



SELF-MANAGEMENT: AN INDISPENSABLE EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE SKILL FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

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Abstract

This paper investigates the importance of the emotional intelligence skill of self-management for secondary school principals. On a daily basis, principals are faced with educational challenges and work demands leading to stress, emotional exhaustion and, in some cases, resignation. To add, principals are under constant pressure to ensure the effectiveness and success of their leadership and management practices. Literature indicates that self-management as an emotional intelligence skill displayed promising and positive results for leadership and management effectiveness of principals, both personally and to the school's benefit. The study used a phenomenological design within a qualitative research approach which included four secondary schools from the Motheo district, Free State, South Africa. A total of four principals and 19 teachers, selected through purposive sampling, took part in the study. The data was collected through individual semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews. The findings revealed that self-management as an emotional intelligence skill may be a deciding factor in the quality of principals' leadership and management practices at school. Furthermore, the data showed that four self-management sub-skills, namely emotional regulation, optimism, adaptability and stress-management, seemed to be beneficial for principals. It is thus recommended that principals consider and allocate time for self-development, workshops or seminars on the value of these particular emotional intelligence skills, either under the umbrella of self-management or emotional intelligence in general.

Keywords: Adaptability, Emotional intelligence, Emotional regulation, Optimism, Principals, Self-management, Stress-management

1 Introduction and Background

The job responsibilities and workload for school principals have drastically expanded and become overwhelming in recent years (Allen, 2022; Elomaa, Eskelä-Haapanen, Pakarinen, Halttunen & Lerkkanen, 2023; Pollock, Nielsen & Singh, 2023). With this increase in responsibilities and workload, it has been shown by several researchers (Kutsyuruba, Arghash, Kharyati & Bosica, 2024; Memela & Ramathan, 2022) that principals are confronted with various daunting educational challenges, and unbearable work demands. This can, in turn, cause enormous pressure on school principals, resulting in stress, burnout, and emotional exhaustion (Kutsyuruba et al., 2024; Gómez-Leal, Holzer, Bradley, Fernández-Berrocal & Patti, 2021). Thus, when principals do not possess the necessary skills to manage the workload, demands and challenges they encounter, it may have severe negative consequences for the school as a whole. Furthermore, Elomaa et al. (2023) and Turk and Wolfe (2019) report that, in more extreme cases, principals may even opt to resign when they lack the ability to manage the daily demands as a principal effectively. According to Kutsyuruba et al. (2024), the well-being of principals has received greater attention following the increase in job demands. Hence, with the development and enhancement of the emotional intelligence (EI) skill of self-management, principals may be equipped to be more effective leaders.

As school leaders, effective principals are crucial for school success. According to Bush (2019) and Hoosier (2019), considerable educational problems are associated with a lack of effective school leadership and management practices on the principal's part. In brief, these problems may include poor learner achievement, negative school climate, unhealthy conflict, dysfunctional relationships and a decrease in teacher performance and job satisfaction (Salip & Quines, 2023; Yusniarti, Arif, Junaidi, Iswantir & Ayu, 2022). Hence, being more emotionally intelligent has become an unavoidable necessity for principals (Blaik-Hourani, Litz, Ali, Azaza &

Parkman, 2023). Furthermore, Hale (2022) found that the success and well-being of a principal depend greatly on the EI skills he/she possesses, as well as being regarded as critical due to the persistent expansion in educational demands. Regardless, school success is dependent on the effectiveness of principals' leadership and management (Van der Vyver, Fuller & Khumalo, 2021; Gogo, Mkhize & Bhengu, 2022).

Nevertheless, numerous studies have discovered a positive correlation between school principals' levels of EI and school improvement and effective fulfilment of duties and responsibilities (Blaik-Hourani et al., 2023; Pellitteri, 2021; Salip & Quines, 2023). However, to date, research has focused predominantly on EI skills in general, with few research reports focusing on self-management as a key construct for the improvement of EI skills. This research therefore aimed to close this gap in current research by focusing on one particular EI skill that may assist and provide school principals with the ability to be better leaders in their schools: self-management.

2 Research Question

This study was aimed at investigating the importance of self-management as an EI skill for secondary school principals. The following research question was formulated to guide the study:

- Why is self-management an indispensable emotional intelligence skill for secondary school principals?

