

Original Article

The challenges of connecting situational leadership and emotional intelligence

Os desafios de conectar liderança situacional e inteligência emocional

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ABSTRACT

Purpose – The study aims to identify whether emotional intelligence influences leadership profiles given the performance of their teams in the face of the people, processes, and results pillars.

Methodology – A qualitative research used in-depth interviews to collect and analyze data, which Iramuteq software supports.

Findings – According to the interviewer's perspective, the results showed that the situational leadership model proved helpful in leadership practice. Emotional intelligence is strongly associated with the situational leadership profile.

Research Limitations – The conclusions of a qualitative study could not be generalized for other's circumstances but could support further research.

Practical Implications – The interviewees perceive this connection between situational leadership and emotional intelligence when they note the importance of knowing how to manage conflicts, influence the team, and have emotional resilience and empathy.

Originality/value – This research assumes that the combined use of situational leadership and emotional intelligence variables can guide the adoption of a management style aimed at achieving results at work and greater employee job satisfaction.

Keywords: Situational leadership; Emotional intelligence; Maturity

RESUMO

Objetivo – O estudo visa identificar se há influência da inteligência emocional nos perfis de liderança frente ao desempenho de suas equipes diante dos pilares pessoas, processos e resultados.

Metodologia – Pesquisa qualitativa que utilizou entrevistas em profundidade para coleta e análise de dados, apoiadas pelo software Iramuteq.

Resultados – Os resultados mostraram que o modelo de liderança situacional se mostrou útil no exercício da liderança, na visão dos entrevistados, e que a inteligência emocional está fortemente

associada ao perfil de liderança situacional.

Limitações da pesquisa – As conclusões de um estudo qualitativo não podem ser generalizadas para outras circunstâncias, mas podem apoiar futuras investigações.

Implicações práticas – Os entrevistados percebem a ligação entre liderança situacional e inteligência emocional quando ressaltam a importância de saber administrar conflitos, influenciar a equipe e ter resiliência emocional e empatia.

Originalidade/valor – Esta pesquisa parte do pressuposto de que o uso combinado de variáveis de liderança situacional e inteligência emocional pode orientar a adoção de um estilo de gestão que vise o alcance de resultados no trabalho e maior satisfação dos funcionários no trabalho.

Palavras-chave: Liderança situacional; Inteligência emocional; Maturidade

1 INTRODUCTION

The topic of leadership is among the most discussed and researched in organizational management theory (Fonseca et al., 2015; Antonakis & Davis, 2018; Samul, 2020), as it is considered an essential factor for the competitiveness of organizations and the well-being of employees (Nixon et al., 2012; *Sant'anna et al., 2012*).

Professionals in a leadership role exert influence over people and teams, which requires developing multiple skills to operate in different contexts (Turano & Cavazotte, 2016; Dirani et al., 2020). Leadership style affects results and reinforces the need to form interpersonal bonds to increase employee engagement to achieve organizational goals (Dinh et al., 2014; Parry et al., 2019).

Especially since the middle of the last century, classic authors (Drucker, 2006; Ramos, 1983) have argued that leadership styles influence employee commitment, which leads to a greater sense of ownership concerning professional and organizational goals and activities.

According to situational leadership theory (Hersey & Blanchard, 1986), the most effective leadership style is one in which leaders adapt their style according to the level of maturity of those they lead. The leader should use a more directive style if the people being led are inexperienced and unprepared for complex decisions involving several variables. The leader can be more participative if the team members are more experienced and prepared to take on greater challenges.

More recent studies question the existence of a relationship between leadership styles and organizational commitment and performance, a pillar of TSL (Thompson & Vecchio, 2007; Fernandes et al., 2014; Andersen et al., 2017; Kosfeld, 2020), while others confirm the link between leadership and improved competitiveness and employee satisfaction (Duarte & Papa, 2011; Pasaribu, 2015; Mustofa & Muafi, 2021).

There is, however, consensus on some aspects: (1) there are different ways of exercising leadership, and there are different levels of maturity among those being led so that knowledge about the virtues and objections of this type of leadership in different companies can contribute to organizational management; (2) there are variables exogenous to the relationship between leader and subordinate that have an impact on productivity at work (culture, government policies, organizational purpose, among others); and (3) the exercise of leadership, considering the economic, social and organizational context, requires flexibility in the relationship with subordinates to develop more productive teams, circumventing difficulties and boosting performance.

Developing the ability to identify one's feelings and those of others to manage emotions in personal and organizational relationships (Boyatzis et al., 2000; Goleman, 2015) is an attribute that can modulate a leader's performance. This capacity could be translated into a degree of emotional intelligence. This expression indicates the aggregation of a skill that fits in with the basic precepts of leadership in a volatile, plural, critical, and multidisciplinary work environment, characteristic of this turn of the century (Gardenswartz et al., 2010).

Therefore, is there any association between situational leadership and emotional intelligence that can influence organizational performance? This study aims to analyze the alignment between situational leadership and emotional intelligence as a mechanism for improving the management model and organizational performance through content analysis of in-depth interviews with managers of a large financial institution. This study assumes that nowadays, it is not enough to adapt the management style

to the characteristics of the environment (situational leadership), but the appropriate approach and dexterity in managing leadership (emotional intelligence).

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Situational leadership

There is no single way of leading that applies to all situations. The style must consider the characteristics of the macro and micro contexts in which the leader operates (Blum et al., 2016) and the individual skills that enable them to take advantage of adversity and overcome obstacles. However, the authoritarian, inflexible, and domineering leadership style inhibits debate, the conflict of ideas, and, ultimately, innovation (Silva et al., 2020).

