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The Importance of Emotional Intelligence and Leadership Development in Principal Efficacy

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THE IMPORTANCE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE
AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT
IN PRINCIPLE EFFICACY

A Dissertation

by

LORINE OLIVAREZ BAZAN

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
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The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

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December 2023

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ABSTRACT

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Recently, public schools have seen an increase in obstacles and challenges in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, and school leaders have had to pivot and adjust to meet these ever-changing demands (McLeod & Dulsky, 2021). Principals in today's schools have had to discover new and innovative ways to successfully lead, motivate and support their school communities. This emerging leadership includes the leader's ability to utilize emotional intelligence and leadership skills effectively and intentionally.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to take a deeper look at investigating the school principal's utilization of emotional intelligence and effective leadership skills. This research utilized a phenomenology approach where the researcher gathered anecdotal experiences through interviews of experienced principals. Furthermore, this study provided an in-depth look at the application of emotional intelligence and effective leadership in today's schools. Research questions were intentional and purposefully aimed at gathering specificity on the topics of effective leadership and emotional intelligence which can support the self-efficacy of a principal.

Key findings included the importance of a school leader to create a positive environment where all stakeholders can thrive. Most notably, the findings demonstrated the importance of the school leader and the attitude and behaviors of the school leader affect the overall climate of the

school community. Specific themes and subthemes emerged from the study which could substantially support the effectiveness, support and longevity of today's school leaders.

DEDICATION

Thank you God for protecting me and my family with your shield of amour and always being by our side. It is through your strength and love that this was possible. I love you!

To my family, I want you to know that you were always my “WHY”. First, I would like to acknowledge my husband, Angelo; always know that you are my life’s number one companion, my best friend, soul mate and by biggest rock... I love you! To my children: Jacqueline, Victoria, Angelo and Daniel, you are the biggest blessing in my life.

Thank you mom and dad, Leonel and Amparo Olivarez. You have instilled great values in ALL our family which encompass love, service, humility, compassion, empathy and the importance of education to all of us! To my grandmother, Estela Luna, you are a big part of my upbringing and heart! I love you, grandma! I would also like to acknowledge my tios, tias, cousins and everyone who encompasses family. I would also like to thank my siblings and their families for all their love and support. Leo, Lisa, Norma and Mack along with all my nieces and nephews always know that I love you! To my Bazan family, always know I love you and how happy I am to live at the Bazan ranch. Each of you have loved and supported me and my family throughout the years, *gracias!*

I dedicate this dissertation to my husband and my children: Angelo, Jacqueline, Victoria, Angelo II and Daniel. I truly cannot express how much our family means to me and how being your mother is my biggest why and purpose in this life. I love you all from the depths of my soul! Always remember that “love” conquers all! I love you!!!!!!!!!!!!

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT.....	iii
DEDICATION.....	v
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	vii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	viii
CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Background.....	2
Context	3
Theoretical Framework	3
Statement of the Problem	5
Purpose of the Study.....	6
Significance of the Study.....	7
Definition of Terms	9
Limitations of the Study	11
Chapter I Summary.....	12
CHAPTER II. LITERATURE REVIEW	14
Theoretical Framework	15
Leadership on Emotional Intelligence	15
Emotions.....	18
Timeline of Emotional Intelligence	20
Social Intelligence	20
Non-Cognitive Intelligence	21
Abraham Maslow- People Can Build Emotional Strength.....	21
Multiple Intelligences	22
Emotional Intelligence Defined.....	22
1997- Bar-On’s Emotional Social Intelligence Model	23
Emotional Intelligence.....	24

Emotional Intelligence Competencies	25
Self-Awareness	25
Self-Management	26
Social Awareness	28
Relationship Management	29
Leadership and Emotional Intelligence	30
School Leadership	32
Significant Studies and Research on Emotional Intelligence and Leadership	33
Chapter II Summary	34
CHAPTER III. METHODOLOGY	36
Research Methodology	36
Research Design	38
Target Populations, Sample Method and Related Procedures.....	40
Target Population	40
Sampling Method	41
Related Procedures	42
Confidentiality.....	44
Data Collection Procedures	44
Data Analysis Procedures.....	45
Trustworthiness	47
Limitations.....	48
Internal Validity	48
External Validity	49
Ethical Issues	49
Researcher’s Position Statement	49
Chapter III Summary.....	50
CHAPTER IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS	51
Research Questions	51
Description of the Study.....	52
Summary of the Results	53
Theme One: Positive Campus Culture	53
Fostering Positive Relationships	54
Instill Core Values	55

Intentional Leadership	57
Communication	59
Theme Two: Self-Awareness	61
Self-Reflection.....	62
Strong Support Systems	63
Theme Three: Self-Regulation	65
Emotional Stability	65
Work-life Balance	66
Self-Regulating Strategies	68
Theme Four: Empowering Others	68
Empathy.....	69
Developing Others.....	70
Recognitions/Appreciation	71
Summary of Findings	72
CHAPTER V. CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSIONS	75
Purpose	75
Research Design/Methodology	77
Summary of the Results.....	79
Discussion of the Results of the Literature.....	81
Implications for the Results of Practice	85
Recommendations for Further Research	87
Summary	88
REFERENCES	91
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH	98

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Effective leadership and emotional intelligence skills are critical components that can contribute to the success of any organization (Issah, 2018). Similarly, ineffective leadership and a lack of emotional intelligence can lead to a negative culture that impedes learning. Public schools have seen an increase in obstacles and challenges in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has tremendously impacted educators and students. Leaders have faced unprecedented challenges that are now evident because of the pandemic crisis (McLeod & Dulsky, 2021).

According to Goode (2020), principal burnout and replacement become the new reality. Statistics show that there is usually a new principal within five years. Furthermore, school leaders of the past predominantly focused on managerial tasks of running and maintaining a school (Ashworth, 2013). Today, the role of leadership has changed to a more complex role that is at the forefront of education. A qualitative study investigating school leaders' skills in emotional intelligence and effective leadership can contribute to the support of current and future leaders. According to Goleman (2019), emotional intelligence is an essential leadership skill. Therefore, leaders should possess a high-level skill set in this area. Furthermore, Goleman (2019) emphasizes that emotional intelligence is essential in successful skills, whereas technical skills are less of a factor. Leadership is critical to the success of student achievement; therefore, cultivating an atmosphere where leaders grow professionally will ensure the stability and

longevity of this crucial role, which ultimately affects student achievement (Leithwood & Levin, 2010).

This chapter aims to provide insight into the critical constructs of school leadership and emotional intelligence, which are at the core of supporting campus staff and students no matter what situations educators face. According to Leithwood (2011), successful leadership includes shared values and shared responsibility where all stakeholders are dedicated to continued learning.

Background

Leadership theory has been a complex topic of interest and originates from the background of sociology (Mumford, 1906). Leadership continues to be all-encompassing with demands that continue to arise. School leaders serve multiple stakeholders, including parents, students, teachers, and superintendents. Furthermore, leadership is a complex phenomenon that entails overlapping leadership and emotional intelligence skills. Social effectiveness and facilitation are prevalent among great leaders. In addition, emotional intelligence skills are being identified as a critical factor in leadership because individuals who possess emotional intelligence-related skills use their moods and emotions and that of others to motivate them to adapt to desired behaviors (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Identifying and acquiring these best practices can support public school administrative leaders amid turbulent times. Empathy is critical to emotional intelligence and is a key factor in supporting relationships throughout these obstacles. Goleman (2004) describes emotional intelligence as key to today's leaders: self-awareness, motivation, self-regulation, empathy, and relationship adeptness.

Three perspectives of emotional intelligence have been identified, which include the “ability” model, the “trait” model, and the “mixed” model, which describes a combination of the

two (Mayer et al., 2000). The “ability” model focuses on individuals appropriately processing and using emotional information in a social environment. The “trait” model focuses on behavioral dispositions and self-perceived abilities. The “mixed” model describes a mix of mental abilities, dispositions, and traits (Mayer et al., 2000). These trait perspectives focus on emotion-related pre-dispositions, especially under stressful situations. According to Goleman (2004), emotional intelligence is the “ability to be aware of and to handle one’s emotions in varying situations” (p. 4). Similarly, Mayer et al. (2004) define emotional intelligence “as the ability to (a) perceive emotions, (b) use emotions to facilitate thought, (c) understand emotions, and (d) manage emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth” (p. 199).

Context

This study will explore a deep look into leadership and emotional intelligence as a compass to help guide the research and learn more about this phenomenon. This qualitative study examined the experiences of skilled principals who shared accounts of their school leadership and emotional intelligence strategies utilized throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, a description of the methodological process delineates the process of the phenomenology study, data collection, and analysis process. This study provides substantial insight into the best practices of leaders today regarding effective leadership and emotional intelligence qualities. Lastly, the limitations of the study are also described.

Theoretical Framework

The educational system is a complex organization that relies on interactions with different stakeholders daily. The theoretical framework for this study is emotional intelligence and effective leadership. According to Cherry (2022), Emotional Intelligence and leadership skills can help any school leader understand other people’s feelings and navigate through them.

According to McDonald (2021), “the global pandemic has affected teachers, students, and parents with intense emotions and increasing levels of anxiety and depression” (p. 1). Emotions are a natural instinctive state of mind deriving from one’s circumstances, mood, or relationships with others. Influential leaders can control their emotions when dealing with stressful demands. However, today, school leaders struggle with controlling emotions depending on various situations. At the same time, other people have a robust skill set when processing emotions and emotional stimuli that positively guide their emotions and behavior (Drigas & Papoutsis, 2018). According to Drigas and Papoutsis (2018), “emotional intelligence has been of great interest to scientists and researchers regarding its nature of emotional intelligence in the area of measurement, structure, as well as positive and negative effects” (p. 2). As explained by McDonald (2021), Emotional Intelligence consists of an individual’s capacity to recognize, manage, and express emotions and the ability to perceive, understand, interpret, and respond to the emotions of others. In addition, McDonald (2021) expresses that emotional intelligence allows people to navigate interpersonal relationships with empathy and think time before acting, allowing for sound decision-making and fostering positive interpersonal relationships.

The 2020-2021 educational school year was disrupted and changed like never before because of the COVID-19 pandemic (Reimers, 2020). The range of academic and emotional disruptions differed for every student and educator. Nonetheless, everyone needed to adjust. Due to this sensitive transition, emotional intelligence was vital for school leaders to survive.

According to Goleman (2010), the capacity to stay true to “thine own self” ensures that you are aligned with your deepest values no matter the social consequences. Those situations include social relations, adaptation, compassion, and empathy with others. Goleman (2010) outlines Emotional Intelligence into four domains: self-awareness, self-regulation, social skills, and

relationship management. This study will take a deep dive into these four domains to analyze and understand each component and how school leaders put their emotional intelligence and leadership skills into practice. Understanding these domains can better help school leaders navigate daily situations and build their toolbox with their leadership and emotional effectiveness.

Statement of the Problem

It is unknown how and to what degree the pandemic has had on students and educators across the United States. There is a gap in the literature regarding school leadership and emotional intelligence skills needed to navigate these unprecedented times. School leaders faced various concerns, including health, social isolation, transition to online learning, social and emotional issues, teacher retention, and much more. These additional burdens have caused burnout in educators across Texas. Teacher burnout is evident with the increase of teachers leaving the educational profession. According to Pressley & Ha (2021), prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, 8% of teachers were leaving the profession, and today approximately 19% - 30% of teachers with five years or less are leaving the profession. Pressley and Ha (2021) state that in a survey of 1,800 teachers 81% of them felt high levels of stress. He emphasizes that many stressors impact the classrooms and that there's a huge need to support teachers post-pandemic. Furthermore, the adverse effects of burnout can include severe illness and casualties and negative repercussions to personal relationships (Beausaert et al., 2016). The COVID-19 pandemic has not only negatively affected students but it has also placed increased demands on all educators. These challenges require educators to build on their leadership and emotional intelligence skills to support their stakeholders' needs.

School leaders at all levels were at the forefront of making decisions based on the ever-changing needs of the pandemic. Leaders needed to adjust and pivot to support the transition from in-person to online learning and support the social/emotional needs of those they served. These tasks were not easy and required increased attention to leadership best practices and the application of high levels of emotional intelligence skills. School leaders scrambled to support the people they served the best way they knew how. A new look at school leadership and emotional intelligence was explored by leaders who have dealt with these challenges successfully. Specifically, which skills or characteristics were applied to help them lead the people they served? School leaders became vulnerable. However, many leaders led with intention and focus.

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the job requirements and duties of school leaders. The role of principals is a crucial component of the success of a school; therefore, it is essential to review factors/strategies that will support individuals in these positions. According to Beausaert et al. (2016), researchers argue that school leaders are the second most significant influence on student outcomes behind the teacher. When the leader is not functioning well, arguably, the whole school suffers.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to get a deeper look at anecdotal data on effective leadership and emotional intelligence in efforts to add to the bank of knowledge in this area. Strategies that were key to educational leaders throughout the pandemic were analyzed, specifically in the Rio Grande Valley of South Texas. Understanding the practical skills of school leadership emphasizes the need for continued professional development in leadership and emotional

intelligence best practices. A phenomenology qualitative study was utilized to acquire deep, rich accounts of experiences regarding principals who led others through the pandemic.

Now more than ever, mainly due to increased academic demands, safety, and health concerns, as well as supporting students' and staff's social/emotional needs, school leaders must stay abreast of leadership and emotional intelligence best practices. According to Liew and McTigue (2010), the school curriculum must integrate activities that promote the development of social-emotional and self-regulatory skills with academic instruction. Some research emphasizes embedding social/emotional programs within academic instruction (Liew & McTigue, 2010). This study emphasizes the similar social/emotional support for school leaders. Specifically, critical findings in effective leadership and emotional intelligence skills will help guide future professional development to support current and future leaders.

School leadership is a complex phenomenon that requires individuals to promote a vision, cultivate a positive culture, and work together to support the needs of their stakeholders. Great leaders lead with precision and purpose. However, leaders are not always naturally born and need professional development just as much as all educators. With the never-ending demands and expectations of practical school leadership, the need for continued professional development is vital for school leaders. This phenomenology study deeply examined compelling leadership accounts to determine what they did or could have done to support their school community.

Significance of the Study

According to Norton (2002), research strongly supports the idea that a school principal impacts the school climate directly, which also impacts student achievement. Norton (2002) suggests that increasing the school leader's emotional intelligence and leadership skills would

help sustain future and aspiring leaders in a public school setting. Due to the increased and ever-changing accountability and increased social/emotional needs of students, leaders must expand their leadership and emotional intelligence skills. To provide some context, administrative school leaders of the past predominantly focused on managerial tasks of running and maintaining a school (Ashworth, 2013). Today, leadership has changed to a more complex role at the forefront of education. Leadership is critical to the success of student achievement; therefore, cultivating an atmosphere where leaders grow professionally with both leadership and emotional intelligence will ensure the stability and longevity of these critical main generations to come. School leadership is a complex phenomenon that has caught the attention of studies throughout history. Some of the best leaders encapsulate certain traits and characteristics that enable them to stand the test of time. Our history has shown us that the school curriculum must integrate all odds and embody charismatic personalities in many ways. This study will focus on identifying leadership traits that embody great leaders and the emotional intelligence skill set that ultimately sets them apart. Analyzing these practices with this research can provide insight for further professional development where essential leadership and emotional intelligence skills will benefit and sustain future leaders to support those they serve.

