

What Makes Flexible Managers? The Role of Emotional Intelligence in Adaptive and Self-Monitoring Behaviors

ABSTRACT

In the ever dynamic and hybrid organizational landscape of today, flexibility on the managerial level is viewed as a capability necessary to navigate uncertainty, foster innovation, and sustain performance. Whereas previous studies have emphasized flexibility from structural or strategic points of view, in the present study, we focus on psychological antecedents regarded as truly individual-level factors. Second, with the foundation theory of behavioral adaptability and emotional-intelligence frameworks, the managers are investigated for their flexibility traits, which embody interpersonal adaptability, perspective taking actual self-monitoring. The moderating role of emotional intelligence in enhancing these relations is also examined. Following a quantitative survey approach, validated scales were applied to professionals with managerial responsibilities involving sectors, including technology, education, healthcare, and hospitality. Thereafter, the study proposed the structural model that was tested using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The results are expected to contribute theoretically to the understanding of flexible managerial behavior and provide practical inputs to design training programs that enhance adaptive capacity among leaders. The thrust of this research is to view managerial flexibility as a trainable psychological competency, rather than just a strategic attribute.

KEYWORDS: Managerial Flexibility, Interpersonal Adaptability, Perspective Taking, Self-Monitoring, Emotional Intelligence, PLS-SEM.

INTRODUCTION

The Schumpeterian world we live in has underwent briskest changes in the last few years, molded by swift technological advancements, evolving workplace demographics, and most significantly, hybrid workforce coming into play. The global adaptation of remote work illustrated during COVID-19, accelerated the digital transformation and consecutively coerced the organizations to rethink their working and communication strategies (de Bem Machado et al., 2024; Kumar et al., 2024). Microsoft and Google became flagbearers of this change by implementing permanent hybrid work policies and revising the shape of the dynamics in the organization as well as the expectations from the employees (Yang et al., 2022; Battisti et al., 2022). In the uncertain modern work environments, managers are supposed to make rapid strategic decisions while remaining adaptable. That capacity to

maintain flexibility has proven indispensable—not only during crises but in the day-to-day leadership assignments as well. (Donaldson et al., 2024). A skill that emerges crucial in these conditions is managerial flexibility, referring to the proactivity of the managers during an inflection point. In addition to this, diversity and inclusion in the workplace has gained prominence, obligating organizations to opt for practices that are inclusive in nature along with cross cultural collaborations (Oliver & Lievens, 2014). These pivots emphasize a novel certainty: organizational success rests on the ability to adapt and innovate and the central stakeholders of these pivots are the managers of the organization, who uphold the responsibility of orchestrating these transformations (Parker & Axtell, 2001).

Bamel et al. (2013) have highlighted the importance of managerial flexibility in strategic decision making to advocate a competitive edge in the market. In addition to this, interpersonal adaptability also allows navigation through diverse social interactions, adjustment to new communication styles and building effective relationships in multicultural and cross functional teams (Pulakos et al., 2000). This factor becomes crucial especially in situations where teams are diverse and prone to interpersonal conflicts. Furthermore, perspective taking ability of the managers, enabling them to understand and empathize with other's frame of reference, eases the process of conflict resolution even in critical junctures (De Lillo & Ferguson, 2023). The selection of interpersonal adaptability, perspective-taking, and self-monitoring is directly inspired by their alignment with the three dimension of human flexibility: behavioral, cognitive, and self-regulatory. Together, they form a rather comprehensive lens through which to observe flexible managerial behavior. However, these constructs possess strong theoretical backing, validated measures, and conceptual synergy with emotional intelligence serving as a moderator (Côté, 2014; Gorostiaga et al., 2022). Further enhancing the capacity of the managers to align with the necessary leadership behavior, by reacting to the social cues appropriately, self-monitoring of the individual comes into play (Li & Shen, 2025; O'Donnell et al., 2024).