The situational leadership theory is based on the idea that team performance depends on the interaction of leadership styles and distinguishes itself by representing a more comprehensive perspective to the study of leadership by also considering the level of maturity of subordinates in the performance of their tasks (Hersey & Blanchard, 1986).

Although the adoption of this leadership model has been taking place in organizations for almost forty years, on the one hand, there is criticism of its effectiveness, notably linked to the agility of adapting the style to new circumstances in the business environment and the ability of the leader to know how to assess the maturity of those led in order to choose the most appropriate leadership style (Armandi et al., 2003; Mulyana et al., 2022). On the other hand, there is a greater volume of research validating the use of situational leadership (Walters, 2001; Thompson & Aarset, 2012; Maisyaroh et al., 2019; Todorovic' & Todorovic', 2020).

These studies show that situational leadership is adapted to the organizational context of reducing hierarchies, sharing information in networks, and focusing on innovation and socio-economic sustainability since it presupposes the adoption of a

flexible style that focuses not only on the leader but also on the person being led and the context surrounding this relationship. These surveys revealed that the leader's ability to understand the development stages of teams and individuals contributes to improved performance and results.

2.2 Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence is related to an individual's ability to manage and understand their own emotions and those of others so that they can use them to facilitate their adaptation to the environment in which they live (Muniz et al., 2007). This concept is based on five basic and interdependent skills: self-awareness, self-motivation, self-control, empathy, and sociability. The first three refer to examinations of the self's reactions to what the individual does with their feelings, while the last two are related to the feelings of others and social interactions:

Figure 1 – Emotional intelligence skills

Skills	Features	Leadership
Self-awareness	Self-awareness. Involves emotional awareness, self-evaluation, and self-confidence.	Better professional performance, more receptive to criticism and feedback.
Self-management/ Self-control	Ability to control impulses and emotions. It involves self-control, reliability, integrity, adaptability, and innovation.	More transparent, more focused, more pragmatic.
Self-motivation	The ability to direct emotions towards a goal. It involves achievement, commitment, initiative, and optimism.	More effectiveness and better use of opportunities.
Empathy	Possess the ability to put oneself in another's shoes. It involves understanding others, being service-oriented, developing others, and maximizing diversity.	Perception of emotions felt and unspoken by the group.
Social skills	Possess the ability to relate well and be attentive to the demands of others. It involves influence, communication, conflict management, leadership, and catalysts for change.	Monitors customer satisfaction; redirects energy towards a common goal; finds alternatives to overcome obstacles.

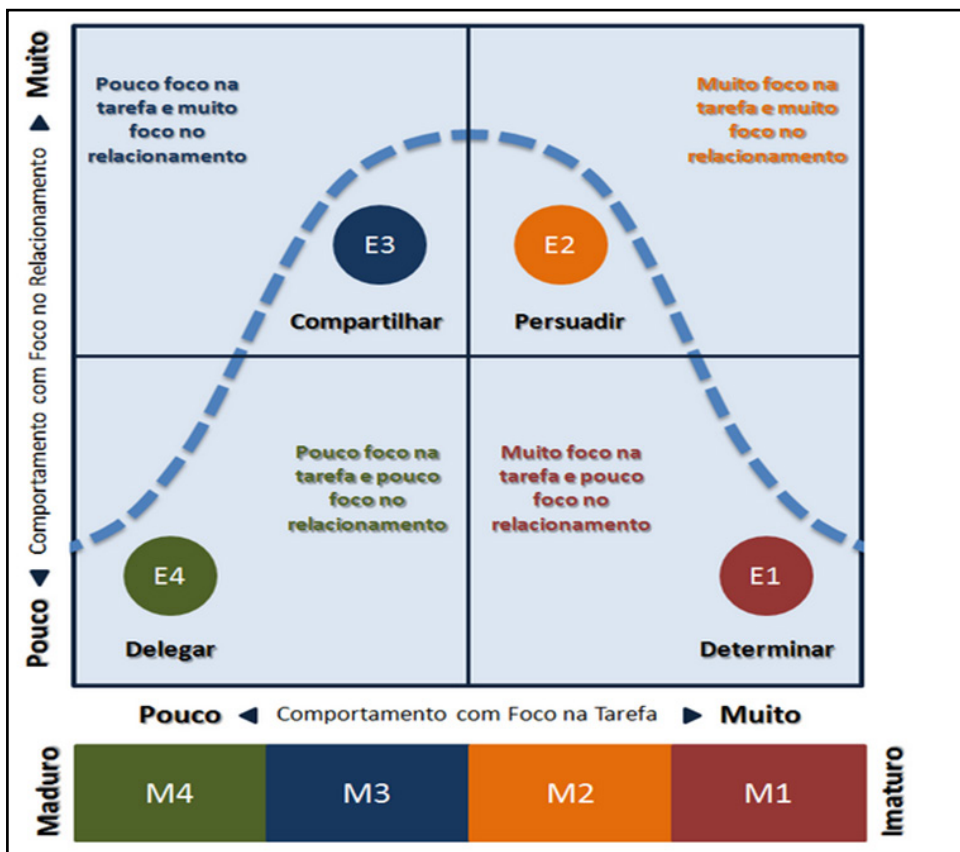
Source: Adapted from Goleman (2015) and Ferrari & Ghedine (2012)

Emotional intelligence requires leaders to be able to deal with their own emotions, whether in team building, skills development, communications with the various segments of the organization, or in economic, political, and social life (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2018; Lone & Lone, 2018).

