

# **INTELLIGENCE IN THE 21ST CENTURY**

## THE STRATEGIC ROLE OF MANAGERIAL COMPETENCIES IN ENHANCING ORGANIZATIONAL RESILIENCE AND PERFORMANCE IN INTELLIGENCE ORGANIZATIONS

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### Abstract:

*This article explores the relationship between managerial competencies and organizational performance, with a specific focus on intelligence organizations operating in highly complex and uncertain environments. Building on the theoretical models of managerial skills, the study integrates classical categories of competencies – technical, cognitive, and social – with modern dimensions such as emotional intelligence, social intelligence, and adaptability. The empirical research is based on a qualitative methodology, using semi-structured interviews with 18 managers from an intelligence institution. The analysis demonstrates that managerial performance is not the result of a single dominant competence, but rather of a dynamic equilibrium between multiple dimensions. Technical competencies provide credibility and ensure operational efficiency, while cognitive abilities enable strategic thinking and objective decision-making. Social and emotional competencies emerge as decisive in building trust, cohesion, and motivation within teams. Adaptability and continuous learning are identified as crucial for ensuring resilience and innovation in fast-changing contexts. The study also highlights critical limitations, such as the restricted sample size and the reliance on self-reported data. Overall, the findings confirm the necessity of shifting managerial evaluation and selection processes towards a more integrative approach that values relational and adaptive skills alongside professional expertise. The conclusions underline both the theoretical contribution to leadership studies and the practical relevance for strengthening organizational resilience and sustainable performance in intelligence settings.*

**Keywords:** *managerial competencies; organizational performance; intelligence organizations; emotional intelligence; social intelligence; adaptability.*

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## Introduction

Managerial competencies are one of the most important research topics in contemporary organizational sciences, having a direct impact on the performance and sustainability of institutions. In the context of accelerating economic, technological, and social changes, analysing how managers' skills influence organizational processes becomes essential. Intelligence organizations, characterized by complexity, uncertainty, and high decision-making pressure, provide a particularly relevant framework for investigating this relationship. This article aims to integrate theoretical perspectives and empirical findings on managerial competencies in order to identify the mechanisms through which they contribute to organizational performance and institutional resilience.

### **Managerial competencies and organizational performance: an integrative perspective**

The study of managerial competencies has undergone significant development in recent decades, reflecting both the concerns of theorists and the practical needs of organizations to identify the factors that lead to sustainable performance. The literature has outlined several perspectives on the definition and classification of competencies, but their convergence highlights several common dimensions: knowledge, skills, behaviours, and attitudes that enable managers to effectively fulfil their roles and responsibilities (Boyatzis, 1982; Spencer and Spencer, 1993).

The first theoretical concerns emerged in the second half of the 20th century with the work of Katz (1955), who proposed the classic distinction between technical, human, and conceptual competencies. This structure formed the basis for further developments, such as the organizational competency models developed by Boyatzis (1982), which emphasized the correlation between managerial competencies and job performance.

In recent literature, Yukl (2011) developed a comprehensive model, frequently used in the analysis of managerial competencies, which includes six categories of competencies necessary for achieving performance. Three of these falls into the category of classic competencies: (1) technical competencies – knowledge and skills specific to the field of

activity; (2) cognitive competencies – strategic thinking, organizational diagnosis, ability to solve complex problems; (3) social competencies – communication, influencing, team motivation, relationship building.

Numerous other classifications proposed in the literature confirm the relevance of these categories. Spencer and Spencer (1993) developed a framework based on cognitive, social, and motivational competencies, and Boyatzis (2009) emphasized the role of emotional and social intelligence in determining managerial performance. Contemporary research emphasizes that these competencies are not static, but are dynamic resources that are activated differently depending on the situation and organizational context (Antonakis and Day, 2018).

In addition, Yukl added three modern competencies adapted to the requirements of contemporary organizations: (4) emotional intelligence – self-control, empathy, managing emotions in professional interactions; (5) social intelligence – the ability to understand and interpret group dynamics and social context; (6) the ability to learn from experience and adapt to change – cognitive flexibility and openness to new practices and perspectives (Yukl, 2011).

This model expands the classic paradigm of managerial competencies and integrates dimensions that are essential for effective management in organizations operating in complex and dynamic environments.