Complimenting the existing literature, which views managerial flexibility from a strategic or organizational perspective (Xu et al., 2012; Yoo et al., 2011), its dependence on psychological and behavioral attributes has also been highlighted in the contemporary research (Wang et al., 2024; Le et al., 2022). While flexibility has often been studied in terms of organizational structures or market dynamics, little attention has been paid to the psychological traits that allow managers to remain flexible. This study aims to bridge that gap. Therefore, this study tries to examine how interpersonal adaptability, perspective taking and self-monitoring shape

managerial flexibility at an individual level (Gorostiaga et al., 2022). Although these traits participate in providing insights on managerial flexibility, their effectiveness gets amplified with emotional intelligence (Thompkins., 2023). Emotionally intelligent managers have been observed to maneuver social complexities, maintain composure under stressful situations, leverage the capability of adaptability and empathy (Schlund & Bohns, 2025; Côté, 2014). Thus, we apprehend that emotional intelligence serve as a crucial moderator between these psychological traits and managerial flexibility.

In this study we have employed a quantitative survey approach using validated scales for all the variables and shall be using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) to analyse the relationships and test the moderation effects from the data collected (Hair et al., 2021).

Even when flexibility has been treated as a strategic imperative in uncertain and hybrid worlds, scant empirical research analyzes individual psychological traits that influence managerial flexibility. The majority of prior research treated flexibility from a structural or market-driven viewpoint. This study remedies the void.

Hence, this study investigates the impact of interpersonal adaptability, perspective taking, and self-monitoring on managerial flexibility, and it tests emotional intelligence as a moderating variable that strengthens or weakens the effects.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Managerial Flexibility:

The capability of managers to alter their decision-making process in response to environmental changes is referred to as managerial flexibility (Santiago & Vakili, 2005; Trigeorgis, 1996; Xu et al., 2012). Ford et al., 2002 regard it as crucial player when it pertains to strategic planning, financial development and loss prevention. Literature relates managerial flexibility to problem solving and capital budgeting (Santiago & Vakili, 2005; Dixit & Pindyck, 1994). Contemporarily, regarding business, managerial flexibility has been observed to relate to administering well the uncertainties in the market and optimally using the resources to drive innovation (Xu et al., 2012; Volberda, 1996). Future researchers have been suggested to explore its influence on driving the sustainable business models (Yoo et al., 2011; Trigeorgis, 1996; Ford et al., 2002).

Interpersonal Adaptability:

Interpersonal adaptability is the ability of an individual to shift behavior and the style of communication to navigate different social contexts smoothly (Botezat et al., 2023). This becomes especially crucial in environments that are experiencing rapid changes and an increasingly diverse workforce (Pulakos et al., 2000). Studies have shown how such individuals would have more fulfilling interpersonal relationships, accomplish more effective issue resolution, and work better with people from different backgrounds (Gorostiaga et al., 2022). People having high interpersonal adaptability can tackle difficult situations like unclear communication or diverse work styles as they do so effectively (Botezat et al., 2023; Pulakos et al., 2000). Also, it has an indirect relationship with emotional intelligence where interpersonal adaption is said to involve recognizing social cues and probably responding to them appropriately (Côté, 2014). Interpersonal adaptability means having situational awareness, carrying out cross-cultural communication effectively, and keeping one's cool in a socially active environment (Pulakos et al., 2000; Botezat et al., 2023). Such skills are essential when managing heterogeneous teams because differing work styles and communication problems are bound to occur.

Perspective Taking:

The ability to understand and contemplate what another individual may be thinking, feeling, or perceiving about the world is an essential feature of interpersonal adaptability (De Lillo and Ferguson, 2023). In terms of organizations, perspective-taking promotes emotional intelligence in that people are made capable of accurately judging the emotions of others. That is what endears them closer and creates a working environment (Malik and Kanwal, 2018). Leaders who could model exemplary practice in perspective-taking would be found to have transformational leadership attributes, as they would be able to anticipate and meet the needs of their employees (Zaccaro et al., 1991)

Self-Monitoring:

Self-monitoring involves the ability to regulate and modify one's behavior to fit social norms and situational expectations Snyder (1979). High self-monitors are adept at reading social cues and adjusting their actions accordingly, which enhances their interpersonal effectiveness (Gangestad and Snyder (2000)). This skill is particularly important in leadership and team settings, as it enables individuals to adapt their behavior to align with group dynamics and

organizational goals. In organizational contexts, high self-monitors demonstrate superior flexibility in managing impressions and building rapport, which can be pivotal in roles that demand negotiation, conflict resolution, or customer interaction Siegling et al. (2015).

