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MASTER'S THESIS

SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE IN SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

The relation between social intelligence in supply chain management is examined in this Master's thesis, emphasising the significance of the human element in the increasingly intricate and interrelated supply chains. This study asserts that interpersonal relationships, communication quality, and trust are crucial factors that determine total supply chain effectiveness, in contrast to typical methods to SCM that place an emphasis on efficiency, technology, and quantifiable performance indicators. The results show that social intelligence has a major impact on cooperation, coordination, and flexibility in a variety of supply chain operations. In dynamic contexts, it has been demonstrated that effective communication, the ability to decipher social cues, and the ability to establish and sustain relationships based on trust reduce misunderstandings, increase responsiveness, and improve problem-solving. These elements are especially crucial in cross-cultural and international settings, where performance may be impacted by variations in expectations and communication styles. Although social intelligence is widely acknowledged as crucial, it is frequently not used effectively in established supply chain practices. Its use tends to be casual rather than being systematically incorporated into organizational processes like employee training or performance evaluation. This thesis offers a more human-oriented view of supply chain management, highlighting that enhancing social intelligence can lead to better relational dynamics and improved performance across the supply chain.

KEY WORDS: social intelligence, supply chain performance, communication, trust, collaboration

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



POVZETEK

V tej magistrski nalogi je preučena povezava med socialno inteligenco in upravljanjem oskrbovalne verige, s poudarkom na pomenu človeškega elementa v vse bolj zapletenih in medsebojno povezanih oskrbovalnih verigah. Ta študija trdi, da so medosebni odnosi, kakovost komunikacije in zaupanje ključni dejavniki, ki določajo celotno učinkovitost oskrbovalne verige, v nasprotju s tipičnimi metodami SCM, ki poudarjajo učinkovitost, tehnologijo in merljive kazalnike uspešnosti. Rezultati kažejo, da ima socialna inteligenca velik vpliv na sodelovanje, koordinacijo in fleksibilnost v različnih operacijah oskrbovalne verige. V dinamičnih kontekstih je bilo dokazano, da učinkovita komunikacija, sposobnost dešifriranja socialnih znakov ter sposobnost vzpostavljanja in vzdrževanja odnosov, ki

temeljijo na zaupanju, zmanjšujejo nesporazume, povečujejo odzivnost in izboljšujejo reševanje problemov. Ti elementi so še posebej pomembni v medkulturnih in mednarodnih okoljih, kjer lahko na uspešnost vplivajo razlike v pričakovanjih in komunikacijskih slogih. Čeprav je socialna inteligenca splošno priznana kot ključna, se v uveljavljenih praksah oskrbovalne verige pogosto ne uporablja učinkovito. Njena uporaba je običajno občasna in ne sistematično vključena v organizacijske procese, kot sta usposabljanje zaposlenih ali ocenjevanje uspešnosti. Ta teza ponuja bolj človeško usmerjen pogled na upravljanje oskrbovalne verige in poudarja, da lahko izboljšanje socialne inteligence vodi do boljše dinamike odnosov in izboljšane učinkovitosti v celotni oskrbovalni verigi.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: socialna inteligenca, učinkovitost oskrbovalne verige, komunikacija, zaupanje, sodelovanje

CILJI TRAJNOSTNEGA RAZVOJA



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

sl. -Slovene

AI – (sl. Umetna inteligenca); Artificial intelligence

CSR – (sl. Socialna odgovornost podjetji); Corporate Social Responsibility

EQ – (sl. Čustveni količnik); Emotional Quotient

IQ – (sl. Inteligenčni količnik); Intelligence Quotient

SCM – (sl. Management oskrbovanih verig); Supply Chain Management

SI – (sl. Socialna inteligenca); Social Intelligence

TSIS – (sl. Tromsøjeva lestvica socialne inteligence); Tromsø Social Intelligence Scale

1 INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly globalized and interconnected business environment, supply chain management (SCM) has evolved from a predominantly operational function into a complex system of interdependent relationships. Modern supply chains span multiple organizations, cultures, and geographical regions, requiring extensive coordination, communication, and collaboration among a wide range of actors (Wu et al., 2014). Even while supply chains are now much more efficient and transparent because of technological advancements and process optimization, human interaction still plays a major role in how well they function. Because of this, the social aspect of supply chain management has grown in significance but has not received enough attention in scholarly studies.

Supply chains are social systems by nature, where long-term collaboration, problem-solving skills, and coordination efficacy are influenced by human connections, communication quality, and trust. I gained this awareness while working in customer service for a large multinational company, where the role was to coordinate and connect different parts of the supply chain. The importance of correct communication, understanding the needs and social relationships was invaluable and without a doubt impacted the performance of the whole supply chain. Strong relationships between supply chain partners promote information exchange, lower transaction costs, and increase responsiveness in dynamic contexts (Mlaker Kač et al., 2016). However, a large portion of the current SCM literature still places a strong emphasis on formal structures, quantifiable performance indicators, and technical skills, frequently ignoring the behavioral and cognitive capacities of those who work in supply chains. Misunderstandings, misplaced expectations, and poor communication can have a detrimental impact on performance in global and culturally varied supply chains, where this gap is most noticeable (Tuan, 2016).

Stemming from first hand experience, seeing the importance of human factor on supply chain performance, the idea of researching social intelligence (SI) and its impact came to mind. The ability to comprehend people, decipher social cues, modify behavior for various social situations, and establish productive connections is referred to as social intelligence. Thorndike (1920) coined the phrase and stressed that social intelligence is different from academic or technical intelligence and is essential for both personal and professional success. The idea has been expanded upon by later studies that relate social intelligence to cross-cultural communication, teamwork, and effective leadership (Goleman & Boyatzis, 2008).

This master's thesis aims to investigate how social intelligence affects social interactions and supply chain performance as well as the function of social intelligence in supply chain management. The thesis seeks to advance a more thorough knowledge of the human element in supply chains by connecting ideas from social intelligence theory with supply chain management literature. The thesis includes a theoretical overview as well as empirical

research based on in-depth, qualitative interviews with supply chain experts from various organizational levels and global locations. In order to supplement current quantitative and performance-based SCM research, this method allows the investigation of real-world experiences and perceptions (Wu et al., 2014).

The thesis has four primary objectives. The thesis's first goal is to examine the existing research on social intelligence and related ideas and talk about how supply chain management might benefit from them. Second, it aims to examine the significance of social connections in supply chains, focusing especially on cooperation, communication, and trust as factors that influence supply chain performance (Urbaniak, 2015). Third, the thesis looks at supply chain professionals' awareness and comprehension of social intelligence as well as how it shows up in their day-to-day job. Lastly, the thesis assesses how supply chain management may use social intelligence assessment and capacity-building techniques, especially in hiring, staff training, and leadership development.

I structured the thesis in the following chapters. An overview of supply chain management with an emphasis on its social context is given in the first chapter. It looks at how social ties function in SCM, talks about how important they are for supply chain performance, and evaluates current methods and their shortcomings. Second chapter focuses on the concept of social intelligence, along with its theoretical underpinnings, essential components, and methods of measurement. The chapter also examines the possible synergy between supply chain management and social intelligence. The research design and methodology are described in the third chapter, along with the qualitative approach, sampling strategy, data collecting through in-depth interviews, data analysis techniques, and research limitations. The empirical findings from interviews with supply chain specialists are presented in the fourth chapter, with particular attention to social skills in professional practice, the social aspect of supply chain performance, and the perceived potential of social intelligence integration in supply chains. The results are discussed in the fifth chapter along with their practical implications for supply chain management, limits, and future research directions. The thesis is finally concluded in the sixth chapter, which summarizes the main conclusions and highlights the importance of social intelligence for supply chain management's future advancement.

By addressing the intersection of social intelligence and supply chain management, this thesis contributes to a more human-centered perspective on supply chains and provides insights for organizations seeking to enhance performance through improved social awareness, communication, and relationship management.

2 SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS IN SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT

In supply chains of any size, social relationships are inevitable and because they form a big part of the supply chain operations we have to understand the effect that they have and how to manage them correctly. A deeper understanding of relationships in supply chain is needed, so we can apply the general research on social studies in business to the more specific managerial and operational systems in supply chains. This research is focusing on the possible link between supply chain management performance and social awareness or more specifically social intelligence. According to one of the earliest studies by O'Sullivan et al. (1976), social intelligence can be best defined as an ability composed of different segments that make up the behavioral cognition or understanding the ability to understand the feelings, thoughts, and intentions of other people. These factors correspond roughly to what we call empathy, person perception or social awareness. As all relationships are built on trust, it should also be taken in consideration when defining supply chain relationships. Good and effective cooperation (built on trust) between organization and its stakeholders leads towards being better than other companies, and thus being better than the competitors. At the end greater trust leads indirectly and, in many cases, even directly to greater competitive advantage of an organization (Mlaker Kač et al., 2016). Additionally, in international organizations with highly diversified supply chains operating in different parts of the world, special knowledge is required to manage the teams comprised of different cultures and habits to avoid miscommunication, mistrust and an altogether lacking performance.

2.1 Supply chain management: overview

Firstly, it is important to understand that there are countless types of supply chains depending on the type and size of the organization. Effective supply chain management is a critical determinant to building and sustaining competitive advantage in the market place (Sukati et al., 2012). The person that is responsible for the supply chain performance can be a supply chain manager or a professional working withing the supply chain. One way or another, the part that the responsible person plays has a larger performance effect on a company level. As Zelbst et al. (2009) point out, the success of an organization heavily depends on the success of the supply chain in which the organization plays a role as a partner. That means that we have to think about supply chains in a broader term than just it being one of the internal processes of the company. Once an organization has an established supply chain, it at the same time steps into the supply chain of other partners, so the manager has to be aware, that he is organizing an outward facing part of the company.

In a further research of supply chain management and it's impact on the performance of the supply chain, conducted by Sukati et al. (2012), it is shown that strategic supplier partners, information sharing and customer relations are the determining factors of the supply chain performance. Furthermore, it has been researched that SCM strategy alone has a negligible

impact on the performance, without integrating it to SCM organizational practices, which have a proven impact on the performance of supply chains. (Sukati et al., 2012). According to Wu et al. (2014) SCM is a tool best used for improvements in the flexibility and customer responsiveness especially in the dynamic market. They also highlight the flow of numerous activities across the whole supply chain, such as material sourcing, subassembly, production, ordering, delivery, payment, and customer service. The number and complexity of these activities makes it very difficult to effectively manage the whole supply chain. Comprehensive management should include all parts of the supply chain including physical capabilities/assets, work processes, timelines, partnerships and lastly human capital with an emphasis on professional knowledge and social awareness or intelligence. The effects of the latter will be researched more in depth in the following sections.

2.2 Social context of SCM

This idea of a complete SCM system includes procedures for organizing, carrying out, and assessing the movement of supplies, machinery, information, and human resources across businesses in order to guarantee the efficient and prompt delivery of physical goods and services between the supplier and the client (Urbaniak, 2015). Establishing long-term partnerships between businesses and their suppliers and consumers is crucial to gaining a competitive edge. Urbaniak (2015) also adds that personalized, trust-based strategy for establishing relationships, expressing interests and potential for collaboration, negotiating and carrying out transactions with partners ensure a beneficial relationship for both sides. Maintaining such relationships and showing preparedness for further partnerships requires positive evaluation of these actions, which allows all parties to recognize numerous measurable advantages.

Many researchers accentuate the impact and importance of trust in the supply chain. Mlaker et al. (2016), for example point out strong connection between trust and other factors that comprise an effective supply chain such as collaborative behaviour, shared values and communication. On the other hand, the same research also shows a semi strong negative connection between trust and opportunistic tendencies. Tuan (2016) divides trust deeper into categories of knowledge-based trust, identity-based trust and calculation-based trust. Wu et al. (2014) add that a deeper level of relational commitment will create long lasting bonds for alliances, which will encourage partners to engage in cooperative actions. Positive behaviors and beliefs of social exchange processes must gradually cultivate collaborative behaviors. From those researchers and others we can take away that trust is one of the most important factors to consider in relation to the social context of SCM. The word »trust« in all its forms and meanings appears in many articles researching supply chain relationships, SCM performance and other SCM related sources used in this research.

2.3 The importance of social relationships in SCM

Where Urbaniak (2015) sees the benefits for supply chains in practice is shortening the lead times (and reducing the associated costs), ensuring business continuity, hazard mitigation (associated with the products, people and the processes implemented in the supply chain), increasing the efficiency, flexibility and effectiveness of the processes through an efficient and rapid communication (aimed at demand planning and forecasting, joint planning of resource use etc.). As all relationships are built on trust, it should also be taken into consideration when defining supply chain relationships. Good and effective cooperation (built on trust) between organization and its stakeholders leads towards being better than other companies, and thus being better than the competitors. At the end greater trust leads indirectly and, in many cases, even directly to greater competitive advantage of an organization (Mlaker Kač et al., 2016). A study by Johnson et al. (2013) further amplifies that the collaboration in a supply chain emerges as a consequence, of the development of relational capital via mutual agreements, partners sharing an open-plan workspace and resources, all of which promote the formation of trust.

Furthermore, we can say that supporting and even improving communication is the root of social relationships in SCM and as mentioned by multiple researchers it has an impact on a number of measurable and non-measurable factors that are beneficial or even essential for the performance of a supply chain. It is worth pointing out the study of Johnson et al. (2013) that mentions open-plan workspace and the physical closeness of supply chain members which is now even more relevant than at the time of their research. We still see companies swithing to open-plan workspaces especially in supply chain departments because they are aware of the importance of information sharing and overall good personal relations that potentially bring mutual benefits for all involved. The relationship between the information sharing and supply chain performance is further researched and proven as significant, yet it has to be relative, correct and shared with all concerning parties (Eyaa et al., 2010). Only the correct information that is given in the right time to the right people, allows for better decision making and shorter lead times. Wu et al. (2014) divide the performance on finance-based and non finance based which makes it easier to futher investigate the impact of collabortive behaviour on supply chains. They mention finance-based performance such as cost efficiency and return on investment, complimented by non-finance-based performance such as customer service and market changes. Where a lot of coordination and cooperation takes place is the customer service department which is essentially the connecting link among the internal and external processes with the added responsibility of gathering and communicating the information to the customer or final link in the supply chain.