There is a growing consensus in the literature that managerial performance and, implicitly, organizational performance depend on the extent to which managers possess and effectively apply these competencies. Empirical studies (Luthans et al., 1988; Boyatzis, 2009; Yukl, 2013) show that high-performing managers are able to align their own and their team's competencies with the organization's objectives, use interpersonal skills to create cohesion and maintain the organizational climate, or develop robust decision-making processes that increase efficiency and reduce uncertainty.

Recent research confirms that there is no single competency that determines performance, but rather a configuration of competencies that, when adapted to the context, contributes to the achievement of objectives (Judge and Piccolo, 2004). Thus, cognitive and strategic competencies provide long-term vision, while interpersonal and emotional

competencies are essential for effective strategy implementation and maintaining employee motivation. High-performing managers are distinguished by their ability to mobilize and combine different sets of competencies in a process of continuous adaptation to the complexity and dynamics of the environment. This direct link between competencies and performance is confirmed by numerous empirical studies and forms the basis of applied research in highly complex organizations.

### **Managerial competencies as determinants of performance in intelligence organizations**

Intelligence organizations are distinguished by a working environment characterized by uncertainty, high pressure, incomplete information, and the need to make quick decisions, often with major strategic impact (Treverton, 2009). In these organizations, managers not only coordinate day-to-day activities, but also shape complex analytical processes, manage sensitive resources, and create cohesion in teams under constant stress.

Research on intelligence management is relatively limited compared to other fields, but the existing literature highlights that organizational performance depends on a distinct set of managerial skills, tailored to the specifics of this type of organization (Walsh, 2016; Oleson and Cothron, 2016).

*Cognitive and analytical skills.* A first fundamental pillar for intelligence managers is cognitive and analytical skills. These include the ability to evaluate ambiguous information, identify patterns in incomplete data, and anticipate possible scenarios (Heuer, 1999). Studies show that managers who possess these competencies enhance the quality of analytical products and reduce systematic errors in judgment. Also, the ability to prioritize information and integrate multiple perspectives is essential for transforming raw data into strategic knowledge (Marrin, 2007). Oleson and Cothron (2016) emphasize that flexible, continuous learning-oriented management improves the accuracy of intelligence products and reduces organizational vulnerability.

*Technical and professional skills.* Technical skills in intelligence organizations refer not only to knowledge of the specific field (geopolitics, security, technology, etc.), but also to the use of advanced data collection

and analysis technologies (Walsh, 2016). High-performing managers are able to integrate new technologies into analysis processes and ensure that staff are trained to use them effectively.

*Social and coordination skills.* Another key category is social skills – the ability to communicate clearly, build collaborative networks, and coordinate multidisciplinary teams. Walsh (2021) shows that modern intelligence organizations are required to develop new governance mechanisms, which requires increased negotiation and collaboration skills. Within the Five Eyes alliance (US, UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand), information sharing was only effective to the extent that managers demonstrated collaborative leadership skills (Walsh, 2011).

*Emotional and social intelligence.* The literature confirms that, under conditions of stress and continuous pressure, emotional intelligence is crucial for maintaining balance and resilience in teams (Caruso and Salovey, 2004). Managers who are able to regulate their own emotions and understand the reactions of team members create a climate of trust, which leads to better staff retention and increased quality of analysis. Jenkins (2018) points out that these skills become even more important in the context of virtual leadership and the use of digital collaboration platforms.

In addition, social intelligence is necessary to interpret group dynamics, to negotiate between multiple stakeholders: governments, agencies, national or international partners; and to build organizational legitimacy. Hatfield (2008) emphasizes that succession in the intelligence management hierarchy depends not only on expertise, but also on the ability to develop credible relationships and trusted networks.

*The ability to learn and adapt.* In an environment marked by rapid change, the ability of managers to learn from experience and adapt is one of the most important competencies (Yukl, 2011). Recent studies show that intelligence organizations that promote organizational learning and managerial flexibility are more resilient in the face of new threats (Phythian, 2013). Walsh (2021) shows that without mechanisms for continuous manager development and adaptive governance, intelligence agencies risk losing their relevance and ability to respond effectively to new challenges.

