
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND COMMUNICATION IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR: THE CASE OF A LITHUANIAN ARMED FORCES MILITARY UNIT

Rolanda KAZLAUSKAITĖ MARKELIENĖ

*General Jonas Žemaitis Military Academy of Lithuania
Šilo st. 5A, LT-10322 Vilnius, Lithuania*

Dalia PRAKAPIENĖ

*General Jonas Žemaitis Military Academy of Lithuania
Šilo st. 5A, LT-10322 Vilnius, Lithuania*

Vytautas LAZDINIS

*General Jonas Žemaitis Military Academy of Lithuania
Šilo st. 5A, LT-10322 Vilnius, Lithuania*

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Abstract. *The ability to manage emotions and to apply them purposefully in leadership, process management, or communication is important both for interpersonal relationships and for individual satisfaction in dealing with others. Emotional intelligence plays an important role in shaping relationships between individuals, both at the individual level and within teams. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to analyse the relationship between emotional intelligence and communication in a Lithuanian Armed Forces military unit. The research method used was a quantitative survey. According to the results of the study, emotional intelligence and satisfaction with communication in the public sector are related, and respondents with higher emotional intelligence scores are more satisfied with communication. The results show that emotional intelligence skills and communication are positively and significantly related. However, despite the positive aspects of the emotional intelligence-communication link identified in the study, the areas for improvement in the communication-emotional intelligence link in the unit analysed relate to strengthening the expression of empathy, improving the communication of the organisation's policies and objectives, and ensuring satisfaction with the quality of feedback.*

Keywords: *emotional intelligence, communication, communication satisfaction, Lithuanian Armed Forces military unit.*

Reikšminiai žodžiai: *emocinis intelektas, komunikacija, pasitenkinimas komunikacija, Lietuvos kariuomenės karinis vienetas.*

Introduction

In the context of cultural and social changes in society, the changing attitude of society toward the effectiveness of organisational activity encourages researchers to pay more attention to the concept of emotional intelligence (EI) and its expression in the context of effective organisational activity. On the one hand, this is related to the general improvement of the organisation's activities (Croitor et al. 2013). On the other hand, this proceeds with a clear understanding that the core of the organisation is individuals at any level of the hierarchy. For these individuals, in the uncertain modern world, next to the implementation of goals, the relations between the members of the organisation, leadership (Adiguzel and Uygü 2020; Hajncl and Vučenovi 2020; Motorniuk and Krokmalna 2022; etc.), and the quality of communication gain importance, as do the social skills needed for teamwork and stress reduction at work (Dambean 2021). Communication is increasingly becoming a strategic factor in organisations (Jorfi et al. 2014; Ander 2021). All of these are necessary conditions for the members of organisations to achieve a balance between professional activity and personal life to ensure their wellbeing.

The relationship between EI and communication in the context of a military unit or the military as an organisation is an understudied topic. The relationship between EI and leadership in the military was examined by Morath et al. (2011), Kozáková and Saliger (2019), Aguilar and George (2019), and Pereira and Sousa (2021). Valor-Segura et al. (2020) investigated the relationships between EI, teamwork, communication, and job satisfaction among cadets. Aguilar and George (2019) noted that in the military, the quality of leadership is prioritized over the emotional wellbeing of the force members because of the established historical view that emotions can interfere with the effective performance of tasks. Such an approach requires a change, especially in noncombat situations, because EI-based leadership provides the prerequisites for achieving a higher level of resilience, which is a cultivated component of EI that helps commanders in challenging missions or when disaster strikes (Aguilar and George 2019). Military commanders must understand and protect the physical and emotional wellbeing of those serving (Morath et al. 2011). It is assumed that the Lithuanian army and its related organisations face similar challenges that require scientific and practical intervention.

Thus, the research presented in this article is based on the following question: How and in what areas is communication related to EI in a military unit? This research problem was based on the insight of Mayer et al. (2000) that EI impacts decision-making – i.e., individuals with high EI use their emotions to generate ideas and effectively control and manage their emotions, which helps to achieve and ensure effective communication. The aim of the research was to investigate the relationship between EI and communication in

a military unit of the Lithuanian army. The research was conducted using a quantitative research method via a questionnaire survey.