3 Conceptual Framework and Literature review

The study adopted a conceptual framework, defined by Ringelstein and Patel (2023:11) as a "network of interlined concepts that together provide a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon". The phenomenon in this case is self-management as an indispensable EI skill for secondary school principals. The framework consists of the main concepts related to EI, with particular focus on one of the main domains: self-management. The EI skills and concepts situated under self-management related to this study are: emotional regulation, optimism, adaptability and stress management. These concepts and self-management skills relate to two of the main models that have been reviewed, namely the Goleman and Boyatzis Model of EI (Goleman, 2001; Goleman, Boyatzis & McKee, 2013; Livesey, 2017), and Bar-On's Model of Emotional-Social Intelligence (Bar-On, 2006).

Firstly, the concept of EI needs to be clarified. In short, EI can be defined as the ability to identify, understand, manage and express one's own emotions as well as that of others accurately and appropriately in social situations (Bru-Luna, Martí-Vilar, Merino-Soto & Cervera-Santiago, 2021; Livesey, 2017; Maddocks, 2023; Mayer, Caruso & Salovey, 2016; Salip & Quines, 2023). Within the model of Goleman, self-management is one of the main EI domains, along with self-awareness, social awareness and relationship management (Goleman et al., 2013; Livesey, 2017). Conversely, under Bar-On's model of EI, there are five main domains, namely intrapersonal, interpersonal, stress management, adaptability and general mood (Bar-On, 2006). This study focused on the main EI domain of self-management which is referred to as the capability of controlling one's own emotions and impulses whilst focused on achieving the set goals (Lubbadeh, 2020; Sajeevanie, 2020).

Additionally, self-management is defined as "the principal's ability to manage their emotions while interacting with different groups" (Sepiriti, 2023:3). Under the main domain of self-management, there are various EI sub-skills. The review of literature uncovered four EI skills relevant to self-management, which are: emotional regulation, optimism, adaptability and stress management. Emotional regulation is an EI skill listed under self-management in Goleman's model (Goleman et al., 2013), whereas Bar-On referred to his domain of stress management for emotional regulation (Bar-On, 2006). Optimism is also listed as an EI skill under self-management in Goleman's model, along with adaptability, whereas Bar-On (Bar-On, 2006) listed optimism under general mood and adaptability as a main domain in his model of EI. Lastly, stress management was removed from Goleman's model of EI when he reduced the competencies from 27 to 18 (Livesey, 2017); however, stress management is categorised as a main EI domain in Bar-On's model (Bar-On, 2006).

The first concept and EI skill related to this study under self-management is emotional regulation. Emotional regulation is defined as the ability to manage and shield negative and disruptive emotions, to manage one's emotions effectively and constructively (Bar-On, 2006; Goleman et al., 2013; Livesey, 2017). The ability and expertise to always see and persist in the positive during challenging and demanding situations, is known as optimism (Bar-On, 2006; Ogbo, Obiekwe & Okorji, 2023; Tripathy, 2018). Adaptability is regarded as the ability of an individual to be open-minded as well as being able to modify and adjust to evolving situations effectively, in short, management of change (Bar-On, 2006; Livesey, 2017; Purnomo, Prananto, Fitriya & Kaur, 2024). The last concept, stress management, is the skill to manage emotional states and impulses effectively and constructively (Tripathy, 2018).

In the following sections, an overview on the importance and necessity for principals of each EI skill under self-management will be provided based on existing literature.

3.1 Managing Emotions

Managing emotions has always been considered a critical aspect for school principals and leadership effectiveness. Furthermore, it is strongly suggested by Hauseman (2020) that principals must be able to manage their emotions to achieve success in their positions. According to Bayraktar, Yalçinkaya and Eytimiş (2021) and Lee, Yeh, Yu and Lin (2023), principals had an increase in work productivity and performance in areas such as problem-solving and making better decisions once they could manage their emotions effectively. Moreover, in doing so, principals may be able to detach from or ignore negative or destructive emotions which may distract them from making better decisions or finding solutions (AL-Qadri & Zhao, 2021; Lubbadah, 2020). It has also been explained that principals who are able to manage their emotions are more likely to effectively analyse their behaviour and emotions and thus identify more effective ways to achieve their goals (Fernandes, Wong & Noonan, 2022). Regarding their interaction with their staff, Lee et al. (2023) note that effective management of emotions at school resulted in the promotion of trust and commitment from staff. Along the same line, a study by Finnigan and Maulding-Green (2018) implies that a principal's management of his/her emotions can affect staff either negatively or positively. To add, a teacher's work performance and job satisfaction is exceedingly dependent on a principal's emotional regulation (Yusniarti et al., 2022), thus underlining the importance of this skill.

