

## The Impact of Emotional Intelligence on Religious Leadership

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**ABSTRACT.** This paper examines the influence of emotional intelligence (EI) on religious leadership, with an emphasis on pastors serving in Neo-Protestant Christian contexts. Drawing on major theoretical models of EI, including those of Mayer and Salovey, Bar-On, and Goleman, the study explores how core EI competencies such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management shape leadership behaviors within religious communities. A systematic review was conducted following PRISMA guidelines, using scientific databases to identify peer-reviewed studies published between 2007 and 2025. Out of 140 initial sources, eight studies met all inclusion criteria. Their findings collectively indicate that EI contributes both directly and indirectly to effective pastoral leadership. Higher EI is associated with leadership styles marked by empathy, collaboration, principled behavior, conflict-resolution ability, and servant-oriented practices. Studies consistently highlight emotional self-regulation, empathy, and communication as essential components for managing complex interpersonal dynamics within churches. Deficits in EI skills, particularly self-regulation and social skills, correlate with reduced leadership effectiveness, diminished congregational trust, and difficulty managing organizational challenges. The review underscores a recurring gap across theological education programs, which often neglect emotional development despite its demonstrated impact on ministry effectiveness. The paper concludes by recommending the integration of EI training into pastoral preparation and calls for future research to develop validated EI instruments for religious contexts and to design targeted training interventions for spiritual leaders.

**Keywords:** Emotional Intelligences, Religion, Leadership

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## INTRODUCTION

Religious leadership is not just an administrative function or a spiritual responsibility, but also a continuous process of interaction and influence on the religious community. Pastors are not only preachers, but also counselors, mediators, community leaders - people who work with other people and bear responsibility for the souls of others. In this context, emotional intelligence plays an essential role in defining effective religious leadership.

This research explores how emotional intelligence influences religious leadership. To successfully manage complex situations, be able to resolve conflicts, and provide emotional support to parishioners, pastors need a set of interpersonal skills. Although these skills are essential in any humanistic field, pastoral training tends to focus on theology and doctrine, while aspects related to emotional intelligence are completely neglected. For a clearer understanding, it is important to clarify what the vocation of a pastor means. The vocation of pastor involves being a spiritual leader of the church, and brings with it multiple roles such as: preacher, counselor, mediator. In Romanian culture, we identify two major categories of Churches: traditional and new Churches. Traditional Churches are, in general, churches that have at least 100 years of activity/existence in Romania as an organized denomination. The Romanian Orthodox Church, the Catholic Church, the Greek Catholic Church and the Protestant Churches are the denominations that perceive themselves as traditional historical churches. Neo-Protestant Churches (Baptists, Pentecostals, Seventh-Day Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses) are perceived by the other churches as newcomers (Muntean, 2005).

This distinction is important because the role of the pastor and the priest is different depending on the categorization. Although there are similarities in pastoral activities, such as preaching the Scriptures, officiating at baptisms, weddings, and funerals, there are also differences in pastoral practice. Pastors of Neo-Protestant Churches are directly involved in community life, having a more informal relationship with parishioners. (Muntean, 2005) For example, in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, pastoral activities include tasks such as: visiting members at home, active missionary work, premarital and marital counseling. In traditional Churches, the priest has a much more dogmatic role and the relationship with parishioners is much more formal. For example, in the Orthodox Church, there are rituals that are not present in neo-Protestant denominations, such as: Sfătul (the consecration of houses and workplaces) or Parastas (Commemoration of the dead).

In this context, in this paper we explore religious leadership in the contexts of Neo-Protestant Churches, in which pastors have an active leadership role and we seek to answer the questions: "Does emotional intelligence influence the leadership style adopted?" and "What are the main components of emotional intelligence necessary for effective religious leadership?"

### **The Concept of Emotional Intelligence**

Emotional intelligence is conceptualized through several theoretical models that have been developed over the years.

The first model of emotional intelligence was proposed by Mayer & Salovey in 1990 and revised in 1997 and 2004. Initially, the Mayer & Salovey model defines emotional intelligence as a subset of social intelligence, which involves the ability to monitor one's own feelings and emotions, as well as those of others, to differentiate between them, and to use this information to guide a person's thinking and actions. (Mayer & Salovey, 1990). The authors propose three dimensions of emotional intelligence: recognizing and expressing one's own and others' emotions, emotional regulation, and using emotions in flexible planning, creative thinking, redirected attention, and motivation. In 1997, Mayer & Salovey completed this model with a fourth dimension of emotional intelligence, creating the four-branch model that contains the following dimensions: the ability to perceive emotions, to use emotions to facilitate thinking, the ability to understand emotions, and to manage emotions. (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). The model was revised in 2004 and 2016, with the authors adding other subbranches. In 2016, the authors expanded the model based on new scientific discoveries in the field and the development of cognitive psychology.

Contrary to the four-branch model proposed by Mayer, Caruso and Salovey, the Bar-On model proposes a different approach and considers emotional intelligence as an intersection between emotional and social competencies, skills and facilitators, which determine how effectively we understand and express ourselves, how well we understand others and are able to empathize with them, and the extent to which we can cope with daily demands. (Bar-On, 2006). The model is mainly based on the intrapersonal ability to be aware of one's self, to understand one's strengths and point to improve and to experience one's emotions and thoughts in a desirable way. On the interpersonal side, being emotionally and socially intelligent means having the ability to be aware of other people's needs, feelings and emotions, and also to build and keep balanced and meaningful relationships. Finally, being socio-emotional intelligent means being able to successfully manage changes in the personal, social and environmental areas, through an ongoing adaptation to immediate situations, and through problem solving and decision-making skills (Bar-On, 2006).

The emotional intelligence model developed by Daniel Goleman introduces a new approach, namely emotional intelligence in the organizational environment and the context of leadership. In addition to the general conceptualization of emotional intelligence, Goleman explores its impact on performance at work, in the organization and in leadership, arguing that an effective leader has a high level of emotional intelligence. (Gayathri & Meenakshi, 2013). Goleman (1998) conceptualizes emotional intelligence as a learned ability, based on emotional intelligence, that leads to very good performance at work. Boyatzis, Goleman, & Rhee (2000) consider that a person is emotionally intelligent when he/she demonstrates competencies such as: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and social skills when a particular situation requires and also in appropriate ways, with sufficient frequency to be effective in the given situation.

