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Article

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Article

Work Team Effectiveness: Importance of Organizational Culture, Work Climate, Leadership, Creative Synergy, and Emotional Intelligence in University Employees

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Abstract: (1) Background: In university contexts, the effectiveness of work teams is vital for institutional success and the personal development of an institution's members. Objective: Our aim is to understand the relationships between emotional intelligence, team leadership, organizational culture, work climate, and creative synergy with team effectiveness. (2) Methods: We used a cross-sectional predictive design study using structural equation modeling (SEM), in which 512 surveys of employees of a private Peruvian university were analyzed. (3) Results: Leadership and emotional intelligence were found to significantly improve team effectiveness. In addition, organizational culture, work climate, and creative synergy act as mediators in these relationships, enhancing team effectiveness. The adjusted model presented adequate incremental ($\chi^2 = 9452.498$, $gI = 3391$, $p < 0.001$) and comparative (TLI = 0.998, CFI = 0.998, RMSEA = 0.017 y SRMR = 0.033) goodness-of-fit indices. (4) Conclusions: The results showed that the development of emotional competencies and leadership skills is essential to optimize the effectiveness of work teams in universities. This integrated model not only provides a solid theoretical framework for future research, but also offers practical recommendations for improving the management and performance of work teams.

Keywords: work team effectiveness; emotional intelligence; work team leadership; organizational culture; work climate; creative synergy; higher education institutions



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1. Introduction

Work team effectiveness (WTE) in higher education institutions is essential for the development and achievement of institutional objectives, encompassing both academic and administrative employees in activities ranging from teaching to administrative management (Meneses and Navarro 2015; Ogunsakin 2024). WTE is not only measured by the achievement of goals, but also by the quality of results, the satisfaction of the team's members, and their ability to adapt and work cohesively (Arora et al. 2023; Keir et al. 2020; Wagner and Hollenbeck 2020).

Traditionally, WTE has been defined as the ability of a team to achieve high levels of performance and satisfaction, maintaining a balance between the quality of results and the satisfaction of its members (Alcover et al. 2011; Gil et al. 2005; Mathieu et al. 2008; Ramón et al. 2010; Richter et al. 2011). This definition has evolved, incorporating aspects such as adaptability, resilience, and innovativeness, reflecting the health and well-being of team members (Keir et al. 2020; Reis and Puente-Palacios 2019; Schmutz et al. 2019; Strode et al. 2022; Verwijs and Russo 2023). An effective team integrates diverse skills and knowledge,

achieving synergies that enable results superior to those expected individually (Gautam 2018; Schmutz et al. 2019).

WTE facilitates complex problem-solving, fosters innovation, and improves cohesion and internal communication, which translates into greater organizational adaptability and resilience (Scholl 2018; Strode et al. 2022). In addition, WTE contributes to creating a positive and collaborative work environment, essential for talent satisfaction and retention, and for successfully implementing organizational strategies (Reis and Puente-Palacios 2019; Schmutz et al. 2019). The ability to make decisions quickly and effectively, along with better distribution of responsibilities, is another key benefit of effective teams (Strode et al. 2022). Therefore, WTE is crucial in creating a competitive advantage in a globalized and competitive environment (Arora et al. 2023).

The importance of WTE in different organizational contexts has been addressed (Buljac-Samardzic et al. 2020; Carrillo et al. 2021; Jaca et al. 2013; Lacerenza et al. 2018; Murmu and Neelam 2022; Perez et al. 2023). However, not all teams are effective, as every team is totally different. For teams to function properly, they depend on communication and trust, and need leadership that knows how to relate to each of the team members, protect their interests, and support them in the problems they face. This will lead to better results at the individual, team, and organizational levels (Alanis and Abreu 2018; Alcover et al. 2011; Mathieu et al. 2019).

A deep understanding of the factors that impact the effectiveness of a work team remains a challenge, especially in educational contexts in emerging economies such as Peru. This understanding is vital to respond quickly and innovatively to problems and challenges within and outside an institution that seeks to integrate principles for the integral development of its employees (Delgado-Abella et al. 2019).

In view of this, the theories that offer a comprehensive and dynamic understanding of WTE are the Input–Mediator–Output–Input (IMOI) model and the Input–Process–Output (IPO) model, because they facilitate the identification and management of the key mediators that affect team performance and emphasize the interconnection of inputs, processes/mediators, and outputs; this interrelationship allows for a holistic analysis of team performance, recognizing that team performance depends not only on inputs but also on how these are processed and managed (Alcover et al. 2011; Gil et al. 2005; Mathieu et al. 2008; Richter et al. 2011).

The IPO (Input–Process–Output) model suggests that WTE is influenced by inputs (resources, skills, and characteristics of team members) that directly influence processes (interactions, communication, and coordination) that, in turn, affect outputs (team results and performance); it also shows the ability to identify and analyze each component of team functioning in a structured way (Mach et al. 2021). Meanwhile, the IMOI (Input–Mediator–Output–Input) theory adds a dimension of mediation (mediator) and feedback; mediators are internal factors that influence team processes, such as cohesion, motivation, trust, and collective efficacy, which intervene directly in performance and can feed back into the system for continuous improvement; continuous feedback between the different components of the system is crucial for the self-regulation and adaptation of the team, allowing continuous adjustments and improvements (Ilgen et al. 2005; Mathieu et al. 2008, 2019).

Inputs are the resources, characteristics, and initial conditions that team members bring to the work process; they include skills, knowledge, individual motivations, and the organizational environment where the quality and quantity of these inputs are critical determinants of subsequent processes and team performance (Mathieu et al. 2008). Mediators (mediators) are processes and intermediate states acting between inputs and outputs, such as team cohesion, motivation, and emotional intelligence, that influence how team processes transform from inputs to outputs and are often the focus of interventions designed to improve WTE (Lacerenza et al. 2018; Mathieu et al. 2019). Processes emphasize emergent team states and are critical to WTE because they reflect the internal dynamics and quality of interactions among team members (Ahmed 2019; Kozlowski 2018; Kozlowski and Ilgen 2006). Finally, continuous feedback occurs when outputs from one cycle become

inputs for the next; this enables continuous improvement and team adaptation to new conditions and challenges ensuring that teams can learn from their experiences and adjust their strategies to improve their performance over time (Aracil 1995; Bertalanffy 1976; Fan et al. 2022; Kozlowski 2018; Ramón et al. 2010).

Integrating the IPO and IMOI models of effective work teams in university settings provides a holistic approach that highlights the importance of inputs, processes, mediators, and feedback in WTE, not only allowing for a better understanding of internal team dynamics, but also for implementing strategies that promote sustained renewal and continuous improvement (Ahmed 2019; Simonson et al. 2021).

In applying these theories in the context of university work teams, we consider how the input factors or input variables of the leadership of a team coordinator and emotional intelligence (as mediators or process variables) correspond to organizational culture, work climate, and creative synergy; finally, the outputs are reflected in the effectiveness of the team, measured through personal, team, and organizational results. Leadership is an essential component in team dynamics, directly influencing team cohesion and performance (Asbari et al. 2024; Edelmann et al. 2023; Lladó 2021; Mysirlaki and Paraskeva 2019; Smith et al. 2020; Wagner and Hollenbeck 2020). In addition, emotional intelligence is a determining factor that improves communication, conflict resolution, and collaboration within a team (Coronado-Maldonado and Benítez-Márquez 2023; Lee and Wong 2019; Waglay et al. 2020). On the other hand, a positive organizational culture and a favorable work climate create an environment that promotes innovation and employee satisfaction (Dobrowolska et al. 2020). Finally, creative synergy allows individual skills and knowledge to be effectively integrated to produce superior results (Gurrutxaga 2015).