The performance of intelligence organizations depends on the ability of leaders to combine classic skills – cognitive, technical, and social with modern ones – emotional, social, and adaptive. Failure to develop and evaluate these skills leads to structural vulnerabilities: erroneous analyses, loss of trust, and decreased ability to cooperate with other institutions. Succession planning and continuous development become strategic imperatives: without training and transfer mechanisms, intelligence organizations remain fragile in the face of change.

Thus, managerial competencies in intelligence can no longer be viewed as mere individual skills, but as critical resources for organizational and national security. High-performing managers are those who manage to combine analytical, technical, and social skills with flexibility and adaptability, creating resilient organizations capable of coping with the complexity and volatility of the contemporary security environment.

### **Qualitative analysis methodology**

The research was conducted in a military intelligence organization – with a military structure and hierarchy – within an analytical structure responsible for producing and integrating analytical products. The organization is characterized by formal rules, developed bureaucracy, and a sustained process of structural and cultural transformation, with direct effects on managerial practices and the human resource profile. This context required a qualitative methodological approach, capable of capturing the nuances of managerial behaviours and competencies in relation to performance.

The target population included 58 managers of the organization: level 1 – heads of executors; level 2 – heads of heads of executors, with central and territorial representation. Strategic management was excluded from the analysis. Based on a systematic algorithm: alphabetical listing on four sampling frames level 1/2 × central/territorial, selection from position 2 with step 4, 18 participants (≈31% of the population) were selected: 13 level 1 managers (8 central, 5 territorial) and 5 level 2 managers (3 central, 2 territorial). The sample structure ensured very good coverage of the main socio-demographic and organizational dimensions relevant to the research objectives.

We used a semi-structured interview, built on a “funnel” model (from general questions to specific questions), and organized into four thematic blocks: (1) performance in the organization; (2) managerial behaviours and competencies; (3) team characteristics; (4) organizational context. The guide contained only open-ended questions and was accompanied by documentation for operators (managerial performance, competencies, behaviour, and synopsis of contingency theories). This configuration allowed us to capture the causal mechanisms and perspectives of the actors on the competency-performance relationship in the studied environment.

The interviews were conducted at the organization’s headquarters in August–September 2022, face to face; each interview lasted 90-120 minutes. The process was carried out with the support of two interviewers (sociologists), which generated minor differences in style: one interviewer followed the guide more strictly, while the other introduced clarifications and contextual questions. All interviews were transcribed in full, then subjected to thematic coding and aggregation into categories congruent with the study’s objectives.

Gary Yukl’s model (2011) – structured around technical, cognitive, and social competencies, emotional intelligence, social intelligence, and learning and adaptability – served as the theoretical framework for interpreting the data.

The qualitative design, focused on a single analytical structure within a military intelligence organization, limits the statistical generalization of the results. The differences in style between the two operators represent a potential source of variation in the depth of responses, mitigated by the standardization of the guide and full transcription. At the same time, the sensitivity of the organizational environment can sometimes limit the level of detail in reports.

### **Managerial competencies and their impact on organizational performance – case study**

This analysis aims to explore in depth the relationship between the dimensions identified in the literature – technical, cognitive, and social skills, emotional intelligence, social intelligence, and the ability to learn and adapt – and the level of performance perceived in the

organization studied. By integrating data obtained from interviews with managers and correlating them with established theoretical models, the chapter highlights not only the relevance of each category of skills, but also how they interact to support long-term organizational performance.

*Technical competencies.* Technical competencies are the traditional foundation of any managerial career and have historically been considered the basic criterion for selecting leaders. In the organization studied, the emphasis on these competencies was noted by many of the interviewees, who emphasized that a manager's legitimacy derives largely from their level of knowledge of the activity they coordinate. Analysis of the interviews reveals that, although their importance is not disputed, there is a growing awareness that they are not sufficient to ensure lasting organizational performance.

A mechanism linking technical skills and performance is professional credibility. Managers who do not demonstrate an understanding of the specific processes in their field risk being perceived as lacking authority. For example, one of the respondents (M2) argued that "he would never encourage the idea of having as a manager someone who lacks professional skills or who has not demonstrated, through their work, that they know their job." This observation is consistent with Yukl's theory, according to which technical knowledge gives leaders the ability to understand the specifics of the work and to lead the team in a realistic and credible manner. Without this foundation, managers face a rapid erosion of trust among their subordinates.