In efforts to support administrative school leaders, a qualitative research design was utilized analyzing key administrative school leaders' utilization of leadership and emotional intelligence skills. Principals will describe their experiences and recommendations for best practices. The make-up of the participants will include school principals who served at least three years in leadership roles of principal, assistant principal, or dean of instruction throughout the pandemic. The participant responses will be coded for trends and themes to provide specific and conceptual findings about school leadership and emotional intelligence.

This study can contribute to the existing knowledge about leadership and the emotional intelligence of school leaders. However, a deeper insight into leaders' emerging strategies and emotional intelligence characteristics will be examined post-COVID-19 pandemic. The following research questions will guide this study:

RQ1: What leadership styles and characteristics do school administrators perceive yield the highest impact to increase self-efficacy in a school leader?

RQ2: What reported emotional intelligence strategies or characteristics are fundamental for school leaders in their efforts to support their stakeholders?

RQ3: How do the four components of Daniel Goleman's emotional intelligence contribute to effective leadership, as reported by this study's participants?

The research design is qualitative. The research design included a phenomenological qualitative research design to collect data to analyze effective leadership styles and emotional intelligence components that yield leadership excellence. This qualitative research approach sought to understand and describe the essence of effective leadership and emotional intelligence traits that can further benefit future school leaders. Furthermore, interviews were utilized to gather a rich, descriptive account of current leaders' leadership practices and information regarding best practices in emotional intelligence and leadership strategies. This detailed narrative data provided vital information that can support future leaders.

Definition of Terms

Hispanic: The term *ethnic* is derived from the Greek word *ethnos*, which means nation (Jaimes et al., 2013). Ethnicity refers to people with the same ancestry and shared heritage. "Hispanic" is an ethnicity of different origins and races. According to Jaimes et al. (2013), Hispanics can include origin or ancestry from Hispania or Spanish-speaking persons of Latin

American descent living in the United States. The U.S. Office of Management and Budget uses Hispanic and Latino interchangeably, referring to anyone whose origin is Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central and South American, or Spanish culture (Jaimes et al., 2013). Hispanic/Latino is a broad term encompassing a wide range of people whose ties to this term can vary but include a connection to their original place of descent to include Latin American ties (Bureau, 2022). Due to this wide range of interpretations of the term Hispanic, the author will not utilize the term in the research.

Latino: According to Jaimes et al. (2013), Latinos have been linked to people whose origin comes from countries that mainly come from Latin America but may also have come from different countries, including Europe and America. Rodriguez (2014) states that “Latino” is commonly used by Latin Americans living in the United States instead of their countries of origin. There are contradictions in where the word Latino comes from, which invokes debates about the precise borders of Latin America. Furthermore, Ramirez-Valles (2017) emphasizes the fact that the word “Latino” and the word “Hispanic” are sometimes used interchangeably due to the lack of a classification system for their specific groups. According to Ramirez-Valles (2017), there is ambiguity regarding the term Latino. Due to the lack of clarity with the term “Latino,” the researcher will refrain from using this term. According to Burgett Hendler (2020), “Latino” was intended to be applied universally. However, “Latino” in Spanish is in masculine form. In efforts to be more inclusive, a slash between an “o” and “a ” was meant to register two possible gendered possibilities as Latino/a. According to Burgett and Hendler (2020), “this was also criticized by feminists and queer Spanish language communities to reinscribe a gender binary and excluded those who identify outside the binary” (p. 154). Furthermore, the letter “x” was introduced in the term Latinx as means to be more inclusive incorporating other elements of difference. The Term

Latinx was added to Webster's Dictionary in 2018 (Burgett & Hendler, 2020). The researcher will utilize the terms Latino/a/x in this paper when identifying the participants in this study.

Limitations of the Study

Some limitations in this study include a limited sample size specific to a South Texas region. Specifically, the sample size is narrowed to high-functioning school districts in The Rio Grande Valley of South Texas. The participants will also be a small group of principals. Currently, this school district is rated highly by the Texas Education Agency, which can provide a stigma where the results and findings are specific to only high-rated school districts. The United States Department of Education approved an A-F accountability system that grades schools and districts on five domains: student achievement, school progress, closing the gaps, post-secondary readiness, and community and student engagement (TEA, 2017). According to the Texas Education Agency (2017), ratings of these letter grades are intended to lead low-performing students by receiving support and boosting performance. Although this district is a high-performing district, there was a decrease in academic achievement during and after the pandemic.

Another potential limitation of the study would be looking at school leadership through three different lenses, which will also limit the number of participants for each role. The study included a small group of school leaders from one school district. School leaders faced multiple challenges within the different levels of school leadership. One of the biggest challenges includes keeping stakeholders motivated and engaged. Harris and Jones (2020) state that although we may not know all the consequences of the pandemic, it is clear that young people who were isolated at home dealt with increased mental health issues. Harris and Jones (2020) state that school leadership practices have changed considerably and maybe irreversibly. In addition, there is

evidence to support the importance of responsive leadership when implying a shift because of the COVID-19 pandemic. A new leadership order has emerged with no leadership standards, no preparation or development programs, and no blueprints to support school leaders through the obstacles of the COVID-19 pandemic (Harris & Jones, 2020).

Chapter I Summary

Chapter 1 delineated the complex challenges that school leaders are facing today. As the COVID-19 pandemic spread across the globe, educational institutions were directly affected. School leaders had little time to adjust and prepare for the challenges they were faced with. Leaders had to quickly utilize their leadership and emotional intelligence skills to promote the vision and values of their stakeholders. In addition, communication skills were at the forefront. Leaders needed to quickly adjust and communicate with stakeholders who might not be in person longer. Leaders needed to continue to engage their community and treat their staff with unconditional empathy and regard. Furthermore, leaders found a great need to increase interdependence skills to find solutions to daily challenges. The authors submitted that leadership is a close second to teacher quality as having the most impact on student achievement. Also, a deeper look at the construct of leadership and emotional intelligence strategies will be analyzed. Leaders shifted to a new lens of emotional intelligence support like never before. According to Goleman (1998), emotional intelligence encompasses several emotional skills, including analytic reasoning, while others combine thoughts and feelings. Furthermore, the Mayer-Salovey model is a mental ability framework focusing on emotions and interaction (Salovey & Mayer, 1990).

Emotions for all stakeholders in the education system ran at high intensity through this sensitive time. Goleman (1995) suggests that emotional intelligence is divided into a framework of 4 areas: perception of emotions, use of emotion, analyzing emotion, and managing emotion. A

critical component of Emotional Intelligence is becoming self-aware. According to Goode (2020), self-awareness is about being aware of your internal state of mind, which is your mood and thoughts. Furthermore, it explains that we can train our minds to get ourselves into the mood we choose. Therefore, we can react to the daily obstacles of being a principal with sound emotions. Effective leadership and emotional intelligence will be at the core of this study to further develop leaders of today's society and ensure that people in these roles are both ready academically and emotionally.

A new leadership order has emerged, with no leadership standards, no preparation or development programs, and no blueprints to support school leaders through the obstacles of the COVID-19 pandemic (Harris & Jones, 2020).

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review is an overview of the topic relevant to this study. Specifically, this chapter focuses on the construct of emotional intelligence and leadership. A theoretical framework is provided for these constructs to understand the phenomena' depth better. Specifically, there is a deeper dive into analyzing Goleman's (1995) framework on emotional intelligence. Goleman suggests that emotional intelligence falls under the following major components: knowing our emotions, managing our emotions, motivating our emotions, recognizing the emotions of others, and handling relationships (Goleman, 1995). Furthermore, this construct was thoroughly analyzed through the lens of school leadership and the implementation of emotional intelligence and leadership skills.

This qualitative study gathered more insight regarding best practices in emotional intelligence and leadership to support current and future principals. What skills and characteristics are needed to navigate and lead others in today's educational world? Most notably, this research considered the real experiences of principals in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and analyzed their accounts to support future leaders. According to Malone & Caddell (2000), "the demand for effective school principals is at an all-time high" (p. 162). Principals are tasked with public criticism and dealing with the reality that half of the public school teachers will leave the profession over the next decade (Malone & Caddell, 2000). Malone & Caddell (2000) also emphasize that a principal is constantly utilized in various roles. The authors

highlight that some principal's roles include: "manager, instructional leader, motivator, psychologist and public relations expert." (p. 162). These roles require emotional intelligence and leadership skills for individuals to execute effectively (Malone & Caddell, 2000).

This study aims to provide a qualitative analysis of leadership and emotional intelligence that positively contributes to principal efficacy. The literature review is broken down into sections that can provide a theoretical framework for emotional intelligence. First, a look at emotions will be reviewed. Then, background knowledge regarding the theorists who contributed to the idea of emotional intelligence will be explained. Emotional intelligence is the main topic in this study. An analysis of this topic will be reviewed with a historical look at how this construct was derived and the importance of emotional intelligence in today's world. In addition, emotional intelligence was analyzed regarding the impacts of school leadership. In addition, a deep look into Goleman's (1995) theory of emotional intelligence framework and competencies was studied. Lastly, an analysis of the role of a school principal was reviewed with an emphasis on understanding the most effective leadership practices. This background knowledge contributes to the understanding and need to develop both emotional intelligence and leadership skills of current and future principals.

Theoretical Framework

Literature on Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence is a complex topic with a multitude of layers and components. Several theorists have developed models of emotional intelligence; however, Goleman's (1995) model is deeply recognized as a standard model. In 1998, his model was developed with five domains, and then in 2002, it was redesigned into four domains with a lens on how to increase emotional intelligence in the workplace (Goleman, 1995). Goleman's model is a mixed method

model because it includes emotional and social competencies (Goleman, 1995). According to Ott (2017), emotional intelligence is understanding one's emotions and acting accordingly.

Emotional intelligence is a construct that has developed over time. The idea began in the early 1920s when psychologist Edward Thorndike developed the idea of "Social Intelligence" (Walker & Foley, 1973). The idea of emotional intelligence then expanded on the premise of David Wechsler (1944), a psychologist who developed the idea that intelligence does not only include an individual's cognitive abilities (Dhani & Sharma, 2016). He emphasized that intelligence includes emotions, experience, age, and environmental factors (Dhani & Sharma, 2016). In 1950, Abraham Maslow continued to build on emotional intelligence by emphasizing the need for individuals to reach self-actualization (Maslow, 1973). Next, psychologists Peter Salovey and John Mayer were the first to coin the term emotional intelligence. The Mayer-Salovey model developed the idea that individuals can perceive, understand, and manage emotions and thinking. According to Maxim (2021), Peter Salovey and John Mayer stress that emotional intelligence combines feelings with thinking and thinking with feelings. In addition, they found that some people are more skilled at identifying their feelings and determining emotional problems. They believe that emotional intelligence entails perceiving feelings and expressing emotions moderately (Maxim, 2021). Next, the Bar-On EQ- i was published in 1997 by Reuven Bar-On, where this assessment was intended to scale and measure emotional well-being (Bar-On, R., 2000). This model was considered a cross-section of emotional and social competencies and skills that correlate with behavior. The Bar-On EA-i developed a conceptual and psychometric model of emotional intelligence and is considered one of the three major models of emotional intelligence according to Cherniss (2000).

Most notable are the contributions of Goleman's (1995) construct of emotional intelligence. He wrote a landmark book 1995 on emotional intelligence, which has become a popular topic in the scientific world (Mishar & Bangun, 2014). Goleman's (1995) model included four primary emotional intelligence constructs: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. A set of emotional competencies within each of the constructs will be examined. Goleman (1995) believed emotional competencies can be learned (Mishar & Bangun, 2014). Goleman (1995) identified five "domains" of EQ: knowing your emotions, managing your emotions, managing yourself, recognizing and understanding other people's emotions, and managing relationships. These topics are categorized into clusters identified as Goleman's (1995) Emotional Intelligence Competencies. Goleman believed that these five crucial emotional intelligence skills can contribute to success in relationships, work, and a person's physical well-being. Goleman's emotional intelligence model was utilized in the workplace to support employees with emotions (Goleman et al., 2005). This model was a mixed model that included social competencies.

Goleman's framework has evolved through time, and the latest versions include four domains and eighteen competencies. These domains include self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management (Bar-On, R., 2000). The measurement of emotional intelligence has also evolved throughout time. These models include: "Emotional Competency Inventory, the Emotional Intelligence Appraisal, the Work Profile Questionnaire - Emotional Intelligence Version as cited in (Mishar & Bangun p. 400). Goleman developed the Emotional Competency Inventory based on his emotional intelligence competencies for leaders in the workplace (Mishar & Bangun, 2014). These assessment models allow self-reporting and supervisor feedback to rate emotional intelligence behaviors (Bar-On, R., 2000). This study aims

to provide insight into emotional intelligence to understand ourselves better and, in turn, better serve others. The more we can improve our emotional intelligence capacity, the better the impact can be on our relations with others (Mishar & Bangun, 2014).

Emotions

Emotions have been an abstract concept that is generally difficult to define. Emotions are something that people experience and something they do. Emotions can be seen as either the “inner” or “outer” expression of bodily manifestation (Scheer, 2012). Neo-Jamesians and neuroscientist Antonio Damasio distinguish between bodily changes (emotion) and mental perception and interpretation of them in the brain (feeling) (Scheer, 2012). Historians have concluded to remove the stigma that emotions are less than cognition. According to Scheer (2012), they also believe that emotions serve as a mode of communication and a role in human exchanges.

According to Izard (1991), emotions are a complex concept that does not have a simple definition. Various psychoanalytic and psychologists suggest that the theory of emotions consists of an “incoming percept initiates an unconscious process which mobilizes unconscious energies; if no free pathway of activity is open these energies - and this is the case when instinctual demands conflict - they find discharge through channels other than voluntary motility Izard, (1991). Furthermore, “emotional expression” or “emotion felt” may co-occur or succeed one another. Izard (1991) suggests that the emotional state refers to a particular emotion process for a limited time. In contrast, emotion trait refers to the tendency to experience a particular emotion daily. Izard (1991) also explains that fundamental emotions have the same expressions and qualities across cultures. However, Izard (1991) suggests that anyone can learn to modify their

expressions and that different social backgrounds and experiences can influence these emotions' positive and negative characteristics.

Emotions are the reactions that humans experience in an array of situations. Salovey & Mayer (1990) state that “the processes underlying emotional intelligence are initiated when affect-laden information first enters the perceptual system” (p. 191). Furthermore, Salovey & Mayer (1990) explain that verbal communication is one medium for expressing emotions. Furthermore, the ability to express emotions accurately is a part of emotional intelligence (Salovey & Mayer, 1990).

Emotions are a complex topic that includes an array of terms and characteristics. According to Psychologist Paul Ekman (1999), the six universal emotions are happiness, sadness, fear, disgust, anger, and surprise. This study will continue to analyze and understand how the importance of emotions and the importance of individuals' reactions to stimuli affect the overall emotional intelligence of individuals.