Further research implies that a high interorganizational trust encourages partners to concentrate more on developing long-term partnerships. Relationship trust between buyers and suppliers fosters stability, lowers transaction costs, encourages desired (non-opportunistic) behavior, shortens the duration of contracts, and helps with dispute resolving, which is inevitable in a complex process such as supply chain (Ryu et al., 2009). Having a

positive and strong relationship on a daily basis may have many positive benefits as already mentioned. However, misunderstandings, disputes, mistakes and other possible negative events can be handled much more efficiently when the close and thrustful relationship makes it easier to reach a compromise or an acceptable solution. More specifically that can result in lower costs, faster problem solving and a better final customer service which can all be enabled by having enough trust to have looser legal contracts with more manoeuvring space and less potential paperwork and additional time consuming processes (Ryu et al., 2009).

2.4 Existing approaches and their limitations

Generally the desired partnership in a supply chain is the result of a process whereby a supplier and a customer work together to develop comprehensive, robust social, economic, and technical relationships over time. Forming alliances typically comes from a gradual process that starts with recurring business cooperation motivated by trust in a partner's reputation and commitment to the supplier. The existing approaches focus mainly on measurable standards such as more general ISO standard or specific internal requirements that require deep assessment of supply chain partners. While there are measurable benefits to such assessments and constant monitoring for example meeting deadlines, capacities, documentation practices etc., it is important to mention also the increased reliability and consequentially trust and closer cooperation (Urbaniak, 2015).

In a research of various case studies by Goleman and Boyatzis (2008), they indicate that the approach of hiring more socially aware leading employees or managers that already have existing connections is the most impactful in crisis situations since they are able to prioritize people's needs and communicate the issues in a clear yet thoughtful manner. However, Goleman and Boyatzis (2008) also mention that many of the boards still favor specific experience over social ability when a crisis situation occurs. In such situations it is important that a manager has both but one is being favored over the other largely because it is easily defined and measured while the other is more abstract. This point is especially significant for supply chains because crisis situations are more often than not and navigating through the unpredictable and dynamic environment can impact the overall performance.

Although many organizations are aware of the effect of social relations on SCM performance, most of them focus on hard, measurable data, capacities, experience and performance assessments. The drawback of this approach is that it usually focuses on one part of the supply chain and its strategy instead of creating a common strategy which allows for common goals, greater predictability, trust and smoother problem solving (Yawar & Seuring, 2017). Moreover, the existing approaches lack the focus on newly hired employees that have yet to integrate themselves into the supply chain and form strong relationships. The hard data and existing SCM performance indicators often fail to display the ability of individuals to cooperate in a multicultural, international environment, where it is crucial to be socially perceptive both on the receiving and sharing end of the communication.

Aydin and others (2017) point out another approach that could be seen as unconventional as many supply chain managers look at supply chains as an internal process instead of shifting the orientation to a customer-based one. The implication here is not so much about the final customer as all other downstream partners which ultimately have a significant effect on the supply chain performance. Therefore, a potentially beneficial application for supply chain managers would be to define the customer oriented employees, that create and maintain positive relationships with both upstream and downstream partners. In many cases those employees work in customer service or sales departments and they act as intermediaries between the upstream and downstream partners of the supply chain.

3 SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE

There are multiple interpretations and theories about what social intelligence means, what it includes and how it is measured. This thesis focuses on the understanding of different points of view and critically interprets them in order to be able to apply the main principles to the further understanding of supply chain relationships. The definition of social intelligence that is most commonly understood and used in the thesis is the ability to understand, manage and navigate social interactions effectively and on a deeper level that includes people's emotions intentions, behaviours and backgrounds, which leads to responding in a way that builds positive relationships and achieves desired outcomes (Özdemir, 2020). The term “social intelligence” (SI) was coined in 1920 by psychologist Edward Thorndike. He wrote that social intelligence differs from academic ability and is a key element that helps people succeed in life (Thorndike, 1920). Hartini and Fakhrorazi (2018) have concluded based on previous studies that social intelligence has a positive impact on social problem-solving abilities, learning behaviour and intercultural sensitivity. Albrecht (2006) focuses on the Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences and proceeds to describe social intelligence as one of the categories in the multiple intelligence models. Wang et al. (2019), on the other hand, agree with Thorndike's categorization on academic, mechanical, and social dimensions while pointing out the possible drawbacks of Gardner's idea.

Thorndike (1920) originally conceived the psychometric view of social intelligence. In his research, he classified intelligence into three categories: mechanical intelligence, social intelligence, and abstract intelligence. Abstract intelligence is the capacity to comprehend and regulate concepts and abstract ideas. The term "mechanical intelligence" describes the capacity to comprehend and manage concrete objects, or items, within an environment. However, the researchers concluded that social intelligence refers to the interpretation and understanding of other people's psychological state and the interaction with them for better mental and emotional support. Riggio et al. (2001) mention, that especially early researchers were divided in agreeing with the Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences and even today there has not yet been a concluding argument which would point to the right definition and measurement method.

To contribute to bringing insights from social intelligence to supply chain management, the research will touch on multiple intelligence model, which allows us to find social intelligence among the six basic intelligences that form humans' total intelligence (Albrecht, 2006). Additionally, it can be further defined by different segments that make up the behavioral cognition or understanding the ability to understand the feelings, thoughts, and intentions of other people. These factors correspond roughly to what we call empathy, person perception or social awareness (O'Sullivan et al., 1976). Even though some researchers argue that the intelligence quotient (IQ) is the only relevant measurement, it is easier to define and understand the role of social intelligence if we look at it as one of our abilities that in combination with others form our intelligence. Albrecht (2006) also claims that social intelligence is the one that helps us to reduce conflict, replace polarization with understanding, create collaboration and enables people to strive toward common goals. This is and has been an actual topic for years and it applies greatly to international corporations with highly diversified supply chains involving people with different backgrounds.

As included in many researches it is important not only to understand social intelligence but to recognize the possible benefits and practical implications to supply chains and supply chain managers. Hence, it is important to include the teaching possibilities and awareness inducing courses. Training of the social intelligence in employees could have a significant impact on customer service quality (Fischman, 2015). And customer service is a bridging part of supply chains as it serves as a point of contact between the customers and organizations. Additionally, a study where social intelligence has been taken equal to emotional intelligence, a significant connection has been explored between self-management, self-awareness, social awareness, and capacity to organize relationships between the faculty members, and their training/educational performance (Ebrahimpoor et al., 2013). It is worth mentioning the importance of not only the training received but also the ability to teach and guide that successful managers need to possess.

Furthermore, Ebrahimpoor et al. (2013) point out the role of SI when climbing the company hierarchy. The essentiality of SI compared to IQ proves to be even more clear in the higher levels. Based on that, Ebrahimpoor et al. emphasise that social intelligence can be considerably useful in all organizational levels, but it has an even greater impact when it comes to the managerial or higher level positions. This insight has more of an individual application but it is still an important display of the role of SI in supply chains and organizations in general.

3.1 Elements of social intelligence

To better understand all aspects of social intelligence we can use the multiple intelligence model, which allows us to find social intelligence among the six basic intelligences that form humans' total intelligence (Albrecht, 2006). Additionally, it can be further defined by different segments that make up the behavioral cognition or understanding the ability to

understand the feelings, thoughts, and intentions of other people. These factors correspond roughly to what we call empathy, person perception or social awareness (O’Sullivan et al., 1976). Even though some researchers argue that IQ is the only relevant measurement, it is easier to define and understand the role of social intelligence if we look at it as one of our abilities that in combination with others form our total intelligence. In the following paragraphs, social intelligence will be further divided into five aspects. Wang et al. (2019) agree with the traditional division of social intelligence into social understanding, social memory, social perception, social creativity, and social knowledge.

It was Gardner (2000), who proposed that humans have a range of different key competencies/intelligences from which he started to categorize and subdivide. And although his theory of multiple intelligences was not universally accepted nor did he satisfy his personal research goals, he did push the concept far enough that other researchers started to gather their own inputs and develop the idea further. The topic of single versus multiple intelligence models is still active and there are researchers on both sides that have not yet come to a consensus. However, as Albrecht (2006) points out, the studies involve very different experimental tools and research methods so it still makes sense to narrow a research down to social intelligence instead of dealing with the theoretical fray of the multiple intelligence model itself. Table 1 further presents the key conceptual foundations of SI and their relevance in an organizational context.

Table 1: Conceptual Foundations of Social Intelligence

Concept name	Roots	Explanation	Key references
Social Intelligence (SI)	Early intelligence theories; Multiple intelligence perspective	Social intelligence refers to the ability to understand, interpret, and manage interpersonal interactions and social relationships effectively. It is considered a distinct yet complementary component of overall human intelligence.	O’Sullivan et al. (1976); Gardner (2000); Albrecht (2006)
Multiple Intelligence Model	Cognitive psychology; Educational psychology	The multiple intelligence model proposes that intelligence consists of several distinct but interacting capacities, rather than a single general intelligence (IQ), allowing social intelligence to be examined as a separate ability.	Gardner (2000); Albrecht (2006)
Social Understanding	Behavioral cognition; Social cognition	Social understanding involves comprehending the feelings, thoughts, intentions, and behaviors of others, forming the foundation of empathy and interpersonal awareness.	O’Sullivan et al. (1976); Wang et al. (2019)
Social Perception / Social Awareness	Social cognition theory; Mixed models of intelligence; Leadership studies	Social perception refers to the ability to accurately perceive social cues, emotional signals, and relational dynamics within interpersonal and organizational contexts.	O’Sullivan et al. (1976); Goleman & Boyatzis (2008)

Social Memory	Cognitive psychology; Social cognition	Social memory involves retaining and recalling information about people, relationships, and past interactions, enabling continuity and effectiveness in social relationships.	Wang et al. (2019)
Social Creativity	Creativity theory; Social problem-solving	Social creativity reflects the capacity to generate novel and effective responses to social situations, including conflict resolution and adaptive interpersonal strategies.	Wang et al. (2019)
Social Knowledge	Experiential learning; Organizational behavior	Social knowledge encompasses learned norms, roles, cultural expectations, and unwritten rules that guide appropriate behavior in social and organizational environments.	Wang et al. (2019); Goleman & Boyatzis (2008)
Emotional Intelligence (EI)	Social intelligence research; Affective psychology	Emotional intelligence focuses on recognizing, understanding, and regulating one's own emotions and those of others. While distinct, it is closely interconnected with social intelligence and often operates in synergy with it.	Goleman (1995); Fishman (2015); Ebrahimpour et al. (2013)
Relationship Management	Leadership and management theory	Relationship management refers to the ability to influence, inspire, develop others, manage conflict, and build cooperative networks that support organizational and team performance.	Goleman & Boyatzis (2008); Seal et al. (2006)

Source: Own work based on Albrecht (2006); Gardner (2000); O'Sullivan et al. (1976); Goleman (1995); Goleman & Boyatzis (2008); Wang et al. (2019); Seal et al. (2006).

An observation by Albrecht (2006) who met many members of Mensa - an international society of people with high IQ's (the only requirement to enter), where he noticed that despite their impressive cognitive capabilities, many of them struggled to connect with other people or to some degree maintain an emotional resilience. As Hartini and Fakhrorazi (2018) point out, social connections and appropriate behaviour during interactions are the main factors that have the potential to contribute towards more positive attitudes, behaviours, and outcomes in social settings. It is fair to say that these are one of the more crucial abilities alongside the actual cognitive capacities that lead to success in the modern world.

Albrecht (2006), with the intention of simplifying the individual concepts of SI, divided them into the following six primary categories, calling them »multiple smarts«:

1. Abstract Intelligence - refers to the capacity for symbolic and logical reasoning, including the manipulation of numbers, concepts, and abstract ideas.
2. Social Intelligence - denotes the ability to understand, interpret, and effectively manage interpersonal interactions and social relationships.
3. Emotional Intelligence - involves awareness of one's own emotions, the ability to regulate them, and sensitivity to the emotions of others.
4. Practical Intelligence - describes the capability to apply knowledge to real-world contexts in order to solve problems and accomplish tasks efficiently.

5. Aesthetic Intelligence - encompasses sensitivity to form, beauty, and artistic expression, including design, music, and literature.
6. Kinesthetic Intelligence - relates to the effective use of the body for skilled physical performance, such as in sports, dance, or complex motor activities.

Aydin et al. (2017) in their research focused on certain elements of SI such as social processing, social skills and social awareness. Interestingly, all of them had a direct performance influence when it came to sales, even more than the technical expertise did. Goleman and Boyatzis (2008) mention more elements that define SI and the qualities that they believe form a complete SI framework are:

- empathy – understanding other people, their needs and differences
- developing others – coaching, giving the time and energy to help others
- attunement – active listening and thinking about how others feel
- organizational awareness – valuing different cultures and values of the organization, understanding social networks and their unwritten norms
- inspiration – conveying a clear vision and stimulating an optimistic and motivational environment
- teamwork – seeking input and offering support to everyone, encouraging cooperation
- influence – convincing people to engage discussions with their self-interest and getting support from key individuals

Although these elements help to identify a socially intelligent person, we should also focus on understanding and conveying verbal and non-verbal communication to achieve tangible results or avoid conflicts. What was mentioned in their research was, like many others bring up, the difference between social and emotional intelligence, the common points and how both should be used in synergy to understand the impact on organizations and leadership performance (Goleman & Boyatzis, 2008). That is also the approach that will be used in this research so in the following stages the two will be further defined and used for practical implications.

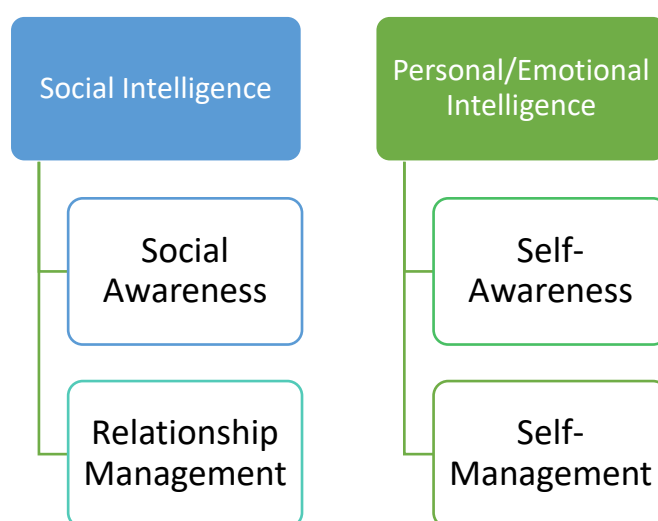
Social and emotional intelligence often intersect as they have many similar implications especially in the business atmosphere. Emotional intelligence is different in a way that it helps to understand the internal emotional landscape, which changes the persons' behaviour and in some ways how the person interacts (Goleman, 1995). Fishman (2015) also highlights the roots of both intelligences and mentions that the emotional intelligence is a newer term but has roots in SI. She then mentions the Goleman's research and how it talks about emotional intelligence while referencing social abilities and finally explains that there is a firm connection between the two intelligences. However, even though the elements of social intelligence apply to emotional intelligence, social intelligence transcends it (Ebrahimipoor et al., 2013). The boundaries where the definition of one competence ends and the definition of the other begins are not completely clear but for the benefit of this research we will not be focusing on dividing them rather, we can gain from understanding both of them in

working together to demonstrate strong cross-cultural communication and business implications that will be researched further on.