Most studies on WTE have focused on sectors such as health and technology, showing little evidence in the context of higher education (Buljac-Samardzic et al. 2020; D'Silva and Ahrari 2016; Murmu and Neelam 2022; Perez et al. 2023). While universities are not considered competitive, they are in an increasingly globalized environment, requiring teams that are not only competent, but also that foster a collaborative environment that enhances the social experience of team members and maintains quality and competitiveness through innovative ideas (Iorhen 2019; Schmutz et al. 2019; Ogunsakin 2024). Moreover, the scientific literature is limited in this context, so it is worth investigating further the relationship of this construct with other important factors, such as those outlined above. Therefore, what is the mediating role of organizational culture, work climate, and creative synergy in the relationship between emotional intelligence and personal leadership and the effectiveness of work teams in employees from academic and non-academic areas of a private Peruvian university located in three regions of the country (coast, highlands, and jungle)?

The present study uses structural equation modeling (SEM) to understand how these factors interact and contribute to WTE in university employees. This approach provides a robust theoretical framework and practical recommendations for improving team management and performance in the university context. By identifying and enhancing the factors that influence team effectiveness, institutions will be able to implement more effective strategies to optimize the performance and satisfaction of their employees, contributing to their success and sustained development (Delgado-Abella et al. 2019).

2. Literature Review

2.1. Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Organizational Culture (OC)

EI refers to the ability of individuals to recognize, understand, and manage their own emotions, as well as the emotions of others and OC encompasses the values, beliefs, norms, and practices that characterize an organization and guide the behavior of its members (Barut 2019; Wei et al. 2021). EI influences OC because it influences the values and beliefs of the organization evidenced in its ability to adapt to change, harmony at work, and its alignment with workers' personal goals, allowing greater job performance and learning (Rasooli et al. 2019). EI helps one develop skills of self-awareness of one's own emotions, as

well as the ability to regulate them, providing self-knowledge and decision-making based on a stable scale of values that foresees emotional pressures, which generates a flexible OC and a pleasant work environment that boosts the creativity of team members (Drigas and Papoutsis 2018).

The EI of work teams builds a collaborative OC because it improves conflict management skills which becomes a motivator to increase team performance (Troth et al. 2012). In a team with high EI, its members can express their ideas and emotions clearly and respectfully, reducing misunderstandings and conflicts; this open and honest communication is fundamental for the exchange of creative ideas (Murmu and Neelam 2022). Institutions that foster EI through training and emotional skills development create an OC where employees feel valued and supported, which improves job satisfaction and increases team cohesion and organizational effectiveness (Wei et al. 2021). Likewise, an OC that values EI can significantly improve employee satisfaction and commitment, which in turn improves the effectiveness of work teams (Barut 2019).

Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1. *Emotional intelligence is related to organizational culture.*

2.2. Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Work Climate (WC)

WC is the set of perceptions employees share about their work environment, which affects their motivation, satisfaction, and performance (Hamid and Ishak 2019; Satrina et al. 2021). Employees with high EI can manage their emotions, enabling them to interact effectively with co-workers, resolve conflicts constructively and maintain a positive attitude in the workplace (Pekkan and Bicer 2022; Tintaru et al. 2021). In addition, they can communicate clearly and effectively, reducing misunderstandings and conflicts and contributing to a more harmonious and cooperative work climate (Pokhrel and Goyal 2022). However, employee performance can be significantly affected by discipline, work climate, and emotional intelligence (Satrina et al. 2021).

When individuals in a work team are emotionally intelligent, they tend to experience less conflict in their interrelationships and task performance (Lee and Wong 2019). Individuals who demonstrate emotional intelligence and positive interpersonal skills can improve the work climate by fostering a positive work environment and reducing stress and conflict (Wagner and Hollenbeck 2020). In addition, emotional intelligence facilitates the creation of harmonious relationships and effective collaboration among team members, a key element in achieving common goals and improving team cohesion (Vargas-Halabí et al. 2017).

The following hypothesis is therefore proposed:

H2. *Emotional intelligence is related to work climate.*

2.3. Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Creative Synergy (CS)

CS is a phenomenon that occurs when the combined skills, experiences, and knowledge of team members result in something unexpected that is greater than the sum of its parts (Climer 2016; Pakeltienė and Ragauskaitė 2017). People with high EI have a greater capacity to generate creative ideas due to their ability to manage emotions and maintain a positive state of mind, which translates into increased CS within teams, as members can collaborate effectively to develop innovative solutions (Geher et al. 2017; Szorc 2020). In other words, EI helps employees feel confident and supported to participate in projects that require creative and collaborative behaviors (Gheorghe et al. 2024).

Emotional intelligence is positively related to creativity, although the specific manifestations of this relationship may vary by gender (Zia and Rouhollahi 2020). However, people who are part of emotionally intelligent teams tend to feel more confident in sharing ideas and experimenting with new solutions without fear of judgment, which increases CS (Keir et al. 2020). Also, EI promotes creativity through resilience and gratitude can strengthen this effect (Tong et al. 2022). Furthermore, team members with high levels of

emotional intelligence exhibit greater trust and a collaborative culture, which facilitates the generation of innovative ideas and creative solutions, as the ability of team members to express and manage their emotions effectively promotes an environment in which creativity can flourish and generate creative synergy (Barczak et al. 2010).

The following hypothesis is therefore proposed:

H3. *Emotional intelligence is related to creative synergy.*

2.4. Team Leadership (TL) and Work Climate (WC)

Leadership theory emphasizes the ability of leaders to inspire and motivate their followers towards the achievement of higher goals; leaders with effective organizational and communication skills are fundamental in establishing a positive WC because leadership skills, such as organizational ability and emotional intelligence, are critical in forming a favorable socio-psychological climate in teams from diverse areas (Cherkasskyi et al. 2023). The leader's role in creating a positive work environment is crucial because the leader must manage situations of stress and conflict by promoting an atmosphere of respect and support; hence, there is need for a healthy WC for adaptation to change, harmony at work, and alignment of personal goals with organizational goals, which improves performance and organizational learning (Rasooli et al. 2019).

Servant leadership significantly improves a team climate by acting as a facilitator in this relationship because it facilitates the adoption of ambidextrous activities by employees, improving their performance (Arshad et al. 2022). In addition, effective leaders must be able to motivate team members, facilitate communication, and create a trusting and collaborative WC (Orengo et al. 2011). A leader who encourages participation and values the creative contributions of team members helps to establish a WC conducive to creativity and innovation in teams (Arora et al. 2023; Sung et al. 2018; Zhu et al. 2018). On the other hand, Chiang et al. (2021) warns that authoritarian leadership tends to create a climate of emotional suppression, which increases team emotional exhaustion and reduces team performance; therefore, leaders should avoid authoritarian behaviors and foster an environment where employees can express their emotions constructively.

