

Emotional Intelligence toward Nurse Managers Competency; A Systematic Review

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Abstract

Emotional intelligence is increasingly recognized as a vital competency in healthcare leadership, especially for nurse managers operating in emotionally complex clinical environments. These professionals must balance clinical duties, staff supervision, organizational demands, and patient-centered care tasks that require strong emotional regulation and interpersonal skills. Despite growing attention to emotional intelligence in nursing leadership, existing evidence on its determinants and influence on managerial competency remains fragmented. This systematic review aimed to synthesize empirical research on the prevalence, determinants, and outcomes of emotional intelligence among nurse managers, with a focus on its impact on leadership effectiveness, managerial competency, and organizational outcomes. Following PRISMA 2020 guidelines, peer-reviewed studies were identified across multiple databases. Eligible studies included various research designs that examined emotional intelligence in relation to leadership performance, job outcomes, organizational factors, or professional well-being. Due to methodological diversity, findings were synthesized narratively. Thirty studies met the inclusion criteria. Emotional intelligence levels among nurse managers were generally moderate to high and were shaped by individual, organizational, and contextual factors. A consistent positive association was found between emotional intelligence and leadership competency, communication, job performance, organizational commitment, and reduced burnout. Key determinants included leadership experience, organizational culture, and emotional intelligence training. Additionally, emotionally intelligent nurse managers demonstrated better decision-making, staff engagement, and care quality. The review concludes that emotional intelligence is a foundational element of effective nurse management. It enhances leadership capacity, promotes workforce stability, and improves organizational effectiveness. Integrating emotional intelligence into leadership development, performance evaluations, and policy frameworks is essential for advancing sustainable, high-quality healthcare delivery.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence; Nurse managers; Leadership competency; Organizational performance; Healthcare management.

1. Introduction

Emotional intelligence has become a central concept in contemporary healthcare leadership due to its influence on interpersonal effectiveness, emotional regulation, and professional decision-making. Within

nursing management, emotional intelligence is increasingly recognized as a critical competency that enables leaders to navigate complex clinical environments while maintaining staff engagement and care quality. Nurse managers are required to balance administrative responsibilities with emotional demands arising from patient care, staff supervision, and organizational expectations, making emotional intelligence a fundamental leadership attribute (Phillips et al., 2021). Nurse managers play a pivotal role in shaping the work environment and influencing staff outcomes through their leadership behaviors. Their ability to understand and regulate emotions contributes significantly to communication effectiveness, conflict management, and team cohesion. Research has demonstrated that emotionally intelligent nurse leaders are better equipped to foster positive workplace relationships and support nurses in managing occupational stressors, which ultimately contributes to enhanced job performance and organizational stability (Majeed & Jamshed, 2021).

Emotional intelligence has also been strongly associated with key professional outcomes among nurses, including job performance and work engagement. Studies have shown that nurses with higher levels of emotional intelligence demonstrate greater professional effectiveness, improved interpersonal interactions, and stronger engagement with their work responsibilities (Turjuman & Alilyyani, 2023). Emotional intelligence further supports clinical decision-making by enabling nurses to manage stress, maintain emotional control, and respond effectively in high-pressure clinical situations (Ayed, 2025). The influence of emotional intelligence extends beyond individual performance to broader organizational outcomes. Evidence indicates that emotionally intelligent leadership contributes to improved organizational commitment and a more supportive workplace climate. Nurses working under emotionally intelligent leadership are more likely to experience job satisfaction and perceive stronger organizational support, which enhances their motivation and retention (Al-Oweidat et al., 2023). Emotional intelligence has also been linked to higher perceived quality of healthcare delivery, emphasizing its role in promoting both staff well-being and patient-centered care (Oweidat et al., 2024).

Several reviews have highlighted emotional intelligence as a core component of effective nursing leadership. A systematic review by Sakallı and Timuçin (2023) demonstrated that emotional intelligence among nurse managers is influenced by individual characteristics and organizational conditions, reinforcing its multidimensional nature. Similarly, leadership-focused reviews have identified emotional intelligence as a key competency associated with communication, adaptability, and transformational leadership behaviors in nurse managers (Perez-Gonzalez et al., 2024). The development of emotional intelligence through education and training has also gained increasing attention. Evidence from intervention-based studies suggests that emotional intelligence training improves leadership capability, communication skills, and emotional regulation among nurses and nurse leaders (Kawashima et al., 2025). Training programs targeting emotional intelligence have further been shown to enhance psychological resilience and reduce stress, supporting sustainable leadership practice in healthcare environments (Saikia et al., 2024).