Emmerling & Boyatzis (2012) agree with and use in their research the terms social and emotional intelligence together in their efforts to establish a »mixed model« of intelligences that could apply to multiple occupations and predict performance of people with different capabilities. Additionally, Seal et al. (2006) research different clusters of competencies especially in leadership and management roles. Although they use the term Emotional Intelligence to cover multiple clusters, it is clear that they emphasized the importance of relationships and social capabilities especially for business and leadership implications. They mentioned that the capabilities can be broken down to more internal facing self awareness and self management and external facing social awareness and relationship management. The self awareness and self management enable to stimulate a more flexible way of thinking about specific situations and respond with appropriately whereas social awareness and relationship management unlock the potential to understand others and taking active interest, resolving disagreements, influencing etc..

As the Figure 1 shows, the clusters of competences can be assigned to social intelligence or emotional intelligence. Social awareness includes empathy, service orientation and organizational awareness. It is an external facing capability that helps to understand and recognize needs of customers or team members and perceiving relationships within the team or organization. Relationship Management cluster is also an external facing capability that includes inspirational and influential leadership style, helping other to achieve their goals and developments, initiating or managing change and building networks with a shared synergy and vision. Self-Awareness cluster as the name suggest focuses on internal emotions and their effects that also help to understand own strengths, limits and a sense of self worth that result in strong self confidence. Lastly, Self-Management cluster includes internal flexibility in dealing with obstacles or changes, emotional self control, achievement orientation, trustworthiness, optimism and initiative (Seal et al., 2006).

Figure 1: Clusters of Social Intelligence and Emotional Intelligence



Source: Own work based on Seal et al. (2006).

3.2 Measuring social intelligence

To properly define the seemingly abstract concept of social intelligence it is important to know that it can be measured. Numerous experiments have been done that capture its different dimensions and its impact. In an early study of O’Sullivan et al. (1976) it is mentioned that many words-based measurements failed in the past because human behaviour is easier to measure through visual and auditory stimuli such as realistic pictures, audio recordings, stick figures, cartoons, silhouettes etc.. That was done in order to measure six behavioral cognition factors: CBU – Cognition of Behavioral Units, CBR – Cognition of Behavioral Relations, CBS – Cognition of Behavioral Systems, CBT – Cognition of Behavioral Transformations, CBI – Cognition of Behavioral Implications, CBC – Cognition of Behavioral Classes. Those will be further explained in the SI tests section.

O’Sullivan et al. (1976) also highlighted the issues when measuring SI that will be problematic until we solidify a universally accepted definition of SI and define its exact components. The issue here is that there is still no common understanding, let alone awareness among general public so that we could create an accurate measuring system. Many of the measurement systems that were developed later on such as the one from Lahneman and Arcos (2014), are focusing on self-administering surveys that output values related to specific elements of social or emotional intelligence. Lahneman and Arcos specifically used examples of surveys that help to identify, map and measure the presence of SI, by using more open ended, creativity employing questions.

Dippenaar and Schaap (2017) for example, researched the measurement of SI on basis of an ESC model (Emotional and Social Competence model), integrated into the Bar-On mixed model to measure emotional intelligence. It is a model that consists of a 1-5-15 hierarchical

model of components that together construct into a single component called emotional quotient (EQ). The items that are being measured by this model are the elements that were previously researched in this paper such as adaptability, intrapersonal component, emotional self-awareness, flexibility, optimism etc.. The scores gained by this measurement output an indicator called Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i). The score measured with in this indicator was, as previously researched, a strong forecaster of effective and transformational leadership (Butler & Chinowsky 2006).

Goleman (1995) took the Bar-On approach and modified it with more specific performance-based measurements. His model is based on measuring the previously mentioned clusters of social and emotional intelligence with the focus on organizational leadership and work performance. Both Bar-On and Goleman's models are difficult to evaluate numerically as the only way to evaluate the measurement objectively is to get the values by Likert scales. Additionally there are personal and social desirability response biases that can make the results inaccurate or hard to interpret. Silvera et al. (2001) also argue that the results of such tests depend on individuals' understanding of SI and intelligence models. Nevertheless, in an effort to bring forward the lack of modern measurement tools, they designed the so called Tromsø Social Intelligence Scale (TSIS), a carefully developed and tested scale that in its final version consists of 21 questions that target three areas: social information processing, social skills and social awareness. The outputs of this measurement along with the three measurement subscales proved to be internally reliable and significantly correlated with each other (Silvera et al., 2001). Zautra et al. (2015) further solidify the TSIS method by conducting an analysis of variance which also supported the effects of increasing SI and EQ capacities through learning. Although this method of measurement should be researched more and compared to other intelligence capacity models, it is very valuable for practical application. It is easy to administer and it is not time consuming in contrast to other existing measurement methods.

Referencing the TSIS method, the research of Frankovský and Birknerová (2014) adds another measurement tool called MESI (manipulation, empathy and social irritability). The structure of the later is similar but differs in the question structure and measuring factors. The measurement as the name suggests consists of manipulation, empathy and social irritability scores, that significantly correlate to the TSIS factors. MESI methodology represents a broader concept of the view of social intelligence which includes cognitive, emotional and social components. With these differences in mind, there is a potential to combine the two measurement methods in an effort to apply them in a business environment.

The table 1 shows different cognition factors defined in a study by O'Sullivan et al. (1976), where he created multiple tests to measure six behavioral cognition elements. Each of these elements also corresponds to the elements already researched by others such as empathy, social awareness and person perception.

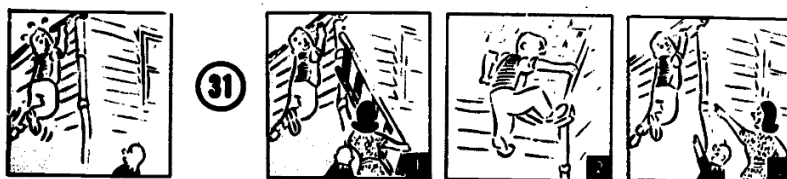
Table 2: Behavioral cognition factors and testing methods by O'Sullivan et al. (1976)

Factor	Factor definition	Testing methods
Cognition of Behavioral Units	The ability to accurately perceive and recognize discrete, observable social behaviors, such as facial expressions, gestures, or verbal cues.	Faces – Choosing one of four faces that expresses the same feeling as that of the face of the opposing gender. Expressions – Choosing an alternative drawing of expression among the given alternatives Inflections – Choosing a drawing that expresses the same feeling as a recorded audio.
Cognition of Behavioral Classes	The capacity to group individual behaviors into meaningful categories or types based on shared social or psychological characteristics.	Expression grouping – Choosing a drawing that matches a group of other three drawings. Picture exclusion – eliminating a picture that does not go with the other three.
Cognition of Behavioral Relations	Involves understanding the relationships between different social behaviors, including how one behavior is linked to, influences, or follows another within an interaction.	Social relations – Choosing verbal statements in relation to two presented facial expressions. Silhouette relations – Selecting a picture of a man in relation to a woman and his expressions – later the roles are reversed.
Cognition of Behavioral Systems	The ability to comprehend complex, organized patterns of social behavior as integrated systems, such as roles, norms, and interaction structures within groups.	Missing pictures – Choosing a picture that completes a given pictorial story. Missing cartoons – Identical principle but with cartoon panels where one is missing.
Cognition of Behavioral Transformations	The capacity to anticipate how social behaviors may change across situations, contexts, or over time in response to varying social conditions.	Picture exchange – Choosing a picture that will change the meaning of a four picture story. Social translations – Choosing an alternative pair of people where a given statement changes the intentional meaning.
Cognition of Behavioral Implications	Involves predicting the likely outcomes, consequences, or social meanings of particular behaviors for individuals or relationships.	Cartoon predictions – Choosing a cartoon that predicts what will follow from a given cartoon situation.

Source : Own work.

Figure 2: Example of Cartoon Predictions

4. **Cartoon Predictions** CBI03A. Which alternative situation can be predicted from the given one?



Answer: 1. Score: number of items right plus one-third of the number omitted.
Parts: 2; items per part: 15/15, 14/15; working time: 8 minutes.

Source: O'Sullivan et al. (1976).

Although these tests are complex and hard to administer in a business environment they show the possibility of identifying different factors within SI and the possibility of measuring them. Zaccaro et al. (1995) used this specific approach when conducting a research on SI in the US Army. Among other methods, Cartoon Predictions and Social Translations were used as the two statistically most reliable measures.

Over the years, newer methodologies were created to simplify the measuring process and make it more usable for practical situations. The Tromsø Social Intelligence Scale (TSIS) for example, is a test that consists of 21 simple questions that serve as self-reporting measurements of SI. The questions are then divided into three subscales that narrow down the concept of SI to social information processing, social skills and social awareness. The test is designed to cater a multi-angled definition of SI so it can be used in many research and business situations, keeping in mind the limitations and necessary adaptations (Silvera et al., 2001).

Even more recently emerged methodology is MESI (manipulation, empathy and social irritability), which complements TSIS method and similarly consists of 21 self-reflecting questions, rated on a 5-point Likert scale. Although there is a similarity between the two tests, the questions of the MESI test are focusing on different aspects on SI and they are meant to apply the psychometric approach by dividing SI into manipulation, empathy and social irritability. Those components alone can be used to measure SI, but there is a significant correlation with the TSIS components (Frankovský & Birknerová, 2014). As the Picture 2 shows, the correlations are statistically significant; some of them are positive and other negative.

Figure 3: Correlation coefficients between the MESI and TSIS components

Strategies	SP-social information processing	SS-social skills	SA-social awareness
F1 manipulation	.189**	.221**	-.088**
F2 empathy	.617**	.355**	.192**
F3 social irritability	-.257**	-.513**	-.369**

Source: Frankovský & Birknerová (2014).

3.3 Social intelligence in international business studies

The researchers have so far mostly focused on the potential of SI in organizations and cross-cultural settings. Both have rarely been mentioned or researched although international business studies imply the connection of different cultures in a business network. Ebrahimipour et al. (2013) for example study how SI impacts organizational performance. They use the already known metrics of SI and add a clearly defined organizational performance metric, which led to the conclusion that the SI and organizational performance are positively connected. Goleman and Boyatzis (2008) further research the presence of SI in leaders, adding a neuroscientific approach and providing case studies that support the impact of SI and the ability to learn it in order to improve the leadership style. Wawra (2009) on the other hand used the social-neuroscientific approach to connect emotions and social awareness to intercultural communication and negotiations. She also added the potential of training and increasing the capacity of intercultural knowledge in international business.

The research of Koloor and Seifollahi (2018), proves a positive correlation between social awareness and innovative performance in an Agro-Industrial & Livestock company. Managers should be aware of the strength and weakness points of their social relationships to resolve their weaknesses and leverage their strengths, gain enough positive attention and finally improve the staff performance (Koloor & Seifollahi, 2018). Rahim (2017) also argues that social intelligence training could provide a competitive advantage for companies, especially for external-facing roles such as supply chain managers and customer service representatives.

Furthermore, the impact of SI is highly dominant when it comes to important success criteria in sales activities and performance (Aydin et al., 2017). The results of the study by Aydin et al. (2017) focuses on B2B sales but also suggest training and maintenance of staff with high SI as they are proven to perform above average. Mohamed (2021) in his study finds that social intelligence was positively associated with performance of service providers and collective self-efficacy. The results of his study also show the significant effect of SI on the two primary facets of a service provider's effectiveness: contextual performance and task performance. Furthermore, in order to assist managers in determining when and where challenges arise, what steps could be taken, and what skills would be required to overcome

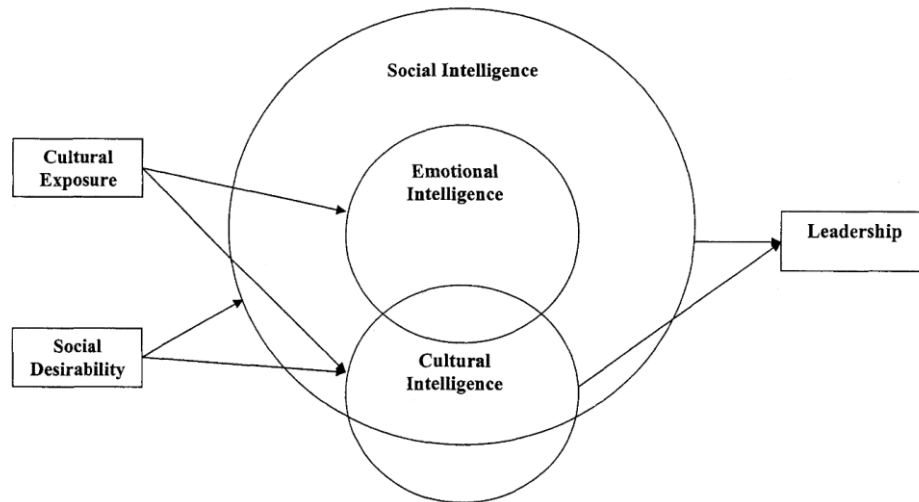
the challenges. All members of agile teams should be aware of these findings and the necessity of developing their own social intelligence skills (Patel & Poston, 2022). Patel and Poston (2022) highlight SI in group management situations where it is specifically useful when facing human and stakeholder challenges. Their research includes elements of SI that were already mentioned and demonstrates their use in tailoring responses to specific human-related challenges in order to obtain an agile organization. Al-Shalmh et al. (2020) add that dimensions of SI are powerful tools that can enhance talent management within a research team, which brings the potential to achieve better performance of an organization as a whole. They propose to employ the dimensions of SI in practice to improve decision making and social relations especially in agile organizations such as supply chains.