Theoretical assumptions on the relationship between EI and communication

According to researchers (Edelman and van Knippenberg 2018), in today's context, a manager's EI becomes an essential factor in organisational management and leadership effectiveness. Wilderom et al. (2015) found that managerial EI and organisational cohesion are valued as intangible organisational resources or social-psychological capital for non-managerial employees. Based on other research, the manager's EI positively influences the formation of employee trust and organisational identity (Adiguzel and Uygun 2020). Moreover, EI improves leadership and management practices (Hajnci and Vučenović 2020; Gransberry 2022). Managers with higher EI are better prepared to understand their own identity, values, worldview, and the influence of their own emotional reactions on their behaviour with others, and are able to create an inclusive work environment that allows individuals of various backgrounds to develop (Boatswain 2022). Tasliyan et al. (2017) noted a significant relationship between EI, communication skills, and academic success. Matthews et al. (2002) indicated that people with higher EI can convey goals, ideas, and intentions more interestingly and assertively. Moreno (2010) examined the importance of communication in an organisation and noted that managers must be thoughtful, consistent, and honest individuals with interpersonal and personal intelligence. Communication is one of the levers of organisational management which is used to form a team and achieve goals, and is based on the manager's communication with employees (Bucăța and Rizescu 2017). Sincere and effective management communication improves employee morale and builds trust in the organisation (Anders 2021). As Popescu (2019) observed, two cultures come together in the army: military and civilian. Communication includes verbal, non-verbal, emotional, and personal aspects, while commanding soldiers is characterised by concise and unemotional expression. Therefore, differences in the organisation's internal communication arise due to differences in goals, differences in participants, different time resources for completing tasks, and different levels of information exchange.

Despite the fact that a military unit is a specific organisation, aspects of leadership and communication are in line with general management principles. According to Pereira and Sousa (2021), in military organisations, as in other public sector organisations, the EI of leaders is closely related to leadership competence, as the increase in one component leads to the increase in the other component, which means that in order to perform well in leadership functions, the development of EI is necessary. When military units perform tasks or participate in international missions, the success of task performance often depends on the ability of military leaders to understand and manage team emotions and on effective communication among team members in a complex and dangerous environment (Aguilar and George 2019; Valor-Segura et al. 2020). Team leaders demonstrate EI by encouraging the team and each member individually to participate in decision mak-

ing, motivating employees and thus increasing their job satisfaction (Jackson and Naziri 2020). Current conflicts involving non-state actors require military leaders to adapt to shifting roles, where EI favours interpersonal relationships, regulates stress, and focuses on optimising decision making (Jeppesen 2017). However, it is essential to realise that EI is a construct that captures differences between individuals in the expression, regulation, and management of emotional experiences, so it is very important to see the relationship between them, relating it to different past experiences and future perspectives (Agnoli 2023). Using EI to encourage others to adopt a desired behaviour is essential for a leader who seeks to build solid teams and facilitate the acceptance and adaptation of team members to organisational changes (Issah 2018). EI helps the manager adapt to the team, demonstrate leadership qualities, and make decisions while simultaneously expressing empathy and understanding to colleagues. Equally important is that EI helps the manager to promote mutual support and reduce tension when faced with disruptive or aggressive behaviour (Sharma and Sehwat 2014). EI, as the ability to empathise, cooperate, motivate, and educate others, must be part of the efficient performance of managers and the human resource management system in an organisation (Motorniuk and Krokmalna 2022).

Research methodology

The quantitative research strategy and questionnaire survey method (standard questions) were chosen for this study. This method was chosen to reveal the attitudes, values, and behavioural traits of the members of a specific military unit in a short time.

