THE ROLE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN SHAPING ENVIRONMENTALLY RESPONSIBLE BEHAVIOR

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Summary

Emotional Intelligence (EI) is a multifaceted concept encompassing the ability to process emotional information for effective interaction and the formation of environmentally responsible behavior. This article summarizes theoretical approaches to the conceptualization of EI in the context of environmental responsibility through the analysis of three key models.

The Ability Model by Mayer and Salovey defines EI as a set of cognitive skills involving the perception, utilization, understanding, and management of emotions, which facilitates well-grounded environmental decisions, such as assessing the impact of environmental degradation. The Mixed Model by Bar-On integrates emotional and social competencies, such as empathy and adaptability, which motivate sustainable lifestyles, including the reduction of resource consumption. Petrides' Trait Model emphasizes subjective emotional self-perceptions, shaping emotional connectedness with nature and encouraging pro-environmental initiatives.

Each model offers a unique perspective on EI, underscoring its role in shaping environmental awareness through cognitive, social, and subjective mechanisms. The practical application of these models involves the development of educational programs aimed at fostering EI to support ecological practices such as waste recycling and the advocacy of green policies. For instance, Bar-On's model contributes to the formation of sustainability-oriented communities through collective action, while the Trait Model enhances individual motivation for eco-activism.

These approaches establish a foundation for integrating EI into policymaking that promotes sustainable development. Further research should aim to integrate these models to strengthen their influence on sustainable practices across diverse cultural and social contexts.

Key words: empathy, self-regulation, sustainability, emotional competence, environmental values.

DOI https://doi.org/10.23856/7029

1. Introduction

Emotional intelligence (EI) is a complex concept encompassing an individual's ability to process emotional information for effective self-interaction and interaction with others, which is critical for fostering environmentally responsible behavior. The theoretical foundations of EI are rooted in diverse models that propose distinct approaches to defining its components and structure. A pivotal model is the ability model proposed by Mayer and Salovey, which

conceptualizes EI as a set of cognitive skills for processing emotional information *(Metcalf et al, 2013)*. This model delineates four components: emotion perception – the ability to recognize emotions in oneself and others through nonverbal cues, such as facial expressions or tone of voice; emotion utilization – the application of emotions to facilitate thinking and decision-making; emotion understanding – the analysis of the causes and consequences of emotional states; and emotion management – the regulation of one's own emotions and influence on others' emotions to achieve desired outcomes. This model emphasizes the cognitive dimension of EI, viewing it as an integral part of general intelligence, measurable through instruments like the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT). This framework enables analysis of how emotion processing can influence environmentally conscious decisions, such as understanding the emotional impact of environmental degradation.

An alternative approach is Bar-On's mixed model, which integrates emotional and social competencies within a broader framework *(Bar-On, 1997)*. This model comprises five domains: intrapersonal skills – self-awareness, self-esteem, and independence; interpersonal skills – empathy and social responsibility; adaptability – flexibility and problem-solving; stress management – stress resilience and impulse control; and general mood – optimism and happiness. Unlike the cognitively oriented model of Mayer and Salovey, Bar-On's model highlights psychological traits that promote well-being and social adaptation. These aspects are particularly significant for environmental responsibility, as empathy and social responsibility can motivate sustainable lifestyles, such as reducing resource consumption *(Bar-On, 1997)*.

A third approach is the trait EI model proposed by Petrides and Furnham, which defines EI as a constellation of emotional self-perceptions situated at the lower levels of personality trait hierarchies *(Petrides et al., 2001)*. This model distinguishes trait EI, encompassing emotionality, self-control, sociability, and well-being, from ability EI, as described by Mayer and Salovey. Trait EI is assessed through self-reports, such as the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (TEIQue). This approach emphasizes subjective emotional experiences, which can enhance environmental behavior by fostering an emotional connection with nature, for instance, motivating participation in conservation initiatives *(Petrides et al., 2001)*.

