

# Emotional Intelligence and Effective School Management in the Private Schools of Kathmandu Valley

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## ABSTRACT

This paper investigated the connection between school management (ESM) and emotional intelligence (EI) of the principals of the private secondary schools in Kathmandu Valley, Nepal. To be more precise, it was to establish whether the two dimensions of EI self-awareness and self-regulation are strongly correlated and forecasting successful school management. The design used was a positivist, quantitative, cross sectional correlational design. Approximately 325 respondents that included principals, vice-principals, coordinators and teachers selected 25 high-performing private schools were used to collect data through a structured questionnaire. Construct validity was determined through the use of exploratory factor analysis, whereas reliability was determined through the use of Cronbach alpha and composite reliability. The data were analyzed with the SPSS version 25 with the application of descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression analysis. The findings indicated that there was a strong positive relationship between emotional intelligence and successful school management ( $r \approx 0.52$ ,  $p < .001$ ), which confirmed Hypothesis H1. Regression analysis also showed that self-awareness ( $\beta = 0.42$ ,  $p < .001$ ) as well as self-regulation ( $\beta = 0.36$ ,  $p < .001$ ) are significant predictors of effective school management thus supporting the Hypothesis H2. The stronger predictor was self-awareness. The results indicate that emotional intelligence is a vital leadership skill and propose that the effectiveness of school management may be improved by increasing the levels of self-awareness and self-regulation amongst principals, especially in schools with limited resources.

## KEYWORDS

Emotional intelligence, Effective school management, Self-awareness, School leadership, Self-regulation

## INTRODUCTION

Good school management requires good leadership especially where there is scarcity of resources but high academic demands. Emotional intelligence (EI) is one of the most recognized leadership competencies that have been identified as a key determinant of the effectiveness of schools (Gómez-Leal et al., 2021). Principals who have high levels of emotional intelligence can inspire, motivate and relate with the teachers and students, which creates positive school climates, teacher morale and better student achievement (Khadka, 2019; Thapa et al., 2023).

School leaders can provide the environment that facilitates a shared vision, shared responsibility and instructional leadership by employing emotional intelligence, or the capacity to recognize, comprehend and manage personal emotions and those of others (Swanwick, 2007; Boyatzis, 2018). Empirical research indicates that emotionally intelligent principals are associated with an increased academic performance, teacher cohesion, and conflict resolution in most cases, mostly due to the implementation of transformational and distributed leadership practices (Gomez-Leal et al., 2021; Thapa et al., 2023; Khadka et al., 2024).

Despite the wide literature intending to associate emotional intelligence with transformational and distributed leadership, there is still a lack of empirical data on the connection in the Nepali education system. Nepal, more specifically, Kathmandu Valley, has a collectivist culture with diverse and heterogenous population, which implies that school leaders may be expected and placed in ways that practice emotional intelligence differently than in Western countries (Bhattarai, 2015; Khanal et al., 2023). Furthermore, innovation-focused management, creativity, teamwork, and problem-solving through collaboration close to emotional intelligence are also becoming more crucial to efficient school management, yet are not understudied in Nepalese private schools (Boyatzis, 2018).

The emotionally intelligent leadership has never been more important than it is today in an era where a greater level of accountability is being demanded towards inclusive and innovative practices in conditions that are chronically under-resourced. The conventional traditional and centralized leadership approaches tend to be unhelpful when dealing with such complex issues, and the transition to collegial and distributed

leadership models based on emotional intelligence is encouraged (Nadeem, 2024). With a particular interest in the context of Kathmandu Valley, where the teachers are typically provided with more autonomy and decision-making opportunities, the given study will help to add context-specific evidence to the progressive leadership practices within the Nepalese education system (Thapa et al., 2023).

### ***Research Problem***

Despite having a positive relationship of emotional intelligence of principals and successful school management in the world literature, the relationship has not been empirically studied in the context of Nepalese private schools especially in Kathmandu Valley. The cultural impact, collectivist principles, and constraints on resources on the application of emotional intelligence by school principals have not been adequately studied (Bhattarai, 2015; Khadka, 2019; Khanal et al., 2023).

