

Sanja Gutić Martinčić, PhD

Senior lecturer
University of applied sciences Effectus
E-mail: gutic.sanja@gmail.com
Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4683-2350>

Jurica Bosna, PhD

Associate professor
University of Zadar
Department of Economics
E-mail: jbosna@unizd.hr
Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0553-2690>

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE OF MANAGERS AND EMPLOYEES' CAREER DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL: DISCRIMINANT ANALYSIS

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Abstract

This study examines the extent to which managers' emotional intelligence, operationalized through empathic behavioural patterns, differentiates employees with respect to their career development potential. Data were collected through two online questionnaires administered to managers (n = 97) and employees (n = 480) from 37 organizations in Croatia, with hierarchically linked samples (employees evaluated their immediate supervisors). Managers' emotional intelligence was measured through four empathic constructs, while employees' career development potential was assessed using five constructs: career decision determination, career planning capability, motivation for career realization, career-related beliefs, and career-related competencies and professional values. Linear discriminant analysis was applied to 24 employee subgroups. The results indicate that the set of career development variables clearly differentiates the groups: in the group with non-empathetic managers, three subgroups were reclassified into the group with emotionally intelligent managers, while no reclassifications occurred in the opposite direction. The findings confirm the importance of managers' emotional intelligence in shaping employees' developmental resources.

Keywords: managers' emotional intelligence, empathy, career development potential, discriminant analysis, human resource management



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1. INTRODUCTION

Emotions are a fundamental component of human behavior and have long been a focus of scholarly interest across disciplines. The emergence of emotional intelligence has marked a paradigm shift in organizational research, reframing emotions from obstacles to rational decision-making into valuable sources of information and resources for effective action. Accordingly, recent studies place less emphasis on the relevance of emotional intelligence itself and increasingly focus on its operationalization and practical application in human resource management.

Prior literature primarily links emotional intelligence to individual career decisions, career success, adaptability, and job performance. Empirical evidence confirms its associations with career decisiveness, motivation, job satisfaction, and professional development (Salovey, 2000; Gati & Levin, 2014; Levin, 2020). However, systematic research on the role of managers' emotional intelligence in employee career development remains limited.

Although research in human resource management highlights the importance of managerial competencies in shaping employee development (Brodarić Ivačić, Tadić, & Bakotić, 2024), managers' emotional and empathic competencies are rarely examined in relation to employees' career development potential. This gap is further reinforced by inconsistent conceptualizations of emotional intelligence, where empathy is often treated as a distinct leadership style despite being a core dimension of emotional intelligence (Gentry, Weber, & Sadri, 2007; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Avolio & Gardner, 2005).

Addressing these limitations, this study focuses on managers' emotional intelligence, operationalized through empathic behavioral patterns, and examines its relationship with employees' career development potential. Career development potential is conceptualized as a set of psychological and behavioral antecedents and operationalized through career decisiveness, career planning ability, motivation, functional career beliefs, and readiness for competency and value development.

The aim of the study is to empirically assess the extent to which managers' emotional intelligence, operationalized through four empathic constructs, differentiates employees according to their career development potential, measured through five psychological and behavioral constructs, using discriminant analysis.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Early research on emotional intelligence in the field of career development was based on the assumption that emotions play a central role in career decision-making processes. Salovey (2000) emphasizes that emotional information strongly shapes individuals' judgments, priorities, and behaviors, making emotions an integral component of career decision-making rather than its opposite. Career choice is therefore often described as one of the most demanding

life processes, with long-term professional and personal consequences (Gyarteng-Mensah, 2022).

Empirical studies indicate that career indecision is strongly associated with negative emotional states, such as anxiety, fear, and pessimistic attitudes (Saka, 2008; Puffer & Pence, 2020), as well as with unclear interests and goals (Levin, 2020; Bian, 2021). Particular emphasis is placed on the role of information and emotional information processing, whereby a lack of relevant or consistent information generates indecision, reduced motivation, and dysfunctional career beliefs (Gati & Levin, 2014; Sidiropoulou-Dimakakou, 2012).

