by Zopiatis *et al.* (2018) highlighted the importance of self-regulation in CSR leadership by showing that leaders who are better able to manage their emotions are more effective in implementing CSR projects.

Leaders with high self-regulation are better able to respond to stakeholder requirements, foster a culture of social responsibility inside the company and clearly convey the significance of CSR activities (Perez-Batres *et al.*, 2012). Additionally, self-regulation helps leaders maintain their commitment to having a beneficial influence on society and the environment while remaining focused on the objectives of CSR projects, especially in the face of setbacks and difficulties.

Additionally, self-control is essential for the growth of a supportive company culture (Cunningham, 2023). Leaders can control their emotions and actions to create a courteous, encouraging, collaborative work atmosphere. This environment can encourage staff members to perform honorably and support the company's CSR initiatives. In turn, this aids businesses in achieving their CSR objectives and positively influences both society and the environment (Zopiatis *et al.*, 2018).

Morehouse (2007)found that leaders with high levels of EI, including self-regulation, were more successful in implementing CSR programs aligned with their organization's values and goals. Similarly, Saeed *et al.* (2014) found that self-regulation is one of the key EI skills that enable leaders to effectively execute CSR initiatives. For CSR projects to be successful, leaders be able to control their emotions and actions, make wise judgments and foster a healthy workplace culture (Cunningham, 2023).

2.2.3 Motivation. Self-motivation, a key component of EI, has been extensively studied in the context of effective CSR leadership (Serrat and Serrat, 2017). Leaders are more likely to successfully execute CSR projects if they are strongly driven to achieve their objectives and have a strong desire to have a beneficial impact on society and the environment (Zhang *et al.*, 2019). CEOs who drive CSR initiatives tend to adopt a more proactive, creative and innovative approach to CSR. They are more likely to interact with stakeholders, see potential areas for growth and promote organizational change. Furthermore, driven leaders are more likely to encourage their staff to embrace CSR projects and collaborate to accomplish shared goals (Paais and Pattiruhu, 2020; Petrenko *et al.*, 2016).

Leaders may overcome problems and obstacles when implementing CSR projects with the help of self-motivation. For instance, leaders who are driven to pursue CSR projects may be better able to spot and deal with objections from workers, stakeholders or other stakeholders. They may also have a higher chance of removing obstacles that prevent CSR projects from being implemented on a political, economic or social level (Al Noor *et al.*, 2011). Effective CSR leadership depends on self-motivation, a key aspect of EI. Self-motivation enables leaders to successfully traverse CSR complexity and has a beneficial influence on society and the environment by giving them the desire and commitment to undertake CSR activities. Organizations that place a high prioritize helping their leaders become self-motivated are better able to carry out CSR efforts and accomplish their objectives.

2.2.4 Empathy. One pivotal element of EI is empathy, which is important for effective CSR leadership. The capacity to comprehend and empathize with the emotions of others, including customers, coworkers and the community, is referred to as empathy

(Ioannidou and Konstantikaki, 2008). Leaders may respond in a way that fosters connections, creates trust and promotes the success of CSR projects by having the ability to empathize with people. By doing so, they can better comprehend the concerns and wants of stakeholders (Muller *et al.*, 2014).

Several studies have highlighted the importance of empathy in effective CSR leadership. Carroll and Shabana (2010) found that empathy plays a significant role in CEO's ability to identify stakeholder concerns and develop sustainable CSR initiatives. Another study by Tian and Robertson (2019) found that leaders' empathy positively impacted employee engagement in CSR activities, leading to better outcomes for both the company and society.

Additionally, compassionate leaders are better equipped to foster a culture of social responsibility within the business, motivating staff to embrace CSR initiatives. In addition, empathy is essential for clear communication and development of strong bonds with stakeholders. Empathetic leaders have the capacity to actively listen to, comprehend the worries of stakeholders and respond in a way that resolves these concerns and promotes cooperation. In the context of CSR, where decision makers must balance the interests of several stakeholders, some of whose interests may be at odds, this might be crucial.

