

THE ROLE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP ABILITIES IN PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Abstract

This article analyzes the role of emotional intelligence in the process of developing emotional leadership abilities among primary school students. Based on scientific sources, it substantiates that the main components of emotional intelligence have a direct impact on the formation of positive leadership qualities in children. The study reveals that students with a well-developed emotional intelligence demonstrate stronger leadership skills. In addition, the importance of pedagogical approaches aimed at developing emotional intelligence, including empathy training, in the primary education process is highlighted. The results confirm that emotional intelligence is a key psychological mechanism in the formation of emotional leadership.

Keywords

emotional intelligence, emotional leadership, primary education, social-emotional development, Social-Emotional Learning (SEL), empathy, motivation, self-regulation, social competence, prosocial behavior, leadership potential, primary school students, pedagogical approaches.

INTRODUCTION. In the context of ongoing globalization, one of the most important requirements placed on the education system is the development of students' not only intellectual but also social and emotional competencies. In the process of personality formation, such factors as the ability to manage one's emotional state, understand the emotions of others, and adapt to the social environment play a leading role.

Early school age is considered the most sensitive and receptive period in the lives of primary school students [1]. In other words, the primary education stage

(from 7 to 10 years of age) represents a crucial “foundation period” in children’s social and emotional development.

During the primary school years, students experience such processes as understanding social roles, mastering new forms of communication, and finding their place within the classroom community. At this age, emotional development occurs very rapidly, and it is precisely during this period that the purposeful development of emotional intelligence components – such as emotional awareness, emotion regulation, intrinsic motivation, empathy, and social skills – has a strong influence on a child’s future social adaptation. One of the aspects that requires special attention in this context is the concept of emotional leadership.

Emotional leadership is a form of leadership based on the use of emotions and empathy in managing a group. Unlike traditional leadership models that rely on power, energy, and control, emotional leadership involves understanding and managing one’s own emotions as well as those of subordinates [2]. In conclusion, emotional leadership is not merely about management, but rather the art of reaching the human heart.

A leader’s ability to deeply understand their own emotions and those of others, to regulate these emotions, and to exert a positive influence on them ensures internal harmony within the group. Such a leadership style not only provides a strong impetus for achieving goals but also creates opportunities for the personal development of each member. Therefore, emotional leadership is an integral component of modern leadership and an important factor in building an effective team. One of the most effective factors in developing emotional leadership among primary school students is the development of their emotional intelligence.

Emotional intelligence is the ability to recognize emotions, understand other people and their personal goals, motivations, and desires, as well as to manage one’s own emotions and those of others in order to solve practical problems [3]. Students with well-developed emotional intelligence tend to be active in the classroom community, open in communication, capable of resolving conflicts constructively, sensitive to the emotions of others, and proactive in their behavior. Research shows that pedagogical approaches aimed at developing components of emotional intelligence significantly accelerate the formation of leadership qualities in students [4].

Therefore, the relevance of the present study lies in the growing need to determine the significance of emotional intelligence (EI) in the formation of emotional leadership among primary school students, to identify effective methods that can be applied in the educational process, and to provide their scientific justification.

LITERATURE REVIEW. The concept of emotional intelligence (EI) was developed in the late twentieth century by American social psychologists Peter Salovey and John Mayer; however, it gained widespread recognition and practical application through the work *Emotional Intelligence* (1995) by American psychologist Daniel Goleman. According to Goleman, emotional intelligence encompasses an individual's ability to recognize and manage their own emotions, maintain motivation, and develop empathy and social skills [5].

The importance of emotional intelligence in developing emotional leadership abilities among primary school students has been emphasized in several scientific studies.

First, research conducted by American child psychologist Susanne Denham highlights that students' social-emotional competence during school readiness and the primary education stage facilitates their assumption of social leadership roles. According to the researcher, students with well-developed emotional intelligence tend to exert a positive influence within the classroom community [6].

Second, American psychologists Marc Brackett and Susan Rivers found in their study that emotional intelligence significantly enhances children's social status at school, cooperation with peers, and ability to take leadership roles in group activities. According to the research findings, specialized programs aimed at developing emotional intelligence increase leadership behaviors among students by 20–30% [7].

Third, the Primal Leadership concept developed by Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis, and Annie McKee emphasizes that emotional intelligence forms the foundation of emotional leadership. Research indicates that leadership within children's groups is often assumed by students who are able to manage emotions, demonstrate empathy, and communicate openly. All of these qualities are core components of emotional intelligence[8].

Fourth, a study conducted by American psychologist Pamela Garner on primary school students revealed that children with well-developed emotional intelligence components—such as empathy, self-regulation, and emotional awareness—are capable of guiding others in classroom dynamics, taking initiative in managing group work, and effectively resolving conflicts with peers [9].

Fifth, the Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) model described by American scholars Stephanie Jones and Suzanne Bouffard demonstrates that developing emotional intelligence in children significantly enhances social leadership, responsible decision-making, and social adaptability. Based on the research, primary schools that implemented emotional intelligence programs reported increased leadership indicators among students[10].