2.3 Theoretical Model of the Association between Situational Leadership (SL) and Emotional Intelligence (EI)

Situational leadership theory addresses the leader’s ability to influence the behavior of a person or group of people to achieve one or more objectives in a specific context (Hersey & Blanchard, 1986). It should be emphasized that the maturity of those being led must be the situational element of this approach, which implies the willingness and ability of those being led to take responsibility for their behavior.

Figure 2 – The general outline of situational leadership



Source: Hersey and Blanchard (1986)

Figure 2 shows the relationship between the maturity of the team members relevant to the task and the leadership styles that the leader should adopt according to the team members' maturity level. The curve passes through all the leadership quadrants and indicates the appropriate leadership style for a given level of maturity.

By M1 we mean the type of maturity with little capacity and rare willingness, so the E1 leadership style requires the leader to give precise instructions and supervise the fulfillment of the task. The style must, therefore, be determined by the leader making the decision. M2 implies some capacity and eventual willingness, i.e., in the E2 leadership style, the leader must explain their decisions and offer opportunities for clarification so that decision-making is based on "persuasion," and more dialog or explanation is required. The M3 style makes it possible to exchange ideas and make decisions quickly. The leader should encourage "shared" decision-making with the team members. In contrast, M4 suggests that the leader has much capacity and willingness, which allows the leader to "delegate" responsibilities to the subordinate.

Leaders' knowledge of how emotions influence work is essential for their growth and that of the company to which they are linked (Goleman, Boyatzis & Mckee, 2018).

Therefore, the theory of situational leadership, on the one hand, emphatically proposes the adaptation of styles to specific groups and contexts (Hersey & Blanchard, 1986), and on the other, the theory of emotional intelligence focuses on the role of emotions as a fundamental condition for the exercise of leadership (Goleman, 2015).

One of the challenges faced by leaders who choose to consider contingencies, team maturity, and the necessary mediation in decision-making is to develop behaviors that reflect emotional intelligence (Caetano & Pletsch, 2019), which implies knowing how to manage and understand the emotions of those they lead, as well as their own, based on the development of emotional leadership competencies and emotional intelligence skills (Goleman, 2015).

Figure 3 – The variables used to investigate the association between Situational Leadership and Emotional Intelligence

Situational Leadership	Emotional Intelligence
Flexibility - Willingness to change leadership style according to performance needs.	Self-awareness - Being aware of both your state of mind and your thoughts about that state of mind allows you to perceive the world more objectively.
Interaction - Communicate effectively, build strong relationships, and mobilize to achieve objectives.	Self-motivation - Dealing with emotions that favor the achievement of proposed goals.
Broad Vision - Understanding how your actions relate to the organization's objectives.	Self-control - Knowing how to differentiate between the negative and the positive to deal with your feelings.
Maturity - Assess the level of maturity of those being led to guide and direct actions.	Empathy - Identifying emotions in others, knowing how to respect differences with sensitivity towards other people's positions.
Focus on People - Show concern for the well-being of those they lead and show willingness to help them grow and develop.	Social Skills - Knowing how to relate to others and establishing assertive connections.
Diversity of Models - Adapt your style according to the situation.	

Source: Based on Hersey and Blanchard (1986,2007) Goleman (2015) and Goleman et al.(2018)

This research assumes that the combined use of situational leadership and emotional intelligence variables can guide the adoption of a management style aimed at achieving results at work and greater employee job satisfaction,

3 METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

The semi-structured interview was chosen as the most appropriate collection technique for surveying the participants' perceptions of the alignment between TLS and EI as a link to provide a more flexible dialog without the rigidity of an adaptable, flexible conversation, avoiding the rigidity of a structured interview. Obtaining the necessary information from a fluid and open conversation favors identifying relevant points in relation to the participants' experience and their perception of the alignment of the variables analyzed (Malhotra, 2005; Flick, 2008).

Given the nature of regional work logistics, the interviewees and the interviewer were in different cities. The interviews were carried out remotely, helping to reduce costs, increase interviewee participation, and reduce time, as well as favoring a higher response rate without losing quality in the data collection (Rocheleau et al., 2012; Santhiago & Magalhães, 2020).

The survey questionnaire is based especially on the bibliography analyzed in this article (Hersey and Blanchard, 1986, 2007; Goleman, 2015; Goleman et al., 2018; Tourinho, 2019).

Figure 4 – Relationship Between topics in the research objective and questions in the survey instrument

Research Objective Topics	Questions
Identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the situational leadership style in the face of organizational competitiveness.	9, 10, 12, 13, 17, 18, 20
Checking leaders' performance against the three pillars: people, processes, and results.	1,2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 12, 14
Checking the influence of emotional intelligence on leadership profiles concerning the performance of their teams.	5 7, 8, 11, 15, 16, 19

Source: Based on Hersey and Blanchard, 1986, 2007; Goleman, 2015; Goleman et al., 2018; Tourinho, 2019

The target audience for this research was employees of a national public financial institution responsible for the corporate management of large personal accounts. This management segment is responsible for offering personalized products to clients, which requires a high degree of flexibility when proposing solutions. The sample for the interviews consisted of eight employees who are linked to a regional private area of a financial institution: four are leaders who occupy the position of *Private Manager*, and the other four occupy the position of *Private Assistant*. Each leader has two or three employees under his coordination.