2.2.5 Social skills. The capacity of a leader to successfully engage with people in social and professional contexts is referred to as having "social skills," which is a part of EI (Riggio and Reichard, 2008). EI and successful CSR leadership, people with great social skills are better able to relate to others and understand their needs and viewpoints (Adigüzel and Kuloğlu, 2019; Riggio, 2013). As a result, leaders are better able to engage stakeholders, promote cooperation and teamwork and convey the significance of CSR activities, which in turn enables more successful execution of CSR projects. Social abilities are vital to the success of CSR projects (Mumford *et al.*, 2000).

Effective social skills in leaders are important for recognizing and addressing stakeholders' needs and concerns, fostering positive relationships and improving the company's reputation. Furthermore, leaders with strong social skills can successfully motivate and involve staff in CSR projects by skillfully communicating the significance of such initiatives(Carroll and Shabana, 2010; Petrenko *et al.*, 2016).

Ran *et al.* (2021) investigated the relationship between EI and CSR among top-level executives in Pakistan. The study found that EI was positively related to CSR implementation, and that social skills were one of the key components of EI that contributed to effective CSR leadership. Vrontis *et al.* (2021) also found that social skills, along with empathy and self-awareness, are important components of EI for CSR leaders.

Therefore, social skills are one of the essential skill for leaders who want to successfully execute CSR programs and have a beneficial influence on society and the environment (Ran *et al.*, 2021; Swanson, 2021; Vrontis *et al.*, 2021). Building good relationships, communicating clearly and involving employees in CSR projects are all made possible through social skills, which may lead to more effective and significant CSR initiatives. These elements are connected and interact intricately.

2.3 Effective corporate social responsibility leadership
A significant body of research emphasizes the importance of EI in effective leadership, particularly in the context of CSR. Studies have shown that leaders with high levels of EI are better able to comprehend and address the requirements of stakeholders, and may foster a culture of social responsibility within the company (Leban and Zulauf, 2004; Saeed *et al.*, 2014). This is especially important in the context of CSR because it calls on top-level leaders to have a beneficial influence on society and the environment in addition to maximizing profits (Du *et al.*, 2010; Tai and Chuang, 2014).

Goleman, Boyatzis, McKee and Patterson found that leaders with strong EI were better able to communicate the importance of social responsibility initiatives to their employees and stakeholders, and were able to inspire and motivate them to participate in these initiatives(Lussier, 2017). Similarly, leaders with high EI were better able to forge deep bonds with stakeholders, which may result in partnerships and collaborations that are advantageous to both parties (Fernandez and Shaw, 2020).

Leadership in CSR has received much attention recently, as businesses look for methods to strike a balance between economic, social and environmental concerns. CSR leadership refers to leadership techniques that assist businesses in creating and implementing socially conscious activities and programs. This can involve actions such as environmental stewardship, sustainability, community involvement and ethical corporate practices (Mostafa and Shen, 2019). Several important elements of effective CSR leadership have been highlighted in the literature. First, the significance of strong leadership commitment was highlighted. According to previous studies, leaders who are enthusiastic about CSR are more likely to carry out CSR activities successfully. Setting a good example, leading by example and getting staff involved in CSR initiatives are all parts of this (Amagoh, 2009; Van Velsor, 2009).

The research also emphasizes the importance of stakeholder involvement in good CSR leadership. Vogel (2007) discussed the importance of engaging stakeholders in CSR initiatives to achieve a successful outcome. Waddock and Graves (1997) highlighted the importance of stakeholder engagement in achieving both financial and social performance.