Another effect associated with technical skills is the ability to accurately assess tasks and resources. Well-trained managers can more easily identify obstacles, anticipate bottlenecks, and formulate realistic requirements for the team. M13 emphasizes this dimension by stating that a leader must "understand the objective difficulties of the work," which requires knowledge of internal processes and technological limitations. Thus, technical skills directly contribute to avoiding poor decisions that could lead to frustration and demotivation among subordinates.

A lack of technical knowledge can expose the leader to a loss of respect and credibility. Even if their main role is no longer one of execution but of coordination, managers must periodically demonstrate

that they have a grasp of the essence and e of the team's activities. Otherwise, the difference between them and their subordinates becomes a factor of vulnerability.

Analysis of the interviews also reveals a much more important nuance: technical skills cannot function in isolation. Several respondents noted that a manager who is an expert but lacks social or cognitive skills fails to generate collective performance. M4, for example, states that of the three major categories (technical, cognitive, social), he would sacrifice the first two, as they can be acquired relatively easily through training and experience. This view reflects a paradigm shift: while in the past the focus was almost exclusively on professional expertise, there is now an awareness that relationships and adaptability have a more direct impact on organizational results.

In conclusion, technical skills are recognized by the managers interviewed as necessary but not sufficient. They are the starting point for managerial legitimacy, but they cannot alone ensure organizational performance. Thus, their role is to underpin and support the other categories of competencies, which become decisive in differentiating between high-performing and low-performing managers.

*Cognitive competencies.* Cognitive competencies are a fundamental category in Gary Yukl's model, being associated with the ability to analyse complex information, make connections, develop creative solutions, and plan strategically. Interviews with managers in the organization studied confirm the importance of these competencies, but at the same time highlight differences in perception regarding their weight in relation to other types of skills.

A first central aspect highlighted is the role of cognitive skills in increasing managers' adaptability to the complex environment in which they operate. Manager M7 places these skills at the top of his hierarchy, arguing that "if you have these cognitive qualities, you adapt much more easily to the environment, you are predisposed to fit in anywhere." We thus find that a high level of analytical and logical thinking allows for rapid integration into variable contexts, which leads to better organizational performance. In modern organizations, where change is a constant, this ability to adapt becomes a decisive competitive advantage.

Another finding shows that cognitive skills are an essential filter through which knowledge becomes useful and operational. In the same vein, M8 emphasized that “if you don’t have the brains, there’s no point in learning a lot.” This direct statement shows that the accumulation of technical knowledge is not enough if there is no solid cognitive basis to enable its processing and application.

Another causal mechanism observed is the ability to analyse and plan strategically. M3 mentions that although analytical skills are not always present, when they are, they are a great advantage for managers. This observation suggests that managerial performance is often enhanced by the ability to correlate disparate information and formulate clear courses of action. Similarly, M10, reflecting on his own professional career, emphasizes the importance of consistency and the ability to maintain “the determination to keep the bar high every day,” traits that derive from a cognitive pattern oriented toward rigor and organization.

The interviews also reveal differences between hierarchical levels. Senior managers tend to place greater emphasis on cognitive skills, considering that they facilitate the connection between different organizational levels. For example, M3 states that, with the transition from line management to senior management, social skills become more important, but cognitive ability remains central to supporting coordination and analysis processes. This finding suggests that, at strategic levels, logical thinking and long-term vision become critical factors for success.

Another element of interpretation is provided by M13, who emphasizes that a lack of structural thinking affects the decision-making process: “if you get attached to a person and decisions are altered by affinities, performance declines.” Here, cognitive skills act as a filter of objectivity, allowing the manager to distance themselves from emotional or subjective factors and make decisions that support organizational goals. Without this filter, performance is sacrificed to personal biases.

Interviewees also refer to accelerated learning ability, which is directly linked to cognitive skills. Managers perceive that the ability to quickly understand a new field and integrate complex information allows them to gain professional recognition and inspire confidence among their team. M17 exemplifies this point, recounting how she had to

develop accounting comprehension skills in order to manage documents with legal and financial implications. This experience shows that performance is not only determined by prior training, but also by the cognitive ability to learn quickly and apply new knowledge.