3.2 Optimism

According to Kutsyuruba et al. (2024), principals are naturally optimistic, motivated and resilient individuals. Nonetheless, it is a deciding skill for effective leadership (Ogbo et al., 2023). For one, in being optimistic, principals positively influence and inspire their staff members to be optimistic (Börü & Bellibaş, 2021; Kutsyuruba et al., 2024; Ogbo et al., 2024). Furthermore, Ogbo et al. (2024) indicate that optimistic principals help and inspire teachers to be more hopeful and motivated. This notion is also supported by Börü and Bellibaş (2021) who argue that principals significantly contribute to the development of teachers' optimism as well as creating a positive school climate. On the other hand, Pollock et al. (2023) indicate that principals' inability to be optimistic may result in lower job satisfaction in teachers. A study done by Ogbo et al. (2023:58) confirmed that a positive correlation exists between a principal's optimism and teachers' job satisfaction: "...how teachers perceive their leaders show of optimism or pessimism in the face of crises or insecurity impact their own psychological disposition". Being or staying optimistic is not always easy, thus principals networking with other school principals or having mentors has proven to be a useful strategy to stay optimistic (Elomaa et al., 2023). Additionally, seeking positives in difficult or bad circumstances helped principals to alter their perspective and accept that the negatives are only temporary and will not define the whole situation (Ogbo et al. 2024). Hence, the importance of optimism affects not only principals but also their staff and work environment.

3.3 Adaptability

It has been claimed by Sánchez-Núñez, Patti and Latorre-Postigo (2023) that schools can experience more harm than good when principals fail to be adaptive. Thus, being adaptable is a necessity for principals since it may influence the rest of the staff's ability to adapt to changing conditions (Issah, 2018). Principals who showed high EI are more likely to be adaptable which results in their finding new and improved solutions (Fernandes et al., 2022). Additionally, Hale (2022) also reported that higher EI in principals indicates better capabilities in adapting to the school's goals which is sometimes required as circumstances evolve. It has been found that older or more experienced principals tend to resist adapting (Lastovska, Surikova, Silin-Jasjukeviča & Lūsēna-Ezera, 2023) which is interesting since Kutsyuruba et al. (2024) found elevated levels of adaptability among more experienced school leaders. Nevertheless, it can be stated that being adaptable can result in increased resilience for principals, finding more effective solutions or methods, as well as motivating, encouraging innovation and creativity among staff (Bagwell, 2020).

3.4 Stress Management

Principals encounter numerous stressful situations and challenges on a daily basis (Sepiriti, 2024). According to Elomaa et al. (2023), principals experience more stress compared to the rest of the school population. Then again, at the end of the day, principals are responsible and held accountable for anything that happens at their schools (Beyers & du Plessis, 2023). However, it has been reported by Sepiriti (2024) that higher EI enables principals to manage stress more effectively. To add, Gómez-Leal et al. (2021) strongly assert that emotionally intelligent principals who can manage their emotions and stress, ensure not only effective management of their job demands and stresses but make good decisions for themselves and the school. Conversely, the lack of ability to manage stress effectively may lead to severe negative consequences such as burnout among principals, inability

to concentrate on essential tasks, teachers feeling neglected, unsupported and being treated unfairly, and ineffective communication (Elomaa et al., 2023; Mahfouz, 2018; Ogalo, Odera & Ogogo, 2020; Taole, 2022; Ulfiah, Nurannisa & Firdausi, 2022). Similar findings were made by Kazak and Ciner (2021) who indicated that one of the factors for principals’ mistreatment of teachers is stress. Therefore, stress management as an EI skill for principals can be decisive for more effective leadership and management (Gómez-Leal et al., 2021).

4 Methodology

A phenomenological research design was implemented for this study. Through this design, an extensive understanding of the phenomenon being studied was gained since a phenomenological design seeks to explore and comprehend the lived experiences of individuals who lived through the phenomenon (Aten & Denney, 2023; Zarestky, 2023). Also, a research approach poised to investigate the lived experiences of individuals relevant to the phenomenon being studied to provide a descriptive interpretation of that phenomenon is referred to as a qualitative research approach (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Taherdoost, 2022; Zarestky, 2023).