### **Emotional Intelligence and Effective Leadership**

To understand the impact of emotional intelligence in a religious context, it is important to understand its role in leadership in general. To this end, we reviewed the literature on the relationship between emotional intelligence and effective leadership.

Emotional intelligence is very important in the field of leadership, because it has an impact on the effectiveness of leaders and on the organizational climate. Leaders with a high level of emotional intelligence manage the emotions and needs of those around them better, strengthening trusting relationships and performance in the organization. (Kour & Ansari, 2024). Empirical research has demonstrated a consistent positive correlation between emotional intelligence and leadership effectiveness. Empirical research has demonstrated a consistent positive correlation between emotional intelligence and leadership effectiveness. Based on the study conducted by Kour & Ansari in 2024, we identify the following behaviors of leaders with a high level of emotional intelligence: good communication skills, express thoughts clearly, listen carefully and actively, and are able to adapt their communication style depending on the context. They have the ability to make effective decisions based on rational analysis and integrating emotional factors into the decision-making process. Effective leaders recognize and manage their own emotional states, facilitate honest discussions, and reach solutions that are beneficial to all parties involved. At the same time, they are able to understand and address the emotional needs of staff, creating a conducive environment and providing appropriate recognition to subordinates (Kour & Ansari, 2024). Goleman and Cherniss (2024) list a series of behaviors specific to leaders with high emotional intelligence, namely: empathy, the ability

to manage one's own emotions, the ability to influence, awareness of the emotional impact on others, the correct and authentic expression of emotions, the ability to provide constructive feedback and the ability to recognize and manage one's own emotions in crisis or high-tension situations.

Another important aspect of leaders with high emotional intelligence is that they have the ability to influence the behavior of subordinates and shape the culture of the organization. They can promote a positive work environment based on trust, respect, and psychological safety, can enhance employee organizational commitment, and can contribute to improving team dynamics through communication and collaboration (Kour & Ansari, 2024). A leader with a high level of emotional intelligence can have a significant impact on employee performance, and studies show that the impact of emotional intelligence is twice as high as that of IQ (Goleman & Cherniss, 2024).

Goleman and his colleagues introduced the concept of "primal leadership" to identify the fundamental principle of leadership, namely that the primary task of leaders is to generate positive emotions in subordinates. The authors emphasize that the primary work of a leader is emotional in nature (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002). To describe the dynamics of leadership, the authors use the term "attunement" instead of the term "alignment". Alignment refers to the establishment of a common goal at the team or organizational level, while synchronization emphasizes the relationship between team members and its quality. In this context, leadership becomes a group function, in which the leader influences the dynamics of the team through his emotions. He becomes an emotional guide, shapes the affective climate of the team and leads it towards a state of resonance, that is, a climate in which each member has the chance to explore his potential. When the leader uses control methods based on fear or shame, he will create a climate based on dissonance, which will negatively affect the emotional dynamics of the group (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002). Emotional intelligence is presented as a dynamic condition that can be learned through the lens of emotional skills. The authors divide emotional competence into two general areas, classified into four categories: (1) Personal competences include self-awareness (the ability to understand one's own emotions and their impact on others), self-assessment and self-confidence, and self-management (emotional self-control, transparency, adaptability, goal orientation, initiative, and optimism). (2) Social competences include social awareness (empathy, organizational awareness, i.e., understanding organizational relationships and politics), service orientation, and the ability to manage relationships through inspirational leadership, influence, and development of others. The leader is the catalyst for change, facilitates conflict management and connection building, and has the ability to work in a team and coordinate. The authors emphasize that an effective leader should possess at least one competency from each of the

four categories of emotional intelligence. Goleman and the authors describe six leadership styles based on emotional intelligence: visionary leadership, coaching leadership, affiliative leadership, democratic leadership, pacesetting leadership, and commanding leadership. An effective leader is able to navigate these styles depending on the context and the need determined by the situation (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002). A common myth in the field of leadership is that true leaders are born, but the literature challenges this claim, arguing that leadership skills can be learned. Old behaviors can change and it is possible to develop emotional intelligence, but self-awareness and natural and timely feedback from others are crucial. This learning style involves training the limbic system through experience, practice, and emotional involvement. To learn to develop emotional intelligence, the individual's desire to make a change and grow is needed, an environment that supports change and provides the opportunity to practice new behaviors, and constant repetition so that new behaviors become habits (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002).

Caruso, Fleming, and Spector (2014) approach emotionally intelligent leadership through the lens of Mayer and Salovey's model, in which emotional intelligence is seen as a set of four interconnected cognitive skills, with the help of which the effective leader is able to perceive, understand, use, and manage his or her own and others' emotions. In this way, the leader is able to make good decisions, build healthy and stable relationships, and thus contribute to organizational performance. It is essential that these skills are used consciously and not intuitively. Emotional intelligence is essential for effective leadership. It is not a fixed trait, it is not innate, it is a skill that can be learned through awareness and practice. Navigating complex environments requires emotional stability, awareness of emotions, their management, flexibility in adopting leadership styles so that leaders can make good decisions, balance organizational success and subordinate satisfaction.

### **Religious Leadership**

Religious leadership is a key area of study and practice within practical theology. Leadership is important at both the community or congregational level and at the institutional level of religious life. The history of religious leadership, whether exercised by clergy, laity, or a combination of both, dates back to biblical times. However, the exact role and meaning of this leadership style are subjects of ongoing debate in both academic and church circles. Biblical texts provide clear guidance on the qualities of a religious leader, but the influence of fields such as business, social science, and political studies has left its mark on contemporary perceptions of leadership in the church (Jenkins, 2012).

Religious leadership is defined as leadership exercised in religious contexts by individuals who identify with that particular context, including church leaders from various Christian traditions, and leaders from other religious communities or non-profit organizations, that have an explicit religious purpose (Storey et al., 2017).