In a research by Sunindijo (2007) they found that project managers with higher emotional intelligence scores use more open communication and lead more proactively than managers with lower emotional intelligence scores. Open communication is a key factor in organizational success as it offers the possibility of extracting the best from people. To tackle problems at their early stages, proactivity is essential. Therefore, a project manager with high emotional intelligence can stimulate innovation and team performance. Furthermore, a study of collaborative performance in IT pointed out that team performance relies on collaboration, harmony and unity, which can be induced by a socially intelligent and aware leader. Equally, SI is crucial when building solutions as a team (Wander, 2013).

When working in multi-cultural organizations, SI plays a mediating role in order to gain trust, stimulate ideas and prevent misunderstandings. The lack of cross-cultural understanding can be a risk to the success of the organization. Trust is an issue especially within teams of different political, geographical and cultural backgrounds (Rahim, 2017). In another study Rahim (2017) also adds that certain cultures that strictly discourage cooperative behaviour pose a significant challenge aimed at enhancing SI to improve cross-cultural leadership. Riggio et al. (2001) propose the promotion of cultural intelligence which combined with emotional and social intelligence promotes better cross-cultural communication and potentially turns cultural heterogeneity into an advantage.

In the picture 2, Crowne (2007) shows how cultural intelligence is placed in relation to social and emotional intelligence and how they in combination lead to effective leadership.

Figure 4: Relations of intelligences leading to effective leadership



Source : Crowne (2007).

Wawra (2009) argues, that SI is a prerequisite to be a successful intercultural communicator which applies significantly to international business organizations. She also mentions the importance of training SI and intercultural communication in business environments. A study on international exchanged students supported those findings, stating that SI positively influence how cross-cultural awareness develops with international students and how they adjust themselves to the new environment. Understanding various cultures is crucial for individuals who interact with other individuals from diverse backgrounds. Additionally, cultivating cross-cultural awareness enables people to see and value the differences in others (Hartini, H., & Fakhrorazi, A., 2018). For the purpose of their research, Evelina et al. (2008) combine social intelligence and cross-cultural intelligence in an effort to define a successful approach by international organizations. The abilities that a cross-cultural and socially intelligent leader should possess are:

- Recognizing and understanding verbal/non-verbal signals from people of different cultural backgrounds
- Be accurate in social inferences in a variety of cultural encounters
- Accomplish relevant social objectives in cultural negotiations and interactions by accepting and understanding different cultures

3.4 SI and SCM: exploring the potential for synergy

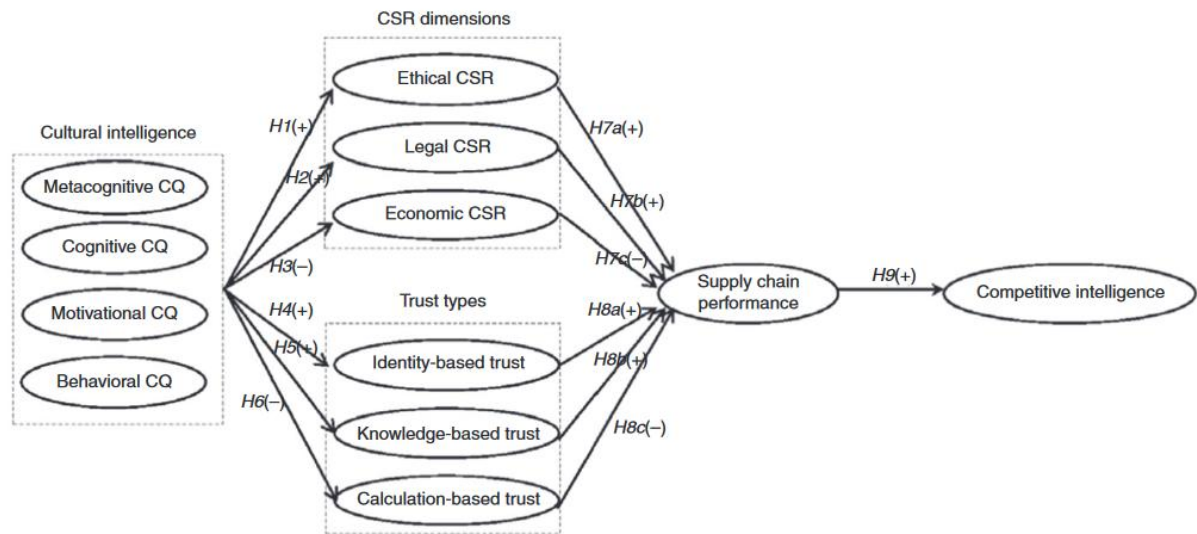
Wu et al. (2014) point out, that supply chain management is the tool best used for improvements in the flexibility and customer responsiveness especially in the dynamic market. They also highlight the flow of numerous activities across the whole supply chain, such as material sourcing, subassembly, production, ordering, delivery, payment, and

customer service. The number and complexity of these activities makes it very difficult to effectively manage the whole supply chain. These flows require a huge amount of online information sharing, communication efforts and establishing collaboration among participants in the supply chain. Handa (2018) researches the connection between cross-cultural SI and occupational success and mentions that social and cultural intelligences are responsible for higher success rate in domestic and cross-border leadership.

The unstable nature of today's economic settings forces companies to change their strategies, structures, offerings, and other aspects in order to stay competitive. Managers are the ones that can mobilize their subordinates in order to execute the desired changes. When faced with such a scenario, managers' social intelligence may be extremely important in controlling their resistance to change (Goswami, 2019). Patel and Poston (2022) emphasize that modern organizations such as supply chains are striving for agile changes and adaptations mainly due to a fast paced economic environment. Those changes often come with human challenges and pushbacks from stakeholders. Social intelligence helps to overcome those challenges by enabling a tailored approach to specific situations. Behavioral flexibility, persuasiveness, empathy and other dimensions of SI are the attributes of a leader that performs well in modern agile supply chains.

According to Eyaa et al. (2010) supply chain performance heavily relies on collaborative relations that consist of high level of trust, transparent information sharing and synchronization across the whole chain. Tuan (2016) further researched social and cultural intelligence and found that different types of trust contribute to the final supply chain performance. In the picture 3, the connections show that different dimensions of cultural intelligence connect to different trust types and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) types. In connection they all impact the final supply chain performance and lead to overall competitive intelligence – a term that encapsulates multiple metrics of intelligence and corporate performance.

Figure 5: Model that connects elements that lead to supply chain performance



Source : Tuan (2016).

Social and cultural intelligence are highly correlated to different trust types which in turn directly effect supply chain performance (Tuan, 2016). Similar model and findings were demonstrated in the research by Wu et al. (2014) where trust is one of the factors contributing to effective information sharing and colaboration which directly leads to supply chain performance. Additionally, when dealing with different cultural exposures, members of international firms, particularly those in management positions, should become aware of how social intelligence, cultural intelligence and emotional intelligence influence leadership (Crowne, 2007). As Rahim (2017) also points out, those qualities should be sought after by professionals such as supply chain managers, customers service representatives, senior leaders and others that are present in boudary spanning activities of international firms.

Table 3: SI significance for different SCM components

SCM component	SI significance
Procurement and planning	- Understanding and communicating the essential needs of the organization - Identifying suppliers and establishing high-trust relationships - Negotiation with suppliers
Inventory management	- Interpretation of recieved information and practical application - Providing clear information about the needs of inventory department, capacities and KPI's
Customer service management	- Point of contact between customer and supplier - Coordinating with the logistics department (passing correct information clearly)

	• Understanding and passing the information in a correct and precise manner • Adaptability of communication when connecting different personalities and cultures • Mediator role
Logistics management	• Direct communication with numerous transport agents and other actors in SC • Ability to negotiate with people with different backgrounds • Ability to create the sense of urgency and communicate the needs clearly
Customer service relationship	• Understanding the customer • Communicating with the customer in a way that de-escalates the situation and provides the best solution for the customer and organization • Maintaining a positive and thrustful customer relationship

Source: Own work.

4 RESEARCH

4.1 Research design

This research was designed in a way that complements and challenges the existing research on the topics of SI and SCM. The emphasis is on getting the first-hand information on how SI is currently understood among professionals working in supply chains. The research with in-depth interviews focuses on gathering specific examples and opinions regarding the claims discovered in the literature review. Since there are already various surveys done on more specific topics, this research will focus on connecting the existing data and filling the gaps that this paper highlights. Additionally, I am aiming at understanding the level of awareness about social intelligence that is present among supply chain professionals. Finally, the research focuses on the existence and the potential of capacity building and the future development of supply chain and social intelligence.

4.2 Methodology

4.2.1 Goals of the research

The purpose of this master's thesis is to provide a deeper understanding of the different dimensions of social intelligence and their impact on supply chains management. Furthermore, I aim to gain first-hand perspectives from professionals in supply chains that will offer a direct insight into the performance of supply chains and what role SI plays in it. The premise of this research is that raising the awareness of social intelligence and its importance through training and capacity building which would increase the effectiveness

of supply chains. The thesis thus provides original analysis on social intelligence in supply chain management, formulates actionable recommendations for companies how to use insights on social intelligence in improving supply chain management, and charts a future research agenda.

With this in mind the goals of my master thesis are:

- To review the literature on social intelligence among other dimensions of human intelligence and discuss it in light of its relevance for supply chain management.
- To analyze the importance of social relations in supply chains and evaluate the human-social factor in relation to supply chain efficiency.
- To gain an insight on the awareness of the importance of social intelligence among professionals working in international supply chains.
- To assess how can organizations leverage social intelligence measurements and tests in the hiring process and training of the existing and next generation of supply chain managers.

4.2.2 Methodology overview

The data sources used in this research are secondary focusing mainly on professional research articles, and primary sources focusing on first-hand experience and subjective information from professionals involved in supply chains. Using secondary data serves as a base for deep understanding of all parts of the research topic. Researching the existing studies brings together different perspectives and different focuses which can be compared and analyzed from our own perspective while focusing on a specific research topic. However, the drawbacks of secondary data have to be considered such as outdated researches or misinterpretation when analyzing and comparing different papers.

While collecting secondary data the majority of the sources used were scientific journals and books while the smaller part included popular sources such as publications from professional agencies focusing on management topics. To get a deeper understanding of the research topic I decided to group the sources on a) social intelligence, measurement and testing; b) supply chain and management topics; and c) social studies and applications in supply chain management. With this strategy I was able to get a solid foundation and understanding of the specific topics that I am aiming to connect and research further with the use of primary data.

I obtained primary data through seven semi structured open-ended in-depth interviews with supply chain experts from both leading/managerial as well as operational roles from different parts of the supply chain such as customer service, logistics, supply operations and aftersales. I interviewed experts found through personal connections, recommendations and social media such as LinkedIn. They come from different international companies with different roles in the supply chain which allowed me to get and insight on multiple levels of the

company and the concept of supply chains at the same time. The appropriate candidates were contacted using my networks built through my work in supply chain management, personal recommendations and through cold-emailing/social media (LinkedIn). Purposive and snowball sampling techniques were used where candidates were selected based on their specific expertise from supply chains and they later referred additional participant from their networks which helped to obtain hard-to-reach professionals. A semi-structured and non-standardized interview were used in order to allow more freedom for the researcher to adapt the questions to a given person or situation and follow up with additional questions to get specific and practical examples, which is the purpose of the interview. The questions were structured in a way that reflects the interviewees' understanding and perception of SI and how different aspects of it play a role in supply chain management. Furthermore, the questions reflect their thoughts on the potential of social intelligence training and testing. The interviews were conducted in person when possible (or via online meetings apps when it was the only possible way) and later transcribed for easier analysis.

4.2.1 Data collection

The interview questions were prepared in advance and divided by the topics. The questions are formed in a way that brings out the social skills awareness and understanding of how it is used in their work. Here I am trying to get some specific situations and examples where they understand that the social skills had a big impact or had the potential to change the outcome. Following group of questions dives into the social aspect of supply chain performance. The questions are aiming at the perception or actual examples of the interviewee about the impact of relationships on the supply chain performance. The goal is also to position the concept of social intelligence in a more specific role and try to see in what ways does it affect supply chains. Last set of questions are directly addressing social intelligence, starting with a basic concept introduction and following up with questions that probe the interviewee to provide specific examples and answers regarding how they and their company operate in this field. The last group of questions aims at researching the potential of SI measuring and implementation from the perspective of supply chain experts. Additionally, their perspective will be questioned regarding the future trends and their personal opinions about the topic that I was not able to cover with my questions.

To make sure that the questions were clear and insightful I first went over them with one of the candidates. After that, I made some corrections to avoid confusion and I conducted a mock interview with ChatGPT version 5.0 where the main goal was getting some feedback on how to perfect the flow and structure of the questions. For this purpose, through advanced prompting, the ChatGPT bot was primed to be an experienced supply chain and logistics manager that leads a small team of 5-10 people in an international pharmaceutical company. The mock interview provided me with both positive and negative feedback which I used to improve the interview draft. Such simulated AI interviews are being investigated more and more in academic research and applied educational contexts. Employing AI, such as

ChatGPT, in simulated interviews improve question formulation, flow, and structure which is consistent with new academic approaches to research methods (Nguyen et al., 2025).

I selected seven candidates in total with the purposive and snowball sampling method which allowed me to find the best suiting experts on different positions in different work fields. The diversity provided me with different perspectives to avoid getting similar experiences and information from all candidates. All candidates selected to remain anonymous.

The interviews were scheduled on different dates and were conducted both in person and online on the Zoom platform. Before each interview I explained the reason of the interview, introduced the topic that I am researching and gave them a preview of the interview so they can get an idea what topics will be discussed. I also presented them the GDPR form in advance and assured them that I will adhere to the data collection policies and the ethical standards when doing the field research.

I conducted the interviews in English, Slovenian and Spanish according to the native language of the respondent or their personal preference. After I conducted all interviews I transcribed them by going over the interview recordings. With that process concluded, I proceeded with the detailed thematic analysis.

4.2.2 Data analysis methods

The data gathered from the interviews was analysed using thematic analysis which is a tool often used for the analysis of qualitative data. It helped me to get a better understanding of different points of view and personal experiences. In the analysis the data was compared and cross referenced because the candidates provided very different answers and personal examples based on their experience and perceptions.