Each model offers a unique perspective on EI's components and their impact on environmental responsibility. The ability model underscores cognitive processes that enable informed decisions regarding environmental actions *(Mayer et al., 1997)*. Bar-On's mixed model emphasizes social and emotional competencies that promote sustainable behavior through collective action and stress resilience *(Bar-On, 1997)*. The trait model focuses on subjective emotional experiences that can cultivate personal commitment to environmental protection *(Petrides et al., 2001)*. These theoretical approaches provide a foundation for developing educational and social programs that enhance EI to promote environmental consciousness, such as encouraging recycling or supporting environmental policies *(Kaiser et al., 2003)*.

2. Emotional Intelligence as a determinant of environmentally conscious behavior

Emotional intelligence (EI) plays a significant role in shaping environmentally conscious behavior, acting as a determinant that influences motivation, decision-making, and actions aimed at environmental preservation. Unlike previously considered aspects, such as the relationship between EI and environmental responsibility or its theoretical models, this text focuses on the mechanisms through which EI directly facilitates environmentally responsible actions, as well as on empirical data supporting this influence.

EI affects environmentally conscious behavior through an individual's ability to interpret emotional signals related to environmental issues. For example, people with well-developed EI are better at recognizing emotions evoked by information about climate change or pollution, such as anxiety or compassion for affected ecosystems, which can motivate actions like reducing one's carbon footprint *(Schultz, 2001)*. This ability to perceive and analyze emotions helps to foster a deeper understanding of environmental consequences, which is crucial for transitioning from knowledge to tangible action *(Kaiser et al., 2003)*.

Another mechanism is emotional regulation, which enables individuals to overcome psychological barriers associated with environmental engagement. For instance, feelings of powerlessness in the face of global ecological problems can be paralyzing; however, individuals with high EI are capable of regulating such emotions by focusing on practical steps, such as participating in local greening initiatives or reducing energy consumption *(Bar-On, 1997)*. Such self-regulation promotes resilience to stress, which is essential for maintaining long-term environmental activism, particularly in conditions of information overload regarding environmental crises.

Empathy, as a component of EI, plays a particularly important role in fostering environmentally conscious behavior. Individuals with a high level of empathy are more likely to feel connected with nature, cultivating a biophilic attitude – a love for living systems *(Mayer et al., 1997)*. This may manifest in actions such as supporting conservation organizations or rejecting products that harm the environment. Empirical studies indicate that empathy towards nature correlates with a willingness to adopt a more sustainable lifestyle, for example, by reducing meat consumption or opting for eco-friendly transportation *(Schultz, 2001)*.

Social skills, another element of EI, contribute to environmentally conscious behavior by influencing communities. Individuals with well-developed social competencies can effectively communicate environmental ideas, persuade others of the need for sustainable development, and organize collective actions such as cleanup campaigns or the promotion of green technologies *(Bar-On, 1997)*. For example, leaders of environmental movements often rely on social skills to mobilize groups, creating a ripple effect throughout society.

Empirical data confirm the connection between EI and pro-environmental behavior. Studies show that individuals with higher levels of EI are more likely to engage in pro-ecological actions, such as volunteering or supporting environmental policies, due to their greater capacity for self-reflection and awareness of the social consequences of their actions *(Petrides et al., 2001)*. Furthermore, programs aimed at developing EI – for instance, training in empathy or emotional regulation – demonstrate growth in participants' environmental awareness, which translates into practical actions such as waste sorting or reducing energy consumption *(Kollmuss et al., 2002)*.

Nevertheless, the impact of EI on environmental behavior has its limitations. Emotional sensitivity can sometimes lead to excessive anxiety, which in turn lowers motivation to act due to feelings of hopelessness *(Schultz, 2001)*. Additionally, without access to resources or knowledge about specific environmental practices, EI may remain an unrealized potential *(Kaiser et al., 2003)*.

In conclusion, emotional intelligence is a powerful determinant of environmentally conscious behavior, exerting influence through emotion perception, self-regulation, empathy, and social skills. Its development through targeted programs can enhance environmental activism and support sustainable development. Future research should focus on creating practical tools for integrating EI into environmental education in order to maximize its impact on individual and collective behavior *(Kaiser et al., 2003)*.

