Negative Effects and Mechanisms of Emotional Intelligence

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Abstract

Emotional intelligence represents a set of abilities to perceive, utilize, comprehend, and regulate emotions. Extant research frequently associates emotional intelligence with its prosocial orientation, thereby overlooking its potential negative ramifications. Within workplace contexts, the detrimental effects of emotional intelligence manifest internally as compromises to physical and mental well-being and job performance, and externally as emotional manipulation and negative behaviors. The underlying mechanisms may be investigated through the integration of ego depletion effect and the emotional intelligence strategies model. Future research should further examine the internal psychological mechanisms and context-specific mechanisms underlying these negative effects, as well as extend investigation to the group level.

Full Text

Negative Effects and Mechanisms of Emotional Intelligence

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Abstract

Emotional intelligence (EI) comprises a set of abilities related to perceiving, using, understanding, and managing emotions. Existing research has often linked emotional intelligence with prosocial outcomes while neglecting its potential negative effects. In the workplace, the negative effects of emotional intelligence manifest as impaired physical and mental health and reduced job performance

at the intrapersonal level, and as emotional manipulation and negative behaviors at the interpersonal level. The underlying mechanisms can be examined through the lens of ego depletion theory and the emotional intelligence strategy model. Future research should further investigate the intrapersonal psychological mechanisms and context-specific conditions of these negative effects, as well as extend the study of emotional intelligence' s dark side to the group level.

Keywords: emotional intelligence; negative effects; ego depletion; strategic use of emotional intelligence
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1 Introduction

Since the publication of Goleman's (1995) bestseller *Emotional Intelligence*, emotional intelligence (EI) has garnered significant attention from both academia and industry as a core competency for effectively addressing various challenges. *Harvard Business Review* has even dedicated a column to emotional intelligence, publishing dozens of research articles on the topic. In the business world, numerous EI training programs have emerged, with an estimated 75% of Fortune 500 companies having utilized emotional intelligence training products (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009). Clearly, in the public eye, emotional intelligence is considered—if not the sole determinant of success—then certainly one of its most essential qualities.

In academic research, emotional intelligence has frequently been associated with prosocial outcomes. First, due to its capacity for emotional regulation, EI helps individuals maintain positive emotional states and psychological well-being (Burrus et al., 2012; Hansen, Lloyd, & Stough, 2009). Second, emotional intelligence facilitates empathy and cooperative behavior, thereby fostering positive interpersonal relationships (Reis et al., 2007). Third, EI enables individuals to cope with workplace stress and achieve higher job satisfaction and performance (Ouyang, Sang, Li, & Peng, 2015; Lam & Kirby, 2002; Joseph, Newman, & O' Boyle, 2015). Additionally, at the team level, emotional intelligence correlates with the quality of interpersonal interactions, with high-EI teams demonstrating greater cohesion and more cooperative behavior, which in turn enhances team performance (Jordan & Troth, 2004; Farh, Seo, & Tesluk, 2012).

Existing research indicates that emotional intelligence is indeed highly correlated with positive outcomes such as strong relationships and superior job performance (Mayer, Roberts, & Barsade, 2008). However, questions remain about how significant its role truly is and whether it effectively predicts success. Some scholars have raised sensitive concerns about these claims. When Salovey and Mayer (1990) first proposed the concept of emotional intelligence, they noted that "when emotional skills are harnessed for antisocial intentions, individuals may create manipulative scenarios or harm others' interests during interactions" (p. 198). Although they early identified the potential for malicious use

of emotional intelligence, they did not further investigate *who* might employ EI negatively. Bass and Steidlmeier' s (1999) research on authentic versus pseudo-transformational leadership addressed this question, demonstrating that while authentic transformational leaders use emotional intelligence to inspire followers and genuinely care about organizational effectiveness, pseudo-transformational leaders are self-centered, using EI to achieve personal goals—sometimes at others' expense.