Developmental approaches to careers emphasize that careers are shaped through continuous everyday decisions rather than isolated choices (Cherniss & Goleman, 2001). Recent research on competencies and skills in the Croatian context points to a gap between formally acquired knowledge and actual job requirements, with increasing emphasis on transferable and socio-emotional competencies (Štimac & Bilandžić Tanasić, 2023; Mijoč, Dropulić, & Galant, 2024). In this sense, managers' emotional intelligence may function as a contextual mechanism that facilitates the development of such competencies among employees.

Within this process, emotions act as motivational and regulatory mechanisms that support persistence in pursuing career goals. Research confirms that emotional self-regulation contributes to better stress coping, more positive work attitudes, and lower levels of burnout (Huang, 2019; Arthur, 2021), while individuals with higher emotional intelligence report greater subjective career success and demonstrate higher levels of work engagement (Kafetsios, 2012; Krishnakumar, 2017; Weziak-Bialowolska et al., 2021).

Despite the extensive literature on employees' emotional intelligence, significantly fewer studies have systematically examined the role of managers' emotional intelligence in the development of employees' career potential. Existing research suggests that managers' emotional intelligence is associated with employee motivation, job satisfaction, and willingness to exert extra effort (Adetula, 2016; Alston, 2010), as well as with more favorable work and developmental environments (Zampetakis & Moustakis, 2011; Farnia & Nafukho, 2016).

However, recent literature reviews highlight the continuing lack of empirical research directly linking managers' emotional capacities to employees' career development processes, particularly at the level of psychological and behavioral career antecedents (Coronado-Maldonado & Benítez-Márquez, 2023). This research gap forms the basis of the present study, which operationalizes managers' emotional intelligence through empathic behavioral patterns and examines their role in shaping employees' career development potential.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research design and analytical procedure

This study applies linear discriminant analysis (LDA) as a multivariate statistical method suitable for examining differences between a priori defined groups of respondents (Izenman, 2018; Huberty & Olejnik, 2006). LDA was selected because the main objective of the research was not to test linear relationships between variables, but to determine whether employees can be distinguished based on their career development potential depending on the level of emotional intelligence of their immediate managers.

Two groups of employees were formed *ex ante* according to the emotional intelligence of their direct managers, operationalized through empathic behavioral patterns. To increase analytical stability and reduce the influence of individual-level variability, employees within each group were aggregated into 12 subgroups. These subgroups represent the units of analysis in the discriminant model.

The number of subgroups was determined as a methodological compromise between maintaining sufficient subgroup size for stable estimation and preserving enough analytical units to allow meaningful discrimination. This structure ensured approximately equal subgroup sizes within each group, symmetry between groups, and adequate variability for the application of linear discriminant analysis. The choice of twelve subgroups thus reflects a balance between statistical robustness and interpretability rather than an arbitrary decision.

The purpose of applying LDA was to examine whether a set of variables describing employees' career development potential can reliably discriminate between the two predefined groups, and whether some subgroups can be statistically reclassified into the opposite group based on their proximity to group centroids. Classification was based on Mahalanobis distance, which represents a standard criterion in discriminant analysis (McLachlan, 2004).

Statistical analyses were conducted using Microsoft Excel and SPSS 21.0.

3.2. Sample and respondents

Primary data were collected through two online surveys. The first questionnaire was administered to direct managers ($n = 97$), and the second to employees ($n = 480$). Respondents were drawn from 37 small and medium-sized organizations across various sectors in Croatia. Given the heterogeneity of the population, stratified random sampling was applied.

The survey among managers was conducted in the second half of 2022, while the employee survey was conducted in the second half of 2023. Of the 120 questionnaires distributed to managers, 97 were correctly completed and returned (response rate: 80.83%). Of the 560 questionnaires distributed to employees, 480 were validly completed (response rate: 85.71%). Only employees with at least five

years of work experience were included, based on the assumption that a shorter period does not allow meaningful reflection on career development.

It is important to emphasize that the samples of managers and employees were not independent. Each participating manager was the immediate supervisor of the employees who also participated in the study. Employees completed the questionnaire exclusively in relation to their direct manager, whose emotional intelligence had been measured separately. This ensured a direct hierarchical linkage between managerial characteristics and employee responses.

3.3. Measurement instruments

3.3.1. Emotional intelligence of managers

Managers' emotional intelligence was operationalized through four empathic constructs reflecting key emotional capacities in people management. A total of 16 statements were developed, four for each construct, based on relevant literature (Table 1).