In conclusion, cognitive skills are perceived by the managers interviewed as an essential pillar of performance. They cannot completely replace technical or social skills, but they play a crucial role in integrating and capitalizing on them. High-performing managers are those who manage to combine analytical thinking, foresight, and objective decision-making, thus generating a solid foundation for organizational development and achieving sustainable long-term results.

*Social skills.* Social skills are the dimension most frequently mentioned by the managers interviewed, as they are perceived as fundamental to ensuring organizational performance. While discussions on technical and cognitive skills were more nuanced, there was almost unanimous consensus on social skills: without them, a manager cannot mobilize the team and achieve sustainable results.

A first aspect highlighted is the ability to build relationships based on trust and mutual respect. Manager M1 states that the essence of a successful leader lies in “compromise, the ability to work with others and not to close doors when it is not necessary.” This perspective suggests a clear causal mechanism: social skills facilitate the maintenance of long-term relationships, the avoidance of conflicts, and the creation of a stable organizational climate. Without them, the team becomes fragmented and collective performance is affected.

Another important element is the ability to communicate effectively and persuasively. M6, which gives social skills a 50% weighting in its hierarchy of priorities, states that they are the “essential ingredient” of leadership. Clear and convincing communication allows the manager to convey objectives, provide constructive feedback, and create a sense of cohesion. This ability is not just a communication skill, but a tool for mobilising and motivating, without which the team can become disoriented.

Another significant causal mechanism is the role of social skills in preventing and managing conflicts. M14 emphasizes that a successful manager is “with people, not above them.” This wording highlights

the importance of a relationship of proximity and partnership, which reduces tensions and discourages conflictual behaviour. In an environment where relationships are based on authoritarianism and a lack of dialogue, demotivation, voluntary departures, and decreased productivity quickly arise.

The theme of recognition and appreciation of subordinates also appears in the interviews. M12 states that “a good manager knows how to see the person behind the job and appreciate them for their efforts.” This observation suggests that organizational performance depends not only on objective processes, but also on how valued employees feel. Social skills act as a catalyst for intrinsic motivation, which leads to increased engagement and loyalty to the organization.

In addition, M9 offers an indirect perspective on social skills through performance indicators: “the number of subordinates who ask to leave may be a signal of leadership quality.” This shows that a lack of social skills has direct and quantifiable consequences on team stability. Excessive staff turnover caused by poor relations with the manager is a cost and vulnerability factor for the organization.

In conclusion, the analysis shows that, for the organization studied, social skills are the strongest predictor of managerial performance. While technical skills confer legitimacy and cognitive skills support rational decision-making, social skills are what bring life and cohesion to the team. High-performing managers are those who manage to be close to people, understand them, and mobilize them through a participatory and empathetic leadership style. Without these skills, even leaders who are highly trained technically or cognitively face failure because they fail to generate the collective motivation necessary to achieve organizational performance.

*Emotional intelligence.* Emotional intelligence is a set of essential skills for managers who want to lead high-performing teams in a sustainable way. This includes empathy, emotional self-regulation, self-awareness, and the ability to express feelings in an authentic and constructive way. The interviews show that, although not all managers explicitly use the term “emotional intelligence,” most refer to its constituent elements, confirming the relevance of this dimension in organizational practice.

A first causal mechanism highlighted is empathy as a factor of cohesion. M12 emphasizes that “you have to care about human aspects beyond professional tasks.” This statement suggests that a manager who understands the states, emotions, and difficulties of their employees can create a climate of trust and openness. Without this empathy, the team risks alienation, lack of motivation, and even voluntary departures.

Another element is emotional self-regulation. M18 notes that managers who lack the ability to manage their emotions can become “absent and underperforming,” even if they have solid technical skills. This observation illustrates that a leader who cannot control their reactions in stressful or conflictual situations conveys instability to the team, generating insecurity and a decline in collective performance. In contrast, managers who remain calm and balanced under pressure provide a positive model of resilience.

Self-awareness is also implicitly mentioned by several interviewees. M6, for example, states that “a manager must be concerned about the impact they have on their people.” This concern shows an understanding of one’s own emotions and behaviours and how they influence the team. Thus, emotional intelligence acts as a self-monitoring tool, allowing the leader to adjust their communication style and avoid tense situations.