3. The influence of emotional competence on the formation of environmental values

Emotional competence, defined as the ability to recognize, regulate, and direct emotions, significantly influences the formation of environmental values that promote sustainable attitudes toward nature. Emotional adaptation to changes in the environment, as a manifestation of emotional competence, contributes to the development of environmental values by enabling people to respond flexibly to environmental transformations. For example, in the context of deteriorating air quality or the reduction of green areas, individuals with high emotional competence can manage emotions such as sadness or irritation and channel them into developing values that support pro-environmental actions. This may manifest, as Bar-On *(Bar-On, 1997)* suggests, in valuing the preservation of nature through supporting air-cleaning initiatives or creating urban gardens. Such adaptation helps shape values that address contemporary ecological challenges.

Ecological reflection within personal narratives, supported by emotional competence, is an important mechanism for forming environmental values. People with well-developed emotional competence can analyze their emotional experiences related to nature and create personal stories that reflect their attitude toward the environment. For instance, reflecting on the joy of walking in a park may encourage the formation of a value for protecting green spaces, expressed through the support of local environmental protection projects, as Mayer & Salovey *(1997)* emphasize. This reflective process contributes to integrating environmental values into one's personal worldview.

Emotional competence also plays a role in forming environmental values through engagement with local environmental initiatives. Individuals with high emotional competence can effectively participate in local projects such as river clean-ups or eco-educational programs, using their emotional skills to build connections within the community. For example, Schultz *(2001)* highlights that they may develop a value of environmental responsibility by participating in local waste recycling campaigns, thereby strengthening their commitment to sustainable development. Such interaction fosters the formation of values with a strong local foundation.

Empirical studies confirm that emotional competence promotes the formation of environmental values through its impact on adaptation and local engagement. Research shows that people with higher emotional competence are more likely to develop values that support ecological initiatives, such as participating in local greening projects or supporting recycling programs *(Kollmuss et al., 2002)*. Programs aimed at developing emotional competence also contribute to enhancing the value of environmental awareness, manifested in conscious actions like supporting local eco-initiatives *(Kaiser et al., 2003)*.

However, there are limitations. For example, in communities with low levels of environmental activity, emotional competence may encounter a lack of opportunities for realizing these values *(Kollmuss et al., 2002)*. Furthermore, excessive emotional sensitivity to environmental changes can lead to feelings of helplessness if not accompanied by community support, as Schultz *(2001)* notes. To address these challenges, programs that integrate emotional competence with local environmental resources and community support are necessary.

In summary, emotional competence shapes environmental values through adaptation to environmental changes, ecological reflection within personal narratives, and engagement with local initiatives. Its development through educational programs and local projects can enhance value-based perceptions of the environment. Future research by Kaiser & Fuhrer *(2003)* should focus on creating strategies that integrate emotional competence with local environmental initiatives to support values across different communities.

4. The role of empathy in decision-making for sustainable development

Empathy, as the ability to understand and share the emotions of others, plays a central role in decision-making aimed at sustainable development, which implies a balance between the economic, social, and environmental needs of current and future generations. Empathy promotes sustainable development decisions through interpersonal understanding of the needs of vulnerable groups, who are often most affected by environmental and social changes. People with a high level of empathy are able to feel an emotional connection with those suffering from the consequences of climate change, for example, communities losing access to water or land due to drought. This understanding encourages decisions that take into account the interests of such groups, such as supporting projects for water supply or the restoration of agricultural lands, according to Batson et al. *(1997)*. Research by Schultz *(2001)* shows that empathy toward vulnerable groups increases the likelihood of making decisions aimed at social justice in the context of sustainable development. Such an interpersonal approach helps shape decisions that consider the long-term needs of society.

Social solidarity, reinforced by empathy, is another important factor in sustainable development decision-making. Empathy fosters the creation of shared understanding regarding environmental issues, motivating communities to support sustainable development policies. For instance, people who feel empathy for future generations are more likely to support initiatives such as reducing carbon emissions or transitioning to renewable energy sources, being aware of their impact on the quality of life for their descendants. The study by Kollmuss & Agyeman *(2002)* highlights that empathy for abstract groups, such as future generations, facilitates the formation of consensus for implementing green policies. This allows communities to unite around decisions that support sustainable development through shared values.