Table 1 Statements for the operationalization of managers' emotional intelligence

Empathic segments	Statement	Source
1.	1. I find it appropriate, useful and pleasant when people express their emotions freely at work	Puffer & Pence, 2020
	2. My feelings are not just my business and are reflected in how others feel	Levin, 2020
	3. I try to cry, laugh and show all my other feelings often, whether they are sad or happy	Salovey, 2020
	4. If someone I am talking to starts crying or laughing, I will start crying or laughing too	Gati & Levin, 2014
2.	5. I try to fill each of my working days with good emotions and reject bad ones	Gati & Levin, 2014
	6. I get upset when I see employees suffering because of some difficult or sad news	Chesnut & Cullen, 2014
	7. I avoid meeting people who spread negative feelings and enjoy hanging out with people who have positive feelings	Arthur, 2021
	8. I have learned how to adopt and maintain positive and avoid negative feelings in working with people	Brief & Weiss, 2002
3.	9. When someone smiles warmly at me, I smile back and feel an inner warmth	Arthur, 2021
	10. I always try to please the feelings of the people around me, because then I feel good myself	Salovey, 2020
	11. I feel and understand the emotions of employees and help them spread positive and get rid of negative emotions	Salovey, 2020
	12. I quickly notice when someone in the group feels uncomfortable and I do not remain indifferent to it	Gati & Levin, 2014
4.	13. I am willing to help most people with emotional difficulties, because in the end we all feel good	Puffer & Pence, 2020
	14. When I make other people smile and happy, it makes me feel the same way	Puffer & Pence, 2020
	15. I am always willing to help people better and more effectively connect their work to their feelings	Cherniss & Goleman, 2001
	16. Being around people who are depressed does nothing good for my mood and successful work	Huang, 2019

Source: made by authors (2025)

Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree). Reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha indicated acceptable to excellent internal consistency across all four empathic constructs (Table 2)

Table 2 Indicators of consistency of empathic levels of managers in the Likert scale

Empathic leadership segments	Calculated α	Reference α	Consistency
1	0.832	0.8 to 0.9 (good)	good
2	0.917	0.9 to 1,0 (excellent)	excellent
3	0.735	0.7 to 0.8 (acceptable)	acceptable
4	0.826	0.8 to 0.9 (good)	good

Source: made by authors (2025)

Composite reliability and convergent validity were further confirmed through CR, AVE, and factor loadings (Table 3).

Table 3 Reliability and convergent validity indicators of the Likert scale

Empathic leadership segments	CR (composite reliability)	AVE (average variance extracted)	Factor weights
1	0.813	0.616	0.784
2	0.934	0.538	0.802
3	0.907	0.720	0.661
4	0.862	0.611	0.759

Source: made by authors (2025)

Based on managers' results, two operational groups were formed. The first group included managers who did not meet the minimum threshold on any of the four empathic constructs. These managers were linked to 138 employees, forming Group 1. The second group consisted of managers who demonstrated three out of four empathic constructs, indicating higher emotional intelligence. These managers were linked to 342 employees, forming Group 2.

3.3.2. Career development potential of employees

Employees' career development potential was measured using a questionnaire consisting of 10 statements, two for each of five constructs representing psychological and behavioral preconditions of career development: career decision determination (X1), career planning capability (X2), motivation for career realization (X3), career-related beliefs (X4), and career-related competencies and values (X5) as seen at Table 4.

Table 4 Statements measuring indicators of employees' career development potential

Variable	Statement	Source
X ₁	1. I have enough self-confidence to decide and persist in my career	Adelula, 2016
	2. No doubts or fears stop me from determining what my life interests are and deciding for my career	Cortellazzo, 2020
X ₂	3. I have gathered enough information and believe that I have made the right decision for my career	Arthur, 2021
	4. I believe in the strength of my values and that I have made a career plan that will be achieved in accordance with time	Arthur, 2021
X ₃	5. I do not reject the help and support of others, although I am able to persevere in the realization of my career myself	Levin, 2020
	6. The numerous difficulties I encounter in life and work do not influence me to give up the career I have chosen.	Salovey, 2020
X ₄	7. I am emotionally strong, but I like it when others support me emotionally to persevere in my career	Salovey, 2020
	8. I believe that my career expectations will be met, and I do not doubt my abilities	Gati & Levin, 2014
X ₅	9. I make my own career decisions, I do not leave them to others and do not avoid personal responsibility	Cherniss & Goleman, 2001
	10. I am constantly acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills that I need to be successful in my career	McLoughlin, Stapleton, Pendrous, Oldham & Hochard, 2025

Source: made by authors (2025)

Responses were recorded on a five-point Likert scale. Reliability analysis showed satisfactory internal consistency for all five constructs (Table 5).