Creating a sense of mutual respect among stakeholders, setting shared objectives and encouraging cooperation are important for effective leaders. Attentive listening, clear communication and comprehension of the wants and requirements of all stakeholders are necessary to achieve these goals, especially in the context of CSR (Van Velsor, 2009). The significance of incorporating CSR into organizational culture is another major issue in the literature. This may entail creating CSR policies, emphasizing their significance to staff members and enlisting their participation in CSR projects. Additionally, businesses with a strong CSR culture are more likely to have workers who are enthusiastic, engaged and dedicated to the organization's vision and objectives (Phillips *et al.*, 2019; Yu and Choi, 2016).

3. Theoretical perspective

The theoretical perspective can be better understood through the lens of transformational leadership theory, particularly in comparison with transactional and *laissez-faire* leadership styles. According to the theory of transformational leadership, managers who empower and inspire their teams to not only accomplish their objectives but also grow personally and professionally can foster an organizational culture that values CSR and produces advantageous results for both the business and the community (Ekawarna, 2022; Rao, 2014). An important element of transformative leadership is EI, which enables leaders to be self-aware, empathic and proficient.

Transactional and *laissez-faire* leadership approaches can be compared to transformational leadership in the context of CSR. Transactional leadership focuses on the exchange of rewards for work, whereas *laissez-faire* leadership involves a hands-off approach, where leaders provide little guidance or direction to their teams (Ahsan and Khalid, 2023; Bass and Riggio, 2006; Kerr *et al.*, 1974). By contrast, transformational leadership is characterized by inspirational motivation, idealized influence, individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation, which inspires employees to go beyond their own interests and work towards a common goal (Bass and Riggio, 2006).

In the context of CSR, transformational leaders with high EI are better equipped to understand and address stakeholders' demands (Groves and LaRocca, 2011). They can foster a culture of social responsibility within the company, establish solid connections with stakeholders and inspire employees to work toward a common goal that benefits both the business and the community (Peterson, 2009). This is in contrast to transactional and *laissez-faire* leadership, which may not prioritize CSR or lack the necessary EI to effectively engage with stakeholders and employees in a meaningful way.

Therefore, organizations that prioritize transformational leadership and EI in their leaders may be better equipped to engage in CSR activities that are both effective and beneficial for both the business and community. By focusing on the development of EI in their leaders, organizations can create a culture of social responsibility that not only benefits the environment and society, but also improves their bottom line (Ahsan and Ahmed, 2023).

By contrast, transactional and *laissez-faire* leadership approaches are less effective in promoting CSR because they tend to focus on short-term goals and may not prioritize the long-term social and environmental impacts of business activities. Transactional leaders rely on rewards and punishments to motivate their teams and may not foster the type of engagement and empowerment necessary to develop a CSR culture within an organization. *Laissez-faire* leaders, on the other hand, may delegate responsibility and decision-making to their teams without providing adequate guidance or support, which can lead to a lack of direction and a lack of accountability for social and environmental impacts (Ahsan and Khalid, 2023).

Transformational leadership is a crucial component of CSR leadership. Leaders who possess EI and can inspire and empower their teams to achieve their goals while also prioritizing social and environmental impacts can create a culture of CSR within their organization that produces positive results for both the business and community. By contrast, transactional and *laissez-faire* leadership approaches are less effective in promoting CSR and may not prioritize long-term social and environmental impacts.

4. Propositions
4.1 Leaders and stakeholders
CSR has become an essential aspect of modern business, with companies recognizing the importance of contributing to the well-being of society and the environment. However, effective CSR requires active participation and support from stakeholders including employees, customers, investors, and local communities. To engage stakeholders effectively, CSR leaders need to possess high EI, which allows them to recognize, understand and regulate their own emotions, as well as those of others.

Milhem *et al.* (2019); Wei, bin Mohd Noor, binti Mansor and Awang (2021) stated that leaders with high EI are better able to recognize and address the social and environmental issues that stakeholders care about. Additionally, leaders with strong EI can inspire and motivate others to participate in CSR activities, leading to increased support for such programs (Blaik Hourani *et al.*, 2021).