Emotions are often defined as complex feelings which result in physical and psychological changes affecting thought and behavior. Emotions include different parts of the human body related to our nervous system and physiological changes that affect behavior. Emotions can take over someone's life if there is a failure to recognize proper responses to critical events. School leaders worked diligently throughout the pandemic to support their students and staff during these difficult times. School leaders rose to the challenge, which took precision in both leadership and emotional intelligence. Emotions can be broken down into three categories: motivation, emotion, cognition, and consciousness (Drigas & Papoutsis, 2018). Influential school leaders understood that Emotional Intelligence skills and the support of others were what both educators and families needed to get through. Understanding how to deal with

the emotions of oneself and others is complicated. Most theorists agree that cognitive processes are an essential source of emotions and that feelings comprise a powerful motivation system that significantly influences perception, cognition, confrontation, and creativity. Research has shown that emotions are a significant part of one's internal harmony. Awareness of your own and others' feelings is critical to leadership in any educational setting, most importantly needed to support educators through and after the pandemic.

Timeline of Emotional Intelligence

Emotional Intelligence was the primary focus of this study. However, emotional intelligence did not always exist. Below is a timeline of how emotional intelligence has evolved through time.

Social Intelligence

“Social Intelligence” was founded by psychologist Edward Thorndike in the 1920's (Furnham, 2012). According to Walker & Foley (1973), Social Intelligence is “the ability to understand others and to act wisely in social situations” (p. 840). This term was quickly accepted in psychology, and approximately ten years later, instruments were created to evaluate this ability, Walker and Foley (1973). Thorndike's 1920 original definition of social intelligence included “the ability to (a) understand others and (b) act or behave wisely in relating to others” (p. 842). Furthermore, Thorndike's interpretation could be seen as action-oriented regarding coping with others. Social Intelligence has evolved to take on different views specific throughout time. However, the concept still encompasses the following characteristics: interpersonal competence, egocentrism, and empathy (Walker & Foley, 1973).

Non-Cognitive Intelligence

David Wechsler (1944) emphasized that intelligence does not denote just a person's cognitive abilities but also non-cognitive abilities. He explained that intelligence is the sum of a person's ability to reason and to deal effectively with his environment (Wechsler, 1944). He referred to "intellective" characteristics as affective. In 1943, he emphasized the importance of non-intellective ideas to a successful life. Wechsler stated the importance of measuring the non-intellective factors as a part of measuring intelligence (Wechsler, 1944).

Abraham Maslow- People Can Build Emotional Strength

Maslow emphasized the need for self-actualization. According to Maslow (1973), self-actualization can be described as "the full use and exploitation of one's talents, capacities, potentialities, etc." (p. 150). He emphasizes that self-actualization is the being of a "mature, fully human" person striving for identity and autonomy and yearning for excellence. (Mittelman, 1991). He introduced the concept of a Hierarchy of Needs in a paper he wrote in 1943 called "Theory of Human Motivation". This theory suggests that people must fulfill basic needs before moving on to more advanced ones (Maslow, 1943). He expresses that if all needs are met, a person can reach the state of self-actualization (Maslow, 1943). Maslow believes that humans must meet essential human needs before reaching or satisfying higher ones (Maslow, 1943). Maslow's self-actualization theory included the following basic principles: 1.) The normal personality is characterized by unity, integration, consistency, and coherence. 2.) The organism includes all parts, and no part can be isolated. 3.) People strive to reach the state of self-actualization. 4.) The influence of the appropriate environment can lead to the organism's maximum potential. 5.) Man is good, not evil. Therapy is meant to help a person reach their journey to self-actualization. Self-actualization can arrive when the four basic needs are met on

the hierarchy of needs model. He believes that some people work on being the best they can be and developing themselves to reach their highest potential (Maslow, 1943). Ultimately, Abraham Maslow was credited as one of the first psychologists to discuss the importance of positive psychology and studied how to achieve happiness and reach self-actualization, which is the best version of yourself.

Multiple Intelligences

In 1983, Howard Gardner published a breakthrough book, *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*. This theory of multiple intelligences expands the definition of intelligence and outlines several types of intellectual competencies. This theory describes seven “intelligences”: linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalist intelligence (Gardner, 1983). Gardner (1983) theorizes that people have more than just intellectual capacity but have an array of intelligence. Gardner (1983) emphasizes that linguistic and logical-mathematical modalities can be most valued in school and society. However, intelligence may differ among different individuals based on genetics or experience. Gardner explains that intelligence is a biopsychological ability to process information and navigate through an array of intelligence that helps create solutions to societal problems (Gardner, 1983).

Emotional Intelligence Defined

According to Mayer & Salovey (1993), Emotional Intelligence was described as a form of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one’s and others’ feelings and emotions and navigate them utilizing cognition of thinking and action. They were also known for creating a research program to measure emotional intelligence and the importance of it (Cherniss, 2000). Mayer & Salovey (1993) describe the scope of emotional intelligence as comprising the “verbal

and nonverbal appraisal and expression of emotion, the regulation of emotion in the self and others, and the utilization of emotional content in problem-solving” (p. 433). Specifically, they stress that emotionality contributes to specific abilities. They explain that individuals differ in their ability and amplitude regarding feelings. Furthermore, they express that people who experience varying emotions will also experience varying thoughts (Mayer & Salovey, 1993). They explain that people in good moods perceive more positive events, adverse events are less likely to occur, and the reverse holds for negative moods (Mayer & Salovey, 1993). Also, Salovey (1990) found that a shift of inward attention follows happy and sad moods. This type of shift can be seen to promote cognitive and behavioral activities that potentially maintain pleasant or unpleasant states. Lastly, Mayer and Salovey (1993) conclude that emotional individuals may emphasize higher-level processes concerning attention to feelings clarity and be partial to feelings. However, individuals who experience feelings clearly and can regulate them can repair their moods quickly and effectively (Mayer & Salovey, 1993). Mayer and Salovey (1993) founded the four-branch model of emotional intelligence, which included four branches. These branches included perceiving emotion, using emotions to facilitate thought, understanding emotions, and managing emotions.

1997- Bar-On’s Emotional-Social Intelligence Model

Another mixed model of emotional intelligence is the Bar-On model developed by Reuven Bar-On in 1997. Bar-On’s Emotional-Social Intelligence Model consisted of a cross-section between social and emotional competencies (Fernández-Berrocal & Extremera, 2006). This model comprises 15 interrelated emotional and social competencies. Bar-on’s Model of Emotional Intelligence includes the skills and abilities to understand how effectively we understand and express ourselves (Bar-On, 1997). Bar-On’s model defines the cross-section of

interrelated emotional and personality traits. This construct's five social/emotional competencies include 1.) intrapersonal skills, interpersonal skills, adaptability, stress management, and general mood cite. The Bar-On construct developed the first commercial instrument to measure EI (EQ-I; Bar-On, 1997). This construct was added to an array of measurement instruments, including interviews, questionnaires for external raters, self-report measures, etc. The Emotional Quotient Inventory became the most utilized assessment measure, comprising 133 items that evaluate the theoretical model (Fernández-Berrocal & Extremera, 2006). Theorists began to consider Bar-On's model as a mixed model of EI, which included a range of social, emotional, cognitive, and personality dimensions (Mayer et al., 2000). Bar-On's model was substantial in assessing EQ-I and the predictive, construct, and validity in measuring personality and cognitive intelligence (Bar-On, 2000).

Emotional Intelligence

In the early 1900s, Daniel Goleman added to Salovey and Mayer's work to discover the new term, Emotional Intelligence (Cherniss, 2000). Goleman wrote the best-seller book, "Emotional Intelligence, " which introduced the term EI in 1995 (Fernández-Berrocal & Extremera, 2006). Goleman was a science writer with the New York Times during this time, where he focused on brain and behavior research (Cherniss, 2000). In his first book, Goleman states that EI comprises five essential elements. These elements consist of 1) knowing one's emotions, 2) managing emotions, 3) motivating oneself, 4) recognizing emotions in others, and 5) handling relationships (Fernández-Berrocal & Extremera, 2006). In his book Emotional Intelligence, Goleman (1998) recognizes the brain as one of the organs that allows human beings to react to certain situations and allows us to learn from our emotions. In 1998, Goleman introduced his emotional intelligence based on performance theory. Goleman's framework has

evolved over the years. However, the latest version includes four domains and eighteen competencies.

Emotional Intelligence Competencies

Self-Awareness

Goleman (1998) explains that self-awareness gives a person the ability to have a clear picture of himself, allowing you to see how others view you. Self-awareness can be broken down into three areas: emotional awareness, accurate self-assessment, and self-confidence (Cherniss & Goleman, 2001). Emotional awareness is an essential part of self-awareness. Emotional awareness is recognizing one's emotions and effects (Cherniss & Goleman, 2001). Self-aware people can understand the links between their feelings and what they think. Emotional awareness allows a person to recognize how their feelings affect their performance. Furthermore, Goleman (2001) suggests that people who are emotionally aware can consider other people's emotions and navigate emotional reactions with sensitivity.

According to Cherniss & Goleman (2001), individuals with accurate self-assessments know their abilities and limitations, seek feedback to improve in areas of weakness and understand how to work with others with complementary strengths. Individuals with this competence know their strengths and weaknesses and are willing to reflect on learning from their experiences (Serrat, 2017).

Goleman (2001) suggests that an accurate self-assessment includes not overestimating your strengths but rather underestimating your abilities. According to Serrat (2017), an essential component of accurate self-assessment is being open to candid feedback, new perspectives, and continuous learning. According to Goleman (2001), assessing our strengths and areas of development is a central part of emotional intelligence.

According to Serrat (2017), having strong self-confidence is the ability of an individual to present themselves with self-assurance and presence. Goleman (2010) emphasizes that self-confident individuals can express their ideas and voice and go out on a limb for what is right. In addition, Goleman (1998) expresses that self-confident people are decisive and able to make sound decisions despite uncertainties and pressures and encompass characteristics of self-confidence that are positively correlated to work success. He stated that 112 entry-level accountants who rated themselves with high self-efficacy and self-confidence were rated by their supervisors ten months later as having superior job performance (Cherniss & Goleman, 2001). Self-confidence was considered a stronger predictor of work performance than a person's skill level or previous training background (Cherniss and Goleman, 2001).

Self-Management

Self-management is another critical domain in Daniel Goleman's Emotional Intelligence Model. Self-management, the ability to manage one's internal state, is another critical component of Daniel Goleman's Emotional Intelligence theory (Cherniss & Goleman, 2001). He suggests that this component comprises five competencies: emotional self-control, trustworthiness, conscientiousness, adaptability, and innovativeness.

Emotional Self-Control is the ability not to react inappropriately or express disruptive feelings when dealing with a situation. According to Goleman (2001), signs of this competence include being unphased when dealing with stressful and hostile situations and not returning those feelings. In addition, it is the ability to have a "strong sense of control over not only themselves but the events in their lives and are less likely to become angry or depressed when faced with job stress" (Cherniss & Goleman, 2001). Goleman suggests that individuals with self-control can

manage their impulsive feelings and distressing emotions, stay composed and cheerful in trying moments, and think clearly and focus under pressure (Serrat, 2017).

Furthermore, Boyatzis (1982) suggests that top managers and executives can balance their drive and ambition with Emotional Self-Control, where they can forgo their personal needs and keep the organization's needs a priority.

Trustworthiness is another vital part of self-regulation. Trustworthiness is the ability to let others know your values and feelings and act consistently with them. Furthermore, individuals with this competence can act ethically and build trust through their reliability and authenticity (Serrat, 2017). Most notably, individuals with this competence can admit to their mistakes and confront unethical actions. Goleman (1998) states, "Trustworthy individuals are forthright about their own mistakes and confront others about their lapses" (p. 34). Lastly, Goleman suggests that trustworthy individuals can take a stand even when the idea is unpopular and confront unethical actions in others.

Being conscientious is another competency in self-regulation. The ability to be conscientious includes being self-disciplined and attentive to one's responsibilities. According to Goleman (2001), a conscientious person is a model who can keep the organization running as it should. Individuals with this competence can meet their commitments and promises (Serrat, 2017). They are highly reliable and hold themselves accountable for meeting their objectives. In addition, conscientiousness includes being organized and careful in their work.

Adaptability is another vital component related to self-management. According to Goleman (2001), adaptable individuals are open to new information and can let go of old assumptions or ideas. Adaptability includes handling change, juggling multiple demands, and adapting to new situations or ideas. According to Serrat (2017), individuals with this competence

are flexible in seeing events. A lack of adaptability can be seen in people focused on the past instead of the future (Serrat, 2017).

Innovativeness also falls under the umbrella of self-management in Daniel Goleman's Emotional Intelligence theory. Innovativeness characteristics include the ability of an individual to seek out fresh ideas from various sources (Serrat, 2017). In addition, individuals with this competence can find original solutions to problems and generate new ideas. An innovative individual can take a fresh perspective and risks in their thinking (Serrat, 2017).

Social Awareness

According to Daniel Goleman's (2010) Emotional Intelligence model, Social Awareness is a fundamental part of his theory and a skill that all individuals can work on to build with themselves. Social awareness includes having an awareness and understanding of the world around us. Social awareness is broken down into five components: empathy, service orientation, developing others, leveraging diversity, and political awareness (Serrat, 2017). Social awareness can be defined as one's ability to "understand the emotions of other people and empathize with them" (Goleman, 2010).

Empathy is a crucial component of social awareness. Individuals with this competence can be attentive to emotional cues and actively listen. Empathy includes the ability to show sensitivity and understand others' perspectives. It includes the ability for an individual to help out based on the understanding of other people's needs and feelings. According to Cherniss and Goleman (2001), sensitivity to others is vital for superior job performance where the focus deals with people's interactions. Empathy competence in the workplace allows for reading people accurately and avoiding stereotyping, leading to a negative culture that can increase anxiety (Cherniss & Goleman, 2001).

Service orientation is another component of social awareness. This component includes understanding the customers' needs and matching them to services or products. According to Serrat (2017), service-oriented people seek ways to increase customer satisfaction and loyalty. These individuals are customer-oriented and can view the need through the lens of the customer acting as a trusted advisor.

Organizational awareness includes reading the current emotions and political realities in groups and building a coalition to yield influence in a professional role (Cherniss & Goleman, 2001). Goleman suggests that top managers and executives generally share the ability of organizational awareness. These individuals can read situations objectively without bias (Cherniss & Goleman, 2001).

Relationship Management

Relationship Management is another critical component of Goleman's Emotional Intelligence Domains and Competencies. According to Cherniss & Goleman (2001), essential social skills are included in this domain. Lunenburg (2011) states that relationship management guides other people's emotions. Relationship management includes influencing others' beliefs and feelings, developing others' capabilities, managing change, resolving conflicts, building strong personal bonds, supporting teamwork, and leading by example. These abilities emphasize the need to communicate clearly and convincingly with the ability to influence others. Furthermore, Lunenburg (2011) suggests that a leader with strong relationship management skills can share their vision and gain support to promote their vision when needed.