As part of practical theology, religious leadership shares its normative, theological, and even eschatological orientation, being concerned with both enlightenment and the promotion of health in faith communities and religious organizations. Religious leadership is part of practical theology and the goal is to help religious communities develop in the life of faith. Researchers are usually influenced by the values of the denomination to which they belong, but often collaborate with people from other faiths. The field of religious leadership explores areas of study about leadership itself, organizational behavior, management, resource management, finance, conflict management, power dynamics, change processes, and professional ethics (Jinkins, 2012).

Management researcher Robert Greenleaf offers a conceptualization of religious leadership as “servant leadership.” The author’s goal was to change the public’s perception of the relationship between leader and follower. (Jinkins, 2012; Smith 2005). The theory states that a successful leader is primarily willing to serve others. The author argues that it is possible to combine the roles of servant and leader. This fusion was authentically portrayed by Jesus Christ, whose work on earth is a perfect example of servant leadership (Giorgiov, 2016). The servant leader is characterized by a sincere desire to serve and help others. His goal is not the intention to exercise power to achieve personal goals (Smith, 2005). The conscious decision to serve others automatically leads him to lead. The servant leader’s priority is to ensure that the needs of those around him are met. The success of this leadership style boils down to the questions: Do those served grow and develop as people? While being served, do they become healthier, wiser, freer, more eager to serve in turn? (Greenleaf, 2002). The servant leader’s goal is to persuade people’s desire to become better, and organizational success is an implicit result of servant leadership. (Smith, 2005). James MacGregor Burns defines leadership as the ability to influence followers to act towards the fulfillment of common goals. Transformational leadership involves moral and personal development of both leaders and followers (Burns, 1978). Rowan Williams, an Anglican theologian, says of religious leadership that it is a form of communicative theology, that is, it is the ability to witness the Gospel in such a way that it is relevant in multiple cultural contexts and can be understood by any population. In this approach, leadership involves an openness to other areas of knowledge, especially that of organizational behavior and managerial practices (Williams, 2000).

When we talk about religious leadership, we cannot omit the biblical vision of it. The New Testament presents a counterintuitive vision of leadership, exemplified by Jesus Christ, who refuses domination and promotes the shepherd model, focused on care, protection, and spiritual shepherding of the community. The Chronicles of the Old Testament recount the lives of great leaders such as Moses, Joshua, kings such as David or Solomon, each distinguished by skills that current specialized literature recognizes as fundamental to successful leadership. At the same time, the Old Testament portrays God as a supreme, jealous ruler with an authoritarian leadership style. In contrast, the New Testament presents a God incarnate in human flesh, who assumes the role of unconventional leader for Jewish cultural traditions. Through His pastoral leadership style, Jesus Christ refused to rule over others and presented us with a leadership style characterized by service. The New Testament approach to leadership favors the image of the pastor. The apostle, presbyter, or elder invested with authority is considered the shepherd of the community. The pastor has the responsibility to guard the community from internal and external dangers (Jinkins, 2012). The Early Christian Church was characterized by a hierarchical structure, in which leadership functions developed progressively. In this context, the central mission of spiritual leaders was to preserve the continuity of faith, to protect the spiritual integrity of the emerging Church, and to shepherd parishioners towards a pious life based on the moral principles and values of Christ's teachings.

In the first half of the 20th century, depending on the geographical and religious context, the role of the religious leader was to perpetuate traditional interpretations of religious sources and truths. These interpretations were made by religious leaders, who received theological training within their own tradition. The classical model involved maintaining religious traditions and caring for souls within a parish. In this way, they consolidated a symbolic world through which the meaning of life at that time was understood (Storey et al., 2017). In the second half of the 20th century, there was a shift in the way religious leaders understood the pastoral calling. The focus shifted from tradition and institution to the individual. The development of the field of psychology also impacted the practice of religious leaders, generating new professional standards for the practice and training of pastoral care. (Storey et al., 2017). Three leadership styles dominated Protestant congregations: the pastoral director, the pastor, and the spiritual guide (Jinkins, 2012). In the pastoral director model, the leader has the primary responsibility to build and unify the Church into the people of God. His mission is to, as a leader, urge God's people to service and fulfill the divine mission in the local community and in the world (Jinkins, 2012; Niebuhr, 1956).

Seward Hiltner, one of the main founders of pastoral theology as a modern discipline, conceptualized ministry through the lens of “shepherding.” He understood shepherding in accordance with two other perspectives, namely communication and organization. In this model, the pastor as a religious leader promotes the organization of the Church as a unitary body. Each individual member is connected and supports each other. The head of the body is Christ. In other words, the Church is made up of organs that make up one body, of which Christ is the head. The role of the pastor is to nourish the Church with spiritual food and to protect it, to protect it from external and internal threats (Jinkins, 2012; Hiltner, 1958). The leader aims for the organization to be healthy, to grow and mature, to be able to adapt to new changes in the environment. Stability, resilience and achievement of goals define the success of religious leadership. The leader has the role of motivating and maintaining the emotional balance of the religious community. To achieve these goals, the leader must have a stable, well-defined identity, not confused with the anxieties and conflicts of the community (Jinkins, 2012; Friedman, 1985).

Storey et al. (2017) address the challenges of religious leadership in the modern era, characterized by religious and community diversity. If in the past, the religious leader dictated community norms that had to be followed by the collective, today, individualism puts its mark on religiousness and leadership. Because of postmodern individualism, people feel entitled to create their own religious system. Blind obedience to a religious institution or identification with it no longer represents the standard experience of religiosity. Consequently, religious leaders must become more actively involved in the individual spiritual development of parishioners. In addition, they must understand the personal processes of attribution of meaning of each member in order to understand how to mobilize people within religious communities. In the contemporary context, religious leadership is undergoing a transition from a model centered on the institution and formal religiosity, to individualized spiritual guidance. The emphasis is placed on the personal spiritual development of parishioners with a focus on spiritual experiences. Thus, in addition to the function of representatives of the institution, religious leaders receive a new task, namely, to act as guides in spiritual development. The author presents two models of religious leadership, the modern and the postmodern. In the modern model, the leader is a central figure, with hierarchical authority and has privileged access to sources of religious teaching. The leadership style is characterized by command and control over parishioners. People are faithful members of a religious institution, and religious identity is characterized by tradition and formality. In the postmodern model, the role of the religious leader is redefined. The leader is characterized

by availability for collaboration, authenticity, and public responsibility. Believers have the freedom to personalize religious experience, preserving elements of tradition, but at the same time personalizing their spiritual identity according to their own needs and interests. The leader is no longer the representative of institutional authority, but a guide in the personal spiritual development of each believer who supports diversity within the religious community. Religious discourse also changes, becoming more oriented towards psychological and relational domains, with fewer ideological elements (Storey et al., 2017).

