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The Implementation of Emotional Intelligence Among

Management Teams in 5-star Hotels in Malta

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Abstract

Research on emotional intelligence (EI) in the hospitality industry in Malta is close to non-existent. This study is designed to determine the level of awareness of and interest in EI among management personnel of five-star hotels in Malta and whether they are developing emotional intelligence skills in their organisation. Additionally, it aims to assess the level of EI among the management personnel of the same star segment with a validated and reliable assessment tool. As EI within the hospitality industry has not been widely investigated, this research offers results that are valuable to academic and industry perspectives through a mixed methodology approach.

This study involved conducting 11 one-to-one interviews with management personnel and using the EQ-i 2.0 emotional intelligence assessment tool with 22 managers and general managers of five-star hotels in Malta. The EI model used for this research is the revised version of Reuven Bar-On's EQ-i.

The overall data analysis results suggest a mixed level of EI awareness among the management teams of five-star hotels, ranging from incognizant to knowledgeable; however, all the participants showed interest and engagement during the interviews, suggesting that management teams are interested in EI and its competencies. Moreover, although EI training development programmes were not common practice in these five-star hotels, this study revealed that a small number had been implementing EI training among their staff.

The EQ-i 2.0 assessment tool also determined a mixed level of EI scores among the management teams, which varied from low-range to high-range quartiles. Interestingly, management personnel with the lowest to middle EI scores were also incognizant of EI; conversely, those with the middle to highest EI scores also had EI awareness and were implementing EI skills.

EI awareness is necessary for effective leadership. As leaders in a high-demanding, service-based industry, hospitality management must recognise and manage their strengths and weaknesses to meet challenging requirements and lead others within an organisation.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence, five-star hotels, management, leadership, EI assessment.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Emotional intelligence is of such great interest in its own right that it no doubt would attract attention regardless of what other views and books were around (Matthews, Zeidner and Roberts, 2002, p.xi).

For too long managers have seen emotions at work as noise cluttering the rational operation of organisations. But the time for ignoring emotions as irrelevant to business has passed. what organisations everywhere need now is to realize the benefits of primer leadership by cultivating leaders who generate the emotional resonance that lets people flourish (Goleman, Boyatzis and Mckee, 2013, p.xv).

1.1 Overview

Since the late 1950s, Malta's tourism development has gained momentum, becoming a significant contributor to the Maltese economy. The year 2018 proved exceptional for the country's gross domestic product (GDP) as the number of tourists visiting the island reached a record of 2.6 million – a growth of about 14% from the previous year (NSO, 2019). Another record was marked the following year as 2019 saw an increase of 5.9% of inbound tourist trips over the same period, with nearly 2.8 million visitors (NSO, 2020).

A leading segment of the island's tourism industry is that of hoteliers, who welcome tourists from every part of the globe. To the best of their abilities, they strive to accommodate guests with the highest level of service, though this does not come without challenges. After consulting with various hotel managers in Malta, the researcher discussed several issues with them. Some of the topics mentioned were

high employee turnover, training and development skills required for both new employees and other long-standing staff members, job satisfaction, and job performance – all of which require the company's time, money, and expertise.

After further research, it was found that several of these elements, such as leaders, management, job performance, job satisfaction, and employee turnover may be significantly affected by emotional intelligence (EI; Gholipour Soleimani and Einolahzadeh, 2017; Shehu and Isa, 2017; Spry, 2016; Trevino II, 2020; Wolfe and Kim, 2013). It can thus be argued that EI plays a significant role in achieving organisational effectiveness (Srivastava, 2013). Such insights have raised the interest of the researcher in investigating EI in further detail.

1.2 What is Emotional Intelligence?

EI has become a topic of vast and developing interest worldwide and is concerned with how we identify, perceive, manage, and understand emotions. People with a high level of EI are conscious of how they are feeling, what their emotions mean, and how their emotions affect others.

Emotionally intelligent persons are highly conscious of their emotional states – whether they are experiencing both positive or negative feelings such as sadness and frustration – and can recognise and handle them. They are very tuned in to the emotions that others experience. Understandably, sensitivity to emotional signals both from within oneself and their social setting could make one a better colleague and leader.

Mayer and Salovey published their first book on EI in 1990, in which they described EI and how it connects with our minds and behaviour. Their definition of EI is as follows:

> We define EI as the capacity to reason about emotions, and of emotions to enhance thinking. It includes the abilities to accurately perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth. (Mayer, Salovey & Caruso, 2004, p. 197)

Statistics from the Carnegie Foundation, Stanford, and Harvard show that about 86% of success that makes top leaders stand out comes from EI. The *Harvard Business Review* has recognised EI as one of the most prominent business concepts (Jose, 2019), and it is important to note that EI is teachable (Scott-Halsell, Shumate and Blum, 2008), which allows any interested person to improve their social and emotional skills, leading to many benefits (Mazur, 2021).

1.3 Brief History of Emotional Intelligence

The term 'emotional intelligence' is commonly derived from the definition by psychologists Peter Salovey and John Mayer (1990); however, further research has indicated that EI goes back to the 1930s and is associated with Edward Thorndike through social intelligence (Virkus, 2009). He described social intelligence as the capability to agree with and do well with other people. In the 1940s, David Wechsler, known for inventing various widely used intelligence assessments for both children and adults, recommended that affective intelligence elements could lead to more significant achievement in life. In the 1950s, Abraham Maslow, a philosopher and psychologist most known for his self-actualisation psychology theory, explained how emotional strength could be developed and strengthened. In 1975, Howard Gardner published the book *The Shattered Mind*, introducing the notion of multiple intelligences, where he debated the value of intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligence. A decade later, Wayne Leon Payne introduced the terminology 'emotional intelligence' in the title of his doctoral dissertation, 'A study of Emotion: Developing Emotional Intelligence; Self-Integration; Relating to Fear, Pain and Desire'. Two years later, Keith Beasley published an article in *Mensa Magazine* and

used the term 'emotional quotient', currently known as 'EQ'. Although it has been proposed that he was the first to utilise the term, Reuven Bar-On asserts to have applied it in his unpublished thesis. Three years later, in 1990, John Mayer and Peter Salovey, two psychologists, published their milestone article, 'Emotional Intelligence', which is known to be the inception of the concept. In 1995, Daniel Goleman popularised the notion of EI once publishing his book 'Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ' (Virkus, 2009).

1.4 Motivation for the Study

The increase in interest in EI is credited to writers such as Daniel Goleman (1995), a globally known psychologist and science journalist who wrote a few books on EI, with his first being published in 1995. His third book was published in 2001, and it was called *Primal Leadership: Unleashing the Power of Emotional Intelligence.* In an interview, Goleman discussed the book and described emotional leadership as follows:

> It's leading at the level of emotions through emotions and the best
> leaders do this naturally.... so there's a direct relationship between
> leaders mood, teams mood and performance. Once you understand
> that, you see that a leader must start leading by managing himself
> or herself first because it's going to affect everybody else. … There
> is a new discovery in neuroscience it's called The Social Brain…
> when we are face to face, when we are on the phone even, your
> brain and my brain are locked together and there's an invisible
> channel that's passing emotions back and forth and the best leaders
> help other people get and stay in the best emotional state to work at
> their best. (Goleman, 2014)

Many theorists, psychologists, and other researchers argue about the importance of EI and its effectiveness in our daily lives at the workplace and in our relationships as

well as at home and with ourselves. Based on the Bar-On EQ-i model (MHS, 2011), EI comprises five composites: self-perception, self-expression, interpersonal, decision-making, and stress management, all of which are vital composites in the hospitality industry. These composites are included in the online assessment administered to the study participants.

EI has been of interest to the author for quite some time. It is a vast and exciting subject that provides reasoning and explanation to human behaviour phenomena. The more one reads about the subject, the more one realises how many other aspects EI connects to, such as increased team performance (Shehu and Isa, 2017), job satisfaction, job performance, and commitment leadership ability (Shooshtarian, Ameli and Aminilari, 2013).

The reason for conducting this research work in hotels in Malta is that the author has a passion for working for and being a guest at various hotels both locally and abroad. The ambience and the feeling inside hotels are more than the servicescape; they are also about the teamwork and team spirit displayed by the staff, who work extremely hard to achieve optimal results for the guest to experience. The author wants to explore the level of awareness and intensity of EI among the management teams of five-star hotels and investigate whether EI is being implemented. At the same time, they wish to increase or create awareness where it is lacking while also demonstrating the importance of EI among hospitality management, who will be tasked with communicating and enforcing this skill among the workforce. The author believes that every organisation that strives to have the best team and service, all the way from managers to employees, should consider including the notion of EI in the way that they execute their roles. It has been researched that not only EI has an impact on employee turnover, but the EI of leaders is significantly and negatively correlated to employee turnover. A study suggests that the greater the staffs' understanding of their managements' emotional intelligence, the lower their turnover intention (Falahat, Lau, Aun and Migin, 2014).

1.5 Problem Statement

Individual discussions with hospitality personnel revealed that EI awareness, skills, and abilities in the hospitality segment seem to be lacking. Due to the demanding responsibilities entailed in working in hotels, companies suffer from skilled labour shortages, high levels of stress, miscommunication between staff members and departments, and high employee turnover, to name a few, which disrupts teamwork and team spirit. These factors cause hotels to repetitively hire and train current and new employees, which becomes a time-consuming and costly endeavour that harms the organisation and employees still working there.

Generating EI awareness and practice in the workplace can help management understand its importance and implement it to improve their daily lives with other staff and guests. Since EI focuses on improving oneself and others for balanced emotional and social functioning, many benefits emerge when one starts to include EI in an organisation.

1.6 Research Questions

The main research question is as follows:

1. What is the level of awareness of and interest in EI among the management teams of five-star hotels in Malta?

Secondary research questions are as follows:

2. Are hotel management teams developing EI skills?
3. What is the level of EI among the management personnel of these hotels?

1.7 Research Objectives

This study is conducted in hotels in Malta.

The main objective of this research is as follows:

1. To determine the level of awareness of and interest EI among the management personnel of the hotels.

Secondary objectives are as follows:

2. To determine if the management personnel of the hotels are developing EI skills in their organisation.
3. To measure the level of EI among the management personnel of the hotels.

1.8 Thesis Structure

This study determines EI awareness, development, and level among the management teams of five-star hotels in Malta using a mixed methodology approach. Chapter 1 introduces an overview of Malta's tourism and hospitality development. It highlights the motivation of this study, provides a brief history of EI, and outlines the study's problem statement and research questions. In Chapter 2, the researcher presents extensive literature on EI and its main concepts, and it analyses EI implementations in organisations from various academic articles. Chapter 3 discusses the research methodology applied and the target sample. In Chapter 4, the researcher illustrates findings of the data collection and analysis conducted through a mixed methodology. Chapter 5 discusses the results of the study. Finally, Chapter 6 presents the conclusions and implications of the data obtained through the study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 What is Intelligence?

The notion of intelligence has been a widely discussed subject among psychologists and theorists for decades. The word 'intelligence' was originally derived from the Latin word '*intelligentia*' and the corresponding Latin verb '*intelligere*', which connects the two terms *inter* (between) and *legere* (to choose); therefore, etymologically, the root of the word 'intelligence' means to understand and realise how to select. According to Waschler (1943), intelligence is characterised as an individual's whole potential to reason, behave purposefully, and act effectively and officially within their surroundings. As found in the Oxford English Dictionary (2018), intelligence is classified as a noun that refers to acquiring and applying information and experiences. Being intelligent means that one has the mental capacity to learn, reflect, and resolve issues. Intelligence determines the capability to understand and learn, therefore impacting human behaviour in all dimensions (Piaget, 2006).

Research on human intelligence goes back to the late 1800s, when Charles Darwin's cousin Sir Francis Galton became one of the first to study this subject. Some researchers have argued that intelligence comprises talents and specific skills, whereas others have claimed that it is a general ability. Similarly, some psychologists have disputed that intelligence is inherited or genetic, while others have claimed that it is mostly affected by the surrounding environment (Ruhl, 2020). There are many different definitions and theories of intelligence, which explain it in several ways such as problem-solving, decision-making, abstract reasoning, mental representation, emotional knowledge, creativity, ability to learn, and adjustment to the surroundings. Professor Robert Sternberg, a psychologist and psychometrician, described intelligence as 'the mental abilities necessary for adaptation to, as well as shaping and selection of, any environmental context' (1997, p. 1036).

2.2 What is Emotion?

Emotions greatly affect human behaviour, and powerful emotions can make one take uncharacteristic actions or evade the circumstances. Psychologists and philosophers have long argued the essence of emotions such as anger and happiness. Advancements in neuroscience have proposed that brains generate emotions through a compound of bodily perception and cognitive appraisal (Thagard, 2010). Emotions are generated subconsciously and describe physiological conditions; typically, they are autonomous bodily responses to specific internal or external situations (iMotions, 2015).

2.3 Emotional Contagion

Emotional contagion (EC) is the capacity to indirectly or directly control the behaviours and emotions of other people. The word 'contagion' in EC is derived from the intentional and unintentional actions of revealing our emotions to others through physical or oral expression. EC is used as a strategy in relationships and work environments as the brain adapts and helps people read others' emotions to show how relevant the responses should be. Therefore, neurologists have found EC to be a valuable tool (Morris, 2017). According to Clara Morris, certain people are more sensitive to EC than others, while some personalities and moods are more susceptible to being 'contagious' than others. Gerald Schoenewolf, a psychoanalyst and author of 13 books on psychoanalysis and psychotherapy, defines EC as 'a process in which a person or group influences the emotions or behaviour of another person or group through the conscious or unconscious induction of emotion states and behavioural attitudes' (1990, p. 50). Since EC can affect feelings and thoughts, a change in one's mood can also be an outcome of EC.

2.4 EI and Its Relevance for the Tourism and Hospitality Industry

According to previous research (Goleman, 1996), 60% of achievements in different industries may be credited to EI, and 90% of people demonstrating outstanding performance and success seem to have a comparatively higher level of EI (Bradberry and Greaves, 2009). Among senior executives, EI is believed to be one of the 10 best abilities for successful businesses and a vital skill for the future (World Economic Forum, 2015). The World Economic Forum's (2015) report recognises critical thinking, communication, problem-solving and collaboration, and personality qualities such as cultural and social awareness, curiosity, adaptability, and an understanding of others as the key skills of the twenty-first century. These are congruent with the skills and abilities of EI. Various studies indicate that the above soft skills are and will continue to be more vital than practical skills (Rojas, 2014; Nikhil and Arthi, 2018). Moreover, it is believed that occupations needing soft skills will less likely be influenced by artificial intelligence and automation in the future (Aydin at al., 2017; Nokelainen et al., 2018).

A research by Kolbjørnsrud et al. (2017) has revealed that people working in sales having high levels of EI are most likely to be capable of meeting their sales goals than those with lower levels of EI. Furthermore, employees who have high levels of EI demonstrate a tendency to operate with burnout and stressful situations at work significantly better than employees with low EI levels (Wiens, 2016). In addition, employees and managers with developed levels of EI and working in the tourism and hospitality industry are more likely to better satisfy and serve their customers as well as enjoy better working relationships with their fellow managers and employees.

According to Barlow and Maul (2000), high levels of EI in tourism and hospitality service settings bestow a superior degree of employee and customer job satisfaction. Research on gender and interpersonal skills has demonstrated that generally, females are more likely to possess a higher level of EI (Danguah, 2014), and they tend to have superior skills when it comes to service characteristics such as

assurance, dependability, compassion, physical evidence, and alertness. For example, a study by Noller and Fitzpatrick (1990) shows that females are better at interpreting peoples' emotional acts and engaging with negative actions within their surroundings. Since females are also more tolerant and diligent (Meyers-Levy and Loken, 2015), they might be more reliable in service environments (Koc, 2017). According to Rehnman and Herlitz (2007), females remember the looks of individuals and recall facial identity better than males. Such information is vital since clients enjoy being identified by service staff, and unhappy customers may result in highly bad consequences for hospitality organisations (Koc 2017). Instant discontent may result in evident or not-so-evident consequences. An evident dissatisfaction may be represented by a customer lodging a complaint, whereas a non-evident consequence may be the alienation of prospective guests due to negative verbal feedback by unhappy clients. According to Brown and Reingen (1987), happy customers may share their satisfaction on average with only four or five individuals; conversely, unhappy customers may share their discontent with an average of 10 individuals. Such a finding indicates that an unhappy customer may cause damage to the hospitality industry and offset the advantages gained from a happy customer. Furthermore, on average, 96% of all unhappy customers switch to different providers after making a complaint. The mentioned studies pinpoint the necessity for more thorough and methodical EI training and education of potential hospitality and tourism employees.

In a more generic work context, a different study by Slaski and Cartwright (2003) aimed to determine if EI could be developed in managers and, provided this was true, whether improved EI had a positive effect on performance, wellbeing, and health. The study consisted of 120 managers in UK who were included either into the control or the training group. Managers in the training group attended an EI development course for four weeks, while the control group underwent no training. After their analyses, it was found the training group's EQ-i scores had increased substantially, while the control group EQ-i scores had declined slightly. Additionally, the morale, quality of life scores, and distress increased. On the other hand, the training group experienced lower stressed level, increased quality of life, and morale at significant levels.

2.5 Improving Emotional Intelligence

Unlike the intelligence quotient (IQ), EI can be improved and developed. Studies have demonstrated that EI improves as we get older (Goleman, 1998; Bal et al., 2011). The reasoning behind this is because people can enhance their cognitive abilities by identifying and adapting theirs and others' emotional reactions according to their life practices and experiences (Mayer and Salovey, 1997). Another way to develop EI is by exercising and being more nurturing and sociable with the people one encounters. In conjunction with personal life lessons, educational training aimed at improving one's own insights may also enhance their EI development (Goleman, 1998). According to Siegel (2007), EI may be enhanced through established and coherent methods to construct social awareness and abilities, social skills, self-management, and mindfulness education. Hospitality employees, in particular, may enhance their EI by enquiring, observing themselves objectively, detecting and demonstrating accountability for their own feelings, being attentive to their own behaviour, having a positive mindset, and learning about what inspires them to better their EI skills (Hasson, 2017).