### ***Research Questions***

- i. What is emotional intelligence of Kathmandu Valley private school principals?
- ii. Does the emotional intelligence of principals have a major correlation with the running of a school?
- iii. How does emotional intelligence affect leadership behaviours including collaboration, teamwork, innovation, and transformational leadership in the case of the private schools?

### ***Research Hypothesis***

H1: Emotional intelligence of principals in private schools (self-awareness and self-regulation) is positively and significantly correlated with good school management.

H2: The effectiveness of school management in the context of the private schools is significantly predicted by self-awareness and self-regulation of principals.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### ***Conceptual Review***

Emotional intelligence as a leadership skill has been extensively accepted to be a primary competency of a leader especially in a school where leaders have to deal with tricky interpersonal dynamics and establish emotionally friendly working conditions that facilitate learning. Generally, EI can be described as possession of the skills to perceive, comprehend, control, and influence emotions in others and oneself (Gomez-Leal et al., 2021). As time passed by, a number of conceptual models of EI have been developed chief among them being ability-based, trait-based and mixed models, which provide various perspectives to the construct.

The battles of ability-based model which is developed by Mayer and Salovey views EI as a collection of cognitive-emotional skills that pertain to emotion perception, cognition and control. Although this model is theoretically sound, it is highly cognitive and as such lacks the applicability to the actual leadership practice in the social dynamic school settings. By contrast, trait-based theories concentrate on emotional self-perceptions that are built into personality frameworks and these may be inadequate in explaining leadership behaviors, and organizational performances.

Since the field of educational leadership is applied, the current study followed the mixed model of emotional intelligence developed by Daniel Goleman that combines emotional skills and skills, personal traits, and measurable leadership skills. The model by Goleman is also explicitly applicable to the work of school leadership since he directly connects emotional competencies to performance and leadership performance in the workplace (Gómez-Leal et al., 2021). According to Goleman model, there are five fundamental dimensions of EI (Goleman, 1995):

- i. Self-awareness- it is the capability of acknowledging and comprehending feelings and how the feelings guide behavior and decision-making.
- ii. Self-regulation - the ability to control emotional urges, be malleable, and react positively to situations.
- iii. Motivation- an inner desire in accomplishing what is not given but will build perseverance and commitment.
- iv. Empathy - the skill to co-exist with others by empathizing with their feelings and showing the right emotional reaction to their feelings.

- v. Social (interpersonal) skills - the capability to establish relationships, conflict management and collaboration.

Goleman subsequently divided these dimensions into personal competence (self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation) and social competence (empathy, social skills) that are both important in the context of leadership in schools with a significant level of social interaction (Goleman, 2005).

In the educational setting, emotionally intelligent school leaders are in a better position to establish trust, handle stress, conflict management as well as develop a positive school culture. This leadership promotes collegiality, teacher efficacy and student achievement (Brackett et al., 2011). In addition, EI will help leaders to resolve emotionally charged issues like teacher burnout, student discipline, parental involvement, and change management, which leads to enhanced job satisfaction, decreased turnover, and enhanced educational outcome (Boyatzis, 2018). The EI model chosen as the conceptual framework of the current research is the work by Goleman due to its high level of empirical evidence, relevance of leadership, and consistency with school management practices.