On this basis, the following hypothesis is put forward:

H4. *Team leadership is related to work climate.*

2.5. Team Leadership (TL) and Creative Synergy (CS)

Effective leadership can foster CS by promoting active participation, mutual trust, and the free expression of ideas in a work team (Componential Theory of Creativity 2013; Schmutz et al. 2019). Leaders who promote strategic collaboration not only improve operational performance, but also drive innovation and creativity within teams (Asbari et al. 2024). Leaders who promote a culture of trust, autonomy, and risk support encourage team members to explore new ideas and innovative solutions by achieving high levels of creativity and synergy (Pakeltienė and Ragauskaitė 2017). A leader who uses affiliative humor can promote a more collaborative and psychologically safe environment, which facilitates creativity and innovation within the team (Gheorghe et al. 2024). This means that leadership in a work team should facilitate open communication and promote a culture of trust and mutual respect so that team members feel safe to express their ideas and take creative risks (Asbari et al. 2024).

On this basis, the following hypothesis is put forward:

H5. *Team leadership is related to the creative synergy of a work team.*

2.6. Work Climate (WC) and Organizational Culture (OC)

WC is the perceptual manifestation of how values and norms are lived and experienced in daily practice while OC sets the context in which WC takes place by providing the

normative and value framework that guides interactions and behaviors within a team (Gamero 2008; Lin et al. 2021). Hence, a positive WC, where employees feel valued and supported, can strengthen adherence to organizational values and improve team cohesion whereas a negative WC can undermine the OC, creating discord and demotivation among employees because the WC reflects how the OC is lived and perceived in the day-to-day lives of employees; hence, a positive OC, which emphasizes values such as mutual support and security, translates into a positive WC, where employees feel valued and supported (Amiri et al. 2023; Dobrowolska et al. 2020); furthermore, an OC that values flexibility and innovation promotes a positive WC that encourages innovative behavior among employees (Etikariena and Kalimashada 2021).

On this basis, the following hypothesis is put forward:

H6. *Work climate is related to organizational culture.*

2.7. Work Climate (WC) and Creative Synergy (CS)

WC refers to employees' collective perceptions of their work environment (Mejía-Chavarría 2018; Paredes 2013). A positive WC fosters an environment of trust and cooperation that motivates team members to collaborate and generate innovative ideas (Pandey et al. 2019). A safe and motivating environment strengthens creative role identity by fostering a collaborative and stress-free team mentality leading to the expression and development of innovative ideas (Zhang et al. 2020). A WC that encourages participation reduces fear of failure and significantly increases team creativity because members perceive a supportive, safe environment to share innovative ideas and collaborate effectively (Primus and Jiang 2019). Likewise, the perception of inclusiveness in a work environment where each member's contributions are valued and respected fosters a positive team climate where diversity of thought and perspective is valued, enriching the creative process and promoting innovation (Ghosh and Tripathi 2021).

A WC that emphasizes trust and manages conflict constructively makes team members feel safe to express their opinions and face challenges without fear of negative repercussions, creating an environment conducive to innovation; this type of WC not only improves team effectiveness but also facilitates the generation of novel ideas and creative problem-solving (Stinkeste et al. 2021). The use of creative methods during team formation enhances WC because they promote greater participation and collaboration from the early stages of team formation, increasing participatory trust, social engagement, and friendly competition, while reducing fear of failure; this supportive environment is crucial for the development of a positive team climate, which in turn fosters creative synergy, allowing teams to achieve high levels of innovation and effectiveness (Primus and Jiang 2019). In the university context, where collaboration and innovation are essential, a positive WC can transform work dynamics and enhance creative synergy because it fosters trust and open communication not only improves job satisfaction, but also boosts collective creativity (Ghosh and Tripathi 2021).

Based on this, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H7. *Work climate is related to creative synergy.*

2.8. Organizational Culture (OC) and Work Team Effectiveness (WTE)

An OC, understood as shared values, beliefs, and norms, forms the basis for achieving WTE because norms are established that give clarity about expectations in employee interactions (Mejía-Chavarría 2018). OC shapes the thoughts of the members of a work team to behave according to the dominant values, norms, and beliefs of the organization; this collection of concepts includes symbols, language, ideology, beliefs, rituals, and myths that evolve and impact WTE (Moro 2017). Hence, effective leadership is critical for developing and maintaining a positive OC, which in turn enhances WTE, because leaders who foster a culture of support and recognition facilitate an environment where teams can

work cohesively and efficiently (Shah et al. 2023). In addition, a culture that fosters innovation and continuous improvement provides a framework in which teams can implement high-performance practices, leading to greater organizational effectiveness and success (Tamunomiebi and Keremah 2020). Likewise, by fostering shared values and behaviors aligned with institutional goals, leaders promote a culture of support, collaboration, and mutual respect that can significantly improve WTE (Ogunsakin 2024).

Based on this, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H8. *Organizational culture is related to the effectiveness of a work team.*

2.9. Work Climate (WC) and Work Team Effectiveness (WTE)

A positive WC, characterized by clear goals and task orientation, is closely associated with higher job satisfaction and better coordination among team members; this is due to the ability of team members to work together in a cohesive and coordinated manner, facilitating team effectiveness (Peduzzi et al. 2021). Positive WC not only improves employee satisfaction and well-being, but also facilitates the implementation of innovative practices and complex problem-solving; high job satisfaction contributes to an environment where employees are motivated to contribute novel ideas and address challenges creatively (Akan et al. 2020).

Teams operating in a positive WC show high levels of effectiveness due to their ability to coordinate their efforts effectively and solve problems collaboratively; open communication and mutual support also enable teams to function as cohesive units, increasing their overall performance (Jansen et al. 2019). Teams with a favorable WC show greater effectiveness in decision-making and project execution due to improved clarity and the frequency of interactions among team members (Prasetya 2023). A WC that reflects recognition and reward for hard work where employees feel valued as an integral part of the organization fosters greater commitment and cooperation among team members; this positive perception of the work environment motivates employees to collaborate more efficiently, which improves the effectiveness of the work team (Ugwu et al. 2022).

Based on this, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H9. *Work climate is related to the effectiveness of a work team.*

2.10. Creative Synergy (CS) and Work Team Effectiveness (WTE)

CS refers to the ability of teams to integrate and leverage individual ideas and skills so that the collective outcome is greater than the sum of its parts while WTE measures the degree to which a team achieves its objectives efficiently and effectively (Reche and Perfectti 2020; Stasser and Abele 2020). Teams with high CS can tackle complex problems efficiently due to the diversity of their ideas and approaches, which allows for more innovative and effective solutions; that is, diversity in educational background combined with balanced creative self-efficacy and a cooperative work environment are crucial factors that contribute to innovative performance and team effectiveness (Park et al. 2021). This means that diversity in teams, when properly managed, can enhance creativity and thus team effectiveness (Stel and Van Den Berg 2022). On the other hand, collective creativity can be enhanced through technological tools that facilitate communication and collaboration, thus improving team effectiveness (Reiter-Palmon et al. 2021). In addition, participation in creative processes and co-creation of solutions generate a sense of belonging and commitment among team members increasing motivation and reducing staff turnover, which is crucial for team stability and continuity (Hermawan et al. 2022).