4.2.3 Sample analysis

Because the research of primary data is interview based, the sample of the candidates needed to as diverse as possible and big enough to capture enough relevant information in order to compare and conduct further analysis. The potential candidates were selected using a purposive and snowball sampling methods which resulted in a diverse group with experience from different fields and position. This process was enough to reach data saturation so additional interviews were not needed.

The first step was to contact several supply chain manager and professionals by email and LinkedIn network. This process involved over 20 invitations to participate in my research and only 3 of them agreed to participate. When searching for suitable candidates I first looked for connections from my personal network and from there I searched for their connections and filtered by the field they work in and positions that they have. I focused on both locally present companies and international ones. Additionally, I made sure that the

candidates were part of both big and smaller companies, the focus was on getting a group as diverse as possible but still within the limits of the supply chain management field.

The first 3 respondents later gave me referrals to their known contacts that could be suitable for my research. This snowball sampling method resulted in two more suitable candidates. The last two candidates were selected via my own connection network but I was careful to select respondents that were relevant for the research and had enough professional experience to provide valuable answers.

The respondents were mostly from Slovenia with one candidate being from Albania and one candidate from Mexico. I only managed to conduct two interviews in person, the rest was done via a meeting app. The respondents are listed below.

Table 4: List of respondents

Respondent	Position	Company size and operation	Years of experience	Duration	Origin
1	Logistics Coordinator	Mid-size international - Logistics	5 years	00:11:32	SLO
2	Head Supply Chain Management	Big international - Pharmaceutical	Over 15 years	00:21:09	SLO
3	Regional Supply Chain Manager	Big international - Pharmaceutical	Over 5 years	00:21:58	SLO
4	Supply Operations Manager	Mid-size international - Pharmaceutical	7 years	00:21:11	SLO
5	Logistics and Supply Manager	Small local – Home appliance production	Over 5 years	00:05:57	MEX
6	Supply Development Manager	Big local – Health products	8 years	00:14:44	ALB
7	Aftersales Supply Chain and Administration Manager – Adriatic region	Big international - Automotive	Over 10 years	00:24:56	SLO

Source: Own work.

4.2.4 Reflection on the process of interviewing

The interviewing process formed a central pillar of the empirical component of this research. Engaging directly with seven supply chain professionals provided rich, practice-based insights that would have been difficult to obtain through secondary sources alone. This chapter reflects critically on the design, execution, and overall experience of conducting

these interviews. It discusses methodological considerations, interpersonal dynamics, challenges encountered, and the researcher's own learning and development throughout the process.

4.2.4.1 Preparation, design and challenges

Before conducting the interviews, substantial time was invested in developing a semi-structured interview that would balance structure and lead the candidates through the research topics. It was also designed in a way that allowed flexibility to allow them to elaborate on experiences relevant to their role and context. The process of designing the interview highlighted the importance of aligning questions directly with research objectives while keeping language accessible and industry-appropriate. Recruitment also required careful planning. Identifying suitable supply chain professionals with the expertise and willingness to participate proved more time-consuming than anticipated. Several potential participants declined or never responded. This experience underscored the value of professional networks since the candidates themselves proved useful in providing other possible contacts from their networks. One of the bigger challenges was scheduling due to irregular working hours and time differences. However, adaptability solved the issue of numerous reschedulings. Another challenge proved to be the depth and direction of the answers because of the semi-structured nature of the interview. Some candidates turned out to provide lengthy answers and were easy to keep on track with the research topic, while others either strayed from the topic completely or gave short answers despite follow-up questions and trying to engage in a deeper discussion. Part of the issue was a different understanding of the research topic which will be discussed more in the reflection section. A constraint worth mentioning was also the transcription part as the interviews were conducted in different languages and some candidates were not speaking perfectly clear or with formal vocabulary.

4.2.4.2 Conducting the interviews

Establishing initial rapport with candidates emerged as a crucial aspect of the interviewing process. As many interviewees were senior professionals accustomed to targeted, results-driven communication, contributing with an informal discussion helped create a more relaxed atmosphere but it was crucial not to introduce bias by accident. This contributed to more open and reflective responses during the interview itself. Although the interviews were anchored by a pre-defined set of questions, participants often diverted into related topics or emphasized areas that were not originally expected to be central. Allowing these digressions proved highly valuable, as they frequently revealed insights into their personal understanding of social intelligence, relationships and supply chain implications. At the same time, it required careful steering to ensure that the essential topics were ultimately covered without interrupting participants' natural flow of thought. The semi-structured interview style invited participants to provide insight to their perception and understanding

of the research topic and allowed them to express their opinions and experience. This proved to be valuable for the research but difficult at the same time as not every participant was able to elaborate their thoughts and provided answers that were straight to the point. This resulted in different interview durations with the average duration being around 20 minutes.

4.2.4.3 Data quality reflection

The dynamics of each interview directly influenced the richness and reliability of the data collected. Interviews where rapport was quickly established and the topic was well understood provided the most rich and elaborated answers. Conversely, interviews that began more formally, with less understanding of the topic or in a time-pressured context produced concise, sometimes resulting in more guarded responses. Recognizing these differences proved important during analysis, prompting the researcher to account for situational factors rather than interpreting variations in depth as differences in participant expertise or relevance. It was crucial to understand and interpret the answers from the researchers' standpoint to extract the most value from even the shortest answers. Overall, the interviewing process was a deeply instructive and enriching component of the thesis, providing indispensable empirical data. Conducting seven interviews with supply chain professionals highlighted the value of human-centric research methods in understanding complex organizational phenomena. Especially valuable for the analysis part are the very different answers provided by professionals from different positions and industries. The range of information that the interviews were able to gather is important in order to understand the perception of social intelligence and its impact in supply chain management which is one of the main goals of the primary research.

4.2.5 Limitations of the research

The own research in this paper relies heavily on the information extracted from the interviews which was a conscious decision in order to obtain subjective information, personal stories and real world experience. Since one of the goals of the research is to find out about the awareness of SI amongs the supply chain professionals it was crucial to dive deeper with open ended questions for interpretations partly also because SI is a multi-dimensional concept and structured surveys might not be able to capture the information needed for the goals of this research. However, the selected method does expose certain limitations:

- Personal bias – Even though personal understanding and experience was the main goal it is hard to objectively interpret the interview data especially from the standpoint of the researcher that already has some research background and personal opinion.

- Overgeneralization – Due to the complexity and multi-disciplinary field there is a risk that the findings don't cover the entire spectrum of SCM. The candidates were selected from different departments, countries, sectors and generations which guaranteed data saturation however, the answers might not guarantee a complete insight on how social intelligence is perceived and applied in different sectors or cultures. The research terms SCM and SI are very broad and multi-dimensional so it is hard to capture and analyze information without some level of generalization.
- Lack of longitudinal data – SI in supply chains is an evolving topic with very different views and definitions that evolved over time and will continue to evolve. Hence, the information gathered in as single point in time could be different that if we would capture how the development of social intelligence over time changes and in which direction it is moving.

5 RESULTS

The research results of interviews with supply chain experts will be divided into three parts where each of the interview sections will be discussed to allow easier understanding of the broad information collected from the respondents. At the end, the reflection on the process of interviewing is provided from the perspective of the interview designer and interviewer. The interviews cover several key themes regarding social intelligence in supply chains. Communication emerges as the main activity, requiring continuous adaptation to different audiences. Trust is mentioned in relation to reliability and consistent task fulfillment. Misunderstandings largely stem from unclear communication, emphasizing the need for clarity, repetition, and structured information exchange. Social relationships significantly influence performance, particularly in managing disruptions and fostering collaboration. While social intelligence is widely recognized as essential, its formal measurement and development remain limited. The growing use of artificial intelligence presents both opportunities for efficiency and risks to interpersonal skill development and relationship quality.

5.1 Social skills in their profession

When asked how much of their work includes communication or collaboration, most of the respondents quickly answered that it is the predominant part and they estimated that it represents between 70 and 90 percent of their work, with some of them judging this percentage even higher and emphasised that it is the base of their day to day work. All of the respondents confirmed that they adapt the communication according to the people on the receiving end with respondents 1,4 and 5 specifying that they mostly adapt due to different seniority or departments while the rest of the respondents touching more on the cultural and personal differences. Respondent 1 also added the language and written/spoken communication barriers that make him adapt his communication.

When asked how they gain trust among their contacts is where the answers were very different and based on personal experience and beliefs. The one thing that they all agreed with was that the most important thing is to complete the assigned tasks exactly as they were required and within the deadlines. Respondents 3,4 and 5 also mentioned that being open and helpful helps to gain trust in a way that they allow different views and opinions and offer transparency. Respondents 2 and 6 shared different views with respondent 2 explaining that authenticity and personal approach gains trust whereas respondent 6 pointed out that the most important point is to be professional and precise with everything you do and say. They both agreed that at the end what matters the most in getting the trust from the other person is to complete what was agreed upon.

The last part in this segment was about their experience with misunderstandings in their work. While most of them did not remember specific situations, they gave general everyday examples of misunderstandings and provided their opinions on how to avoid them or resolve them. Respondents 1, 5 and 6 remembered specific situations where poor communication or lack of understanding led to issues that can impact business outcomes. Respondent 1 explained how the client was not specific enough with their needs so the documentation had to be redone multiple times causing frustration and extra work. He is aware that the situation could be avoided by asking for more specific instructions before proceeding especially when knowing the specifics of this client. Respondent 5 provided an example with a similar root cause where the needs were not communicated clearly enough and the communications with a supplier was not understood correctly which resulted in the lack shipped material. His solution to this kind of misunderstandings is to communicate more clearly and perhaps use a more uniform form of communication to avoid the risk of misunderstanding the messages. Respondent 6 provided an example where the lack of knowledge and experience lead to complication in the implementation process and poor relationships due to criticism and harsh comments. The respondent added that the solution was a more direct communication and cooperation in the team. Other respondents provided valuable insight on how misunderstandings normally happen, how they act to prevent them and how to go about fixing them when they happen. Respondent 2 focused on the communication tools and how communication changed over time in a sense that the tempo of information exchanging is much faster now which can lead to misunderstandings. Respondents 3 and 7 gave similar insight on how to prevent misunderstanding or act when they occur. They say that it helps to repeat important information and to keep in mind that not everyone understands communication in the same way. Respondent 4 gave a personal preference which is to involve other responsible parties that can help to guide the process and avoid misunderstandings with their experience and leadership.

5.2 Supply chain performance – Social aspect

The second segment transitioned the conversation into the social aspect of the supply chain performance. With the exception of respondents 6 and 7, the rest answered that they see

punctuality and consistence as the most important part of supply chain performance. The answers were somewhat similar and they all agreed that a successful supply chain is based on delivering on the promises on time and complete. Respondent 3 added that having well designed processes also helps to avoid possible delays and issues. Respondent 2 pointed out that in highly automatized supply chain it is crucial to have correct data since this is the basis for decision making. Respondents 6 and 7 were the ones to highlight the importance of communication and collaboration which they said are the things that help in difficult situations. Good relationships and dialogue lead to the other party to be more willing to help and understand certain situation. Respondent 7 also added that this social aspect affects on how you feel in the work environment because good social relationships cause him and his coworkers to enjoy coming to work more.

When asked more specifically how the social aspect impacts the supply chain performance all of the respondents recognized the importance of it. Some of them generalized by saying that the social aspect plays a big role in all jobs because it impacts the overall well-being of the team and it prevents unnecessary misunderstandings, whereas others connected this aspect to the specifics of supply chains and the amount of organization and collaborations is needed for a successful operation. Both internal and external communication was mentioned, the internal one focusing on good relationships with coworkers and feeling good in a workspace while the external communication was mentioned because it can often help when complications arise and it is up to an external party to give a hand.

When it comes to bad social relationships and misunderstandings, the responses were homogenous except of respondent 6 that saw the lack of effort and knowledge as the main reason for poor performance and relationships. The rest of the responses focused on issues stemming from communication and personalities. Respondent 1 for example exposed the lack of social awareness and cultural differences. Respondent 2 said: »As always, there are two people in a relationship, sender and receiver and vice versa and likely (the reason for issues) is in the transfer of information and fulfillment of expectations.« Respondent 3 pointed more towards the clash of personalities where neither one is willing to adapt to the other person which leads to a dysfunctional relationship. Respondent 4 said that they can't exactly point out the main reason but in their experience the issues come from certain countries where the same communication that is used for others does not bring the same results and often lead to delays and them go in a circle. Respondent 5 did not elaborate a lot but said in short that the »Lack of communication« is the reason for bad social relationships. Respondent 7 mentioned egoism as an important issue that leads to conflicts and the way he sees the solution is to first give the involved people time to cool off and then have an open conversation where you set clear commitments. He added an interesting point »People understand when you fail but they resent a lot when there is no progress and if they see no effort. That is the worst.«.

The segment was concluded with the question »What part of the supply chain has the most social contacts?«

Table 5: Responses on what part of supply chain has the most social contacts.

Respondent 1	The commerical one. »Because they need to actually introduce themselves to a client and make them believe they are a good company that is worth working with.«
Respondent 2	Customer service. »Customer service, I think it is the most important that it has a good social network.« Launch management as well as it's a project management role.
Respondent 3	Customer service, because it is based on communication and connecting various parts of the supply chain. They added that almost all departments participate in communication so it is hard to point out a single one.
Respondent 4	Internally it is customer service and externally a purchasing coordinator or department since it has contacts outside of the organisation.
Respondent 5	They said that all parts but logistics the most because if the relationships are not good there, the final objective will not be reached.
Respondent 6	They couldn't point out a single part because all of them have social contacts and supply chain is basically working with people.
Respondent 7	They couldn't specify a department but instead pointed out that managerial roles have the most important social contacts as they have to coordinate, lead the conversations and supports communication on operational level.

Source: Own work.

The majority of respondents mentioned Customer service as a department that has the most social contact in supply chain. Another common answer was neither or all of them, meaning that the respondents did not want to or could not select a specific part because supply chain as a whole is based on communication and collaborating with people.

5.3 Potential of SI integration in supply chains

The last segment was focused specifically on SI in their work environments. The goal was to capture how they feel that the SI is used and measured on their positions and in their companies. In addition, the questions were targeted at the potential of SI capacity building and future development of SI as a concept in the fast paced environment and the rise of AI.

In the beginning of the segment all respondents confirmed that they are familiar with the concept of SI to some degree whether they used common sense to interpret it, they actively learned about this topic or they heard about it in their studies. Following, was the question on how this concept relates to their work and their views are listed below:

- Respondent 1 – It helps them to resolve problems faster and understand the problems of coworkers or other partners easier. This response highlights social intelligence as a practical tool for improving operational efficiency particularly by preventing time wasting corrections.