Another relevant causal mechanism is the ability to motivate through emotional support. M1 mentions that “the difference between high performers and low performers is how they know how to manage interpersonal relationships.” Therefore, a manager with a high level of emotional intelligence does not limit themselves to delegating tasks, but supports employees when they face personal or professional difficulties. This attitude increases employee motivation, involvement, and loyalty, directly contributing to increased organizational performance.

In addition, M14 emphasizes the importance of authenticity and emotional congruence, arguing that “the impact is very high when people feel that the manager is sincere and transparent.” This confirms that, beyond cognitive and technical skills, emotional authenticity strengthens the relationship of trust between the leader and the team.

In conclusion, emotional intelligence proves to be a key factor in achieving organizational performance. The managers interviewed recognize that empathy, self-regulation, and authenticity are indispensable

for maintaining a healthy climate and mobilizing teams toward common goals. The absence of this dimension leads to alienation, conflict, and the loss of valuable human capital, while its presence contributes to strengthening cohesion and achieving sustainable results.

*Social intelligence.* Social intelligence is defined in Gary Yukl's model as the ability to understand situational demands and adopt behaviours appropriate to the context. It combines social perception – the ability to read and understand the organizational environment, with behavioural flexibility – the ability to adjust leadership style according to the situation. Interviews with managers of the studied organization confirm the importance of this dimension, even if not all of them explicitly use the term “social intelligence.”

A first aspect highlighted is the need for flexibility in interpersonal relationships. M4 states that “mental flexibility determines relational flexibility,” emphasizing that managers must be able to deal with different types of people and contexts. This causal mechanism is essential: rigidity in behaviour generates tension and resistance to change, while flexibility allows for continuous adaptation and maintenance of efficiency.

Another mechanism identified is the ability to calibrate leadership style according to context. M17 describes underperforming leaders as characterized by “fear of failure” and a tendency to over control. This reflects a lack of behavioural flexibility, which leads to blockages and inhibits creativity in the team. In contrast, leaders with high social intelligence know how to alternate between a more directive and a more participatory style, depending on situational needs.

Manager M15 emphasizes the role of social intelligence in harmonizing relationships between hierarchical levels. Managers who can understand organizational dynamics and adjust their behaviour according to their interlocutor manage to build bridges between departments and facilitate cooperation. This type of behaviour has direct effects on overall efficiency, reducing conflicts and communication barriers.

Another element highlighted in the interviews is the ability to anticipate social reactions. Managers with developed social perception can assess the potential impact of a decision on the team and adapt the implementation method to minimize resistance. Thus, social intelligence

is not limited to specific interactions, but plays a strategic role in creating a climate of acceptance and involvement.

In conclusion, social intelligence is an essential dimension for managers in the organization studied, even if it is less frequently mentioned explicitly. It acts as a link between cognitive, emotional, and social skills, allowing leaders to adjust their behaviour and navigate complex and variable contexts effectively. Managers with a high level of social intelligence are able to reduce tensions, facilitate cooperation, and increase the organization's adaptability, which has a direct impact on long-term performance.

*Ability to learn and adapt.* The ability to learn from experience and adapt to change is the last of Yukl's categories, but it is one of the most important dimensions for ensuring long-term organizational performance. In today's dynamic environment, characterized by rapid change, emerging technologies, and external pressures, managers can no longer rely solely on accumulated experience but must demonstrate flexibility and a constant willingness to adjust their behaviours and strategies. The interviews confirm that this ability is perceived as a fundamental condition for managerial success.

One aspect that stands out is the inclination toward continuous development. M5 states that a successful leader must have "a desire for constant development and a focus on learning." This element indicates that performance is not limited to the accumulation of initial expertise, but involves a process of continuous improvement. The lack of this orientation leads to stagnation and an inability to respond to the ever-changing demands of the organization.

Another mechanism observed is learning from negative experiences. M16 emphasizes that "negative examples motivated me to be different." This statement shows that learning does not derive exclusively from successes, but also from failures or critical observations. Managers who are able to extract lessons from difficult situations manage to adjust their strategies and prevent mistakes from being repeated, which leads to an increase in organizational efficiency.