Teams that develop CS are more flexible and adaptable to environmental changes and challenges; this adaptability is crucial for maintaining team effectiveness in a dynamic and constantly changing university environment; therefore, the selection of effective leaders is crucial for the development of complementary teams that can maximize CS because leaders who understand individual strengths and integrate them effectively within the team are

essential to achieve high levels of effectiveness (Hattori and Yamada 2020). In the university context, where work teams must face complex and diverse challenges, fostering CS can be a key differentiator for achieving high levels of effectiveness because an environment that promotes creativity and collaboration not only improves academic and administrative outcomes but also creates a more satisfying and enriching work environment for all team members (Primus and Jiang 2019).

Based on this, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H10. *Creative synergy is related to the effectiveness of a work team.*

2.11. Organizational Culture (OC), Work Climate (WC), and Creative Synergy (CS) as Mediators of Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Work Team Effectiveness (WTE)

EI plays a key role in the dynamics of work teams because leaders with high EI can foster an OC that values emotions and promotes a mutually supportive and cooperative work environment that is reflected in improved communication, motivation, satisfaction, and fostering a positive environment (Coronado-Maldonado and Benítez-Márquez 2023; Lee and Wong 2019).

Organizational culture (OC), work climate (WC), and creative synergy (CS) are key mediators that enhance the relationship between EI and WTE. Team members who feel psychologically secure are more likely to share ideas, take risks, and collaborate effectively, not only do they cooperate and collaborate, but they also coordinate their work and communicate with each other, contributing to team effectiveness and facilitating the exchange of ideas and information, openly discussing diverse ideas and creative resolutions to diverse problems among members, which enables team members to share information and innovate (Kim et al. 2020; Lee and Wong 2019). OC acts as a mediator between EI and WTE, facilitating the implementation of practices and values that promote collaboration and innovation because a strong OC can amplify the positive effects of EI on team effectiveness by providing a clear and consistent frame of reference for interactions and behaviors within the team (Wei et al. 2021).

A positive WC that fosters an environment of trust and cooperation promotes motivation and job satisfaction, resulting in higher WTE (Gómez and Salas 2018). Therefore, WC mediates the relationship between EI and WTE by providing an environment that facilitates open communication and conflict resolution because a positive WC, characterized by trust and mutual support, enables teams to function more effectively and achieve their goals more efficiently (Dobrowolska et al. 2020). EI facilitates the creation of an environment where creativity and innovation can flourish by improving communication and emotional understanding among team members (Barczak et al. 2010). CS acts as a mediator by enabling teams to take full advantage of the diversity of skills and perspectives of its members because EI enhances CS by fostering an environment where members feel safe to share ideas and collaborate effectively resulting in more innovative solutions and greater team effectiveness (Reiter-Palmon et al. 2021).

Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H11. *Organizational culture, work climate, and creative synergy mediate the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and team effectiveness.*

2.12. Organizational Culture (OC), Work Climate (WC), and Creative Synergy (CS) as Mediators of Team Leadership (TL) and Work Team Effectiveness (WTE)

Shared leadership enhances WTE and is visualized not only in improved performance and satisfaction, but benefits collaboration, communication, and skill development of (Carrillo et al. 2021; Chamberlin et al. 2024; Cotterill 2023; Rangel-Carreño et al. 2018; Wagner and Hollenbeck 2020). Work team leadership directly influences OC by establishing and reinforcing desired values, norms, and behaviors within the organization because shared leadership generally manifests in collective (members share all leadership roles)

and distributed (members play one leadership role while other members play other leadership roles) configurations, which has implications for team processes and effectiveness (Chamberlin et al. 2024; Wu and Cormican 2021).

On the other hand, transformational leadership inspires and motivates team members, while distributed leadership encourages the participation and empowerment of all members (Gil et al. 2011; Lisak and Harush 2021). Likewise, leadership that promotes autonomy, emotionally supportive behaviors, and facilitates communication can be an effective strategy to enhance WTE in organizations resulting in improved team cohesion, job satisfaction, and overall well-being (Alexandrino et al. 2024; Edelmann et al. 2023). That is, transformational leadership creates a positive, collaborative, and excellence-oriented work environment, especially in multicultural contexts where the management of diverse cultural identities is crucial for success (Lisak and Harush 2021).

The OC acts as a mediator between the TL and WTE by providing a structured environment aligned with team goals because a well-defined organizational culture, which promotes cohesion and commitment, amplifies the positive effects of leadership on team effectiveness by facilitating an alignment of goals and strategies within the team (Wang et al. 2014). Effective leadership also has a significant impact on WC, and a positive WC is critical for WTE because it promotes an environment of trust and cooperation; moreover, a positive WC, characterized by mutual support and open communication, enables teams to face challenges more effectively and achieve their goals more efficiently (AlMulhim 2023). CS is another crucial mediator linking TL to WTE because effective leadership enhances CS by fostering an environment where creativity and innovation can flourish, facilitating communication and emotional understanding among team members (Reiter-Palmon et al. 2021). Leadership that promotes creativity and innovation within the team results in more innovative solutions and greater team effectiveness, creating an environment conducive to collaboration and the development of novel ideas (Stinkeste et al. 2021).

Based on this, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H12. *The leadership of the person coordinating a work team predicts the effectiveness of the work team.*

Based on previous research, it is assumed that the leadership of the person coordinating the work team is related to emotional intelligence, organizational culture, work climate, and the creative synergy of the work team, explaining the effectiveness of the work team. On the other hand, emotional intelligence is related to organizational culture, work climate, and creative team synergy to explain the effectiveness of the work team. Understanding these interactions helps to develop effective strategies to improve the leadership of the person coordinating the work team and emotional intelligence and, therefore, the effectiveness of work teams in higher education institutions.

This study provides a theoretical model that facilitates a comprehensive understanding of how the leadership of the work team coordinator, emotional intelligence, organizational culture, work climate, and creative synergy of the work team influence work team dynamics (Figure 1). In addition, it offers practical recommendations to improve the management and effectiveness of work teams in the educational environment.

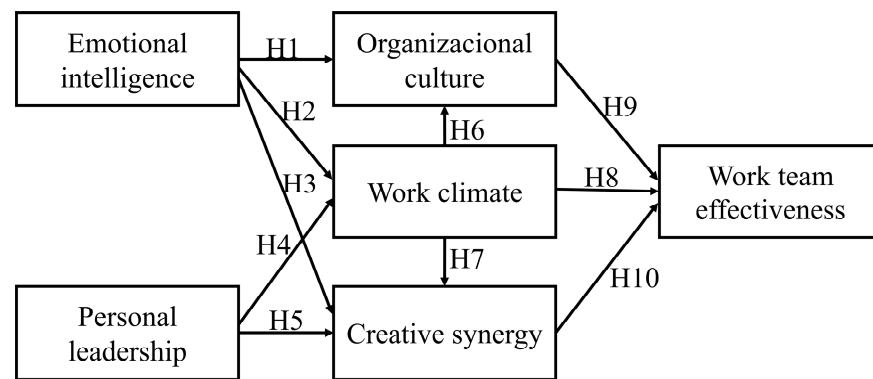


Figure 1. Hypothesized research model.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Study Design and Participants

This is a cross-sectional predictive design study (Ato et al. 2013). Participants were selected by non-probabilistic convenience sampling. The participants were considered to be academic personnel (e.g., faculties, professional schools, research area, committees or axes, teaching staff by professional schools, etc.) and non-academic personnel (e.g., teams from the areas of university welfare, accounting, finance, human talent management, etc.), who were registered in the payroll and working at the time the instrument was applied. It was verified that they would be part of a work team and that they would agree to participate voluntarily. Academic and non-academic personnel with part-time contracts, personnel on leave, personnel on vacation, personnel who were not in the workplace, and personnel who refused to give informed consent were excluded; in addition, hierarchical personnel (rector, vice-rectors, managers, and deans) were excluded.