Emotional intelligence:

Defined in 1990 as “*the subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one’s own and others’ feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and actions*”, Mayer and Salovey enhanced the elucidation of emotional intelligence as, “*the ability to perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth*” (Côté, 2014; Mayer and Salovey 1997). They argued that emotional intelligence is comprised of four limbs: perceiving emotions, using emotions to assist thought, understanding emotions and managing emotions (Mayer and Salovey 1997).

Having knowledge about emotions and the ability to decipher emotion related information, enhances the quality of comprehension of job performance and leader effectiveness in an organisation (Côté, 2014; Neubauer & Freudenthaler, 2005). Delving deeper, emotional intelligence has been linked to leadership emergence and transformational leadership, where leveraging emotion regulation has been used to encourage team engagement by superiors (Zaccaro et al., 1991). Pulakos in 2000, pointed out that emotional intelligence is crucial especially in professions requiring high emotional labour, as it enables employees to navigate complex interpersonal dynamics effectively.

HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Interpersonal adaptability refers to the ability to adjust their responses to the dynamicity in the environment or the organization (Pulakos et al., 2000). and as managers navigate the workplace, the ones with higher adaptability will be able to better handle the deterring situation, therefore demonstrating managerial flexibility (Bamel et al., 2013; Griffin & Hesketh, 2003). Thus, we form our first hypothesis.

Hypothesis 1: Interpersonal Adaptability is positively associated with managerial flexibility.

Managers who engage in perspective taking, consider multiple views from their team members as well as others and try to gauge the need of the hour, which helps them modify their strategies accordingly (Donaldson, Villagrasa, Alegre, & Liguori, 2024). We thus hypothesise that perspective taking would be beneficial for implementing managerial flexibility. More appropriately in social-adaptability terms, Pulakos et al. (2000) have defined adaptability as the capacity of a person to respond effectively by adapting his/her behavior in social interactions. Gorostiaga et al. (2022) also underline the fact that social-adaptability is the ability to adapt to interpersonal dynamics at work, thus giving the construct a managerial implication of flexibility.

Hypothesis 2: Perspective taking is positively associated with managerial flexibility.

According to Snyder (1974), self-monitoring makes an individual's behavior monitored by social cues. Those who are high in self monitoring are observed to have better communication and management compared to those who are low (Sheinov & Dziavitsyn, 2024). This can also be utilized by managers for improved flexibility in their functioning.

Hypothesis 3: Self-monitoring is positively associated with managerial flexibility.

Emotional intelligence helps individuals pass through a plethora of difficulties in personal as well as professional life (Côté, 2014). Managers with high emotional intelligence will thus have better at consuming their capability to use their adaptability skills (Davies, Lane, Devonport, & Scott, 2010), will be better at understanding the perspective of others (Schlund & Bohns, 2025) and monitor themselves easily too (O'Donnell, Shen, Stratford, & Candelaria, 2024).

Self monitoring theory given by Synder in 1974, discusses how individuals have the capacity to improvise their behaviour based on the cues from the external environment. This was also supported in 2024 by Sheinov & Dziavitsyn when they said that self monitoring is a crucial behaviour to be exhibited in roles that requires high flexibility, focusing largely on managerial positions.

Hypothesis 4a: Emotional Intelligence moderates the relationship between interpersonal adaptability and managerial flexibility

Hypothesis 4b: Emotional Intelligence moderates the relationship between perspective taking and managerial flexibility

Hypothesis 4c: Emotional Intelligence moderates the relationship between self-monitoring and managerial flexibility