The research was conducted in one military unit of the Lithuanian Armed Forces (hereinafter – the military unit), the exact name of which is not disclosed due to data protection. The unit was chosen because of specific functions related to the performance of tasks related to the national security of the country (participation in international missions, military support, etc.). Simple random probability sampling was used to select the sample. The size of the research sample was 80 respondents (47 had no management experience and 33 had management experience); 85 percent of those who participated in the study were men ($N = 71$), and 15 percent were women ($N = 10$). The specifics of the military unit determined such a distribution. It can be asserted that the research sample is representative of the military unit and the obtained results can be applied in the case of this military unit. The study was conducted in October and November 2021.

Two standardised questionnaires were used for the study. The first was the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (Short Form; Cooper and Petrides 2010), which consists of 30 statements. The second research instrument, based on the methodological assumptions of Snowden et al. (2015), was the Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire (CSQ; Downs and Hazen 1977). The overall internal consistency coefficient of the two questionnaire scales used in the study was high: EI scale Chronbach $\alpha = 0.851$; internal reliability of the communication questionnaire Chronbach $\alpha = 0.947$.

The data obtained were processed using the SPSS (Statistic Package for Social Sciences) statistical software package. The following statistical methods were used in data

analysis: calculation of arithmetic means, determination of standard deviation, and frequency calculation. To assess the relationship between EI and communication, Pearson's correlation coefficients between EI and communication subscales were calculated.

The research hypothesis was as follows: individuals with higher EI are more satisfied with communication in the organisation.

Findings

Evaluation of communication satisfaction. When evaluating the satisfaction of the military unit personnel in various aspects of communication, the value of each isolated communication satisfaction/dissatisfaction factor was calculated: for each factor, respondents were considered to be dissatisfied or less satisfied with communication if the score was between 6 and 24, and a score between 25 and 35 identified those satisfied and very satisfied. The results revealed that the staff were most satisfied with horizontal and informal communication and communication with managers (Table 1). Staff were least satisfied with personal feedback and the communication climate created in the organisation.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of satisfaction with communication in the organisation

Subcategories	Code	Survey sample	Min	Max	Medium	Standard deviation
Satisfaction with organisational integration	S1	80	11	31	25.19	3.927
Satisfaction with organisation's perspective	S2	80	8	34	24.40	5.031
Satisfaction with personal feedback	S3	80	11	32	23.81	4.106
Satisfaction with communication climate	S4	80	10	35	24.02	4.863
Satisfaction with communication with managers	S5	80	15	32	25.79	3.844
Satisfaction with horizontal and informal communication	S6	80	14	35	25.79	4.068
Satisfaction with the quality of communication tools	S7	80	12	35	25.25	4.157
Satisfaction with communication with subordinates	S8	33	14	33	25.26	3.883

When detailing the different factors of the subcategories of communication, each of which was evaluated on a Likert scale from 1 to 7 (1 – *very dissatisfied*, 7 – *very satisfied*), particular strengths and weaknesses of communication emerged in each case (Table 2).

Table 2. Strengths and weaknesses of communication in the military unit

Code	Strengths			Weaknesses		
	Measured factors	M	SD	Measured factors	M	SD
S1	Communication related to the conveyance of information about job requirements	5.34	1.03	Satisfaction with providing information on organisational policies and objectives	4.69	1.25

Code	Strengths			Weaknesses		
	Measured factors	M	SD	Measured factors	M	SD
S2	The staff receive enough information about the financial situation of the organisation	5.17	1.43	Communication about internal organisational changes	4.31	1.28
S3	Information related to the evaluation of the subject	5.35	1.97	Feedback-related communication, which demonstrates that managers understand the problems and difficulties faced by employees	4.24	1.53
S4	Individual's identity with the organisation where the person works	4.96	1.17	Promoting communication skills	4.60	1.23
S5	Information conveying trust in employees	5.40	1.11	The conveyance of information from managers about listening to the employee's position	4.86	1.15
S6	The freedom of horizontal communication among colleagues	5.85	1.99	Gossip-related communication	4.19	1.63
S7	Information about the quality and completeness of the submitted reports	5.40	1.98	Attitudes toward the organisational communication ethos	4.76	1.06
S8	The ability of subordinates to express their need for information	5.34	0.97	The factor related to active/overloaded communication	4.66	0.97

Assessment of EI. Considering the theoretical assumptions that EI is important in the communication process and helps establish relationships between employees and subordinates, manage risks, ensure teamwork, etc., we sought to assess EI in the surveyed military unit. Using the methodology of the selected research instrument, the general values and the values of each single factor were calculated. If the total value of EI is 30 to 150, then this represents lower EI; 151 to 210 – higher EI. The closer the score is to 210, the higher the EI is considered to be. Within the research framework, the overall average EI of all respondents (162) was classified as higher (min. 122, max. 200).