The effect size considering the number of observed and latent variables in the model, the anticipated effect size ($\lambda = 0.3$), the desired statistical significance ($\alpha = 0.05$), and the statistical power level ($1 - \beta = 0.95$) considering a minimum recommended sample of 236 were analyzed (Soper 2024). However, out of a total of 2885 academic and non-academic employees of a private Peruvian university with campuses located in the three regions of the country (coast, highlands, and jungle), 512 workers participated (Table 1), achieving a response rate of 17.75%. Of these, 55.3% ($n = 283$) were male and 44.7% female ($n = 229$). The majority were married (62.3%), non-academic (63.3%), aged 40–49 (31.3%), with a professional degree (39.1%) at the time of participation, and living in the city of Lima (49.2%).

Table 1. Sample characteristics.

Category	Frequency	%
Sex		
Male	283	55.3
Female	229	44.7
Place of work		
Lima	252	49.2
Tarapoto	79	15.4
Juliaca	181	35.4
	512	100.0
Marital status		
Single	153	29.9
Married	319	62.3
Divorced	23	4.5
Widowed	4	0.8
Other	13	2.5

Table 1. Cont.

Category	Frequency	%
Academic degree		
Technician	39	7.6
Bachelor's Degree	66	12.9
Licentiate Degree	200	39.1
Magister	179	35.0
Doctor	28	5.5
Job title		
Non-academic personnel	188	36.7
Academic staff	324	63.3

3.2. Instruments

The instruments employed were adapted questionnaires based on a review of theories derived from the literature review. The questionnaires were evaluated by five experts with doctoral degrees, extensive management experience, and a recognized academic background at both the undergraduate and postgraduate levels to ensure accuracy and clarity.

3.2.1. Work Team Effectiveness

Work team effectiveness was assessed with 9 items (e.g., “The members of your work team perceive the final result of the team as positive”) of the scale developed by (Jaca et al. 2011), which is based on Hackman's theory (Hackman 1990). This instrument seeks to measure results related to the organization, the team, and the person. It presents a Likert-type scale between 1 (Total disagreement) and 6 (Total agreement), which reported reliability by McDonald's omega equal to 0.98.

3.2.2. Organizational Culture

Organizational culture was evaluated with 10 items, which assess participation in communication, decision-making, goal setting, and participation in creativity and innovation (e.g., “The managers of the institution motivate workers” or “Teamwork is encouraged in the institution”) using the scale developed by Gómez (Ayestarán and Gómez 2010). The questionnaire presented a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (Organizational culture of maintenance and not very participative) to 6 (Innovative and very participative organizational culture). The factors presented a McDonald's omega between 0.96 and 0.97, respectively.

3.2.3. Work Climate

The work climate was evaluated with 25 items (e.g., “Interpersonal relationships between bosses and collaborators are based on mutual respect”) from the scale developed by (Paredes 2013) with a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (Total disagreement) to 6 (Total agreement). These are divided into 3 dimensions: social–work environment, physical–health environment, and intellectual and spiritual environment. The reliability of the dimensions using McDonald's omega was 0.95, 0.97, and 0.98, respectively.

3.2.4. Leadership

The leadership was evaluated using 5 items (e.g., “The distribution of team roles assumed by team members”) developed by (Ayestarán and Gómez 2010), with a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (Total disagreement = little influence) to 6 (Total agreement = a lot of influence). It evaluates the degree of influence exerted by the co-coordinator on the functioning of the team. McDonald's omega was 0.98.

3.2.5. Creative Synergy

The (Climer 2016) creative synergy scale (e.g., “Team members openly share information with each other”) composed of 24 items with three key factors was used: (a) team dynamics, which measures trust, participatory safety, communication, conflict, or creative

abrasion, (b) creative process, which has to do with problem identification, fact solution identification, and applied solution, and (c) sense of team purpose which refers to the team's goal. It has six response options: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = somewhat disagree, 4 = partially agree, 5 = agree and 6 = strongly agree. The test was run on a convenience sample of 830 participants from 11 countries. McDonald's omega was 0.98 for team purposes, 0.99 for team dynamics, and 0.98 for creative process.

3.2.6. Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence was assessed with (e.g., "We often think about the feelings that other members may have") the trait scale Trait Meta-Mood Scale (TMMS) adapted by (Gurrutxaga 2015). It measures perceived emotional intelligence by assessing the meta-awareness of emotional states—that is, the skills with which we can be aware of our own emotions, as well as our ability to regulate them—and consists of 11 items with a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 6 (Strongly agree). The reliability reported by the authors reached a McDonald's omega of 0.98.

3.3. Ethical Aspects

Ethical procedures followed the 1964 Helsinki declaration and subsequent modifications. Prior to the study, approval was obtained from the ethics committee number 2020-CE-0002 of a Peruvian university. Due to the state of emergency for COVID-19 an online questionnaire was provided using the Google Forms tool and was sent via e-mails and WhatsApp, always preserving the anonymity of the participants. Only workers who agreed to participate in the study voluntarily answered the questionnaire. Respondents were also asked to read the informed consent as an initial page in the questionnaire. The time to complete the questionnaires was approximately 40 min.

3.4. Statistical Analysis

Descriptive statistics and bivariate analysis were calculated to determine the nature of the variables and the correlations between variables using the Pearson correlation statistic.

The hypothesized relationships of all variables were analyzed using an explanatory model through structural equation modeling (SEM) that allows the use of latent constructs composed of multiple observed variables, allowing the estimation of relationships between latent constructs (Byrne 2001, 2016) and the estimation of direct and indirect paths. This makes it an appropriate technique for assessing the direct and mediating effects of latent predictor variables on outcome variables. In addition, the main statistical analysis followed the proposal of (Kline 2016, 2023) for statistical analysis and testing structural equation models and the weighted least squares mean adjusted (WLSM) was used. Model goodness-of-fit indices were evaluated according to the proposals of Kline and Escobedo (Escobedo et al. 2016; Kline 2016). Comparative fit indices (CFI) and Tucker–Lewis fit indices (TLI) ranging between 0.90 and 0.95 indicated an acceptable fit and values above 0.95 indicated an adequate fit. Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) and standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) indices with values between 0.05 and 0.08 indicated an acceptable fit and values below 0.05 indicated an adequate fit. Statistical analyses were performed using the R 4.1.2 program (<https://www.rstudio.com/>).

4. Results

This section may be divided by subheadings. It should provide a concise and precise description of the experimental results and their interpretation, as well as the experimental conclusions that can be drawn.