2.6 Improving Emotional Intelligence in Hospitality Organisations

Studies show that a person's brain is more likely to execute emotional processing as opposed to logical processing (Baker et al., 2006). According to Blakeslee and Hawkins (2005), there are about one-tenth less signals coming from the brain's prefrontal cortex (the logical component) in comparison with its limbic system (the emotional component). This suggests that individuals, including customers and staff working in the hospitality industry, mostly undergo emotional rather than logical processing (Baker et al., 2006). The basic principle of social functioning is the capability of a hospitality service staff member to apprehend and recognise customers' – as well as work colleagues' – feelings and emotions or internal state from external signs such as body language and facial expressions (Marsh et al., 2005). Such a principle is closely related to the concept of emotional labour.

2.7 Emotional Labour

As found in the Oxford Reference dictionary online, emotional labour describes the process by a service employee is required to perform verbal and non-verbal emotions aiming to induce specific responses and feelings in the person(s) to which the service is rendered. For example, hospitality waiting staff must perform emotional labour by displaying positive emotions, effective listening, smiling, and being responsive to customers and coworkers. Employees regulate and manage their emotions while interacting with other people, including their executive staff (Koc, 2013). In accordance with Hochschild (2012), emotional labour also leads a person to suppress their natural feelings, which may be inappropriate in a particular circumstance, and express appropriate feelings instead.

Feel (2019) argues that even if done with good intentions, suppressing one's emotions is mere pretence as it may have various negative impacts; for instance, it may lead to experiencing less significant connections and social support and to a low satisfaction level in everyday life. Suppressing feelings for a considerable amount of time may result in physical symptoms such as poor memory and high blood pressure. Such suppression may affect a person's social circle, especially those closest to them; for instance, if one's colleagues know that a particular event will make them displeased or angry, but this person hides their true feelings and fakes laughs or smiles, these actions may spike their colleagues' stress response level.

Deep acting and surface acting are two types of emotional acting. Deep acting requires service staff to make an effort to feel and change their behaviour and express the emotions required by the context. By contrast, when hospitality staff surface act, they change their outward behaviour by mimicking false emotions such as their intonation, gestures, and physiognomy. One's internal feelings stay the same, but the external representations are modified (Hochschild, 2012). Studies have shown that surface acting, in contrast with deep acting, is dangerous for the wellbeing of employees since it commonly results in adverse consequences, namely burnout and excessive stress (Koc and Bozkurt, 2017). Studies show that EI can

contribute to coping with negative feelings such as burnout and stress. When service employees employ deep acting and service acting, EI can help eradicate the adverse effects of emotional labour (Chu et al., 2012).

2.8 Assessing Emotional Intelligence in the Hospitality Industry

The Forbes Coaches Council (2018) ranked the EQ-i 2.0 assessment instrument as the second most recommended assessment for executives to take to become more successful leaders. They recommend it for the insights it provides and for its help in focusing more on certain areas of oneself, enhancing one's skills as well as making one stand out. According to *Forbes*,

> *Emotional intelligence is a key indicator of leadership performance. And when leaders lead well, organisations do well. The EQ-i 2.0 is a valid and reliable tool that measures the way you perceive and express yourself, develop and maintain social relationships and cope with challenges. The clear measurements and guiding competencies make this tool a must-have in my executive coaching engagements.*

2.9 Overview of Emotional Intelligence Studies and Influential Models

EI studies originally appeared in educational articles in the early 1990s. After only a few years, the EI concept gained interest and became a popular notion, attracting various researchers nationwide, and consequential claims proposed its significance for predicting success. According to the Encyclopedia of Applied Psychology (Spielberger, 2004), there are three influential EI models; the Mayer and Salovey model, the Bar-On model, and the Goleman model.

According to Mayer and Salovey, EI is a form of pure intellect and is described as the capability to identify, understand, control, and practise emotions to support the thinking process. In more practical terms, it is being conscious that emotions can

drive our behaviour and influence people both negatively and positively and learning how to manage one's own and others' emotions, especially when feeling stressed or under pressure (Mayer & Salovey, 1997).

Reuven Bar-On, an Israeli psychologist, theorist, leading pioneer, and researcher in EI, has developed the Bar-On model – an interrelated emotional, social, behaviour, and abilities model that affects intelligent behaviour competencies. Therefore, the Bar-On model stresses how personality and cognitive factors influence overall wellbeing (Bar-On, 2006). Reuven Bar-On also created the EQ-i assessment tool (1997), which was then revised and updated by MHS and named EQ-i 2.0 (2011).

Finally, Daniel Goleman describes EI as a combination of several skills and abilities that promote effective managerial performance. Nowadays, the work rules are changing; employees are not only being judged by their expertise, their intelligence, or their training but also by their ability to manage each other. This change often occurs when employees get hired or retained, terminated, or promoted.

Academic abilities are becoming foreign to this standard, and the right level of technical know-how and intellectual skills to do the job are merely enough in this day and age. Personal qualities such as adaptability, empathy, persuasiveness, and initiative are gaining more focus and attention as they identify star performers and display which abilities contribute to excellence in the workplace, particularly in leadership. What keeps people employed in a time where job security is not guaranteed are these top personal qualities. Terms such as 'personality', 'character', 'competence', and 'soft skills' have been discussed for decades; today, however, there is a more precise understanding of these top human qualities, which is conveyed by the concept of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 2011).

2.10 A Person High in Emotional Intelligence

According to Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso (2009), an individual who is high in EI is someone who can use emotions when thinking, perceive them better, understand their meaning, and manage them more efficiently than other individuals. For high EI people, solving emotional issues may require less cognitive work. They might also be better in social, verbal, and other types of intelligence, especially if they have higher EI in recognising emotions. These persons are more likely to be more agreeable and open than others. An individual high in EI is enticed to professions that involve social interactions, such as counselling and teaching, rather than occupations that involve administrative and clerical work. Moreover, a high EI person is less likely to engage in self-destructive, problematic behaviours and more likely to avoid harmful behaviours such as drug abuse, smoking, excessive drinking, and violence. A highly emotional intelligent individual is also more prone to possess sentimental belongings around their home and positive social connections while being more proficient at expressing motivational aims, missions, and goals (2009).

2.11 Recognising People with High Emotional Intelligence Level

Murphy (2016) created a list on *Forbes* showing five ways to recognise people with a high level of EI. These personal characteristics are not difficult to evaluate in regular circumstances.

1. People with high EI tackle criticism without fault, consternation, disavowal, and condonement. Self-awareness is one of the top signs of high EI in an individual; it is a profound comprehension of what really matters to us and what fulfil us, infuriates us, and interests and bores us. Additionally, it implies that we can evaluate ourselves and our issues with clarity and extraordinary genuineness. Thus, when individuals with high EI commit an error and get censured for it, they do not have an emotional breakdown but

essentially consider the circumstances as a reality to be noted, dismantled, and rectified.

2. They have a progressive and liberal mindset. An undeniable degree of self-awareness lets EI individuals tune in to a circumstance without responding to judgement. They do not reject thoughts only because they do not align with theirs, and this makes them sought-after individuals in case of inconveniences, issues, and challenges or when in need of someone thoughtful. They are not seen chattering the entire day or exhibiting negative behaviours, yet they can immediately support others to make things right.

3. They have exceptional listening skills. Excellent listening demands a composed listening structure that isolates current realities from explanations and responses. EI individuals can recognise the feelings that stop them from being able to listen. They have managed to nourish their capacity to separate themselves from those feelings so that they can remain open to understanding what is being said.

4. They are sincere and do not try to make something seem better or more positive than it is. EI requires perceiving others' feelings; however, self-awareness does not imply evading truths or employing stunts to mellow the intense input blow. Individuals with EI realise how significant it is for reality and truth to be heard, but they do not disclose truth that might end the discussion, showing no empathy.

5. They admit it when they are wrong and apologise for it. Individuals with high EI do not waste valuable time trying to sugar-coat or twist realities by attempting to demonstrate that they are correct when they know they are not. They quickly apologise, which allows them to rapidly refocus (Murphy, 2016).

Every person with high EI can react to criticism in their own way. Certain individuals are more empathetic and may wonder for what reason an individual has criticised them; they also try to comprehend how this critical expression might affect their functioning relationship. Other people handle criticism by hoping to root-cause an item's deformity, deliberately taking apart every progression that paves the way to what they have been reprimanded for, in a way similar to that of a process engineer. Their initial thinking would be to know and fix precisely what went wrong. Examples of denial, such as saying, 'My presentation was perfectly fine' when it was not or 'Those rules don't concern and apply to me', show that these people are so guarded and their personalities so delicate that they are not prepared for constructive criticism. What they are essentially stating is 'There is no issue; the presentation was great. If you did not enjoy it, you have an issue with your judgement, not with my presentation'. Other people may place blame on others, which is the implicit affirmation that constructive criticism is justified (i.e. the results were inferior) combined with a reluctance to concede any own fault (Murphy, 2016).

2.12 Emotional Intelligence in Organisations

Ciarrochi and Rosete's (2005) conclusions indicate that executives with higher EI are more apt to accomplish corporate results and to be considered influential leaders by their direct managers and subordinates. Their regression analysis showed that the ability to understand emotions could be a predictor of effective leadership. Such a resultcould have significant implications on how organisations manage, choose, and develop managers. According to Khosravi et al., (2011), in the contemporary workplace, the managers and staff's productivity and effectiveness will increase dramatically. Successful leaders in organisations may adopt every instrument and method to develop an effective and productive environment amongst staff, thus building warm relationships between them. Lately, EI has become a requirement for managers to encourage employees to create a workplace atmosphere conducive to attaining the business goals. In addition, EI plays a crucial role, contributing to an effective delegation in companies. Hence, EI dynamics and competencies are

deemed critical measures for placing employees in key positions to keep stimulation and motivation high (Khosravi et al., 2011).

EI sets strong managers apart and leads them to excel to improve profits and productivity in organisations. The difference between managers and leaders is determined by their EI and IQ levels. Managers only manage obligations and tasks, while leaders produce a pathway for companies and staff. It is the individuals' EI ability which defines whether the individual is a follower or a leader. It is the EI differences between two individuals that differentiate ability and quality. Managers only concentrate on structures and systems, however leaders concentrate on individuals since they trust in the effect of people's communication and power (Khosravi et al., 2011).

According to Ugoani (2016), recent company theory considers EI as the index of competencies that support a company in building its competitive vision, allowing organisational leaders to devote to it enthusiastically and strengthening executive representatives who may fulfil this vision. To amplify competitiveness, businesses use models to clarify and simplify thought, detect essential facets, recommend solutions and forecast outcomes, and investigate other performance areas that would otherwise be hidden. Ugoani's (2016) research has thus discovered that EI has a strong positive relationship with organisational competitiveness; studies conducted worldwide have found that its function in achieving organisational effectiveness is essential. The research has also suggested that aspects of EI align well with the organisation's goals and ultimately lead to job satisfaction (Srivastava, 2013).

2.13 Emotional Intelligence and Job Satisfaction

It has been acknowledged that employees with high EI experience superior job satisfaction because they can develop approaches to overcome the potential consequences which may result from stressful events. Conversely, employees with low EI may struggle to overcome stressful circumstances. Moreover, employees with

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high EI in groups can impact the emotions of other people around them in such a way that they can boost their own and their colleagues' morale. Further, emotional intelligence studies have also shown that EI leads to better mental health, organisational success, better results in workgroups, and leadership qualities (Ealias and George, 2012). Therefore, EI appears to affect job performance.

2.14 Emotional Intelligence and Job Performance

According to Rotundo and Rotman (2002), job performance describes the behaviours and actions of employees that contribute to the company's goals achievement. It is an essential dependent variable of value to the government, educators, society, and businesses alike. Jankingthong and Rurkkhum (2012) argue that employees' job performance plays an essential role in the expansion and progress of a company as it adds positively to the overall company's accomplishments and effectiveness. HR employees constantly work on understanding and implementing the best way to increase employee performance. To do so, they work on building skills, enhancing positive attitudes, increasing employee satisfaction, introducing incentives, motivating employees, and expanding their level of responsibility on the job (Tseng & Huang, 2011).

2.15 Emotional Intelligence and Employee Retention

EI can be used to radically increase employee retention and assist the organisation in building deeper working relationships, creating a place where employees feel genuinely appreciated and recognised, and better envisaging job performance. Talent Smart, which is the number one world premier provider of emotional intelligence training, assessments, and consulting, conducted a survey of over 33 essential workplace abilities and resulted that EI is the most powerful analyst of performance (About Emotional Intelligence - TalentSmart, 2019).

2.16 Emotional Intelligence Classifications and Assessment Tools

EI assessment tools and theories may be grouped under the performance-based model (also recognised as the ability model) and the trait model (also known as the mixed models or self-report inventory; Brackett et al., 2006). The trait EI model by K.V. Petrides (2010) is described as 'a constellation of emotional self-perceptions located at the lower levels of personality hierarchies'.

2.17 The Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i 2.0) Assessment Tool

The Emotional Quotient Inventory[1] (EQ-i 2.0) is a world-renowned EI tool that applies many years of studies to help successful human performance and advancement. It is one of the most recognised and respected EI assessment tools globally, and it offers an intuitive and vigorous framework to tackle matters associated to leadership.

The EQ-i 2.0 is self-rating, online appraisal measure with the choice of including a multi-rater EQ 360 (EITC, n.d.), and it has been used in various studies (Papanagnou et al., 2017; Shahid, Stirling and Adams, 2018; Dolev, Goldental, Reuven-Lelong and Tadmor, 2019; Gribble, Ladyshewsky and Parsons, 2019). This assessment, developed on a trait model of EI, is intended to characterise skills and traits that help persons adjust to social and emotional functioning. It measures five main composite skills, and each of these composites consists of three building blocks. The five main composites are self-perception, self-expression, interpersonal, decision-making, and stress management. The 15 sub-composites are the following: self-actualisation, self-regard, emotional self-awareness, assertiveness, emotional expression, independence, empathy, interpersonal relationships, social responsibility, reality testing, problem-solving, impulse control, stress tolerance, flexibility, and optimism. Figure 1 below shows the EQ-i 2.0 model used comprising the main composites and building blocks,

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[1] The EQ-i 2.0 assessment tool is a revised and updated version by MHS.com of Reuven Bar-On's original EQ-i assessment to measure EI.

which together form healthy emotional and social functioning. All these skills are intertwined, and no composite of EI exists in isolation. All EI skills are valuable and may be used skillfully to better one's chances of accomplishment and success (Stein and Book, 2011).
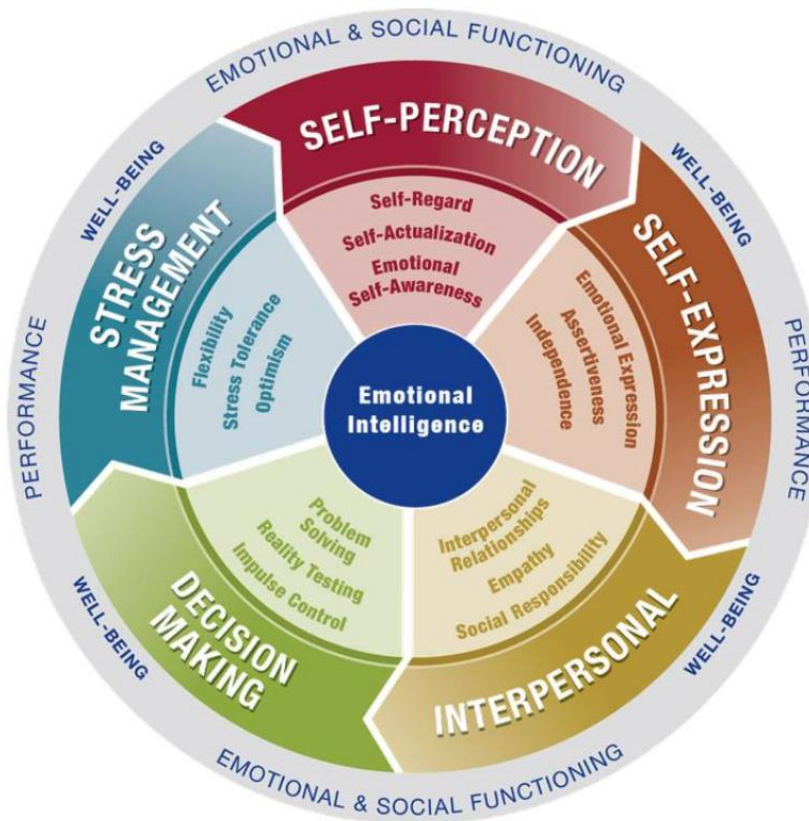
Figure 1 The EQ-i 2.0 EI model (2011) based on Reuven Bar-On's EQ-i model (1997)

(Source: MHS.com)

2.18 The Five Main Composites as Best Described by the CEO of MHS and Inventor of EQ-i 2.0

1. Self-perception: This area of EI involves the inner self. It consists of one's relationship with oneself, one's awareness of their own feelings and how they are living their life. Having a healthy level of self-perception results in being fully mindful of one's own emotions, feeling confident and strong in achieving one's life dreams.

2. Self-expression: This notion includes expressing oneself both verbally and nonverbally openly. While interacting with others, one constantly communicates emotionally, and this is done through the volume and tone of one's voice, their facial expressions, their words, and their body language. Having a healthy level of self-expression means being in harmony and open when expressing oneself emotionally with themselves and others.

3. Interpersonal: This part of EI is commonly known as people skills. People with a healthy level of this skill are reliable and responsible individuals. In different circumstances, they show high understanding and relate and interact particularly well with others. In a team, they instill trust and perform admirably.