This reconfiguration of the role of the religious leader, from institutional authority to personalized spiritual guide, has also generated a process of hybrid professionalization. Religious leaders are no longer just representatives of the religious institution holding hierarchical power, but become professionals specialized in responding to the social, cultural and emotional demands of the community (Storey et al., 2017). Hybrid professionalization of religious leadership is the process by which religious leaders redefine their traditional collectivist roles to the demands of a postmodern, individualistic society. Spiritual competencies are complemented by organizational, psychological and managerial skills. The religious leader no longer acts exclusively as a representative of the religious institution, but becomes a professional capable of responding to the needs of the community. Thus, the religious leader assigns himself multiple roles such as: religious entrepreneur, guide of meaning, culture shaper and identity builder. He is also able to adopt traditional values to current contexts. In this context, the authority of the religious leader is no longer given by the institution, but by the relevance and impact he has in the life of the community. Given the diversity of religious, cultural, ethnic, and organizational contexts, religious leadership cannot be reduced to a universal model. Researchers propose a contextual approach, in which the tasks and roles of the religious leader vary depending on the organizational stage of the community (e.g., whether it is growing, declining, or revitalizing) and on the particularities of the community such as size, culture, and demographic composition (Storey et al., 2017).

In this sense, religious leadership is no longer just a promoter of tradition, but receives a multidisciplinary dimension. Theological skills remain fundamental, but they are no longer sufficient. To successfully fulfill his calling as a spiritual guide, the religious leader needs emotional intelligence to be able to influence, motivate and understand the needs of the community. Table 1 summarizes the theoretical approaches to religious leadership identified in the literature and included in this work.

**Table 1.** Theoretical approaches to religious leadership

Definition	Features of the model	Authors
The model defines religious leadership in terms of shepherding and organization.	The emphasis is on spiritual care and organizing the community into a unified body.	Hiltner (1958)
The concept of transformational leadership in a religious context is substantiated.	The pastor influences, the emphasis is on the moral and personal development of the leader and followers.	Burns (1978)
It highlights how important it is for the balance of the community that the leader has a clear identity.	The leader must have emotional stability, autonomy, adaptability, and know how to lead effectively.	Friedman (1985)
Religious leadership is defined as communicative communication.	The emphasis is on cultural contextualization, interdisciplinary leadership, and communication relevant to the present.	Williams (2000)
The author proposes the servant leadership model.	The leader prioritizes service, caring for others, and guiding those served in personal transformation.	Greenleaf (2002)
The author proposes three models of Protestant leadership: pastoral director, shepherd, and spiritual guide.	The leader has a prophetic mission; he does not lead, he shepherds, he integrates organizational and spiritual dimensions into the administration of the community.	Jinkins (2012)
The author presents the transition from institutional leadership to personalized leadership, centered on the individual and context.	Leadership becomes contextualized, and the leader has multiple roles: he is a spiritual guide and a culture shaper.	Storey et al. (2017)

## METHODOLOGY

To test the hypotheses that: emotional intelligence influences the leadership style of religious leaders and that there are specific components of emotional intelligence essential for effective religious leadership, we applied a qualitative methodology, a systematic review. The literature review was conducted based on the PRISMA protocol. This method allows for structuring data and extracting relevant conclusions based on studies conducted in the field.

The databases used to identify the studies were: ResearchGate, PubMed, Google Scholar, Web of Science, Sci-Hub. These sources are scientific databases, which contain updated and scientifically validated sources. ResearchGate allows

direct access to the works of researchers. If these are not accessible on other platforms, it offers the possibility of obtaining the full versions of the articles. PubMed contains specialized literature in the field of mental and emotional health. Google Scholar provides access to many scientifically validated academic sources relevant to the subject. Web of Science is an academic database and provides access to peer-reviewed articles that guarantee the validity of the sources.