These scientific sources clearly confirm the critically important role of emotional intelligence in developing emotional leadership abilities among primary school students. Pedagogical approaches based on emotional intelligence contribute to the formation of leadership qualities such as empathy, social engagement, initiative, and the ability to manage group processes.

METHODS. The research employed historical, retrospective, and theoretical-methodological analysis of sources; generalization and interpretation of collected data; observation; interviews; questionnaires; content analysis; qualimetry; and expert evaluation.

DISCUSSION. The findings of the present study, together with an analysis of recent literature, indicate that the development of emotional intelligence in primary school students has a significant impact on their social-emotional development, group interactions, social activity, and leadership potential. A number of studies empirically confirm this relationship.

Among primary school students, a high level of emotional intelligence has been found to enhance intrinsic motivation, social initiative, and the ability to express one's own opinions. These characteristics support the emergence of students as natural leaders.

Studies focused on the development of collective leadership also demonstrate that students with well-developed emotional intelligence more frequently exhibit prosocial leadership qualities—such as helping others, assuming responsibility within a group, and exerting positive influence on the collective. This, in turn, confirms the direct relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership behavior.

Recent literature also emphasizes that the SEL concept contributes to the development of social influence and leadership within groups. In the systematic review *Social-Emotional Learning: Enhancing Emotional Intelligence and Academic Success through Holistic Education* (2024), it is noted that the implementation of SEL programs in primary schools has led to the development of students' social leadership qualities—such as cooperation, responsibility, and service to the community [11].

In addition, various interventions provide students with opportunities to perform simple leadership tasks, share responsibility within a group, and work collaboratively with others, which ultimately fosters the development of prosocial leadership qualities. These findings indicate that emotional intelligence is not merely an individual psychological skill; rather, it shapes interpersonal relationships, cooperation, and collective leadership potential within a social environment.

Furthermore, local studies emphasize that teachers' roles, a positive psychological classroom climate, and the appropriateness of teaching methods are essential conditions for developing emotional intelligence in primary education [12]. When emotional awareness and skills related to recognizing and regulating emotions are encouraged by teachers and the school environment, students become more inclined to understand their own emotions, establish empathetic relationships with others, and work effectively in groups. This, in turn, supports the development of their collective leadership potential.

RESULTS. The study revealed that the formation of emotional leadership abilities among primary school students is directly and closely related to their level of emotional intelligence (EI). An analysis of the reviewed literature demonstrated that this process manifests itself across several important dimensions.

First, the core components of emotional intelligence—emotional awareness, self-regulation, empathy, motivation, and social skills—have a significant impact on the development of social leadership behaviors in primary school students. It was observed that students with higher levels of emotional intelligence are more capable of effective peer communication, organizing classroom tasks, resolving conflicts constructively, and exerting a positive influence on the group.

Second, education approaches based on emotional intelligence, particularly the integration of SEL (Social-Emotional Learning) programs into primary education, were found to accelerate the development of qualities such as social initiative, cooperation, responsibility, and prosocial leadership among students. Recent scientific studies confirm that students who participate in SEL programs demonstrate significantly higher leadership indicators.

Third, the teacher's personal emotional competence and the psychological classroom environment emerged as important factors in fostering emotional leadership. In classrooms characterized by a positive emotional climate, students more frequently exhibited leadership qualities such as free self-expression, initiative-taking, and a sense of responsibility toward the group.

Fourth, interventions aimed at developing emotional intelligence—through practical activities, role-playing, emotional reflection, and collaborative tasks—were associated with increased emotional sensitivity, mutual respect, and social adaptability among students. This contributed to the natural development of emotional leadership.

Overall, the research findings confirm that emotional intelligence has a positive, stable, and multidimensional impact on the formation of emotional leadership among primary school students. This highlights the necessity of

integrating emotional intelligence as an essential component of the primary education process.

The results of the conducted research demonstrate that emotional intelligence is a decisive psychological and pedagogical factor in the formation of emotional leadership among primary school students. Primary school age represents the most sensitive period in a child's social-emotional development, and it is precisely at this stage that the targeted development of emotional intelligence components – emotional awareness, emotion regulation, empathy, intrinsic motivation, and social skills – creates a strong foundation for students to find their place within a group and demonstrate leadership potential.

An analysis of the literature confirms that students with well-developed emotional intelligence become more active members of the classroom community, more open in communication, more capable of resolving conflicts constructively, and more able to influence others. This supports the natural development of leadership behavior in primary school. Pedagogical approaches based on SEL and emotional intelligence have demonstrated high effectiveness in developing prosocial leadership, initiative, cooperation, and social responsibility among students.

CONCLUSION. In conclusion, it should be emphasized that the teacher's emotional competence, a psychologically safe environment created during the learning process, and the use of interactive teaching methods emerge as key external factors in the development of emotional intelligence and leadership. In classrooms with a positive emotional atmosphere, students express themselves more freely, demonstrate greater sensitivity to the emotions of others, and participate more actively in collaborative activities.

Overall, the systematic integration of emotional intelligence into primary education not only supports students' social-emotional stability but also significantly enhances the development of their leadership potential. Therefore, the widespread implementation of practical activities, training sessions, game-based methods, and SEL approaches aimed at developing emotional intelligence within the school education process is both relevant and necessary.

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