Despite growing recognition of emotional intelligence in nursing leadership, existing research remains fragmented. Studies vary considerably in methodological approaches, outcome measures, and contextual focus, limiting the ability to draw comprehensive conclusions regarding the role of emotional intelligence in nurse managers' competency. Some studies emphasize individual-level outcomes, while others focus on organizational or leadership dimensions, resulting in an incomplete understanding of how emotional intelligence operates across healthcare systems (González-García et al., 2021). Given these gaps, a systematic review is necessary to synthesize existing evidence and provide an integrated understanding

of emotional intelligence in relation to nurse managers' competency. By consolidating findings across empirical and review studies, this review seeks to clarify the determinants and outcomes of emotional intelligence within nursing leadership. The findings are expected to inform leadership development initiatives, guide organizational policy, and support evidence-based strategies aimed at strengthening nurse managers' effectiveness and improving healthcare outcomes.

2. Methodology

This systematic review was conducted in accordance with the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA 2020) guidelines to ensure methodological transparency, reproducibility, and rigor. A structured and systematic approach was applied to identify, screen, evaluate, and synthesize relevant literature examining emotional intelligence in relation to nurse managers' competency. The methodological process was designed to minimize bias and ensure comprehensive coverage of empirical evidence related to emotional intelligence, leadership effectiveness, and organizational outcomes within nursing and healthcare contexts. A comprehensive literature search was conducted across multiple electronic databases to identify relevant peer-reviewed studies. The search strategy was designed to capture studies examining emotional intelligence in nursing leadership, nurse management, organizational behavior, and performance outcomes. Databases were selected based on their relevance to nursing, healthcare leadership, and behavioral sciences. The search process focused on studies that examined emotional intelligence in relation to leadership competence, job performance, organizational outcomes, and professional well-being. The search was guided by structured keywords and Boolean operators aligned with the study objectives, with an emphasis on emotional intelligence, nurse managers, leadership, and organizational outcomes. The search strategy was informed by prior systematic and scoping reviews addressing emotional intelligence in nursing and healthcare leadership contexts (Phillips et al., 2021).

Eligibility criteria were defined prior to the screening process to ensure consistency and relevance. Studies were included if they were empirical or review-based research published in peer-reviewed journals, focused on emotional intelligence within nursing or healthcare leadership contexts, and examined outcomes related to leadership, job performance, organizational culture, or professional well-being. Both quantitative and qualitative studies were considered eligible for inclusion. Studies were excluded if they were editorials, opinion papers, conference abstracts, or did not explicitly examine emotional intelligence as a study variable. Only articles published in English were considered. The inclusion and exclusion criteria were aligned with previous systematic reviews examining emotional intelligence and nursing leadership (Sakallı & Timuçin, 2023). The study selection process followed a multi-stage screening approach. Initially, all retrieved records were screened by title and abstract to assess relevance. Duplicate studies were removed prior to screening. Articles that met the inclusion criteria at the abstract level were retrieved for full-text assessment. Full-text screening was conducted to confirm eligibility based on study design, population, and relevance to emotional intelligence and nurse management. The selection process is summarized using a PRISMA 2020 flow diagram illustrating the stages of identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion. This process ensured transparency and consistency in study selection and is presented in Figure 1.

Data extraction was conducted systematically using a standardized extraction framework developed for this review. Extracted information included author and year of publication, study design, sample

characteristics, setting, key variables examined, and principal findings related to emotional intelligence and leadership or organizational outcomes. Particular attention was given to identifying whether studies examined burnout, job satisfaction, leadership competency, organizational support, work environment, or demographic variables, in line with the study objectives. This structured approach enabled consistent comparison across studies and facilitated the development of the literature review matrix. Quality appraisal of the included studies was undertaken to ensure methodological robustness and credibility of findings. Studies were assessed based on clarity of research objectives, appropriateness of methodology, sample adequacy, validity of measurement tools, and transparency of data analysis. Systematic and scoping reviews included in the analysis were evaluated based on adherence to established methodological frameworks. This approach is consistent with previous reviews examining emotional intelligence in healthcare leadership (Chaudry et al., 2024).