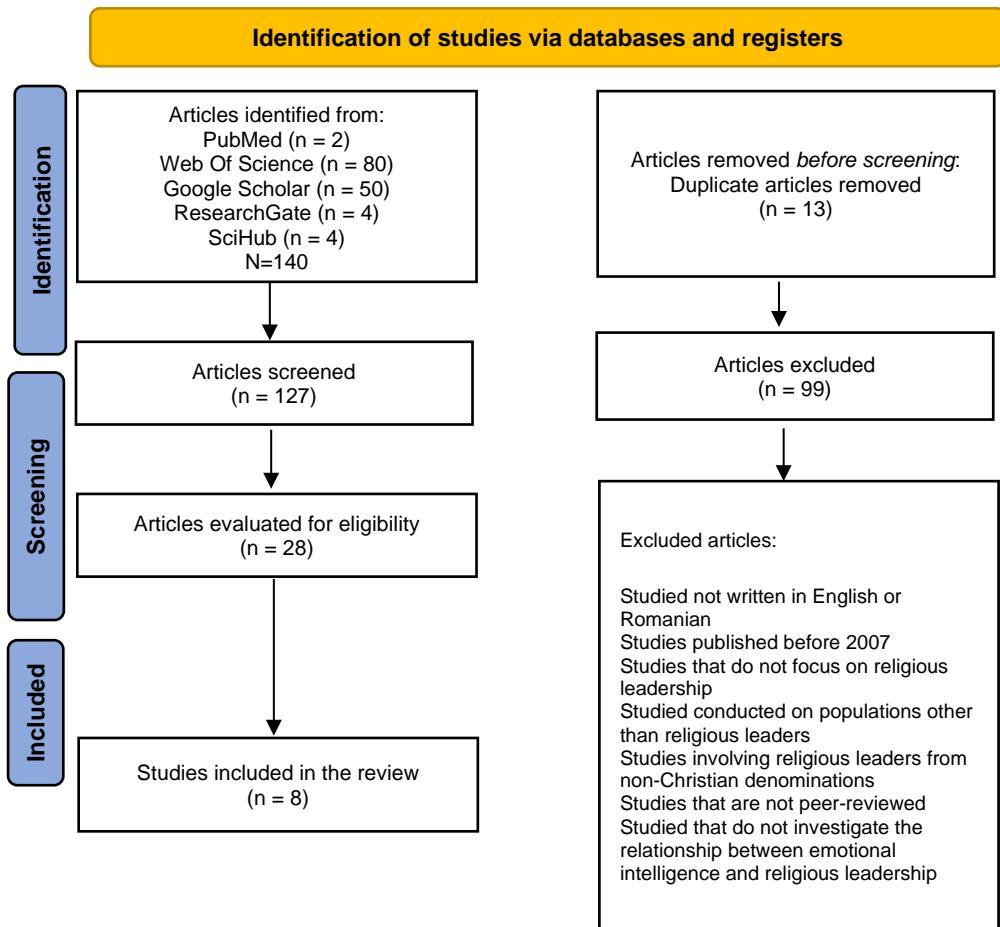
The keywords used in the search were: emotional intelligence AND pastoral leadership; emotional intelligence AND religious leadership; pastoral leadership AND Emotional Intelligence AND impact; servant leadership AND emotional intelligence AND pastoral; servant pastoral leadership AND emotional intelligence; emotional intelligence AND pastoral leadership effect.

### **Inclusion-exclusion criteria**

The inclusion criteria for the studies on which this analysis was based were: (1) studies in English or Romanian; (2) published from 2007-2025; (3) studies conducted on religious leaders, women or men; (4) religious leaders belonging only to Christian denominations; (5) studies that used scientifically validated instruments to measure constructs, (6) studies that were peer-reviewed (7) studies investigating the connection between emotional intelligence and religious leadership. The exclusion criteria for articles and studies were: (1) studies that were not in English or Romanian (2) studies older than 2007 (3) studies that do not target religious leadership (4) studies that were conducted on a population other than that of religious leaders. (5) studies that were conducted on religious leaders belonging to denominations other than Christian ones (6) studies that are not peer reviewed (7) studies that do not investigate the connection between emotional intelligence and religious leadership.

## **RESULTS**

Following the search process, we identified 140 studies. Before screening, 13 duplicate articles were removed, leaving 127 articles for screening. Following the second stage of selection, based on title, abstract, keywords, and discussions, 99 studies were removed, leaving 28 studies. In the third stage of selection, exclusion and inclusion criteria were applied, all studies were reviewed in detail, and 8 relevant studies remained, which were included in this paper. The entire process can be seen in detail in Figure 1.



The purpose of this research was to identify the main theoretical models, the instruments used and the conclusions relevant to the research questions, regarding the relationship between emotional intelligence and religious leadership. For each study, key aspects such as objectives, methodology used, sample, instruments used, results and final conclusions have been presented. A synthesis of all the studies analyzed can be seen in table 2.

Brown's (2024) study investigates the connection between emotional intelligence and pastoral leadership effectiveness among religious leaders in the Richmond, Virginia, metropolitan area. The study focused on emotional intelligence traits, demographic characteristics of participants, and the quality

of the pastors' interpersonal relationships. The study addresses the lack of credibility and influence that pastors have among the American population as well as the lack of research on emotional intelligence among religious leaders and religious organizations. The study assumes that emotional intelligence is essential for effective leadership among religious leaders and that it can contribute to improving interpersonal relationships and adopting conflict resolution strategies. The study has two objectives. First, to determine whether emotional intelligence is related to emotional traits, demographic characteristics, and interpersonal relationships among pastors in the Richmond, Virginia, metropolitan area. Second, the study sought to determine whether emotional intelligence provides a set of skills necessary for effective pastoral leadership. Although the empirical results of the study conducted by Brown (2024) did not confirm significant correlations between emotional intelligence and the variables pursued by the author, and the small sample size reduces external validity, the study remains relevant through its solid theoretical contribution based on the works of Salovey, Mayer, and Goleman. These models were used as a theoretical framework in this paper, integrated together with a theological framework that links emotional intelligence to the leadership style of Jesus Christ. Due to the direct thematic relevance of the study and the solid conceptual support of the relationship between emotional intelligence and religious leadership, the study is included in this systematic review, not for its empirical value, but for its potential to substantiate future rigorous research in the field of spiritual leadership.

The study done by Carrington (2015), examines the relationship between emotional intelligence and servant leadership behaviors among leaders and pastors in the Pentecostal Church. This study is a quantitative, cross-sectional study with a sample of 81 licensed ministers from the United Pentecostal Church, International. The instrument used to measure emotional intelligence was the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire – Short Form, TEIQue-SF. Servant leadership behaviors were measured with the Servant Leadership Behavior Scale, SLBS. The study identified a moderate and significant positive correlation between the global score of emotional intelligence and leadership behaviors specific to a servant leadership style. A significant positive correlation was also identified between the dimensions of emotional intelligence (self-control, emotionality, sociability) and the dimensions of servant leadership (authentic self, voluntary subordination and transformative influence). The cross-sectional design represents a limitation because it does not allow the establishment of causality. Also, the use of self-report instruments can lead to subjective distortions and response biases. Due to the small and homogeneous sample, the results cannot be generalized to the entire population. The results show that religious leaders with higher levels of emotional intelligence tend to exhibit more behaviors typical

of servant leadership. This fact shows that emotional intelligence is associated with servant leadership style in religious context. The study identifies certain specific dimensions of emotional intelligence that are significantly associated with servant leadership characteristics. The most relevant components of emotional intelligence in servant leadership are: emotionality, well-being which includes the dimension of self-esteem, happiness and optimism, self-control and sociability. The study shows that emotional intelligence is positively correlated with servant leadership behaviors among religious leaders, as leaders with higher emotional intelligence exhibit more servant leadership behaviors (Carrington, 2015). We can thus conclude that the level of emotional intelligence influences the leadership style adopted.