To measure the subcategories of EI factors in the military unit, the averages of the sum of the scores on the scales were calculated (the maximum score was 56, and the minimum score was 12) (Table 3).

Table 3. *Descriptive statistics of EI factors*

Subcategories	Survey sample	Min	Max	Medium	Standard deviation
Wellbeing	80	22	42	35.04	4.333
Self-control	80	17	35	27.88	3.498
Emotionality	80	26	48	38.34	5.214
Sociability	80	20	41	30.06	4.740
Empathy	80	12	34	22.70	4.527

In evaluating the self-control factor, a relatively even distribution of results was observed when evaluating all sub-factors: controlling and managing emotions and the abil-

ity to overcome stress. However, as seen in Table 3, this is one of the areas where lower evaluation results were recorded. When comparing the factors of this subcategory between respondents with and without work experience, a slightly more pronounced difference in evaluations emerged in the ability to overcome stress, with higher results for those with managerial work experience.

Emotionality measures how well respondents perceive and express emotions and use them to maintain relationships with others. In this area, the ability of the respondents to understand their emotions ($M = 6.29$, $SD = 0.84$) and to express them in words ($M = 6.16$, $SD = 0.93$) was highlighted. It was observed that the respondents who do not hold managerial positions do this more easily than those with managerial positions. Factors related to the ability to empathise with other people's situations and feel what they feel ($M = 4.60$, $SD = 1.56$) scored the lowest. There were no significant differences in the evaluation of this factor between respondents with and without managerial positions.

The data obtained from the sociability factor (communicability) of both groups show that the highest scores were related to the ability to defend one's rights ($M = 5.93$, $SD = 1.24$) and the ability to readily agree with others ($M = 5.92$, $SD = 0.74$). The ability to influence the feelings of other people ($M = 4.11$, $SD = 1.87$) and self-evaluation as a negotiator ($M = 4.81$, $SD = 1.26$) scored the lowest.

Lower EI indicators were recorded in the evaluation of the empathy subcategory (Table 2). The respondents' average rating regarding the ability to empathise with other people's emotions and influence them was below 5 points.

Evaluation of EI and communication. To assess the relationship between EI and communication, the Pearson coefficient correlation between the EI and communication subscales was calculated.

Table 4. Pearson's coefficient correlation between EI and communication factors

	Satisfaction with organisational integration	Satisfaction with the organisation's perspective	Satisfaction with personal feedback	Satisfaction with communication climate	Satisfaction with communication with managers	Satisfaction with horizontal and informal communication	Satisfaction with the quality of communication tools	Satisfaction with communication with subordinates
Wellbeing	.547*	.645*	−0.39	.600*	.582*	.596*	.439*	.642*
Self-control	.463*	.535*	.503*	.635*	.685*	.431*	.454*	.884**
Emotionality	.482*	.790**	.867**	.536*	.535*	.449*	.590*	.479*
Sociability	.736**	−.144	−.038	.431*	.581*	.575*	.568*	.442*
Empathy	−.134	−.213	−.160	−.012	.770	.836**	.003	.504*

* $p < 0.05$, $p < 0.001$

The results obtained show that the areas of EI abilities and communication were positively and significantly related (Table 4): emotionality and communication related to organisational perspective ($r = 0.790$, $p < 0.001$); emotionality to personal feedback

($r = 0.867$, $p < 0.001$); self-control to communication with subordinates ($r = 0.884$, $p < 0.001$); sociality to organisational integration ($r = 0.736$, $p < 0.001$); and empathy to formal and informal communication ($r = 0.836$, $p < 0.001$).