After data collection, each of the interviews was transcribed for textual scanning by *Interface de R pour les Analyses Multidimensionnelles de Textes et de Questionnaires* (IRAMUTEQ), software used as a tool to support data processing in qualitative research,

with the ability to cross-reference information, organize the distribution of vocabulary in an easily understandable and visually clear way, as will be presented in the following topic (Souza, 2018). Thus, the organization and preparation of the data for analysis, coding of the initial text, descending hierarchical classification, and interpretation of these classes were carried out. The interviews were organized in a single file with one variable. The intention of using this software was to cross-reference information and organize the distribution of vocabulary in an easily understandable and visually clear way, which could be represented by word clouds and dendrograms among other representatives.

4 DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

The use of the IRAMUEQ software to support this research was aimed at obtaining lexical analysis to indicate the terms that appear most strongly in the interviewees' perception of situational leadership categories and their association with emotional intelligence. It was based on the understanding that textual analysis makes it possible to describe and compare different responses according to specific variables (Camargo & Justo, 2016).

Three analyses were carried out on the textual corpus, i.e., the set of information gathered from the interviews:

Specificity analysis describes the data that makes up the information set.

Descending Hierarchical Classification (DHC) and Correspondence Factor Analysis (CFA) to understand the data and make inferences about understanding the participants' manifestations.

Similarity analyses aim to identify common themes, compare different points of view, and identify similarities in the respondents' approaches.

The information was organized into three dimensions - leadership, situational leadership, and emotional intelligence. To do this, we used the Reinert Method (Reinert, 1993), which is based on the idea that the meaning of a text can be understood from its

lexical structure, i.e., the words and expressions that are used in the text and represent existing interactions in a data set, so that the lexical forms are organized into classes according to the relative importance of each one.

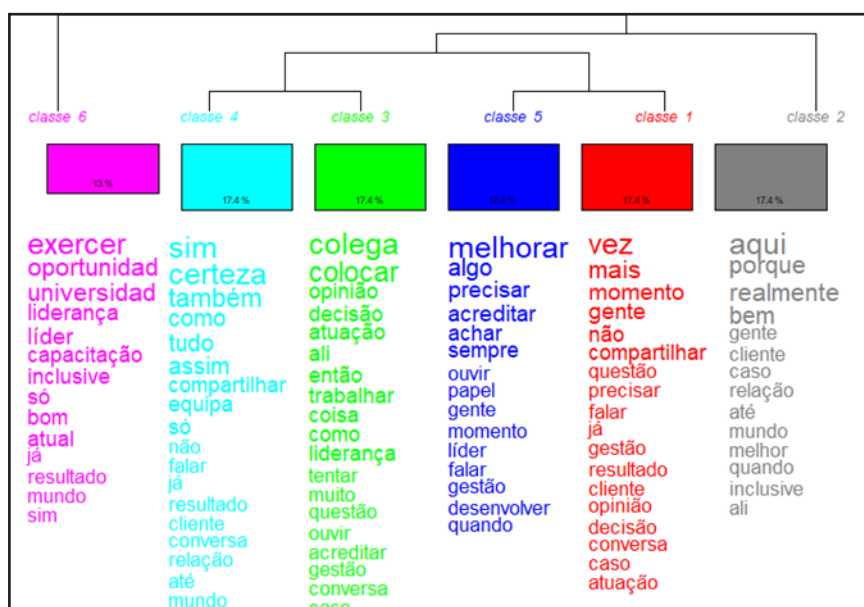
The results for each category are presented below.

4.1 Leadership

Regarding the dendrogram, classes 1 and 5 correspond to the question asked of managers and assistants about what could be improved in the leader. In class 1, the word **time** stood out among the others, showing that, in the opinion of the interviewees, there is always something to improve, and sometimes the leader must act with moderation.

In Class 5, the highlight was the word **improve**, alluding to the leader's attitude toward improving the work and the team's performance. Class 3 deals with the different colleagues and how they fit into the team in response to how the leader relates to the team, whether they promote participation, and whether they build a collaborative environment.

Figure 5 – Dendrogram of the leadership text corpus - IRAMUTEQ

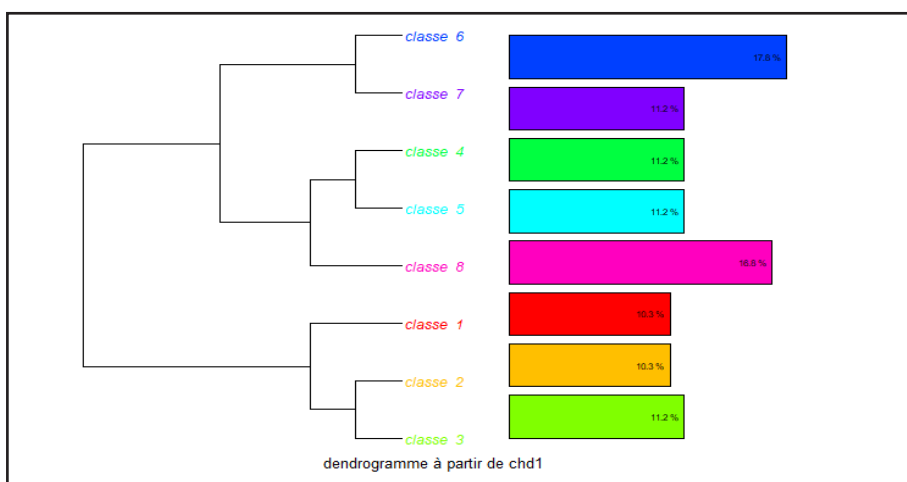


Source: IRAMUTEQ

4.2 Situational leadership

Nine texts corresponding to the nine questions related to this category were analyzed, with 140 text segments in 628 active forms, including adjectives, verbs, unrecognized forms, and common nouns. The classification of the segments exceeded the minimum percentage required to validate the analysis, which is 75%, reaching a value of 76.43%.