Empathy also plays a key role in global cooperation to address environmental challenges, which is fundamental to sustainable development. In a global context, individuals with a high level of empathy are capable of feeling compassion for communities in remote regions suffering from environmental crises, such as rising sea levels or forest degradation. This motivates support for international agreements, such as the Paris Agreement, or funding projects for climate change adaptation in developing countries. Research demonstrates that empathy toward global communities increases the willingness to compromise in international sustainable development negotiations *(Markowitz et al, 2012)*. Such a global approach encourages decisions that consider the interests of the planet as a whole.

Empirical data confirm the significance of empathy in shaping sustainable development decisions. The study by Clayton & Myers *(2009)* shows that individuals with higher levels of empathy are more likely to make decisions supporting long-term environmental goals, such as investing in green technologies or supporting recycling programs. Moreover, programs that develop empathy through education or training contribute to increased readiness to make decisions that account for social and environmental justice *(Pfattheicher et al, 2016)*. For example, empathy training has shown that participants are more likely to support policies aimed at reducing inequalities associated with environmental problems.

However, empathy in sustainable development decision-making has limitations. Excessive empathy toward certain groups may lead to neglecting broader environmental or economic consequences, complicating the achievement of the necessary balance for sustainable development *(Kollmuss et al., 2002)*. Additionally, empathy may be less effective in situations of low environmental awareness, where people lack sufficient information to make informed decisions *(Schultz, 2001)*. To overcome these challenges, programs combining the development of empathy with environmental education and critical thinking are necessary.

In conclusion, empathy shapes sustainable development decisions through interpersonal understanding, social solidarity, and global cooperation, fostering a balance between social, economic, and environmental needs. Its development through educational programs and international initiatives can enhance the readiness for decision-making that supports sustainable development.

5. Self-Regulation as a Mechanism for the Formation of Environmentally Responsible Practices

Self-regulation, as the ability to consciously control one's own thoughts, emotions, and behavior to achieve set goals, is a key psychological mechanism in shaping environmentally responsible practices that contribute to sustainable development and the preservation of natural resources. This text analyzes the impact of self-regulation on environmentally responsible behavior through cognitive self-discipline for overcoming short-term temptations, behavioral adaptation to environmental norms, and motivational resilience for maintaining long-term environmental actions, deliberately excluding previously examined aspects such as empathy or environmental education.

Cognitive self-discipline, as a component of self-regulation, plays a central role in the formation of environmentally responsible practices by enabling individuals to resist impulsive desires that contradict environmental goals. For example, individuals with a high level of self-regulation are capable of refusing excessive consumption, such as purchasing single-use plastic products, in favor of alternatives that reduce environmental impact, like using reusable containers. Research by Schultz *(2001)* shows that cognitive self-discipline encourages the selection of environmentally responsible choices in situations where short-term benefits compete with long-term ecological goals. This ability for self-control helps develop practices aligned with sustainable development principles, such as waste reduction and energy conservation.

Behavioral adaptation to environmental norms is another mechanism through which self-regulation promotes environmentally responsible practices. People with well-developed self-regulation are capable of consciously adjusting their behavior in accordance with social or legislative environmental standards, even when it requires effort or changes to habitual routines. For instance, regularly sorting waste or using public transportation instead of a personal car demands self-regulation to adhere to new norms. Research by Bamberg & Möser *(2007)* emphasizes that self-regulation facilitates adaptation to environmental norms, especially in communities with a high level of social pressure toward ecological responsibility. This process contributes to the formation of practices that become a sustainable part of daily life.

Motivational resilience, supported by self-regulation, is critically important for maintaining long-term environmentally responsible practices. Environmental actions such as reducing one's carbon footprint or supporting reforestation initiatives often require prolonged commitment, despite the lack of immediate results or external rewards. Individuals with high levels of self-regulation can sustain internal motivation, overcoming fatigue or frustration caused by the slow progress in solving environmental problems. Research by Clayton & Myers *(Clayton et al, 2009)* demonstrates that motivational resilience, reinforced by self-regulation, increases the likelihood of consistent environmental practices, such as regular use of energy-efficient technologies. This resilience ensures long-term commitment to environmental responsibility.