At the same time, M17 emphasizes the importance of an open attitude toward learning, arguing that "high-performing managers are those who accept that they always have something to learn." This

perspective indicates a cause-and-effect mechanism in which cognitive modesty and willingness to accumulate new information contribute to maintaining relevance and competitiveness. Managers who think they “know everything” risk becoming rigid and losing touch with organizational realities.

Another important element is the ability to adapt to environmental changes. M13 shows that managerial success depends on the ability to adapt to requirements and respond appropriately to new challenges. In dynamic organizations, adaptability translates into innovation, the ability to rethink processes and introduce creative solutions, which directly contributes to long-term performance.

In conclusion, the ability to learn and adapt is perceived by managers in the organization studied as an essential skill for managerial success. It allows leaders to turn change into opportunity and prevent rigidity, thereby contributing to organizational resilience. High-performing managers are not those who never make mistakes, but those who manage to learn from experience and constantly adjust their mental models and strategies. Without this dimension, organizations risk becoming vulnerable to external changes and losing their capacity for innovation.

The analysis of interviews with managers in the studied organization, through the lens of the six categories of competencies identified by Gary Yukl, reveals a complex and nuanced picture of managerial performance. The central conclusion is that none of these categories is sufficient on its own to guarantee success, but their combination, in a dynamic balance, is the key to sustainable performance.

Technical competencies form the basis of professional legitimacy, providing managers with the necessary credibility in the eyes of their subordinates. They enable realistic assessment of tasks and resources and help to avoid managerial errors. However, when not coupled with cognitive and social skills, they remain insufficient, leading only to a minimum level of organizational functionality.

Cognitive skills complete this picture, being essential for analysis, planning, and objective decision-making. Managers who excel at this level can learn quickly, anticipate the consequences of decisions, and

formulate clear strategic directions. Without them, the organization risks facing rigidity and a lack of vision.

Social skills are emerging as the decisive factor for performance. They enable the building of trusting relationships, team mobilization, and the maintenance of internal cohesion. Managers who fail to communicate effectively, manage conflict, and recognize the merits of their subordinates' risk generating demotivation, excessive staff turnover, and a decline in collective involvement.

Emotional intelligence complements this relational dimension, being a factor of stability and motivation. Empathy, emotional self-regulation, and self-awareness contribute to creating a healthy organizational climate and strengthening team resilience. Without these skills, even technically and cognitively competent managers can become ineffective due to their inability to maintain the emotional engagement of the team.

Social intelligence acts as a glue between all these dimensions, allowing leaders to adjust their behaviours to the context and harmonize relationships across hierarchical levels. Behavioural flexibility and the ability to anticipate social reactions ensure more effective implementation of decisions and reduce organizational tensions.

The ability to learn and adapt provides the necessary foundation for organizational resilience. Managers who are open to learning, who turn negative experiences into constructive lessons, and who constantly adjust their strategies become vectors of change and innovation. Without this ability, the organization risks becoming vulnerable to external changes and losing its competitiveness.

The overall analysis shows that organizational performance is the result of a balance between technical, cognitive, social, and adaptive dimensions, with a major emphasis on social and emotional ones. While in the past the selection of managers was based predominantly on professional expertise, it is now becoming clear that interpersonal skills, empathy, and flexibility are the determining factors for success. In the organization studied, high-performing managers are described as those who manage to combine technical knowledge and analytical thinking with the ability to be close to people and to learn continuously.

In conclusion, organizational performance does not depend on excellence in a single category of competencies, but on the interaction and complementarity of all six. Managers who manage to achieve this balance become authentic leaders, capable of inspiring confidence, creating cohesion, and guiding the organization toward sustainable long-term results.

### **Critical analysis of data and assessment of research limitations**

Analysis of the interviews conducted highlights a number of converging trends in managers' perceptions of the competencies required for organizational performance. Respondents consistently emphasized the importance of social competencies (communication, empathy, the ability to build relationships and manage teams), considering them either complementary to or even superior to professional or cognitive competencies. This finding is relevant, given that, in historical organizational practice, managerial selection has been based predominantly on professional skills and psychometric assessments.