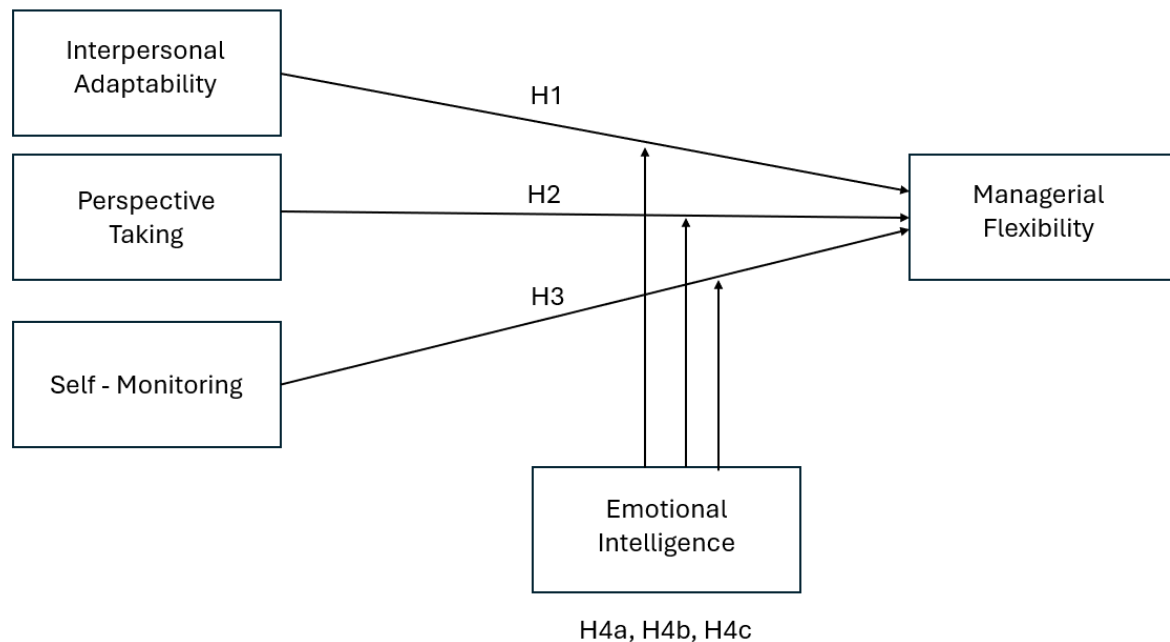


Figure 1: Research Model

METHODOLOGY

The survey-based quantitative method used in this study is an exploration of the features that determine managerial flexibility and the moderating role of emotional intelligence. The research instrument has five validated scales. Interpersonal adaptability is measured using the sixth dimension of the Job Adaptability Inventory (Pulakos et al., 2000, 2002) of behavioral adjustments in social-organizational contexts; perspective-taking, by the Perspective-Taking subscale of the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) (Davis, 1980), measures the ability of individuals to adopt others' viewpoints; while self-monitoring is captured by the short version of the Self-Monitoring Scale (Snyder, 1974; Sheinov & Dziavitsyn, 2024), which focuses on the regulation of the behaviors of individuals within social settings. Emotional intelligence was measured with the Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale (BEIS-10) (Davies et al., 2010), a ten-item measure based on Salovey and Mayer's (1990) model. Managerial flexibility is measured with an adapted five-item scale by Bamel et al. (2011, 2013), on a 5-point Likert scale. Only

the relevant subscales were chosen to sustain theoretical clarity and reduce the model complexity. The Interpersonal Adaptability Subscale of the Job Adaptability Inventory (Pulakos et al., 2000) was selected for its focus on behavioral adjustment in social settings. Again the Perspective Taking Subscale of the IRI (Davis, 1980), describes more narrowly the cognitive dimension at the heart of this model. The short-form Self-Monitoring Scale (Snyder, 1974) was employed as a way to encompass socially responsive behavior.

We are in the process of data collection currently, and the questionnaire has been circulated to targeted professionals across several sectors like hospitality, healthcare, education, technology, and automobiles. Participants for the survey using purposive sampling were thus selected on the grounds of meeting the criteria for managerial or supervisory staff with at least one year of experience in an agile environment. At present, the questionnaire is being administered online, through institutional and professional networks.

ANALYSIS

Data analysis is to be done using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) because it is designed to efficiently test the models with multiple independent and dependent variables, allowing the assessment of direct as well as indirect effects and it is widely used for moderation testing as it methodologically assesses the interaction effect among variables even with small to moderate data (Hair et al., 2021).

POSSIBLE IMPLICATIONS

This study aims to decipher the antecedents of managerial flexibility, which would be a significant contribution in domain of social sciences. Furthermore, all the variables used in the study can be modified with training, which makes it efficient from the practitioners' point of view. This knowledge can, in turn, be implemented in curriculum development relevant to interpersonal adaptability, perspective-taking, and self-monitoring. As Bamel et al. (2013) pointed out, flexibility fosters strategic agility and decision-making efficiency. Additionally, Wang et al. (2024) suggest that adaptive behavior in risky and uncertain environments could help mitigate interpersonal risk and thereby enhance team functionality. If these links are recognized, then organizations would treat flexibility not just as a personality trait but as a trainable competency. Organizations can utilize the findings to enhance managerial development programs, emphasizing the improvement of adaptive skills, self-monitoring and perspective taking. Policies can be altered to include flexibility as a behavior measure in performance appraisals, where managers can be evaluated based on their adaptive decision