The following competencies are crucial to relationship management. The first is influence. Goleman & Boyatzis (2017) suggest that a leader who has strength in relationship management can serve as a coach and mentor and can also handle conflict management well.

They stress that this type of leader will be skilled at giving people unpleasant feedback (Goleman & Boyatzis, 2017). Goleman & Cherniss (2001) suggest that “the most effective people sense others’ people’s reactions and fine-tune their responses to move interaction in the best direction” (p. 37).

Clear communication and conflict management follow the Goleman (1995) Emotional framework. Goleman & Cherniss (2001) suggest that creating clear lines of communication is a critical factor in an organization’s success. They suggest that open lines of communication are key. In addition, communication involves active listening and a “give and take” relationship of emotional information (Goleman & Cherniss, 2001).

In addition, someone with a high degree of relationship management can facilitate teamwork and be an inspirational leader. Goleman & Boyatzis (2017) express that to be successful leaders, an individual must develop a balance of strengths across the different EI competencies. Workplace relationship management encompasses an individual's ability to handle conflict management with skilled listening and diplomacy (Goleman & Cherniss, 2001).

Leadership and Emotional Intelligence

According to Gray (2009), emotional intelligence is at the core of a leader’s decision-making. According to Mayer and Salovey (1997), emotionally intelligent leaders can perceive and understand emotions and regulate emotions to foster emotional and intellectual growth. George (2000) suggests that an effective leader must employ emotional intelligence in the following four dimensions to yield tremendous student success. Four dimensions of emotional intelligence include: expressing emotions, using them to improve decision-making, knowledge about emotions, and managing emotions. A principal’s emotional intelligence is crucial in

fostering a collaborative environment where students can maximize their potential and the school community can thrive (Gray, 2009).

Emotional intelligence is the capacity to be aware of, control, and express one's emotions and to handle interpersonal relationships judiciously and empathetically. Emotional intelligence characteristics are beneficial for fostering a positive environment and are at the “cornerstone” of every decision a principal makes (Gray, 2009). Leaders who show control and integrity will likely have higher emotional intelligence because leading others through their actions and attitudes are easier. Goleman (1995) emphasizes that human competencies like self-awareness, self-discipline, persistence, and empathy are of more significant consequence than IQ in predicting performance. In other words, emotional intelligence is being innovative about oneself and other people. It includes understanding people and doing something with that understanding (Haygroup, 2004). Being able to understand not only yourself but others is a critical element of emotional intelligence. According to Gray (2009), their study shows that emotional intelligence suggests that our “mood and feelings are connected to our thought process and behavior” (p. 2). Moods are emotional states unrelated to particular circumstances (Gray, 2009). However, feelings can be more intense than moods and often influence our thinking (Gray, 2009). George (2000) expresses that a leader's awareness of feelings can be correlated to influence people's decisions.

There is a misconception regarding the belief that leaders can quickly put aside their feelings when making professional decisions (Gray, 2009). Leaders are human beings who encompass an array of emotions daily. Utilizing Goleman’s emotional intelligence competencies can be beneficial in navigating and leading a school organization. According to George (2000), emotionally intelligent leaders manage their organization’s culture to reinforce essential norms

and values and to inspire teachers and students to achieve excellence. The principal's efforts to invest and increase emotional intelligence can positively affect a campus climate, student success, and, ultimately, the school community. According to Gray (2009), a principal's role in instruction means working cooperatively with others daily. A leader's self-awareness of themselves and others is critical in leading and decision-making (Gray, 2009).

School Leadership

Leithwood et al. (2017) emphasize that leadership correlates highly with students' success. In addition, the authors explain that the effects of leadership are typically distributed through the school organization. According to Leithwood et al. (2017), there are four paths to successful leadership, which include the rational path, the emotional path, the organizational path, and the family path. The rational path includes conceptualizing relations between school administrative practice and instructional practice. This path delves into the best practices of distributed and transformational leadership to develop teacher efficacy. According to Leithwood et al. (2017), the emotional path elaborates on the essential components of teachers' emotional support and their emotions. There is an emphasis on cultivating a trusting environment and promoting a caring environment. Leithwood et al. (2017) stress that a leader must clearly articulate a clear vision and create a professional learning environment. Lastly, the authors stress that student families are an essential component of student success and that it is crucial for a leader to create a culture that involves families.

Leithwood et al. (2017) assume that leadership requires specific skills to execute effectively. They express that leaders are constantly evolving, and providing coaching and professional development occasionally is essential. However, these authors also express that professional leaders should have the autonomy to do the right thing. Therefore, analyzing and

implementing best practices in emotional intelligence and leadership could be beneficial for the ever-changing demands of our current and future leaders.

Effective school districts help principals implement the new and demanding responsibilities with holistic performance management systems that systematically develop, support, motivate, and retain quality leadership talent (Ikemoto et al., 2014).

Theorists throughout the years have explored emotional intelligence and validated that this topic can be abstract and somewhat difficult to measure. According to Ciarrochi et al. (2006), an experimental measure of emotional intelligence was introduced due to the difficulty of assessing this construct. The concept of emotional intelligence emerged with attempts to measure it. An array of personality tests was utilized to measure the concept.

Significant Studies and Research on Emotional Intelligence and Leadership

There has been increased knowledge over the years regarding emotional intelligence and leadership through various researchers who have recognized the importance of emotional intelligence as an integral role in a school leader. The role of a school leader has become increasingly more complex, and school leaders are responsible for leading change efforts, building capacity in others, providing safety, and educating children (Gomez-Leal et al., 2021). According to Leal (Gomez-Leal et al., 2021), research emphasizes that the role of the principal should include sharpening their skills in building trusting relationships, demonstrating empathy, and employ self-management skills to accomplish a task as well as provide conflict resolution. According to Pierce (2014), EI is fundamental to positive relationships. According to Berkovich and Eyal (2017), studies have found that a leader's emotional recognition positively and indirectly affects teachers. This ability gives the researcher a more positive outlook on stressful events. Study after study has indicated that a school leader's behaviors often represent how well

they manage their emotions (Gomez-Leal et al., 2021). However, the increase in principal demands and the turnover rate of principals or school leaders continue to rise. The COVID-19 Pandemic has added new stresses that include health risks, virtual learning, and the increased demands in mental health that have been noted since the start of the pandemic. A deeper look with a laser focus on sustained leadership with the utilization of emotional intelligence skills and effective leadership continues to be an ever-changing need. This study analyzed anecdotal data regarding the best practices of school leaders who have sustained the role effectively throughout these turbulent times. An analysis of the findings can provide beneficial information at a deeper level, looking more in-depth at emotional intelligence competencies and strategies that are key to future school leadership.

Chapter II Summary

The literature review presented background knowledge regarding the conceptual framework of emotional intelligence and school leadership. The current literature focuses on how emotional intelligence was explored, specifically emphasizing Goleman's (1995) Emotional Intelligence model. The components of Goleman's (1995) Emotional Intelligence framework were explained in detail, including self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, and relationship management characteristics. Furthermore, a deeper look at school leadership was also reviewed. This background adds to a deeper understanding of the characteristics needed to be an effective school leader (principal).

The results of an empirical study conducted by Hallinger and Heck (1996) regarding the principal's role in schools indicate that principals employ a measurable, indirect effect on student achievement. A principal is vital to any campus, and it is essential to recognize and learn about emotional intelligence characteristics and leadership styles that will help leaders in this crucial

role. Furthermore, according to the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), turnover is an issue across the nation with “35 percent of principals being at their school for less than two years, and only 11 percent of principals being at their school for 10 years or more” (p. 3). An array of quantitative research explores the phenomenon of emotional intelligence and school leadership. However, the research does not explore the lived experiences of participants. There is a lack of qualitative research on the lived experiences of the phenomena through the lens of school leaders who have experienced leadership in the wake of COVID-19. These insights were critical to analyze and explain deeper to support the leaders of today and tomorrow. These constructs add validity and importance on how to increase principal efficacy. The next chapter includes the study's methodology, which discusses the research design and details on how the study was conducted.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter focuses on the research design and methodology for the study. This study sought to understand how emotional intelligence characteristics and leadership qualities positively impact principal efficacy. The research focuses on gaining a deeper perspective on how administrators utilized practical, emotional intelligence and leadership skills to support their stakeholders through the COVID-19 pandemic. These findings provide a compass for future leaders on the specific skills needed to support their ever-changing demands of principals. First, the study's purpose and research questions are reviewed. Next, the research design is discussed with a methodological lens that includes the setting, context of the study, and data collection methods. Data analysis procedures and the logistics of how the data was analyzed is also discussed. This chapter demonstrates the study's validity by explaining in detail the phenomenological research process, including a trustworthiness section. Lastly, the chapter provides details on the limitations and my positionality of the study.

Research Methodology

The qualitative design utilized in this study is phenomenology. This study sought to emphasize and display the emotional intelligence and leadership skills that are key to the success of a principal. This study obtained insights from anecdotal experiences through interviews with the participants. Specific research questions aimed at gathering intentional data regarding

emotional intelligence and leadership best practices. These research questions served as a compass to provide themes and findings regarding the phenomenon.

This study highlights best practices that school leaders have utilized in emotional intelligence and leadership, which can be used as best practices for future leaders, especially throughout these unprecedented times. Specifically, emotional intelligence was the primary focus of this study, with an additional look at practical leadership qualities. The study sought to (1) explore emotional intelligence components and strategies critical to effective leadership and advocate for professional development in leadership and emotional intelligence that will yield positive support for current and future leaders; and (2) analyze and understand what type of leadership qualities yield the highest impact on the increased self-efficacy of a school leader. The research questions below guided the study to help delve into the rich experiences of current school principals in South Texas. In addition, these experiences are explained by participants with vast experience with the phenomenon. The following research questions will be used to guide this qualitative study:

RQ1: What leadership styles and characteristics do school administrators perceive yield the highest impact to increase self-efficacy in a school leader?

RQ2: What reported emotional intelligence strategies or characteristics are fundamental for school leaders in their efforts to support their stakeholders?

RQ3: How do the four components of Daniel Goleman's emotional intelligence contribute to effective leadership, as reported by this study's participants?

The goal of this research is to (1) inform current and future school leaders on best practices in effective leadership by analyzing the effective implementation of emotional intelligence and leadership skills, (2) provide targeted professional development that will increase both the

emotional intelligence and leadership skills of school leaders, and (3) offer recommendations and insights for future study.

This study focuses on successful school leaders' experiences through turbulent times, consisting of principals who have successfully supported staff and students throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Given the number of teachers and students who had to transition to online platforms and lose some face-to-face interactions, there has been an increase in social/emotional challenges for all stakeholders. Challenges include but are not limited to a lack of motivation and disengagement from students and staff who transitioned to online learning platforms, a sense of disconnect amongst colleagues and students due to social isolation, and a decrease in motivation for both students and staff. According to Flores et al. (2012), teacher attrition is another significant problem facing schools. Leaders are scrambling to find highly qualified individuals to meet classroom needs. All of these factors have contributed to the increased demands of education leaders. Due to the unprecedented number of principals leaving the profession, there is a need for targeted professional development that can continue to develop the emotional intelligence and leadership skills of principals of today.

Research Design

Connelly (2010) suggests that phenomenology is a philosophical movement that focuses on experiences through a person's perspective. A deep understanding is collected through various data such as interviews, stories, or observations. In addition, phenomenology focuses on consciousness and the content of a conscious experience (Connelly, 2010). Researchers who utilize this type of inquiry aim to gain an understanding of living the experience (Connelly, 2010). Emotional intelligence and leadership are both abstract constructs that may have challenges when measuring and analyzing through a statistical lens. Therefore, this study utilizes

a phenomenology approach to understand the experiences of the increased stress and obstacles and the best practices in leadership and emotional intelligence to support principals and school leaders today.

According to Creswell and Poth (2018), phenomenology research is an approach in which individuals can describe their experiences. These experiences can include an array of details regarding the experience, including details about the phenomenon. Specific open-ended protocol questions will allow participants to give their experiences and perspectives. Creswell and Poth (2018) suggest that a story is co-constructed between the researcher and participant to convey a message. Collaboration is a critical component of a qualitative phenomenology research design. Data was collected from interviews with deep, rich accounts of the participants' experiences and then broken down into different themes. Creswell and Poth (2018) note that there are numerous ways to communicate phenomenological research, either temporality or spatiality, to organize responses for a deeper analysis of the findings. Ultimately, the researcher conveyed the story from the participant's perspective to gain a deeper understanding.

Patton (2002) suggests that the validity of qualitative measurement has now reached respectability. The Joint Committee on Standards for Evaluation (1994) supports both qualitative and quantitative methods of inquiry as a place of reputable inquiry that now allows for multiple approaches to gather data and vary both methods as effective. The challenge with qualitative data lies in organizing and making sense of the findings (Patton, 2002). With this in mind, this study will categorize the findings into two main themes: emotional intelligence and school leadership. Furthermore, themes will be broken into small subcategories derived from the findings. There will be an intentional focus on examining the five components of Goleman's (2010) Emotional

Intelligence Framework: self-awareness, self-management, social relations, and relationship management.

Target Populations, Sample Method, and Related Procedures

Target Population

To recruit participants for the study, the researcher first needed to acquire permission from the school district's superintendent. An overview of the study was discussed with the school superintendent to acquire permission to proceed with the study. A focus on school leadership and emotional intelligence was emphasized when explaining the proposal. Currently, I serve as a Director of School Counseling in the district and work directly and indirectly with all school administrators in the district. There were different ways to acquire participants for the study. The researcher coordinated with human resources to review which participants may be eligible for the study. After the eligible participants were screened, a formal email was sent to the principals participating in the study. According to Creswell (2013), it is important for the researcher to gain the participants trust to avoid an imbalance of power due to the hierarchy relationship between the researcher and participant. Additionally, the researcher created an environment conducive to facilitating the interviews after participants are recruited. A schedule was utilized to ensure that the participants were not interrupted to allow participants the time to provide their insights for the study. Participants were asked to complete a questionnaire to ensure they met the above criteria before being invited for an interview.

Participants for this study included principals who met the criteria for the study. Thus, the following criteria were set up to recruit eligible participants: (1) be 18 years of age or older; (2) have a minimum of 3 administrative years of experience; (3) currently serve in a South Texas school district; (4) must currently be serving in an administrative capacity. For screening

purposes, all participants were asked to complete an eligibility questionnaire to ensure they met the requirements of the study prior to participating.

The target population included experienced principals willing to consent and participate in the study. Participants must have a professional track record of supervising others to be able to provide information about the phenomenon. Therefore, participants must have experience supervising and serving in a leadership role at a school campus. Purposeful sampling ensured that participants could provide rich experiences that shed light on the phenomenon.

Additionally, the leaders delved into their experience with emotional intelligence. This required the participants to have experience in this area. School administrators play a critical role in improving the learning environment and overall progress in a school, according to Leithwood & Riehl (2003). According to Leithwood and Riehl (2003), skillful leadership is critical for an administrator to accomplish campus goals.

