

METASYNTHESIS OF RESEARCH

Emotions in the Workplace and Emotional Intelligence

A Synthesis of Selected Research on Workplace Emotions, Emotional Intelligence, and Organizational Behavior

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Date: August 20, 2026

METASYNTHESIS: EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE, WORKPLACE EMOTIONS, AND WORKPLACE FLOURISHING

INTRODUCTION

The studies of Schutte and Loi (2014), *Connections between Emotional Intelligence and Workplace Flourishing*, and Ashkanasy and Dorris (2017), *Emotions in the Workplace*, collectively demonstrate that emotions are fundamental to workplace functioning and employee flourishing. Schutte and Loi provide empirical evidence that emotional intelligence is positively associated with mental health, work engagement, workplace social support, and perceived power. Ashkanasy and Dorris provide a broader theoretical framework explaining how emotions operate across individual, interpersonal, team, leadership, and organizational levels.

When synthesized, these studies suggest that emotional intelligence serves as an important individual resource through which employees manage emotional experiences, develop positive workplace relationships, maintain a sense of control, and ultimately achieve greater workplace flourishing.

1. EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AS A FOUNDATION FOR WORKPLACE FLOURISHING

Schutte and Loi (2014) found that employees with higher emotional intelligence tend to experience better mental health and greater work engagement, which they used as indicators of workplace flourishing. Emotional intelligence involves the ability to perceive, understand, and manage emotions effectively in oneself and others. These capabilities allow employees to respond more adaptively to workplace challenges.

This finding is reinforced by Ashkanasy and Dorris (2017), who position emotional intelligence at the between-person level of their five-level model of workplace emotions. They describe emotional intelligence as an important individual difference associated with work performance, conflict resolution, leadership, and organizational climate.

Together, the studies suggest that emotional intelligence can be viewed as an individual psychological resource that helps employees transform emotional experiences into constructive workplace behaviors.

Emotional Intelligence → Effective Emotional Processing → Adaptive Responses → Well-being and Engagement

2. EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND WORKPLACE SOCIAL SUPPORT

One of the most important findings of Schutte and Loi (2014) is that satisfaction with workplace social support mediates the relationship between emotional intelligence and workplace flourishing.

This finding connects directly with Ashkanasy and Dorris's (2017) discussion of interpersonal emotions. Emotions are continuously communicated between employees through facial expressions, body language, tone of voice, and other forms of interpersonal interaction.

Employees with stronger emotional intelligence may therefore be better able to:

- understand coworkers' emotions;
- communicate appropriately;
- manage interpersonal conflict;
- provide emotional support;
- develop positive relationships; and
- seek assistance when necessary.

These abilities can strengthen an employee's social network within the organization.

Thus, emotional intelligence does not necessarily lead to flourishing in isolation. Its effects may operate through the quality of interpersonal relationships and social support available within the workplace.

Emotional Intelligence → Better Emotional Communication → Stronger Relationships → Social Support → Workplace Flourishing

3. EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE, PERCEIVED POWER, AND CONTROL

Schutte and Loi (2014) also found that greater emotional intelligence is associated with greater perceived power in the workplace. Perceived power includes an employee's sense of influence, autonomy, control, and ability to manage workplace circumstances.

This finding can be understood through Ashkanasy and Dorris's (2017) discussion of emotional regulation and affective events. Employees encounter numerous workplace situations that require emotional responses. An employee who can recognize and regulate emotions may be better equipped to handle stressful situations, negotiate conflicts, communicate with supervisors, and make decisions.

Consequently, the employee may develop a stronger perception that they are capable of managing their workplace environment.

Emotional Intelligence → Emotional Regulation → Greater Perceived Control → Engagement and Well-being

This is particularly important because workplace flourishing is not simply the presence of positive emotions. It also requires employees to possess the resources and confidence necessary to manage challenges effectively.

4. WORKPLACE EMOTIONS AS DYNAMIC PROCESSES

Ashkanasy and Dorris (2017) expand the findings of Schutte and Loi by emphasizing that workplace emotions are dynamic rather than static.

Their discussion of Affective Events Theory (AET) suggests that workplace events trigger emotional reactions, which subsequently influence employee attitudes and behaviors.

The process can be represented as:

Workplace Event → Emotional Reaction → Appraisal → Behavior → Workplace Outcome

For example, supportive feedback from a supervisor may produce positive emotions and increase engagement. In contrast, unfair treatment or interpersonal conflict may produce frustration, anger, or fear and consequently reduce well-being or engagement.

Emotional intelligence becomes particularly important within this process because it may determine how employees interpret and respond to these emotional events.

Importantly, flourishing does not mean that employees experience only positive emotions. Rather, it involves having the ability to respond constructively to both positive and negative emotional experiences.

5. EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE ACROSS MULTIPLE ORGANIZATIONAL LEVELS

Ashkanasy and Dorris's (2017) five-level framework provides an important extension of Schutte and Loi's individual-level findings.

The two studies can be integrated across several levels:

Level	Emotional Process	Contribution to Flourishing
Individual	Emotional intelligence and regulation	Mental health and resilience
Interpersonal	Emotional perception and communication	Social support and relationships
Team	Emotional contagion and team dynamics	Cohesion and engagement
Leadership	Emotionally intelligent leadership	Motivation and performance
Organizational	Emotional culture and climate	Sustainable employee well-being

This indicates that workplace flourishing is multilevel.