4. Decision-making: Having a high level of this skill is having the capability to solve issues and dealing with them desirably and satisfactorily by using one's feelings. Having a high level of decision-making skill means being able to propose optimal solutions, deal with situations efficiently, and control one's impulses to more effectively make decisions.

5. Stress management: This skill is about being able to tolerate stress, being flexible, and being positive. Having a healthy level of stress management means that one can remain focused, calm, and flexible. When one realises the need to change decisions instead of maintaining a sense of rigidity, one may maintain positivity and strongly endure situations and opposing emotions without breaking down. Stress management is essential both at the workplace and at home and is without a doubt a crucial skill to have in any organisation (Stein and Book, 2011).

According to the Human Capital Institute (2013), EI assessments are highly efficient, simple, and inexpensive to improve leadership development in any organisation. As reported by more than half of the organisations that use EI assessments, these tools are successful or highly successful; furthermore, their use supports revenue growth rates. It has been reported that companies utilising EI assessments have a higher probability (16% chance) to report an increase in their revenue growth.

2.19 Emotional Intelligence and Leadership Efficacy

The intricacy of business conditions expects organisations to employ pioneers with solid organisational abilities, who have high EI and leadership effectiveness. EI is a pivotal point that highlights the contrast between profoundly effective managers and individuals who are less fruitful. As EI develops, managers become leaders, acquiring relational abilities and evolving as smarter people. This empowers them to recruit more useful employees, foster the abilities of the workers, increment sales, and reduce employee-related expenses. EI is imperative to different areas of business: recruitment, development of elite groups, professional improvement, sales increase, and labour force planning choices (Viriyavidhayavongs and Jiamsuchon, 2001).

According to Viriyavidhayavongs and Jiamsuchon (2001), the significant degree of mindfulness related to EI empowers leaders to show fearlessness and gaining regard and trust from devotees. Through self-guidelines, they can think about the necessities of others regardless of their own sentiments. Pioneers maintaining balance and keeping themselves inspired, optimistic, and cheerful are positive examples to help drive and motivate others. The capacity to feel for other people and to oversee relational connections additionally adds to spur and influence their employees. EI empowers leaders to perceive followers with sentiments, ideas, and thoughts and regard them as people with remarkable necessities and capacities. Empathic leaders utilise their social abilities to assist their teams in developing and creating, improving their mental self-views and self-worth, and assisting them with addressing their necessities and accomplishing their objectives.

Therefore, EI and its different components – social skills, self-regulation, self-awareness, empathy, and self-motivation – are essentially correlated with leadership effectiveness, of which management personnel and those in higher positions have more elevated levels. The achievement of corporate objectives may be improved by strengthening EI in management (Viriyavidhayavongs and Jiamsuchon, 2001).

It is thus suggested that businesses employ staff with high EI and look for approaches to increase the EI level of employed management personnel. Since this enhancement can be achieved, it is recommended that organisations invest in projects to improve the EI of their management teams; this will empower them and their team to operate in further innovative and satisfying approaches (Viriyavidhayavongs and Jiamsuchon, 2001).

2.20 Emotions and Leadership Skills

According to Feel (2019), what distinguishes a prominent supervisor, manager, or executive is the ability to accurately manage, understand, and control their emotions. Being able to receive and give critical feedback while under pressure due to workload and deadlines, and managing challenging colleagues are two of the circumstances that require leaders to rely on their EI. Other behaviours of influential and great leaders who display EI are practising forgiveness, inspiring their workforce, and empathising with them. The aim of enhancing one's EI is to help the individual realise and react consciously to their feelings and the emotions of others rather than suppress them.

2.21 Emotional Intelligence Coaching in Hospitality

Scott-Halsell et al. (2008) argue that in the work environment, cooperation, joint effort, and exceptional relational correspondence are attributes of effective leaders. Groundbreaking leaders fruitfully utilise these emotional leadership abilities through their EI – a solid connection that has been highlighted by past research. In the context of hospitality, it is thus vital that organisations incorporate some degree of EI guidance into training and coaching programmes to competently develop prospective hospitality leaders. In light of earlier research discoveries (Scott-Halsell, Shumate and Blum, 2008), this guidance ought to incorporate substantially more than a couple of hours of coaching and training. The researchers also suggest weekly staff meetings

or even incorporating mentorship training with senior and/or executive employees that rank high on EI assessments and have experienced in-depth EI coaching.

2.22 Developing Leadership through EI in Organisations

Research has found that employee behaviour is impacted by an organisation's leaders. Figure 1 demonstrates an interrelation of organisational factors, with each of these factors influencing EI. According to Srivastava (2013), the HR roles of hiring new employees, management performance, and training development have a solid effect on leadership. Moreover, people in leading roles in an organisation directly impact the degree to which HR roles can assist with expanding the EI of individuals in an organisation. A person with high EI benefits from it with regard to recognising skills, assigning jobs and settling disputes amicably. Srivastava's research paper, along with other studies worldwide, concluded that EI is highly significant in achieving organisational effectiveness. It also indicated that aspects of EI promote the achievement of the company's goals and also, eventually, job satisfaction.

Figure 2: A model of EI and organisational effectiveness* (OE).
Figure cited and adapted from Srivastava, 2013

Scott-Halsell et al. (2008) argue that 'One of the primary duties of hospitality managers is to lead in such a way that both their internal and external customers can find satisfaction'. To guarantee excellent service and product quality, mindful leadership is important. Several analyses and opinions deal with the requirement for viable leadership to push businesses ahead. Although numerous elucidate what should be done or how, hardly any cover the underlying characteristics that a person should have to be an effective leader.

A study by Kerr et al. (2006) involved an EI assessment tool to determine the leadership effectiveness of 38 supervisors through their subordinates. It resulted in an endorsement of incorporating emotional intelligence in selection and recruiting processes and in the development and training processing of managerial staff. The data analysis revealed that a person's EI may be a significant contributing factor of effective leadership. The subordinates' perception of their leaders' effectiveness was highly related to the leaders' EI level.

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According to Goleman (1995), for managers to be successful, they must be aware of their limitations, weaknesses, and strengths. In addition, they must be conscientious, adaptable, cooperative, convincing, high-performing, and empathetic, and they must be able to see situations from the point of view of another. People with a high level of EI are great communicators and can self-express their visions and enthusiasm successfully, which are qualities of successful and effective leaders. In a study by Dulewicz et al. (2003), it was discovered that EI represents 30% of the variation in management performance. In the same study, it was also found that the job performance of managers in the service industry is significantly related to self-awareness.

2.22.1 Self-Awareness

The book *Primal Leadership: The Hidden Driver of Great Performance* by leading EI researchers Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee (2001, p. 49) describes that the most effective leaders convey resonance, which is a mix of displaying behaviours and moods matching the particular situation at hand with a proper amount of optimism. It illustrates that this behaviour comprises four components of EI, first mentioning self-awareness and explaining it as follows:

> *Self-awareness, perhaps the most essential of the emotional intelligence competency's, is the ability to read your own emotions. It allows people to know their strengths and limitations and feel confident about their self-worth. Resonant leaders use self-awareness to gauge their own moods accurately, and they intuitively know how they're affecting others.*

They mention that even though resonant leadership is highly effective, it is also that much rare. Self-awareness has often been recognised by pioneer EI analysts as a vital component of EI (Goleman, 1995; Mayer and Salovey, 1997). As mentioned by Foster et al. (2007), self-awareness is an important factor of transformational self-development.

A research by Gill et al. (2015) studied the viewpoints of successful EI coaches. Gaining insights from 21 EI trainers from New Zealand and their EI training programmes, they analysed a process that is vital to effective EI training and that is the development of a learner's self-awareness. The challenging process for managers and coaches to help staff develop self-awareness is fraught since they must make employees learn about something that is intangible and that they cannot 'see' or that is unknown to them. These research findings indicate that self-awareness is the primary key for learners to make a mindful choice of development. All EI trainers that were interviewed mentioned self-awareness as the crucial element of EI development.

2.23 Management teams with High EI level in an organisation

In the online article 'Why Emotional Intelligence in a Manager is so Important', Susan Reich (2018) addresses the importance of having candidates' EI level assessed. Some advantages of recruiting managers with high EI include positive changes in production works and engagement between employees and an improvement in staff relations since empathy and communication between leaders and staff are enhanced. In this scenario, the management would know how to better control their own emotions, ultimately leading to an improved work relation and work culture and allowing employees to successfully achieve common goals. Reich also mentions that women tend to be exceptionally mindful of their inadequacies and regularly attempt to control and address them. Many women also convey sympathy effectively, and these are only two of the reasons why organisations need men as well as women inside their supervisory groups.

In an online article on *Entrepreneur*, Jeff Mazur (2021) wrote that as claimed in the World Economic Forum's 2020 report, a minimum of 54% of staff needs to enrich their abilities to meet the transforming work requisites by 2022. Introducing a reskilling scheme for any business presents difficulties since it is time-consuming and may introduce challenges, but it also has several benefits. When a company invests in reskilling its staff, it improves retention as the employees feel invested in

the business and are given a chance to improve or learn new skills, which may even lead them to higher roles. Mazur (2021) suggests that a business should work on creating a philosophy of continuous upskilling and constant coaching.

CHAPTER 3: Research Methodology

3.1 Overview

The perception that EI and EI coaching in development programmes is lacking in the hospitality industry generates curiosity as to why such a worldwide phenomenon with so many positive related implications around the use of EI is not being acknowledged and implemented in our organisations. Furthermore, there is a lack of information on the implications of EI in hotels and hospitality management. Even though managers are constantly being trained to improve their skills and expertise in the industry, the researcher aimed to determine whether EI training is offered and/or provided and if so, in what manner.

This research sought to determine and recognise the level of awareness of and interest in EI within management teams operating in five-star hotels and to measure and assess their level of emotional intelligence. It involved administering the Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i 2.0) assessment tool to 22 respondent management employees within the five-star segment of hospitality. Of this sample, 11 employees were interviewed individually to gather in-depth information about their awareness of and interest in EI at their workplace.

3.2 Research Sample

Since the researcher has an interest in the level of knowledge and awareness of EI in the five-star segment of the hospitality industry, the target audience chosen for this research comprised management personnel. The focus was on a single-star group of hotels in which the external environment, the standards of operation, and the type of customers being served have strong similarities between the selected hotels.

From a list containing received by a Malta Tourism Authority (MTA) official, the researcher contacted 14 five-star hotels in Malta and Gozo in 2020 to participate. Seven hotels accepted and participated in the study; of these, 27 management personnel agreed to participate in the research, and 22 were administered the online EI questionnaire. The researcher conducted 11 one-to-one interviews, and 10 interviewees were administered the EQ-i 2.0 online questionnaire. The 11 interviewees worked at six different hotels and were men and women in the positions of managers and general managers. The different management roles for the interviews consisted of General Managers (GMs), Human Resources (HR) Director and Managers, Learning and Development Manager, Head of Sales and Senior Sales Managers, Front Office Manager, Rooms Division Manager and Operations Manager. For the questionnaires, the roles were the above-mentioned ones as well as Area General Manager, Quality Assurance Manager, Food and Beverage Operations Manager, Director of Rooms, Security/H&S Manager, Director of Sales and Marketing, Revenue Manager, and Events Manager.

The total number of managers working in the five-star hotel segment could not be determined since these data were not available when requesting them from MTA and Jobsplus. Due to the current COVID-19 pandemic, interviewing and surveying hotel employees was not feasible as many had lost their jobs or were working remotely or on reduced hours. For these reasons, only management teams from five-star hotels were selected as research sample.

3.3 Mixed Methodology

As stated by Buckley and Chiang, 'a research methodology is a strategy or architectural design by which the researcher maps out an approach to problem-finding or problem-solving' (1976, pp. 87-88).

To investigate the problem statement, the researcher used a mixed methodology approach of quantitative and qualitative research by administering questionnaires and

conducting interviews. While quantitative data typically involve closed-ended responses, such as those found in psychological instruments and questionnaires, qualitative data usually include open-ended information. The idea of applying mixed methods resides in the fact that both methods have weaknesses and prejudices; thus, their combination counterbalances the defects of each form of data collection. A way of seeking confluence across quantitative and qualitative methods is the triangulation of data (Jick, 1979; Creswell, 2014). As suggested by Malina et al. (2011), a mixed methodology gives the best prospect for addressing research objectives. According to Creswell (2014), many journals, such as *Quality and Quantity*, *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, *International Journal of Multiple Research Approaches* and *Field Methods*, recommend mixed methodology research. Other journals also effectively encourage this type of method, such as the *Qualitative Health Research* and the *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*. As Dr. Greener (2008, p.80) wrote in her book, '*[Also], we should bear in mind that mixed quantitative and qualitative methods can usefully be used, where elements of both approaches can be used both to triangulate results and to develop richer pictures still on the phenomenon under investigation.*'

As suggested in a mixed methods study by Akhmetova, Kim, and Harnisch (2014, p.519) on EI and teaching competencies, '*The combination of quantitative data (Emotional Intelligence and Teaching Competencies measurements) and qualitative data (Emotional Intelligence and Teaching Competencies qualities, descriptions) provide a better understanding of a research question.*'

3.3.1 Quantitative Research

Quantitative research is a well-established empirical method. One of the main components that define quantitative research is that it involves mostly numerical data when contrasted with qualitative research. The goal of quantitative analysis is to make use of established theories, generate hypothesis, and employ mathematical models that are relevant to address the problem at hand. According to SIS International Research (2015), because the quantitative method is measured

mathematically and examined objectively, nearly all researchers obtain equivalent results and investigate them in a similar manner.

Since EI is comprises several abilities or skills, it can be measured (Psychology Department - University of Toronto, 2016). A quantitative method was used for this study to gather numerical data through the online EI questionnaire to measure and determine the level of EI among management personnel in five-star hotels. With the use of the EI online assessment, the researcher determined various information such as the highest, the lowest, and the mean score of each EI composite and sub-composite. Furthermore, EI composite/s and/or sub-composite/s that were commonly high or low among management employees and any particular distinctions between male and female participants were also recorded.

3.3.2 Qualitative Research

The qualitative research methodology is deemed fitting when the researcher either examines a new area of research or aims to determine and hypothesise leading issues (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). It relies on image and text data and includes specific steps in data analysis. The most common types of qualitative research methods are observation and interviews; nevertheless, many other methods are used to gain an extensive and in-depth understanding of a study's subjects (Creswell, 2014).

Because the current research also sought to determine and understand the level of awareness of and interest in EI and to assess whether hotel management develops EI skills and training in their organisation, a narrative data collection procedure was also considered pertinent.

According to Almeida, Faria and Queirós (2017, p.370),

Qualitative research is not concerned with numerical representativity, but with the deepening of understanding a given problem. In qualitative research, the researcher is both the subject and the object of his research. The objective of the qualitative methodology is to produce in-depth and illustrative information in order to understand the various dimensions of the problem under analysis.

3.3.3 Triangulation of Data

To confirm and enrich the data gathered from the study, the researcher used a triangulation of data. The questionnaire results determined, amongst others, the level of EI of each participant, while the interviews added more comprehensive data on the topic.

3.3.4 Open-ended One-to-one Interviews

For this research, interviews were conducted with the management personnel of the hotels that accepted to participate in the study. The in-depth interviews were designed and formulated with ad hoc questions (Almeida, Faria and Queirós, 2017); they were conducted to acquire more information on EI from the management personnel's awareness and level of interest and determine whether they developed EI skills in their hotels. GMs and HR managers were encouraged to participate in the semi-structured and open-ended interviews, so that the researcher could interact directly with the decision makers of the organisation and training programmes. Other management personnel were also invited to participate. From a total of 27 management personnel, 11 managers and GMs took part in the interviews and inadvertently also answered the online questionnaire.

3.3.5 Benefits of Face-to-face Interviews

There is no substantial time lag between question and answer in face-to-face interviews as the interviewee and interviewer will respond promptly to what the other person says or does. The advantage of this synchronous discussion is that the interviewee's reply is more immediate and does not require further thought. Because of the synchronous aspect of the medium, the interviewer must focus more on the questions to be answered and the responses offered. Collecting data using face-to-face interviews is favoured when the interviewees' social cues are essential data sources and the interviewer has sufficient time and budget for travelling or lives close to the interviewees (Opdenakker, 2006). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the participants were given the choice to have the interview conducted online or at the respective hotel. Nine of the participants opted for an online interview, while two chose to be interviewed face to face at the hotels in which they worked.

3.4 Data Collection

The HR and GMs of five-star hotels in Malta were contacted via email and/or telephone calls. Due to COVID-19 precaution measures, the researcher was limited in approaching management teams in person to ask for their participation.

An introductory and explanatory email/call was provided to the HR and GMs of different five-star hotels; it consisted of a brief introduction about the researcher and an explanation of the study and its objectives, research methods, and ethical considerations. Both HR managers and GMs were especially encouraged to participate in this study since they were responsible for many implementations of EI in an organisation and its employees. GMs are the executives of an organisation, who make the final decisions on how to run and manage the hotel and its employees – whether staff or managers – and on what type of training they opt for, while HR managers are concerned with but not limited to training and coaching, recruiting, and managing staff turnover.

As mentioned above, GMs and HR managers were encouraged to participate in the study through the introductory email the researcher sent. In the email, the researcher included that other managers were also encouraged to partake as they are responsible for managing and leading a team of employees, ultimately affecting their job satisfaction, job performance, staff retention, and the quality of their service to the guests. Furthermore, they are also in a leadership position that plays a vital role in the organisation's effectiveness and success.