Empirical data confirm the significance of self-regulation in shaping environmentally responsible practices. A study by Osbaldiston & Schott *(2012)* shows that people with higher

levels of self-regulation are more likely to consistently demonstrate environmentally responsible behaviors, such as conserving water or supporting green initiatives, even in challenging economic conditions. Furthermore, programs that develop self-regulation through behavioral management training help increase the frequency of environmentally responsible actions, such as recycling or using bicycles for transportation. For example, one study found that participants in self-regulation training more frequently integrated environmental practices into their daily routines.

However, self-regulation as a mechanism for shaping environmentally responsible practices has certain limitations. In situations of high cognitive load or stress, self-regulation may weaken, reducing the likelihood of environmentally conscious actions *(Bamberg et al, 2007)*. Additionally, in communities with low levels of environmental awareness, self-regulation alone may be insufficient without external support, such as access to recycling infrastructure *(Schultz, 2001)*. To address these challenges, programs are needed that combine the development of self-regulation with environmental education and the creation of favorable conditions for environmental practices.

Self-regulation shapes environmentally responsible practices through cognitive self-discipline, behavioral adaptation to norms, and motivational resilience, contributing to sustainable development. Its development through educational programs and infrastructure support can strengthen commitment to environmental responsibility.

6. Social competencies and their significance for advancing environmental initiatives

Social competencies, as a set of skills enabling effective interaction with others, relationship-building, and the coordination of joint actions, play a crucial role in promoting environmental initiatives aimed at addressing both global and local ecological problems.

Effective communication in intergroup interactions, as a manifestation of social competencies, is a fundamental element in advancing environmental initiatives. Individuals with well-developed social competencies can articulate environmental ideas clearly and persuasively, adapting messages to different audiences such as communities, businesses, or governmental bodies. For example, communication skills allow activists to present the benefits of urban greening initiatives in ways that consider the interests of local residents – such as improving air quality or creating recreational areas. Research shows that social competencies, particularly active listening and persuasive argumentation skills, increase the effectiveness of environmental campaigns, such as programs to reduce plastic waste *(Moser et al., 2011)*. Such communication encourages broader public engagement in environmental initiatives.

The development of social capital, underpinned by social competencies, is another important mechanism for promoting environmental initiatives. Social capital, which includes networks of trust, interaction, and cooperation, is built through individuals' ability to establish strong interpersonal connections. People with high social competencies can create and sustain networks that unite civil society organizations, volunteers, and local leaders to implement environmental projects. For instance, organizing joint clean-up actions in natural areas or promoting energy efficiency initiatives relies on the ability to coordinate the efforts of diverse groups. Research by Krasny & Tidball *(2012)* emphasizes that social competencies, such as networking and conflict resolution skills, contribute to the development of social capital, which in turn increases the success of environmental projects like the creation of community gardens. This process ensures a resource base for long-term initiatives.

Facilitating cross-sectoral cooperation, enabled by social competencies, plays a critical role in advancing environmental initiatives that require collaboration among governmental,

private, and civil society sectors. Individuals with strong social competencies can act as intermediaries, reconciling the interests of various stakeholders to achieve shared environmental goals. For example, the creation of regional waste recycling programs requires collaboration among local authorities, businesses, and community organizations, which depends on facilitation, negotiation, and group dynamics management skills. Research demonstrates that social competencies, particularly consensus-building abilities, enhance the effectiveness of cross-sectoral environmental initiatives such as implementing green construction standards *(Reed, 2008)*. This approach promotes the integration of resources and knowledge necessary for the implementation of complex environmental projects.

Empirical data confirm the importance of social competencies in promoting environmental initiatives. Studies show that individuals with high social competencies are more likely to contribute to the successful implementation of environmental projects, such as ecosystem restoration, through effective group coordination *(Pretty et al, 2004)*. Programs that develop social competencies via communication or facilitation training also increase community involvement in environmental initiatives, such as energy efficiency campaigns *(Dietz, 2010)*. For instance, research findings reveal that participants of social competence training programs are more often the initiators of local environmental projects.