An employee's emotional intelligence begins as an individual capability, but its effects can extend to coworkers, teams, leaders, and eventually the broader organization.

6. LEADERSHIP AND THE TRANSLATION OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE INTO TEAM OUTCOMES

Both studies point to the importance of leadership.

Schutte and Loi (2014) show that emotional intelligence is related to social support and perceived power. Ashkanasy and Dorris (2017) extend this relationship to leadership and teams, explaining that leaders can influence the emotional states of their followers through emotional expression and emotional contagion.

Emotionally intelligent leaders can influence employees through:

- effective communication;
- appropriate emotional expression;
- conflict management;
- support during stressful situations;
- recognition of employee emotions; and
- regulation of negative workplace emotions.

Through emotional contagion, the emotions demonstrated by leaders can spread throughout teams.

This creates a possible pathway:

Emotionally Intelligent Leadership → Positive Team Emotions → Stronger Relationships → Greater Engagement → Better Organizational Functioning

However, Ashkanasy and Dorris (2017) also identify a potential dark side of emotional intelligence, noting that emotional abilities can potentially be used to manipulate others. Therefore, emotional intelligence alone does not guarantee positive outcomes; ethical leadership and organizational context also matter.

7. EMOTIONAL REGULATION RATHER THAN CONSTANT POSITIVITY

Another important insight from the synthesis is that workplace flourishing should not be understood as constantly feeling happy or positive.

Ashkanasy and Dorris (2017) explain that both positive and negative emotions can serve useful functions.

Positive emotions may promote:

- creativity;
- cognitive flexibility;
- optimism;
- engagement; and
- cooperation.

Certain negative emotions, however, may promote:

- persistence;
- careful evaluation;
- recognition of problems; and
- motivation to change undesirable conditions.

Therefore, emotional intelligence allows employees to consider:

What am I feeling? Why am I feeling it? What does this emotion tell me? How should I respond?

This makes emotional regulation a central mechanism connecting emotional intelligence to workplace flourishing.

The objective is not to eliminate negative emotions but to understand and manage them appropriately.

INTEGRATED METASYNTHESIS MODEL

The two studies can be integrated into the following conceptual model:

Workplace Events & Organizational Context

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Employee Emotional Experiences

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Emotional Intelligence *Perceiving* → *Understanding* → *Regulating Emotions*

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Adaptive Emotional Responses ✓

↘

Social Support **Perceived Power/Control**

↓

↓

Positive Relationships **Autonomy & Confidence**

↘

↙

Mental Health + Work Engagement

↓

Workplace Flourishing

At the same time, these individual outcomes influence the broader workplace:

Workplace Flourishing → Positive Interactions → Team Emotional Climate → Leadership & Organizational Climate

This suggests a reciprocal and dynamic process rather than a simple one-directional relationship.

OVERALL METASYNTHESIS

Taken together, Schutte and Loi (2014) and Ashkanasy and Dorris (2017) suggest that **emotional intelligence is both an individual psychological capability and a relational resource embedded within a broader organizational emotional system.**

Schutte and Loi provide empirical evidence that emotional intelligence is directly and indirectly associated with workplace flourishing, particularly through social support and perceived power. Ashkanasy and Dorris provide a broader theoretical explanation by demonstrating that workplace emotions operate across interconnected individual, interpersonal, team, leadership, and organizational levels.

The synthesis therefore indicates that workplace flourishing emerges from the interaction between individual emotional competencies and the emotional environment of the organization.

Employees with higher emotional intelligence may be better able to perceive and regulate emotions, manage workplace challenges, build supportive relationships, and maintain a sense of control. These capabilities can contribute to better mental health and stronger work engagement. At the same time, leadership, emotional contagion, team relationships, organizational culture, and emotional climate can either reinforce or constrain these individual capabilities.

Therefore, emotional intelligence should not be viewed merely as an employee characteristic. It can be understood as a **mechanism connecting individual emotional functioning with interpersonal relationships, leadership, team dynamics, and organizational climate.**

CENTRAL SYNTHESIS

Emotional intelligence enables employees to understand and regulate emotional experiences; this facilitates stronger social support, greater perceived control, healthier interpersonal interactions, and adaptive responses to workplace events, which collectively contribute to mental health, work engagement, and workplace flourishing. These individual processes are further reinforced or constrained by team leadership, emotional contagion, and organizational emotional climate.

RESEARCH GAP

The synthesis also reveals an important research gap.

Schutte and Loi (2014) primarily examine relationships at the individual level, particularly the relationship between emotional intelligence, social support, perceived power, mental health, and work engagement.

In contrast, Ashkanasy and Dorris (2017) emphasize a multilevel perspective, showing that emotions operate across individuals, interpersonal relationships, teams, leadership, and organizational culture.

Therefore, future research could examine how individual emotional intelligence interacts with organizational and contextual factors.

Rather than asking only:

Does emotional intelligence make employees flourish?

future research could ask:

How and under what workplace conditions does emotional intelligence contribute to employee flourishing?

This broader question could examine the interaction of:

Emotional Intelligence + Leadership + Social Support + Emotional Climate + Workplace Events → Workplace Flourishing

Such an approach would provide a stronger foundation for developing emotional intelligence training, leadership development programs, supportive workplace practices, and organizational policies aimed not

only at improving employee performance but also at promoting **sustainable employee well-being and organizational flourishing**.

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