Ishola-Esan's (2019) study investigates the role of emotional intelligence in pastoral leadership effectiveness in churches in Southwest, Nigeria, a region marked by recurrent conflicts between church leaders and congregation members. The study starts from the hypothesis that traditional theological training does not sufficiently include the emotional development of future pastors. As a result, they do not develop social and interpersonal skills well enough. The study aims to determine whether emotional intelligence is an important competency or not for effective pastoral leadership. The objectives of the study are: to explore what knowledge pastors have about the concept of emotional intelligence, to what extent they consider emotional intelligence to be an important competency for effective leadership and to identify which competencies are relevant for religious leaders. Another objective is to see whether these competencies are integrated into pastoral practice, namely to examine whether there is a relationship between emotional intelligence and the effectiveness of pastoral teams. The study used a descriptive design and a self-designed questionnaire, based on the literature with structural items, validated by experts and with high reliability ( $r=0.90$ ). The sample consisted of 120 Baptist pastors from Southwest Nigeria. The data were statistically analyzed by percentages and Pearson correlation. The results of the study answer the question regarding the influence of emotional intelligence on leadership style. Religious leaders not only have theoretical knowledge, but also have an openness to integrate emotional intelligence into their practices. Leadership effectiveness may act as a moderator in the relationship between emotional intelligence and the leadership style adopted by pastors. Those who have a high level of emotional intelligence demonstrate several traits of an empathetic, relationship-oriented, and collaborative leadership style. In other words, the study confirms that emotional intelligence, defined by self-knowledge, self-management, social awareness, social skills and relationship management, is an important factor for the effectiveness of religious leaders and leads to the adoption of a relationship-oriented, empathetic and effective leadership style in managing human interactions and conflicts within religious

communities. The competencies that were identified as necessary for a religious leadership style are based on Goleman's theoretical conceptualization. These competencies are: self-awareness, managing one's own emotions, social awareness, social skills, and relationship management. These are the most common competencies that pastors integrate into their leadership style. This result directly answers the question of what are the necessary emotional intelligence competencies for effective leadership.

Roth, J. (2011) investigated the relationship between emotional intelligence and pastoral leadership in growing and declining Christian churches in the United States. The aim of the study is to identify whether certain emotional intelligence competencies are significantly different in the two groups compared according to church status, i.e. growing or declining. The study addresses the lack of literature on the use of emotional intelligence in the context of pastoral leadership. The author conducted a cross-sectional survey study. The sample included 41 pastors (25 from growing churches and 16 from declining churches). The instrument used was the Bar-On EQ-i (Emotional Quotient Inventory), a self-report questionnaire. The small sample size and the self-reported nature of the data are limitations that do not allow the results to be generalized to the entire population, but they provide a direction for future research. The results of the study suggest that emotional intelligence influences pastoral leadership style through its correlation with leadership effectiveness. The author's conclusion is that there are certain dimensions of emotional intelligence that are indispensable for pastors serving in declining churches. Although the study does not specifically define leadership style, the results show that pastors in growing churches (where leaders are assumed to be more effective) have higher levels of certain emotional intelligence competencies. As a result, the level of emotional intelligence directly influences the leadership style adopted by religious leaders and guides their leadership behaviors.

Heryanto et al. (2025) have investigated the relationship between spiritual leadership and emotional intelligence among religious leaders. The study explored the role of self-management as a mediating and moderating variable. The authors used a quantitative design, and the data were collected with a self-report questionnaire, based on a Likert scale with 17 indicators distributed between the three main variables: spiritual leadership, emotional intelligence and self-management, the special concept for this study. The authors tested the validity and reliability of the study to ensure that it would accurately measure the proposed concepts. To test the validity, the authors used the loading factor technical criterion, which indicates the extent to which the question targets the studied concept. All questions exceeded the minimum threshold of 0.7, as a result the questionnaire was considered valid. The results show that there is a significant relationship between spiritual leadership and emotional intelligence. They also showed that

self-management of emotions shapes effective leadership behaviors within religious organizations. Based on the results, the authors concluded that self-management can greatly impact emotional intelligence. This ability guides leaders in managing their thoughts, attitudes, allows for the control of emotions and adaptation to new situations. These skills are essential for effective religious leadership. In conclusion, the better a leader can self-manage, the more emotionally intelligent he is, which will implicitly influence the leadership style adopted. In addition to self-management, the study highlights two skills as essential for an emotionally intelligent leader: social awareness and self-awareness. These are important for the leader to effectively manage interpersonal dynamics within churches.

Francis et al. (2019) explores the level of emotional intelligence among Anglican clergy in Wales. The central aim of this study was to replicate and extend previous research into the emotional intelligence of religious leaders in the UK. In previous research, the authors observed that religious leaders in the UK have lower levels of emotional intelligence than the general population. As a result, this study targeted Anglican religious leaders in Wales to complement and add to previous research. The study is a quantitative survey, with a sample of 364 clergy from Wales. To collect data, they used the Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale instrument, composed of 33 items. As a theoretical reference, the authors used the Goleman model of emotional intelligence. The authors do not specifically define leadership styles, but the study data suggest an implicit relationship between emotional intelligence and the adopted leadership style. Given the nature of pastoral ministry, based on empathy and relationships with parishioners, emotional intelligence skills become key tools in adopting an effective leadership style, aligned with the needs of the churches. The analysis of the responses of each participant shows us that although most religious leaders have a moderate level of self-awareness, many do not have a level of emotional intelligence high enough to be able to deal with the difficulties that arise in ministry. This indicates that the religious leader who has low emotional intelligence will have difficulty dealing with the challenges encountered in ministry, which means that the pastor has an ineffective leadership style and is not aligned with the needs of the church. The study identifies two components of emotional intelligence that are absolutely necessary for effective leadership. These are: personal skills (self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation) and social skills (empathy and other social skills). The results of the study show that most clergy in the sample have a moderate to high level of empathy and motivation. On the other hand, many of them have difficulties in self-regulation and interpreting non-verbal signals from others. Based on these results, we can conclude that the lack of these skills influences the ability of leaders to effectively exercise their leadership role. The authors highlighted the fact that although the instrument

used is scientifically validated, it is not specifically adapted for religious leaders and to measure the targeted construct as accurately as possible in a religious context.