As research has progressed, a few scholars have built upon Salovey and Mayer' s concerns to discuss *why* emotional intelligence might have negative effects (Härtel & Panipucci, 2007; Jordan, Ashton-James, & Ashkanasy, 2006; Kilduff, Chiaburu, & Menges, 2010). They argue that high emotional intelligence entails greater capacities for emotion recognition and regulation, which may enable individuals to feign or shape their emotions to manipulate others' perceptions and feelings for personal gain. However, these arguments remain largely at the theoretical level. More recently, Davis and Nichols (2016) expanded the perspective on EI' s negative effects to include intrapersonal dark effects, noting that under certain conditions, emotional intelligence may lead to self-vulnerability (for example, high-EI individuals may more readily internalize others' occupational stress).

Although the negative effects of emotional intelligence have attracted some scholarly attention, relevant research remains insufficient. Therefore, this study responds to Kilduff et al.' s (2010) call to "decouple emotional intelligence from noble moral qualities," focusing on the negative effects of emotional intelligence in the workplace, examining their underlying psychological mechanisms and theoretical foundations, and proposing future research directions based on an analysis of current limitations in this field.

2 The Concept and Structure of Emotional Intelligence

2.1 The Concept of Emotional Intelligence

Existing literature primarily defines emotional intelligence from two perspectives. The first is the ability emotional intelligence (AEI) perspective, which views EI as a set of abilities related to emotional activities. The second is the trait emotional intelligence (TEI) perspective, sometimes called the mixed emotional intelligence perspective, which treats EI as a combination of personality traits and abilities (Walter, Cole, & Humphrey, 2011).

The trait EI concept has been criticized for including content unrelated to "emotion" (such as character and personality), leading to accusations of conceptual breadth and looseness (Wong & Law, 2002). The ability perspective, in contrast, strictly distinguishes emotional intelligence from personality traits and employs measurement tools with superior psychometric properties (Daus & Ashkanasy, 2005). Therefore, this study adopts the ability-based definition of emotional intelligence, conceptualizing it as a set of skills related to emotional activities involving "the ability to accurately perceive, appraise, and express emotion; the

ability to access or generate feelings that facilitate thought; and the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge" (Mayer & Salovey, 1997).

2.2 The Structure and Measurement of Emotional Intelligence

Salovey and Mayer (1990) divided emotional intelligence into four distinct dimensions: (1) Self-Emotional Appraisal (SEA), involving the ability to understand one' s own deep emotions and express them naturally; (2) Others' Emotional Appraisal (OEA), referring to the capacity to perceive and understand the emotions of those around us; (3) Regulation of Emotion (ROE), or the ability to regulate emotions, enabling individuals to recover more quickly from happiness or distress to a normal state; and (4) Use of Emotion (UOE), or the ability to employ emotions to guide constructive activities and improve performance.

Wong and Law' s (2002) self-report emotional intelligence scale, developed based on Salovey and Mayer' s structural model, aligns with these dimensions, with each dimension containing four items for a total of 16 items. In addition to self-report measures, ability-based emotional intelligence can be assessed through performance tests, among which the MSCEIT (Mayer, Salovey, Caruso, & Sitarenios, 2003) is a widely recognized instrument. The test employs two scoring criteria: consensus scoring (based on the frequency of responses in a large sample) and expert scoring (based on the frequency of responses from experts). Emotional intelligence is evaluated according to how closely test scores match these criteria.

3 The Negative Effects of Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence is not always positive for two key reasons. First, as an emotion-related ability, it can serve both benevolent and malevolent purposes, just like any other skill (Grant, 2014). Second, humans are complex beings with different traits, motivations, and values, and their interactions with organizational environments vary (for instance, high-EI individuals are more adept at reading situations). When these factors interact with emotional intelligence, the effects can differ dramatically. This study organizes research on the negative effects of emotional intelligence based on the contexts in which EI operates (solitary versus social situations) (Zhang, 2014) and the "intrapersonal/interpersonal" dimension (see Table 1).

3.1.1 Emotional Intelligence and Physical/Mental Health

Some studies have found that individuals with high emotional intelligence often exhibit stronger stress responses. Bechtoldt and Schneider (2016) examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and stress responses, as well as the moderating role of testosterone, using cortisol as a physiological indicator of stress. Their results revealed that in socially demanding situations, high-EI individuals tended to have higher stress levels, with this relationship strengthening at higher testosterone levels. Additionally, Bechtoldt and Schneider (2016)

noted that high-EI individuals recovered more slowly from elevated cortisol levels. Petrides and Furnham (2003) conducted an experimental study showing that while high-EI individuals detected emotions more quickly, they also reported higher levels of anxiety and anger and lower energy levels after watching distressing films.