### ***Empirical Review***

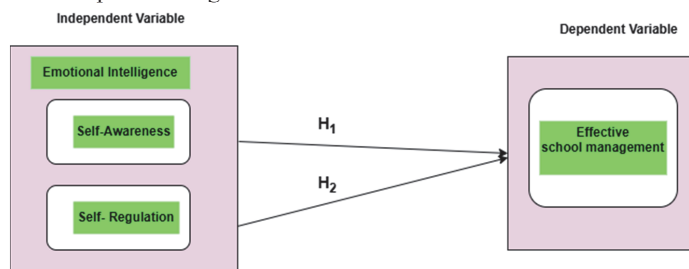
Numerous studies have shown that there is a close connection between the emotional intelligence of principals and school performance. As Heenan et al. (2023) discovered, change initiatives applied by school leaders with well-developed EI profiles were more likely to be effective and to not undermine the staff morale. On the same note, Santiago (2024) emphasized the importance of EI in conflict management and shaping collaborative teams, which makes it applicable to school collaborative settings. Regarding the Nepalese context, despite being still underrepresented, there are some growing studies that highlight emotional intelligence as a key factor of effective leadership. The study performed in Nepal suggests that principals, who possess higher EI levels, achieve success in conflict-management, team-building, and the improvement of academic outcomes (Khadka, 2019; Thapa et al., 2023). Such results are consistent with the global study that defined EI as an influential predictor of transformational leadership and teacher-perceived leader effectiveness (Gómez-Leal et al., 2021).

Recent research also reiterates the importance of EI to the establishment of positive school culture. According to Yuan (2024), emotionally intelligent leaders achieved greater success in creating inclusive and supportive working conditions, which ultimately increased teacher job satisfaction and student performance. Angwaomaodoko (2024) emphasized the mediating effect of school climate on the relationships between self-awareness and self-regulation of principals and positive school management results, which has a systemic impact on instructional results and stakeholder satisfaction. Altogether, these studies verify that emotional intelligence is an underlying leadership competence, which indirectly and directly affects effective school management by enhancing school climate, collaboration, and instructional leadership.

### ***Study Conceptual Framework***

According to the emotional intelligence model presented by Goleman and the focus of the current research, the conceptual framework suggests that the emotional intelligence of principals and the effective management of schools in the private schools have a direct relationship.

Emotional intelligence is operationalized in two dimensions as shown in the framework: Self-awareness and Self-regulation. These two dimensions are the independent variables and portray the ability of principals to have knowledge of their internal feelings and are able to control their emotional reactions in leadership and management scenarios.



**Figure 1: Conceptual framework of emotional intelligence and effective school management.**

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

### ***Research Approach***

The research paradigm of this study is positivism which rests on the view that the relationships between variables are measurable and testable. The ontological perspective of the study is oriented towards an objectivist (realist) view in which emotional intelligence (EI) and effective school management (ESM) are observable constructs that can be measured by using standardized instruments. In the epistemological interpretation, the relationships are tested by a deductive, quantitative method employing statistical analysis of hypothesized relationships. In line with this, the research design is a cross-sectional correlational design that seeks to define the relationship between effective school management and emotional intelligence of principals (self-awareness and self-regulation). The hypotheses were tested by gathered data in the shape of a structured questionnaire and examined through factor-analytic methods and correlation and regression models.

### ***Sample and Sampling***

The target population was made up of secondary schools that were privately run in Kathmandu Valley (Kathmandu, Bhaktapur and Lalitpur districts). The Ministry of Education says that the Valley has about 2100 schools. Stratified random sampling method was used which led to the selection of 25 private schools. The sample was purposely in private schools that have a good record in the Secondary Education Examination (SEE) to align the sample with institutions that have relatively well-structured management practices and performance-focused management practices. The selection of high-performing schools was based on the fact that, they have higher chances of displaying well-established leadership systems and management routines that would enable the study to test the relationship between the emotional intelligence of the principals and the school management when strong academic accountability exists. The sampling approach also limits the overabundance of variability owing to shaky governance foundations in under performing schools thus aiding in the explicit interpretation of correlations among EI and ESM under similar institutional settings. The sample was based on formula developed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970) which has an estimated minimum of about 325 participants. These participants were principals, vice-principals and coordinators picked randomly in sampled schools as well as teachers who were chosen proportionally. Each school contained about 1316 respondents. To ensure comparability of the samples, the schools that had a population of less than 500 students, schools that were not public/community schools, and schools above Grade 10 were eliminated.