Holford's (2020) study aims to assess the emotional intelligence competencies of pastors at the New Testament Church of God Barbados, in the context of declining church membership and attendance. The purpose of the study is to observe the extent to which pastors know how to apply emotional intelligence competencies in their practice to manage the decline. In the first stage of data collection, emotional intelligence competencies were assessed, for which the Emotional Intelligence Appraisal (EIA) questionnaire based on Goleman's theoretical model was applied. In the second stage, in order to explore in detail the competencies that pastors have in the religious context described, data were collected through semi-structured interviews, based on a semi-structured interview, with the aim of capturing the experiences lived by pastors. Although the study does not allow the generalization of the results to the entire population, it was included in this systematic review because it helps to understand the theory and provides valuable directions for future research. The results show that pastors who apply emotional intelligence skills in their religious practice have a much more effective leadership style. They are able to develop relationships with parishioners, have much more effective communication because they know how to actively listen and observe the verbal and non-verbal signals of members. An emotionally intelligent religious leader is able to be empathetic, is effective in solving problems and managing conflicts. They are perceived by parishioners to be trustworthy, respectful, friendly and are considered a good support. The integration of emotional intelligence in religious practice improves the function and effectiveness of pastors.

Higley (2007) study tracked the dynamics between a pastor leader and the pastoral team he leads. The goal was to investigate how the leader's emotional intelligence influences the effectiveness of the pastoral team he leads. The results show that a high level of emotional intelligence influences the approach to a principled leadership style. The theoretical model on which this study was based was the four-branch model proposed by Mayer and Salovey. According to this model, emotional intelligence is a mental ability (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). The author identified a fit between the dimensions of the four-branch model of emotional intelligence and the characteristics of principled leadership. These fits are: the ability to identify and talk about feelings contributes to promoting honesty and integrity, and is related to the pastor's willingness to solve problems related to the performance of members. Other skills that were strongly correlated with the traits of principled leadership are understanding, the ability to make correct assumptions about people, and the ability to know

what to say at the right time. These skills allow the leader to effectively lead the team. The leader's ability to use emotions and inspire others contributed significantly to creating a climate based on trust and collaboration within the team. In conclusion, the emotional intelligence of the pastor influences the leadership style adopted, in this case a principled style, through the way he processes and then uses emotional information to facilitate an environment based on trust and collaboration. As a result, the skills necessary for effective leadership are: identifying emotions and being willing to talk about them, the ability to inspire people, the ability to make correct assumptions about people and knowing what to say depending on the context and situation.

**Table 2.** Summary table of reviewed studies

Title	Author (Year)	Study Type	No. of Participants	Measurement Tool	Theoretical Basis of Leadership	Key Concepts	Conclusions
<i>A non-experimental quantitative correlational study of emotional intelligence as an effective tool for pastoral leadership</i>	Brown (2024)	Quantitative, correlational, non-experimental	N=30, pastors	Demographic Inventory Questionnaire (DIQ); Emotional Competence Profile Questionnaire (EPQ)	Pastoral leadership, based on the Goleman, Salovey & Mayer models	Emotional intelligence (self-awareness, self-management, empathy, social skills), effective pastoral leadership, emotional foundational traits, demographic characteristics, interpersonal relationships	No significant correlations were identified, but the study makes a valuable contribution, as the theoretical foundation supports that emotional intelligence is relevant for effective leadership.
<i>A correlational study of emotional intelligence and servant leadership among church leaders</i>	Carrington (2015)	Quantitative, cross-sectional	N=81, licensed pastors	Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire – Short Form, TEIQue-SF; Servant Leadership Behavior Scale, SLBS	Servant leadership, based on the TEIQue model	Emotional intelligence (self-control, emotionality, sociability, well-being), the servant leadership style	Emotional intelligence correlates positively with the servant leadership style

Title	Author (Year)	Study Type	No. of Participants	Measurement Tool	Theoretical Basis of Leadership	Key Concepts	Conclusions
<i>Impact of emotional intelligence on pastors' leadership effectiveness in churches of Southwest, Nigeria</i>	Ishola-Esan (2019)	Quantitative, descriptive	N=120, Baptist pastors	Self-reported questionnaire, validated (r=0.90)	Pastoral leadership, based on the Goleman model	Emotional intelligence (self-knowledge, self-management, social awareness, social skills, relationship management), leaders' perception of emotional intelligence, effective leadership	Emotional intelligence is associated with a leadership style based on empathy, collaboration, and relationship effective communication, conflict management.
<i>The relationship between emotional intelligence and pastor leadership in turnaround churches</i>	Roth, 2011	Quantitative, cross-sectional	N=41, pastors	Bar-On EQ-i (Emotional Quotient Inventory)	Pastoral leadership in the context of churches in decline or growth based on the Bar-On assertive-model	Emotional intelligence (independence, flexibility, optimism, self-awareness, assertiveness), leadership effectiveness in growing/declining churches	Pastors in growing churches have higher emotional intelligence scores
<i>The influence of spiritual leadership on emotional intelligence moderated and intervened by self-management</i>	Heryano et al. (2025)	Quantitative	N= 85, religious leaders	Self-reported questionnaire, based on a Likert scale, validated (r>0.70)	Spiritual leadership, based on the Goleman model	Spiritual leadership, emotional intelligence, self-management as a moderating variable	Self-management positively influences emotional intelligence and implicitly leadership style