Data synthesis was conducted using a narrative synthesis approach due to heterogeneity in study designs, measurement tools, and outcome variables. The findings were organized thematically to reflect key dimensions of emotional intelligence and its relationship with nurse managers' competency. These themes included leadership and management effectiveness, job satisfaction, work environment and organizational culture, burnout and stress, and professional development. The narrative synthesis enabled integration of findings across diverse study designs while preserving contextual differences observed across healthcare settings. The overall methodological approach ensured that the review adhered to established standards for systematic reviews while allowing for a comprehensive synthesis of the literature. The use of PRISMA guidelines, structured screening procedures, and rigorous data extraction enhanced the reliability and validity of the review findings. The methodological framework adopted in this study provides a robust foundation for interpreting the results and supports the development of evidence-based conclusions regarding the role of emotional intelligence in nurse managers' competency.

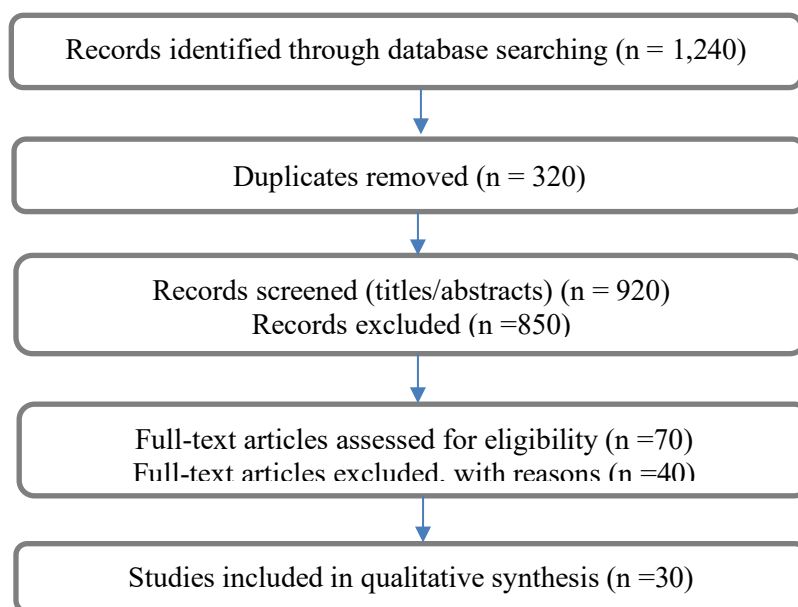


Fig. 1. PRISMA 2020 flow diagram illustrating identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion of studies

3. Results

3.1 Study Selection and Characteristics

The study selection process followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA 2020) guidelines to ensure transparency and methodological rigor. Following the systematic search of electronic databases and removal of duplicate records, studies were screened based on titles and abstracts to determine their relevance to emotional intelligence and nurse managers' competency. Full-text screening was subsequently conducted to confirm eligibility in accordance with the predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. The final selection process is illustrated in Figure 1, which presents the identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion stages of the review. A total of thirty studies met the inclusion criteria and were included in the final synthesis. The characteristics of these studies are summarized in Table 1. The included studies comprised systematic reviews, scoping reviews, cross-sectional studies, and quantitative empirical investigations conducted across diverse healthcare settings. The majority of the studies were published between 2021 and 2025, reflecting the growing scholarly attention to emotional intelligence within nursing leadership and healthcare management. The study populations included nurse managers, staff nurses, nursing students, and healthcare professionals working in hospital and clinical settings.

Analysis of the literature revealed substantial variation in study focus and methodological design. Several studies examined emotional intelligence as a predictor of leadership effectiveness and managerial competency among nurse managers. Research conducted by Phillips et al. (2021) emphasized the relevance of emotional intelligence in shaping nurse managers' ability to support staff satisfaction and retention. Similarly, Kang and Kim (2024) demonstrated that emotional intelligence significantly influenced nursing managerial competence through its effect on communication skills. These findings highlight emotional intelligence as a core leadership attribute linked to managerial effectiveness. A number of studies focused on the relationship between emotional intelligence and job-related outcomes such as job satisfaction, work engagement, and performance. Turjuman and Alilyyani (2023) reported a strong positive association between emotional intelligence and nurses' work performance and engagement. Chauhan et al. (2022) further confirmed that emotional intelligence positively influenced job performance through the mediating role of job satisfaction. These findings were supported by Georgousopoulou et al. (2025), who found that emotional intelligence significantly predicted job satisfaction among nurses working in hospital environments.