Table 5 Indicators of consistency of employees' career development potential

Variables	Calculated α	Reference α	Consistency
1	0.754	0.7 to 0,8 (acceptable)	acceptable
2	0.915	0.9 to 1,0 (excellent)	excellent
3	0.837	0.7 to 0.8 (acceptable)	good
4	0.816	0.6 to 0.7 (questionable)	good
5	0,792	0,7 to 0,8 (acceptable)	acceptable

Source: made by authors (2025)

Convergent validity was confirmed through composite reliability, AVE, and factor loadings (Table 6)

Table 6 Reliability and convergent validity indicators of employees' career development potential

Variables	CR (composite reliability)	AVE (average variance extracted)	Factor weights
1	0.769	0.546	0.824
2	0.833	0.702	0.950
3	0.941	0.683	0.738
4	0.852	0.811	0.844
5	0.810	0,735	0,922

Source: made by authors (2025)

Low intercorrelations among the constructs further supported their suitability for discriminant analysis (Table 7).

Table 7 Intercorrelation of variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1	1,000	0,116	0,264	0,192	0,026
2	0,137	1,000	0,055	0,237	0,147
3	0,069	0,302	1,000	0,038	0,226
4	0,028	0,483	0,103	1,000	0,139
5	0,250	0,057	0,071	0,048	1,000

Source: made by authors (2025)

5. RESEARCH RESULTS

5.1. Descriptive structure of discriminant variables

The values of the discriminant variables are presented as aggregated mean values of respondents' answers within each of the 12 subgroups in both employee groups. This approach enables a comparison of the structure of career development potential between groups formed according to the level of emotional intelligence demonstrated by their immediate managers.

The mean values of the discriminant variables for Group 1 (employees whose managers do not exhibit empathic dimensions of emotional intelligence) are presented in Table 8. In this group, the values of variables X1–X5 are, on average, clustered around the midpoint of the scale, with more pronounced variability across subgroups. This pattern indicates lower levels of career decision-making decisiveness, reduced motivation for career realization, and more limited development of career-relevant competencies and values.

Table 8 Group 1 values of discriminant variables.

Subgroup	Discriminant variables				
	X ₁₁	X ₂₁	X ₃₁	X ₄₁	X ₅₁
1	3.17	3.22	2.74	2.85	2.61
2	2.84	3.27	3.01	2.59	2.47
3	2.79	2.50	3.02	2.45	2.76
4	3.05	3.68	3.14	3.22	2.86
5	3.46	3.38	3.07	2.82	3.12
6	3.13	3.06	3.34	2.73	2.61
7	2.33	3.35	3.02	3.17	2.70
8	2.81	3.28	3.15	2.96	2.53
9	3.58	3.37	3.41	3.02	3.15
10	3.20	3.39	3.11	2.73	2.95
11	3.44	3.06	2.89	3.24	2.57
12	3.26	2.88	2.40	3.36	2.43

Source: made by authors (2025)

In contrast, the mean values of the discriminant variables for Group 2, presented in Table 9, are considerably higher and more stable across all subgroups. The values of all five variables consistently fall within the upper range of the scale, indicating a more pronounced career development potential among employees working under managers with well-developed emotional intelligence (three of the four empathic dimensions).