Ensuring participants had a deep understanding of effective leadership and emotional intelligence was another criterion for participants. The participant questionnaire was utilized with specific questions to ensure the participants met the criteria in this area. Participants were also allowed to ask questions about the topic and be willing to share their experiences. Additionally, the researcher acquired seven participants to represent the study. Furthermore, the researcher acquired consent from the participants. The interviews took place in a conducive environment via a teleconference utilizing a Google Meet software.

Sampling Method

It is essential to understand the perspectives of school leaders who had leadership experience throughout the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and are still currently in the profession. The researcher sought to capture the experiences through the lens of principals who

served during these turbulent times. The participants needed to meet specific criteria to be utilized for the interview process. Some criteria included a minimum of three years in an administrative role, must have worked in this role throughout the pandemic, and must currently serve in an administrative capacity. The researcher needed to provide a platform for the participants to highlight their experiences and how they applied their emotional intelligence and leadership expertise. Purposeful sampling was utilized to select individuals intentionally. According to Creswell (2012), a researcher utilizes purposeful sampling to learn and understand the essential phenomenon and uses intentionality when selecting individuals and sites.

Related Procedures

Protocol questions were derived from the research questions guiding the conceptual and theoretical framework of the study. The first part of the interviews included questions that explored participants' experiences with emotional intelligence and leadership. The protocol questions derived from the research questions below. First, the researcher sought to gather the experiences in school leadership and the phenomenon's characteristics to gain a deeper insight into that area. This aligns with R1:

R1: What type of leadership styles and characteristics yield the highest impact to increase self-efficacy in a school leader with your experience?

Secondly, the topic of emotional intelligence was explored. Questions included insights into the participants' views and experiences regarding emotional intelligence and the specific characteristics and qualities needed to support the school community.

RQ2: What reported emotional intelligence strategies or characteristics are fundamental for school leaders in their efforts to support their stakeholders?

Lastly, the researcher provided participants with a copy of Goleman's (2010) Emotional Intelligence framework in an effort for the participants to elaborate on their experiences on this topic. Questions were specific to understanding the participants' expertise in the four domains: self-awareness, self-management, social relations, and relationship management. This aligns with RQ3:

RQ3: How do the four components of Daniel Goleman's emotional intelligence contribute to effective leadership, as reported by this study's participants?

The protocol questions were a critical component of the research process to delve into the discussed suggestions and recommendations for future professional development and ideas on building on leaders' skill sets. Identifying the key ideas or characteristics that the participants share in emotional intelligence and leadership substantially benefit the challenges school leaders face today. These findings allow for a deeper insight into future best practices in emotional intelligence and practical leadership skills for future leaders.

Before each interview, the researcher emailed an informed consent to each school principal. The participants were asked to carefully review the form and submit written consent to the researcher before conducting the interview. In addition, the researcher made herself available to answer any questions or concerns from the participants. Additionally, a demographic form was also collected from each of the participants. Information such as educational background, certifications, work experience, and willingness to share their leadership and emotional intelligence was included. According to Creswell (2014), saturation in a phenomenology study ranges from three to ten interviews when no new information is found. The researcher interviewed between seven participants to reach saturation throughout the Spring and Summer 2023 semesters.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is of the utmost importance and critical to the study's validity. To protect the identity of the participants in the study, the researcher used pseudonyms for the participants. The researcher redacted any identifying information that included the school district, campus, or participants' names to protect the participants' identity. The researcher ensured that the information shared is secure and that no other person can access the participant's responses. The interview was recorded to ensure the researcher had a record of the interview. Additionally, any paperwork the researcher acquired was securely stored in my home office, where only the researcher could access that information.

Data Collection Procedures

The researcher utilized the data collection procedures throughout the study, including one-on-one semi-structured interviews. This data collection procedure is effective because it allows participants to add or share more details regarding their experiences. Participants needed to meet specific requirements to be included in the study, including a minimum of three years of experience in an administrative role. Furthermore, background information was collected from the participants, including certification, educational experience, and insight regarding their leadership and emotional intelligence experiences. This information was essential to ensure that participants' experiences met the criteria set forth by the researcher to acquire valid findings.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted via teleconference. The interviews were approximately 45 minutes. According to Creswell (2018), "hermeneutical phenomenology describes research as oriented toward lived experience (phenomenology) and interpreting the "texts" of life" (p. 138). Interviews are a phenomenological process in collecting information from participants in an in-depth way. I gave participants a general overview of the purpose of the study and expressed my positionality for conducting the study. Participants provided written

consent to participate in the study. I created a pre-interview questionnaire, which gave the participants some insight into the questions that would be asked. Furthermore, I provided participants with a general overview of how the interview was going to be conducted. Additionally, I provided a copy of the protocol questions to each of the participants. The researcher ensured that any questions that the participants had were answered and reminded participants that no identifying information will be included in the study. Next, I scheduled interviews in a conducive environment.

Data Analysis Procedures

Phenomenology research methods were ideal in this study because they captured the meaning and experiences of individuals who lived the phenomenon. According to Creswell (2018), hermeneutical phenomenology is research that describes lived experiences and interprets “texts” of life. Husserl, a psychologist, believed phenomenology is a science of understanding human beings at a deeper level (Qutoshi, 2018). Furthermore, researchers analyze a phenomenon of concern and derive themes that organize this lived experience. According to Creswell (2018), a description of the phenomenon is analyzed and broken down into interpretations. According to Moustakas (1994), there are systematic steps in the data analysis procedure for phenomenological research:

First, the researcher determines if the phenomenology approach is best utilized to examine the phenomenon. In this case, lived experiences as administrators utilizing emotional intelligence and leadership skills will be examined. According to Wilson (2015), phenomenological research involves studying a person’s experience and understanding his or her world as meaningful. The researcher will use these common ideas to understand the phenomenon better. Husserl describes the first phase of this data analysis as *epoche* (Creswell, 2018). Epoché is the

ability to exclude any biases or judgments from research (Creswell, 2018). The researcher will refrain from personal biases or judgments of the data by recognizing the researcher's background in Counseling and Guidance and the unconscious bias on emotional intelligence and school leadership.

The second step is understanding a working definition of the lived experience or phenomenon (Wilson, 2015). The bracketing process is the researcher's ability to set aside their own experiences or beliefs regarding the phenomenon (Creswell, 2018). This can be achieved by setting aside one's understanding of the phenomenon and understanding how others experience the phenomenon. Awareness of your judgments is critical to bracketing (Wilson, 2015). Bracketing involves how far you can objectively investigate a person's lived experience and being aware of your assumptions and preconceptions (Wilson, 2015). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011), analytic bracketing involves orienting procedures for alternately focusing on the "whats then the hows of interpretive practice" to assemble a contextual picture of everyday language in use. Bracketing involves the ability to (1) interpret critical ideas and statements regarding the phenomenon, (2) interpret the meanings without bias, (3) obtain the participant's interpretation, (4) examine what is revealed from the findings of the participant's perspective and experience; (5) create a statement of theme to help categorize the findings.

The researcher utilized all of these steps as the researcher conducted interviews. The researcher analyzed the transcriptions line by line and began the bracketing process mentioned above. Understanding phenomenology is a crucial component of the data analysis portion of the research. According to Wilson (2015), phenomenology allows one to understand experiences in a lived way that other methodologies may not. The researcher uncovered the participants' personal and theoretical assumptions regarding their experiences in emotional intelligence and school

leadership. Research questions guided the inquiry and helped the researcher stay focused and dive deeper into the phenomenon. Open-ended questions were utilized throughout the process.

According to Creswell (2018), phenomenological analysis steps are similar for all phenomenologists who build data from their first and second research questions. The researcher highlighted significant statements and utilized *horizontalization* to help develop clusters of meaning regarding the statements into themes. The themes were broken down into textual and structural descriptions. Creswell (2018) emphasizes that textual description is utilized to describe the context of the setting and how the setting influenced the participants' phenomenon. Furthermore, structural descriptions will be utilized to provide a complete description of the phenomenon experienced by the participants in the study.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is a crucial component to ensure the reliability and validity of the study. According to Creswell (2018), trustworthiness is commonly utilized to emphasize the importance of credibility and rigor in qualitative research. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), trustworthiness encompasses the reflexive validity questions to consider the worthiness of the study.

The researcher ensured the study is credible during the *epoche* phases of the data analysis. Things to consider when analyzing the study's credibility included how the selection criteria was determined and how sampling strategies were considered. In addition, the researcher determined if the research questions and methods of the study align.

Next, transferability needed to be considered when ensuring the research is trustworthy. The researcher ensured that the experiences were accurately recorded. The researcher utilized the strategy of member checking to ensure that participants felt confident in

the findings and themes of the interviews. The participants received a copy of the written transcription from the interview and allowed participants to validate or clarify any of the findings. In addition, the researcher analyzed the dependability of the study. The researcher analyzed if the research questions allowed for rigor and autonomy in participants' voices. The researcher utilized mentors and colleagues to help guide and stay focused on the study's intent. These supports helped provide feedback in my research design to ensure alignment, dependability, and trustworthiness in the study. Lastly, the researcher included confirmability in the study which allowed the researcher to analyze the data authentically and not influence the findings. The researcher continued to gather feedback from peers, participants, and advisors to ensure an accurate interpretation of the findings. The findings were theoretically categorized and contributed to discoveries in the phenomenon.

Limitations

Internal Validity

Every research type is vulnerable to validity and reliability risks. One crucial internal validity risk is that of personal bias. The researcher was aware of these limitations and addressed them. According to Creswell (2018), there are some limitations when it comes to interviews. The researcher must be aware that participants are providing “indirect” information. The interviewer must provide well-developed research and protocol questions to try and gather precisely what the participant is saying. In order to do this, I let the participants know that after their interview is transcribed, they would receive a copy of the transcription for feedback. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), member checking is “the most crucial technique for establishing credibility” (p. 314). Furthermore, I received guidance from my experienced professors in reviewing the research questions and protocol questions ahead of time for

additional feedback. Furthermore, I asked for support from my colleagues and professors when decoding manually to ensure that I captured the most significant information from the participants.

External Validity

To ensure external validity, the researcher analyzed how the findings could be generalized to different people, places, and times. The researcher utilized population validity in this case. This type of external validity looked at how the study's results were applied to a larger group of people. The researcher analyzed the findings in detail and assessed if they are conceptual to be applied across different educational settings and institutions. The study was considered valid for a later population. According to Denzin (1978), triangulation is a validity procedure where researchers search for convergence among multiple sources to form themes and categories in a study. The researcher utilized triangulation through participant interviews, theories, and previous research on leadership and emotional intelligence that aligned with principal efficacy.

Ethical Issues

The limitations to the study's research design include a potentially limited sample size. The sample size was limited to a South Texas region rather than a national demographic. Although the pandemic affected school leaders worldwide, this study was explicitly narrowed to the South Texas region. Further, the study analyzed one specific school district in South Texas. The researcher was also cognizant of any personal biases by utilizing member checking, peer debriefing, and checking with UTRGV professors regarding the research findings.

Researcher's Position Statement

For the past twenty years, the researcher's role in an administrative capacity allowed the researcher to understand the complexity needed for today's school leaders. Moreover, serving as

a principal throughout the COVID-19 pandemic further strengthened the researcher's desire to support future school principals. Specifically, the researcher's background in Guidance and Counseling guided the researcher to delve deeper into the phenomenon of emotional intelligence skills and characteristics that could yield positive self-efficacy in school leaders. The researcher's positionality was stated to continue to provide validity to the research.

Chapter III Summary

This chapter delineated the research design and methodology for the study. This chapter included the research design, data collection, analysis, internal and external validity, trustworthiness, ethical issues, and the researcher's positionality. The researcher utilized a phenomenology design to gather profound, rich experiences of current principals in a South Texas school district. The research was designed to take a deeper look at emotional intelligence and school leadership. Providing a deep understanding of this phenomenon further strengthens and sharpens future leaders' leadership and emotional intelligence skills. These findings positively affect the school community today and in the future. In the following chapter, the researcher presented the study's findings after conducting the data collection and analysis procedures. These findings provide a deeper understanding of effective leadership, encompassing intentional emotional intelligence and leadership skills.

CHAPTER IV

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

School leadership is a complex role that encompasses an array of tasks and demands from the school community. School leaders are required to serve a wide range of stakeholders, including parents, students, staff, central office personnel, and local and state stakeholders. School leaders have recently faced increased challenges that include a rise in health concerns, safety issues, increased accountability demands, and meeting the social-emotional needs of those they serve. School leaders must adapt and be able to shift and pivot daily to handle situations that occur effectively. The purpose of this study was to explore school administrators' lived experiences on emotional intelligence and effective school leadership. This research is significant because it looks deeper into their accounts of effective school leadership and dynamic intelligence strategies needed to navigate and be effective with the new demands. Furthermore, research questions aimed at delving into specific emotional intelligence strategies that have helped these school administrators support their school community. Most notably, these administrators utilized Daniel Goleman's Emotional Intelligence domains and competencies to serve and support the ever-changing needs of their stakeholders. School leaders keen on these strategies and applying these concepts can better serve their school community.

Research Questions

The research questions below served as a compass to gather insights regarding their experience with emotional intelligence and effective school leadership techniques.

RQ1: What leadership styles and characteristics do school administrators perceive yield the highest impact to increase self-efficacy in a school leader?

RQ2: What reported emotional intelligence strategies or characteristics are fundamental for school leaders in their efforts to support their stakeholders?

RQ3: How do the four components of Daniel Goleman's emotional intelligence contribute to effective leadership, as reported by this study's participants?

Description of the Study

The qualitative design utilized in this study is phenomenology. It aimed at gathering anecdotal experiences from effective school administrators through interviews. Specific research and protocol questions were developed to help pick the critical insights into their adventures on effective school leadership and emotional intelligence.

The school leaders were defined as individuals with experience in school leadership and met the following criteria. The criteria included: (1) be 18 years of age or older; (2) have a minimum of 3 administrative years of experience; (3) currently serve in a South Texas school district; (4) must currently be serving in an administrative capacity. In addition, all participants signed a consent form and completed an eligibility questionnaire to ensure they met the requirements. The school administrators who participated in the study were from three elementary schools, two junior highs, and two high schools from one South Texas school district. In-depth interviews, approximately 45 minutes, were held via Google Meets with each administrator. Additionally, three focus groups were interviewed. These focus groups were divided into grade-level subgroups: elementary, junior high, and high school. Three participants were from the elementary focus group, two from the junior high focus group, and two from the high school focus group. These interviews contributed to a meaningful amount of data regarding

the phenomenon. After the meetings, the researcher transcribed the data and began the data analysis process of (1) Epoche, (2) bracketing, and (3) cluster of meanings. The data was broken down by research questions where themes were discovered. In addition, subthemes were also included.

Summary of the Results

The findings in this phenomenological study were organized around three primary research questions: What type of leadership characteristics yield the highest impact in increasing the self-efficacy of a school leader, which emotional intelligence components were identified as being fundamental to leadership, and how Daniel Goleman's Emotional Intelligence framework best applies to school leadership? The seven administrators in the study made meaning of their experiences individually and collectively, where the following themes were derived. Themes: (1) positive campus culture; (2) continual self-awareness; (3) self-regulation; (4) empowering others. Each theme is presented below, including direct quotes from the participants to gather a deeper understanding of the theme or concept.