Figure 6 – Hierarchical Descending Classification (CHD) - IRAMUTEQ



Source: IRAMUTEQ

Seven classes were formed in the CHD, so Class 1 encompassed Classes 2 and 3. Class 1 interacts with the other classes. Class 8 encompasses Classes 4 and 5 more closely because they refer to question 2 of the interview form. Class 6 concentrates the largest part of the corpus (17.8%), followed by Class 8 (16.8%), while Classes 1 and 2 concentrate the smallest part (10.3% each).

In the opinion of all the assistants interviewed, the concern for development is present in their leaders, who propose challenges to promote growth, development, and improvements in the team. When asked, the leaders also believe that they promote team development. This convergence of understanding allows us to infer that promoting development concerns everyone.

It can be seen that the most appropriate attitude, including the observation of feelings and preferences, will depend on each situation, which corroborates the literature (Bowditch & Buono, 2009) on the need to align the leadership style with the decision to be made, considering the benefits to be obtained from effective leadership, and to emphasize that there is no single way of leadership to be applied in each and every situation and that the circumstances must be observed before making a decision (Blum et al., 2016).

The results, therefore, corroborate the premise of the situational leadership theory (Hersey & Blanchard, 1986) about adapting the leadership style to the level of maturity of those being led and the tasks to be performed.

When asked about the need for the leader to impose authority in any situation, all the assistants said it may be necessary to use authority in certain situations. However, some interviewees pointed out that this authority should only be used in extreme situations, with caution, to adapt to the other person's style without characterizing any harassment.

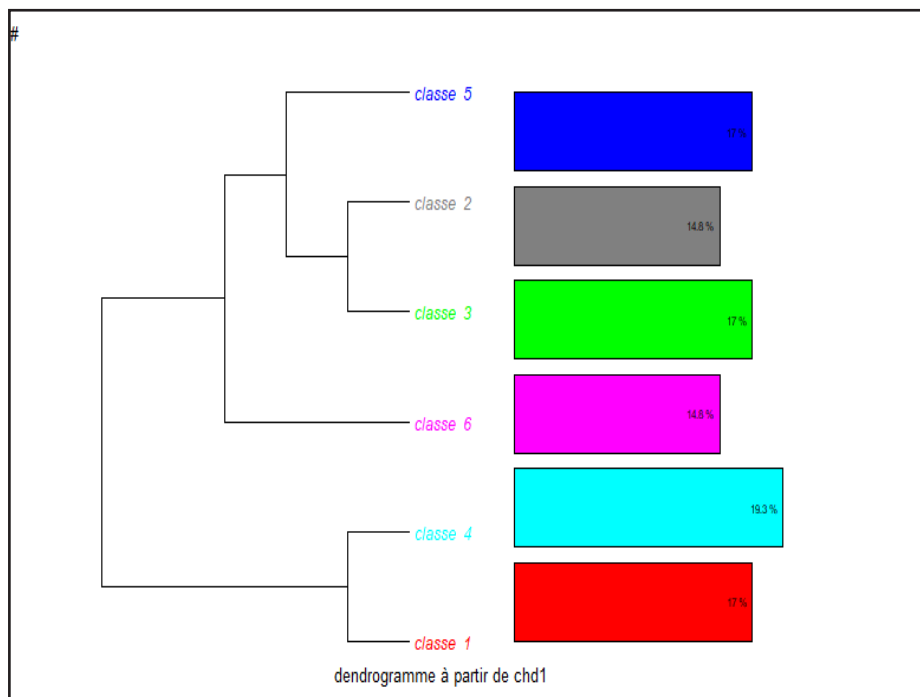
Both leaders and those they lead must analyze the situation before adopting a particular strategy or leadership style, given the consensus that adopting a rigid leadership model is impossible. The circumstances and maturity of those being led must be considered before adopting a particular leadership style.

4.3 Emotional Intelligence

Analysis of the text corpus for this category found 3,823 occurrences of words in six texts corresponding to the six questions. 83.02% of the segments were classified, which validates this analysis.

These texts were used to carry out a Descending Hierarchical Classification (DHC), forming six classes, as shown in Figure 7.