- Respondent 2 – It plays a big part especially in large multinational companies since the startups and innovators can be a one man band. They lead a team of about 200 people from departments and managers where it is hard to know everyone especially when there is a high fluctuation and a lot of new people. They mentioned that the social part is even more important because you are dealing with people and the managers or leaders especially have to be aware of that. Their perspective positions social intelligence as a key leadership capability, particularly for maintaining engagement, visibility, and cohesion in large and dynamic teams where personal familiarity is limited.
- Respondent 3 – The concept absolutely applies to their work because there is a lot of communication and each departments has their own contacts and relationships. For example their role acts as an intermediary between departments like customer service, commercial and country as a buyer. A big part of every day work is the communication and transfer of information and a part of SI is how you adapt your communication according to your audience and secondly, how you are able to understand and listen to your audience. They added that it is important to put yourself in the shoes of the other person and adapt your tone, graphics and all other elements that form communication.
- Respondent 4 – They mentioned that it plays an important part that helps you »create profiles«. Awareness is important in order to assess if you have this capacity or you could use some improvement. The respondent also emphasized self-assessment, and impression management, suggesting that social intelligence influences not only interactions but also how supply chain professionals present themselves to external stakeholders.
- Respondent 5 – The respondent presents social intelligence as a decisive factor between success and failure. Their statement implies that inadequate social intelligence leads to misinterpretation of needs and objectives, directly endanger goal achieving within complex supply chain processes.
- Respondent 6 – It helps not only in the professional environment but in life in general. It tells you how to act appropriately and adapt to the situation. This view frames SI as a general adaptive capability. In a professional context, this suggests that socially intelligent individuals are better equipped to adjust their behavior to situational demands commonly encountered in supply chain environments.
- Respondent 7 – They started off by mentioning that listening and understanding are two different things. They see a great importance in really paying attention to your audience and genuinely caring, not just listening to listen. Getting closer to the other person creates a bond that is stronger and those are the relationships where we are more likely to help each other. Even though it never evolves to a more personal level and it remains as a »professional friendship«. Their perspective suggests that social intelligence strengthens professional relationships, fostering trust and cooperation while remaining within appropriate professional boundaries.

All respondents were able to confirm that SI relates to their workfield. Some of them were able to provide more indepth answers and examples while others went straight to the point but nevertheless clearly stated that it plays a big part in their work.

The goal of the next question was to find out if their company ever measures SI or a similar cognitive capacity with new or existing employees. Respondents 7, 6, 5 and 2 don't have any knowledge of such tests in their company although respondent 2 mentioned, that the initial interview plays a big part in assessing this capacity, but there is no specific test dedicated to social intelligence, only a general »360« personality test that probably includes some aspects of SI. Respondent 6 also mentioned that there is most likely a general managerial check for higher positions.

Respondent 1 said that their interview process included a cognitive test where the employer was evaluating the communication skills and politeness since those skills are needed for working with clients. They added that they were also chosen because of the email application which was very polite and made it easy to understand who they are and why they are applying. Respondent 3 answered that they have psychological tests and they apply to different departments although at times it falls out of use, depending on the amount of potential new employees. »We have psychological tests and part of it is also social intelligence.« Respondent 4 also answered positively, saying that they use such tests when employing but they also mentioned that sometimes it is noticable how some employees are clearly lacking the social intelligence capacity, indicating that the tests that they use might not be the most reliable.

The next question was targeted at the potential capacity building of existing employees in the companies of the interviewees. The answers were mixed again from Respondent 6 that said that there is no training whatsoever and there is just an »ethics code« that serves as a guidance to all employees. Respondent 5 also denied the existence of any official training or capacity building but he added that he personally is trying to grow in this direction and understand his coworkers, why they are doing what they are doing in order to achieve the objective. Respondent 2 mentioned that there is no specific training for social intelligence but the existing trainings are interconnected and they most likely cover this topic as well. They touched on the subject of wellbeing, social security and working from home and how this changes the relationships and they elaborated that those relationships outside of work (cofee meetings, social events etc.) often lead to great ideas and in this aspect of creating new ideas a lot is still unknown. Respondent 7 confirmed that the company is working on building worksops that will be implemented soon but they will be for management cadre only and in their opinion it should be a company-wide application. Until the time of the interview there has been no such trainings, only talks and plans for the near future. The respondent agreed that apart from training an initial evaluation would be beneficial since relationships are hard to learn and they are more feeling based. Respondents 4 and 3 both confirmed that their company

uses tests that might not be specifically named »social intelligence« but they cover this topic in some chapters of the course. Respondent 4 added that the company is putting a lot of effort into communicating ethical guidances and behaviour practices. However they mentioned that even with all this effort there are still individuals that are clearly not following the guidelines in the company.

The last question was directed at the future trends and what how will the impact of social intelligence change with the introduction of tools such as artificial intelligence (AI). Those that did not mention the possible negative effects were additionally asked if they see and danger or negative side. The nature of the question allowed for very different and open topic answers.

- Respondent 1 – They view AI tools as particularly beneficial for individuals with lower social skills, as they can reduce communication anxiety and increase efficiency. However, they also express concern that overreliance on such technologies may hinder the development and improvement of interpersonal competencies over time.
- Respondent 2 – They already use some of the modern tools inside the company such as an »internal Chat GPT«. They emphasized that AI tools are already embedded in supply chain operations and are progressively automating both information retrieval and operational processes. While they acknowledged significant productivity gains and workforce reductions in the future, they also highlighted risks related to misuse, job displacement, security, and the difficulty of controlling the technology's long-term impact. Apart from that it could be hard to contain the technology and make it serve its real purpose.
- Respondent 3 –They pointed out that higher productivity, time saving and task automatization make sense, that way you free up the time for employees to focus on more complex tasks. The negative part would be tracking the reliability, information sources, how they are processed and the general computing process behind the answer. The lack of know-how could be problematic but the potential is high so they stressed that it is critical to decide in what direction do we want to go with this technology and what tasks do we trust with it in order to not cause more damage than benefit. The respondent personally experienced surprisingly positive results in some tasks but very unreliable results in others.
- Respondent 4 – Just like Respondent 3 they mention that there are upsides and downsides at the same time. While AI can support communication and reduce misunderstandings (particularly for individuals lacking confidence in writing) it may also mask deficiencies in social skills and reduce meaningful human interaction. They emphasize that AI can assist but cannot fully substitute social intelligence.
- Respondent 5 – They see the rise of new technologies such as AI as something that could have a more negative impact on the social aspect of supply chains. That is mostly because relationships with different parts of supply chain might weaken and they believe that good relationships are key to achieving business goals. They added that in case that the

supply chain continues growing and good contacts are not maintained it can lead to shaky relationships with business partners which lead the respondent to view the overall impact as predominantly negative.

- Respondent 6 – It was hard for them to connect the modern technologies to the concept of social intelligence but after additional elaborations, they confirmed that AI might take over certain tasks but the focus will still be on the person that provides inputs. It will mostly be used in routine tasks according to the protocols. People still tend to prefer talking to a person and not a bot. A bot predicts and assumes what you mean and people also assume at the beginning but we very quickly understand what somebody wants. They believe it's a mistake from the companies that implement such technology for things such as IT tickets because of the lack of human understanding. Such technology needs data behind and in some cases it cannot take every variable into account to make the correct decision or provide a solution.
- Respondent 7 – They believe that the technology is already heavily implemented in everything that we do, from socializing, communication and work. The constant use of mobile phones and how this changes the way we communicate and understand what somebody is trying to say. For example a written text or email is harder to understand correctly than talking in person especially if we use abbreviations. We can't know the intonation and the emotional background of the message. Regarding AI they see it as a useful tool but it is important to be careful when it comes to communication. They noticed that the younger generations are lacking the professional communication, that is where AI can be helpful but they think it's sad that such tools have better articulation than young perspective cadre. Another important point that they mentioned is that a company has to be cautious when implementing AI because of its limitations and the access that it might have. However, it will progress despite possible possible drawbacks and improve competitiveness.

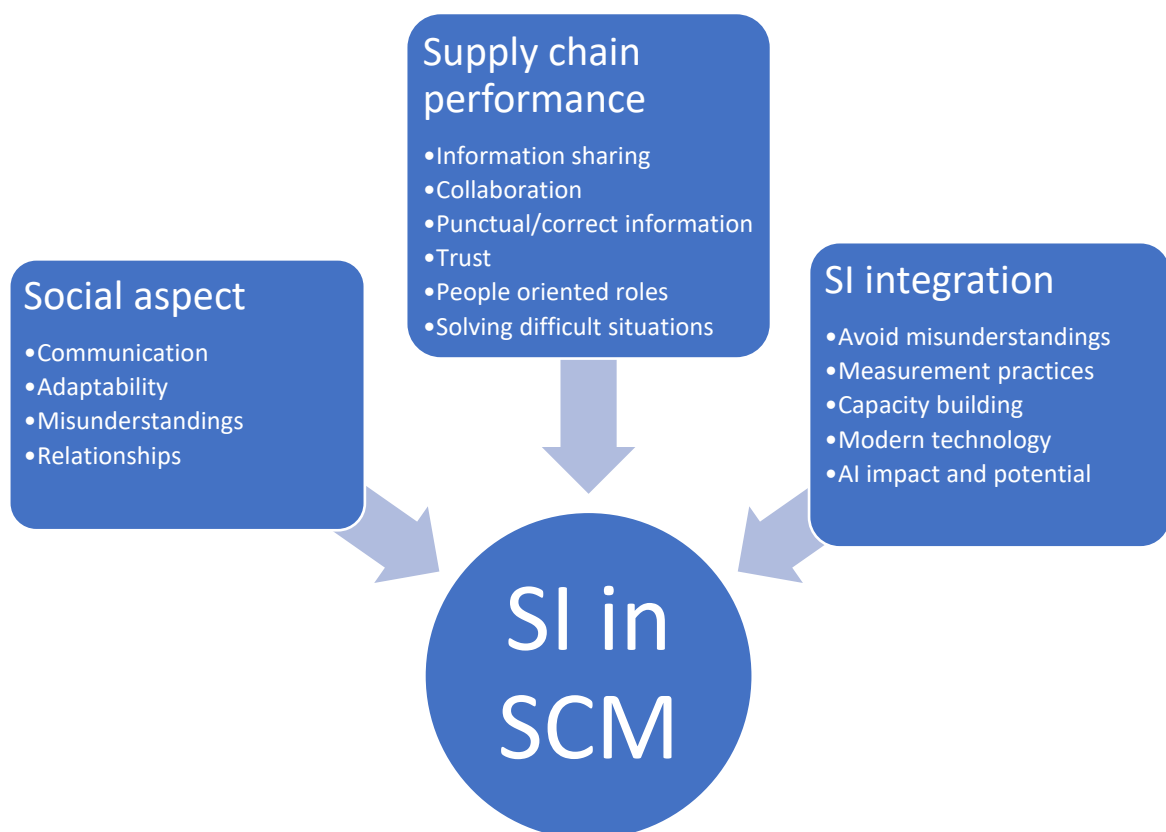
At the end of the interview each respondent was asked if they would like to add anything in regards to the topic of social intelligence in supply chains. Respondent 2 only mentioned that he finds the topic important and worth researching. Respondent 3 shared their experience working in customer service and how the information sharing and communication changed or should change when talking with different departments in order to get what you needed from them. They recognized that the way you communicate your requests can help to save time and additional explaining. Equally important is information sharing that should be clear and structured in a way that the target audience understands it instantly. They said that it was a part of their process to observe or ask in order to understand what would be the best way to cooperate without misunderstandings. They finished by saying that »social intelligence might not be the first thing you think of in supply chain, but it definitely is a big part of it«. Respondent 6 concluded the interview by mentioning that social intelligence is something that you either have or not, doubting that we can learn it with courses. For example, one can't learn logical thinking by attending trainings. Emotional intelligence is the same and it

depends also on how you were brought up. Respondent 7 rounded up the interview by saying that supply chain is one of the most stressful functions due to constant changes and promises that need to be delivered. Work of other departments such as sales, production or purchasing end up in the hands of supply chain that has to coordinate to keep the promises. »That is where communication becomes very important and being susceptible to it is a big advantage or makes it a lot easier.«

5.4 Analysis of the results

Supply chain management is an intermediary role that requires collaboration, communication and coordination. It navigates relationships with suppliers, partners and customers which contributes to the performance of the supply chain itself (Sukati et al., 2012). The data obtained by interviewing supply chain professionals provides first hand insight into the importance of understanding the social situations, relationships, communication etc. which is the premise of the paper. The below thematic map shows what themes were most often mentioned in different segments of the interview.

Figure 6: Thematic map of main themes mentioned in the interviews



Source: Own work.

6 DISCUSSION

The discussion consists of the analysis of the data obtained with the interviews, possible practical implications that link to secondary source research. Primary research data in this chapter clearly links and compares to the information gathered from academic sources from the role that SI plays in supply chains to the ways to measure and implement it. Drawing from that, this part also presents practical implication frameworks. Lastly, this chapter includes limitations and recommendations for future research.

6.1 Social aspect

Interviewees confirmed that the majority of their work consists of social contacts and communication with either coworkers, partners or third parties. All of them recognized the importance that the human contact plays in their day to day work. As Johnson et al. (2013) mention, many companies are transitioning to open floor plan and bringing close the teams where collaboration is important. The interview answers further strengthen the belief that social connections still play a big part in supply chain management and the topic is just as relevant as it was at the time of the older research papers. Among the researched secondary sources the research by Sunindijo (2007) stands out, as they claim that emotionally intelligent leaders focus on open communication and proactivity, which was a trait observed especially in the answers of respondents 3 and 7. Respondent 7 for example, emphasised the importance of open communication that stretches beyond the strict office environment. Two specific areas where he applies this are conflicts or misunderstandings and relationship building either within his team or with partners. Respondent 3 on the other hand, focused more on open communication with direct contacts in order to get what they need. They also mentioned the importance of such communication when giving instructions or handing over tasks.