However, social competencies have limitations in advancing environmental initiatives. In communities with low levels of trust or social cohesion, social competencies may be less effective due to resistance to cooperation *(Pretty et al, 2004)*. Moreover, excessive reliance on individual social skills can lead to uneven distribution of responsibility if institutional structures fail to support initiatives *(Moser et al., 2011)*. To overcome these challenges, programs are needed that combine the development of social competencies with institutional support and the creation of enabling conditions for cooperation.

Social competencies promote environmental initiatives through effective communication, the development of social capital, and the facilitation of cross-sectoral cooperation, ensuring the engagement of diverse groups in addressing environmental problems. Their enhancement through training programs and institutional support can strengthen the effectiveness of environmental projects.

7. Ethical aspects of using emotional intelligence in shaping environmentally responsible behavior

Emotional intelligence, as the ability to recognize, understand, and manage one's own emotions and those of others, represents a powerful tool for shaping environmentally responsible behavior that contributes to sustainable development and the preservation of the natural environment. However, the use of emotional intelligence in environmental initiatives raises a number of ethical issues that require careful analysis to ensure fair and responsible application.

A potentially manipulative influence of emotional intelligence on environmentally responsible behavior constitutes one of the key ethical challenges. The application of emotional intelligence, for instance, through emotionally charged campaigns or narratives, can motivate individuals to engage in pro-environmental actions such as reducing consumption or supporting recycling by appealing to emotions such as guilt, fear, or compassion. Nevertheless, this may border on manipulation if such strategies limit individuals' freedom of choice or exploit emotional vulnerability. For example, campaigns that excessively emphasize the suffering of animals caused by pollution may exert emotional pressure, compelling people to act without deeper reflection. The study by Schultz *(2001)* highlights that the use of emotional appeals in

environmental campaigns may become ethically problematic if it is not accompanied by transparent information and respect for individual autonomy. An ethical application of emotional intelligence requires a balance between motivating pro-environmental behavior and preserving individuals' right to make conscious, autonomous decisions.

Equity in the distribution of emotional resources for fostering environmentally responsible behavior represents another important ethical dimension. Emotional intelligence is frequently applied in educational programs and public initiatives aimed at behavior change, yet access to such resources can be uneven. For instance, communities with lower socio-economic status may have limited opportunities to participate in emotional intelligence training programs focused on environmental awareness compared to wealthier regions. This creates a risk of exacerbating inequality, whereby only certain groups receive the tools to shape environmentally responsible behaviors. The research by Kollmuss & Agyeman *(2002)* points out that the unequal distribution of psychological resources, including emotional intelligence development programs, can restrict the effectiveness of environmental initiatives within marginalized communities. An ethical approach requires ensuring inclusive access to such resources so that all social groups have the opportunity to develop environmentally responsible behaviors.

Responsibility for the unintended consequences of using emotional intelligence in environmental initiatives constitutes yet another important ethical concern. Applying emotional intelligence to encourage pro-environmental actions, such as reducing plastic use or supporting green technologies, may produce unforeseen effects, including emotional burnout or social polarization. For example, campaigns that employ emotional intelligence to accentuate global environmental threats may evoke feelings of hopelessness within certain groups, thereby weakening their motivation to act. The study by Markowitz & Shariff *(2012)* demonstrates that excessive use of emotional stimuli in environmental campaigns can lead to psychological stress if not accompanied by supportive strategies. Ethical responsibility obliges the initiators of such campaigns to anticipate potential adverse outcomes and develop mechanisms to mitigate them – for example, by providing psychological support or offering practical, actionable solutions.

Empirical evidence confirms the necessity of an ethical approach to the use of emotional intelligence in environmental initiatives. Research by Clayton & Myers *(2009)* shows that programs utilizing emotional intelligence to shape environmental behavior are more effective when they incorporate ethical principles such as transparency and respect for individual autonomy. Furthermore, emotional intelligence training programs that include ethical components – for instance, teaching participants to avoid manipulative techniques – contribute to greater trust in environmental initiatives *(Pfattheicher et al., 2016)*. One study found that participants in ethically oriented programs more frequently demonstrated sustainable environmental behaviors, such as supporting recycling initiatives.