For this study, multiple data collection methods were employed, namely semi-structured individual interviews and focus groups interviews. This ensured that data was triangulated which ensured the reliability of the findings (Stahl & King, 2020). Individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with school principals whereas focus group interviews were conducted with teachers. This study sought to extensively investigate the views and experiences of participants regarding self-management as an EI skill, thus making these two data collection methods applicable. Both methods allowed the researcher to ask follow-up questions, obtaining clarification or deeper understanding regarding any informative and valuable information that was shared (Mwita, 2022; Quitaras & Abuso, 2021; Tümen-Akyildiz & Ahmed, 2021). The data collected was analysed using thematic analysis. Thus, patterns were identified which led to generating of codes and constructing of themes with the aim of describing the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Elsevier, 2022; Lochmiller, 2021).

4.1 Participants

Participants for this study were purposefully selected, which is a method of selecting participants with intent (Casteel & Bridier, 2021). Four secondary schools were identified, which included four secondary school principals who participated in the study and a total of 19 teachers who participated in four separate focus group interviews. Teachers were included in the study because they act as silent observers and work under the leadership and management of principals. Thus, teachers were considered as a key factor in providing their views, understanding and experiences regarding their school principals’ skills in self-management. The first focus group consisted of four teachers, the second focus group interview had seven teachers participating, and the third and fourth focus group interviews both consisted of four teachers each. Codes were designated and assigned to participants to avoid confusion (e.g., S1/P/T1;2). The first part of the code (S1) indicates the school that participated, and the second part of the code refers to the position (P for principal and T for teacher). Lastly, for focus groups, the code F was used, for example, S2/F/T2 refers to school two, focus group and teacher number two in the focus group. Below is a brief overview of the participants’ biographical data.

Table 1: Participants’ biographical data

School 1 (S1)	Gender	Age	Years teaching	Years as principal
Principal (P)	M	63	40	23
Teacher (T1)	F	26-30	6-10	n/a
Teacher (T2)	F	1-5	1-5	n/a
Teacher (T3)	F	11-15	11-15	n/a
Teacher (T4)	F	1-5	1-5	n/a
School 2 (S2)	Gender	Age	Years teaching	Years as principal
Principal (P)	M	50	23	20
Teacher (T1)	M	56-60	31+	n/a
Teacher (T2)	F	26-30	6-10	n/a
Teacher (T3)	F	31-35	6-10	n/a
Teacher (T4)	F	36-40	11-15	n/a
Teacher (T5)	M	20-25	1-5	n/a

Teacher (T6)	F	31-35	11-15	n/a
Teacher (T7)	F	20-25	1-5	n/a
School 3 (S3)	Gender	Age	Years teaching	Years as principal
Principal (P)	F	53	30	1
Teacher (T1)	M	36-40	11-15	n/a
Teacher (T2)	F	46-50	21-25	n/a
Teacher (T3)	F	31-35	6-10	n/a
Teacher (T4)	F	51-55	26-30	n/a
School 4 (S4)	Gender	Age	Years teaching	Years as principal
Principal (P)	M	64	41	7
Teacher (T1)	F	20-25	1-5	n/a
Teacher (T2)	F	26-30	6-10	n/a
Teacher (T3)	F	31-35	6-10	n/a
Teacher (T4)	F	36-40	16-20	n/a

5 Findings

The following themes were identified and defined from the data for self-management: emotional regulation, optimism and managing criticism, adaptability, and stress management.

5.1 Emotional Regulation

A notable quote from one of the teachers was captured regarding the importance of emotional regulation for principals which stated that, “they work with people and before doing that you must be able to work with yourself” (S1/F/T2). One school principal (S2/P) strongly asserted that a school leader – whether principal, deputy principal or Head of Department (HOD) – will most likely not fare well in challenging situations such as conflict or difficult conversations if they are unable to regulate their emotions. He (S2/P) further insisted that a principal has already lost control of the situation before it even started when he/she is unable to regulate their emotions. This also significantly aligns with findings from two teachers in different focus group interviews (S1/F/T1; S4/F/T2) who claimed that a principal needs to be able to regulate their emotions to effectively manage situations – especially difficult ones where emotions may be intensified – to prevent any damage being done or to affect colleagues or other educational stakeholders negatively.