Other research has examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological disorders. Li, Cao, Cao, and Liu (2015), studying nursing students, found that students with either excessively high or low emotional intelligence showed lower levels of post-traumatic growth following childhood trauma compared to those with moderate EI levels. Ciarrochi, Deane, and Anderson (2002) discovered that when individuals experienced more daily hassles, high emotional intelligence often led to greater depression, suicidal ideation, and hopelessness. Similarly, Davis and Humphrey (2012, 2014) found that high-EI individuals exhibited greater psychological maladjustment and higher depression levels when facing family dysfunction or financial loss.

3.1.2 Emotional Intelligence and Performance

Emotional intelligence may incur hidden costs when job activities do not require it (Grant, 2014). For example, in a meta-analysis by Joseph and Newman (2010) that synthesized hundreds of studies on the relationship between emotional intelligence and job performance across 191 different occupations involving thousands of employees, results showed no consistent relationship between EI and job performance. Specifically, when jobs demanded substantial emotional engagement, higher emotional intelligence predicted better performance; conversely, for jobs requiring minimal emotional investment, high emotional intelligence could be a disadvantage rather than an advantage. Grant (2014) explained this potential negative effect by suggesting that in jobs with low emotional demands, high-EI employees focus on emotions when they should concentrate on task completion. For instance, in data analysis or auto repair work, reading people' s emotions becomes a distraction. Khanna and Mishra (2017) similarly argued that emotional intelligence does not benefit job performance in occupations with low emotional demands (such as mechanical work, scientific research, and aerospace engineering).

3.2.1 Emotional Intelligence and Interpersonal Manipulation

Emotional intelligence can lead to emotional manipulation and deception in interpersonal relationships. Brackett, Warner, and Bosco (2005) investigated the relationship between emotional intelligence and marital quality, finding that couples where both partners had high emotional intelligence scored lower on relationship quality than couples where neither partner had particularly high EI. The study also noted that while low EI in both partners resulted in poor relationship quality, having one or both partners with high EI did not significantly improve relationship quality. Emotional manipulation also occurs in non-romantic relationships. Austin, Saklofske, Smith, and Tohver (2014) found

that although emotional intelligence negatively correlated with the tendency to worsen others' emotions, agreeableness moderated this relationship: individuals with low agreeableness and high emotional intelligence were more likely to worsen others' emotional states. Similarly, Nagler, Reiter, Furtner, and Rauthmann (2014) noted that individuals with dark personality traits are more skilled at using emotional abilities to manipulate others.

3.2.2 Emotional Intelligence and Interpersonal Negative Behaviors

Research has indicated that emotional intelligence leads to more negative interpersonal behaviors. Côté, DeCelles, McCarthy, Van Kleef, and Hideg (2011) proposed that personality traits activate relevant goals, and emotional abilities help individuals achieve those goals. Through two studies, they examined how the interaction between emotional intelligence and moral identity influenced prosocial behavior, and how the interaction between emotional intelligence and Machiavellianism affected interpersonal deviance. Results showed that high-EI individuals could produce both more prosocial behavior and more interpersonal deviance, with the outcome depending on which personal goals were triggered by individual traits. Specifically, high-EI individuals with moral identity exhibited more prosocial behavior, while the most Machiavellian employees with high emotional intelligence displayed the most interpersonal deviance. Côté et al. (2011) further argued that emotional intelligence itself is neither positive nor negative but can facilitate the achievement of individual goals—whether prosocial or antisocial—through effective emotion regulation. Additionally, Tett, Freund, Christiansen, Fox, and Coaster (2012) found a relationship between emotional intelligence and faking behavior: when given the opportunity, individuals with high cognitive ability and high emotional intelligence exhibited more faking behavior.