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Title	Author (Year)	Study Type	No. of Participants	Measurement Tool	Theoretical Basis of Leadership	Key Concepts	Conclusions
<i>Just how emotionally intelligent are religious leaders in Britain? A study among Anglican clergy in Wales</i>	Francis et al. (2019)	Quantitative, cross-sectional survey	N=364, Anglican clergy	Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale	Pastoral leadership, based on the Goleman model	Emotional intelligence (self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, social skills), pastoral leadership effectiveness	Deficits in self-regulation and social skills negatively affect leadership effectiveness
<i>An examination of emotional intelligence leadership practice in pastoral leaders in the New Testament Church of God Barbados</i>	Holford (2020)	Qualitative, exploratory case study	N=5, pastors	Emotional Intelligence Appraisal (EIA) and semi-structured interview	Pastoral leadership, based on the Goleman model	Emotional intelligence (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship management), pastoral leadership	Pastors who have emotional intelligence skills adopt a relationship-oriented, empathy-based style and are able to support the church in times of crisis.
<i>The relationship between the lead pastor's emotional intelligence and pastoral leadership team effectiveness</i>	Higley (2007)	Mixed methods, case study	N=43, pastoral teams	Wong and Law Principled Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS); Mayer & Team Effectiveness Questionnaire (TEQ); Leader Emotional Intelligence Strength Rater (LEISR)	Principled leadership, based on the Salovey model	Emotional intelligence (identifying and expressing emotions, ability to inspire, empathy, effective communication), leadership principles	The pastor's emotional intelligence directly influences the leadership style adopted and the team's effectiveness

## CONCLUSIONS

Based on our systematic review of the literature on the relationship between emotional intelligence and religious leadership, we can state that there is a direct and indirect relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership style. Also, based on the evidence from studies, we identified the dimensions of emotional intelligence necessary for effective leadership.

The studies analyzed confirmed that among the essential skills for effective religious leadership are: recognizing and managing one's own and others' emotions. These skills determine the success of religious leaders in adopting a leadership characterized by empathy, active listening and a good ability to manage conflicts. Although Brown (2024) did not identify significant correlations between emotional intelligence and his investigated variables, the author emphasizes the need to integrate the development of emotional intelligence in the training of religious leaders. He also points out how important it is for a leader to be emotionally intelligent in managing relationships and pastoral credibility crises (Brown, 2024).

The results obtained by Carrington (2015) and Ishola-Esan (2019) provide evidence in favor of the hypothesis that emotional intelligence is associated with the servant leadership style. This style is characterized by empathy, collaboration orientation and care for others. Heryanto et al. (2025) makes an important contribution. Through his study, he highlights the role of self-management ability as a mediating and moderating variable. The study reinforces the fact that emotional self-regulation is a fundamental skill for having an effective leadership style.

Roth (2011) and Francis et al. (2019) demonstrate that dimensions of emotional intelligence differentiate between effective and less effective leaders, especially in delicate contexts such as decline or where pastoral ministry requires direct interaction with the community. The two studies demonstrate that an emotionally intelligent religious leader demonstrates empathy, motivation, and good adaptive skills. In this way, the leader directly contributes to a better quality of interpersonal relationships and to the creation of an organizational climate based on trust and collaboration.

From a qualitative perspective, Holford (2020) shows that integrating emotional intelligence into pastoral practice leads to the development of better relationships and the building of trust. These are essential for maintaining cohesion in the community. In turn, Higley (2007) provides evidence that supports the association of a high level of emotional intelligence with a principled leadership style and the creation of a climate of collaboration within pastoral teams. The study identifies the following skills as important: identifying emotions, the ability to inspire others and communicating effectively.

Based on the studies analyzed, we can conclude that the most important components of emotional intelligence necessary for effective religious leadership are: self-awareness, the ability to recognize and understand one's own emotions, self-management, emotional regulation and impulse control in order to have balanced behaviors and be able to make rational decisions, social awareness, the ability to form and maintain interpersonal relationships, effective communication and the ability to manage conflicts. Also, a leader who possesses these skills and is emotionally intelligent is more likely to adopt a servant, principled or collaborative and empathetic leadership style, while leaders who have not developed these skills have difficulty adopting effective leadership behaviors. As a result, the hypothesis is confirmed according to which the level of emotional intelligence influences the religious leadership style adopted.

This systematic analysis lays the foundation for solid and necessary future directions in the development and research of this topic. A recurring idea in all studies is that theological training is often considered sufficient to prepare a religious leader, but the affective part and the development of emotional intelligence are overlooked. Religious ministry, however, is not reduced to just preaching. It involves a multidisciplinary activity, which combines skills from various areas of development, including the development of socio-emotional competencies and emotional intelligence. The reviewed studies suggest that many of the difficulties encountered in churches are due to the fact that leaders are not prepared to manage the emotional aspects of their role, which leads to ineffectiveness in ministry, professional dissatisfaction, and in terms of the community, it can lead to alienation of members, recurrent conflicts between members and general dissatisfaction of the community (Heryanto et al., 2025).

Although this paper does not aim to directly analyze specific interventions or training programs, it is important to note that all studies draw attention to the lack of formal education on the development of emotional intelligence among religious leaders. Theological training does not include special programs or modules dedicated to the development of emotional intelligence and the application of socio-emotional skills in pastoral ministry. Research has been identified that proposes training programs on emotional intelligence.

Therefore, an important direction for future research is to develop and test emotional intelligence development programs for religious leaders, and adapt validated instruments to target the general population of religious leaders. Also, special programs can be created to develop socio-emotional skills among religious leaders and extend the socio-emotional skills model to this population. Also, there is a need to expand the samples, in order to obtain valid results that can be generalized to the entire population, thus confirming the hypotheses and theories.

In conclusion, although the empirical evidence varies in terms of the strength of statistical correlations or external validity, the theoretical consensus and conceptual convergence across studies provide a landmark for an important future direction in research on the relationship between emotional intelligence and religious leadership. It is clear how important it is to integrate emotional intelligence into the training, assessment, and practice of religious leadership. The development of emotional intelligence is essential for the effectiveness of spiritual leadership in the 21st century, in which the religious context is becoming increasingly complex, multidisciplinary, and relational. The reviewed studies draw clear directions for future research. The emphasis is on adapting instruments, creating educational programs, and expanding samples to obtain valid and generalizable results.

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