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Emotional Intelligence as a Micro-Foundation of Sustainable Leadership: Associations with Team Wellbeing and Performance

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Sustainability in organizations extends beyond environmental stewardship to encompass the social dimension, including employee wellbeing, ethical conduct, psychological safety, and the long-term viability of human capital. Within this perspective, leadership behaviors that nurture relational quality and human flourishing constitute a micro-foundation of sustainable organizational performance. The present study examines the role of emotional intelligence as such a micro-foundation, testing whether managers' emotional intelligence is positively associated with leadership skills and team performance, and whether organizational emotional intelligence training moderates the emotional intelligence–leadership relationship. Drawing on theoretical models of emotional intelligence alongside the sustainable leadership and sustainable Human Resource Management literatures, the review synthesizes evidence linking emotional intelligence to transformational leadership, team processes (trust, cooperation, conflict management), and structured emotional intelligence training as an organizational enabler. Using a cross-sectional survey design ($N = 51$), exploratory factor analysis and multiple regression were employed to test three hypotheses. Results indicate that managers' emotional intelligence is positively and significantly associated with leadership skills ($r = .690, p < .001$) and with team performance ($r = .599, p < .001$). Furthermore, emotional intelligence training significantly moderates the emotional intelligence–leadership relationship ($b = 0.617, p = .007; \Delta R^2 = .075$), such that the association between emotional intelligence and leadership behavior is stronger at higher levels of training. The findings reposition emotional intelligence as a relational capability that supports socially sustainable workplaces and offer practical implications for leadership development, performance management, and the human dimension of organizational sustainability.

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