The online questionnaire was conducted first. A unique link was sent to each participant via email. The answers were automatically sent to MHS, and scores – both raw and standardised – were generated and then purchased by the researcher from her EI profile. The data scores were used for quantitative results, while the EQ-i 2.0 composites and sub-composites were also used for qualitative data in MAXQDA as variables. MAXQDA, a renowned online software for qualitative and mixed methodology, was used to combine the current qualitative and quantitative research. After transcribing the interviews, the researcher set out to code them by using the EQ-i 2.0 composites as variables. The results from MAXQDA provided visual tools for both quantitative and qualitative results.

3.5 Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i 2.0) Model - Questionnaires

After researching a dependable and trustworthy company that would offer a reliable and valid EI assessment tool, the researcher chose to operate with MHS[2], which owns the EQ-i 2.0 assessment tool used for this research as pre-tested questionnaire to measure and determine the level of EI among the management personnel. The EQ-i 2.0 tool was ranked second out of the top 10 EI assessment for leaders and executives for effective leadership by Forbes Coaches Council (2018). This self-report measure is a 5-point Likert scale-based instrument with the response options being *Never/Rarely*, *Occasionally*, *Sometimes*, *Often* and *Always/Almost Always*. The

[2] Since 2017, MHS has been ranked among the 'Assessment and Evaluation Top 20' organisations by Training Industry.

target sample needed to choose an option for each of the 133 items to describe the frequency of their actions, feelings, or thoughts.

For the researcher to assess the EI of the sample, she needed to become a certified EI practitioner (see Appendix D). This required monetary charges applied by with an affiliated company of MHS who offered the course online, the completion of some pre-work, a two-day intensive course, and a pass in the examination. After successfully completing and being awarded a certificate as a qualified EQ-i 2.0 and EQ 360 practitioner, the researcher was then able to contact her sample individually with a unique link via email to conduct the assessment.

3.5.1   Normative Data of EQ-i 2.0 Tool

An extensive population of 4,000 US (90%) and Canadian (10%) residing adults was initially used for the EQ-i 2.0 and updated in 2014 with a normative sample of 10,000, comprising 154 countries (Talent, 2020). Norms were applied as a standard scale to convert the participants' raw scores to standard scores.

3.5.2   Validity and Reliability of EQ-i 2.0 Tool

As indicated by MHS[3] (2011), the EQ-i 2.0 model is a valid EI measure for each of its designated purposes: to be utilised as a measure of EI, to detect changes and improve EI, and to predict achievement. Participants were guaranteed that the EI assessment results accurately reflected their EI; as the tool measures what it is meant to measure, one can see actual change due to improvement planning. If someone wished to re-take the assessment, they were advised to wait at least three to six months between assessments to avoid respondents memorising their previous answers. Test-retest reliability implies that a participant can count on the assessment

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[3] For more than 30 years, Multi-Health Systems Inc. (MHS) has been a dominant publisher of scientifically validated assessments. It assists customers in corporate, clinical, pharmaceutical, educational, military, governmental, public safety, and research settings.

to provide identical results repeatedly, and internal consistency reliability shows that items from the same scale are all constant (Talent, 2020).

3.6 Data Analysis

Data analysis began with the online EI questionnaire. A personalised invitation email (see Appendix E) comprising a description of EI and of the assessment along with a unique link to the questionnaire was sent to 32 participants. Of these, 22 returned completed questionnaires, and 10 were later interviewed individually. The online questionnaire comprised 133 items and required about 10 to 30 minutes to complete (due to the permissions and licensing procedures of MHS, the questionnaire questions could not be included in the study. See https://mhs.com/permissions-translations-and-licensing/). The results were automatically sent to MHS and generated. The researcher then had access to the raw and standardised data and scores of each composite and sub-composite in an excel sheet of each participant.

These data provided the researcher with the level of EI among management teams working in the five-star hotel segment. Following the online questionnaire, one-to-one interviews were conducted online or at the respective hotel in which the interviewees worked depending on their choice. The interviews availed in determining and understanding EI awareness, interest, and organisational development skills in the management teams of five-star hotels.

Table 1 below shows the distribution of participants by hotel who were administered the online EI questionnaire and one-to-one interviews under pseudonyms.

Hotels Pseudonyms	Hotel and Participant Pseudonyms	Online EI Questionnaire Participants	One-to-one Interview Participants
A	A1	✓	
A	A2	✓	✧
A	A3		✧
B	B1	✓	✧
B	B2	✓	
B	B3	✓	
C	C1	✓	✧
C	C2	✓	
D	D1	✓	✧
D	D2	✓	✧
D	D3	✓	
E	E1	✓	
F	F1	✓	
F	F2	✓	✧
F	F3	✓	✧
F	F4	✓	
F	F5	✓	
F	F6	✓	
G	G1	✓	
G	G2	✓	
G	G3	✓	✧
G	G4	✓	✧
G	G5	✓	✧

Table 1 Distribution of participants by hotel who were administered the online questionnaire and one-to-one interviews.

The EI questionnaire data are what has been transferred from MHS, which owns the EI questionnaire; thus, the researcher had to rely on the scores provided by the company, applying the questionnaire but not the primary analysis.

Data from the interviews were analysed through MAXQDA. The software allowed to import the interview transcripts and to input the different codes as well as to highlight and mark the transcripts accordingly. The 20 EI model skills were inputted as main codes and sub-codes which provided data for one of the research objectives – to determine the interest in and awareness of EI. After analysing and coding the interview documents, MAXQDA provided various data visual tools.

3.7 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics are studies that review, describe, and present research data in ways that make them simpler to understand. They help us to understand and define aspects of a set of data through observations and summaries about the research sample that can further recognise patterns. The descriptions generally include pictures such as charts, graphs and quantitative data. Descriptive statistics are sometimes the only analyses performed in a study; however, they do not usually help to reach conclusions about hypotheses. Instead, they are used as preliminary data that may offer the foundation for future studies by establishing primary issues or recognising fundamental analyses in more complex research (Conner, 2017).

3.8 Ethical Considerations

This research was conducted under the rules and regulations by the Institute of Tourism Studies Academic Research and Publications Board. Consent forms were signed and obtained by each participant for questionnaires and interviews, and the names of the participants and hotels were kept confidential and anonymous. The participants were notified that they could withdraw from the questionnaire and/or

interview at any time they deemed necessary without the need for explanation. Pseudonyms were created to ensure anonymity and confidentiality for each participant and organisation. The results and recommendations of this study will be shared with the participants after finalising it.

CHAPTER 4: Research Findings

In this chapter the researcher presents the actual findings from the interviews and questionnaires described in the previous chapter. A discussion and interpretation of the results will be presented in the following chapter.

This research centres on determining the level of awareness of and interest in EI within managers working in five-star hotels. A total of 11 managers from six five-star hotels were interviewed individually over three weeks. The study also focused on determining these management teams' level of EI; hence, they were invited to answer an online EI questionnaire. Administering the questionnaires took the researcher about four weeks. The data findings will be presented using a mixed methodology approach.

The participants included managers from seven hotels and several hospitality departments. Chapter four illustrates the data and results from the 22 EI online questionnaires and the 11 one-to-one interviews. This chapter is organised as follows: (i) a description of the participants' interview answers; (ii) questionnaire results comprising the participants' EI standard scores; (iii) visualisation tools from MAXQDA using the five main EI competencies as codes during the interviews; (iv) a summary of the chapter.

4.1 One-to-one Interview Descriptions

A qualitative analysis to explain the content acquired during the open-ended, one-to-one interviews is provided below. A quantitative approach follows, illustrating the visualisation tools generated with MAXQDA to further analyse and support the data to determine the level of EI interest and awareness within management teams in five-star hotels.

Research questions:

1. To determine the level of awareness of and interest in EI among hotel management personnel.
2. To determine if hotel management personnel develop EI skills in their organisation.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics and Sample Characteristics

The 11 interviewees worked at six different five-star hotels in Malta, and the interview questions can be found in the Appendix section (see Appendix A). All but one interviewee participated in the EI online questionnaire. The female to male ratio of the interviewees was 6:5, and their age ranged between 26 and 71, with the age of one participant marked as 0 since it was not provided. To encourage the contributors' anonymity and not to define the participant by their job description, the participants were given pseudonyms by the researcher. Nine interviews took place online, while another two interviews were conducted at the participants' respective hotels. The interviews took between 30 minutes and one hour. Before each interview, the researcher gave a brief description and explanation of EI, which included a visual demonstration of the EQ-i 2.0 model (MHS) and a list of EI's benefits in the workplace (see Appendix F). The definition of EI provided to the interviewees used was that given by Stein (2017, p.38) as follows:

1. The ability to identify EI in oneself and in others.
2. The ability to manage emotional information in oneself and in others.
3. The ability to focus emotional energy on required behaviours to get things done.

Below is a table showing the study participants. Pseudonyms were applied for anonymity purposes.

Participant Pseudonym	Occupation Managerial Department	Gender	Interview Location	Interview Date
A2	Human Resources Manager	Female	Video Conference	13/04/2021
A3	Learning & Development Manager	Female	Video Conference	16/04/2021
B1	General Manager	Male	Video Conference	30/04/2021
C1	Rooms Division Manager	Male	Hotel	23/04/2021
D1	General Manager	Male	Video Conference	20/04/2021
D2	Human Resources Manager	Female	Video Conference	16/04/2021
F2	Human Resources Manager	Female	Video Conference	16/04/2021
F3	Front Office Manager	Male	Video Conference	20/04/2021
G3	Sales Manager	Female	Video Conference	13/04/2021
G4	Operations Manager	Female	Video Conference	05/05/2021
G5	Sales Manager	Male	Hotel	19/04/2021

Table 2 Study participants with pseudonyms

4.3 Qualitative Analysis - Interviews

Eleven one-to-one interviews were conducted with managers of five-star hotels to determine the level of interest in and awareness of EI and whether the hotel management developed EI skills in their organisation. The level of EI knowledge of the interviewees was unknown to the researcher; hence, before starting each interview, a brief visual explanation of the EQ-i 2.0 model was given to each interviewee in addition to a list of the EI benefits for an organisation. This explanation was also requested by the first interviewee; the researcher believes that it helped some of the interviewees answer the questions due to the perception of a lack of knowledge and awareness of EI. Interesting descriptions were provided by each of the 11 participants interviewed, and the researcher observed that they had a mixed level of awareness of EI. In particular, those who had experienced EI were aware of its many benefits and also implemented EI or EI training in their organisation. Participant B1, a general manager with years of experience in hospitality, welcomed our interview by stating,

> *EI is an ingredient which all leadership should master. It is the secret of success for leadership. All good leaders all over the world in big companies have mastered and implemented emotional intelligence. I have read a lot about it myself, and I use it myself in my leadership whenever I have work, and I totally agree with you.* (Participant B1)

Other participants who have experienced EI or are aware of EI's implementations have added,

> *Since I was lucky enough to start studying EI, I became more stoic, meaning I am not jaded by anything out of my control. So you start controlling your experiences, you communicate better, and you start using more empathy when leading.* (Participant F3)

> *Starting from the individuals themselves. So equipping people, whether it's the leadership team or even team members who are not in a leadership role, to understand and have self-awareness will help them learn a lot about themselves. ... When it comes to leadership team, EI is one of the key skills. It is also one of the basic and most covered subjects in our leadership development programmes.* (Participant D2)

Other participants who were new to EI, however, showed significant interest in having their organisation provide EI coaching and training:

> *It is something that I want in this hotel. I would like to have training at least to explain to them what EI is and create awareness of it.* (Participant A2)

> *We do leadership training. I cannot say I am organising anything with regards to EI this year. However, at a better time (because of COVID-19), I want to focus more on emotional intelligence and also on mental health and other things that are sometimes ignored because they are not the normal training that you do or the quality or the brand standard that we are used to.* (Participant F2)

4.4 EI Awareness and Skills Development Within Management

The researcher wanted to determine whether EI skills was developed within management teams. A participant who had experienced EI and was the general manager of a hotel in Malta raised a crucial issue about the lack of EI within a service-based industry such as hospitality:

> *Many customer complaints, in my experience, come from team members not controlling some of their emotions and reactions – when it comes to different kinds of customers from different cultures; when it comes to a stress level which you don't control; when it comes to being tired as well, and therefore not controlling the way you react in front of customers.* (Participant D1)

Participants from another hotel stated that their organisation had not included EI training in their development programmes but agreed that they would like to have it included.

> *Particular training on EI is not part of the management or staff training programmes directly. Indirectly maybe, because some courses hint at being more receptive to others. But if it were me, I would include it, yes. Why not?* (Participant G4)

> *I have never heard of EI as such before, so I don't think it has been applied directly. Indirectly, I am sure it has. I think it should be introduced. All management and staff should be exposed to it and use it in the future.* (Participant G5)

Another hotel has provided EI training both through an external facilitator and through their HR team in the past, which had been well received by the staff. One manager from another hotel replied that they had touched upon the topic but the course had not gone into much detail, and agreed that EI training should be provided. Another participant mentioned that their organisation had previously provided training and coaching on certain topics that EI covers, such as empathy, self-awareness, and communication, but was not aware that those were part of EI.

The managers' replies suggest that awareness of EI among management personnel is somewhat lacking. It was the first time that the term 'emotional intelligence' had been mentioned to five of the interviewees, and the introductory explanation given

by the researcher seemed vital to have the participants answer the open-ended questions. The participants quickly understood the meaning and the EI model shown to them while also applying its composites to their day-to-day life in the workplace. This explanation helped the participants understand EI's importance not only in an organisation and at the management level but also for their individual growth and self-improvement.

> *The reviews which we most like to read is when they (the guests) mention, for example, the attention to detail of an employee who assisted them or how lovely the room attendant was. We appreciate it more when they mention the staff rather than the view.* (Participant C1)

In conjunction with EI training, the researcher asked the participants what they thought about incorporating an EI assessment with other staff and management in hotels. With a better understanding of how an EI assessment works, and knowing that results and scores can be kept private, the participants seemed keen on including EI assessments due to the positive learning possibilities that it brings.

> *In an ideal world, everyone would do an EI assessment. Just to understand how each person communicates, what they need to improve and how to do so. Of course, it starts cascading from the top to the bottom. Actually, to be honest, it can go both ways, but yes, it is important, and every company should do it if possible.* (Participant F3)

> *Yes, definitely. I think that all the 360-degree (assessment) feedback is always helping us as an individual and as a team.* (Participant D1)

I think each and every individual working in hospitality would benefit from this because they would fully understand the guests' needs, appreciate the moment a person sits down in a restaurant or comes to the reception, or fully understand what needs to be done to make the guests' experience 100% without any glitches ... every hotel stands to benefit from this, especially in the climate we are living in now (during the pandemic). (Participant G3)

From the interviews, the researcher observed that even though the concept of EI was new to some of the participants, by the end of the interviews, they became aware of how much they had been experiencing EI at the workplace without realising it. Participant A2 stated, 'The leadership of the future, they need to go in that (EI) direction if they don't want to lose people'.

The level of interest in EI increased with each participant as the interviews reached the end. Participants showed even greater interest by asking more questions about EI in general and about the EI assessments. They believed in including EI as part of their development training and that both the organisation – including the staff – and the guests would benefit from EI training. Participant D2 described EI training as 'When you see the components of emotional intelligence, it is everything about leadership'. Participant F3 added, '… you'll find that with a higher emotional understanding, your staff will also have a stronger psychological contract with the company, which at the end of the day benefits the company'.

4.5 Visualisation Tools and Data Analysis Using MAXQDA

MAXQDA was used by the researcher to create visual tools using the interview transcripts and the EI model composites as codes. With these data, the researcher could identify which composites were mentioned and how many times during the interviews. The composite or composites being mentioned the most or even the least could indicate the level of awareness of each of them. This new emergent

information could also help in future research by understanding how or why certain composites are mentioned more than others.

A mixed methodology was implemented using the generated visuals along with other demographic data as illustrated below, together with data analysis. Figure 3 shows the participants age, while Figure 4 shows the gender ratio. The participants who took part in the one-to-one interviews came from six five-star hotels with a female to male ratio of 6:5. Their ages ranged between 26 and 71. One participant's age was marked as 0 because it was unknown.

Participants Age - Interviews										
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Age	30	0	71	40	54	40	29	26	37	32	42
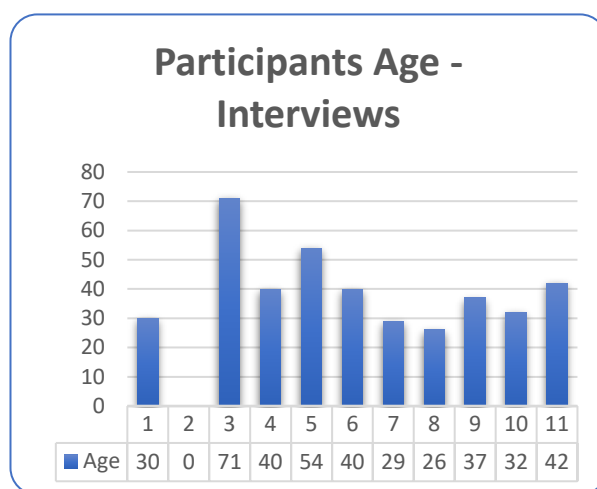
Figure 3 Participants' age - Interviews

Gender Ratio - Interviews		
	F	M
Total	6	5
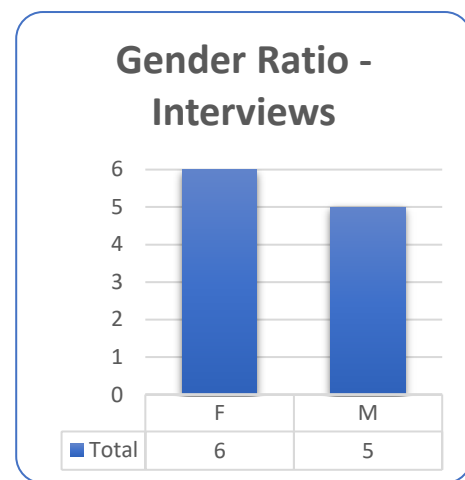
Figure 4 Gender ratio - Interviews

Based on the EQ-i 2.0 model, the five main competencies (self-perception, self-expression, interpersonal, decision making and stress management) and the 15 building blocks (self-regard, self-actualisation, emotional awareness, emotional expression, assertiveness, independence, interpersonal relationship, empathy, social responsibility, problem solving, reality testing, impulse control, flexibility, stress tolerance and optimism) were applied as codes to assist with the research data analyses and research questions using the MAXQDA software.