According to Leban and Zulauf (2004), leaders with high EI are better able to recognize and address stakeholders' social and environmental issues, which is crucial for creating effective CSR projects. Additionally, leaders with high EI are better able to inspire others and convey the significance of CSR activities, resulting in increased buy-in and support for the programs (El Khatib *et al.*, 2021). The creation and success of CSR efforts depend heavily on leaders' ability to recognize and address the requirements of stakeholders (Yu and Choi, 2016). Organizations that place a high priority on helping their leaders develop EI will be better able to have a positive influence on society and the environment.

P1 highlights the importance of EI in CSR leadership and suggests that organizations should prioritize the development of EI qualities in their leaders.

Therefore, we propose our first proposition:

P1. Leaders with high EI are better able to understand and respond to stakeholders' needs, which is essential for effective CSR leadership.

4.2 Leading to greater buy-in and support for the initiatives

According to Lopes (2016), leaders with high EI have stronger communication skills that are essential for conveying the significance of CSR activities. For instance, research by Melita Prati *et al.* (2003) and Riggio and Reichard (2008) discovered that leaders with high EI were able to persuade staff members and stakeholders of the value of CSR in a way that was relevant and motivating, resulting in more buy-in and support for programs.

Castillo *et al.* (2013) and Ioannidou and Konstantikaki (2008) indicated that empathic leaders are better able to comprehend and empathize with stakeholders' concerns and express the significance of CSR activities in a way that resonates with them, resulting in increased buy-in and support. Similar findings were observed in another study by Mersino (2013) showing that leaders with high EI and excellent social skills are better able to form strong bonds with stakeholders, which may result in advantageous partnerships and collaborations, as well as increased support for CSR activities.

The relevance of this quality for leaders who want to successfully implement CSR programs has been repeatedly shown in the literature on EI and its association with the effective communication of those activities. Leaders with high EI can are better able to convey the significance of CSR activities in a sympathetic and motivating way, resulting in increased buy-in and support for the projects, both of which are necessary for their success. Organizations that place a high priority on helping their leaders develop EI will be better able to have a good influence on society and the environment.

Therefore, we propose our second proposition:

P2. Leaders with high EI are better able to communicate the importance of CSR initiatives to employees and stakeholders in a way that is relatable and inspiring, leading to greater buy-in and support for the initiatives.

4.3 Leaders and culture of social responsibility

P3 proposes that leaders with high EI are better equipped to create a culture of social responsibility within the organization, which includes setting an example for others to follow and empower employees to make a positive impact. According to Barrett (2006), leaders with high EI are better equipped to set an example for their teams and foster a pleasant work environment that can improve productivity and morale inside the company. According to Udod *et al.* (2020), leaders with high EI are more likely to motivate and empower people to have a positive effect and foster a culture of social responsibility within the firm.

According to a study by Batool (2013), socially adept and empathic leaders are better able to inspire loyalty and trust in their workforce, which boosts involvement and engagement in CSR efforts. Additionally, studies have shown how crucial EI skills like self-awareness and self-control are in developing a culture of social responsibility inside a business (Gupta *et al.*, 2022; Showry and Manasa, 2014). For instance, self-aware leaders who can control their emotions are better able to recognize and address the demands of stakeholders in a

considerate and efficient manner, which may help promote a culture of social responsibility inside the company. The relevance of this quality for leaders who want to successfully execute CSR programs is continuously illustrated by research on EI and its association with fostering a culture of social responsibility within an enterprise. Strong connections with workers and stakeholders, establishing an example for others to follow and giving staff the freedom to have a positive influence are skills that leaders with high EI excel at. Organizations that place a high priority on helping their leaders develop EI will be better able to have a good influence on society and the environment.

Therefore, we propose our third proposition:

P3. Leaders with high EI are better able to create a culture of social responsibility within the organization, setting an example for others to follow and empower employees to make a positive impact.

4.4 Beneficial partnerships and collaborations

This proposition suggests that leaders with high EI have the advantage of building strong relationships with stakeholders. According to Maqbool *et al.* (2017), leaders with high EI are more likely to participate in effective stakeholder communication, which can result in partnerships and collaborations that are advantageous to both parties.