5.2 Optimism

Regarding optimism, two principals (S2/P; S3/P) claimed that whenever there were unforeseen, difficult or negative circumstances, they would look for the positives and what could work, then they would embrace it to ensure it is beneficial to the school. To add, three principals (S1/P; S2/P; S3/P) noted that it is important to be optimistic to ensure the rest of the staff can be positive and have positive perspectives in every situation. This was concurred by one teacher (S2/F/T7) from a focus group who stated that when principals are always negative, it may influence staff to also become negative or start to see the school through a negative perspective. According to a principal (S3/P) and a teacher (S4/F/T2), when a principal is not optimistic and remains negative most of the time, it has a profound influence on the rest of the school, including staff, creating a negative and hopeless atmosphere. This principal (S3/P) did admit, however, that it is not always easy to remain optimistic and positive. She had to learn over time how to look for and focus on the positive aspects in situations and not allow negative aspects to define the entire situation or objective they are working towards (S3/P). Additionally, another principal (S2/P) emphasised the importance of a school’s vision and goals which help one to stay optimistic, particularly during challenging times, since it ensures the direction towards which one is working; this is the bigger objective, as concurred by another principal (S3/P). Lastly, having other school principals as colleagues assisted in providing clarity and perspective, making it easier for them to be optimistic since most principals have gone through similar situations or challenges (S1/P; S3/P).

5.3 Adaptability

One principal (S1/P) admitted that he does not like change, where he is required to adapt. One reason, as he explained (S1/P), could be traced back to his personality as this principal prefers things to be done in a specific

way. This, however, does not mean that he is incapable of being adaptable as was displayed during one of his explanations of a situation requiring adaptability (S1/P). An expected finding was that it was mostly older and experienced participants (S1/P; S2/P; S4/P) who may not like or find it difficult to adapt since they are comfortable and like how things are. For example, two principals (S1/P; S4/P) claimed that if something works, they do not 'mess with it'. Additionally, one of these participants (S4/P) did explain that it is crucial for principals to be able to adapt but also equally critical to be aware, know when and how to adapt. Most participants agreed and regarded the ability for principals to adapt as pivotal and necessary since it leads to more effective methods, creativity and to progress as a school (S1/P; S2/P; S2/F/T1; S3/P; S3/F/T1; S4/P). Lastly, it was found that when principals can see that adapting will benefit the school, it was much easier to embrace change; at times adaptation is inevitable and needs to occur to ensure the progression and success of a school (S2/P; S3/F/T1; S4/P; S4/F/T3).

5.4 Stress Management

Interestingly, one principal (S3/P) explained that she never experienced stress on such a level prior to becoming a principal, and claimed that "... stress is a big part of a school principal's job" (S3/P). Two principals (S2/P; S3/P) claimed that, if a principal cannot manage stress or pressure, which is inevitable (S3/P), they are less likely to make it, resulting in ineffective leaders for their schools. Regarding the importance of managing stress for principals, two teachers (S2/F/T7; S4/F/T1) concurred that the rest of the staff will be negatively affected if a principal cannot manage or tolerate pressure effectively. The reason for this is that the principal may take it out on staff and place staff under more pressure and stress, or even completely neglect teachers due to being preoccupied. When it comes to managing stress, one principal (S3/P) ensures that plans are made and solutions are found for problems because then less stress will be experienced. Another principal (S2/P) takes part in activities that are not related to school or colleagues from school in order to manage their stress more effectively.

6 Discussion

Overall, findings on why self-management as an EI skill is critical for principals seem positive and can be greatly beneficial when it comes to the leadership and management of their schools. Regarding emotional regulation, findings showed that principals are more likely to have control over intense, emotional, and difficult situations when they can regulate their emotions. This is supported by two other studies (Bayraktar et al., 2021; Hauseman, 2020; Lee et al., 2023) which found that principals showed improvement in their work performance, such as decision-making and problem-solving, when they could regulate their emotions. It has been argued by Sepiriti (2023) that with emotional regulation (self-management), principals are more likely to better manage impulses that may be triggered by educational challenges and demands. Besides managing demanding situations, another finding indicated that relationships with staff can be negatively affected by principals if they are not able to regulate their emotions. This was also found by two other studies (Finnigan & Maulding-Green, 2018; Lee et al., 2023) which reported that principals' emotional regulation promotes trust and commitment in teachers, affecting them positively. To add, Yusniarti et al. (2022) indicated that emotional regulation was one of the main factors affecting teachers' job satisfaction.