Several studies examined emotional intelligence in relation to organizational and environmental factors. Al-Oweidat et al. (2023) found that emotional intelligence was significantly associated with organizational commitment among nurses, indicating its importance in fostering positive workplace attitudes. Oweidat et al. (2024) further demonstrated that emotional intelligence was a strong predictor of perceived quality of healthcare, reinforcing its relevance at both individual and organizational levels. Similarly, Khraim (2023) identified emotional intelligence as a key determinant of job performance, with organizational culture moderating this relationship. The review also identified studies that explored emotional intelligence in relation to stress, burnout, and psychological well-being. Han et al. (2022) reported that emotional intelligence was negatively associated with burnout among healthcare staff, highlighting its protective role in high-stress environments. Yildirim-Hamurcu and Terzioglu (2022) similarly found that higher emotional intelligence levels were associated with lower perceived stress among nursing students. These findings were consistent with those reported by Karimi et al. (2021), who

demonstrated that emotional intelligence predicted psychological well-being and quality of care among healthcare workers.

Several reviews and meta-analyses included in this study provided further evidence of the significance of emotional intelligence in nursing leadership. Sakallı and Timuçin (2023) identified multiple individual and institutional factors influencing emotional intelligence levels among nurse managers. Chaudry et al. (2024) reported that emotionally intelligent leadership was associated with improved job satisfaction, organizational culture, and reduced burnout. Chen et al. (2022) highlighted the effectiveness of leadership development interventions in enhancing managerial competencies among nurse supervisors. In addition, studies focusing on emotional intelligence training demonstrated consistent benefits across nursing populations. Kawashima et al. (2025) found that emotional intelligence training significantly improved emotional intelligence, reduced stress, and enhanced communication skills. Saikia et al. (2024) similarly reported that emotional intelligence training programs contributed to improved emotional regulation, leadership ability, and professional performance among nurses. Overall, the findings summarized in Table 1 demonstrate that emotional intelligence is consistently associated with leadership effectiveness, job satisfaction, organizational support, and psychological well-being across diverse nursing contexts. The included studies collectively indicate that emotional intelligence plays a central role in shaping nurse managers' competency and influencing both individual and organizational outcomes. The synthesis of these findings provides a strong empirical foundation for examining the determinants and outcomes of emotional intelligence in nursing leadership, which are further explored in the subsequent sections of this review.

Table 1: Literature Review Matrix

No.	Author(s) & Year	B	ur	Job	W	ork	E	Le	ad	er	ch	D	e	Org	an	iz
1	Phillips et al. (2021)			✓		✓			✓							✓
2	Majeed & Jamshed (2021)	✓		✓		✓			✓							✓
3	Kang & Kim (2024)								✓			✓				
4	Heikkinen et al. (2026)					✓			✓			✓				✓
5	Han et al. (2022)	✓											✓			
6	Tan, Voon & Ngu (2022)								✓							
7	Turjuman & Alilyyani (2023)					✓							✓			
8	Ayed (2025)								✓				✓			
9	Kawashima et al. (2025)	✓														
10	Aseery et al. (2023)					✓			✓				✓			
11	Zaman et al. (2021)												✓			
12	Chauhan et al. (2022)			✓		✓										✓
13	Al-Oweidat et al. (2023)												✓			✓
14	Oweidat et al. (2024)															✓
15	Khraim (2023)					✓										✓
16	Perez-Gonzalez et al. (2024)					✓			✓							
17	Majeed & Jamshed (2021)					✓			✓							✓
18	González-García et al. (2021)								✓							
19	Fowler et al. (2021)			✓		✓			✓							
20	Sakallı & Timuçin (2023)					✓			✓				✓			✓
21	Dugué, Sirost & Dosseville (2021)					✓										

No.	Author(s) & Year	B	ur	Job	W	ork	E	Le	ader	sh	D	e	Org	an	iz
22	Rhodes & Foran (2023)			✓		✓			✓						
23	Chaudry et al. (2024)	✓		✓		✓			✓						✓
24	Chen et al. (2022)								✓						✓
25	Chen, Chiang & Chu (2025)	✓		✓		✓									✓
26	Georgousopoulou et al. (2025)			✓		✓					✓				✓
27	Almadani & Alamri (2024)								✓		✓				
28	Karimi et al. (2021)														✓
29	Yildirim-Hamurcu & Terzioglu (2022)	✓									✓				
30	Saikia et al. (2024)	✓							✓						✓