### ***Research Instruments***

The structured questionnaire was used to gather data and included three sections, i.e., demographic information, emotional intelligence, and effective school management. The measures of emotional intelligence were self-awareness and self-regulation dimension and the measures of effective school management were various items that indicated the effectiveness of the management. Everything was judged on a five-point Likert scale between strongly disagree and strongly agree. To facilitate the clarity and content validity, a pilot study was carried out on about 10% of the sample. Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability were both then used to determine internal consistency of the scales.

### ***Analytical Tools***

The SPSS version 25 was used to analyze data. The descriptive statistics were a summary of demographic attributes and patterns of response. To ensure that the structure of the factor was established before testing the hypothesis, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was performed to verify the factor structure of both scales of emotional intelligence and effective school management. Once the validity and reliability were established, Pearson correlation analysis was done to test the relationship between the variables and multiple regression analysis was then done to test the predictive power of self-awareness and self-regulation on effective school management.

**DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION*****Demographic distribution of the respondents***

The demographic distribution of the respondents includes information on their age, gender, marital status, education, and work experience. It provides an overview of the background characteristics of the participants in the study.

**Table 1: Demographic of the respondents**

| Variable        | Category           | Counts |
|-----------------|--------------------|--------|
| Age             | 18–24              | 13     |
|                 | 25–34              | 98     |
|                 | 35–44              | 153    |
|                 | 45–54              | 82     |
|                 | 55–60              | 15     |
| Gender          | Woman              | 148    |
|                 | Man                | 212    |
| Marital Status  | Married            | 295    |
|                 | Single             | 66     |
|                 | Divorced           | 1      |
| Work Experience | Less than 2 years  | 8      |
|                 | 2–5 years          | 34     |
|                 | 6–9 years          | 40     |
|                 | More than 10 years | 279    |

The demographic characteristics of the respondents in terms of age, gender, marital status, education, and work experience are presented in Table 1. These data show that the majority of the respondents are in the middle of their careers, with 153 (35–44 years) representing the largest number of respondents, 98 (25–34 years) and 82 (45–54 years). These two categories taken together make up the vast majority of respondents and, to a lesser extent, younger respondents between 18 and 24 (13 people) and older respondents between 55 and 60 (15 people). This suggests that the majority of the study group consists of economically active individuals.

As far as the gender distribution is concerned, the sample is slightly skewed towards men (212 over 148). This means men are in the slight majority of respondents. In terms of marriage 295 respondents are married and only 66 of them are single and 1 respondent is divorced. This reveals a very strong family orientation of the respondents that likely shapes views on leadership and organizational conduct. The educational level of the respondents indicates a well-educated sample. Professional work experience information indicates that the sample is biased towards experienced individuals. Group 279 respondents had > 10 years professional experience, had the highest proportion of responses by a very large margin. The number of respondents is lower for the mid-career levels: 40 respondents having the experience of 6–9 years and 34 with 2–5 years. Only eight participants cited less than 2 years' experience, illustrating the low representation of early career professionals. This spread indicates that a majority of the respondents provide extensive professional knowledge and experience, being essential when interpreting their views on leadership and school management.

***Emotional Intelligence and Effective School Management***

Emotional intelligence plays a vital role in effective school management as it motivates leaders to understand, regulate, and use emotions in decision-making and interpersonal relationships. School leaders with high emotional intelligence can improve a positive school climate, strengthen teamwork, and handle conflicts constructively.