Brammer *et al.* (2007) found that empathy is a critical skill for effective CSR leadership as it helps leaders better understand stakeholders' needs and perspectives. Another study Maqbool *et al.* (2017) found that leaders with high EI were more successful in building trust and forming positive relationships with stakeholders. A study by Jin *et al.* (2020) indicated, for instance, that leaders with empathy are better able to comprehend and empathize with the problems of stakeholders, which promotes more effective communication and collaboration.

According to Goleman (2018), socially adept and emotionally intelligent leaders are better able to foster a sense of commitment and trust among their constituents, which encourages increased involvement and engagement in CSR. The relevance of this quality to leaders who want to successfully execute CSR programs is continuously illustrated in the literature on EI and its link to creating good connections with stakeholders. The proposition concludes that leaders who want to successfully execute CSR programs should focus on developing EI skills to create good connections with stakeholders. Overall, this proposition emphasizes the significance of EI in building and maintaining strong relationships with stakeholders, which can lead to mutually beneficial partnerships and collaborations.

Therefore, we propose our fourth proposition:

P4. Leaders with high EI are better able to build strong relationships with stakeholders, which can lead to mutually beneficial partnerships and collaboration.

4.5 Emotional intelligence components and effective corporate social responsibility leadership

The success of CSR initiatives largely depends on the leadership and management skills of the organization. Effective CSR leadership may require a high level of EI, which includes traits such as self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills (Singh, 2004). According to Showry and Manasa (2014), leaders who exhibit high levels of self-awareness and self-regulation are better able to recognize and address stakeholders' requirements in a considerate and efficient manner, which is essential for the growth and accomplishment of CSR efforts. According to Ioannidou and Konstantikaki (2008), leaders

with high empathy levels were better able to comprehend and empathize with stakeholders' concerns, which resulted in more successful CSR projects.

Similar findings have shown that motivated leaders emphasize CSR and behave in ways that are in line with the organization's social and environmental obligations (Paais and Pattiruhu, 2020; Zhang *et al.*, 2019).

Goleman (1998, 2018) emphasized the significance of social abilities, such as communication, collaboration and conflict resolution, in successful CSR leadership. These skills enable leaders to effectively engage with stakeholders, build relationships of trust and mutual understanding and develop effective CSR strategies that align with the needs and values of both the organization and community. Turker (2009) discovered that socially adept leaders are better able to foster a sense of commitment and trust among stakeholders, encouraging increased involvement and engagement in CSR efforts. Self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills are essential EI abilities for leaders who want to successfully execute CSR projects (Carroll and Shabana, 2010; Issah, 2018).

Therefore, we propose our fifth proposition:

P5. EI components such as self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills are essential for effective CSR leadership.

4.6 Leaders and impact on society and the environment

Leaders have a significant impact on society and the environment through their decisions and actions. Organizations that place a high prioritize the development of leaders' EI are more likely to carry out effective CSR projects (Melita Prati *et al.*, 2003; Mukhtar and Fook, 2020). According to Metcalf and Benn (2013), businesses that teach their leaders in EI have better luck executing CSR programs and have a good influence on the environment and society. According to Castro *et al.* (2012), leaders with high EI are more likely to motivate staff members to make a difference and foster an organizational culture of social responsibility. According to Maak and Pless (2006), leaders with high levels of EI are better able to cultivate stakeholder trust and loyalty, which increases their support for and engagement in CSR projects. EI is an important aspect for leaders who want to successfully execute CSR projects and have a beneficial influence on society and the environment (Twumasi-Ankrah, 2012; Vakola *et al.*, 2004).

Organizations that prioritize the development of leaders' EI skills will be better equipped to achieve their goals and objectives, especially in the context of corporate social, such as promoting ethical behavior, environmental sustainability and social well-being (Stein *et al.*, 2009).