Table 1 Negative Effects of Emotional Intelligence

EI Perspective	Measurement Tool	Negative Effect	Moderator/Context	Study
AEI	MSCEIT	Stress (cortisol levels)	Testosterone	Bechtoldt & Schneider, 2016
TEI	EQ-I; TEIQue	Anxiety, anger, reduced energy	-	Petrides & Furnham, 2003
AEI	SSEIT	Post-traumatic growth	Childhood trauma	Li et al., 2015

EI Perspective	Measurement Tool	Negative Effect	Moderator/Context	Study
AEI	MEIS; SSEIT	Depression, suicidal ideation, hopelessness	Daily hassles	Ciarrochi et al., 2002
TEI; AEI	TEIQue; MSCEIT	Psychological maladjustment, depression	Family dysfunction, financial loss	Davis & Humphrey, 2012; Davis & Humphrey, 2014
AEI	MSCEIT	Tendency to worsen others' emotions	Agreeableness	Austin et al., 2014
AEI	WEIT	Marital relationship quality	-	Brackett et al., 2005
TEI	TEIQue	Primary psychopathy, secondary psychopathy[2]	-	Nagler et al., 2014
AEI	MSCEIT	Machiavellianism	-	Côté et al., 2011
AEI	MSCEIT	Faking behavior	Opportunity to fake, cognitive ability	Tett et al., 2012
TEI	TEIQue	-	-	Gentina, Tang, & Dancoine, 2018
AEI	MSCEIT	-	-	Sample, 2017

Note: This table is compiled based on studies by Davis and Nichols (2016) and others. AEI refers to ability emotional intelligence; TEI refers to trait emotional intelligence. MSCEIT and MEIS are performance-based measures of ability EI; SSEIT, SSI, and WEIT are self-report measures of ability EI; EQ-I, TEIQue, and MEIA are self-report measures of trait EI.

[1] In reviewing research on the negative effects of emotional intelligence, we found that different studies used different conceptual perspectives and measurement tools for EI. This raises the question: Are the negative effects of emotional intelligence attributable to these conceptual or measurement differences? Based on existing research, we can rule out the possibility that the negative effects stem solely from mixing different conceptual perspectives or measurement tools. However, how much inconsistency in conceptualization and measurement contributes to the observed negative effects requires further investigation.

[2] Psychopathy is defined as a personality trait characterized by antisocial psychology and behavior. Primary psychopathy features callousness, manipulation, selfishness, and hypocrisy, while secondary psychopathy involves impulsive behavior and self-defeating lifestyles.

4 Mechanisms Underlying the Negative Effects of Emotional Intelligence

Although the aforementioned studies have demonstrated the negative effects of emotional intelligence to some extent, few have analyzed or interpreted the internal mechanisms. This study examines these mechanisms using the same "intrapersonal/interpersonal" dimension. We explore the negative intrapersonal effects of emotional intelligence through ego depletion theory and conservation of resources theory, and investigate the negative interpersonal effects by integrating the emotional intelligence strategy model.

4.1 The Ego Depletion Effect

Generally, when processing emotional events, individuals with high emotional intelligence should experience less ego depletion than those with low EI. However, some studies have linked high emotional intelligence to greater internal depletion. For example, Davis and Humphrey (2012, 2014) found that high-EI individuals experienced greater psychological maladjustment and higher depression levels when facing family dysfunction or financial loss. Why would high emotional intelligence lead to greater internal depletion?

Ego Depletion Theory provides an explanation for this phenomenon. The theory posits that both emotion regulation and thought control consume psychological energy, and all activities requiring psychological energy draw upon the same resource: self-control resources. Depletion of these resources from previous volitional activities leads to decreased control in subsequent volitional activities (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, & Tice, 1998), a phenomenon known as "ego depletion." Activities such as controlling the environment, controlling the self, making choices, and initiating action all constitute volitional activities (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Muraven, & Tice, 1998). Emotion appraisal, regulation, and use are intentional control behaviors that also deplete self-control resources, thereby affecting subsequent volitional behaviors.

While Ego Depletion Theory clearly describes the depletion effect and its underlying resources, it cannot explain *why* high-EI individuals consume more self-control resources. Therefore, this study adopts the "resource investment-output imbalance" perspective from Conservation of Resources Theory to explain the internal mechanism of emotional intelligence' s ego depletion effect.