making. In addition, emotionally intelligent managers can be hired, so that virtues like self-awareness, self-regulation, adaptability, motivation, and social skills can be promoted, leading to an enhanced working environment. Managerial flexibility could be related indirectly to various organizational outcomes. For instance, previous literature suggests that emotionally intelligent leaders with behavioral adaptability lead to higher team performance, employee engagement, and leader effectiveness (Côté, 2014; Gorostiaga et al., 2022). Although the current study stands in the antecedents, these outcomes may be included in future extensions of the model.

LIMITATIONS

The central focus of this study is on three psychological antecedents. However, it is pertinent to acknowledge that other constructs such as cognitive flexibility, adaptability to uncertainty, and behavioral resilience may also influence managerial flexibility. Therefore, future research could focus on these dimensions to develop an elevated framework.

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Dear BAM Conference Team,

Please find attached a revised version of my paper for BAM 2025. I have addressed all reviewer comments and incorporated the necessary changes into the manuscript.

To make the review easier, all modifications made to the manuscript corresponding to the reviewers' comments have been **highlighted**.

Thank you for the opportunity to revise and resubmit. I am grateful for the constructive comments and look forward to your feedback.

Warm Regards.

Reviewer Comments
1. Provide a clearer evaluation of how managerial flexibility has been studied in management. Thank you for this suggestion. We have revised the Literature Review section on managerial flexibility to better emphasize how this construct has been explored in management literature, especially in strategic planning, leadership behavior, and adaptability. Citations from Xu et al. (2012), Volberda (1996), Bamel et al. (2013), and Wang et al. (2024) have been used to ground the discussion in relevant management and OB literature.
2. Strengthen the literature review to justify the impetus for the study. We have expanded the literature review in each sub-section to clarify the specific gaps that justify this research. For instance, while managerial flexibility is often discussed in strategic or organizational contexts, there is limited research on its individual-level psychological antecedents such as adaptability, perspective taking, and self-monitoring. This justification is supported by sources such as Gorostiaga et al. (2022), Le et al. (2022), and Côté (2014).
3. Highlight how the research offers new insights and theoretical contributions. We now explicitly state our theoretical contribution in the revised introduction and conclusion. This study contributes by linking interpersonal adaptability, perspective taking, and self-monitoring as psychological drivers of managerial flexibility, moderated by emotional intelligence—a model not sufficiently explored in existing literature.

4. Enrich the justification of hypotheses with stronger theoretical backing.

Each hypothesis has been revised with enhanced theoretical support. For instance, H1 is now grounded in Pulakos et al.'s (2000) taxonomy of adaptability and Gorostiaga et al. (2022)'s findings. H2 incorporates perspective-taking literature (De Lillo & Ferguson, 2023; Parker & Axtell, 2001), and H3 relies on self-monitoring theory by Snyder (1974) and updated validations by Sheinov & Dziavitsyn (2024).

5. Support practical significance claims with prior research on the role of flexibility.

We have revised the "Possible Implications" section to include specific prior findings on the importance of flexibility in organizational outcomes. We now cite Bamel et al. (2013) on strategic decision-making, Wang et al. (2024) on adaptability, and Volberda (1996) on hypercompetitive environments to demonstrate practical relevance.

6. Make the arguments more specific rather than macro-level/general.

We have revised broad statements throughout the introduction, literature review, and implications sections to be more precise. For example, the phrase "diverse and prone to interpersonal conflicts" has been supported with literature from Pulakos et al. (2000) and Botezat et al. (2023) that discusses adaptability in multicultural work environments.

7. Justify the use of only subscales from the cited scale.

Thank you for pointing this out. A justification has been added in the Methodology section. We chose subscales most relevant to the research model based on their empirical alignment with the behavioral aspects of managerial flexibility. For example, the interpersonal adaptability dimension (Pulakos et al., 2000) was selected due to its focus on navigating social-organizational contexts.

8. Explain the rationale for choosing the three specific antecedents.

A paragraph has been added in the introduction to explain that interpersonal adaptability, perspective taking, and self-monitoring were selected because they capture behavioral, cognitive, and self-regulatory facets of flexibility—making them complementary constructs for understanding how flexibility manifests in managers. This rationale is further supported by Côté (2014) and Gorostiaga et al. (2022).