Theme One: Positive Campus Culture

RQ1: What leadership styles and characteristics do school administrators perceive yield the highest impact to increase self-efficacy in a school leader?

Several participants reflected on their leadership skills that revolved around building a positive campus culture at each campus. This first significant finding is presented because it shows how these school leaders emphasized the importance of harmony through positive relationships, collective responsibility, and trust as fundamental components of effective leadership. The participants interviewed were intentional with how they created this positive culture and believed that every person is vital to contributing to a supportive environment.

Building a positive campus culture included placing importance on facilitating positive relationships with all stakeholders. Administrators believed this to be a vital component of a thriving workplace environment. In addition, instilling core values, being an intentional leader, and utilizing two-way communication were additional themes that rose to the top.

Fostering Positive Relationships

Fostering genuine and positive relationships was a recurring theme throughout the interviews. Elementary and secondary focus groups and individual interviews continually highlighted the importance of having strong positive relationships among their school family. Multiple administrators expressed that building positive relationships leads to a trusting environment.

“Building relationships happen by caring about the person, and caring enough eventually leads to trust. That, for me, definitely stands out. People see your sincerity, follow you, and work with you, returning to ensure it's a team concept. The people you lead must trust and believe you are leading them by making good decisions.”

Multiple administrators expressed that a leader must have the ability to be trustworthy. According to one of the secondary participants, “If the staff doesn't trust you, it's tough for them to run with you, and you can't do the job alone.” Another administrator added that the role of a school leader involves the ability to demonstrate respect and love.

“Sharing love and kindness with those you work with is important. I believe it takes a strong work ethic that includes respect and a lot of love. They know I love them. Sometimes you must have tough love, but love and support are key.”

Secondary administrators also expressed that truly knowing the people they serve is essential and one of the fundamental functions of an effective school leader.

“You need to know the people on your staff. You learn each person’s personality and how to treat them in each situation. I believe it is about consistency in a relationship year-round and understanding that everyone’s needs differ. Just like the kids, not all students are the same.”

Recognizing and accepting the differences in people was also noted as an essential component of fostering positive relationships. Specifically, one administrator said that they utilized differences in their staff as strengths and not weaknesses. The administrator said, “You must be able to build on different personalities and utilize them as strengths.”

Fostering genuine and supportive relationships was clearly articulated throughout the interviews and was noted as a fundamental skill a leader must possess to be effective.

Instill Core Values

The school administrators interviewed emphasized how important it was that the school leader cultivates the core values they wanted to be instilled at their respective campuses. They highlighted the importance of core values embodying a strong family sense. Participants also believed that having a campus with solid core values contributed to a sense of connectedness and deeply rooted purpose.

“We stick to our five core values in all that we do. These core values include excellence, leadership, pride, respect, and responsibility. We always refer to these core values, whether with teachers, students, or parents. Kids understand that it is the expectation and how we feel. These five values build up character, and they build up a kid with high moral standards.”

Administrators agreed that core values are essential. One of the participants described that her leadership style included being “HOT,” which she explained as being honest, open, and transparent. Another participant emphasized the importance of building a family-oriented culture as a key to a thriving and effective school community. She reiterated that “*care*” is essential to creating a family-oriented culture.

“One of my core values as a leader is “family”. I had an administrator who mentored me a lot; family was one of the key things she preached. It shaped me a lot because I remember my little one being one or two years old, and I was allowed to bring them with me on a Saturday to decorate for the staff and those types of things. The administrator who mentored me valued family time. I think that’s one of the things that shaped me. I know our job is important, and we have high expectations for everyone, but you should never forget those waiting for you at home.”

A strong sense of core values means that the leader builds strong bonds and relationships with those they serve. Administrators interviewed expressed that they take time to “know” the people on their staff, and building relational capacity is vital to a genuine and supportive relationship. Thus, our stakeholders' social/emotional needs involve interactions with individuals beyond the surface where the people you serve genuinely know you care.

“My leadership style is about being a human leader. I’ve told my staff I’ve got to be able to take care of your social/emotional needs first as a staff member, and in turn, you will be able to fulfill the needs of our students. It is similar to when you’re on an airplane. If something were to happen, you must put your mask on first to be able to take care of the others. More than ever, we are having

conversations and continually brainstorming ideas regarding what we can do to support the social-emotional state of our staff.”

Influential leaders understand that building a strong sense of core values contributes to a strong and positive culture. Some core values mentioned included excellence, leadership, pride, respect, and responsibility. The administrators interviewed expressed that these core values supported the district’s vision and mission and helped serve as a building block in achieving student success.

Intentional Leadership

Intentional leadership involves the premise that the leader is purposeful in all that they do. These intentional skills include purposeful planning and action-oriented tasks that engage the school community. Creating and fostering a positive environment is demonstrated with intentional acts of care that involve building harmonious teams, developing capacity in others, and exhibiting empathy.

The participants expressed the importance of teamwork and how important it was to increase their staff's individual and collective skills. By creating engaging and reflective practices, campus stakeholders were able to maximize their full potential.

“In developing others, it is important to take everybody’s strengths and weaknesses and build on their strengths. It is important to put your personality aside and accept everyone. Doing so will create an environment of acceptance and exceptional ability to work with one another.”

Being receptive to the feedback of staff members allowed participants the autonomy to communicate their needs and help refine their professional practices. In addition, participants expressed that allowing opportunities for stakeholders to “voice” their ideas and concerns is a

critical component in the decision-making process. Influential leaders also noted that active listening was a strategy they used and often refined to be open to their stakeholders' ideas. One participant said that now more than ever, she includes the staff in various committees and considers their voice, ideas, and suggestions. She validated that although site-based decision-making committees have been in effect for a long time, she expressed that there has been an increased validation of their voice in all facets, which has improved school outcomes significantly.

“I’m about empowerment. I emphasize that with my staff and tell them it’s about finding their utmost potential. I also feel that it is important for staff to “own it”. You are the teacher in the classroom, so you need to own it... it would be best if you took pride in everything you do. I am here to help you become the best version of yourself.”

Empowering others shifts ownership from the leader to the stakeholder, allowing for autonomy and individuality in professional and personal growth, positively impacting the school climate.

The participant expressed that there is always room for improvement and that doing things together as a team is essential.

“Working as a team involves everyone contributing to the solution. When an idea comes to the table, it is not just their idea but a team idea. It is important for the team to carry out the roles and responsibilities of the idea together.”

Harmonious teamwork provides an undeniable synergy that creates a sense of unity and belonging.

Communication

Another facet of intentional leadership is to communicate effectively. Practical communication skills were noted as being at the forefront of successful relationship development. Furthermore, key strategies were shared regarding the participants' plans to facilitate effective stakeholder communication. Participants emphasized the importance of two-way communication, attention to verbal and non-verbal behavior, and active listening.

“I met with everyone individually, and they expressed they expected communication from me. So, in turn, I told them that I expected the same thing with open and honest communication. I believe that is very important. My door is always open, and I want them to know that. I had them place a window on my door when I got to the campus because there was no window. If I am in an ARD or meeting, I want my staff to know why my door is closed. If not, my door is always open, and my AP’s door is always available. We are in constant communication with our staff.”

Two-way communication is beneficial because it allows information to be transmitted to and from the school leader. Knowing that staff members feel comfortable reaching out and sharing ideas or concerns is critical to a meaningful workplace. In addition, setting clear expectations and providing support was another facet of effective communication.

“Communication is key for me and my availability to my staff. Communication is huge...the way you lay and roll things out is important. My staff is type “A,” so they need “A” answers. I give them calendar invites with an agenda attached; we have a Google classroom and a Remind group. I hold staff meetings regularly, and an email is a plus. They need that relationship.”

Participants noted the importance of providing clear expectations and investing time with their staff to build a stronger, more positive relationship. Additionally, administrators emphasized the importance of effective communication, which encompasses building trust and supporting employees continually.

“You have to be able to know how to communicate and when to communicate. A lot of times, you have a staff member or parent who is coming to you with a concern. They often don’t want a solution; they want to be validated and heard. So as a leader, you need to gauge when to provide a solution.”

Facilitating a positive campus culture recognizes two-way communication's importance and consistently seeks opportunities to allow for stakeholder input.

Participants emphasized the importance of modeling proper verbal and non-verbal cues as an essential aspect of effective communication.

“We have people coming into our offices, parents, students, and we need to be aware of what our body language is saying. Your face says it all, too. And so, it’s important to have emotional self-control or self-awareness to be aware of your facial expressions. This is very important because we're seen as the face of the school on campus.”

If not considered, non-verbal cues can negatively impact the school climate. Participants utilized team members to keep themselves in check and often relied on their feedback to assess their body language while communicating with others.

The skill of listening intentionally is another significant component of communication that involves authentic engagement and sincere interest in what the other party is saying, according to one of the participants interviewed.

“Active listening involves being vulnerable and being able to rely on others for the answers. I’ve learned not to say things just to say things, and I try not to let my emotions get in the way.”

Active listening means the leader first seeks to understand and validate the stakeholder's voice. Participants emphasized that it was necessary to stop what you are doing and understand that supporting people includes allowing others to share their ideas, concerns, and thoughts openly.

“You need to know how to communicate by knowing when to speak and when to listen. Sometimes you may have a staff member or parent bringing a concern to you, and sometimes they want a solution, and other times they want to be heard.”

This participant clearly expressed that he believed communication was a non-negotiable skill that school leaders must have. Specifically, two-way communication is of the utmost importance, another participant said. Allowing avenues and methods for the leader to communicate and genuinely value stakeholder input was noted as a fundamental skill for influential leaders.

RQ2: What reported emotional intelligence strategies or characteristics are fundamental for school leaders in their efforts to support their stakeholders?

Theme Two: Self-Awareness

Research question two dealt with a deeper focus on the emotional intelligence of leaders, where two emerging themes rose to the top: self-awareness and self-regulation. Several participants delved into their ability to have continual self-awareness as a critical component of their emotional intelligence skills. The idea of self-awareness was a constant process that included feedback from self and others. Furthermore, this theme exemplified the notion that

leaders are vulnerable and accept the concept of continual reflection. The participants interviewed committed themselves to being open to new ideas. In addition, participants heavily attributed their success to building a solid system of support. The participants shared specific accounts of how they successfully engaged their team members and relied on them to give them an outside lens perspective. Specifically, leaders showed how they trust and rely heavily on their campus leadership teams for this support. Moreover, participants recognized that every person has a significant role in contributing to the positive culture of the school community.

Self-Reflection

Participants noted how self-reflection was a key component of their role as an effective leader. They recognized the difference it made when they did not go back and reflect on how they could have communicated better. To be a great leader is to own up to your mistakes and learn from them. These participants have all been in challenging situations where they have felt pressure mounted against them. Although they may not have always made the best choice, learning from the events through self-reflection and learning about their support systems was vital in refining their leadership practices.

“My mentor is another person who has helped me manage myself, especially when I realize that I might not have handled a situation accordingly. She doesn’t get upset with me if I do something that I could have done better, but she often uses reflective questioning so that I come up with my self-reflection and my answers. I can recognize when I need to go to my administrative team or mentor to help me self-reflect.”

An essential aspect of self-reflection is the commitment to learn and grow continually. Participants understood the importance of being lifelong learners and that they served their community best when they were their best version.

“I read a lot because I know I need to improve myself. So, I do a lot of self-reflecting on myself, just personally. I enjoy those books that grow your personality. So self-awareness is about growing your personality by reading and being aware of your vibe.”

Participants emphasized multiple times that they did not have all of the answers. Participants utilized different pipelines such as books, podcasts, mentors, team input, and individual self-reflection for professional growth that they attributed to helping them be better leaders.

Strong Support Systems

Several participants shared that trust was vital to helping the leader become self-aware. As the participants navigated through their administrative journey, there was a consensus that being an effective leader relied heavily on self-reflection from their trusted team members.

“Having someone you’re able to confide in is significant. It is important to build strong relationships where people come to you and say, “Is everything okay? Is there a reason you said this or did this because that's normally not you?” So, I think that's where we want to get to where the people around us can notice and give us that feedback. Building those relationships is going to help you become more aware and help you become self-aware.”

Another participant spoke about how they are not afraid to ask for help. Self-reflection encompasses vulnerability, and a great leader needs enough self-confidence to know they cannot do it alone.

"I am confident enough in my knowledge and experience in my abilities to ask for help and run it by somebody. I'm not afraid of picking up a phone or sending a text. What do you think about this and that? Ultimately, we want to make the best decision for the students. In addition to using my leadership and knowledge, I also use the team I have to support me when dealing with difficult situations."

Vulnerability and the ability to take time to reflect on your actions are easier to do when you have built a strong pipeline of support. Support can come from various resources, such as mentors, colleagues, staff, parents, etc. The most effective leaders recognize that the input from all stakeholders can contribute to the most honest self-reflection that, in turn, can positively affect the school community.

Self-awareness is the ability to reflect on your actions and words daily. The school administrators interviewed recognize the importance of this action and utilize self-reflection through individual and secondary input. In addition, strong support teams and genuine feedback from trusted team members were critical to helping a leader be self-aware. Self-awareness helps a leader facilitate a culture of trust and harmony. By acknowledging a leader's mistakes, they can demonstrate humility and the notion that we must continually evolve to serve better those entrusted with them.

The theme of self-regulation was another important theme and portion of a leader's emotional intelligence.

Theme Three: Self-Regulation

School administrators face unprecedented daily demands, making it easy to become overwhelmed. Administrators must be the rock for their staff and students; it is their job to keep the peace. School administrators are now dealing with an array of new obstacles that include health, safety, new accountability demands, and the social/emotional needs of those they serve. They are continually pushed to the limit by staff, students, and parents alike to address the ever-changing needs of the school community. Equipping the leader with the tools to remain emotionally stable is critical. School administrators often feel burnt out and isolated without these tools. Some tools the participants shared were the ability to maintain emotional stability, sustain a work-life balance, and utilize various personal self-regulating strategies.

Emotional Stability

Many participants understood that everyone's eye is on the leader, and their responses to situations can positively or negatively affect the organization. Participants expressed the importance of modeling the behaviors they expected and understood that their answers were critical to their stakeholders' perceptions. Administrators cannot predict the situations that arise. However, they can control how they react to them. They recognize that the problems they face are not personal and must be objective in de-escalating and troubleshooting the situation. The participants' continual strategy was respecting others and modeling respect to keep professionalism at the forefront.

“You must keep your emotions in check and remind yourself that it’s not personal. You need to be able to separate yourself when others are lashing out with anger and frustration. It would be best if you kept your emotions in check by regulating them. You cannot take things personally...you just can’t because as

soon as you finish with one conflict, you are dealing with another. If you take things personally, you can have a heart attack.”

Participants also shared the unique ways they cared for themselves throughout their administrative journey to ensure they kept their emotional stability. Self-care differed for each individual and derived from what each participant enjoyed doing or deemed necessary at other times of the year.

“A lot of it is about your emotional stability and being aware of where you’re at. You must be able to self-check because if you’re not in the right headspace or are not good, it is tough to make adequate decisions for everybody else. If you are not looking out for yourself first, it is tough to support others because your cup runs out at some point. Recognizing when you need time for a self-check is important.”