Figure 5 below displays the code frequencies (in %) of the five main competencies, depending on how many times each main composite was mentioned during the interviews in descending order. Interpersonal was mentioned the most, with 25.7%,

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followed by stress management (22.3%), self-perception (20.9%), decision-making (18.2%), and self-expression (12.8%).
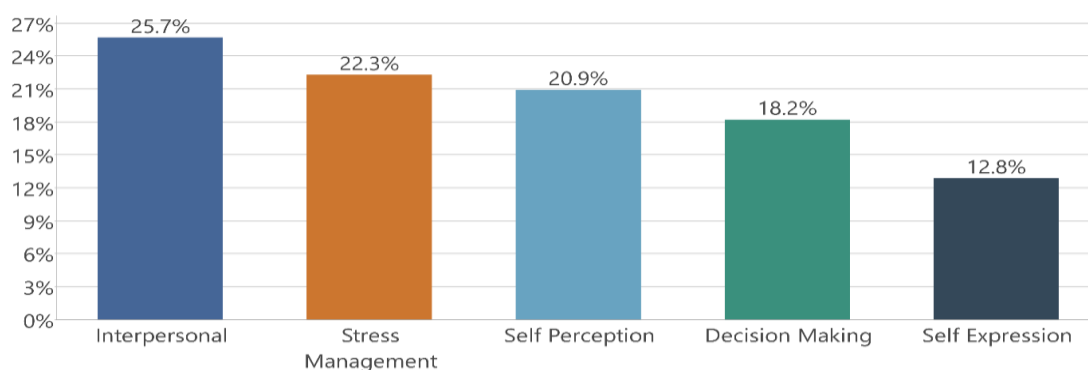
Figure 3 Code frequencies in %

Just as the researcher provided data according to gender in the preceding analysis, the table below shows the percentages of males and females that have talked about each composite in one way or another during the interviews. Table 3 illustrates that decision-making was mentioned equally between females and males; interpersonal was mentioned more by the female participants; self-expression was referred to by males more frequently by 1.2%; self-perception was represented more by females by 9%; finally, stress management was coded more among the female participants (54.5%) compared to the male participants (45.5%).

	Female	Male	Total
Decision Making	50.0%	50.0%	100.00
Interpersonal	60.0%	40.0%	100.00
Self Expression	44.4%	55.6%	100.00
Self Perception	54.5%	45.5%	100.00
Stress Management	54.5%	45.5%	100.00

Table 3 Occurrence % of codes between female and male participants

4.6 EI Online Questionnaires

The EI score embodies how successful the participant is at seeing and articulating one's thoughts, creating and keeping up with social connections, adapting to difficulties, and utilising emotional knowledge in a powerful and significant manner. However, a total EI result may mask low or high functioning in any particular building block; hence, it is vital to analyse the five composites and 15 building block results closer when interpreting and reporting total EI scores to individuals. Within the EI profile, balance is significant since other associated building blocks can temper higher building blocks, and lower building blocks can be strengthened by associated building blocks. For a thorough understanding of an EI score, an individual narrative report and a coaching session by an EI practitioner is provided to examine all composites and sub-composite scores in more depth. For this research, the objective was to measure and determine the EI level among management personnel and to gather a basic idea of where they stood regarding their EI level. Further research could examine the scores more thoroughly and analyse individual scores per composite and sub-composite, which could result in a deeper interpretation of results.

Research Question:

What is the level of EI among the management personnel of five-star hotels?

This research question was answered using a validated and reliable psychometric online EI assessment tool, which also provided some demographic data. All measurements had a 90% confidence interval. The participants who took part in the EI online questionnaire were employed by seven five-star hotels of separate brands with a female to male ratio of 12:10, the location of which is not mentioned to support the participants' anonymity. The participants were aged between 24 and 71 years, and two of them did not provide their age.

The EQ-i 2.0 psychometric assessment provided the researcher with the participants' total EI score, five main composite scores, 15 sub-composite scores, and the happiness score, all of which are shown in the tables below. The mean score in each table is presented with an orange line. For a statistical reference, the EQ-i 2.0 assessment score range is provided in quartiles as: < 90 = Low Range, 90–110 = Mid-Range, and > 110 = High Range. This is because in the norm group, 25% of participants scored below 90, half of the total participants scored between 90 and 110, while 25% scored above 110. The EQ-i 2.0 Leadership Report provided by MHS examines the EI scores through four key leadership dimensions: coaching, authenticity, innovation, and insight. In addition, the scores generated with this assessment may also be compared against the top leader results by the leadership gold bar found in a leadership report. The total EI leadership gold bar is derived from a study of 220 leaders across a range of industries and comprises leaders scoring in the top 50%. The total EI leadership gold bar for the Professional Norm is 108–135, while that of the General Population Norm is 116–140 (TAP - MHS Assessments, 2011). The higher the EI score, the stronger the EI skills. The leadership gold bar for each composite and sub-composite holds a different bar range (EQ-i 2.0 Leadership Report, n.d.).

4.7 Qualitative Analysis

The highest total EI score from the 22 managers was 132, followed by 130, and the lowest total EI score was 65, followed by 75. Hence, the scores ranged between 65 and 132. The mean EI score was 101.55, which was rounded to the nearest unit (102). Therefore, according to the EQ-i 2.0 quartile range, the research sample mean score ranked mid-range, and it was 6 points less than the EI leadership benchmark. Almost all participants obtained different total standard EI scores. The comparison of the study's EI scores with the leadership gold bar showed that seven managers from four different hotel brands reached the Leadership Professional Norm. A complete list of the total EI scores in ascending order is shown in Figure 6. The participants' scores are numbered from 1 to 22 in no particular order to promote confidentiality.
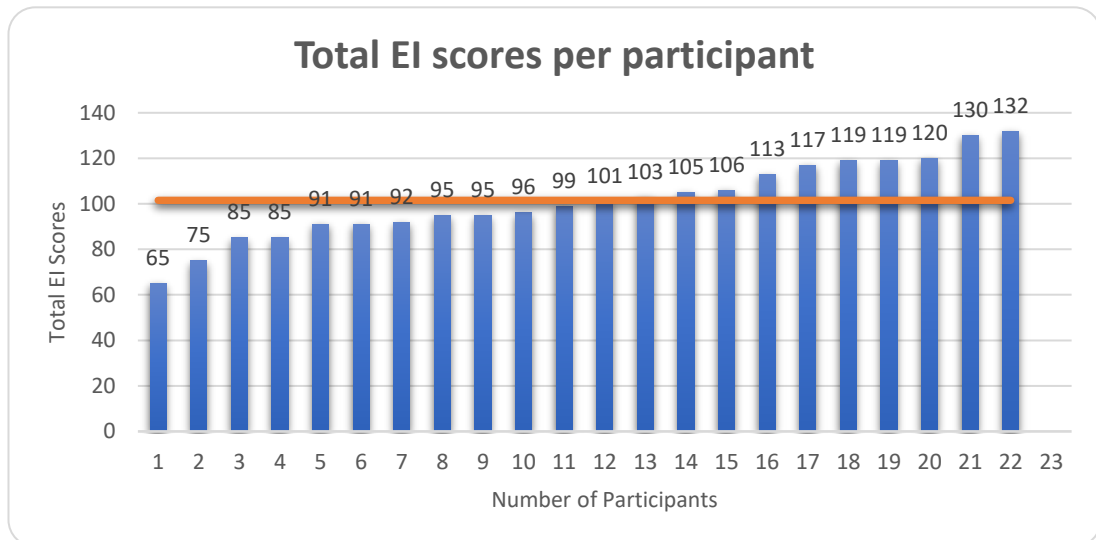
Figure 4 Standard EI scores in ascending order

In Figure 7 below, the participants' EI scores are illustrated using a different colour per hotel. Looking at each hotel individually, each participant obtained a different score, showing inconsistency in EI abilities. Hotel A's two participants scored 91 and 101, showing a noticeable difference in EI level between the two managers. Participants of Hotel B demonstrated higher EI scores over the mean score, obtaining the overall highest score of 132 from all 22 participants. Hotel B is the only hotel whose employees surpassed the mean score. Hotel C shows a lower EI level result from the total mean score, with 99 and 95 EI scores. Hotel D has a mixed level of EI skills, where two participants exceeded the mean score by 12 and 16 points, while a third participant was under the mean score by 10 points.
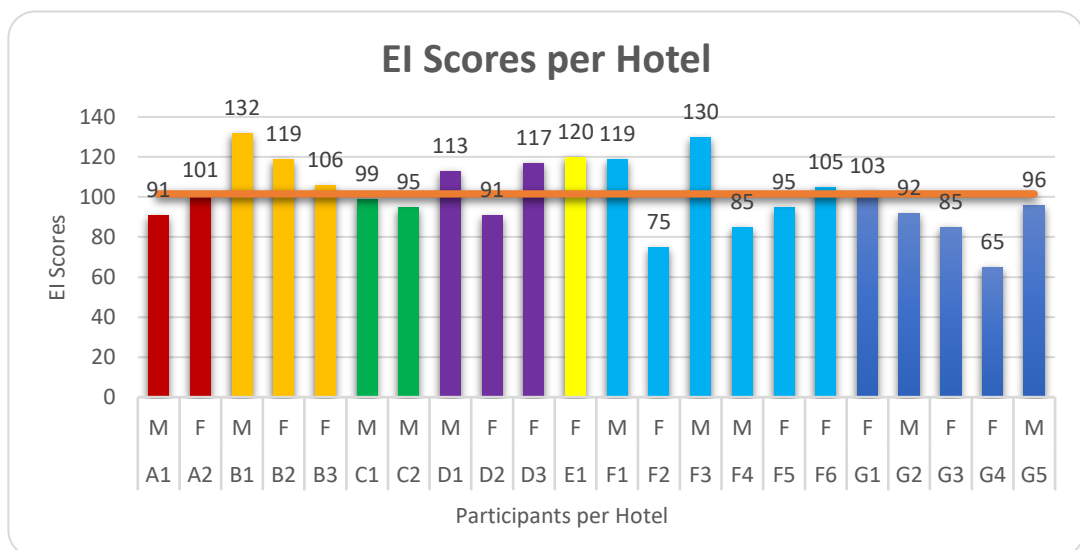
Figure 5 EI scores per hotel

Only one participant from Hotel E was administered the EI questionnaire; they had an EI score of 120, which surpassed the mean score by 19 points and ranked highly on the leadership gold bar. Because they were the only participant from this hotel, his score could not be compared to that of other managers from the same hotel.

On the other hand, there were six participants from Hotel F. Their EI scores ranged between 75 and 130 points, showing a significant difference between the highest and lowest scores. Moreover, three scores were higher than the mean score, while another three were lower. Additionally, one participant out of six managers ranked on the leadership benchmark range. These scores show varied EI level abilities among the management team. Hotel G had five participants undertaking the assessment, with one manager scoring slightly above the mean score with 103 points. The scores ranged between 65 and 103, showing varied EI scores and lower EI levels than the leadership benchmark.

Considering the EI scores collectively, Figure 5 shows 10 managers who surpassed the mean score, with scores ranging from 103 to 132. Of these participants, seven managers reached the leadership benchmark, ranking among the top leaders with scores between 113 and 132. Eleven managers ranked lower on both the leadership benchmark and the mean sample score, with EI levels ranging between 65 and 101.

4.8 EI Levels According to Hotel and Gender

The researcher aimed to determine whether there were any significant differences between the two genders. Figure 6 and Figure 7 illustrate EI scores per gender, hotel, and mean scores.

Figure 8 below displays the Male EI Scores per hotel, with the male mean score of 105 points (grey line) and the total mean score of 102 points (orange line). The male mean is higher than the female mean by 6 points. The top two scorers were male

managers with 132 and 130, followed by a female manager with 120 points – all in the leadership benchmark range. Out of the 10 male participants, four ranked within the leadership range and above both mean scores. Another six male participants scored lower than both mean scores. From hotels A, B, and D, only one male per hotel participated; thus, the researcher could not compare the results with other male EI scores from the same hotel. From Hotel C, both EI scores were below the mean but still ranked in the mid-range. In total, five participants ranked in the mid-range quartile. One participant with an EI level of 85 ranged in the low quartile inadvertently managed the same hotel as the second-highest EI participant.

Male Managers' EI Scores per Hotel

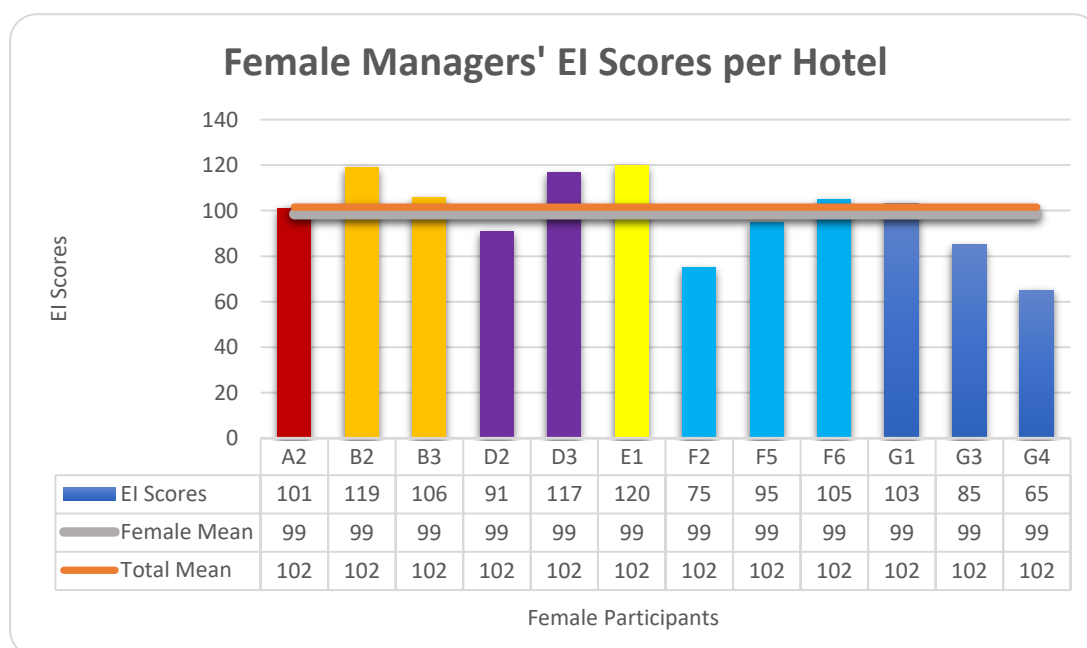|	A1	B1	C1	C2	D1	F1	F3	F4	G2	G5
EI Scores	91	132	99	95	113	119	130	85	92	96
Male Mean	105	105	105	105	105	105	105	105	105	105
Total Mean	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102
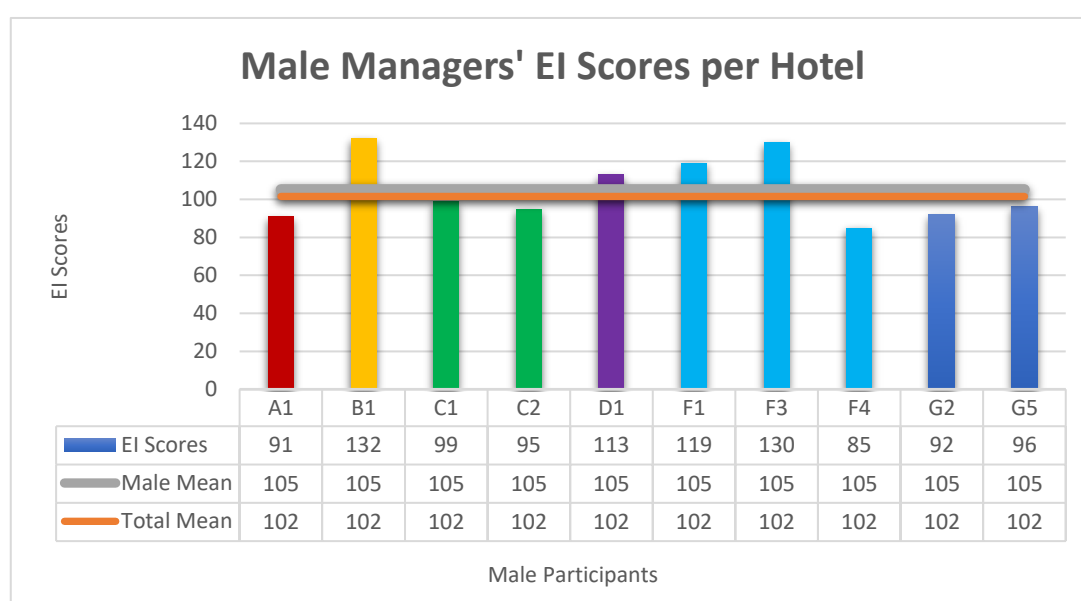
Male Participants

Figure 6 Male managers' EI scores per hotel

Figure 9 below displays the female managers' EI scores per hotel, with the female mean score of 99 (grey line) and the total mean score of 102 (orange line). The top EI participants were E1, B2, and D3 with 120, 11,9 and 117, and all scored within the leadership benchmark. These participants were employed in three different hotels. Out of the 12 female participants, seven scored above the female mean, while six scored above the total mean. A2 scored just below the total mean with 101, while five participants scored below the female mean. Participants G4, F2, and G3, who scored 65, 75, and 85 points, ranked in the low-range quartile. A2 was the only female participant from this hotel; hence the researcher could not compare her EI result with those of another from the same hotel. Both participants from Hotel B

surpassed both mean scores: B3 ranked in the mid-range with 106, while B2 ranked in the high range with 119. There were no female participants from Hotel C. EI scores of Hotel D vary; D2 scored 91 ranking in the mid-range and lower than both mean scores, while participant D3 scored 117, surpassing both mean scores, ranking in the high-range quartile and within the leadership gold bar. A considerable difference between the two scores is observed.