After the analysis of the data, it may be claimed that the hypothesis that people with higher EI are more satisfied with communication in the organisation has been confirmed. Statistically significant results were obtained by comparing all the respondents according to the correlation between EI and communication satisfaction. It was found that subjects with higher EI who hold managerial positions ($r = 0.845$, $p < 0.001$) and those without managerial work experience ($r = 0.793$, $p < 0.001$) were more satisfied with communication.

Discussion

In summary of the study results, it may be stated that the overall level of EI in the military unit is high. As a result, individuals with higher EI are more satisfied with organisational communication. The results of the study showing solid relationships between communication and EI support the claims of researchers (Mayer et al. 2000; Jorfi et al. 2014; Mendelo 2021; Agnoli 2023) that individuals with high EI use their emotions to generate good ideas and also possess the ability to control and manage their emotions, which helps achieve effective communication. The results of the military unit in question confirmed the results of Tasliyan et al. (2017), Ghasemi et al. (2018), and Valor-Segura et al. (2020), and proved that EI and communication skills are closely related. However, to effectively implement these indicators in a military unit, the factors that emerged as problematic during the study need a more detailed analysis.

Analysing the survey data, certain differences were observed between the responses of managers and subordinates. Respondents working in managerial positions rated communication with subordinates highly – i.e., managers are satisfied with communication with subordinates, are aware of their expectations and initiate communication with them. However, an equally important aspect for solving communication problems is the communication climate, which can be manifested both by a lack of empathy and a lack of personal feedback. This aspect was rated the lowest. Therefore, these results confirm the theoretical assumption that the effectiveness of communication between the managers of an organisation and its employees is related to the full understanding of the group's employees or the ability to reduce communication problems that arise.

A lower communication climate score and a lack of personal feedback allow us to assume that insufficient attention is paid to encouraging employees, especially in terms of connecting them to the organisation's goals and promoting interpersonal communication and teamwork. These research data also agree with the theoretical insights of other authors (Marques & Dhiman 2017; Jeppesen 2017), and confirm that EI plays an important role in shaping individual and interpersonal interactions.

The study results related to areas of communication, such as satisfaction with organisational integration and organisational perspective, allow us to claim that the respondents highly valued communication related to the requirement to provide information about the

tasks performed and communication related to information about progress at work. However, it became clear that the area of communication that is essential both for the achievement of the organisation's goal and for increasing the motivation of employees needs to be improved. It is communication that is concerned with providing information about the organisation's policies and objectives. Arguably, this result depends both on each individual's personal interest and the information that managers provide. The results of the study showed that respondents with higher EI scores were more satisfied with communication related to the organisation's perspective, i.e., information about the policies and objectives of the employee's department, implemented policies related to the employee's work, internal changes in the organisation, financial status, and achievements or problems. This supports the theoretical assumption (Jorfi et al. 2014) that managers with high EI succeed in accurately and interestingly conveying their ideas, organisational goals, and intentions, thus making others feel more confident in the professional environment.

One of the essential areas for improvement in the surveyed military unit is enhancing empathy. Empathy is an important communication skill proven (Tripathy 2021) to influence the acquisition of personal knowledge and in maintaining interpersonal relationships. Therefore, it is likely that enhancing the internal factors (emotional sharing, positive relationships, mutual regard, and personal genuineness) specified in Valente's (2016) empathy development model could be one of the solutions to reducing the identified weakness in the case of the analysed military unit.

Limitations. Some limitations have been identified in this research. First, the study sample is not large, and the results cannot be generalised for the entire Lithuanian army. Therefore, conducting larger-scale research involving more subjects and organisations and applying other additional measurement methods would be appropriate. Second, the present study collected data in a male-dominated military unit. This sample selection eliminated the representation of women, so their attitudes towards subjective wellbeing at work remained unexplored. This situation could be another direction for further research. Despite the abovementioned limitations, the study confirms the relationship between EI and communication in a military unit and creates prerequisites for further research involving the entire Lithuanian army.