Table 9 Group 2 values of discriminant variables

Subgroup	Discriminant variables				
	X ₁₂	X ₂₂	X ₃₂	X ₄₂	X ₅₂
1	4.1	4.3	4.8	3.9	4.8
2	4.0	4.2	3.9	4.5	3.7
3	3.7	4.5	4.7	3.6	4.0
4	4.6	4.3	4.4	4.7	4.6
5	4.2	4.6	4.8	4.5	4.7
6	3.8	3.8	4.1	3.9	4.2
7	4.7	4.3	4.6	4.4	4.5
8	4.1	4.3	3.8	4.5	4.7
9	3.7	3.9	3.8	3.8	3.6
10	4.2	4.2	4.0	3.7	4.5
11	3.7	3.8	3.8	4.6	3.8
12	4.4	4.7	4.2	4.4	4.6

Source: made by authors (2025)

These results suggest that emotionally intelligent managers create a work context characterized by greater psychological safety, trust, and support, which is reflected in more positive emotional and motivational patterns among employees with regard to their own career development.

5.2. Values of the discriminant functions and group centroids

The values of the discriminant functions (Y_c) for individual subgroups in both groups are presented in Tables 10 and 11. The discriminant functions represent linear combinations of variables X1–X5 that maximally differentiate the observed groups.

Table 10 Values and scores of discriminant equations (Y_c) of group 1

Subgroup	$Y_{c,1}$	Y_c values	t-values					F	DW
			$t_{1,1}$	$t_{2,1}$	$t_{3,1}$	$t_{4,1}$	$t_{5,1}$		
1	$Y_{c(1,1)}$	0,558	1.37	3.58	4.01	3.03	4.57	2.48	1.93
2	$Y_{c(2,1)}$	0,336	1.08	2.82	1.75	2.57	3.04	3.94	1.57
3	$Y_{c(3,1)}$	0,488	2.74	4.73	3.22	3.19	4.43	4.46	2.36
4	$Y_{c(4,1)}$	0,413	2.51	4.58	4.48	1.74	2.38	5.17	2.21
5	$Y_{c(5,1)}$	0,352	1.77	3.81	3.90	2.82	2.76	6.39	1.79
6	$Y_{c(6,1)}$	0,407	5.63	5.92	2.76	2.59	6.20	4.02	2.04
7	$Y_{c(7,1)}$	0,518	4.11	2.73	1.06	4.16	4.17	2.66	2.35
8	$Y_{c(8,1)}$	0,346	3.76	4.44	4.24	6.15	3.28	5.57	1.88
9	$Y_{c(9,1)}$	0,522	5.29	5.17	5.22	4.33	3.07	4.84	2.37
10	$Y_{c(10,1)}$	0,463	3.67	5.04	4.07	5.26	2.34	4.91	2.19
11	$Y_{c(11,1)}$	0,529	1.52	3.82	5.49	2.89	4.81	3.85	1.83
12	$Y_{c(12,1)}$	0,586	2.09	3.55	3.17	4.31	6.33	5.16	1.66

Source: made by authors (2025)

Table 11 Values and scores of discriminant equations (Y_c) of group 2

Subgroup	$Y_{c,2}$	Y_c values	t-values					F	DW
			$t_{1,2}$	$t_{2,2}$	$t_{3,2}$	$t_{4,2}$	$t_{5,2}$		
1	$Y_{c(1,2)}$	0.247	2.93	2.50	4.27	3.83	2.95	3.97	1.87
2	$Y_{c(2,2)}$	0.316	2.75	1.33	5.03	4.05	4.14	4.82	2.34
3	$Y_{c(3,2)}$	0.325	3.92	3.98	3.39	3.62	3.51	6.06	1.56
4	$Y_{c(4,2)}$	0.293	4.29	6.73	2.81	5.51	3.88	7.58	2.42
5	$Y_{c(5,2)}$	0.351	5.07	4.14	5.52	5.62	3.98	6.51	2.18
6	$Y_{c(6,2)}$	0.168	6.38	4.59	4.07	3.02	5.47	7.04	2.26
7	$Y_{c(7,2)}$	0.204	5.15	5.07	2.24	6.21	4.64	8.55	2.33
8	$Y_{c(8,2)}$	0.303	6.24	4.82	3.57	3.73	3.74	7.63	1.91
9	$Y_{c(9,2)}$	0.137	4.75	7.13	2.88	4.36	4.80	8.07	1.68
10	$Y_{c(10,2)}$	0.262	3.56	2.25	2.15	4.42	5.02	6.69	2.12
11	$Y_{c(11,2)}$	0.177	4.19	3.74	5.33	5.06	6.12	4.18	1.81
12	$Y_{c(12,2)}$	0.251	2.36	5.93	3.78	3.50	4.83	6.36	2.10

Source: made by authors (2025)

To determine the classification criterion, the mean values of the discriminant variables, the overall mean values, and the centroid as the reference point of discrimination were calculated. These results are presented in Table 12.