Female Managers' EI Scores per Hotel

	A2	B2	B3	D2	D3	E1	F2	F5	F6	G1	G3	G4
EI Scores	101	119	106	91	117	120	75	95	105	103	85	65
Female Mean	99	99	99	99	99	99	99	99	99	99	99	99
Total Mean	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102

Female Participants

Figure 7 Female managers' EI scores per hotel

Participant E1 was the only participant from this hotel and was the second-best scorer exceeding both mean scores and ranking in the leadership bar. The three participants from Hotel F scored different EI abilities; 75, 95 and 105 points, respectively. F6 scored over both mean scores, but neither participant from Hotel F reached the leadership bar. Three female participants from Hotel G scored 103, 85 and 65; Participant G4 scored the lowest EI out of all the 22 participants, with G3 also in the low range. G1 scored 103, with the highest EI skills from Hotel G, and reached both mean scores but not the leadership benchmark.

Table 4 below visually displays the frequencies between male and female total count. Four males and three females reached the leadership gold bar; hence, the same participants were also in the high-range quartile. Five males and six females ranked

in the mid-range, while one male and three females scored in the low-range quartile. There were four males and six females who reached the total mean of 102.

Participants in the:	Male	Female	Total
Leadership Gold Bar 108-135	4	3	7
High- range Quartile >110	4	3	7
Mid- range Quartile 90 - 100	5	6	11
Low- range Quartile <90	1	3	4
Reached Total Mean Score Of 102	4	6	10

Table 4 Male and female frequency score table

4.9 T-Test on Male and Female Mean Scores

A t-test was conducted on the male and female mean scores to determine whether the difference was statistically significant. First, a null hypothesis was stated,

$$H_o: the\ mean\ of\ the\ two\ groups\ are\ equal$$

$H_o: \mu_{male} = \mu_{female}$ or

$H_o: \mu_{male} - \mu_{female} = 0$ where μ is the population mean

The alternative hypothesis was

$$H_1: the \ mean \ of \ the \ two \ groups \ are \ not \ equal$$

$$H_o: \mu_{male} \neq \mu_{female} \quad \text{or} \quad H_o: \mu_{male} - \mu_{female} \neq$$

The T-Test score was given as,

$$t_{score} = \frac{Sample \ difference - Population \ difference}{Standard \ Error}$$

$$t_{score} = \frac{(\overline{X_{male}} - \overline{X_{female}}) - (\mu_{male} - \mu_{female})}{SE}$$

where μ_{male} is the population mean for males, which was unknown, and μ_{female} is the population mean for females, which was also unknown. However, as it was assumed that the values were the same, their difference was 0, or $\mu_{male} - \mu_{female}$, as stated in the null hypothesis above. The standard error was then obtained. Two samples needed to merge; therefore, the sample pooled variance as used as follows:

$$S_p^2 = \frac{S_{male}^2 (n_{male} - 1) + S_{female}^2 (n_{female} - 1)}{(n_{male} - 1) + (n_{female} - 1)}$$

$$S_{male}^2 = \frac{\sum (X_{male} - \overline{X_{male}})^2}{n_{male} - 1} \ , variance \ of \ male$$

	X_{male}	$X_{male} - \overline{X_{male}}$	$(X_{male} - \overline{X_{male}})^2$
	91	-14.2	201.6
	132	26.8	718.2
	99	-6.2	38.4
	95	-10.2	104.0
	113	7.8	60.8
	119	13.8	190.4
	130	24.8	615.0
	85	-20.2	408.0
	92	-13.2	174.2
	96	-9.2	84.6
Sum	1052		2595.6

$$S^2_{male} = \frac{2595.6}{10 - 1} = 288.4$$

The the variance for the female participants can be computed as,

$$S^2_{female} = \frac{\Sigma(X_{female} - \overline{X_{female}})^2}{n_{female} - 1}, variance\ for\ female$$

	X_{female}	$X_{female} - \overline{X_{female}}$	$\left(X_{female} - \overline{X_{female}}\right)^2$
	101	2.5	6.3
	119	20.5	420.3
	106	7.5	56.3
	91	-7.5	56.3
	117	18.5	342.3
	120	21.5	462.3
	75	-23.5	552.3
	95	-3.5	12.3
	105	6.5	42.3
	103	4.5	20.3
	85	-13.5	182.3
	65	-33.5	1122.3
Sum	1182	0	3275.0

$$S_{female}^2 = \frac{3275.0}{12 - 1} = 297.73$$

Therefore,

$$SE = S_p \sqrt{\frac{1}{n_{male}} + \frac{1}{n_{female}}}$$

Notations	Interpretation	Value
n_{male}	Male sample size	10
n_{female}	Female sample size	12
S^2_{male}	Variance with male	288.4
S^2_{female}	Variance of female	297.73
$\overline{X_{male}}$	Sample mean of male	105.2
$\overline{X_{female}}$	Sample mean of female	98.5

$$S^2_p = \frac{288.32\,(10-1) + \, 297.73\,(12-1)}{(10-1) + \,(12-1)} = 293.496$$

$$SE = \sqrt{293.496} * \sqrt{\frac{1}{10} + \frac{1}{12}} = 7.332$$

$$t_{score} = \frac{(105.2 - \,98.5) - (0)}{7.332}$$

$$t_{score} = \,0.914$$

The male sample had a degree of freedom 9, and the female sample a degree of 11; hence, the total degree of freedom was 20. The t-score was compared to the critical value in the t-table. α was 0.05 (95%), with a *df* of 20, and the t-table value was as follows:

$$t_{\propto,df\,(0.05,20)} = \,1.725$$

The decision rule involved rejecting the null hypothesis if the t-score was greater than the t-table value. The researcher did not reject the null hypothesis because the t-score (0.914) was less than the table value (1.725); hence, it was concluded that the means of both males and females were equal, and there was no significant difference between the mean value of EI scores between the male and female groups.

4.10 The Five Main EI Composite Scores

As previously mentioned, the EI questionnaire does not only provide a total EI score but also a score for each main composite. The five main composite scores were generated from the same EI online assessment and are shown in the tables below. The high score of a composite does not always have positive implications, especially if another composite has a low score; for example, a participant may score high on self-expression, which includes the building blocks of assertiveness and independence, but then scores low on interpersonal, which includes empathy and social responsibility. A balance between the scores is considered as more positive. The composite scales illustrate a deeper result than the total EI score; however, just as the total EI result, composite scores may also mask a low or high result on a given building block. The five main composite scales may be deciphered as buckets for organising the 15 building blocks into parallel classifications. The scores provided below provide the researcher with a better understanding of the EI level among management teams in five-star hotels. The five leading composite results, including the highest and lowest standard scores and the mean scores, are provided below. As standard scores are analysed from raw results, each composite has an identical standard deviation of 15 and a mean score of 100.

a) Self-Perception

The self-perception scores ranged between 64 and 127. The highest score in the self-perception composite was 127, followed by 126. The lowest score was 64, followed by 71. The mean score was 98.86364, making it 99 to the nearest unit. Figure 8 shows all the scores for this composite per participant.
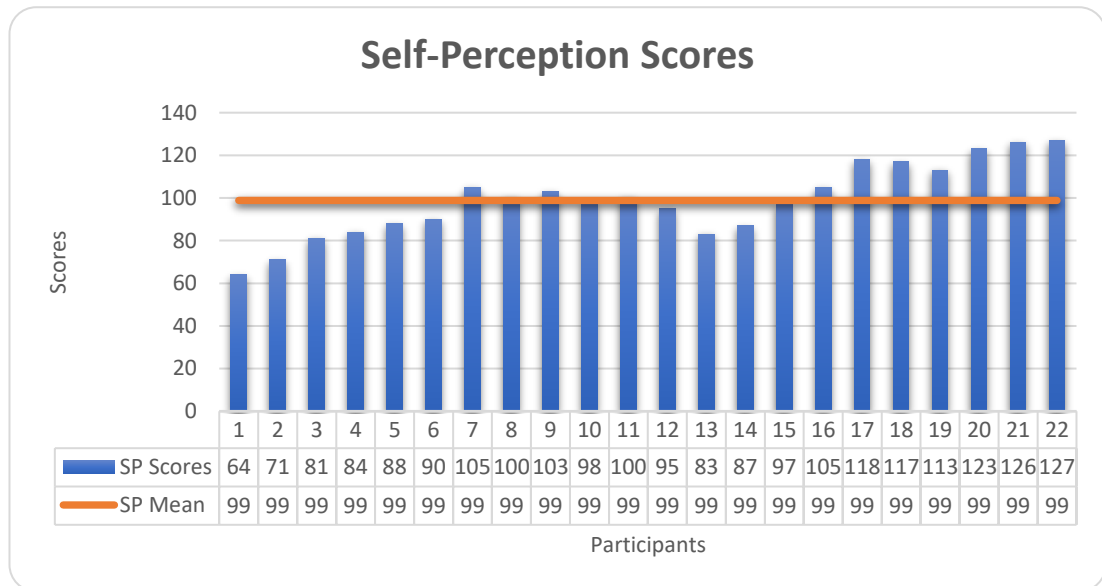

Self-Perception Scores

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
SP Scores	64	71	81	84	88	90	105	100	103	98	100	95	83	87	97	105	118	117	113	123	126	127
SP Mean	99	99	99	99	99	99	99	99	99	99	99	99	99	99	99	99	99	99	99	99	99	99

Participants

Figure 8 Self-perception standard scores

b) Self-Expression

The self-expression composite results ranged between 56 and 126. The highest score was 126, followed by 125, and the lowest score was 56, followed by 68. The mean score for this composite was 101.5 (i.e. 102). Figure 9 shows all the results for this composite.
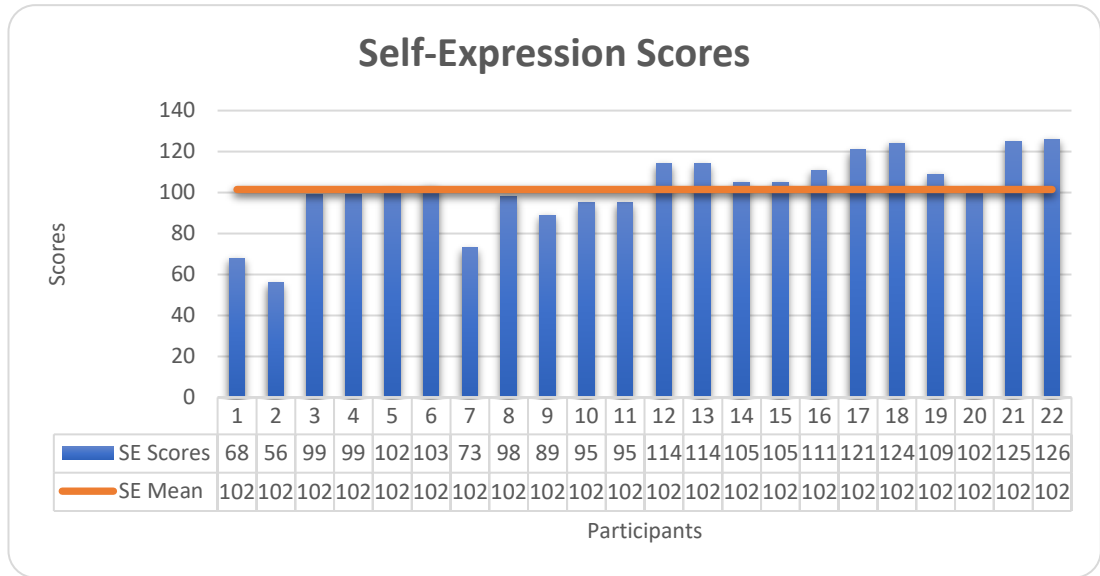
Self-Expression Scores

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
SE Scores	68	56	99	99	102	103	73	98	89	95	95	114	114	105	105	111	121	124	109	102	125	126
SE Mean	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102

Participants

Figure 9 Self-expression standard scores

c) Interpersonal

The interpersonal composite scores ranged from 73 to 130. The highest score was 130, followed by 127, and the lowest score was 73, followed by 83. The mean score was 104.8636 (i.e. 105).
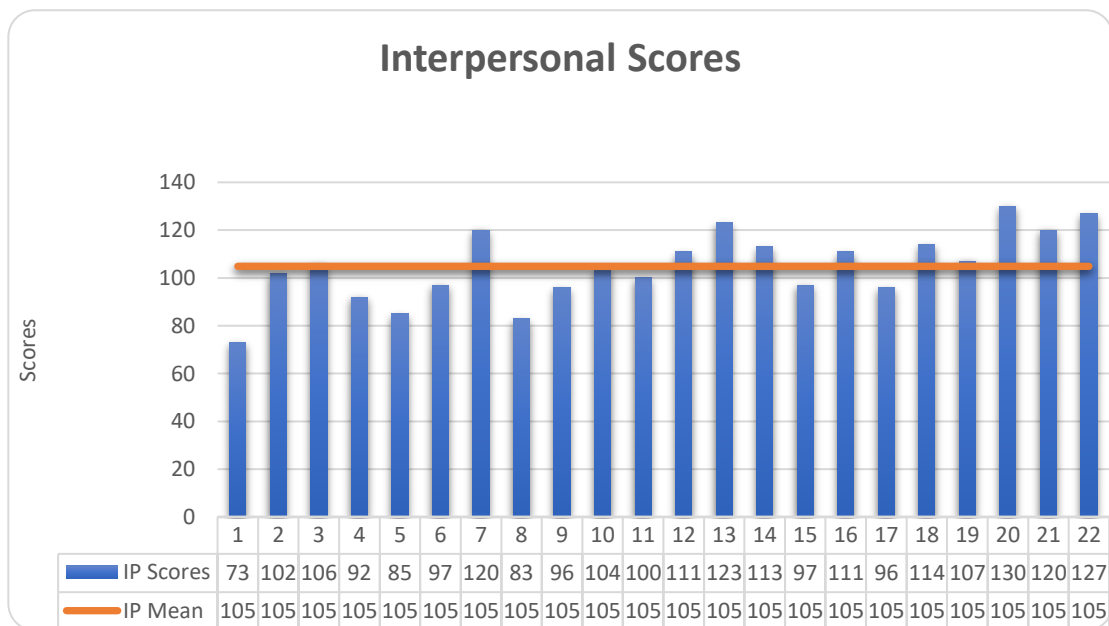

Interpersonal Scores

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
IP Scores	73	102	106	92	85	97	120	83	96	104	100	111	123	113	97	111	96	114	107	130	120	127
IP Mean	105	105	105	105	105	105	105	105	105	105	105	105	105	105	105	105	105	105	105	105	105	105

Figure 10 Interpersonal standard scores

d) Decision-Making

This fourth composite result ranged between 72 and 132. Therefore, the highest decision-making score was 132, followed by 127, and the lowest score was 72, followed by 73. The mean score was 99.7727, making it 100 to the nearest unit.
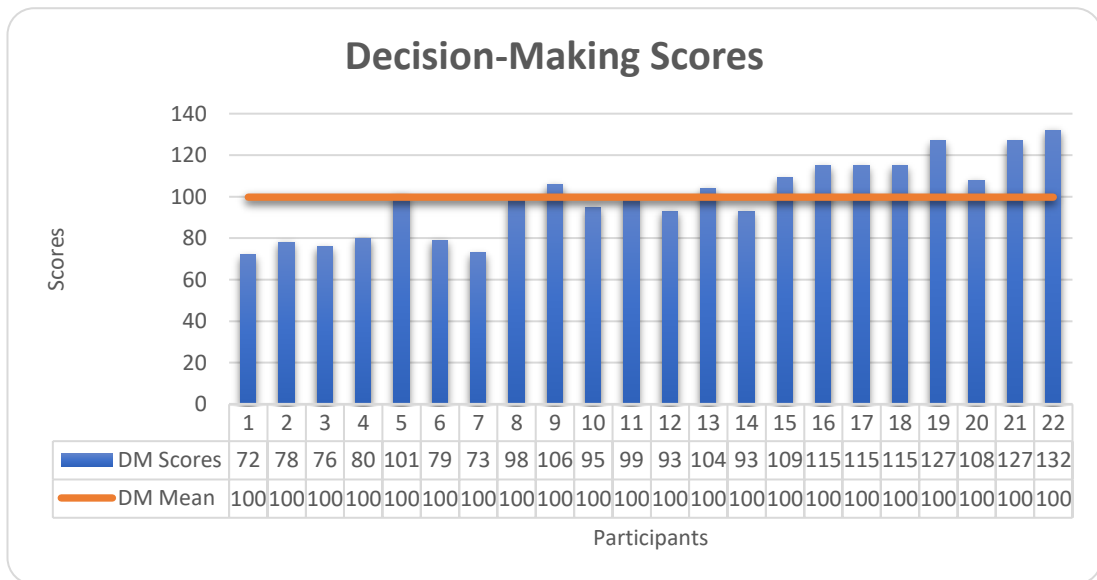
Decision-Making Scores

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
DM Scores	72	78	76	80	101	79	73	98	106	95	99	93	104	93	109	115	115	115	127	108	127	132
DM Mean	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Participants