Nonetheless, the ethical application of emotional intelligence faces certain limitations. For example, in cultures with high levels of individualism, ethical principles such as respect for autonomy may conflict with the necessity for swift collective action to address urgent environmental issues *(Kollmuss et al., 2002)*. Additionally, the absence of standardized ethical guidelines for the use of emotional intelligence in environmental campaigns may lead to abuses, such as the deployment of manipulative narratives *(Markowitz et al., 2012)*. To address these challenges, it is necessary to develop ethical codes and programs that integrate emotional intelligence development with clear moral guidelines.

Emotional intelligence plays a significant role in shaping environmentally responsible behavior, yet its application gives rise to ethical challenges related to manipulative influence, equity in resource distribution, and responsibility for unintended consequences. An ethical

approach to the use of emotional intelligence – grounded in transparency, inclusivity, and foresight regarding potential outcomes – can enhance the effectiveness of environmental initiatives.

8. Obstacles and limitations in the application of emotional intelligence to environmental issues

Cognitive biases affecting the perception of environmental issues represent a significant obstacle to the effective application of emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is often employed to strengthen the emotional connection with nature, for example, through campaigns that evoke empathy toward affected ecosystems. However, cognitive biases such as temporal discounting or optimism bias can weaken the impact of such emotional stimuli. For instance, people may experience an emotional response to messages about melting glaciers but, due to these biases, believe that the consequences will not affect them personally or will occur in the distant future, which reduces motivation to act. Gifford's research *(2011)* demonstrates that cognitive biases limit the ability of emotional intelligence to transform emotional reactions into concrete environmental actions, such as reducing one's carbon footprint. This obstacle requires combining emotional intelligence with cognitive strategies to overcome biases.

Cultural differences in the perception of emotional stimuli create additional limitations for the universal application of emotional intelligence to environmental issues. Emotional intelligence depends on cultural norms that determine how people interpret and express emotions related to environmental problems. For example, in individualistic cultures, emotional appeals for environmental protection may emphasize personal responsibility, whereas in collectivist cultures, appeals to shared values prove more effective. This complicates the creation of universal campaigns that rely on emotional intelligence. Kitayama & Markus's study *(Kitayama et al., 2000)* highlights that cultural differences in expressing emotions, such as compassion toward nature, restrict the effectiveness of global environmental initiatives that rely on emotional intelligence. Overcoming this obstacle requires adapting emotional strategies to cultural contexts, which demands additional resources and expertise.

Resource constraints for scaling up emotional intelligence development programs present another significant barrier. Programs that use emotional intelligence to promote environmentally responsible behavior – such as training sessions to develop emotional sensitivity to environmental issues – require substantial financial, human, and time resources. In many regions, especially in low-income countries, such programs remain inaccessible due to a lack of funding or qualified specialists. This limits the potential for widespread implementation of emotional intelligence as a tool for shaping environmental awareness. Stevenson et al. *(2013)* point out that resource limitations, such as insufficient infrastructure for environmental education, reduce the effectiveness of emotional intelligence development programs in marginalized communities. This issue further exacerbates inequality in access to tools that could foster pro-environmental behavior.

Empirical evidence confirms that the obstacles to applying emotional intelligence to environmental issues are systemic in nature. Clayton & Myers's research *(Clayton et al, 2009)* shows that cognitive biases and cultural differences reduce the effectiveness of emotional intelligence in motivating environmental actions such as supporting green technologies or participating in recycling programs. Additionally, resource constraints complicate the scaling of initiatives that employ emotional intelligence, particularly in regions with limited access to education *(Kollmuss et al., 2002)*. For instance, Weber's study *(2016)* emphasizes that emotional

intelligence development programs are less effective in contexts of economic instability, where basic needs are prioritized.

However, these obstacles are not insurmountable. Cognitive biases, for example, can be partially addressed by integrating emotional intelligence with informational campaigns that provide clear data on environmental consequences, as suggested by Gifford *(2011)*. Cultural differences require the localization of emotional intelligence-based strategies by involving local leaders and adapting content *(Kitayama et al., 2000)*. Resource limitations can be mitigated through the use of digital platforms to disseminate emotional intelligence training, thereby reducing costs *(Stevenson et al., 2013)*. Nonetheless, these solutions demand coordinated efforts and additional investments.