**Table 2: Correlation Matrix between items of EI and ESM**

|            |                    | ESM1  | ESM2  | ESM3  | ESM4  | ESM5  | ESM6  | ESM7 |
|------------|--------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|
| <b>EI1</b> | <b>Pearson's r</b> | —     |       |       |       |       |       |      |
|            | <b>df</b>          | —     |       |       |       |       |       |      |
|            | <b>p-value</b>     | —     |       |       |       |       |       |      |
| <b>EI2</b> | <b>Pearson's r</b> | 0.586 | —     |       |       |       |       |      |
|            | <b>df</b>          | 358   | —     |       |       |       |       |      |
|            | <b>p-value</b>     | <.001 | —     |       |       |       |       |      |
| <b>EI3</b> | <b>Pearson's r</b> | 0.515 | 0.515 | —     |       |       |       |      |
|            | <b>df</b>          | 357   | 358   | —     |       |       |       |      |
|            | <b>p-value</b>     | <.001 | <.001 | —     |       |       |       |      |
| <b>EI4</b> | <b>Pearson's r</b> | 0.355 | 0.362 | 0.353 | —     |       |       |      |
|            | <b>df</b>          | 356   | 357   | 357   | —     |       |       |      |
|            | <b>p-value</b>     | <.001 | <.001 | <.001 | —     |       |       |      |
| <b>EI5</b> | <b>Pearson's r</b> | 0.502 | 0.496 | 0.523 | 0.465 | —     |       |      |
|            | <b>df</b>          | 356   | 357   | 356   | 355   | —     |       |      |
|            | <b>p-value</b>     | <.001 | <.001 | <.001 | <.001 | —     |       |      |
| <b>EI6</b> | <b>Pearson's r</b> | 0.315 | 0.346 | 0.300 | 0.221 | 0.441 | —     |      |
|            | <b>df</b>          | 358   | 359   | 358   | 357   | 357   | —     |      |
|            | <b>p-value</b>     | <.001 | <.001 | <.001 | <.001 | <.001 | —     |      |
| <b>EI7</b> | <b>Pearson's r</b> | 0.365 | 0.434 | 0.440 | 0.340 | 0.520 | 0.477 | —    |
|            | <b>df</b>          | 357   | 358   | 357   | 356   | 357   | 358   | —    |
|            | <b>p-value</b>     | <.001 | <.001 | <.001 | <.001 | <.001 | <.001 | —    |

Table 2 indicates the coefficients of correlation among EI and ESM items. Results revealed positive, significant correlations between all of the variables at  $p < .001$  this indicates that effective school administration is significantly correlated across components (item constructs analysis). The coefficients indicate a moderate strong level of the relationship that the effectiveness of school management practices improves when EI increases.

The items have a best linear relationship with EI2 and EI5. EI2 correlates very well with ESM1 ( $r = 0.586$ ) and ESM3 ( $r = 0.515$ ), whereas EI5 is significantly associated with ESM3 ( $r = 0.523$ ) and ESM7 ( $r = 0.520$ ). The implications of these findings are that the competencies of recognizing and managing emotions in oneself and others have a significant impact on the downstream management of schools (e.g., decision-making ability, collaboration, the effectiveness of leadership). There were also significant, moderate and stable ( $EM = 0.515$ , ea.) relationship between EI3 and ESM1 and ESM2 (223) indicating

that expectation regarding the need of emotional insights for an effective management requires empathy. Similarly, EI7 has strong relationship with other ESM items such as ESM2, ESM3 and ESM6 depicting the social awareness and relationship management of respective leadership in achievement of the schools. Meanwhile, the weaker correlations are detected with EI6 and still significant. For instance, its correlation with ESM4 ( $r = 0.221$ ) is not as significant as the correlations with EI2 and EI5. This means that while S-OEI constitutes efficient school functioning, its role is one of a supporting nature rather than core, which is the case with the remaining components of EI. However, significance of all  $p < .001$  shows that the weaker relationships are still meaningful in offering a broader understanding of the relationship between emotional intelligence and school management effectiveness.

In general, the correlation matrix presents a somehow pattern in which all the measurements to the emotional intelligence are positively related with the effective school management, although not in a same manner. The implications about the leaders' competence (empathy, self-regulation and relationship management) for a positive school climate and high organizational effectiveness are discussed. While some factors may have more influence than others, over all, the results enable educators and schools leaders take into account emotional intelligence as an important variable for the role in order to help to improve better school leadership/ management.