High-EI individuals face higher job demands (informal workplace norms) that may stem from elevated expectations from both others and themselves. For example, high-EI individuals are likely affected by the emotions of those connected to them in the organization, often helping them process negative emotions at work (Toegel, Anand, & Kildiff, 2007). They may need to frequently display organizationally-desired positive emotions that do not always align with their actual feelings; when conflicts arise, high-EI individuals must regulate their emotions to display the required positivity (Lin, Scott, & Matta, 2018). Joseph and Newman' s (2010) meta-analytic finding that "for jobs not requiring substantial emotional investment, high emotional intelligence may be a disadvantage"can be explained accordingly: when formal job norms do not involve emotions, low-EI individuals engage in fewer emotional activities in their daily work, whereas high-EI individuals, due to high expectations from themselves and others, must still process numerous emotional events, thereby depleting their internal resources and affecting work outcomes.

In actual work situations, particularly under high-stress or negative conditions, the resources depleted by high-EI individuals may be irrecoverable. High-EI individuals perceive negative events more deeply and attempt to mobilize more resources to address difficulties. When these difficulties are successfully resolved, depleted resources can be partially restored; however, when problems are insurmountable and persist long-term, high-EI individuals face more severe resource depletion and more difficult resource recovery. This partly explains the phenomenon linking high emotional intelligence to psychological disorders (Ciarrochi, Deane, & Anderson, 2002; Davis & Humphrey, 2012, 2014).

4.2 The Emotional Intelligence Strategy Model

Kilduff, Chiaburu, and Menges (2010) explored how people in organizational settings use emotional strategies to control interaction outcomes and achieve competitive success. Based on the ability-based perspective of emotional intelligence (e.g., Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Mayer & Salovey, 1997), Kilduff et al. (2010) proposed that in competitive situations, emotional intelligence endows individuals with four emotional capabilities, whose strategic use enables individuals to advance their own interests and gain competitive advantage. Figure 1 [Figure 1: see original paper] illustrates the relationship between emotional intelligence abilities and self-interested strategies, while also showing the hierarchical relationships among these abilities.

Emotional Intelligence

1. Perceive own and others' emotions → Focus on strategically important goals

2. Use emotions to facilitate thinking → For personal gain, disguise or express one' s own emotions
3. Understand own and others' emotions → For personal gain, evoke and shape others' emotions
4. Manage own and others' emotions → Strategic control of emotional information

Figure 1. Emotional Intelligence Strategy Model
Note: This figure is adapted from Kilduff, Chiaburu, and Menges (2010). Solid arrows indicate EI abilities required for self-interested tactics; dashed arrows indicate that higher-level EI abilities encompass more basic EI abilities. The ordering of these four self-interested strategies reflects the escalation of manipulation by high-EI individuals.

As shown in Figure 1, the first self-interested strategy (focusing on strategically important goals) requires the abilities to perceive emotions in oneself and others and to use emotional intelligence to facilitate thinking. Simply put, high-EI individuals selectively employ these abilities to focus on people who can help or hinder their advancement while ignoring the emotions of irrelevant parties. For example, from a subordinate' s perspective, the emotions of supervisors who control performance evaluations and salary increases are likely to be carefully studied in every organization.

The second self-interested strategy (disguising or expressing emotions for personal gain) utilizes the ability to manage emotions in oneself and others. Kilduff et al. (2010) argued that high-EI individuals can deliberately shape their emotions to create favorable impressions or display appropriate emotions that contradict their true feelings to achieve their goals. For instance, a shrewd poker player might mask trouble with a neutral expression or smile happily when holding mediocre cards.

Regarding the third self-interested strategy (evoking and shaping others' emotions for personal gain), people are easily influenced by others' credible explanations when they do not fully understand their own feelings or why they have them (Brodt & Zimbardo, 1981). High-EI individuals excel at changing the meaning of events through misattribution or subtly analyzing ambiguous situations for their own benefit. Consequently, high-EI individuals often help colleagues interpret ambiguous feelings in ways that are saturated with self-interest.

Concerning the fourth self-interested strategy (strategic control of emotional information), high-EI individuals influence others' reputations by controlling information flow or evoke different emotional responses in others through selective communication and resource allocation to affect their decisions and behaviors. For example, a high-EI supervisor might over-reward subordinates to exploit their guilt and gratitude when receiving unexpected or undeserved gains, thereby encouraging them to accept unattractive, unethical, or even illegal assignments.