While talking about the social aspect the majority of respondents recalled situations where misunderstandings led to negative results whether it was additional work, time loss or in the case of Respondent 5 even incomplete orders. The answers positively connect with the findings of Ryu et al. (2009), that claim that building strong relationships daily helps to prevent such issues or allow much easier resolution by reaching a compromise. Respondents 2 and 7 were on the same page that the medium of communication changes the dynamic because some factors such as intonation or emotional note can be hard or impossible to communicate via written messages. Different people can understand the same written message in many different ways. Respondent 2 added that over the years the communication and the technology changed and we can communicate much faster now than we did when they started working. They said that »there is a lot of communication through some tools where there is a lot of opportunity to misunderstand the communication«.

As Respondent 1 mentions, it is important to recognize the specifics of the receiver so we can adapt our communication. In their case it was a specific example of partners from a different country that did not give detailed instructions initially so their expectation needed to be cleared up by asking more specific questions. Similarly, Respondent 4 said that they prefer the other side to contribute with their comments and ideas in order for both sides to be able to adapt and find the best solution. The adaptability point draws interest especially because it appears in the ESC model which is integrated in the Bar-On mixed measurement model, researched by the already mentioned Dippenaar and Schaap (2017), Butler and Chinowsky (2006) and Goleman (1995).

6.2 Impact on supply chain performance

Supply chain performance depends on many factors and the interviews proved it by providing different opinions from the professionals. Five out of seven respondents suggested that the performance ultimately comes down to delivery times, respecting the delivery promises both in timelines and quantities. Respondent 3 for example mentioned, that the well defined processes have a crucial impact on performance. Sukati et al. (2012) argue that SCM strategy alone doesn't have such a big impact on the performance of the supply chain. Wu et al. (2014) add that SCM should have a comprehensive approach including different parts of a supply chain such as physical capabilities/assets, work processes, timelines, partnerships, human capital etc. The importance of technical knowledge and solid process is undeniable but supply chains are dynamic and it is necessary to look beyond the rigid frameworks. Factors such as interpersonal relationships, trust, communication among others have a significant impact on the final supply chain performance indicators that some interviewees mentioned.

The remaining respondents said that supply chain is a social or people-oriented role and therefore relationships have one of the strongest impacts on the performance. Both respondents elaborated that good relationships are mostly beneficial in case of urgent situations or issues, which are an unavoidable part of working in supply chains. A specific example was provided from both and it was the possibility of the partner or supplier to make exceptions for you or even favors if a good relationship exists. This is invaluable in unpredictable situations that often occur due to the nature of the supply chain business.

The concept of trust was presented to the candidates within the interview question but it was also mentioned numerous times directly or indirectly in their answers. The most repeated answers on how to gain trust was fulfilling the promises that were made initially and open communication. Respondents 5 and 6 specifically mentioned the willingness to help and showing the collaborative spirit. It was observed that the respondents from higher management position with more experience in team leadership mentioned the importance of open and professional communication when trying to gain the trust in their work environment. Rahim (2017) claims that gaining trust is a special challenge in highly

diversified teams which complements the observed answers from respondents from larger international companies where the sole focus was no longer in fulfilling the promises and sticking to the timelines but also in communication correctly, openly, creating an opportunity to build a trust-based bond.

In order to fully understand the social impact on the performance of supply chains it makes sense to find the roles within the supply chain that engage in social situations the most in their every day work. Three out of seven interviewed professionals mentioned customer service as the role that requires most communication, coordination, information sharing and overall demands some level of relationship building with other roles within the company. Although less than half of respondents mentioned customer service, due to the open-ended question that they were given without prior bias of mentioning of specific departments, the results are significant and they align with the research from multiple researchers. Wu et al. (2014) for example point to the equal importance of non-financial based performance that relies on departments like customer service that as coordinators and points of contact for information sharing. Aydin et al. (2017) add that customer-oriented roles such as customer service and commercial serve as important intermediaries between upstream and downstream partners in supply chains. Other researchers mention the positive potential in social intelligence trainings for these specific roles. More on those papers will be discussed in the next segment.

The rest of the respondents took a more general approach by claiming that supply chains are based on human contact so it makes little sense in pointing out single departments. Respondent 1 mentioned commercial role as it acts as the first contact, representing the company. Respondent 5 said that the logistics department has the most impact on performance while respondent 7 answered that it is the managerial roles where social situations matter the most. There was a clear correlation between their answers and their current position since they might not be familiar enough with all roles and their responsibilities, so they might have mentioned the role closer to them. Respondent 4 (Supply operations manager) for example mentioned their own role as the most socially focused internally but for externally oriented roles they say it is customer service.

6.3 SI integration potential

The first goal in this segment of the research was to get the feedback from supply chain professionals on their awareness of social intelligence. The questions were aimed also at capturing their perception of the concept and how it relates to their work field. Although there was some uncertainty in some cases, all respondents confirmed that they came across the term at some point, some of them even added that they remember it from their studies. None of the respondents mentioned that the term was presented to them through any company related trainings or measurements. The professionals gave valuable insight when they spoke about the effect that SI has on their work field. Their concise answers are:

- Respondent 1 – SI helps resolving issues and avoiding misunderstandings especially when working in international environment where expectations and instructions can be understood differently depending on the way they are communicated. Lack of communication also leads to »guessing« and therefore missed expectations. This insight is especially important for roles that require a lot of coordination where having the expectations synchronized is crucial to avoid frustration and delays.
- Respondent 2 – This ability is necessary when you as a leader are presenting yourself, motivating, making an impact as a person. They drew a connection to how to use the understanding that you have about your audience to making an impact either as a leader or a motivator.
- Respondent 3 – Similarly to Respondent 2 they pointed out better communication that is reached by adapting the communication according to the audience. Understanding the audience or reading the room is invaluable to making a positive impression, avoid a negative one or simply getting the point across effectively.
- Respondent 4 – They add that in their practice it is important to make a correct impression externally by adapting their communication style to the other part. This adaptation can be understood as a part of social intelligence because it means reading the emotional state, intentions, expectations from different communication styles and channels.
- Respondent 5 – Understanding the audience and where they are coming from.
- Respondent 6 – Reacting to situations appropriately depends on someone's ability to read the situation and the person behind it correctly. Social intelligence helps to judge correctly what kind of response is appropriate for situations that can occur very quickly and don't allow time to weigh every element.
- Respondent 7 – Their answer leaned on the connection/similarity between personal and business relationships and how establishing and maintaining such relationships requires being a good listener, taking real interest in the other person and understanding different backgrounds that helps to avoid being insensitive and betray the trust that is crucial in business and personal relationships.

The spectrum of answers shows, that the candidates apply social intelligence in different ways but more importantly, the answers prove that they have at least a general idea of what SI is. It is encouraging to see that they are applying the basics of the concept to improve their performance at work. The answers align closely with the study from Rahim (2017) that claims that SI can play a mediating role in multi-cultural organizations by closing the gaps in communication or cultural differences. Urbaniak (2015) also highlighted the importance of efficient communication and how it applies to different roles, which was ultimately also the focus of most of the respondents. Most of them mentioned that SI relates to how they try to understand their audience or situation and adapt their communication accordingly.

A substantial research has been done on the measurement of SI such as Bar-On, TSIS, Goleman's, MESI etc. From the data obtained from the professionals we can conclude that those exact measurements are not used frequently in practice. Instead, companies opt to

measure intelligence in broader terms but in some points those tests address also social and emotional intelligence. This process was observed mainly in larger companies that generally have well structured hiring processes and measurement methods for evaluating employees. On the other hand smaller or more locally operated companies seem to approach this in a less structured way and more feeling-based. This is an interesting take-away because it was not well addressed in the secondary source research. There was more emphasis on the measurement methods, which will be relevant in the practical implication part. However, the feeling-based approach is more than relevant, because it shows, that even though companies don't have specific measurements in mind, they consciously or subconsciously evaluate candidates or employees on this type of intelligence. One respondent even said that he was partly chosen because the employer was satisfied with the level of politeness and social skills that he showed in his communication. Even though this is just the initial contact it is fair to assume, that the employers look in advance and select candidates that show a level of social skills that will not cause potential issues.

Findings on the existence of SI related trainings in practice were interesting and very relevant for the premise of the research. The majority of »real world« professionals admitted that there are no such trainings at least when it comes specifically to SI. The closest connection that the candidates found were trainings on ethics or code of conduct. It was interesting to find that even among similar positions and companies the answers were very different which indicates, that certain companies are more aware of SI significance than others. The two respondents that confirmed the existence of such courses added that they are not specifically addressing SI but rather cover it in one of the chapters. Furthermore, Respondent 7 added that the company is developing workshops in this direction but they say that it is unfortunately targeted at the management cadre whereas they would find it beneficial for a broader audience. Respondent 3 also mentioned that the courses that cover SI are assigned for more managerial roles. This finding can be linked to the answers of the majority of respondents that claim that social intelligence is especially useful in positions that require a lot of mediating, leading, coordinating and making a positive impact as a leader. The observed lack of more specific trainings on SI open a window for a discussion on the potential implementation of professionally designed capacity building courses. Various researchers such as Fischman (2015), Ebrahimpoor et al. (2013) and Rahim (2017) mention a number of tangible benefits and advantages that social intelligence trainings can offer in respect to the overall competitiveness, better customer service and CSM performance.

Additionally, the professionals were asked on their opinion on the modern technology and the rapid development of the tools used in supply chains. It is not surprising that the technology over the years significantly changed the way we communicate. Some mentioned the already the increased use of texting and emailing make it harder to understand the correct tone of the message because of the lack of clues such as intonation, facial expressions, emotional note etc. Consequentially, the role of SI also changes as it has to be applied differently and in some cases the importance is even amplified. Respondents were mostly

uniform in saying that new technologies can make it harder to understand the message correctly. AI as one of the most relevant new technologies at the time of writing was also mentioned. The respondents had mixed opinions on whether it is beneficial or damaging in their work field. In general they were able to recognize both benefits and risks, but the predominant opinion was that it will have a negative impact on SI in supply chains. The benefits and risks are shown in the below figure.

Table 6: Benefits and risks of AI implementation in supply chains according to respondents

Benefits	Risks
• Automatization of routine tasks • Freeing up time for more valuable tasks • Ease of access to information • Helps in case of lacking formal communication skills	• Contributes to loss of interpersonal contacts • Data privacy issues • Possible misunderstandings • Loss of basic knowledge of the processes • Unreliable in specific situations • Limitations of the »new« technology

Source: Own work.

6.4 Practical implications

In the research so far, it was established that there are different types of intelligences and different models that separate them according to their key elements. It is essential to distinguish between the types that have the most relevance in supply chain management in order to find ways to effectively apply tools or improvements in practice. Social intelligence was selected as a topic of research as it most directly applies to SCM due to the nature of work in supply chains and management. However, during the research, more concepts were found that also apply and will therefore be included in order to provide a more complete framework suited for practical application. Relevant terms include emotional and cultural intelligence that appeared in secondary research but were also mentioned by supply chain professionals.

6.4.1 Practical SI evaluation

The first step in applying the concept of SI in practice is to measure it. That way an employer or a manager can get an insight into the specific competence that has a significant impact on the employees performance. Furthermore, this topic becomes even more relevant for higher positions according to some respondents and Goleman and Boyatzis (2008) that claim that leading positions have a bigger impact in critical situations and have more impactful relationships.

One approach that companies can take is to evaluate the existing employees which is a measurement that does not need to be continuous or periodical. This type of evaluation should present the ad hoc capacity of employees in order to understand what is the overall level in the company, if improvements are needed or if the results are even correlated with the performance. It is important to evaluate the results in a meaningful way that does not only include number-based indexes but also elements such as workplace happiness, soft-skills, intercompany relationships and others. This approach is crucial because SI can have an effect much broader than the standard supply chain KPI's. The effects can be observed in areas such as crisis situation navigation, multicultural competence, customer service quality, strength of relationships.

To put the measurements in practice with existing employees Goleman and Boyatzis (2008) mention, that the observation process proves to be effective because as O'Sullivan et al. (1976) claim, SI is better measured through visual clues which would in this case be the observation of the behaviour, communication and relationships of the target employee. Such approach is more individual and would be most suitable for a smaller number of key positions that require high social competence. An example of a possible evaluation process is displayed in the below figure where after initial observation, the person is evaluated. The results and expectations are then communicated with the employee and a repeated observation is executed after a certain period.

Figure 7: SI evaluation process for employees



Source: Own work.

When it comes to evaluating employment candidates, the approach has to be adapted due to the nature of modern employment processes. The measurement method therefore requires a less personal approach more suited for multiple candidates. In later stages a deeper evaluation is possible but in process of filtering hundreds of candidates different methods become more suitable. It is necessary to keep in mind that employment process includes a number of other just as important evaluations so the SI part is not supposed to be the main or only topic, taking up a large part of the process.

Among the researched measurement methods, TSIS and MESI are the least time consuming with 21 question structure and present easily measurable results on specific attributes such as social skills, social awareness, social irritation and others. However as O'Sullivan et al. (1976) point out, human behaviour proves to be challenging to measure with structured, word-based tests. The surveys designed by Lahnen and Arcos (2014) add value with open

ended and creativity inducing questions. The cartoon prediction tests from O'Sullivan et al. (1976) are the most visual choice that measure different behavioral cognition elements.

With the input of the interviewed professionals we can conclude, that the method of testing in practice is individualized based on the specifics of the company. Furthermore, some respondents mentioned the feeling-based evaluation, which is relevant especially in the introduction stage. However, the results of this research suggest benefits to a more complete approach to the measuring of SI where organizations need to identify the specific needs and apply the mentioned measurement methods when selecting candidates for the roles that benefit from a high SI capacity. The figure below shows an example of a progressive approach to the measuring of key cognitive competences through the different stages of the hiring process.

Figure 8: Example of measurements of the key cognitive competences during the hiring process



Source: Own work.

6.4.2 SI capacity building

Complementing the evaluation of existing and potential employees is the practical application of trainings that build the capacity of SI. Some of the respondents mentioned, that this kind of intelligence is hard or impossible to learn. In their opinion, it is something that you either have or don't have. Some people do naturally have more developed social skills and intelligence which can even be subconscious. However, for other people the awareness and conscious improvement can result in better performance in many areas.

Fischman (2015) for example claims that such trainings can lead to better customer service. Mudarisovna Zakirova and Ivanovna Frolova (2014) also conclude in their research that there is a connection between the successful capacity building activities and increased SI. It is important to take into account, that when it comes to the training of human behaviour can yield empirically questionable results that depend on the training approach and the target person. Dippenaar and Schaap (2017) for example mention this issue but add that the most optimistic results come from the individual approach of ongoing feedback and coaching instead of »classroom- based training« and similar types of leadership trainings. Goleman and Boyatzis (2008) share a similar observation and present a case study where a recently promoted leader had a transformational success by having a coaching-based training with regular observations and direct feedback.