Figure 7 –Hierarchical Descending Classification (CHD) - IRAMUTEQ



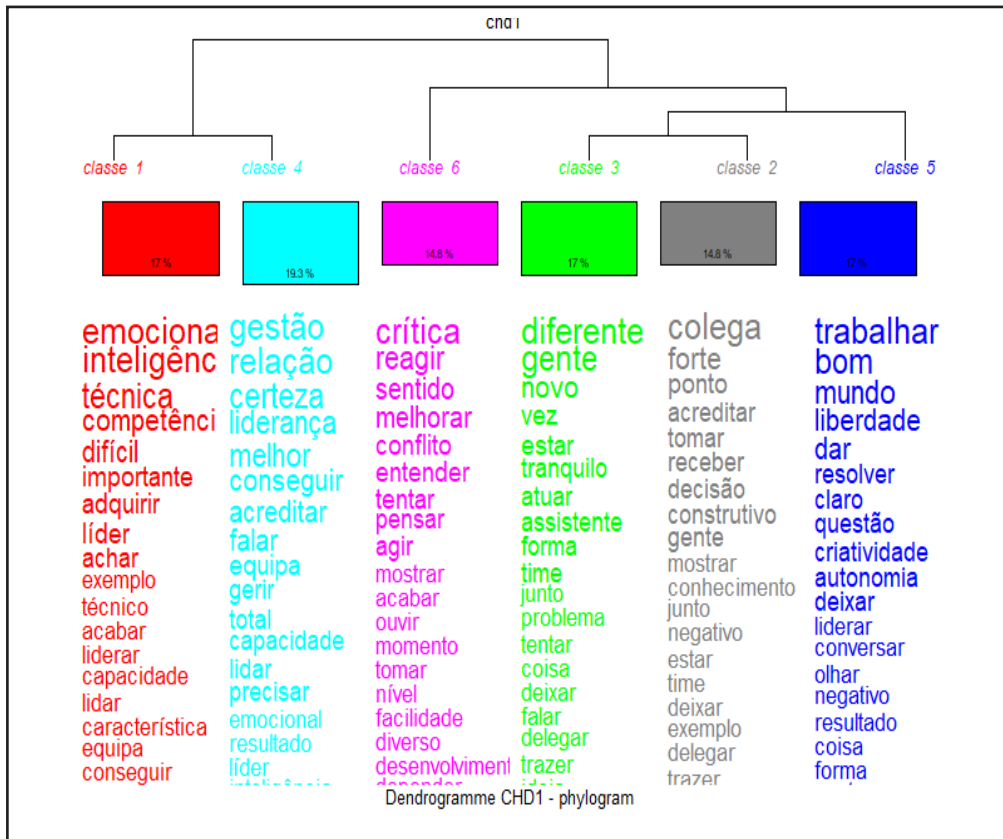
Source: IRAMUTEQ

In Classes 1 and 4, the words **emotional, intelligence, technical, competence, and difficult** stand out, occupying a not-so-central position. In contrast, the words **management, leadership, and better** are closer to the center in a **conversation** with the questions that make up Class 6, in which the words **critical** and **react** stand out, occupying a more peripheral position, indicating separation from the other classes. In the fourth quadrant, representing questions 10 and 18, the word **work** is the most frequent in Class 5, very close to the word **freedom**, indicating a relationship between work and freedom of action.

The freedom to work creatively is emphasized in the interviewee's speech, which shows that achieving results is the most important thing and that there is no need for so much pressure, indicating a leadership profile that uses emotional intelligence.

In Figure 8, the text commands and similar words have been grouped into six classes, named after the questions, associated with each one.

Figure 8 – Dendrogram of the textual corpus of emotional intelligence - IRAMUTEQ



Source: IRAMUTEQ

4.4 Discussion of results

This section analyzes the objective set for this research, which is divided into three subsections corresponding to the three specific propositions it contains.

4.4.1 Identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the situational leadership style in the face of organizational competitiveness

When analyzing the interviewees' responses, it was possible to see that the leaders are concerned about the development of their team, as well as observing the preferences and feelings of the team members, adapting to the individual capabilities of the team members, and considering the context in which they work. This perception of flexibility combined with the ability to adjust their leadership style according to the

characteristics of the team members is also shared by those they lead, who share the same idea, resulting in a more collaborative working environment where people feel more valued and engaged.

Although all the leaders say they give opportunities to all they lead, calling them to participate in decision-making and promoting shared decision-making, half of the leaders interviewed did not agree that they are allowed to participate collectively in decision-making.

This divergence of understanding, although interpreted by some leaders as a possible failure in communication - this point has even been indicated as something to be improved - can be a way for leaders to set limits within their teams while still causing some discomfort to those they lead.

In addition, other aspects to be improved were mentioned, such as being more supportive of others, improving one's own emotional intelligence, managing conflicts better, managing certain behaviors in the workplace better, avoiding rework, and involving the team more in the objectives.

On the other hand, strengths were indicated in the exercise of leadership, with those being led emphasizing that they feel secure in the figure of their leaders, considering them to be fully prepared to resolve complex activities. Those they lead also understand that their leaders, in general, adapt quickly to any new situation, be it favorable or adverse, involving the team and sharing responsibilities.

The perception among the respondents is that there is always something to improve, even when they are generally satisfied with the leadership they exercise, not least because, in situational leadership, reactions can vary according to the situation and the context.

Situational leadership emphasizes the importance of adapting the leadership style to different situations, requiring the leader to have the ability to choose the best approach for each situation, considering the level of readiness of the leader.

The situational leadership style highlights resilience, flexibility, and the ability to adapt as strengths, the dependence on good communication between leaders and

those they lead, and limitations in more complex situations as points to be improved. The expressions valued are **adaptation, valuing others, delegation, and the ability to try to solve problems**, which reflect expectations of abilities that are part of leadership.

4.4.2 Checking how leaders act in terms of managing people, processes, and results

In this respect, for leaders to manage these three pillars - people, processes, and results - they need specific and distinct skills and a balance between them. To deal with people, leaders must develop and maintain solid relationships with those they lead, know their skills and potential, and provide continuous training and development for their teams.

It was noted that the role of a leader in managing people, processes, and results requires a series of specific skills and abilities. An effective leader balances people's needs and expectations, optimizes the organization's internal processes, and achieves consistent results.