Figure 11 Decision-making standard scores

e) Stress Management

The fifth and last composite was stress management. The highest and lowest scores ranged from 75 to 132, making 132 the highest stress management result. The mean score was 101.7727 (i.e. 102).
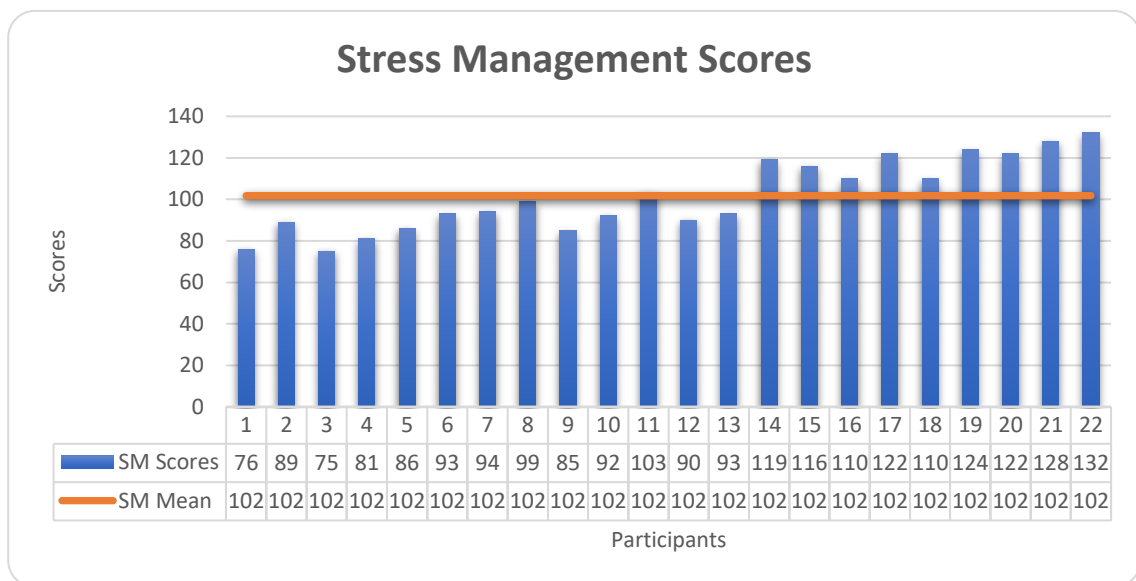
Stress Management Scores

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
SM Scores	76	89	75	81	86	93	94	99	85	92	103	90	93	119	116	110	122	110	124	122	128	132
SM Mean	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102

Figure 12 Stress management standard scores

The The happiness scores provided below is an additional benefit derived from using the EQ-i 2.0 psychometric tool, although it is not specific to the research being undertaken. The outcome of a progression of empirical, theoretical, and practical analyses recognised optimism, self-regard, self-actualisation, and interpersonal relationships as key aspects of EI, with direct associations with wellbeing and happiness that can be created by compelling training practices and positive development. The happiness composite scores ranged between 65 and 132. The mean score was 102 when rounded to the nearest unit.

Happiness Scores

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
H Score	65	93	74	93	84	81	114	103	100	93	106	97	97	106	110	123	119	110	114	123	123	123
H Mean	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102
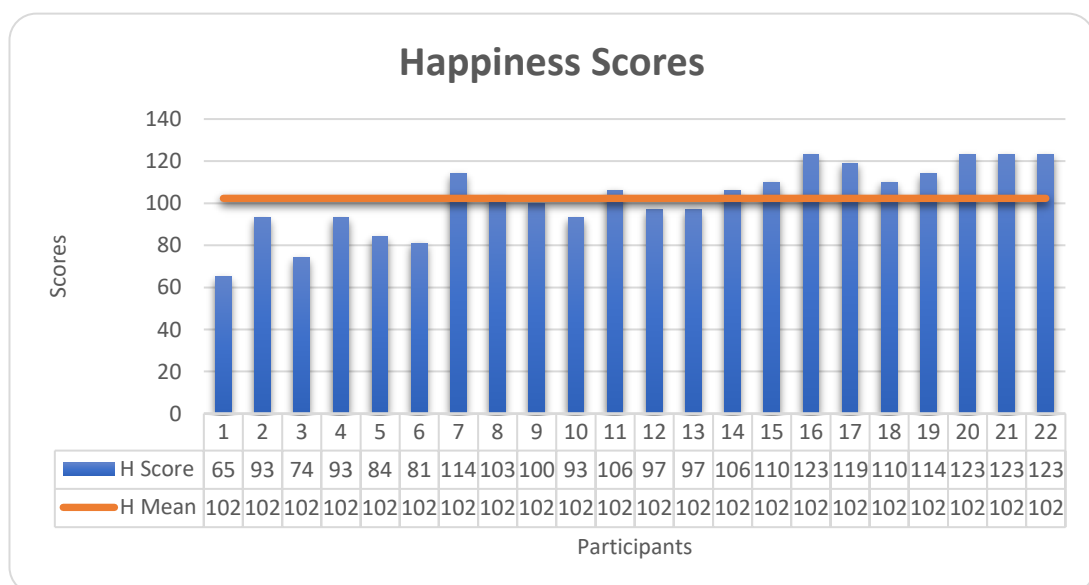
Figure 13 Happiness standard scores

4.11 A Summary of the Findings

This chapter explored the attributes of 22 managers and GMs via an EI questionnaire and those of 11 managers and GMs via interviews. Textual descriptions of each research methodology were detailed, along with a quantitative approach by charts, figures, and tables. A code frequency count percentage of the five main composites and crosstab of the two genders ensued. A discussion and interpretation of the research results follows in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5: Discussion

5.1 Overview

This phenomenological research studied the interest in and awareness level of EI among management teams of five-star hotels as well as their EI level. This study also sought to determine if these management teams were being trained to develop EI skills. Research on including EI skills and assessments in hotels in Malta has been close to non-existent; thus, this study aimed to shed light on management development and EI and how both can be cohesive, strengthening the hotels management and service levels in Malta through emotions and intelligence. Not including EI training and coaching may have resulted in EI competency gaps within hotels and other hospitality segments. By doing so, hotels may be in a better position to enrich more responsible and valuable leaders with the emotional and cognitive skills required to lead in a vibrant and high-demanding service industry. This study was based on Reuven Bar-On's EQ-i model, revised and updated by MHS to EQ-i 2.0 (MHS, 2011).

This research used a mixed methodology approach to obtain the results and conduct the data analyses. The EI questionnaire was used to measure the level of EI of management personnel, while one-to-one interviews allowed the researcher to discuss a topic that was unknown to many participants. The researcher believes that a mixed methodology approach has helped gather better and more thorough information about management personnel's level of interest in and awareness of EI and determine whether they develop EI competencies during their training.

Due to the perception that EI awareness is lacking in hotels in Malta, one-to-one interviews with open-ended questions have helped the researcher obtain more honest answers from each participant on their knowledge and awareness of EI. Although the researcher would have preferred conducting the interviews face-to-face for an enhanced relationship with the participants and discussing EI, this was hard to

achieve due to the current COVID-19 pandemic. Only two participants volunteered for a face-to-face interview.

5.2 Discussion on the Research Sample

The research sample included managers or GMs of different five-star hotels managing different departments and teams. Their years of experience in a managerial position was unknown. This information could have given more in-depth information as managers or GMs who have been in the industry for longer would have a higher probability of EI awareness and training. In comparison, someone who has just started in a managerial role might have a lower EI awareness and training probability. The sample's managerial level – whether junior, middle, or senior level – was also undetermined. The researcher started the interview by providing a brief explanation on EI and showing a visual EI model to each participant, which promoted an understanding and insight into EI and its competencies to help answer the questions. The researcher believes that considering the mixed level of EI awareness between the participants, this was a crucial step.

The qualitative data gathered showed a mixed level of awareness of EI. Five participants from three hotels had never had any EI training and were not familiar with the notion of EI. Four participants from three hotels had heard of EI and had also had EI training in the past, whether in the hotel in which they were working or through a previous company. While two participants from the same hotel said that they had heard of EI, they had not yet been offered EI training. However, there was a high level of interest among all the management personnel. Those who had experienced EI strongly endorsed the notion that it had improved their leadership skills and corporate experiences and that they were still practising it to the day. Other participants who were being trained or had been offered EI training in their hotel also spoke highly of EI and believed that it is the basis of any industry and leadership role – both today and in the future. Those participants who had either never heard of the notion or had heard of it but had not experienced EI coaching or training thus far expressed their interest in having their organisations include it in their development

programmes. They believe that it would help them understand and better manage themselves and those around them.

During the interviews, therefore, many showed interest in understanding and discovering more about EI as well as in EI coaching and training being implemented on a yearly basis for both management teams and the staff. As the participants started to understand the benefits and positive outcomes of EI within organisations, it is argued that this research has increased their level of interest and awareness. It is suggested that EI development programmes be included for all management and staff in several hospitality organisations in Malta.

5.3 EI Assessments

In addition to EI coaching, the use of assessments was also strongly endorsed. Two participants had experienced EI assessments before and agreed that they are critical to understanding oneself and others and that they ultimately benefit the company. The nine other participants had never administered an EI questionnaire before the study but revealed a common interest and understanding of how it works and what it includes as well as an interest in having the employees at their hotel administer an EI assessment in conjunction with EI training. As identified by other participant statements, EI training in hotels is close to non-existent in most of the hotels participating in this study, which creates opportunities for further development of management and staff. This research also revealed individual and unique perspectives on EI experiences by management personnel. An array of perspectives was gathered to shed light on EI's significance, leadership, and future development.

The EI online assessments have added value to this research by demonstrating and analysing EI among management teams in five-star hotels and especially among those participants who lacked EI awareness and training. It has also shown that EI can be measured and, most importantly, improved. The participants were not notified

of their EI scores as conditioned by the owners of the questionnaire (MHS) since the assessments were conducted for research purposes.

The EI scores indicate that the male participants scored higher in the EI assessment when compared to the female participants, with a mean difference of 6 points; however, a t-test demonstrated that there was no significant difference between the mean score values. The researcher noted that managers who had experienced EI through development and training produced middle to higher EI scores, while those unfamiliar with the notion and who had not practised EI training had lower EI scores. This might demonstrate that EI awareness and EI training enhance one's emotional and social skills and that EI is teachable.

Participant B1, with the highest EI score, also had the highest scores in four of the leading composites, namely self-perception, self-expression, decision-making, and stress management. In the interpersonal composite, his result came second with a 3-point difference. This participant stated that he had experienced and trained in EI for years and that it had led to personal and corporate growth as well as efficient leadership skills in his career journey. This case may contribute to the EI literature arguing that EI can be taught and improved, leading to effective leadership skills and capabilities in one's leadership roles throughout their career.

Participant F3, with only two fewer total EI points from the top EI scorer, also came second in four other leading composites, namely self-perception, interpersonal, decision-making, and stress management. This participant also stated that he had been trained on EI and believed that EI training results in better communication, better mutual knowledge, and better work. Moreover, it is easier to notice leaders who implement EI as they run a more effective department. Participant F3 represents another case where EI has been fundamental to the manager role and to effectively leading a department.

On the other hand, the participant with the lowest EI score, G4, also had the lowest scores in four leading composites, namely self-perception, interpersonal, decision-making, and stress management. This participant acknowledged that she was not trained nor familiar with the notion of EI; however, during the interview, she understood how necessary and significant EI skills are for herself as an individual and for the company. Low EI skills do not represent insufficient knowledge of one's professional role but reflect their emotional and social skills. Participant G4 showed interest in both EI training and EI assessments to be accessible and practised in her workplace.

It is also noted that all the participants who claimed to have never heard of emotional intelligence were those with the lowest EI scores; by contrast, those who had experienced EI through awareness and training were the ones with mid to highest EI scores and believed and understood that EI is essential for everyone. Some participants believed that EI allows one to build trust and be more confident – especially when in front of a guest – along with experiencing a more positive behaviour and a stronger team connection. According to the highest EI scorer, Participant B1, EI is key, and unless it is implemented correctly, one cannot achieve success as EI must become second nature. A study by Langhorn (2004) used the EQ-i tool and assessed hospitality GMs, indicating that their performance depended on their awareness and ability to understand their emotions. This finding echoes the idea that understanding one's own emotions is critical to developing EI skills. In addition to this, maintaining healthy relations with others (interpersonal connections) is vital to providing managerial execution.

Considering the mixed EI scores gathered in this research and the EI literature related to leadership, EI lacks awareness and training among management personnel in five-star hotels. It is suggested that training development programmes on EI be prioritised in hotels to increase EI awareness and EI skills, ultimately resulting in the improved emotional and social abilities of staff and management and enhanced relationships with their guests (Scott-Halsell, Blum and Huffman, 2008). A company would benefit significantly from personnel developing emotional and social competencies,

eventually reducing staff turnover (Falahat et al., 2014) and occupational stress and increasing leadership ability, personal wellbeing, team performance (Shehu and Isa, 2017), and decision-making (Human Capital Institute and Multi-Health Systems, 2013). According to Bijon Dutta and Banerjee (2017), and Gholipour and Einolahzadeh (2017), comprehending the notion of EI in an organisation affects job satisfaction within employees, which eventually leads to reduced employee turnover.

The study also provides the five principal composite standard scores, which help to further the participants' EI skills. The scores generated show varied EI scores ranging from low to high EI level, highlighting the need for EI training, especially when compared to the leadership gold bar. The mean scores of all the five leading composites are in the mid-range quartile, showing room for improvement. In addition, 32% of the EI assessment participants reached the leadership gold bar, showing growth potential with further EI awareness and training. Viriyavidhayavongs and Jiamsuchon (2001) suggest that focusing on managerial EI development would allow to achieve organisational targets.

5.4 Interviews

The research findings obtained from the interviews indicate a mixed level of EI awareness among management personnel in five-star hotels. Participants, especially in HR roles, showed interest in including EI as part of their future training. It was discussed that, if the training were outsourced, the HR team could also participate in it rather than being the trainer. The benefits explained to them by the researcher provided enough information to make them understand the importance of implementing EI in their organisation. Participants who mentioned that they had included EI in their hotel shared their insight and belief of having their employees learn about EI and implement these skills as imperative for both the staff and their guests. They believed that EI had helped them communicate and better work together; in many ways, understanding and managing their emotions had been helpful to provide their guests with the level of high service that they wished to convey.

5.5 EI Training Implemented in Hotels

During the interviews, the managers were asked to mention incidents at the workplace where EI – or the lack of – was experienced. The COVID-19 pandemic, which has affected the hospitality industry, has tested all employees on various levels. However, it was shared with the researcher that considering all the changes and adjustments that the staff had to make, such as managers needing to assume managerial roles in other departments and staff helping in or switching to other departments, both managers and staff had been understanding and flexible and had shown exceptional support with each other and with the hotel administration. This situation indicated a certain level of EI within the organisation as adaptability, flexibility, and stress management are all part of the EI model. A better understanding of EI and a team aware and trained on EI would have helped significantly as the management and senior leaders had to make drastic and quick decisions that sometimes had to be altered from day to day due to the government's new rules and regulations. A team that are trained to understand and manage their emotions and those of others is prepared for situations that require emotional and social skills to handle such circumstances at the best of their abilities, while limiting the adverse reactions and consequences to a minimum (Trevino, 2020). According to Stein (2017, pp. 309-310), 'leaders with high emotional intelligence tend to be happier, less stressed, and generally have a better quality of life'.

During the interview, it was noted that interpersonal statements were mostly mentioned with a 25.7% frequency. This composite included empathy, social responsibility, and interpersonal relationships, and it also had the highest mean score out of all the composite mean scores. Coincidentally, stress management was mentioned second-most times with a frequency of 22.3% and the second-highest mean score of 102, meaning that the top mean scores were also mentioned the most during the interviews. A correlation of awareness, interest and EI composite skills by the management could indicate this observation. It was also analysed that 60% of those who gave interpersonal statements were female, and 40% were male. Decision-making was mentioned equally between males and females with 50% each.

5.6 Theoretical Contributions

The researcher has identified that EI increases team performance, trust between staff, staff retention, communication, and interpersonal skills. This is because social and emotional skills and the corresponding competencies of EI account for effective leadership (Viriyavidhayavongs and Jiamsuchon, 2001). The purpose of this research was to determine whether EI was being implemented among management teams in five-star hotels as well as to assess their level of interest in and awareness of EI. In addition, the researcher also aimed to determine their EI level as leaders with higher EI skills improve their teams' performance, satisfaction, and communication, leading to greater guest satisfaction.

The researcher agrees with the existing literature that EI improves leadership abilities and trust, hence creating better leaders at the workplace, and that better interpersonal skills improve relationships between team members, resulting in an enhanced work environment (EI Experience, 2018). The researcher found it hard to disagree with the implementation of EI since its competencies are all positive abilities leading to successful and positive contributions.

This study contributes to academic research by exploring the interest in and awareness of EI among management teams in hotels to integrate social and emotional abilities. The present study integrates the EQ-i 2.0 model to help understand EI skills and determine managers' EI level in five-star hotels in Malta. Additionally, it helps expand EI awareness and knowledge of how EI can help management improve their leadership skills. The study contributes to effective leadership studies in the context of EI and improves EI awareness and implementation. Given that research on EI levels of management and EI implementation within management in hospitality is close to non-existing, this contribution is particularly vital.

5.7 Practical Contributions

A service-based industry such as hospitality is dynamic; hence, staff and management need to be sharp, regularly trained, and well prepared for anything that comes their way. Hospitality has been growing year after year, and one cannot expect it to grow unless the people managing it do not grow along with it. EI literature has indicated that emotional intelligence helps people grow and educate themselves to improve their emotional and social skills, from which management, staff, guests, and companies would benefit. This research sheds light on emotional intelligence awareness and training within management teams in five-star hotels in Malta and provides insight into how EI can be measured.

The research analyses also showed that although not all management teams had experienced EI directly or were aware of the notion of EI and its competencies, the hospitality management within this research still practised EI unknowingly in their workplace. This was done by showing concern with the staff, demonstrating adaptability and flexibility when needed, and working under stressful circumstances while managing and addressing the situations at hand at the best of their abilities. They were considerate and helpful towards other staff when required and also understanding of people's individual needs and adapting to personal circumstances to help them.