In the interview data it was observed that SI or similar capacity building initiatives are not widely used in practice. The closest courses that the respondents could connect were about ethics and professional communication. This offers an opportunity for improvement that according to secondary source research can lead to significant and tangible benefits. As some respondents mentioned, the target roles are mostly managerial. This observation makes sense because such trainings prove to be effective if they have narrow focus and a personal approach. Furthermore, managerial roles in supply chains prove to have the most impactful relationships and benefit the most from a higher SI.

The practical proposal would therefore be a coaching or consulting process for managerial positions. It is necessary that the coach possesses the knowledge, experience, self-awareness etc. Such processes are ongoing and require a longer time period with regular feedback and guidance which could be compared to a therapy. It is a substantial time and financial investment that should be a part of the managers' long-term development plan. Some suggestions for a successful process based on the research and case studies are:

- Initial screening – determining windows for improvement
- Reflection – behaviour and motivation recognizing
- Regular observation and guidance from the coach
- Good practice mirroring –observing a proven high SI leader in action
- Documenting progress or significant changes

Additionally, a more general approach can be taken for increasing the awareness of SI which already proves to be beneficial. The respondents that had a better idea of the concept of SI had in general more relevant answers and higher awareness of the importance that it can have on the supply chain and relationships within it. This observation presents an opportunity for department-wide social intelligence courses aimed at increasing the awareness of SI and connected cognitive capacities for more socially oriented departments such as customer service or commercial.

6.5 Limitations and future research

During the initial research of secondary sources it became clear that SCM is a well researched topic, there were even several sources including social and behavioral topics. SI and related topics have also been researched well over the last 100 years and more. The issue that I found was that the researchers have different definitions and models that seem to be changing even to the present day. That caused difficulties selecting the most applicable definitions for the integration with the study of SCM performance. Likewise, the measurement methods of SI were very different. They were not contradictory but the researchers were not united in the opinion on what is the best way to measure it. Some focused on observation and personal approach while others defended the empirical, data-based measurement. Therefore I had to include and evaluate very different approaches. I

used the data from primary research to avoid being too subjective in the evaluation and final implications.

The interviews presented a different set of challenges. The biggest one was getting the respondents to elaborate more extensively on their opinions and experiences. Even with additional questions there was very little success with some interviewees while others talked freely for most of the interview. The second significant challenge was finding professionals that I was targeting. I was looking for managers with over 5 years of managerial experience in supply chain departments from different industries and different sized organizations. Looking back, the selection criteria was very strict and hard to satisfy.

Further research would benefit from a larger number of interviewed supply chain professionals with diverse backgrounds. Additional candidates should bring more geographical width for example from Asia and Americas since most of the respondents had European backgrounds. Additionally, researchers and professionals focusing on social and cognitive studies would provide a valuable theoretical background to complement the first-hand experience from supply chain environment.

Suggestions for further research include more recent topics such as work from home, new communication technologies and AI. As mentioned, SI is an evolving concept that follows the constant changes in communication and social relations. Working from home and modern technologies already changed the dynamic of professional and personal relationships. Modern technologies change the way we communicate and therefore understand communication. Further research is needed on the effect of the latest changes in the professional environment. This paper does not focus on those topics but the interview part opens an opportunity for more indepth future research.

7 CONCLUSION

The purpose of this master's thesis was to investigate the function of social intelligence in supply chain management and evaluate its applicability to supply chain performance in modern, global business settings. The thesis sought to establish a connection between the extremely practical, coordination-intensive reality of supply chains and the somewhat abstract concept of social intelligence by drawing on existing literature from supply chain management, social sciences, and intelligence research. The study offers empirical insights into how social intelligence is viewed, used, and valued in actual supply chain environments through a qualitative research approach based on in-depth interviews with experienced supply chain workers.

Supply chains are social systems by nature, as the literature research showed. They rely on trust, cooperation, communication, and long-term connections between people and organisations in addition to the actual movements of materials and information. Previous

studies have consistently identified relationship commitment, trust, and information sharing as important factors influencing supply chain success. However, there seems to be a gap in the literature: although social relationships are widely recognised to be important, the individual-level skills that facilitate these relationships—especially social intelligence—remain understudied and inadequately operationalised in SCM research and practice.

The premise of the thesis leans on the idea of multiple intelligence models that define different cognitive capacities, one of them being focused on social interactions. Social intelligence, as defined in this thesis, includes elements such as social awareness, processing social information, empathy, adaptability, communication abilities, and effective relationship management. Comparison and evaluation of different views was crucial since the topic is somewhat broad and abstract and therefore the researchers to this day have different definitions of SI. By referencing both classical and modern models (Thorndike, Albrecht, Goleman, Silvera et al.), this thesis establishes social intelligence as an essential complement to technical skills and cognitive intelligence. The studies examined from the fields of international business, leadership, sales, and cross-cultural management consistently indicate that individuals with high social intelligence excel in roles that benefit from coordination, negotiation, and spanning boundaries—traits that are crucial in supply chain management.

These theoretical insights are highly supported by the primary study data. Every interviewee acknowledged that teamwork and communication make up the majority of their daily tasks; they frequently estimated this percentage to be between 70 and 90 percent. The significance of tailoring communication to different stakeholders, cultures, seniority levels, and functional responsibilities was repeatedly mentioned by respondents. With respondents emphasizing dependability, openness, authenticity, and consistency as crucial elements in establishing and preserving successful supply chain relationships based on trust which appeared as a major theme. Significantly, a number of participants gave specific instances of how miscommunications, cultural differences, or a lack of social awareness caused delays, operational interruptions, or strained relationships—showing that social intelligence directly affects performance.

The study also showed that although supply chain workers understand the value of social intelligence on an intuitive level, organizational practice still lacks formal knowledge, assessment, and structured SI growth. The majority of respondents stated that their employers rely on interviews or general personality tests rather than specifically measuring social intelligence throughout the hiring process. Similar to this, formal training targeted at enhancing social intelligence is uncommon; instead, indirect initiatives like leadership programs, ethical codes, or general communication training frequently take its place. For businesses running intricate, global supply chains, this disconnect between acknowledged significance and official implementation amounts to a substantial lost opportunity.

The distribution of social needs throughout supply chain roles is another significant result. Many respondents emphasized that social intelligence is crucial in all supply chain professions, especially in managerial and coordinating roles, even though customer service was most commonly described as the function with the highest level of social interaction. This supports the idea that SI should be viewed as a multifunctional capability that improves entire supply chain effectiveness rather than as a role-specific competency.

Practically speaking, the results point to a number of supply chain management consequences. First, in addition to technical and analytical talents, firms should clearly recognize social intelligence as a fundamental competency. Second, incorporating verified SI measuring tools—such as modified TSIS or similar instruments—into hiring procedures could be advantageous, particularly for leadership and cross-functional positions. Third, concentrated training and development initiatives that emphasize relationship management, empathy, communication, and cultural understanding may increase supply chain resilience, foster better teamwork, and lower the expenses related to misalignment and conflict. Lastly, managers should understand that social intelligence becomes more and more important in unstable, uncertain, and digitally accelerated situations where automation or artificial intelligence cannot completely replace human judgment, trust, and flexibility.

This study has limitations despite its contributions. The results' limited generalizability is due to their qualitative character and limited sample size. The cross-sectional methodology fails to capture how social intelligence changes over time, and the use of self-reported views raises the possibility of subjective bias. Mixed-method approaches, larger and more diverse samples, longitudinal designs, and quantitative performance measurements could all be used in future research to overcome these constraints. It would also be especially beneficial to investigate further how social intelligence, cultural intelligence, and digital competences interact in supply chains.

This thesis concludes by showing that social intelligence is an essential component of successful supply chain management rather than a "soft" or incidental quality. Social intelligence has a direct impact on supply chain resilience and performance by fostering trust, communication, cooperation, and problem-solving skills. Integrating social intelligence into research frameworks and managerial practice is not only advantageous but also becoming more and more essential as supply chains continue to become more complicated and globally interconnected.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Povzetek (Summary in Slovenian)

Ta magistrska naloga preučuje vlogo socialne inteligence v oskrbovalnih veriah in njen vpliv na uspešnost. Medtem ko se obstoječa literatura o upravljanju oskrbovalnih verig osredotoča predvsem na operativno učinkovitost, merljive kazalnike uspešnosti in tehnične kompetence, ta raziskava zavzema bolj na človeka osredotočeno perspektivo, tako da oskrbovalne verige konceptualizira kot inherentno socialne sisteme. V takih sistemih komunikacija, zaupanje, sodelovanje in upravljanje odnosov niso obrobni elementi, temveč osrednji dejavniki uspešnosti. Glavni cilj naloge je bil raziskati, kako socialna inteligenca vpliva na socialne interakcije znotraj oskrbovalnih verig in kako te interakcije posledično vplivajo na splošne rezultate oskrbovalne verige.

Sekundarna raziskava se opira na literaturo s področja upravljanja oskrbovalne verige, teorije socialne in čustvene inteligence ter mednarodnih poslovnih študij. Pregledane študije dosledno poudarjajo zaupanje, izmenjavo informacij in predanost odnosom kot ključne gonilne sile uspešnosti oskrbovalne verige, pri čemer povezujejo močne medosebne odnose z nižjimi transakcijskimi stroški, izboljšano koordinacijo, večjo odzivnostjo in trajno konkurenčno prednostjo. Raziskave socialne in čustvene inteligence nadalje dokazujejo, da kompetence, kot so empatija, socialna ozaveščenost, vedenjska fleksibilnost in upravljanje odnosov, pozitivno vplivajo na učinkovitost vodenja, medkulturno komunikacijo in organizacijsko uspešnost. Literatura tudi kaže, da je mogoče socialno inteligenco meriti s strukturiranimi instrumenti in jo razvijati s ciljno usmerjenim usposabljanjem, kar je še posebej pomembno za vodstvene vloge, ki delujejo v dinamičnem in medkulturnem okolju.

Primarna raziskava je bila opravljena s sedmimi strokovnjaki oskrbovalnih verig z različnih organizacijskih ravni, iz različnih panog in mednarodnih kontekstov. Ugotovitve potrjujejo, da komunikacija in sodelovanje predstavljata znaten del vsakodnevnega dela v oskrbovalni verigi. Anketiranci so poudarili pomen prilagodljivosti v komunikaciji, gradnje zaupanja z zanesljivostjo in preglednostjo ter sposobnosti preprečevanja ali reševanja nesporazumov. Praktični primeri so pokazali, da lahko nejasna komunikacija, nezadostna usklajenost pričakovanj in pomanjkanje medsebojnega razumevanja neposredno motijo poslovanje, povečajo stroške in škodujejo odnosom. Nasprotno pa so bili močni socialni odnosi povezani z bolj gladkim usklajevanjem, hitrejšim reševanjem problemov in večjo pripravljenostjo partnerjev za sodelovanje v zahtevnih situacijah.

Čeprav večina podjetij v praksi ne ocenjuje socialne inteligence sistematično v procesih zaposlovanja ali ocenjevanja, so kandidati na splošno priznali njen pomen za učinkovito delovanje oskrbovalne verige. Tehnično znanje in izkušnje ostajajo prevladujoča izbirna merila, čeprav tudi socialne kompetence pomembno vplivajo tako na finančne kot nefinančne rezultate. Raziskava ugotavlja, da socialna inteligenca predstavlja pomembno, a premalo izkoriščeno dimenzijo upravljanja oskrbovalne verige. Z združevanjem spoznanj iz teorije socialne inteligence s prakso upravljanja s socialno inteligenco teza dokazuje, da lahko okrepljena ozaveščenost, merjenje in razvoj socialne inteligence okrepijo sodelovanje,

izboljšajo prilagodljivost v kompleksnih okoljih ter prispevajo k bolj trajnostni in odporni oskrbovalni verigi.

Appendix 2: Interview questions

A: SOCIAL SKILLS IN THEIR PROFESSION

1. How much of your day to day work deals with communication or collaboration?
2. How are you adapting your communication in order to be understood correctly?
3. How do you gain trust among the coworkers and people outside of the organization?
4. Do you remember any cases where misunderstandings led to significant issues?
5. How would you prevent that situation now that you are familiar with it?

B: SUPPLY CHAIN PERFORMANCE - SOCIAL ASPECT

1. What is the main aspect of the performance of supply chains?
2. To what degree do social relationships affect this performance?
3. What is the main reason for bad relationships and misunderstandings?
4. Which part of the supply chain would you say has the most social contacts?

C: POTENTIAL OF SI INTEGRATION

1. Are you familiar with the concept of SI?
2. How would you say that this concept relates to your work field?
3. Does your company ever measure this kind of cognitive capacity when employing new people?
4. Did you or your company ever think about training/improving this kind of ability?
5. How do you see the future impact on social intelligence with the rise of AI and rapidly evolving supply chains?

Appendix 3: Participant consent form

Soglasje o sodelovanju v intervjuju in izjava o strinjanju z javno objavo anonimnih podatkov sodelujočih intervjuvancev

Naslov magistrske naloge: Social Intelligence in Supply Chain Management

Avtor: Lan Pajmon Rak (raziskovalec) in doc. dr. Anastas Vangeli (mentor)

Prosim Vas, da preberete spodnje izjave.

1. Potrjujem, da sem seznanjen(a) z informacijami, ki so relevantne za raziskavo v kateri sodelujem. Imel(a) sem možnost pridobiti informacije in dodatno vprašati o temah.
2. Razumem, da je moje sodelovanje prostovoljno in neobvezno, ter da lahko zapustim intervju brez razloga.
3. Stinjam se, da bo intervju sneman za namene transkripcije, v kateri bodo osebni podatki anonimni.
4. Strinjam se, da bodo podatki zbrani v intervjuju javno objavljeni, vendar bo pri tem moja identiteta skrita.
5. V primeru dodatnih vprašanj ali skrbi lahko kontaktiram raziskovalca Lan Pajmon Rak na elektronski naslov lan24rak@gmail.com

S podpisom se strinjam z zgornjimi izjavami in pristopam k sodelovanju v raziskavi.

Ime udeleženca

Datum

Podpis

Ime raziskovalca

Datum

Podpis