3.2 Prevalence and Determinants of Emotional Intelligence

The reviewed literature consistently indicates that emotional intelligence is prevalent among nurse managers and varies according to individual, professional, and organizational factors. Several studies reported moderate to high levels of emotional intelligence among nurse leaders, emphasizing its importance in managerial effectiveness and professional functioning. Sakallı and Timuçin (2023) demonstrated through their systematic review and meta-analysis that emotional intelligence levels among nurse managers are influenced by a combination of personal attributes and institutional conditions. Their findings revealed that factors such as age, education level, professional experience, and organizational support significantly shaped emotional intelligence levels, while workload and institutional constraints acted as limiting factors. Individual-level determinants were consistently highlighted across studies. Almadani and Alamri (2024) found that emotional intelligence was significantly higher among female nurse leaders with longer leadership experience and stronger self-leadership abilities. Their findings suggested that emotional intelligence develops progressively with professional maturity and leadership exposure. Similarly, Yildirim-Hamurcu and Terzioglu (2022) reported that higher emotional intelligence among nursing students was associated with stronger self-leadership skills and lower perceived stress, indicating that emotional intelligence is shaped early in professional development and continues to evolve throughout a nurse's career.

Organizational context also emerged as a critical determinant of emotional intelligence. Georgousopoulou et al. (2025) demonstrated that organizational culture significantly influenced emotional intelligence levels and job satisfaction among nurses. Their study revealed that supportive and people-centered organizational cultures foster higher emotional intelligence, while rigid hierarchical structures were less effective in promoting emotional awareness and emotional regulation. Similarly, Khraim (2023) found that organizational culture moderated the relationship between emotional intelligence and job performance, reinforcing the importance of institutional climate in shaping emotional competencies. Educational and training-related determinants were also prominent in the literature. Kawashima et al. (2025) reported that emotional intelligence training significantly enhanced emotional awareness, communication skills, and stress management among nurses and nursing students. Saikia et al. (2024) further confirmed that structured emotional intelligence training programs were effective in improving emotional regulation, resilience, and interpersonal competence. These findings suggest that emotional intelligence is not solely a fixed trait but a modifiable competency that can be developed through targeted educational interventions.

Leadership role and professional responsibilities were also associated with variations in emotional intelligence levels. Chen et al. (2025) demonstrated through meta-analysis that emotional intelligence was positively associated with organizational functioning, social support, and satisfaction while being negatively associated with occupational stress. Similarly, Sakallı and Timuçin (2023) identified leadership position, years of experience, and managerial responsibility as significant predictors of emotional intelligence among nurse managers. Collectively, the reviewed studies indicate that emotional intelligence among nurse managers is shaped by a dynamic interaction between personal characteristics, professional experience, organizational environment, and access to training opportunities. These determinants highlight the multifaceted nature of emotional intelligence and emphasize the need for organizational strategies that promote emotional development as part of leadership capacity building.

3.3 Outcomes of Emotional Intelligence on Nurse Managers' Competency

The reviewed evidence consistently demonstrates that emotional intelligence plays a critical role in enhancing nurse managers' competency across multiple domains, including leadership effectiveness, communication, decision-making, job performance, and staff outcomes. Emotional intelligence was repeatedly identified as a core attribute enabling nurse managers to perform complex leadership roles effectively within demanding healthcare environments. Several studies highlighted the influence of emotional intelligence on leadership and managerial performance. Kang and Kim (2024) found that emotional intelligence significantly predicted nursing managerial competence, with communication competence acting as a key mediating factor. Their findings indicated that emotionally intelligent nurse managers were more effective in planning, coordination, and human resource management. Similarly, Perez-Gonzalez et al. (2024) identified emotional intelligence-related traits such as empathy, communication, and transformational leadership as central components of effective nurse management.

Emotional intelligence was also strongly associated with job performance and professional effectiveness. Turjuman and Alilyyani (2023) demonstrated that higher emotional intelligence was associated with improved work performance and work engagement among nurses. Khraim (2023) further confirmed that emotional intelligence significantly predicted job performance across multiple professional groups, with emotional regulation and emotional appraisal emerging as the strongest contributors. These findings indicate that emotionally intelligent nurse managers are better equipped to manage tasks, resolve conflicts, and support team performance. A substantial body of evidence linked emotional intelligence to improved organizational outcomes and workforce stability. Majeed and Jamshed (2021) found that leader emotional intelligence significantly influenced team culture and reduced turnover intentions among nurses. Al-Oweidat et al. (2023) similarly reported that emotional intelligence was positively associated with organizational commitment, suggesting that emotionally intelligent leaders foster stronger professional attachment and retention. These findings underscore the strategic importance of emotional intelligence in addressing workforce challenges in healthcare systems.