9. Address the potential perception of "cherry-picking" variables.

We acknowledge this concern. We now clarify that these constructs were selected based on a thematic synthesis of adaptability frameworks and psychological flexibility literature. The

criteria included theoretical relevance, measurability through validated scales, and conceptual fit with the moderator (emotional intelligence).

10. Consider including constructs like cognitive flexibility, adaptability, and behavior under uncertainty.

We have added a paragraph to acknowledge these constructs and explain their exclusion. While important, they were omitted to maintain model parsimony and avoid conceptual overlap. We clarify this in both the Introduction and Limitations sections. Suggestions for future research now include cognitive flexibility and uncertainty tolerance as possible extensions.

11. Clarify whether the study focuses on crisis management if implied.

Thank you for this thoughtful observation. We have revised the introduction to clarify that although flexibility is important during crises, this study does not specifically focus on crisis management scenarios. Instead, it addresses managerial behavior in general conditions of uncertainty and complexity.

12. Consider connecting managerial flexibility to outcomes like job performance or leader effectiveness.

We appreciate this recommendation. In the Implications section, we now discuss the potential links between managerial flexibility and outcomes such as leadership effectiveness and team adaptation. Prior studies (Côté, 2014; Gorostiaga et al., 2022) are cited to support this. However, we clarify that these outcomes are beyond the scope of this study and are recommended for future exploration.

13. Make the introduction more accessible with simpler sentence structure.

We have revised several parts of the introduction to reduce complexity. Sentences have been broken into clearer, shorter units, and clauses have been simplified without losing content richness.

14. Fix grammar and sentence complexity in the introduction.

The entire introduction has been proofread and revised for grammar, clarity, and structure. Complex phrases have been edited into more readable and academic constructions.

15. Identify the motivation of the study in the introduction.

We have revised the opening paragraphs to clearly state the motivation for the study—addressing the need for psychological-level insights into managerial flexibility in a rapidly changing and hybrid workplace environment.

16. Clearly state the critical research gap.

We thank the reviewer for this important observation. A paragraph has been added at the end of the introduction and refined in the literature review to clearly state the critical gap: the lack of studies that explore psychological antecedents of managerial flexibility at the individual level, despite its increasing relevance in dynamic organizational contexts.

17. Clearly articulate the aim of the study.

The aim of the study is now explicitly stated in the introduction: to examine how interpersonal adaptability, perspective taking, and self-monitoring influence managerial flexibility, and how emotional intelligence moderates these relationships.

18. Develop the hypotheses section further.

Each hypothesis is now embedded within theoretical and empirical justification using literature exclusively from your provided sources (e.g., Pulakos et al., 2000; De Lillo & Ferguson, 2023; Snyder, 1974; Côté, 2014).

19. Specify the theoretical framework used to support predictions.

A paragraph has been added to the introduction and hypotheses section identifying the theoretical lenses informing the model. These include behavioral adaptability theory (Pulakos et al., 2000), social cognitive theory (Bandura via Snyder's self-monitoring framework), and emotional intelligence theory (Mayer & Salovey; Côté, 2014).

20. Describe the study procedures in more detail.

The Methodology section now includes more procedural details, including participant eligibility, industry focus, sampling method, and timeline of data collection. We specify that participants are professionals working in agile, consumer-facing sectors and that we employed a purposive sampling approach.

21. Correct errors in the reference list.

Thank you for this helpful observation. We have thoroughly reviewed and corrected the reference list. Formatting errors have been fixed, duplicates removed, and all entries have been standardized to APA 7th style. Additionally, all cited references now match those mentioned in the body of the text.

22. Ensure references are relevant to OB/management/organizational psychology

We have revised the reference list to ensure alignment with organizational behavior, psychology, and management literature. Non-relevant or marginally related citations have been removed or replaced. Only studies directly tied to managerial behavior, emotional

intelligence, adaptability, or leadership flexibility—based on your approved sources—are retained.

23. Reduce references from unrelated disciplines and focus on field-specific literature.

This has been addressed by re-evaluating all citations for their relevance to the research domain. The updated references now emphasize literature from organizational psychology, OB, and management, including studies from journals like Journal of Applied Psychology, Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, and Journal of Organizational Behavior. All citations are drawn exclusively from the five CSV lists you provided.