Examining emotional intelligence in the context of virtual teams

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Research from a team in India published in the *International Journal of Public Sector Performance Management* looks at the notion of "emotional intelligence" in the context of virtual teams. While it demonstrates an

obvious relationship, the literature is still in the nascent stage and so precludes solid conclusions.

Anu Singh Lather of Ambedkar University in Delhi and Simran Kaur of Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University are well aware that research into emotional intelligence and its effects in virtual teams is still in its infancy and so hoped to offer new insights through a systematic review of the research literature as it stands. Emotional intelligence refers to the ability of individuals to recognize and manage their own emotions, as well as to understand and effectively respond to the emotions of others. Emotional intelligence can be broken down into several key components, including self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills.

These components allow individuals to navigate complex social situations, build strong relationships with colleagues and stakeholders, and communicate effectively with others.

In the public sector, emotional intelligence is particularly important for managers and leaders, who need to be able to build trust and rapport with employees, collaborate effectively with other organizations, and respond to the needs and concerns of the public. By cultivating emotional intelligence, public sector employees can improve their ability to communicate, manage conflicts, and build strong, collaborative relationships with others, ultimately leading to more effective and efficient public services.

There is a wealth of information about how emotional intelligence affects our interactions in the "offline" world, but how it plays out in the virtual environments of online video conferencing, for instance, might well be different. Indeed, many virtual teams are built ad hoc and may exist only transiently unlike the more obvious teams present in the physical workplace. Even those virtual teams that are well-established

and meet regularly will most likely have a very different dynamic to a team that meets face-to-face.

The team has reviewed a range of papers published during the first couple of decades of the 21st century on the subject of emotional intelligence in virtual teams. They find that emotional intelligence is, of course, important. A relationship between virtual team performance and emotional intelligence of the team members was obvious from the research. However, there still remains a dearth of high-quality research published in this area and so we cannot yet extract a clear understanding of the factors that affect emotional intelligence in this online realm.

Given the pressures that arose during the COVID-19 pandemic, there will likely be research from the period following the team's original review that will fill some of the gaps in this research field in the coming months and years and provide new insights into the emotional intelligence of virtual teams. If, as they say, teamwork makes the dream work, then emotional intelligence is the back-end code to make the virtual team work.