All participants agreed that being a school administrator can be stressful and emotionally draining. However, finding the tools necessary to be prosperous is critical if hoping to achieve success and longevity as a leader. Another component of being a great leader is having a balanced life. Leaders cannot be solely focused on work. It is essential to enjoy and destress outside their school community and find the balance that works for them.

Work-life Balance

Some participants attributed the ability to have a work-life balance as crucial in helping to regulate their emotions with such a high-demand role. Additionally, participants expressed that this type of outlet is correlated with their mood and overall social/emotional well-being. Many participants agreed that scheduling time to turn the leadership role “off” was vital.

“When I'm here, it's GO time; I don't have time to be sad. I don't have time to be tired. It happens all the time: Monday, noon, and it's already been a long week. I mean to me, I'm here, and I have to be at my best. Outside of work, I do my self-care. When 5:30 p.m. comes around, I'm out the door unless I have a school activity or something. Sometimes, it could just be meeting up with friends and hanging out. One of my mentors once said this job is a marathon, not a sprint. It's important to do things that make you happy and take your mind off work.”

Another example a participant shared was his ability to take time to do things he enjoyed. This included traveling and ensuring that family time stayed as a priority.

“When I first started, I was questioned if I was passionate enough if I was doing it for the money. I took offense to it because when I was at work, I worked. But then, after work, I have a life, and I enjoy life. I do that for my dad because he worked so much he didn't get to live life. I told myself at a young age. He passed away when I was 18, and I will enjoy life because he didn't get to. So, if you notice every chance I get, you see me having fun and traveling.”

Most participants shared that sharing experiences and moments with their family contributed to building their strong sense of balance. Having deeply rooted relationships among loved ones adds to a strong self-worth, contributing to being a self-regulated leader.

“I was criticized at the beginning of my career for missing out on work events to go see my children's events. It's a catch-22 because some people give it their all but lose sight of their family. Looking back, I don't regret anything. I don't regret anything.”

Self-Regulating Strategies

Participants expressed that self-regulating strategies were an essential component of self-regulation. They admitted they often utilize time off, positive self-talk, and breathing techniques to get them through challenging situations.

“When I realize that I’m in a situation where I’m going to be upset or unhappy, I have a thing where I take some time to myself. I either come in and close the door, or I take a drive. There are other days when I take a day off, so understanding what works best for you is essential.”

One participant stated that taking time to reflect and decompress was essential to rejuvenating yourself and ensuring you can serve from a full cup. Furthermore, another participant mentioned that you cannot be so hard on yourself and emphasized that giving yourself grace and learning not to take things personally is essential. You can do this by “being more understanding of yourself and allowing for flexibility and experience that it’s not going to be precisely what you envisioned”. Positive self-talk was the ability to make positive thoughts out of negative ones. According to the participants, the ability to be solutions-oriented instead of pessimistic was an essential attribute for a school leader.

RQ3: How do the four components of Daniel Goleman’s emotional intelligence contribute to effective leadership, as reported by this study’s participants?

Theme Four: Empowering Others

The four components of Goleman’s - reference? Emotional intelligence frameworks were referenced as the ability of the leader to support their staff in maximizing their full potential. By doing so, staff members can understand their emotions, manage them, and ultimately recognize how their feelings affect peer relationships. School administrators emphasized that a leader with

emotional intelligence understands the importance of empowering others. Administrators interviewed outlined the concepts of empathy, building capacity in others, and affirming and recognizing their staff as critical components of helping the people they serve stay motivated and reach their highest potential. Developing the power of the people in the organization was another layer to building additional leaders, creating a dynamic team, and positively affecting students.

Empathy

The participants felt strongly that leaders must demonstrate empathy and compassion when leading others. This included being a “human” leader and being able to take care of their employees as individuals before they were able to do their role. Facilitating a culture of care and meeting employees' individual needs is now at the forefront of leadership participants noted.

“I usually tell my staff family that their health and family comes first. You won’t be 100% at work if you can't handle that. Regardless of what a staff member is going through, it is important that we can put ourselves in their shoes.”

Demonstrating empathy contributed to a sense of unconditional regard for the people they served. Participants stressed that compassion and empathy went hand in hand. Furthermore, participants delved into the importance of leaders being able to put themselves in the shoes of those they serve.

In addition, recognizing efforts and building the skill set of the staff members was another critical component of being an emotionally intelligent leader. Multiple leaders acknowledge and understand that human capital development is crucial to a successful organization. Leaders intentionally described how they offer individualized support, mentoring, and positive reinforcement through various means.

Developing Others

In addition, recognizing efforts and building the skill set of the staff members was another critical component of being an emotionally intelligent leader. Multiple leaders acknowledge and understand that human capital development is crucial to a successful organization. Leaders intentionally described how they offer individualized support, mentoring, and positive reinforcement through various means.

“I think over time, it is important that you build that trust and skills in your staff members. There are team members that have the capabilities to grow, and you start giving them a little bit more of that trust, and in turn, not only do they believe a little bit more in themselves and know that you believe in them. So, I think it comes back to that.”

The administrators interviewed served as mentors to the people they served and were committed to ensuring that the people they served reached their highest potential.

“I’m about empowerment. I emphasize this with my staff and let them know as well. It’s always about finding your utmost right potential; I am firm regarding the staff’s idea of owning it. You are the teacher in the classroom; you own it. You have to be able to take on that classroom and have pride in everything that you do. I’m here to help you become the best version of yourself.”

Participants expressed the importance of allowing their team members to have opportunities to gain experience in their leadership and knowledge by heading different projects or committees. These opportunities were vital in truly allowing individuals to gather knowledge from these hands-on experiences.

“You have to be willing to allow your teams to grow, and those opportunities come from learning from each other and going out to learn from others.”

Building a strong and cohesive system helps develop and strengthen the school culture. These emotionally intelligent leaders recognize this and spend time to mentor and support those they serve. Many participants believed in targeted professional development as one way to help their teams grow. Another way is by allowing their team to have hands-on experiences on campus.

Recognitions/Appreciation

Positivity and recognition was another powerful tool noted as an important skill of an emotionally intelligent leader. Participants referred to individualized recognition, prizes, team-building opportunities, meal sharing, etc., as ways to keep motivation high. These affirmations also strengthen the school culture.

“Every message has been about the culture and the climate and the relationship building; it's in everything that we do, right, what then is and even right now in planning, the calendar for the school year. It's getting all of those things in place. How are we going to recognize, honor, and celebrate our teachers? How are we going to fill their bucket every day? You have to plan those things out. That message comes from the leader.”

Being intentional about recognition and ensuring that they are genuine was considered extremely important by multiple administrators interviewed. These participants added that these types of positive reinforcements helped keep motivation high and allowed stakeholders to feel part of the school community.

Ensuring the leader meets the employee's hierarchy of needs was also noted as another way to take care of the staff. One administrator stressed how he always took time to plan different types of foods and snacks throughout the year to address his staff's needs.

“Of course, food always brings people together, so I'm huge on having food for our staff as often as we can incentivize them with certain things. Team building is one thing that we need to do often that we don't get to do much of.”

School leadership continues to be a complex role, evolving every year. The participants interviewed noted that being an emotionally intelligent leader in today's world requires the leader to show empathy and compassion and build up the abilities of their team. In addition, these leaders were intentional about ongoing genuine recognition of those they serve.

Summary of Findings

The findings in this phenomenology study provided a deeper insight into how school administrators of today have had to pivot and adjust from a managerial leadership role to a more supportive and transformative approach. Four key themes were discovered through the research questions of leadership and emotional intelligence. These themes included (1) building a positive campus culture, (2) the ability to have continuous self-awareness, (3) the ability to self-regulate, and (4) empowering others to maximize their potential, which will strengthen the organization. The seven administrators in the study made meaning of their experiences. They conveyed that these leadership and emotional intelligence strategies are fundamental to supporting their school community.

First, the data revealed that building a positive culture is a fundamental function of a school leader. Creating a positive culture includes investing time in people and fostering positive relationships. Administrators emphasized that a leader must instill core values to help build this

vital foundation. Furthermore, leading with intentionality was mentioned time and time again. Today's leaders must plan for creating a nurturing environment and take time to develop trust with whom they serve. Lastly, two-way communication was vital. Influential leaders ensure that their stakeholders have the means to communicate their ideas with them and take into account the voices of others.

Being an emotionally intelligent leader was also noted as being equally important. Participants shared multiple examples of how they continually and intentionally are self-aware of their actions and words and how they self-regulate their emotions when dealing with the complexity of the role. Participants shared that self-reflection involved utilizing an outside perspective at times to serve as feedback. Moreover, a strong support team is critical to an effective leader.

Further, the ability to self-regulate their emotions and not take things personally helped these leaders with longevity in their roles and effectiveness. Some strategies noted included the ability to be emotionally stable by not reacting personally to situations and self-care processes. Most notably, most of the administrators interviewed expressed how intentional they were with having a work-life balance. Administrators were able to differentiate between work and personal time.

A school leader's impact is critical to the overall success of the school community. Influential leaders recognize that their role directly and indirectly influences those they serve. This chapter gave great insight into how these effective leaders fostered a positive culture, facilitated positive relationships, continually refined their abilities, and worked and supported others to reach their highest potential. The phenomenon of their lived experiences lends insight as to how the role of school leadership continues to evolve and how important it is for leaders to

be skillful with their leadership and emotional intelligence abilities. The next chapter will highlight how these findings contribute to school leaders' knowledge of effective leadership and emotional intelligence.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

This final chapter highlights the researcher's contribution to the current knowledge of school leadership as it relates to applying effective leadership and emotional intelligence skills. In this study, I attempt to provide deep insight into the specific strategies and interpersonal skills needed to navigate and effectively be a school leader in today's world. These insights were captured by seven participants who represented a South Texas school district. Participants who were represented needed administrative experience for at least three years and currently serve in a principal capacity. This chapter is organized by the purpose of the study, methodology, and research design utilized, and a summary with recommendations. The findings are categorized into an overview of four themes to support future recommendations that help today's school leaders.

Goleman's 1995 emotional intelligence framework served as the basis of this research project. School leadership is a complex and ever-changing phenomenon, and this study helped delve into deep components of this framework to help gather more insight into the role and strategies needed for today's school leaders. Both emotional intelligence and school leadership strategies were the key concepts in which this study was organized and highlighted.

Purpose

The study aimed to get a deeper look at anecdotal data on effective leadership and emotional intelligence strategies from school administrators to add to the knowledge bank in this

area. School leaders' strategy application was analyzed through the data gathered from the participants' interviews. Specifically, a deep analysis of the skills utilized by the participants helped highlight the need for continued professional development in leadership and emotional intelligence best practices. The need to implement effective school leadership practices that include a leader's attention to being emotionally intelligent has become more prevalent due to the increased academic demands, safety, and health concerns, as well as supporting the social/emotional needs of their school community. According to Marsh et al. (2023), school principals face increased stress levels, and few resources support principals' health and well-being. Deepening this knowledge can contribute to a leader's ability to navigate this complex and demanding role.

The study was guided by three research questions: (1) what leadership styles and characteristics do school administrators perceive as yielding the highest impact to increase self-efficacy in a school leader? (2) what reported emotional intelligence strategies or characteristics are fundamental for school leaders in their efforts to support their stakeholders? (3) how do the four components of Goleman's 1995 emotional intelligence framework contribute to effective leadership, as reported by this study's participants? Specifically, the following protocol questions also guided the study: (1) Tell me about your background, certifications and administrative experience; (2) What do you think are the most essential skills that a school leader should possess; (3) Can you describe your core values that have shaped your leadership style; (4) How do you respond and utilize your leadership skills when dealing with an obstacle or difficult situation; (5) Describe the importance you place as a leader regarding utilizing emotional intelligence strategies to support your school community; (6) Tell me about the emotional intelligence strategies you utilize most frequently to be intentional with your leadership; (7)

What are some recommendations that you would provide upcoming leaders in regarding your leadership and emotional intelligence support of others; (8) Which component of Goleman's 1995 self-awareness competency do you most utilize in school leadership; (9) Explain how you self-regulate and self-manage after dealing with a problematic situation; (10) Share any other ideas about your personal leadership style that can contribute to this study.

The insight offered by this study provides a deeper look into leadership styles and traits necessary for school leaders to possess today. Equally important was the deep dive into how administrators utilize emotional intelligence techniques as leaders and how these behaviors can contribute positively to the school community.

As the demands of the school leader continue to rise, it is evident that there are key strategies, skills, and behaviors that are fundamental for a school leader to possess to be effective and successful in this leadership role.

Research Design/Methodology

The qualitative design utilized in this study was phenomenology. The study sought to emphasize and display the emotional intelligence and leadership skills that are key to the success of a practical principal/administrator. This study obtained insights from anecdotal experiences through interviews with the participants. The phenomenology approach was intended to focus on the essential meaning of the participants' lived experiences with specific research questions aimed at gathering intentional data regarding emotional intelligence and leadership best practices. Research questions served as a compass to provide themes and findings regarding the phenomenon.

The study sought to (1) explore emotional intelligence components and strategies critical to effective leadership and advocate for professional development in leadership and emotional

intelligence that will yield positive support for current and future leaders; and (2) analyze and understand what type of leadership qualities yield the highest impact on the increased self-efficacy of a school leader. To achieve this goal, I utilized a phenomenology approach to understand the experiences of how skilled administrators incorporated emotional intelligence and practical leadership skills into their roles. I conducted a total of nine interviews using a Google Meet platform. Three participants were elementary principals, two were junior high principals, and the other two were high school principals. Additionally, I conducted three different focus groups. The first focus group included the three elementary principals, the second had the two junior high principals, and the third included two high school principals. All participants emailed me their consent forms and a questionnaire to ensure they met eligibility.

Interviews were utilized to gather data and analyzed into themes derived from research questions. There were multiple methods used to analyze the data. First, I utilized the epoche process to maintain the participants' authenticity. Next, I utilized bracketing any assumptions as I studied the participants' transcripts. Additionally, I immersed myself in the data by playing and breaking down critical ideas into themes and subthemes. I manually analyzed the transcripts and broke down the findings into a cluster of meanings. The following themes included (1) positive campus culture, (2) continual self-awareness, (3) self-regulation, and (4) empowering others.

The four key themes were discovered through the interviews of school administrators and the data analysis of their transcripts. Today's school leaders must be equipped with crucial leadership and emotional intelligence skills to help them be keen on the needs of those they serve. These sections will summarize the results, how the results relate to the current literature, the limitations, and the implications of the findings and recommendations for further research.

Goleman's (1995) emotional intelligence framework served as the basis of this research project. School leadership is a complex and ever-changing phenomenon, and this study helped delve into deep components of this framework to help gather more insight into the role and strategies needed for today's school leaders. In addition, school leadership was also analyzed. School administrators shared anecdotal data about which leadership qualities helped them most effectively facilitate the school leadership role. Both emotional intelligence and school leadership strategies were the key concepts in which this study was organized and highlighted.