Emotional intelligence also demonstrated a protective effect against occupational stress and burnout. Han et al. (2022) reported that emotional intelligence negatively correlated with burnout among healthcare staff and played a buffering role in managing job stress. Karimi et al. (2021) further showed that emotional intelligence predicted psychological well-being and quality of care, reinforcing its role in maintaining both staff welfare and patient outcomes. These findings are particularly relevant in high-pressure clinical environments where emotional demands are substantial. Evidence also supports the role of emotional intelligence in enhancing communication, decision-making, and quality of care. Ayed

(2025) demonstrated a strong positive relationship between emotional intelligence and clinical decision-making among neonatal nurses, emphasizing its importance in high-stakes clinical settings. Oweidat et al. (2024) further confirmed that emotional intelligence significantly predicted quality of healthcare delivery, accounting for a substantial proportion of variance in care quality indicators.

4. Discussion

This systematic review aimed to synthesize current empirical evidence on emotional intelligence and its influence on nurse managers' competency, with particular attention to behavioral, organizational, and contextual determinants. The findings demonstrate that emotional intelligence is a multidimensional construct that significantly shapes leadership effectiveness, professional behavior, organizational outcomes, and healthcare quality. Across the reviewed studies, emotional intelligence emerged not merely as an individual trait but as a dynamic capability influenced by personal attributes, organizational climate, and professional context. The results confirm that emotional intelligence is consistently associated with improved leadership performance, stronger interpersonal relationships, enhanced decision-making, and greater organizational commitment.

Nurse managers with higher emotional intelligence were found to be more effective in managing staff, resolving conflict, fostering teamwork, and maintaining positive work environments. These findings reinforce the growing consensus that emotional intelligence is a critical leadership competency within complex healthcare systems, where emotional labor, ethical responsibility, and interpersonal communication are central to effective management. The discussion further highlights that emotional intelligence functions as both an antecedent and an outcome of organizational and behavioral processes. It contributes to leadership effectiveness while simultaneously being shaped by institutional culture, leadership development opportunities, and workplace demands. This dual role underscores the importance of integrating emotional intelligence into leadership development frameworks, performance evaluation systems, and organizational policy design.

4.1 Interplay of Behavioral, Organizational, and Contextual Determinants

The findings of this review demonstrate a strong interaction between behavioral characteristics, organizational structures, and contextual factors in shaping emotional intelligence among nurse managers. Behavioral determinants, particularly self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, and communication competence, were repeatedly identified as core components influencing leadership effectiveness. Kang and Kim (2024) showed that emotional intelligence significantly enhanced managerial competence through improved communication ability, indicating that behavioral skills serve as a direct mechanism through which emotional intelligence influences leadership performance. Behavioral attributes were also shown to influence nurses' ability to cope with occupational stress and emotional demands. Yildirim-Hamurcu and Terzioglu (2022) found that emotional intelligence and self-leadership significantly reduced perceived stress among nursing students, suggesting that emotional intelligence functions as a psychological resource that enhances emotional resilience. Similarly, Han et al. (2022) demonstrated that emotional intelligence played a protective role against burnout, particularly in high-pressure healthcare environments. These findings highlight the importance of emotional

regulation and self-awareness in sustaining leadership effectiveness under demanding conditions.

Organizational determinants were equally influential in shaping emotional intelligence outcomes. Georgousopoulou et al. (2025) demonstrated that organizational culture significantly affected emotional intelligence and job satisfaction, with supportive and participative cultures fostering higher emotional competence among nurses. This aligns with findings from Khraim (2023), who reported that organizational culture moderated the relationship between emotional intelligence and job performance, reinforcing the idea that emotionally intelligent behaviors are either facilitated or constrained by workplace environments. These findings emphasize that emotional intelligence cannot be developed or sustained in isolation but requires organizational structures that encourage psychological safety, open communication, and professional growth. Leadership context also played a central role in shaping emotional intelligence development. Almadani and Alamri (2024) found that emotional intelligence among female nurse leaders was strongly associated with leadership experience and self-leadership capacity. Their findings indicate that emotional intelligence evolves through exposure to leadership responsibilities and reflective practice. Similarly, Sakallı and Timuçin (2023) demonstrated that both individual characteristics and institutional factors influenced emotional intelligence levels among nurse managers, further reinforcing the interaction between personal and organizational determinants.