In summary, the application of emotional intelligence to environmental issues faces obstacles such as cognitive biases, cultural differences, and resource limitations that diminish its effectiveness in shaping pro-environmental behavior. Overcoming these barriers through integration with informational strategies, localization, and digital technologies can enhance its impact.

9. Conclusions

Emotional intelligence is an important resource for shaping a sustainable society that harmoniously integrates economic, social, and environmental goals. The integration of emotional intelligence into social processes can promote enhanced cooperation, responsibility, and long-term thinking necessary for sustainable development. This text analyzes strategies for integrating emotional intelligence through the development of emotional skills within educational systems, the application of emotional intelligence in sustainable leadership, and its use in public dialogues to address environmental and social challenges – intentionally avoiding previously discussed aspects such as ethical dilemmas or cognitive biases.

Development of Emotional Skills in Educational Systems

The development of emotional skills within education is one of the key strategies for integrating emotional intelligence into the formation of a sustainable society. Educational programs that include emotional intelligence training can nurture generations capable of making conscious decisions while considering social and environmental consequences. For instance, incorporating exercises on emotion recognition or conflict management into school curricula can help students develop sensitivity to issues such as climate change and social inequality. Research by Ojala *(2012)* demonstrates that educational initiatives aimed at cultivating emotional intelligence increase young people's willingness to participate in environmental projects, including afforestation campaigns and energy efficiency initiatives. This strategy contributes to the formation of a society where emotional skills become a foundation for sustainable thinking and action.

Applying emotional intelligence in the development of sustainable leadership represents another effective strategy. Leaders with a high level of emotional intelligence are able to motivate teams, build trust, and coordinate efforts toward achieving sustainable development goals. For example, leaders employing emotional intelligence within the corporate sector can promote initiatives to reduce emissions or implement green technologies, leveraging empathy and persuasive communication skills to engage stakeholders. The study by Metcalf & Benn *(Metcalf et al, 2013)* emphasizes that emotional intelligence in leadership enhances the effective implementation of sustainability strategies within organizations, such as transitions to circular economy models. This approach enables leaders to create emotionally engaged, long-term sustainability-focused organizational cultures.

The integration of emotional intelligence into public dialogues is a crucial strategy for addressing environmental and social challenges in a sustainable society. Public dialogues concerning issues like climate adaptation or natural resource distribution are often accompanied by conflicting interests. Emotional intelligence can assist facilitators and participants in managing emotions, building mutual understanding, and achieving consensus. For example, employing active listening skills and recognizing emotional triggers in dialogues about water use can foster fair resource distribution between communities. Research by Day & O'Riordan *(2001)* shows that applying emotional intelligence within public consultations increases the effectiveness of resolving environmental conflicts, such as those related to nature reserve management. This strategy fosters the development of an inclusive society grounded in mutual respect and shared objectives.

Empirical data support the effectiveness of strategies integrating emotional intelligence into sustainable society building. Research by Clayton & Myers *(Clayton et al, 2009)* demonstrates that programs developing emotional intelligence in education and leadership increase involvement in sustainability initiatives, such as support for renewable energy projects or social programs. Additionally, emotional intelligence training applied in public dialogues improves groups' ability to reach compromises in complex environmental issues *(Dietz, 2010)*. For example, studies have shown that participants using emotional intelligence skills during dialogues more frequently supported joint decisions, such as regional climate adaptation plans.

However, the integration of emotional intelligence faces certain limitations. For instance, implementing emotional intelligence development programs in education requires significant resources, which may be challenging in underfunded regions *(Ojala, 2012)*. In leadership, emotional intelligence may be less effective in rigidly hierarchical organizations that prioritize short-term outcomes *(Metcalf et al, 2013)*. In public dialogues, emotional intelligence may complicate achieving consensus amid deep ideological divisions *(Clayton et al, 2009)*. Overcoming these challenges requires combining emotional intelligence with institutional support, adequate resources, and contextual adaptation.

Emotional intelligence can be integrated into the formation of a sustainable society through the development of emotional skills within educational systems, its application in sustainable leadership, and its use in public dialogues. These strategies promote cooperation and responsibility for social and environmental objectives, forming the foundation for a society oriented toward long-term sustainability.

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