### *Regression Analysis for Emotional Intelligence Dimensions*

Multiple regression analysis was done to further investigate the predictive relationship between emotional intelligence of principals and effective running of schools. The dependent variable was considered to be Effective School Management (ESM), and the two dimensions of emotional intelligence; self-awareness and self-regulation were typed as the independent ones. This analysis is a direct answer to the Hypothesis H<sub>2</sub>, and H<sub>1</sub> is confirmed with the help of correlation analysis. There were the assumptions of linearity, normality, and multicollinearity which were analyzed before the regression analysis and were found to be within the acceptable level. The regression model was tested as significant meaning that the dimensions of emotional intelligence have a considerable amount of variance being explained in effective school management, collectively.

**Table 3: Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Effective School Management**

| Model           | Unstandardized Coefficients (B) | Std. Error | Standardized Coefficients ( $\beta$ ) | t    | Sig.  |
|-----------------|---------------------------------|------------|---------------------------------------|------|-------|
| (Constant)      | 0.312                           | 0.118      | —                                     | 2.64 | 0.009 |
| Self-Awareness  | 0.421                           | 0.062      | 0.42                                  | 6.79 | 0.000 |
| Self-Regulation | 0.367                           | 0.058      | 0.36                                  | 6.33 | 0.000 |

Table 3 reveals that self-awareness and self-regulation are important predictors of effective school management. Self-awareness turned out to be the more significant predictor ( $\beta = 0.42$ ), which implied that the capability of principals to cognize their own feelings and leadership skills is critical in running schools. The contribution of self-regulation was also found to be strong and significant ( $\beta = 0.36$ ), and this result is associated with the significance of emotional regulation and flexibility in making leadership decisions. Collectively, these results indicate that emotionally self-aware principals with the ability to manage their emotional reactions are more effective in how they run the school, support staff, and make the organization effective.

***Hypothesis Testing Results***

The hypotheses of the study were tested on the basis of correlation and regression analysis and the results are given in Table 4.

| Hypothesis  | Coefficient ( $\beta$ ) | p-value | Result   |
|---|-------------------------|---------|----------|
| H <sub>1</sub> : Emotional intelligence of principals (self-awareness and self-regulation) is positively and significantly correlated with good school management | 0.52 (avg.)             | < .001  | Accepted |
| H <sub>2</sub> : The effectiveness of school management is significantly predicted by self-awareness and self-regulation of principals                            | 0.42 / 0.36             | < .001  | Accepted |

Both hypotheses were accepted. Emotional intelligence (self-awareness and self-regulation) was positively related and significantly predicted effective school management in private schools.

***Discussion***

The analysis of the relationship between EI and ESM provides strong evidence that emotional intelligence is an important correlate of effective leadership behavior in schools. largest pair-wisely correlations, between all EI and ESM items, being significant ( $p < .001$ ) denote that a higher EI leads to an effective school leadership. These results are consistent with earlier literature that emphasizes that it is an emotional intelligence that are very important in education leadership positions and process not only for the school culture, co-operative projects and decision-making (Goleman, 1995). The associations between all these features of ESM was the closest with EI2 and EI5, respectively. It seems that the capacity to identify and manage emotions in self and others is one of the most pertinent EI competencies in predicting manager performance. Leaders who are able to read emotional meaning and appropriately respond to those meanings, are more effective in building trust, getting employees to comply and appropriately handle conflict (Mayer et.al, 2016). These results are similar to those of Gómez-Leal et al. (2021) who argued that managers who have emotional intelligence that is their dwelling and transformational leadership will be more efficient in developing organization and maintain performance. Results indicated that EI3 and EI7 significantly correlated with ESM, and moderate to strong correlations with some items. These dimensions of empathy, social awareness, and relationship management reflect the interpersonal character of leadership in schools. According to Khadka (2019) the teachers who are successful are then also successful leaders of the school, lead to excellent interpersonal relations, working in teams and to mutual responsibility. These relational competencies are more than ever pertinent in the resource-poor and competition-driven high stakes environments, like in Kathmandu valley, where apart from collaboration and creativity, it is with relational abilities that the soundness of the quality of education is maintained. There were somewhat weaker correlations between EI6 and the other items, but significant correlations nonetheless. This suggests that, although the self-regulation factors may play a role, the effect on the effectiveness of school leadership is perhaps not as potent as those of EI interpersonal factors. It is consistent with findings of other research on the fact that intrapersonal (Pashler, 1998) and interpersonal archives coordinated the processing b of tar getting also.