Contextual influences, including workload, staffing levels, and healthcare system demands, were also identified as significant contributors. Majeed and Jamshed (2021) showed that leader emotional intelligence directly influenced team culture and turnover intentions, suggesting that emotionally intelligent leadership mitigates the negative effects of stressful work environments. Oweidat et al. (2024) further demonstrated that emotional intelligence significantly predicted quality of healthcare delivery, indicating that emotional competence has direct implications for patient outcomes and service quality. The interplay between behavioral, organizational, and contextual factors underscores the complexity of emotional intelligence as a leadership construct. Emotional intelligence does not operate independently but is shaped by continuous interactions between individual capabilities, institutional culture, and healthcare system pressures. These findings support the conceptualization of emotional intelligence as a dynamic and developable competency rather than a fixed personality trait.

4.2 Policy, Practical, and Theoretical Implications

The findings of this systematic review carry important implications for healthcare policy, managerial practice, and theoretical development in nursing leadership. At the policy level, the consistent evidence demonstrating the influence of emotional intelligence on leadership effectiveness, job performance, organizational commitment, and quality of care suggests that emotional intelligence should be explicitly incorporated into national and institutional leadership frameworks. Policymakers responsible for healthcare workforce development should recognize emotional intelligence as a core leadership competency alongside technical and administrative skills. Evidence from Sakallı and Timuçin (2023) indicates that emotional intelligence levels among nurse managers are shaped by both individual and institutional variables, highlighting the importance of organizational policies that support emotional development through training, evaluation, and leadership succession planning.

From a practical perspective, the findings underscore the need for healthcare organizations to embed emotional intelligence into leadership development programs, performance appraisal systems, and

continuing professional education. Studies have consistently shown that emotionally intelligent nurse managers demonstrate stronger communication skills, higher leadership effectiveness, and improved team performance. Kang and Kim (2024) demonstrated that emotional intelligence directly enhances managerial competence through improved communication, suggesting that leadership training programs should prioritize emotional and interpersonal skill development alongside technical knowledge. Similarly, Kawashima et al. (2025) provided empirical evidence that structured emotional intelligence training significantly improves emotional awareness, reduces stress, and enhances communication skills among nurses and nursing students. The practical implications also extend to workforce retention and job satisfaction. Majeed and Jamshed (2021) showed that leader emotional intelligence significantly influenced team culture and reduced turnover intentions, highlighting the role of emotionally intelligent leadership in addressing workforce shortages. Al-Oweidat et al. (2023) further demonstrated that emotional intelligence positively affects organizational commitment, reinforcing the value of emotionally intelligent leadership in promoting staff stability and engagement. These findings support the integration of emotional intelligence assessment into recruitment, promotion, and leadership evaluation processes.

Theoretically, this review strengthens the conceptualization of emotional intelligence as a multidimensional construct that interacts with organizational behavior, leadership theory, and healthcare management frameworks. The findings align with leadership theories that emphasize relational and transformational elements of leadership, where emotional awareness, empathy, and self-regulation play central roles. Perez-Gonzalez et al. (2024) highlighted that leadership competency in nurse managers is strongly linked to interpersonal and emotional capabilities, supporting the integration of emotional intelligence into leadership competency models. Moreover, the evidence supports theoretical models that view emotional intelligence as both an antecedent and outcome of effective leadership behavior, reinforcing its dynamic and developmental nature. This review also contributes to theory by demonstrating that emotional intelligence operates across individual, organizational, and system levels. Chen et al. (2025) showed that emotional intelligence is associated with organizational cohesion, job satisfaction, and reduced stress, suggesting its relevance to broader organizational performance theories. These findings indicate that emotional intelligence should be incorporated into conceptual frameworks examining leadership effectiveness, healthcare quality, and workforce sustainability.