Building on Kilduff et al.' s (2010) work, Khanna and Mishra (2017) further ex-

plored the negative interpersonal effects of emotional intelligence. First, regarding negative effects in interpersonal relationships, high-EI individuals control their own emotions to gain others' trust, then use that trust to control information flow and advance their own interests. Second, concerning negative effects at the leadership level, high-EI supervisors can use emotional strategies to manipulate subordinates and achieve desired outcomes, which may adversely affect subordinates. Grant (2014) also noted that high-EI leaders may manipulate others for self-interested motives, treating emotion management skills merely as tools to achieve goals that can be either benevolent or malevolent. Bausseron (2018) tested Kilduff et al.' s (2010) strategic EI model through content analysis, finding that self-focused leaders are more likely to use emotional abilities strategically.

5 Conclusion and Future Directions

Although the negative effects of emotional intelligence have attracted scholarly attention (Kilduff et al., 2010; Grant, 2014; Li, Zou, Li, & Wei, 2016), and existing research has made preliminary attempts to address this issue, most findings lack in-depth investigation or remain at the theoretical level. Overall, the internal mechanisms of emotional intelligence' s negative effects currently constitute a "black box," and exploring this question represents both a challenging and fascinating task. Therefore, based on our review of existing literature and discussion of relevant theories, we propose an integrated model for future research on the negative effects of emotional intelligence, as shown in Figure 2 [Figure 2: see original paper]. This model focuses on several key issues:

Situational Factors:
- Stress climate[1]
- Competitive climate[2]

Individual Factors:
- Self-monitoring[1]
- Political skills[2]

Intrapersonal Depletion → Employee work effectiveness

Leadership Factors:
- Leader-member exchange[1]
- Supervisor management decisions[2]

Interpersonal Manipulation → Observer perceptions and behaviors → Negative behavioral mimicry

Figure 2. Integrated Model of Negative Effects of Emotional Intelligence
Note: [1] indicates variables that primarily affect the intrapersonal level; [2] indicates variables that primarily affect the interpersonal level. Due to insufficient literature, the model does not present negative effects of emotional intelligence at the group level.

First, the intrapersonal psychological mechanisms underlying EI' s negative effects. Previous research has often linked high emotional intelligence to psychological disorders (Davis & Nichols, 2016; Furnham & Rosen, 2016), but these studies have mostly conducted simple correlational analyses without deep investigation of the underlying principles. According to Conservation of Resources Theory, high-EI individuals, due to their superior emotional capabilities, pay more attention to emotional events in organizations. Simultaneously, they receive high expectations and demands from both others and themselves, leading them to differ from low-EI individuals in their attitudes, approaches, and resource mobilization when processing emotional events. This may create a "with great power comes great responsibility" phenomenon, resulting in greater self-depletion. Future research could examine variables related to resource consumption (such as ego depletion, emotional exhaustion, and job fatigue) as mediating mechanisms between emotional intelligence and negative intrapersonal outcomes.

Interpersonal perspectives on emotional intelligence have begun to link EI with self-interested strategies, but these studies remain theoretical (Kilduff et al., 2010; Grant, 2014; Khanna & Mishra, 2017). In today' s highly competitive organizational environments, employees who can identify and act upon emotional undercurrents within organizations are more likely to succeed. Specifically, high-EI employees excel at using the "vividness effect" of information to achieve their goals—for example, describing events in moving language, using concrete examples and appealing metaphors rather than relying solely on statistical data or rational evidence (Kilduff et al., 2010). A common strategy among high-EI individuals is impression management; they can frame self-interested behaviors as selfless through impression management tactics (Kilduff et al., 2010). Future research should further investigate the mediating roles of non-prosocial motivations and non-autonomous motivations (such as impression management and self-enhancement motives) in the relationship between emotional intelligence and negative outcomes.

