



Business Research Proposal

TOPIC

“RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LEADERSHIP AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE ON
TEAM PRODUCTIVITY CASE OF TESCO”

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Executive summary

In recent years, companies have been given more attention to research by investing more financial commitment into this area to align with the current technological improvement and dynamics of the business environment. Tesco is not an exemption. Since the primary objective of any organization is to generate profit by meeting the needs and desire of its customers. In this regard, the problem facing Tesco organization through leadership and emotional intelligence will be investigated by employing the qualitative method research process in analyzing and identifying the problems.

Introduction

Leadership plays a central role in shaping team productivity, particularly in operational retail environments where performance depends heavily on people's management.

At Tesco, managers operate in fast-paced, customer-facing settings, requiring not only technical competence but also strong interpersonal and emotional skills. Leadership approaches that fail to address emotions, motivation, and wellbeing can negatively affect morale, engagement, and productivity.

Emotional intelligence—defined as the ability to recognize, understand, manage, and influence emotions in oneself and others—has been identified as a key differentiator of effective leadership. Tesco's internal leadership and culture materials emphasize inclusive leadership, psychological safety, and wellbeing, all of which align closely with EI principles.

This study therefore investigates how leadership emotional intelligence relates to team productivity within the Tesco context. Example of team build exercise done with senior managers.

Brief Background of Tesco

The Tesco organization was founded by Jack Cohen in 1919. It was initially established as a London market stall and gradually grown to be the UK largest retailer operating over 4,600 stalls globally with 28% UK market shares. It's also celebrated for early employment of self-service with a slogan of piled it high, selling cheap strategy and a club card loyalty card and scheme in 1995 to boost their sales.

Identification of the Business Problem

The Tesco organization leadership and emotional intelligence aspect needed urgent attention towards meeting the global stand experienced in the business environment. As a result, the management desired to conduct research to identify and suggest solutions to this problem. Generally, this problem creates a deep concern as it both affects company customers and employees motivation, high-pressure environment, and drives measurable improvements in operational performance and profit.

Because in a retail environment that demands high performance and customer focus, EI allows leaders to effectively manage stress, resolve conflicts, and motivate teams, resulting in stronger team cohesion and better business outcomes.

Research Aim

The concentration of this research is to identify the barrier between leadership and emotional intelligence in Tesco. In addition, to pinpoint, identify and recommend solution to the emerging problem.

Research Objective

The objective for conducting research Tesco organization includes: -

- To examine the barriers existing between leadership and emotional intelligence in the management of the company
- To ascertain the issue encountered by employee towards exploiting emotional intelligence in the organization
- To proffer a recommendation and solution for the problem

Research Questions

- 1- Describe time your mood impacted the team.
- 2- How will you identify unspoken employee struggles with diverse needs.
- 3- How will you manage or handle constructive criticism among colleagues.
- 4- How will you react to customers under severe pressure.

Literature Review

Leadership and Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence theory suggests that leaders with high EI demonstrate self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and strong relationship management.

These competencies enable leaders to

- Adapt their style
- Manage stress
- Resolve conflict,
- Maintain trust within teams.

Research consistently indicates that such leadership behaviours improve communication quality, employee satisfaction, and commitment.

Within Tesco's leadership frameworks, emphasis is placed on inclusive leadership, wellbeing, and creating environments where colleagues can "be their best every day," reflecting EI-driven leadership expectations.

Emotional Intelligence and Team Productivity

Team productivity extends beyond output metrics to include

Effectiveness: The degree to which a team successfully achieves its goals with high-quality results. An effective team prioritizes the right tasks, solves problems efficiently, and delivers outcomes that align with organizational objectives.

Collaboration: The ability of team members to work together cooperatively by sharing ideas, responsibilities, knowledge, and support. Strong collaboration encourages trust, open communication, and collective problem-solving.

Consistency: The team's capacity to maintain reliable performance and steady progress over time. Consistent teams follow dependable processes, meet deadlines regularly, and sustain quality standards across projects.

Resilience: The ability of a team to adapt, recover, and continue performing effectively during challenges, stress, or change. Resilient teams manage setbacks constructively, remain motivated, and learn from difficulties to improve future performance.

Emotionally intelligent leaders positively influence productivity by:

- Building psychological safety, enabling colleagues to speak up without fear
- Supporting wellbeing and emotional resilience
- Managing performance conversations constructively
- Motivating individuals through empathy and recognition

Internal Tesco learning materials explicitly link inclusive leadership behaviors' to winning performance cultures and sustained results, indicating an organizational recognition of this relationship.