Table 12 Discrimination procedure

Procedure	a					\bar{Y}_c
	x_1	x_2	x_3	x_4	x_5	
Group 1	3.09	3.20	3.03	2.93	2.73	0.460
Group 2	4.10	4.23	4.24	4.15	4.25	0.255
Centroid	3.60	3.72	3.64	3.54	3.49	0.358

Source: made by authors (2025)

The centroid value of the discriminant function is 0.358 and represents the cutoff point used to assess the assignment of each subgroup to one of the two groups. Subgroups whose discriminant function values are closer to the centroid of the other group are considered statistically more similar to that group, regardless of their initial classification.

5.3. Results of subgroup discrimination

Based on the comparison of discriminant function values with the centroid, subgroup classification was performed. The results of the discrimination are presented in Table 13.

Table 13 Discrimination result

Group	Correctly discriminated	Wrongly discriminated
Group 1	9	3
Group 2	12	0

Source: made by authors (2025)

In Group 1, 9 out of 12 subgroups were correctly classified, while 3 subgroups were statistically reclassified into Group 2. These reclassified subgroups exhibit discriminant function values below the centroid, indicating that their career profiles more closely resemble those of employees working under emotionally intelligent managers (see Y_c values of subgroups 2, 5 and 8 in table 10).

In Group 2, all 12 subgroups were correctly classified, with no reclassification into Group 1. This finding indicates a high level of within-group homogeneity among employees whose managers demonstrate well-developed empathic dimensions of emotional intelligence.

6. DISCUSSION

The research results reveal clear and systematic differences in employees' career development potential with regard to the level of emotional intelligence demonstrated by their immediate managers. Employees whose managers do not exhibit empathic dimensions of emotional intelligence achieve lower mean values across all observed career development potential variables, whereas employees working under emotionally intelligent managers (three out of four empathic dimensions) achieve consistently high and uniform results.

Lower mean values in the first group can be explained by the presence of negative emotional patterns that hinder career decision-making and career realization. Puffer and Pence (2020) emphasize that worry, anxiety, fear, and insecurity constitute dominant affective reactions that block career development, which is consistent with the lower levels of career decision-making decisiveness (X1), motivation for career realization (X3), and readiness to acquire competencies and professional values (X5) observed in the first group. A lack of information and clear developmental guidance further contributes to career indecision and weaker career planning, as confirmed by the findings of Gati and Levin (2014) and Sidiropoulou and Dimakakou (2012).

In contrast, the high and stable mean values of all five variables in the second group indicate well-developed functional emotional self-regulation and positive emotional dynamics related to career development. This emotional state is characterized by self-confidence, persistence, and a sense of support and empowerment, which are associated with higher job satisfaction, a lower risk of burnout, and more positive work outcomes (Huang, 2019; Merino, 2019; Ren, 2021). Empathic managers create a work environment marked by psychological safety, trust, and support, which encourages employees to actively plan and pursue their careers (Edmondson & Lei, 2014; Cherniss & Goleman, 2001). Similar mechanisms have been identified in organizational learning research, where psychological safety and a supportive climate are shown to mediate the relationship between individual capacities and organizational outcomes (Talaja & Dumanić, 2023).

These findings further confirm the importance of leaders' socio-emotional competencies as an integral component of contemporary and integrative managerial competency frameworks (Živković, 2022), particularly in contexts of organizational change and development.

In small and medium-sized organizations, where managerial roles are often less formalized and interactions more frequent, the emotional and relational capacities of managers may play a particularly salient role in shaping employees' developmental experiences.

A particularly noteworthy finding is that, in the first group, three employee subgroups were statistically reclassified into the second group, whereas no reclassification was observed in the second group. This asymmetric pattern

suggests that although managers' emotional intelligence has a strong influence on employees' career development potential, it is not the sole determining factor. The reclassified subgroups may reflect the presence of employees' personal resources, alternative sources of support, or individual emotional regulation strategies that partially compensate for the lack of empathic managerial support (Levin, 2020; Huang, 2019).