Additionally, future research could explore how observers interpret strategic behaviors to uncover the negative effects of strategic EI use on observers. The outcomes of high-EI individuals' strategic behaviors largely depend on observers' attributions and evaluations of these behaviors. In emotional intelligence research, Dasborough and Ashkanasy' s (2002) emotion and intentionality attribution model proposes that followers' attributions about their leaders' intentions (genuine or manipulative) lead them to categorize leaders as authentic or pseudo-transformational. Observers' attributions about actors' intentions subsequently influence their own behavioral responses. Combining this with Social Learning Theory, negative attributions toward actors coupled with positive behavioral outcomes for those actors (such as pseudo-transformational leaders achieving positive results through strategic behaviors for personal gain) may trigger observers' sense of injustice and even produce negative behavioral mimicry. Future research must also address how to avoid such a vicious cycle of "negative attribution → negative behavioral mimicry."

Second, the situational conditions under which EI' s negative effects occur. Some scholars have linked emotional intelligence to physical and mental health (Mayer, Roberts, & Barsade, 2008), while others have connected it to psychological disorders (Davis & Nichols, 2016; Furnham & Rosen, 2016), suggesting that the effects of emotional intelligence depend on the specific context in which the actor is situated.

Future research could investigate the specific conditions under which high-EI individuals experience internal depletion by examining the external and internal stress environments they face. Such stress can be either objective environmental pressure or psychological stress. For example, leaders represent an important objective stressor; high-EI individuals pay particular attention to supervisors who control performance evaluations and salary increases (Kilduff et al., 2010), showing interest in subtle cues from leaders, including vocal tone, facial expressions, and other nonverbal gestures that reveal leaders' viewpoints, preferences, and potential behavioral tendencies (Sanchez-Burks & Huy, 2009).

Individual characteristics may create psychological stress environments for high-EI individuals. For instance, Snyder's (1974) concept of self-monitoring suggests that high self-monitors attend to external factors, consider how to behave appropriately in specific situations, and adjust their behavior based on external feedback, whereas low self-monitors attend to internal factors and regulate their behavior according to their own characteristics and internal states. Employees who practice self-monitoring are like "looking in a mirror" —adjusting their external behavior while observing others' behavioral feedback. It follows that when high-EI individuals also have high self-monitoring levels, they are likely to experience greater psychological stress and internal depletion.

Although interpersonal perspectives on emotional intelligence have begun to combine EI with individual characteristics, suggesting that their interaction can produce either positive or negative effects—for example, Côté et al. (2011) found that the interaction between emotional intelligence and moral identity promoted prosocial behavior, while the interaction between emotional intelligence and Machiavellianism was significantly related to interpersonal deviance —such research remains limited. Future studies should further investigate "who uses emotional intelligence strategically" and "when they use it strategically." Competitiveness, as an individual characteristic, can trigger citizenship efforts and improve performance but can also lead to unethical behaviors such as sabotage (Charness, Masclet, & Villeval, 2013). Theoretically, when competitiveness is high, high-EI individuals are more likely to use their emotional intelligence strategically to satisfy personal interests. One emotional intelligence study partially supports this hypothesis: using the prisoner's dilemma to examine decision-making among individuals with different EI levels, the study found that high-EI individuals were more likely to choose competition to maximize personal gain when facing dilemmas (Fernandez-Berrocal, Extremera, Lopes, & Ruiz-Arande, 2014). Additionally, does the level of competitiveness in the organizational environment also relate to strategic behavior? This awaits further investigation

and testing.

Third, negative effects of emotional intelligence at the group level. Reviewing empirical research and theoretical discussions on the negative effects of emotional intelligence reveals that previous studies have almost never addressed negative effects at the group level. Most group-level EI research maintains a positive view, suggesting that high-EI groups typically have less conflict, higher cohesion, and more cooperative behavior, thereby producing higher group performance (Dasborough & Ashkanasy, 2002; Wolff, 2005). However, in organizational practice, "harmonious" yet inactive groups are not uncommon. Clearly, existing research is insufficient to explain the potential negative effects of group emotional intelligence.

Future research on group-level emotional intelligence effects should distinguish between different types of performance (such as task performance and innovative performance). As Chamorro-Premuzic and Yearsley (2017) noted, emotional intelligence may lead to lower creativity and innovative potential. Moreover, simple linear relationships may be inadequate to explain the relationship between emotional intelligence and performance; future research should explore the possibility of more complex relationships between these variables.

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Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.