4.3 Comparison with Existing Reviews, Limitations, and Future Research

The findings of this review are largely consistent with previous systematic and scoping reviews examining emotional intelligence in healthcare leadership, while also extending the literature by focusing specifically on nurse managers' competency. Similar to the conclusions of Sakallı and Timuçin (2023), this review confirms that emotional intelligence is influenced by multiple individual and organizational factors and plays a critical role in leadership effectiveness. Likewise, the findings align with the review by Chaudry et al. (2024), which reported that emotionally intelligent leaders contribute positively to job satisfaction, organizational culture, and workforce engagement. Compared to earlier reviews that focused primarily on emotional intelligence training or general leadership outcomes, this review provides a more integrated perspective by linking emotional intelligence directly to nurse managers' competency. The inclusion of studies examining decision-making, communication, job performance, organizational commitment, and quality of care offer a broader understanding of how emotional intelligence operates

across leadership functions. This expands upon the work of Dugué et al. (2021), who emphasized emotional intelligence in nursing education, by demonstrating its sustained relevance across professional and managerial roles.

Despite its contributions, this review has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, most of the included studies employed cross-sectional designs, limiting the ability to establish causal relationships between emotional intelligence and leadership outcomes. Longitudinal and experimental studies remain limited, which restricts conclusions regarding long-term effects of emotional intelligence development. Second, the majority of studies relied on self-reported measures of emotional intelligence, which may be subject to response bias and social desirability effects. This limitation was also noted by Sakallı and Timuçin (2023), who emphasized the need for more objective assessment methods. Another limitation relates to geographical concentration. Many of the included studies were conducted in specific regions, particularly the Middle East, Asia, and parts of Europe, which may limit generalizability to other healthcare systems. Almadani and Alamri (2024) highlighted cultural influences on emotional intelligence, suggesting that contextual factors should be considered when interpreting findings. Additionally, variability in measurement tools and study designs contributed to heterogeneity, limiting the ability to perform meta-analytic synthesis across all outcomes.

Future research should prioritize longitudinal and interventional designs to examine how emotional intelligence develops over time and how targeted interventions influence leadership effectiveness and organizational outcomes. There is also a need for greater exploration of emotional intelligence within different healthcare contexts, including primary care, emergency settings, and long-term care environments. Further studies should examine how emotional intelligence interacts with emerging challenges such as digital transformation, workforce shortages, and increasing patient complexity. Saikia et al. (2024) emphasized the importance of structured emotional intelligence training programs, suggesting that future research should evaluate the sustainability and long-term impact of such interventions. In conclusion, while existing evidence strongly supports the role of emotional intelligence in enhancing nurse managers' competency, further research is required to strengthen causal inference, expand contextual understanding, and refine intervention strategies. Addressing these gaps will contribute to the development of emotionally intelligent healthcare leaders capable of navigating the increasing complexity of modern healthcare systems.

5. Conclusion

This systematic review provides a comprehensive synthesis of current evidence on emotional intelligence and its influence on nurse managers' competency within healthcare settings. The findings demonstrate that emotional intelligence is a fundamental leadership capability that underpins effective management, professional performance, and organizational functioning. Across the reviewed studies, emotional intelligence consistently emerged as a critical determinant of leadership effectiveness, communication quality, decision-making capacity, staff engagement, and overall workplace well-being. The review highlights that emotional intelligence among nurse managers is shaped by a complex interaction of behavioral attributes, organizational environments, and contextual demands. Individual factors such as self-awareness, emotional regulation, and interpersonal sensitivity were shown to enhance managerial competence, while organizational culture, leadership support, and professional development

opportunities played a decisive role in nurturing or constraining emotional intelligence. These findings emphasize that emotional intelligence is not a fixed trait but a developable capability that evolves through experience, education, and supportive leadership environments.

Importantly, the review demonstrates that emotionally intelligent nurse managers contribute to positive organizational outcomes, including improved job satisfaction, reduced burnout, stronger organizational commitment, and enhanced quality of care. Emotional intelligence also serves as a protective factor against occupational stress and turnover, positioning it as a strategic asset in addressing workforce challenges faced by healthcare systems globally. The consistent association between emotional intelligence and leadership effectiveness further reinforces its relevance to modern nursing leadership, where relational competence and emotional awareness are essential for managing complex clinical environments. The evidence synthesized in this review supports the integration of emotional intelligence into leadership development frameworks, performance evaluation systems, and professional training programs. Strengthening emotional intelligence among nurse managers has the potential to improve not only individual leadership performance but also team cohesion, organizational resilience, and patient care outcomes. As healthcare systems continue to evolve in response to increasing demands and complexity, emotionally intelligent leadership will remain central to sustaining effective and compassionate care delivery.

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