This study confirms the value of emotional intelligence of principals in management of schools in the case of private schools, in terms of the importance of self-awareness and self-regulation. The regression analysis showed that both dimensions have significant predictions of management effectiveness, but the correlation analysis showed that emotional intelligence has a positive and significant relationship with the outcomes of school management. These results reinforce the opinion that emotionally intelligent principals are more likely to make wise decisions, handle an interpersonal relationship, and lead a school efficiently (AI Nashash, 2024).

Self-awareness was also found to be the more powerful predictor, as it has been noted to play an essential role in reflective leadership and strategic decision-making patterns; self-regulation had a significant role

to play because it allowed principals to overcome stress, conflicts and to maintain stability within organizations. These findings are aligned with the previous research in Nepal and other countries that highlight emotional intelligence as an essential predictor of leadership and management success at schools (Yuan, 2024). Altogether, the results imply the need to incorporate emotional intelligence building in the process of leadership training and professional development among school leaders.

The research findings reinforce with evidence that, emotional intelligence is an essential characteristic of any effective school leader. The stable, strong associations that EI maintained with the leader's practice seem to suggest that EI is useful not only in terms of helping leaders to manage their team, but that it might also have added benefits that span over effective school management. This is also in line with the international studies that recommend the incorporation of EI in leadership development programs which has a positive effect on student achievement. Based in the context of Kathmandu Valley, the findings of this research could be of significance even though there is still limited policy and training in the consideration of the emotional intelligence of the school leaders for the sustainability of the effective school leadership practitioners.

### **CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS**

The results of the current study show that emotional intelligence (EI) is positively linked to the successful school management (ESM). In particular, the essential EI dimensions, including emotional regulation, empathy, and relationship administration, were associated with strong relationships and predictive power of core management practices, i.e., collaboration, communication, and decision-making. The same findings can be explained by the fact that previous studies imply that emotionally intelligent leaders can more effectively create positive school climates and motivate staff. On the same note, research in the Nepalese context has already found that the capacity of principals to comprehend and cope with emotions is the decisive factor in successful school leadership (Khadka, 2019; Thapa et al., 2023), which provides the research with a certain background validity.

The results suggest that emotional intelligence competencies are to be explicitly emphasized in the development of leadership in the Nepalese schools, in addition to technical and administrative skills. Unlike the previous views that viewed leadership as mainly top-bottom or top-down (Harris, 2003; Spillane, 2007), the study presents the significance of emotionally based leadership in day to day running of the school. In resource-constrained settings like Kathmandu Valley where academic performance is high in schools, it has been shown that specific EI training (self-awareness, emotional regulation, interpersonal communication, and conflict management) can have a measurable positive impact on teamwork, teacher satisfaction and organizational effectiveness. This training may be operationalised in terms of structured workshops, reflective management practice and performance-based evaluation of emotional skills, which will enhance leadership capacity and contribute towards better educational performance.

### **LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

Although it has its contributions, this research has a number of limitations that need to be noted. To begin with, the research was based on self-reported questionnaire information, subject to social desirability bias and common method variance. Second, the selection of high-performing private schools in Kathmandu Valley prevents the generalization of the study results to the low-performing or to the public schools. Third, the cross-sectional design does not allow making the causal conclusions concerning the relationships between emotional intelligence and effective school management.

The research of the future needs to take into account longitudinal or mixed-method research because it can be more representative of the causal association and alterations in leadership effectiveness with time. The sample size of the study should be extended to cover the public and rural schools to increase the generalizability of the findings and to be able to compare the different types of schools. As well, objective performance measures and the application of other dimensions of EI or leadership style may be added to future research to come up with a more holistic picture of emotionally intelligent school leadership in various educational settings.

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**AUTHORS' CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

The author declares no conflict of interest with respect to publication of the paper.