Conclusions

1. In summary of the study results, it may be maintained that EI and communication satisfaction are related. Higher EI enables more effective communication and helps reduce employee stress and conflicts. Managers with higher EI can choose the right moment to communicate with superiors or subordinates when presenting new ideas, increasing the likelihood that the individuals with whom they communicate at the right time will be open to those ideas and will listen carefully to their arguments.
2. The results obtained show that EI skills and communication are positively and significantly related in the following areas: emotionality and communication are related to the perspective of the organisation; emotionality to personal feedback; self-control to communication with subordinates; sociality to organisational integration; and empa-

thy to formal and informal communication. It may also be claimed that respondents with higher EI scores are more satisfied with communication.

3. The research identified areas for improvement in the relationship between communication and EI in the analysed military unit related to enhancing the expression of empathy, improving communication related to disseminating the organisation's policies and goals, and ensuring the quality of satisfaction with feedback.

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Rolanda Kazlauskaitė-Markelienė, Dalia Prakapienė, Vytautas Lazdinis

EMOCINIO INTELEKTO IR KOMUNIKACIJOS RYŠYS VIEŠAJAME SEKTORIUJE: KARINIO VIENETO ATVEJIS

Anotacija. *Gebėjimas valdyti emocijas ir jas tikslingai taikyti vadovaujant, valdant procesus ar komunikuojant yra svarbus tiek personalo tarpusavio santykiams, tiek individo pasitenkinimu bendraujant su kitais. Emocinis intelektas yra svarbus formuojant indi-*

vido tarpusavio santykius tiek individualiu lygmeniu, tiek komandoje. Todėl šio straipsnio tikslas yra ištirti emocinio intelekto ir komunikacijos ryšį Lietuvos kariuomenės kariniame vienete. Tyrime taikytas kiekybinis tyrimo metodas – anketinė apklausa. Remiantis tyrimo rezultatais teigina, kad emocinis intelektas ir pasitenkinimas komunikacija viešajame sektoriuje yra susiję, o respondentai, turintys aukštesnius emocinio intelekto balus, yra labiau patenkinti komunikacija. Gauti rezultatai rodo, kad emocinio intelekto gebėjimai ir komunikacijos sritys yra teigiamos ir reikšmingai susijusios. Tačiau, nepaisant tyrimo įvadytų emocinio intelekto ir komunikacijos sąsajų teigiamų aspektų, identifikuotos analizuoto karinio vieneto komunikacijos ir emocinio intelekto ryšio stiprinimo tobulintinos sritys, susijusios su empatijos raiškos stiprinimu. Straipsnyje aptartas komunikacijos, susijusios su organizacijos politikos ir tikslų sklaida, gerinimas, taip pat pasitenkinimo grįžtamoju ryšiu kokybės užtikrinimas.

Rolanda Kazlauskaitė Markelienė, associate professor, Research Group for Security Institutions Management General Jonas Žemaitis Military Academy of Lithuania, Vilnius, Lithuania.

E-mail: rolanda.kazlauskaite@lka.lt

Dalia Prakapienė, associate professor, Research Group for Defence Economics and Management General Jonas Žemaitis Military Academy of Lithuania, Vilnius, Lithuania.

E-mail: dalia.prakapiene@lka.lt

Vytautas Lazdinis, MA, General Jonas Žemaitis Military Academy of Lithuania, Vilnius, Lithuania.

E-mail: vytautas.lazdinis@edu.lka.lt

Rolanda Kazlauskaitė-Markelienė, docentė, Saugumo institucijų valdymo mokslo grupė, Generolo Jono Žemaičio Lietuvos karo akademija, Vilnius, Lietuva.

E. paštas rolanda.kazlauskaite@lka.lt

Dalia Prakapienė, docentė, Gynybos ekonomikos ir vadybos mokslo grupė, Generolo Jono Žemaičio Lietuvos karo akademija, Vilnius, Lietuva.

E. paštas dalia.prakapiene@lka.lt

Vytautas Lazdinis, magistras, Generolo Jono Žemaičio Lietuvos karo akademija, Vilnius, Lietuva.

E. paštas vytautas.lazdinis@edu.lka.lt