Summary of the Results

Four different themes were derived from the data given by the South Texas school administrators. The findings highlighted the importance of the leader to (1) build a positive school culture, (2) utilize the emotional intelligence component of self-awareness to refine your leadership behaviors continually, (3) utilize self-regulation emotional intelligence skills to manage your emotions and lead effectively; (4) build an effective team by building capacity with each individual in the organization. Direct quotes from the participants were included in Chapter 4 that better help the reader understand the phenomenon. Below are the three research questions and a summary of the findings of each of the questions.

RQ1: What leadership styles and characteristics do school administrators perceive yield the highest impact to increase self-efficacy in a school leader?

The school leaders interviewed expressed that a fundamental skill that a leader possesses is to influence and build a positive campus culture. They believe that employees should enjoy coming to work and that influential leaders facilitate stakeholder harmony and positively impact the environment. Additionally, they highlighted that staff needed to be included in the purpose, and that was done by including stakeholders in cultivating and instilling core values of what the

school environment stands for. Some of these values included respect, trust, and positive relationships among each other. Leaders emphasized the importance of two-way communication. They believe that an effective school leader's strength includes communicating with their stakeholders and actively utilizing the voices and ideas of those they serve. The participant findings from theme one highlight a school leader's fundamental characteristics, including being transformational, which positively affects the school climate and influences the stakeholders who serve.

RQ2: What reported emotional intelligence strategies or characteristics are fundamental for school leaders in their efforts to support their stakeholders?

Utilizing emotional intelligence strategies as a leader was noted as fundamental in supporting the school community. With skillful use of emotional intelligence, the leader could define themselves as a person and their leadership practices. Specifically, the participants identified self-awareness as the key to effective leadership. According to Goleman (1998), self-awareness includes having a clear picture of yourself, allowing you to see how others view you. The participants believed that self-awareness included the ability to accurately self-reflect. Participants shared accounts of how important it is to be vulnerable and rely on team members' feedback for honest self-reflection. Additionally, they expressed that influential leaders understand that they are human and must learn from their mistakes. Participants said leaders should always be self-aware and willing to refine their skills. Utilizing a pipeline of resources such as books, team feedback, podcasts, mentors, etc., were fundamental supports noted as critical to help support today's school leader.

Being an emotionally stable leader was also noted as a critical skill for today's leaders. School administrators interviewed expressed that they needed to model and regulate

their emotions in efforts to lead their organization positively. Participants understood that they could not take the situations that they dealt with personally and were intentional in working objectively when dealing with problems. Some critical strategies emphasized included being intentional with personal self-care, having a work-life balance, and utilizing automated techniques such as mindfulness, positive self-talk, breathing, etc. Participants expressed how they rely on their team member support to help them emotionally self-regulate.

RQ3: How do the four components of Goleman's 1995 emotional intelligence contribute to effective leadership as reported by this study's participants?

Empowering others to reach their highest potential in the school system was the key theme highlighted as a culmination of being an emotionally intelligent leader. Participants expressed that the leader helps cultivate key characteristics in others that directly contribute to the organization's climate. Participants shared the importance of influencing the concept of empathy and compassion in their stakeholders. They expressed that this was at the core of empowering others. Additionally, they believed that people should be validated for their efforts and strides in their growth and that affirmations were pivotal in helping and empowering others. It is important to note that each participant affirmed and recognized their staff uniquely. However, they all agreed that establishing was extremely important and should be genuine. Influential leaders understood that developing others in their organization would strengthen their school unit and that every role on campus was equally important in their contribution toward this goal.

Discussion of the Results of the Literature

The theoretical framework that served as a basis for the study was Goleman's 1995 framework on emotional intelligence. The framework suggests that emotional intelligence is an

essential construct in knowing their emotions, managing their feelings, motivating emotions, and recognizing the feelings of others (Goleman, 1995). The findings were connected to literature in an array of ways. The researcher utilized this framework to help create research and protocol questions that would delve into the thoughts and behaviors of the administrators interviewed.

The first research question allowed the participants to express leadership styles or characteristics that they believed had the highest impact on increasing self-efficacy in a school leader. The theme derived from the participant transcripts included creating a strong positive culture as a fundamental step for the leader. The administrators expressed that the environment was critical in supporting those they serve. This finding aligns with Maslow's 1973 theory of the hierarchy of needs that correlates to human motivation. Maslow's 1943 theory suggests that basic human needs must be met before an individual can reach self-actualization. Self-actualization is the level at which an individual can become the best they can be (McLeod, 2023). The participants understood their employees needed to feel safe, loved, and connected to the organization. They understood that interpersonal relationships among their staff were meaningful and contributed to cultivating the group. Therefore, research question one exemplifies alignment between the participants' answers and the theoretical framework of Maslow's 1943 Hierarchy of Needs, which underlines the importance of relationships and a sense of belonging in the school setting.

The second research question aimed at delving into Goleman's 1995 emotional intelligence framework and gathering more profound insight into how these school administrators utilized their emotional intelligence skills to support their stakeholders. The findings included the importance of the leader to refine themselves continually. This refinement included the ability for the school leader to be self-aware and self-regulate their

emotions. According to Goleman (1998), emotional intelligence matters most to high-performing teams and organizations. Goleman's 2010 emotional intelligence framework categorized emotional intelligence into four domains and multiple competencies. Two domains focused on self, while the other two focused on relationships with others. The participants' findings showed how they strengthened self-awareness and self-management. The findings affirmed that school administrators must utilize self-awareness, such as honest feedback from peers and the idea of being vulnerable as a leader. These soft skills outlined in Goleman's findings are essential for the school leader.

The concept of self-management was another critical domain in Goleman's 1995 Emotional Intelligence framework. This topic rose to the top as a crucial function of a school leader. Exemplifying emotional stability was also explained in depth through the administrator's anecdotal data. According to Goleman (2001), signs of being emotionally competent include being unphased in dealing with stressful situations and not returning to those feelings. School administrators gave insight into ensuring their emotions did not negatively affect their abilities to lead others. Most notably, the leaders interviewed individually and in a focus group agreed they could not take the situations they dealt with personally. They demonstrated how they intentionally did not let their personal feelings or biases get in the way of working with difficult situations. School administrators said that not taking situations personally is challenging, but they understood the extreme importance of this function as a leader. Leaders expressed that they needed to take their time in difficult situations and often not make decisions immediately. The ability to slow down and consult with others, incorporate a healthy work-life balance, and utilize self-regulating strategies was vital to an emotionally stable leader, making for an effective, transformational leader.

Lastly, the third research question allowed participants to delve deeper into Goleman's (1995) Emotional Intelligence framework and analyze their own implementation of their leadership style. The question was framed to discover how the overall framework contributes to their leadership style. Participants were given the framework as a reference as they answered the research and protocol questions that related to this framework.

The overarching idea that arose from the importance of utilizing Emotional Intelligence with their unique leadership abilities was empowering others. These participants believed that an emotionally intelligent leader is constantly refining his/her abilities as well as the abilities of others. With their unique leadership style and personality, each participant expressed how important it was to maximize each employee's potential. In turn, this would collectively and positively contribute to the whole campus community. Participants explained that they understood the leader's responsibility to cultivate critical values to help their stakeholders maximize their potential. Some of the values and traits included the ability to have empathy and compassion for their peers and students. Additionally, the participants expressed that the school community should support each other and recognize individual and collective efforts. Intentional use of affirmations was vital to keeping employees motivated and valued. The leaders interviewed acknowledged that the leader cannot do things in isolation.

A fundamental component of an effective leader is facilitating a collaborative community where individuals can thrive and utilize their strengths and abilities. According to Leithwood and Rihel (2003), at the core of leadership are two functions: providing direction and exercising influence. The authors conclude that influential leaders facilitate professional learning communities to support the school community. Additionally, they express that an effective leader promotes cooperation and fosters avenues for individuals to support each other to meet common

goals. Participants affirmed the idea of teamwork and empowerment of individuals and teams and attributes that an emotionally intelligent leader skillfully creates these opportunities and supports for those they serve.

Implications for the Results of Practice

The findings in this study clearly emphasize the importance of keen leadership and emotional intelligence skills that are needed for a school administrator. Participants validated that the leader was a pivotal component to the success and harmony of the overall organization. Further, participants expressed that a leader should intentionally create a positive environment for everyone in the school community to thrive. They also emphasized that it is essential for the leader to be emotionally intelligent and have avenues in which they can become self-aware of their behaviors and how to intentionally self-manage their emotions. Lastly, the participants understood that each person in the school family mattered, and the leader's primary role was to help their employees reach their highest potential. The implications of these findings validate the importance of effective leadership and emotional intelligence strategies for school leaders.

The first chapters of this study explained the importance and purpose of the study. Effective leadership and emotional intelligence are at the core of success in any organization (Issah, 2018). Statistics show the increase in turnover rates in today's principals. With that in mind, participants shared anecdotal data on the importance of building an administrator's skills in the areas of effective leadership as well as emotional intelligence. An emotionally intelligent leader is a person who can manage their own emotions and those of others. School districts should invest in professional development to refine and enhance these skills. In addition, school districts should adopt a framework of leadership that includes the

domains and skills needed so that leaders can grow in areas they may need to refine. Investing in human capital, especially in emotional intelligence at the leadership level, can benefit the district as a whole. The participants expressed the importance of fostering mentorship opportunities and avenues for professional growth in effective leadership and emotional intelligence. The data suggests that investing quality time with individuals, providing professional development opportunities in emotional intelligence and leadership, and adopting a district-wide framework encompassing these domains and competencies can help highlight the importance and support the skills needed for the leader and everyone in the district.

Additionally, due to the increase in supporting the social/emotional areas of the school community, perhaps incorporating counseling courses into the administrative certification process or courses would be beneficial. This study acknowledges that emotional intelligence strategies take time to develop, and emphasizing the importance of training and education courses will help develop an emotionally intelligent leader. This vertical alignment and collaboration would help bring foundational knowledge and support throughout the administered educational journey.

Lastly, another implication that continued to rise to the top was the idea of a school family or team. Participants reported and validated the importance of everyone on campus and how important each person was to the overall organization. The data gave specific examples of how important the team supported the leader and how important it was for the leader to support and facilitate social interactions, understand the emotions of others, and self-manage their own emotions. The leaders interviewed gave multiple examples of how they understood that the team's synergy was vital to overall school success. The leader expressed that they needed to plan and be intentional with how they led and model what they expected. Key attributes of a leader

rose to the top, including the ability to foster trust among their stakeholders. Leaders expressed that they did this by being empathetic, supportive, and understanding of those they serve.

Today's school leader has shifted from managerial to transformational leader, where the leader utilizes their leadership skills with emotional intelligence at its core.

Emotional intelligence strategies are at the core of this study. When individuals are mindful of how they treat others, they will likely refrain from negative behaviors and attitudes. As the role of the principal or school leader continues to increase in demand, there has also been an increase in teachers' stress and demands, which can lead to emotionally exhausted employees. An emotionally intelligent leader can pick up on the pulse of the campus and facilitate engagement and social activities that can support employees' emotional states. First, the data revealed that creating a safe and trusting environment was vital to facilitating a positive culture. Next, the leader must be emotionally well to lead others. Participants expressed that they rely heavily on the input of their teams and utilize self-awareness techniques often. Additionally, participants understood the importance of self-regulating their emotions no matter the situation. Lastly, each participant recognized and appreciated their school family and took time to support their individual and collective professional growth.

Recommendations for Further Research

The implications of this study shed light on additional opportunities to follow up on this research. The first recommendation would be to utilize a quantitative research design to gather additional data to better measure the impacts of a leader's emotional intelligence and practical leadership qualities with their stakeholders. This type of data could help solidify the importance of utilizing these techniques. Utilizing different types of survey instruments throughout the year could also be beneficial in efforts to measure the impact as well. Maybe a correlational study

from one year to another that includes the differences between minimal use of these strategies compared to intentional and maximum use of these strategies would also validate the importance of the intentional use of these strategies.

Additionally, perhaps utilizing observational data in a qualitative study could give the participants a first-hand look at how the administrators put what they discussed into practice. The interviews were specific, and the use of open-ended questions gave the participants autonomy to share their ideas; however, feeling and seeing these actions live would benefit the researcher and, ultimately, the study. Emotional Intelligence can be an abstract concept that can often be challenging to measure because of ever-changing emotions. However, the researcher could pick up on tone, facial expressions, body language, etc., to contribute to the data.

Summary

Findings from this study expand the literature of existing studies in effective school leadership and emotional intelligence. This study provides in-depth accounts from participants to better support the rationale of utilizing critical leadership and emotional intelligence techniques to serve a school community best. The current literature on school leadership does reflect a shift of ideas that the leader's role has shifted from managerial to transformational Sun and Leithwood (2012). However, this study provides deep accounts of the experiences of South Texas leaders and how they specifically utilized their unique leadership traits and emotional intelligence skills to lead those they serve. These intimate accounts allow us to gather first-hand experiences and support the practical application of these behaviors that could impact positive results.

First, the data revealed that building a positive culture is a fundamental function of a school leader. Creating a positive culture includes investing time in people and fostering positive relationships. Administrators emphasized that a leader must instill core values to help build this

vital foundation. Furthermore, leading with intentionality was mentioned time and time again. Today's leaders must plan for creating a nurturing environment and take time to develop trust with whom they serve. Lastly, two-way communication was vital. Influential leaders ensure that their stakeholders have the means to communicate their ideas with them and take into account the voices of others.

Key emotional intelligence strategies as a leader, such as self-awareness and self-regulation, were also noted as equally important. Participants shared multiple examples of how they continually and intentionally are self-aware of their actions and words and how they self-regulate their emotions when dealing with the complexity of the role. Participants shared that self-reflection involved utilizing an outside perspective at times to serve as feedback. Moreover, a strong support team is critical to an effective leader.

Further, the ability to self-regulate their emotions and not take things personally helped these leaders with longevity in their roles and effectiveness. Some strategies noted included the ability to be emotionally stable by not reacting personally to situations and self-care strategies. Most notably, most of the administrators interviewed expressed how intentional they were with having a work-life balance. Administrators were able to differentiate between work and personal time.

A recurring finding included the importance of teamwork within an organization. The participants interviewed recognized and validated that the strength of the campus came from the individual and collective efforts of who encompassed their team. Today's leaders understood that they needed to support their staff's social-emotional needs before they could serve others. Additionally, the participants expressed that the leader understands that they are responsible for guiding and influencing the behaviors of their staff.

The findings can potentially support and transform schools in an impactful way. The key takeaways include supporting and developing leaders of today and tomorrow. This can be done through targeted professional development that includes support of the emotional intelligence of leaders, helping leaders create and sustain a positive campus climate, and helping the leader systematically create effective teams. An emphasis on critical strategies of effective leadership and emotional intelligence could yield a strong pipeline of school leaders that directly affect the overall organization's success.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

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Professionally, over the past 26 years her work experience has been in the public school educational setting. She has served as a teacher, counselor, assistant principal, principal and director where she has positively made an impact on students. She has focused on her passion for Counseling where she has exhibited the ability to build the social and emotional support of those she serves. She continues to strive to provide training and professional development in this area to help others reach their highest potential.

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