At the same time, the complete absence of reclassification in the group of employees working under emotionally intelligent managers indicates greater within-group homogeneity and stability of career development potential. This suggests that managers' empathic behavioral patterns function as a protective and stabilizing factor, reducing variability in employees' career outcomes.

7. CONCLUSION

The results of this study confirm that managers' emotional intelligence, operationalized through empathic behavioral patterns, plays an important role in shaping employees' career development potential. Employees working under emotionally intelligent managers exhibit higher levels of decisiveness, career planning, motivation, functional career beliefs, and readiness to develop competencies, whereas contexts characterized by low managerial empathy are associated with more heterogeneous and transitional patterns of career potential. These findings confirm that managers' emotional intelligence represents a strong, though not exclusive, contextual factor in employees' career development.

From a practical perspective, the findings highlight the need for the systematic and structured integration of emotional intelligence into key human resource processes. In the areas of managerial selection and promotion, this implies the use of assessment tools focused on empathic capacities, emotional self-regulation, and the quality of interpersonal relationships. In terms of managerial development, the results justify investment in targeted emotional intelligence development programs, mentoring, and developmental feedback aimed at strengthening empathic behavioral patterns.

This study contributes to the existing literature on several levels. First, it shifts the focus from career outcomes to employees' career development potential, emphasizing the psychological and behavioral antecedents that precede career realization. Second, the study offers a clear and consistent operationalization of managers' emotional intelligence through empathic behavioral patterns, thereby avoiding the conceptual ambiguity and overlap with leadership styles frequently observed in prior research. Finally, the application of discriminant analysis enables the classification of employees according to the emotional intelligence context of their managers and the identification of transitional patterns, thereby deepening the understanding of the complex relationship between managers' emotional capacities and employees' career development.

Future research could apply longitudinal designs and incorporate additional individual and organizational factors in order to further elucidate the mechanisms through which managers' emotional intelligence influences employees' career development.

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Dr. sc. Sanja Gutić Martinčić

Viša predavačica
Effectus poslovno učilište
E-mail: gutic.sanja@gmail.com
Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4683-2350>

Dr. sc. Jurica Bosna

Izvanredni profesor
Sveučilište u Zadru
Odjel za ekonomiju
E-mail: jbosna@unizd.hr
Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0553-2690>

**EMOCIONALNA INTELIGENCIJA MENADŽERA I
POTENCIJAL RAZVOJA KARIJERE ZAPOSLENIKA:
DISKRIMINANTNA ANALIZA*****Sažetak***

Ovaj rad istražuje u kojoj mjeri emocionalna inteligencija menadžera, operacionalizirana na temelju empatičnih obrazaca ponašanja, razlikuje zaposlenike s obzirom na njihov karijerni razvojni potencijal. Podaci su prikupljeni s pomoću dvaju online upitnika: menadžeri (n = 97) i zaposlenici (n = 480) iz 37 organizacija u Hrvatskoj, pri čemu su uzorci hijerarhijski povezani (zaposlenici su procjenjivali odnos prema svom neposrednom nadređenom). Emocionalna inteligencija menadžera mjerena je na temelju četiriju empatičnih konstrukata, a karijerni razvojni potencijal zaposlenika na temelju pet konstrukata: odlučnost, planiranje, motivaciju, karijerna uvjerenja te kompetencije i profesionalne vrijednosti. Primijenjena je linearna diskriminantna analiza na 24 podskupine zaposlenika. Rezultati pokazuju da skup varijabli karijernog potencijala jasno razlikuje skupine: u skupini s neempatičnim menadžerima tri su podskupine reklasificirane u skupinu s emocionalno inteligentnim menadžerima, dok u suprotnom smjeru nema reklasifikacija. Nalazi potvrđuju važnost emocionalne inteligencije menadžera u oblikovanju razvojnih resursa zaposlenika.

Ključne riječi: emocionalna inteligencija menadžera, empatija, karijerni razvojni potencijal, diskriminantna analiza, upravljanje ljudskim potencijalima.

JEL klasifikacija: M12, M54, J24.