Hospitality is a people-based service industry, and it is at the heart of the industry to serve and welcome their guests to the best of one's abilities. It has become increasingly significant and vital that the wellbeing of the hoteliers and staff – whether mental, social, or emotional – is addressed and given the attention that it truly deserves. This will impact the wellbeing of people working in hotels and that of the guests and all their families. People influence and are influenced by other people's actions and responses, whether good or bad. Developing emotional and social skills within this fast-growing industry by acknowledging and taking action is becoming increasingly crucial.

The researcher believes that these findings can help management teams and staff members in every hotel star segment and that the implementation of social and emotional skills can empower the workplace by building trust and increasing effective leadership. Understanding and managing one's own emotions and those of others are life changing to each individual, their families, and colleagues. According to Sharma (2019), employees with higher EI can more easily solve conflicts, manage work-related stress, better cooperate with others, and learn from their own interpersonal mistakes. Understanding and improving one's own EI will also result in greater self-control.

These findings indicate that hotels should include EI training and coaching as part of their professional development practice within their management teams and staff. To start, they should host an introductory session that addresses what EI is and why it is important in the workplace, which would set forth the EI awareness path, especially among those who are new to the notion. Participants should be allowed to express their own experiences and be free to ask questions to increase their interest and understanding. Another session would include the EI model and its five main composites and 15 building blocks. In-depth coaching sessions would address each main composite and sub-composite, while further group activities would help put these skills into practice. Team discussions and activities would help participants nurture EI skills further through shared experiences and questions. Effective training sessions would significantly increase emotion comprehension, regulation, and general EI abilities (Gill, Ramsey and Leberman, 2015), enabling the participants to have a comprehensive idea of EI's emotional and social skills.

Another session would then introduce the EI online measuring tool and what it entails. It is suggested that the EI assessment be done by each participant who wants to improve their EI abilities. The individual report generated for each questionnaire would then be discussed privately with each participant. Following these meetings, it is advised that a training development programme take place every week for one to two months. Six months after conducting the first assessment, the participants would then re-take the online EI assessment and determine the improved EI score after the

two-month programme. The gap between the end of the EI programme and the second EI assessment would give the participants time to put what they have learned into practice. Applying the exercises and activities that structure EI training sessions is helpful only when these are implemented and is considered the most crucial phase of learning EI.

CHAPTER 6: Conclusion

6.1 Conclusion

This research aimed to determine EI's level of interest and awareness within management and to assess whether EI skills were being developed among management teams in five-star hotels in Malta. Based on a qualitative analysis conducted through one-to-one interviews with management personnel, it became evident that not all five-star hotels were aware of the notion of EI; hence, it can be concluded that not all of them were directly developing the EI skills of their management teams. However, it was also apparent that while conducting the interviews, all the 11 participants showed interest in EI and its competencies. The EI of 22 managers was determined based on a quantitative analysis with a validated and reliable online EI assessment tool, the EQ-i 2.0. This assessment tool is a revised version of the renowned Reuven Bar-On's EQ-i measuring tool.

The varied EI scores resulting from the questionnaires reflected the qualitative analysis of the interviews. This is because participants with none to very little awareness of EI scored low- to mid-range quartiles, while those with a level of EI awareness scored mid- to high-range quartiles, with some also reaching the leadership gold bar. The t-test indicated that the difference in male and female EI scores was insignificant. The results also indicated that the management teams developing EI skills in their organisations were aware of the benefits and increased leadership abilities and sought to continue to include EI training. In contrast, management teams who had not been initially aware of the notion of EI before being contacted by the researcher were interested in including it as part of their EI development training. They also believed that administering EI assessment to both management and staff would be the best option for a company because everyone – and not only management – can benefit from an EI assessment and its implications.

The research clearly illustrates the need for EI awareness and implementation within five-star hotels in Malta and elicits the question of the availability of EI coaches and practitioners in Malta to provide organisations with professional EI training development.

6.2 Limitations of Research

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, interviewing and surveying hotel employees was not feasible since many had lost their jobs, worked remotely, or worked on reduced hours. Thus, only management personnel were asked to participate in this study.

Another limitation also due to the pandemic was that in the case of the interviews, most participants opted for an online conference rather than meeting in person. The researcher would have preferred a face-to-face encounter to create a better rapport with the interviewees. This arrangement may have also resulted in several potential participants not accepting to take part in the research.

The pre-tested validated EQ-i 2.0 questionnaire generated both raw and standard scores. However, as no information was available on how the raw scores were calculated into standard scores, the researcher had to rely on the standard scores provided by the company. Since the questionnaire results had to be purchased, a budget had to be allocated; hence, the total number of questionnaires was limited. After administering the questionnaires and purchasing the scores, the EI results obtained from the questionnaires could not be communicated back to the research sample as the company does not allow to share the scores of questionnaires administered for research purposes. The researcher needed to undertake the EQ-i 2.0 certification course to determine the management's EI scores while also purchasing the EI questionnaire scores herself. These were both purchased out of pocket and were not sponsored or supported by any agency, organisation, institute, or individual.

EI was perceived as an unfamiliar notion to some while also being a sensitive subject to discuss. Considering that the researcher was not a hospitality employee,

communicating with management staff from five-star hotels and sparking their interest in undergoing the assessment and interview was a limiting factor. Additionally, conducting research when said hotels were essentially closed due to the pandemic created a sample size limitation.

6.3 Recommendations for Future Research

Practitioners should consider implementing EI training development programmes and EI assessments for management teams based on these conclusions. Future research may address staff personnel instead of management by conducting further interviews and administering EI questionnaires from 5-star hotels or even from a different star segment to better understand the implications of these results. Further research may utilise the same methodology but on a larger sample and compare the results with the current study to determine whether the results are similar or not and why. Other researchers may administer an EI assessment with a sample of participants working in hospitality and then provide them with a certified EI training programme. A further EI assessment could then be administered again after an X amount of time to determine whether the participants have increased their EI score with the EI training provided and by how many EI points. This study could involve management or staff depending on the researchers' choice. Further research may include comparative studies on the impact of applying EI in hotels on employee satisfaction, customer satisfaction, employee turnover rates, and profitability.

The problem statement addressed the lack of EI awareness and knowledge within the hospitality industry in Malta, which could cause a stressful environment, lack of effective communication between staff and different departments, and lack of employee retention. These findings have reinforced the idea that EI helps ineffective leadership by building stronger teams through trust, communication, and improved interpersonal abilities. It is recommended that organisations invest in their employees' wellbeing, emotionally, socially, and mentally through continuous EI development training.

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APPENDIX A: Interview Procedure

Interviewee: _____

Date and Time: _____

Many thanks for agreeing to participate in my study through this interview. A pseudonym will be applied, and your personal replies will be kept in confidence. With your consent, for the purposes of transcribing and analysing the information, this interview will be digitally recorded for use in my thesis. Should you want to stop the interview any time, without justification, please let me know.

I would like begin by sharing with you what I hope to learn from my study. I am interested in your experiences, as a manager or general manager working in a 5-star hotel, in developing your EI. The aim is to gain knowledge about the awareness and interest of the notion of EI within 5-star hotels in Malta and if the hotel management is developing emotional intelligence skills in their organisation.

For this study, EI is defined as, (i) *"The ability to identify emotional intelligence in oneself and in others, (ii) The ability to manage emotional information in oneself and in others, and (iii) The ability to focus emotional energy on required behaviours to get things done."*

RQ 1: To determine the level of awareness and interest on EI within management teams in 5-star hotels.

RQ 2: To determine if hotel management are developing EI skills in their organisation.

1. What do you think are some of the benefits of EI in the workplace?
2. Do you think EI helps in building good relations and trust between management and staff?
3. Do you think that the management team listens to each? (whether in meetings, face to face, telephone communication…)

4. Do you feel that the management team practices "Open Communication" amongst themselves and with other employees?

5. What do you find the most challenging when discussing your views and expressing your emotions at the workplace with fellow managers or with an employee?

6. How did the team manage with adaptability to the new changes due to the current pandemic?

7. How important and beneficial do you think implementing EI is in enhancing a beneficial leadership style at the workplace and why?

8. Is EI part of the development or training programmes for management within your hotel?
    a. If yes, please describe what is being done.
    b. If not, why not?
        i. If not, would you consider including it as part of the development or training programmes?

9. Do you consider administering further EI assessments with management personnel and/or maybe with other employees to be beneficial to the hotel's development and success?
    a. Do you think there would be hesitation from some people to undergo further EI assessments and why?
    b. What would you say to those who might hesitate to undertake an EI assessment?

10. What are the signs / behaviours that you observe that indicate that EI is being or not being used within the hotel culture?

11. How has the use of EI changed you as a person and the way you manage your team / department?

12. How do you display EI in your work?

APPENDIX B: Research Consent Form in English

Title of Research: The Implementation of Emotional Intelligence within Management Teams in 5-star Hotels in Malta.

Researcher: Lydia Xuereb, 463287(m)

Degree: MBA in International Hospitality Management

Dear Sir / Madam,

I, Lydia Xuereb, a student at the Institute of Tourism Studies am currently in the final year of my MBA in International Hospitality Management. I am carrying out research on 'The Implementation of Emotional Intelligence within Management Teams in 5-star Hotels in Malta'.

I would like to explore your views on this matter by asking you some questions. The purpose of this form is to provide you with information so you can decide whether to participate in this study. Any questions you may have will be answered by the researcher.

There are no known risks related with this research project other than possible discomfort with the following:

- You will be asked to be honest when answering questions.

The information in the study records will be kept strictly confidential. All data will be stored securely and will be made available only to those individuals conducting the study. No reference will be made in oral or written reports that could link you to the study. Your identity will not be revealed in any publications that result from this study.

You can terminate your participation at any time without prejudice. You also do not have to answer individual questions you don't want to answer. Your name will not be attached to the questionnaire and I will ensure that your participation remains confidential.

Participant's declaration

I have read this consent form and am giving the opportunity to the researcher to ask questions. I hereby grant permission to use the information I provide as data in the above-mentioned research project, knowing that it will be kept confidential and without use of my name.

Personalised invitation email sent to participants to take the EQ-i 2.0 assessment

Participant's Name	Participant's Signature	Date

Researcher's Name	Researcher's Signature	Date

APPENDIX C: Research Consent Form in Maltese

Titlu tar-riċerka: The Implementation of Emotional Intelligence within Management
                           Teams in 5-star Hotels in Malta.

Riċerkatur: Lydia Xuereb, 463287(m)

Degree: MBA in International Hospitality Management

Għażiż Sinjur / Sinjura,

Jiena, Lydia Xuereb, studenta tal-Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS) bħalissa qiegħda fl-aħħar
sena tal-MBA tiegħi fil-Management Internazzjonali tal-Ospitalità. Qiegħda inwettaq riċerka
dwar, 'The Implementation of Emotional Intelligence within Management Teams in 5-star
Hotels in Malta'.

Nixtieq nesplora l-opinjonijiet tiegħek dwar din il-kwistjoni billi nsaqsik xi mistoqsijiet. L-
iskop ta 'din il-formola huwa li jipprovdilek informazzjoni sabiex tkun tista' tiddeċiedi jekk
tipparteċipax f'dan l-istudju. Kwalunkwe mistoqsija li jista' jkollok tiġi mwieġba mir-
riċerkatur.

M'hemm l-ebda riskju magħruf relatat ma 'dan il-proġett ta' riċerka għajr skumdità possibbli
b'dan li ġej:

• Int se tintalab biex tkun onest/a meta twieġeb il-mistoqsijiet.

L-informazzjoni fir-rekords tal-istudju tinżamm strettament kunfidenzjali. L-informazzjoni
kollha tinħażen b'mod sigur u tkun disponibbli biss għal dawk l-individwi li jwettqu l-istudju.
Ma ssir l-ebda referenza f'rapporti orali jew bil-miktub li jistgħu jorbtuk mal-istudju. L-
identità tiegħek ma tkun żvelata fl-ebda pubblikazzjoni li tirriżulta minn dan l-istudju.

Tista 'ttemm il-parteċipazzjoni tiegħek fi kwalunkwe ħin mingħajr preġudizzju. M'għandekx għalfejn twieġeb mistoqsijiet individwali li ma tridx twieġeb. Ismek mhux se jkun mehmuż mal-kwestjonarju u jiena niżgura li l-parteċipazzjoni tiegħek tibqa 'kunfidenzjali.

Dikjarazzjoni tal-parteċipant

Jiena qrajt din il-formola ta' kunsens u qed nagħti l-opportunità lir-riċerkatur biex tistaqsini mistoqsijiet. B'dan nagħti permess biex nuża l-informazzjoni li nipprovdi bħala dejta fil-proġett ta' riċerka msemmi hawn fuq, billi naf li se tinżamm kunfidenzjali u mingħajr l-użu ta' ismi.

Participant's Name	Participant's Signature	Date

Researcher's Name	Researcher's Signature	Date

APPENDIX D: EQ-i Certificate

EQ-i 2.0™
assess. predict. perform.

EQ 360
assess. predict. perform.

CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION

This is to certify that

Lydia Xuereb

Has successfully completed the **EQ-i 2.0 + EQ 360 Certification Program**

Facilitated by KinchLyons on behalf of MHS Inc.

And is now qualified to purchase and use the EQ-i 2.0 / EQ 360

Completed: 12/24/2020

Hazel Wheldon, M.A.
Chief Executive Officer
Multi-Health Systems Inc.

Approved CCE Hours	
Core Competencies	9.25
Resource Development	6.75

MHS® TALENT

CCE
Continuing Coach Education
International Coach Federation

APPENDIX E: EQ-i Request for Assessment

(Automatic email from MHS.com)

Dear _____ ,

Emotional Intelligence (EI) refers to a distinct combination of emotional and social skills and competencies that influence our overall capability to cope effectively with the demands and pressures of work and life. I would like you to complete an online emotional intelligence assessment instrument, the Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i). Incorporating more than 20 years' research and development, the EQ-i is a psychometrically sound, validated assessment instrument that is applied to EI assessment and development at individual, team, and organisational levels. The EQ-i is one of the most respected and recognised EI assessment instruments worldwide and it will provide us with a robust and intuitive framework to address questions related to leadership.

Your assessment answers and results will be held in the strictest confidence. I am the only person who will see your results or be able to access them.

In order for the results to reflect your behaviours and feelings as accurately as possible, please take approximately 20 minutes of uninterrupted time to complete the instrument. EI involves the most effective engagement of a combination of skills and competencies that best match the context of your unique situations. Therefore, there are no right or wrong answers.

In order to access the EQ-i, click <Link>. You must complete the questions in one sitting or the system will not save your answers and you will need to start over from the beginning.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions about the EQ-i.

Sincerely,

Lydia Xuereb

APPENDIX F: EQ-i 2.0 Model and Benefits

APPENDIX G: Literature Review

Every person with high EI can react to criticism in their own way. Certain individuals are more empathetic and may wonder for what reason an individual has criticised them or try to comprehend how a critical expression might affect their functioning relationship. Other people handle criticism by hoping to root-cause an item deformity, deliberately taking apart every progression that paves the way to what they have been reprimanded for, in way similar to that of a process engineer. Their initial thinking would be to know and fix precisely what went wrong. Examples of denial, such as saying, 'My presentation was perfectly fine' when it was not or 'Those rules don't concern and apply to me', show that these people are so guarded and their personalities so delicate that they are not prepared for constructive criticism. What they are essentially stating is 'There is no issue; the presentation was great. If you did not enjoy it, you have an issue with your judgment, not with my presentation'. Other people may place blame on others, which is the implicit affirmation that constructive criticism is justified (i.e. the results were inferior) combined with a reluctance to concede any own fault (Murphy, 2016).

In 2013, David Rude presented his dissertation for Doctor of Education on 'experiential and situated learning to discern how EI develops' (p.vii) by examining the experiences of Federal Government executives in building their EI. Rude (2013) assessed the Federal Government leaders with a validated EI tool and interviewed 11 of these leaders to comprehend their EI developmental activities. His research contributed to several theories of EI, leadership, and leadership development.

In addition, EI is a crucial part of leadership and management in any organisation (Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee, 2013). When it comes to management, '…EI is considered as a major factor of effective leadership within leadership literature…' (Kerr, Garvin, Heaton and Boyle, 2006, p.265). A study conducted by the Human Capital Institute and Multi-Health Systems (2013, p.16) found that 'organisations that value and widely use EI are 3.2x more likely than other organisations to have effective overall leadership development efforts'.

APPENDIX H: Explanation Email

Dear _____ ,

I am reading for an MBA degree in International Hospitality Management with the Institute of Tourism Studies and I am currently at the stage of starting my thesis research on the topic of Emotional Intelligence, with the respective title of, "The Implementation of Emotional Intelligence within Management Teams in 5-star Hotels in Malta".

As an Emotional Intelligence certified practitioner, my research methodology will consist of an Emotional Intelligence Assessment (an online questionnaire) and interviews. The online questionnaire will measure the Emotional Intelligence of the participant through several questions on five main composites. The EQ-i 2.0 Emotional Intelligence assessment that I will use is an advanced and thoroughly researched measure of emotional intelligence in the assessment industry and will take 10 - 30 minutes to complete.

The interviews will be conducted to discuss the topic of Emotional Intelligence and its implementation, interest and awareness within the management and organisation. All information will be dealt with the strictest of confidentiality and anonymity.

I seek to administer the online Emotional Intelligence (EI) assessment and interviews with Managers from every 5-star hotel. General Managers and HR Managers are highly encouraged to take part in this research. The interviews may be held online due to the current situation.

Your knowledge and assistance would be highly appreciated should you accept to participate in my research study. More information will be communicated accordingly. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Many thanks.

Kind regards,
Lydia Xuereb