4.1. Descriptive and Bivariate Analysis

Correlation analysis between the variables studied (Table 2) showed a strong positive correlation between the variables under study ($r > 0.79$, $n = 512$, $p < 0.01$). Bivariate analysis showed that team effectiveness correlated positively with organizational culture ($r = 0.85$),

creative synergy ($r = 0.85$), work climate ($r = 0.85$), coordinator leadership ($r = 0.79$), and emotional intelligence ($r = 0.79$). Also, positive correlations of organizational culture with creative synergy ($r = 0.84$), work climate ($r = 0.87$), coordinator leadership ($r = 0.80$), and emotional intelligence ($r = 0.82$) were observed. Creative synergy correlated positively with work climate ($r = 0.88$), coordinator leadership ($r = 0.86$), and emotional intelligence ($r = 0.88$). Work climate correlated positively with coordinator leadership ($r = 0.83$) and emotional intelligence ($r = 0.82$). Coordinator leadership presented positive correlations with emotional intelligence ($r = 0.84$). These relationships provide the basis for examining the hypothesized mediation model.

Table 2. Means, standard deviations, and correlations with confidence intervals.

Variables ¹	M	DS	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. WTE	41.56	8.94	1					
2. OC	46.94	9.78	0.85 ** [0.82, 0.87]	1				
3. CS	114.79	23.35	0.85 ** [0.82, 0.87]	0.84 ** [0.81, 0.86]	1			
4. WC	116.41	24.02	0.84 ** [0.81, 0.87]	0.87 ** [0.85, 0.89]	0.88 ** [0.86, 0.90]	1		
5. TL	24.18	5.16	0.79 ** [0.75, 0.82]	0.80 ** [0.77, 0.83]	0.86 ** [0.84, 0.88]	0.83 ** [0.80, 0.85]	1	
6. EI	52.53	10.90	0.79 ** [0.75, 0.82]	0.82 ** [0.79, 0.85]	0.88 ** [0.86, 0.90]	0.82 ** [0.79, 0.85]	0.84 ** [0.81, 0.86]	1

¹ WTE = work team effectiveness; OC = organizational culture; CS = creative synergy; WC = work climate; TL = team leadership (TL); EI = emotional intelligence; M = mean; SD = standard and median. Values in square brackets indicate the 95% confidence interval for each correlation. The confidence interval is a plausible range of population correlations that could have caused the sample correlation (Cumming 2014). ** indicates $p < 0.01$. The tolerance level statistical method and the variance inflation factor (VIF) values were used to continue the analyses and find variables that were multicollinear. The results showed that the tolerance for all variables was above 0.10 and the VIF for all independent variables was below the critical threshold of 10 (Table 3), confirming the absence of multicollinearity (Hahs-Vaughn 2016).

Table 3. Multicollinearity tests of the variables.

Model	UC		SC	<i>t</i>	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	<i>B</i>	Standard Error	<i>Beta</i>			Tolerance	VIF
WTE (Constant)	0.177	0.103		1.714	0.087		
OC	0.381	0.047	0.379	8.048	0	0.183	5.475
WC	0.173	0.056	0.168	3.084	0.002	0.136	7.339
TL	0.07	0.042	0.073	1.652	0.099	0.207	4.834
CS	0.35	0.056	0.345	6.193	0	0.13	7.666
EI	−0.028	0.046	−0.028	−0.608	0.544	0.186	5.375

Note: Unstandardized coefficients (UC); standardized coefficients (SC).

4.2. General Analysis of the Model

With the variables that presented significant correlations, a predictive model was evaluated using structural equation modeling (Figure 2). The hypothesized model presented adequate incremental ($X^2 = 9452.498$, $gl = 3391$, $p < 0.001$) (Schermelleh-Engel et al. 2003) and comparative ($TLI = 0.998$, $CFI = 0.998$, $RMSEA = 0.017$ and $SRMR = 0.033$) goodness-of-fit indices. Specifically, emotional intelligence predicted organizational culture ($\beta = 0.32$, $p < 0.001$), work climate ($\beta = 0.41$, $p < 0.001$), and creative synergy ($\beta = 0.38$, $p < 0.001$), thus supporting Hypothesis 1 indicating that emotional intelligence predicts organizational culture, work climate, and creative synergy. Coordinator leadership predicted work climate ($\beta = 0.50$, $p < 0.001$) and creative synergy ($\beta = 0.22$, $p < 0.001$) significantly, supporting

Hypothesis 2. Work climate predicted organizational culture ($\beta = 0.64, p < 0.001$), creative synergy ($\beta = 0.39, p < 0.001$), and work team effectiveness ($\beta = 0.16, p < 0.01$), presented in Hypothesis 3. Creative synergy and organizational culture predicted work team effectiveness ($\beta = 0.35, p < 0.001$; $\beta = 0.44, p < 0.001$), evidencing what was proposed in Hypothesis 4. Taken together, this suggests that higher levels of work team effectiveness are indirectly associated with emotional intelligence and coordinator leadership through the mediating effect of organizational culture, work climate, and creative synergy.

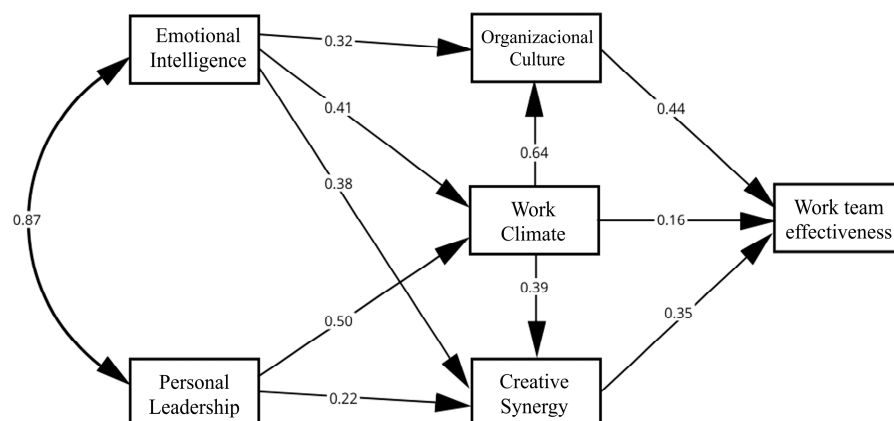


Figure 2. Structural model. Absolute ($X^2 = 9452.498, df = 3391, p < 0.001$) and comparative (TLI = 0.998, CFI = 0.998, RMSEA = 0.017, and SRMR = 0.033) goodness-of-fit indices.

4.3. Measurement Effect Test

To examine measurement effects, Hypotheses 5 and 6 were evaluated by the non-parametric bootstrapping method using the R package “Bootstrap” (Baron and Kenny 1986; Mallinckrodt et al. 2006). A total of 10,000 samples were randomly calculated with a 95% confidence interval (Preacher and Hayes 2008). The direct relationship between the predictors (emotional intelligence and coordinator’s leader-reason) and work effectiveness remained significant when adding the mediators (organizational culture, work climate, and creative synergy). A separate measurement analysis was performed.

Regarding Hypothesis 5, the results showed that organizational culture ($\beta = 0.416, p < 0.001, CI = 0.357, 0.480$), work climate ($\beta = 0.404, p < 0.001, CI = 0.340, 0.472$), and creative synergy ($\beta = 0.492, p < 0.001, CI = 0.408, 0.577$) mediated the relationships between emotional intelligence and work effectiveness. Likewise, Hypothesis 6 was evaluated indicating that work climate ($\beta = 0.866, p < 0.001, CI = 0.723, 1.024$) and creative synergy ($\beta = 0.977, p < 0.001, CI = 0.814, 1.154$) mediated the relationships between coordinator leadership and work effectiveness.