Principals will be required to deal with adversity on numerous occasions and in different forms in their jobs. Thus, being able to be optimistic may be the deciding factor principals need to ensure they can continue working towards theirs and the school's objectives. A notable finding for why principals need to be optimistic is because it, in turn, influences the rest of the school and the staff. This was corroborated by various other studies (Börü & Bellibaş, 2021; Kutsyuruba et al., 2024; Ogbo et al., 2024) that reported similar findings on teachers being positively influenced and inspired by principals' optimism. Conversely, when principals are not optimistic, are negative or lack resilience, it may stimulate these same qualities in staff which leads to lower job satisfaction and production (Pollock et al., 2023). One of the methods in the findings used by participants to stay optimistic is to look for the positives in situations, especially negative and difficult circumstances. The findings agreed that negative aspects in certain circumstances cannot define the whole situation. This finding is aligned with what Ogbo et al. (2023) note about how seeking out the positives may assist principals in being optimistic since they will see and accept that such an incident is only temporary and will not affect other activities or the bigger objective. Lastly, one finding indicated the importance of having other principals as colleagues assisted greatly in remaining optimistic. This suggestion is supported by findings from Elomaa et al. (2023) which claim that networking with other principals led to immense support, clarification on certain issues, trust and knowledgeable support.

The findings indicated that some principals may be against adaptability, however, they did stress the importance of this trait, since it may benefit the school in general. Similar findings were reported by Lastovska et al. (2023) with experienced principals being more likely to resist adapting to change. However, Kutsyuruba et al. (2024) found that experienced principals normally display a more efficient ability to adapt to challenging

situations. This may come down to personal choice rather than not being able to adapt, since findings in this study indicated that principals may choose not to adapt for reasons such as personal preference. Nevertheless, the findings were compelling regarding the importance and necessity of principals being able to adapt. Findings indicated that adaptability may benefit the school, such as discovering better methods and solutions for educational challenges. These findings are supported by Bagwell (2020) who reported that adaptability resulted in principals becoming more resilient and finding more effective solutions or methods.

The findings regarding stress are not surprising since Beyers and du Plessis (2023) claimed in their study that there is an increase in stress and pressure for principals as they are responsible and held accountable for anything that may occur at school. Also, Elomaa et al. (2023) argue that principals experience higher levels of stress compared to the general population, which is aligned with the findings of this study regarding principals never experiencing stress to such an extent prior to becoming principals. This makes sense as Sepiriti (2024) also found that principals encounter several stressful challenges and demands on a daily basis. Thus, it is crucial for principals to be able to effectively manage stress and pressure. Studies have shown that, in failing to do so, principals are more likely to experience emotional exhaustion leading to burnout, or even more extreme, resigning from their leadership positions (Elomaa et al., 2023; Turk & Wolfe, 2019). Lastly, it is important to manage stress for the benefit of staff members as well, as it was found that principals under stress may cause teachers to be under increased pressure, more stressed or in some cases, to neglect teachers or mistreat them. This is supported by other studies (Kazak & Ciner, 2021; Ogalo et al., 2020; Taole, 2022) that found that stress was one of the factors for teacher negligence by principals, displaying undesired mistreatment, resulting in lower job satisfaction and teachers feeling unsupported. However, it seems that when coping strategies are in place, for example, doing activities not related to school, this is alleviated. This is supported by Elomaa et al. (2023) who suggest that outlets outside of work, such as physical exercise, is a recommended stress management strategy. Additionally, one principal claimed that focussing on finding solutions helps them and this is aligned with another management strategy for stress by Elomaa et al. (2023), referring to addressing the problem through action plans. The findings therefore align with previous research.

7 Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has concluded that self-management as an EI skill for secondary school principals is important. With the development and enhancement of this EI skill, principals can become more effective leaders and managers in their schools. This could be advantageous and beneficial for principals on a personal level as well. It is inevitable that principals will experience and encounter numerous educational challenges and demanding workloads which may hinder their leadership effectiveness. Leadership ineffectiveness may further cause detrimental effects for the school and the educational stakeholders. However, as the study has revealed how vital self-management with its underlying EI skills are, it can be a deciding factor for principals in their leadership and management efficacy.

It is thus recommended that principals allocate time for the development of their self-management skills. This can be done through self-development, workshops, short-courses or seminars. It is strongly recommended that teachers working towards leadership and management positions in schools, such as department heads, deputy principals or principals, are also encouraged to start attending additional workshops, training, programs or seminars regarding the development of EI skills. These methods may not be solely effective to prepare teachers for leadership positions, therefore, principals should also consider mentoring and guiding potential future leaders for these positions. Lastly, as with any other study, this study had limitations which included the number of participants, thus the findings cannot be generalised and applied to the entire population. However, the information obtained can be of great value for principals, other school leaders or teachers, who find themselves in the same context and subjected to similar challenges.

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