The interviewees who have already had the chance to exercise leadership, even as substitutes, emphasize the importance of the leader being present, listening, and guiding those they lead through their difficulties and challenges. According to them, it is impossible to lead without listening, integrating the team, giving opportunities for training and development, and valuing people. Understanding that people are different, that teams are heterogeneous, and that situations change is a necessary skill for leaders when dealing with the people who make up their team.

For the interviewees, there is a tendency to consider people management as fundamental to a team's success. The leader must be able to inspire, motivate, and develop their team's skills, create a positive working environment, communicate clearly and efficiently, listen to the concerns and ideas of those they lead, offer constructive feedback, and recognize exceptional performance. The team also expects the leader to be able to identify talent and provide opportunities for professional growth and development.

When it comes to processes, leaders must always be on the lookout for improvements and innovations, improving the quality of the organization's work and projects, ensuring proper resource management, monitoring processes, and identifying opportunities for improvement to achieve organizational efficiency and effectiveness. In process management, the leader works to optimize and improve the activities and workflow within the organization, and this involves setting clear goals, creating plans and strategies to achieve them, and efficiently allocating resources combined with best practices. An effective leader must be able to identify bottlenecks, solve problems, introduce innovations, and ensure operational efficiency in conjunction with upgrades aimed at the organization's competitiveness.

From the point of view of those being led, the leader needs to trust that those being led will carry out the activities set out in the work processes without giving up close monitoring that does not take away their freedom to resolve problems, issues, and negotiations. Autonomy in carrying out processes is important.

As for results, the leader should focus on setting measurable and achievable goals aligned with people and processes. The team unity achieved through good leadership is seen as a way of achieving the proposed results. Leaders play an important role in guiding the team toward results, motivating them, and encouraging creativity, innovation, and continuous training.

An effective leader is oriented toward achieving goals and objectives. This involves setting challenging and realistic goals, establishing performance indicators, continuously monitoring results, and taking corrective action if necessary. A leader must create a high-performance culture where team members are focused on achieving results and are encouraged to strive for excellence.

Leaders' performance concerning the three pillars (people, processes, and results) requires a systemic approach that balances the needs of employees, processes, and the organization's goals. To achieve business success, leaders must develop the skills to motivate, guide, and support teams, as well as monitor processes and evaluate the performance of results.

People believe that training can promote opportunities for better development of processes to achieve positive results for the organization.

Finally, the leader's role in managing people, processes, and results is interdependent. An effective leader recognizes that people are an organization's most valuable resource and understands that effective process management is necessary to achieve the required results. Furthermore, a successful leader promotes collaboration and teamwork, recognizing that collective success is more potent than individual success.

4.4.3 Checking the influence of emotional intelligence on leadership profiles concerning the performance of their teams

Verifying the influence of emotional intelligence on leadership profiles with team performance is a relevant and interesting question in leadership studies. Emotional intelligence refers to the ability to recognize, understand, and manage one's own emotions, as well as the ability to understand and deal with the emotions of others.

The interviewees see emotional intelligence as essential for effective leadership. It is a differentiator for building a cohesive team committed to the organization's objectives, surpassing technical competence. A leader with high emotional intelligence skills can create a positive and motivating work environment, establishing effective communication and a solid emotional bond with their team members. This skill can positively influence employee engagement, motivation, and satisfaction. A leader with well-developed emotional intelligence can express empathy and understand the needs and feelings of team members. This allows them to identify when someone is experiencing difficulties and needs additional support or recognition for their achievements. This ability to deal with individual emotions promotes a healthy and positive working environment in which team members feel valued and supported.

Knowing how to deal with their own emotions and those of those they lead makes it easier for the leader to exercise leadership, influencing and motivating those

they lead. This characteristic demonstrates a resolving capacity to help the team adapt to different situations and teams.

Those they lead expect the leader to be able to act calmly and serenely in the face of criticism, trying to understand the best course of action for each specific situation. Similarly, the leader understands that it is up to them to have the maturity to deal with criticism and conflicts, think strategically, and be open to new positions.

Therefore, leaders who master emotional intelligence can connect with their subordinates, understand their needs, and lead them toward success. This type of intelligence also helps leaders to manage conflicts and maintain a positive working environment. However, applying emotional intelligence requires constant self-management to succeed.

If they had to choose between having a leader with technical competence or emotional competence, those they lead said they would choose the second option because they understood that, in addition to the other aspects already mentioned, this competence is more difficult to develop than the technical one.

A leader with emotional intelligence empowers people, provides information, listens, validates each other's work, and makes managing people smoother by being more flexible and dynamic. They recognize a very close relationship between situational leadership and emotional intelligence, so a leader with this type of intelligence can influence those they lead, increasing team performance.

Emotional intelligence is considered more important than technical competence because they understand that knowing how to receive criticism, manage conflicts, and understand differences can be a differentiator in management. To give autonomy and freedom of action, leaders need to know how to differentiate each situation, acting with emotional intelligence.

Emotional intelligence is also related to the ability to manage conflicts constructively. A leader with these skills can understand the emotions involved in a conflict and seek solutions that benefit everyone. This contributes to effective problem-

solving and strengthens interpersonal relationships within the team.

Another important aspect is the influence of emotional intelligence on the decision-making process. A leader with this ability can consider emotions in conjunction with logic and rationality, leading to more balanced and effective decisions. In addition, controlling emotions allows the leader to make decisions under pressure while maintaining balance and mental clarity.