5. Discussion

The results found in the present study corroborate the hypotheses that emotional intelligence, the leadership of the person coordinating a work team, organizational culture, work climate, and creative synergy are determining factors in the effectiveness of work teams in one higher education institution, which provides a novel perspective on the internal dynamics of work teams in the university context. These findings are consistent with previous research that reinforces the importance of these factors in the dynamics of effective work teams.

Emotional intelligence was identified as having a significant relationship with organizational culture. This finding can be discussed with previous work (Barut 2019; Irfan et al. 2021; Wei et al. 2021), which argues that fostering emotional intelligence in organizational culture not only improves individual employee well-being, but also strengthens team cohesion and effectiveness. This is due to emotional intelligence’s ability to improve communication skills, stress management and conflict resolution, as well as its role in creating a positive and supportive organizational climate. The study in (Barut 2019) highlights that

employees with high emotional intelligence tend to have better communication skills and a greater ability to manage stress, which contributes to their overall well-being. This is evidence that an organizational culture that promotes the development of emotional intelligence through training and emotional support programs creates an environment where employees feel valued and understood, which reduces turnover and improves satisfaction.

A culture that prioritizes emotional intelligence fosters trust, mutual support, and highly integrated teams that work together, manage problems constructively, and achieve their goals. High emotional intelligence helps team members recognize and manage their own and others' emotions, reducing conflict and improving collaboration (Irfan et al. 2021). Wei et al. (2021) found that high emotional intelligence reinforces a positive organizational culture, creating a virtuous circle that leads to a healthier and more productive workplace that improves team effectiveness. Previous studies (Murmu and Neelam 2022; Rasooli et al. 2019) have shown that emotional intelligence has a significant impact on the formation and reinforcement of organizational values and beliefs, which shape a positive organizational culture that is essential for adapting to change, harmony at work, goal alignment, and improved performance and learning. Emotional intelligence improves communication, collaboration, and employee engagement, creating a healthy workplace culture. COs that recognize and support emotional intelligence can help employees develop emotionally, increasing their adaptability and resilience. This two-way interaction is essential for effective teams and a healthy, productive workplace (Drigas and Papoutsis 2018; Neong 2022).

Work climate is related to emotional intelligence. Tintaru et al. (2021) found that employees with high levels of EI have a favorable work climate because EI improves relationships and promotes harmony and cooperation. However, Pekkan and Bicer (2022) found that employees with high levels of EI are better able to cope with stress and job demands, which improves well-being and reduces turnover. Satrina et al. (2021) found that teams with high levels of EI can solve problems more creatively and achieve their goals more effectively because their employees can manage their own and others' emotions, which facilitates cooperation and conflict resolution. Conversely, Pokhrel and Goyal (2022) concluded that EI improves communication and collaboration among employees, creating a favorable work environment. Effective EI management supports harmonious interpersonal interactions and team collaboration, which is crucial for a successful work environment (Coronado-Maldonado and Benítez-Márquez 2023; Lee and Wong 2019). Team members with effective EI management have emotional control skills that promote unity and openness to new ideas and perspectives, which makes the work environment more collaborative and responsive (Gómez and Salas 2018).

Emotional intelligence (EI) and creative teamwork (CT) are related. This finding is consistent with previous findings (Pashazadeh and Alavinia 2019; Szorc 2020; Tong et al. 2022; Xu et al. 2019; Zia and Rouhollahi 2020) that EI creates an environment in which emotions are effectively managed, allowing individual skills and ideas to synergistically combine to produce innovative outcomes. On the other hand, EI creates a positive emotional environment when team members recognize, understand and manage their own and others' emotions, which makes them more likely to collaborate, share ideas and come up with creative solutions, as unresolved conflicts can hinder collaboration (Ayestarán et al. 2013; Gurrutxaga 2015; Lee and Wong 2019; Liu et al. 2022; Parke et al. 2015; Waglay et al. 2020). Emotional intelligence also helps to manage negative emotions and enhance positive ones, which is essential for team motivation and engagement by fostering a feeling of empowerment, essential for creativity and innovation in work teams (Componential Theory of Creativity 2013). EI promotes generosity, the sharing of resources and support among members, and energy and enthusiasm for creative activities, which enhance CS (Carmeli et al. 2014). EI enhances communication, builds trust and support, inspires idealism, and promotes generosity and vigor, essential in CS (Geher et al. 2017; Keir et al. 2020). Team members with high EI are better able to collaborate, face challenges, and generate creative solutions, resulting in improvement.

Team leadership is related to organizational culture. [Edelmann et al. \(2023\)](#) found that peer leadership behaviors provide a friendly and collaborative atmosphere, sustainable outcomes, and superior team performance, which has a positive impact on OC. According to [\(Delgado-Abella et al. 2019\)](#), organizational principles, values, norms, and beliefs lead to more structured work and greater employee involvement in decision-making, which enhances work team performance. Finally, [Gurrutxaga \(2015\)](#) found that team member's personal growth and awareness of their colleagues' needs can improve their perceptions, motivations, and attitudes, but OC must also prioritize responsibility and participation in the productivity and management of the institution for these changes to be effective.

Team leadership is related to work environment. Previous studies have shown that effective leadership creates a climate of trust and open communication, which improves the work environment, team motivation, satisfaction, and performance. However, leaders who can effectively manage interpersonal relationships and foster open communication improve the WC, which is a crucial part of organizational culture ([Arshad et al. 2022](#); [Cherkasskyi et al. 2023](#); [Chiang et al. 2021](#); [Pérez-Vallejo et al. 2015](#)). This reduces conflict and promotes a healthier, more respectful, and collaborative WC ([Li and Patterson 2024](#)). [Waglay et al. \(2020\)](#) observed that leaders who listen and address employee complaints generate a positive WL and a culture of respect and trust. [Li and Patterson \(2024\)](#) found that managing interpersonal connections and encouraging open communication reduces conflict and promotes company culture, improving WC. According to ([Waglay et al. 2020](#)), a leader's capacity to listen and address staff issues fosters respect and teamwork. According to ([Rangel-Carreño et al. 2018](#)), effective leadership that promotes free expression and idea valuation fosters a workplace where team members feel valued and supported, fostering creativity and team effectiveness. Finally, [Wu and Cormican \(2021\)](#) show that shared leadership, which involves equal involvement in decision-making, can improve WC by building team cohesiveness and collaboration.

Another hypothesis being tested is whether leadership is related to the creative synergy of a work team. This finding is related to the study conducted by ([Rangel-Carreño et al. 2018](#)), which showed that leaders who create an atmosphere that values and encourages the open expression of ideas effectively reduce fear of failure and allow team members to propose innovative solutions without fear of unfavorable judgment. The study conducted by ([Chamberlin et al. 2024](#)) shows that shared leadership structures not only promote a more cooperative work atmosphere, but also increase creativity and team effectiveness. This suggests that equal participation in leadership allows for a wider range of ideas and problem-solving approaches. Similarly, [Edelmann et al. \(2023\)](#) found a significant correlation between peer leadership behaviors and sustainable work outcomes as well as increased levels of team performance. This is due to the ability of peer leaders to effectively influence team creativity by cultivating a supportive and collaborative atmosphere. [Ayestarán et al. \(2013\)](#) found that training for working in innovation teams can increase team creativity and effectiveness. In other words, good training allows leaders to build the skills necessary to effectively manage creative teams. Leaders who develop a well-defined framework and cultivate a culture that values invention and experimentation play a critical role in setting ambitious, yet achievable, performance goals for team members. They also prioritize continuous improvement, which greatly enhances team creativity ([Pei 2017](#)).