Therefore, we propose our sixth proposition:

P6. Organizations that prioritize the development of EI in their leaders are better equipped to have a positive impact on society and the environment.

5. Discussion

Effective CSR leadership requires a combination of several important factors, with high levels of EI being an important component because it enables leaders to better comprehend and address the demands of stakeholders. According to Leban and Zulauf (2004), leaders with high EI are better able to recognize and address stakeholders' social and environmental issues, which is essential for the creation and implementation of CSR projects.

Additionally, leaders with high EI are better able to inspire others and convey the significance of CSR activities, resulting in increased buy-in and support for programs (Batool, 2013). Creating a culture of social responsibility inside the business, setting an example for others to follow and encouraging staff members to have a good influence are all things leaders with high EI are better equipped to do. Leaders with high EI are more likely to motivate and empower people to have a positive effect, as well as to foster a culture of social responsibility inside the firm (Castro *et al.*, 2012; Vogel, 2007).

Furthermore, leaders with high EI have the capacity to forge close bonds with stakeholders and workers, which may increase support and buy-in for CSR activities (Melita Prati *et al.*, 2003). Leaders with high EI are better able to establish trusting bonds with stakeholders, which may result in profitable alliances and collaborations. Leaders with high EI are more likely to participate in effective stakeholder communication, which may result in mutually beneficial partnerships and collaborations that are mutually beneficial (Bratton *et al.*, 2011). Strong social skills are another trait shared by leaders with high EI, which are essential for establishing and sustaining connections with stakeholders (Al Noor *et al.*, 2011). Effective CSR leadership requires a variety of EI traits, including self-awareness, self-control, motivation, empathy and social skills (Goleman, 1995). This is corroborated by studies that demonstrate how important it is for the growth and success of CSR programs for leaders to have high levels of self-awareness and self-regulation to effectively recognize and address the demands of stakeholders (Goleman, 2018). Empathy is a crucial EI skill for effective CSR leadership because it enables leaders to comprehend and empathize to stakeholders' problems, which results in more successful CSR activities (Humphrey, 2013). Additionally, it takes drive, empathy and social skills to effectively communicate CSR activities and build lasting bonds with stakeholders (Castillo *et al.*, 2013). Additionally, firms that place a high prioritize the improvement of their leaders' EI will be better positioned to have a positive influence on society and the environment. Businesses that gave their leaders training in EI could have more success in putting their CSR plans into action and having a good influence on the community and the environment (Turker, 2009; Waddock and Graves, 1997).

EI should be one of the important trait for leaders who want to successfully execute CSR programs and have a beneficial influence on society and the environment (Castro *et al.*, 2012; Mukhtar and Fook, 2020). Effective CSR leadership requires a variety of EI skills, including self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills. Organizations that place a high prioritize the development of leaders' EI will be better able to accomplish these objectives (Goleman, 2018; Vakola *et al.*, 2004).

6. Conclusion

EI and its connection to effective CSR leadership constantly emphasize the significance of EI for leaders who hope to successfully execute CSR programs and have a beneficial influence on society and the environment. Leaders with high EI are better able to recognize and address stakeholders' needs, foster a culture of social responsibility within the company, forge close bonds with both stakeholders and staff members and clearly convey the significance of CSR initiatives. Effective CSR leadership has been found to need a variety of EI qualities, including self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills. The research also shows that firms will be better able to have a positive effect on society and the environment if they emphasize the development of EI in their leaders.

The ability of leaders to negotiate the complexity of CSR and make educated ethical judgments is greatly influenced by their EI, in addition to the aforementioned considerations. Leaders are better able to comprehend and meet the many and sometimes competing interests of stakeholders using EI. They are also better able to make judgments

that balance economic, social and environmental factors. Additionally, EI supports management in fostering a corporate responsibility culture within the business, encouraging staff to act honorably and aiding in CSR initiatives. Additionally, developing and sustaining stakeholder relationships essential for the success of CSR initiatives requires a high level of EI. Effective leaders must be able to develop trust with stakeholders, set shared objectives and promote collaboration and cooperation. Stakeholder involvement is a crucial component of CSR. Effective communication and the ability to recognize, comprehend and respond to stakeholder issues are made possible by EI, which may lead to partnerships and collaborations that are profitable for both parties.