In short, emotional intelligence tends to be associated with leadership profiles and team performance. Leaders with developed emotional intelligence skills can create a positive working environment, establish healthy relationships with team members, manage conflicts constructively, and make balanced decisions. Understanding and verifying the influence of this capacity on leadership is fundamental to improving and developing more effective leaders and high-performance teams.

Based on the interviews, it was possible to identify strengths and weaknesses in the organization related to the three pillars of situational leadership, as shown in Figure 9.

Figure 9 – Strengths and weaknesses in the three pillars of management

PILLAR	STRONG POINT	WEAK POINT
People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding the emotions of those they lead. A more empathetic, collaborative, and motivating environment. Adaptable leadership, encouraging individual and team development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some leaders have difficulty identifying and dealing with personal emotions. Difficulty in making decisions in times of crisis.
Processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More efficiency in processes due to adapting the different maturity levels of those being led. The flexibility of situational leadership helps to deal with different scenarios and challenges. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Difficulty dealing with sudden changes. Disruption in some processes.
Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on the desired results. Ability to delegate, better distribute tasks, and optimize productivity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Difficulty in dealing with pressure and conflicts can lead to unsatisfactory results. Inadequate goals and objectives for specific groups.

Source: Based on the Authors

5. CONCLUSION

Situational leadership has been analyzed through its practical application to improve organizational performance. The research on the subject has made it possible to identify the strengths and weaknesses of this leadership style and assess its applicability in each context. The theory of situational leadership considers the needs and characteristics of those being led in an individualized way, observing the needs of the team and the organization, which demands more flexible and adaptable leaders capable of adjusting to different scenarios and demands, bringing benefits to both the organization and those being led.

The interviews with leaders and team members confirm the relevance of situational leadership in management. The interviewees highlighted the importance of the leader understanding each team member and knowing how to guide them best, considering their skills, knowledge, and needs. It was also found that situational leadership is effective in promoting the development of team members, encouraging them to make decisions and take on new responsibilities through collaboration, autonomy, and accountability, and that it meets the needs and expectations of team members while improving the effectiveness and performance of the team in general.

The study of situational leadership has also been used as an effective tool for leaders seeking to maximize their performance in all aspects of management - people, processes, and results. By considering the level of maturity and ability of each employee to carry out their tasks, situational leadership promotes the improvement of everyone's capacity, bringing benefits to both people and the results achieved. In addition, this leadership style can improve processes and make the organization's operations more efficient, as it boosts communication between leaders, subordinates, and decision-makers, strengthening the team's responsibility and autonomy.

In situational leadership, stimulating creativity is valued, as seen in the interviewees' statements when they emphasize that the leader should not impose

restrictions on how delegated tasks are solved, giving them autonomy. However, they recognize that there are limitations to this stimulation of creativity.

This type of leadership, being adaptive, allows leaders to explore innovative solutions by encouraging the expression of convergent but also divergent opinions, which can promote the search for creative solutions.

However, situational leaders must know the limits between creative freedom and the organization's strategic objectives to guarantee a balance between stimulating creativity, developing processes, and achieving results. Effective communication between the leadership and those they lead lets the team know how far they can go with their innovative potential in each circumstance.

Some advantages of using this leadership style were observed, such as adaptability to different situations and different people in the team. On the other hand, there is a need for continuous improvement in communication, requiring the ability to convey guidelines and expectations effectively and know how to give adequate feedback to team members.

A leader with emotional intelligence creates a more empathetic and productive working environment. The ability to understand the emotions of their collaborators and their own emotions allows leaders to work better in any environment, resolve conflicts, and motivate their subordinates to do their best. Understanding the importance of emotional intelligence in leadership has been the subject of debate and study, and the results indicate that emotionally intelligent leaders can achieve superior performance by maintaining healthy interpersonal relationships.

The combination of situational leadership and emotional intelligence provides a healthy, positive working environment, increasing the team's performance. This feels part of the process because of leadership that knows how to manage and use emotions. The interviewees perceive this connection between situational leadership and emotional intelligence when they note the importance of knowing how to manage conflicts, influence the team, have emotional resilience and empathy, and pay attention to the feelings of those they lead, motivating and inspiring them.

Despite the benefits identified in the application of situational leadership with emotional intelligence, some gaps need to be addressed to understand better the relationship between these aspects of leadership, such as analyzing whether this relationship can be affected by factors such as organizational culture, gender, and the age of those being led.

As future contributions, it is suggested that further research be carried out on this subject in different cultural contexts, with different demographic groups, to better understand the relationship between these constructs.

In addition, another important point of investigation is the development of emotional intelligence in leaders. While this type of intelligence is considered a fundamental leadership skill, most training and development programs focus on technical and tactical issues, leaving little room for improving emotional skills.

Future studies could evaluate the effectiveness of specific training programs in emotional intelligence for leaders and measure the impact of these programs on team performance and organizational results.

In summary, the study of applying situational leadership correlated with emotional intelligence can be improved through research that analyzes broader contexts and improves emotional skills development programs, contributing to a greater understanding of the area and possibly generating better results. Among the main points, we highlight the importance of the leader's flexibility to adapt to different situations, the needs of those they lead, and the influence of emotional intelligence on the leadership style adopted, especially concerning the ability to empathize and deal with conflicts.

Among the limitations of the research, it is noteworthy that the sample of participants does not represent the total number of private managers in the organization and that a complexity of factors influences leadership and emotional intelligence, causing the results to vary depending on the context and the individuals involved.

However, it is essential to note that several complex factors influence leadership and emotional intelligence, meaning that the results can vary depending on the context and the individuals involved.

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