However, the responses indicate a diversity of perspectives: some interviewees place cognitive skills – mental flexibility, analytical and anticipatory abilities – first, while others believe that professional experience remains the foundation without which performance cannot be achieved. This plurality of opinions reflects a complex reality: managerial performance is not based on a single type of competence, but on a balance between professional, cognitive, and social dimensions.

A critical aspect revealed by the data is the lack of a strong correlation between the official criteria for managerial selection and the realities of organizational performance. Interviewees point out that standardized testing or seniority criteria cannot capture the social skills and leadership attitudes that prove decisive for team cohesion. In this sense, the data confirms a tension between the traditional selection paradigm based on “technical expertise” and the current need for relational leadership.

Furthermore, a comparative analysis of the responses shows that, in the interviewees' perception, underperforming managers are characterized by rigidity, lack of involvement, poor communication, lack

of empathy, and inability to motivate subordinates. In contrast, managers considered to be high performers are distinguished by flexibility, openness, the ability to delegate, and to integrate multiple perspectives. A dichotomy between authoritarian and participatory styles is therefore emerging, with an obvious advantage for the latter.

Although the interviews provide a detailed picture of managerial perceptions, the research has some methodological limitations that should be mentioned: (1) sample size – the relatively small number of respondents and their origin from a single organization limit the degree of generalization of the conclusions; (2) the subjectivity of the responses – as these are self-assessments and perceptions of colleagues, there is a risk of distortions generated by personal experiences or the desire to project a favourable image; (3) absence of methodological triangulation – the analysis is based exclusively on qualitative interviews, without being corroborated by other data sources (performance evaluations, organizational indicators, direct observation); (4) limited contextualisation – the responses reflect a particular organisational framework, which limits the applicability of the conclusions to organisations with different managerial cultures or leadership systems; (5) lack of a consensual hierarchy – although most interviewees recognized the central role of social skills, there is no uniform hierarchy among the three categories of traditional skills, suggesting that managerial performance depends on multiple contextual variables.

### **Conclusions and recommendations**

The analysis highlighted that managerial performance in military intelligence organizations is the result of a complex interaction between competencies, behaviours, and organizational context. Managerial competencies do not act in isolation but function through causal mechanisms that integrate technical, cognitive, social, and emotional dimensions.

The assessment shows that managerial performance cannot be reduced to a single set of competencies, but requires a balance between professional, cognitive, and social dimensions. Even though managerial

selection has traditionally been based on technical expertise and psychometric assessments, current data indicates an increasing need for relational leadership and social skills capable of building trust, motivating teams, and generating organizational cohesion.

At the same time, managers' perceptions suggest that rigidity, lack of involvement, and communication deficiencies are the main factors limiting performance, while flexibility, openness, and adaptability define the profile of a successful manager. This conclusion confirms the transition from an authoritarian to a participatory paradigm, in which managerial success depends on the quality of interpersonal relationships at least as much as on professional expertise.

The conclusions are in line with international findings in the literature on transformational leadership and contingency theories, which show that performance is determined by the fit between managers' behaviours and situational characteristics. At the same time, the study contributes to the literature by contextualizing these theories in the environment of intelligence organizations in Romania, an area that has not been explored academically.

Based on the data analysed, we can say that high-performing managers are those who combine technical expertise with social and emotional intelligence, adopting a flexible and adaptive leadership style. They manage to mobilize human resources within a strict hierarchical framework, but also to cultivate an organizational climate based on trust and collaboration, which generates sustainable performance.

These results not only confirm existing theories, but also have practical implications for the development of managerial resources: the selection, training, and evaluation of managers must simultaneously target technical, cognitive, and socio-emotional skills, depending on the specific context of the organization. In this way, both short-term efficiency and long-term resilience and adaptability of military intelligence organizations can be ensured.

The research results indicate the need for an integrated approach to the development of managers in military intelligence organizations, by strengthening the balance between technical and social skills, implementing training programs adapted to hierarchical levels, promoting

an organizational climate based on trust and collaboration, making leadership styles more flexible depending on the situational context, continuous investment in the development of cognitive skills – analysis, critical thinking, decision-making –, and the use of multidimensional evaluation mechanisms that capture both operational performance and the impact on team cohesion and organizational climate.

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