Research on EI and how it relates to effective CSR leadership repeatedly indicates the importance EI is for leaders who want to successfully execute CSR projects and have a beneficial influence on society and the environment. Leaders with EI may successfully negotiate CSR intricacies, make morally sound judgments, establish a corporate responsibility culture and forge close bonds with stakeholders. As a result, firms should place a high priority on helping their leaders improve their EI to successfully implement CSR projects and have a beneficial influence on society and the environment.

6.1 Future directions

Future research directions can emphasize empirical studies that test the propositions outlined in this study to determine their validity. Researchers might explore the link between EI and successful CSR leadership in various enterprises and sectors by conducting empirical studies. This would provide people with deeper knowledge of how EI functions in effective CSR leadership and how it can be used in real-world settings. Researchers should also be able to explore the function of EI in successful CSR leadership in various cultural contexts through cross-cultural comparisons. This would provide insight into the cultural elements that affect the link between EI and effective CSR leadership and assist in discovering cultural variances in the significance of EI for CSR leadership. The applicability of EI as a predictor of successful CSR leadership across various cultures and countries can be clarified through cross-cultural comparisons.

Another area for future research could involve investigating the impact of EI on employee attitudes and behaviors toward CSR initiatives. For example, how do leaders with high EI influence employee engagement and commitment to CSR activities? This would help organizations understand how EI can impact not only leaders but also the workforce in the successful implementation of CSR initiatives. Overall, these new paths have the potential to increase our knowledge of how EI plays a part in effective CSR leadership and its real-world effects on businesses and leaders. Such research could have significant implications for improving CSR practices in various organizational settings.

6.2 Theoretical implications

The present study contributes to the growing body of research on EI and its effects on leadership by examining the role of EI in effective CSR leadership.

This study has provided six propositions that highlight the importance of EI in effective CSR leadership. These propositions include the idea that EI enables leaders to comprehend and address the demands of stakeholders, create a culture of social responsibility within the organization, promote cooperation and collaboration among stakeholders, enhance ethical decision-making, improve corporate reputation and foster innovation.

The findings provide evidence of the significance of EI for successful CSR leadership, and highlight the key elements of EI that are essential for leaders to be successful in implementing CSR initiatives. The results of this study can contribute to and enhance

existing theories on EI and how it influences leadership and can serve as a theoretical foundation for future research in this field. The research findings suggest that EI is a critical factor in successful CSR leadership and that developing EI abilities can enhance leaders' ability to navigate the complexities of CSR and make morally sound decisions. The theoretical implications of this study suggest that EI should be considered an essential component of leadership and should be incorporated into leadership development programs.

6.3 Practical implications

This study's emphasis on the importance of EI for effective CSR leadership has practical implications for organizations and leaders. As a way of successfully executing CSR activities and having a beneficial influence on society and the environment, the findings of this study suggest that businesses should prioritize the development of their leaders' EI.

Furthermore, organizations can use these findings to evaluate the EI of their current and potential leaders and provide targeted training to improve their EI competencies. This can result in better CSR outcomes and positively impact an organization's reputation, employee engagement and community relationships. Additionally, leaders with high EI can inspire and motivate their workforce to adopt CSR practices and foster positive workplace culture.

The results also emphasize the significance of certain EI capabilities, including self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills, and they offer firms a framework for training their leaders in these abilities. The study provides evidence that EI plays a critical role in effective CSR leadership and emphasizes the importance of developing leaders' EI skills.

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Further reading

Goleman, D., Boyatzis, R., McKee, A. and Patterson, S. "Primal leadership: realizing the power of emotional intelligence".

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