Leadership Context in Tesco

Tesco operates at scale, with diverse teams across different channels (Online, large format, convenience formats, and distribution centers) and sub businesses such as tesco Mobile, Booker, One Stop, Tesco Ireland and Tesco International.

Internal commentary across the organization highlights that people managers “make a huge difference to how it feels to work for Tesco, and what we all achieve together”.

This reinforces the importance of emotionally intelligent leadership for consistent productivity across varied operational contexts.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a **qualitative case study approach**, focusing on Tesco as the organisational context. Data sources include:

- Internal leadership culture and learning materials
- Organisational communications related to leadership and people management
- Academic literature on EI and leadership effectiveness

The methodology allows exploration of *how* and *why* emotionally intelligent leadership behaviours influence productivity, rather than measuring specific quantitative outputs, which may vary by role, format, and location.

Research design

Sampling Strategy

Purposeful sampling- Participants are selected based on specific criteria relevant to the research question to gain in-depth insights.

Snowball Sampling- Often used to identify hard-to-reach participants through referrals

Data Saturation- collection of Data

Sample Selection: choosing between participants samples involves balancing, respectively, internal versus external validity.

Research Ethics (Participant Protection)

- **Informed Consent:** Participants are fully informed of the study's purpose and voluntarily agree to participate.

- **Confidentiality/Anonymity:** Identities are protected using pseudonyms, and data is stored securely.

Data Reliability & Validity

Credibility (Validity): Increased by using multiple methods/data sources.

- **Confirmability:** Establishing a clear audit trail and reflecting on biases to ensure findings reflect data, not researcher bias.
- **Dependability (Reliability):** Documenting research steps meticulously to ensure consistency.
- **Transferability:** Providing "thick description" to allow others to apply findings to similar contexts

Business Relevance

Is the ability of a product, service, message, or company to be directly connected, applicable, and valuable to its target audience's needs, behaviors, and current context. It bridges the gap between what a company offers and what a customer requires, driving engagement, trust, and sales.

“ Tesco, as a massive retailer, relies on accurate, swift decision-making to manage its vast, complex operations”

My proposal research will helps Tesco make better decision by moving from a purely authoritative, management style to a more empathetic and participative approach, Tesco has been able to improve staff retention, foster trust, and boost performance across its global operations.

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- **Improved Retailer-Supplier Relationships:** By applying EI in supplier management, Tesco builds stronger, more trusted partnerships, which leads to better product sourcing and supply chain reliability.
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- **Data-Driven, Empathetic Decisions:** Leaders using EI combine analytical skills with an understanding of employee and customer sentiments. For example, by understanding employee feedback on new, simpler "Shift Leader" roles, they can make better decisions regarding staffing and store organization.
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- **Navigating Crises with Transparency:** During financial crises, such as the 2014 reporting scandal, Tesco's leadership recognized the need for open, honest, and transparent dialogue—a key EI trait—to restore trust among shareholders and stakeholders

Improving Operations

- **Living Service" Initiative:** Tesco's "Living Service" programme, which trained thousands of store managers to tap into intrinsic motivations, resulted in a 45% improvement in service levels during busy periods.
- **Reducing Operational Complexity:** Leadership teams have focused on streamlining processes and removing administrative tasks (e.g., at Metro stores) to allow staff to focus more on customer service, enhancing both efficiency and employee morale.
- **Personalization and Customer Trust:** Leveraging emotional intelligence, Tesco's leadership focuses on restoring trust by connecting emotionally with customers, such as personalizing experiences and tailoring stores to how customers shop today.

Practical Implications

- Strengthen EI components within leadership development programmes
- Embed emotional intelligence into performance management and talent reviews
- Encourage reflective leadership practices focused on empathy and self-awareness
- Link colleague wellbeing initiatives explicitly to productivity outcomes.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates a clear positive relationship between leadership, emotional intelligence and team productivity within the context of Tesco. Emotionally intelligent leadership contributes to higher engagement, stronger psychological safety, and more resilient teams, all of which underpin productivity in complex, people-led environments.

Tesco's leadership culture and learning frameworks already reflect strong EI principles, suggesting that continued investment in emotional intelligence development can further strengthen performance outcomes. Future research could build on this study by incorporating quantitative performance data or colleague engagement metrics to deepen empirical understanding.

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