Work climate is related to organizational culture. This finding is reinforced by the results of ([AlMulhim 2023](#)) and ([Dobrowolska et al. 2020](#)), who found that a positive WC, which reflects the support and appreciation of employees, strengthens adherence to organizational values and improves team cohesion; that is, the perception of WC on a daily basis directly influences how employees live and perceive OC, highlighting the importance of a work environment that promotes support, security, and innovation. Likewise, the results of ([Li and Patterson 2024](#)) show that OC establishes the context in which WC is developed, providing a normative and value framework that guides interactions and behaviors within a team, because a positive WC, where employees feel valued and supported, can strengthen adherence to organizational values and improve team cohesion. Furthermore, the findings

of (Etikariena and Kalimashada 2021) also highlighted that a culture that encourages innovation and adaptability is reflected in a WC where employees feel empowered to propose new ideas and solutions. For their part, Amiri et al. (2023) found that a positive work environment that emphasizes mutual support and security translates into a positive WC where employees feel valued and supported; this supportive environment is crucial for team cohesion and the achievement of organizational goals.

The hypothesis that work climate is related to creative synergy is supported by previously published studies (Ghosh and Tripathi 2021; Primus and Jiang 2019) in the sense that they found that a positive WC that values and respects individual contributions, manages conflicts constructively, and encourages the active participation of all team members creates an environment of trust, inclusion, and support that is essential for effective collaboration and the generation of innovative ideas. In this regard, the results of (Stinkeste et al. 2021) noted that a WC that emphasizes trust and manages conflict constructively is crucial for creating an environment where team members feel safe to express their opinions and face challenges without fear of negative repercussions; work climate not only improves team effectiveness but also facilitates the generation of novel ideas and creative problem-solving. In addition, Stinkeste et al. (2021) found that when team members perceive an environment of support and safety, they are more likely to share innovative ideas and collaborate effectively; this perception of inclusion and valorization of individual contributions enriches the creative process and promotes innovation.

It was shown that organizational culture is related to the effectiveness of the work team. This finding is supported by the results of (Barkova and Melnik 2023) who found that a solid OC is essential for building effective teams because OC influences team cohesion, communication, and collaboration, essential elements for achieving high levels of performance; additionally, a culture that values transparency, mutual support, and innovation creates an environment where teams can thrive and achieve their goals more efficiently. On the other hand, a strong and well-defined organizational culture can significantly improve team effectiveness because it provides a solid foundation for decision-making and conflict resolution, i.e., an organizational environment characterized by a positive culture promotes collaboration and commitment among team members (Tamunomiebi and Keremah 2020). Furthermore, positive OC not only improves employee job satisfaction and motivation, but also increases team cohesion and overall effectiveness because teams that operate in a culture that fosters trust and cooperation are more likely to collaborate effectively and solve problems innovatively (Shayya 2018).

Work environment is related to team effectiveness (WTE). This finding is reinforced by the results of (Jansen et al. 2019), who found that teams operating in a positive work environment show high levels of effectiveness due to their ability to coordinate efforts and solve problems collaboratively. The results of (Peduzzi et al. 2021) argue that a positive work environment promotes cohesion and coordination, which are essential for team effectiveness. Similarly, Akan et al. (2020) claim that employee satisfaction and well-being in a supportive environment motivate employees to contribute novel ideas and creatively approach challenges.

Creative synergy is related to the effectiveness of a work team. This finding is reinforced by the results of (Reiter-Palmon et al. 2021), who emphasize that team diversity and the active participation of all members are key factors that enhance CS. Therefore, technology and virtual tools have enabled greater collaboration in work teams because they promote creativity throughout through participation and interaction; this approach is crucial for university teams, where collaboration and idea-sharing are essential for innovation. On the other hand, the results of (Primus and Jiang 2019) show that the use of creative methods during team formation significantly improves the team climate; this is due to participatory trust, social engagement, and friendly competition, which reduce the fear of failure and foster a supportive environment for CS, which in turn improves WTE by allowing teams to work more effectively and collaboratively. On their part, the findings of (Hermawan et al. 2022) indicate that effective leadership is crucial for consolidating CS in

teams, as leaders who foster a collaborative work environment and support creativity can maximize individual contributions and promote collaboration, resulting in greater WTE. On the other hand, [Stel and Van Den Berg \(2022\)](#) argue that diversity of thought and active participation are fundamental for synergy in teams, but this diversity can lead to interpersonal conflict if not properly managed; therefore, it is crucial to balance diversity with a positive team climate that promotes collaboration and constructive conflict resolution; this ensures that CS translates into greater team effectiveness.

Organizational culture, work climate, and creative synergy are moderators of emotional intelligence and work team effectiveness. These findings are consistent with previously published studies ([Coronado-Maldonado and Benítez-Márquez 2023](#); [Lee and Wong 2019](#); [Najafzadeh et al. 2020](#); [Smith et al. 2020](#); [Waglay et al. 2020](#); [Wu and Cormican 2021](#)), in which researchers found that these mediators facilitate the creation of a positive work environment, promote collaboration, innovation, and team effectiveness, because adequate management of emotional intelligence facilitates shared leadership in the work team, allowing autonomy in decision-making, greater trust, open communication, commitment, and adequate assessment of team members to improve the effectiveness of the work team in an institution. Likewise, EI enhances the team leader's ability to foster an OC that values emotions and promotes a positive work environment; this environment facilitates the building of solid and trusting relationships, essential for a healthy WC; in addition, a leader with high EI, who is empathetic, adaptive, and receptive, can understand and value the perspectives and needs of team members during conflict resolution and task completion, strengthening positive OC and improving WTE ([Li and Patterson 2024](#); [Troth et al. 2012](#); [Waglay et al. 2020](#); [Wagner and Hollenbeck 2020](#)).

Finally, this study also showed that organizational culture, work climate, and creative synergy are mediators of team leadership and work team effectiveness. These findings are consistent with previous studies ([AlMulhim 2023](#); [Reiter-Palmon et al. 2021](#); [Smith et al. 2020](#); [Stinkeste et al. 2021](#); [Wang et al. 2014](#)), which found that OC, WC, and SC are important mediators that enhance the relationship between LE and WTE because they facilitate the creation of a positive work environment and promote collaboration, innovation, and WTE. Studies ([Troth et al. 2012](#); [Waglay et al. 2020](#); [Wagner and Hollenbeck 2020](#)) also show that these mediators facilitate the creation of a positive work environment, promote collaboration and innovation, and ultimately improve WTE because leaders with high levels of EI are typically empathetic, adaptive, and responsive, which allows them to understand and appreciate the perspectives and needs of team members during conflict and in the performance of assigned tasks; this capacity for conflict management and empathy strengthens positive OC, which is essential for WTE. For their part ([Wu and Cormican 2021](#)), they found that leadership's ability to promote autonomy and participation in decision-making significantly encourages collaboration and creativity within the team, which translates into greater effectiveness.

In addition, our findings suggest that leaders with high levels of EI tend to be more empathetic, adaptive, and responsive, a skill that allows them to understand and value the perspectives and needs of team members, especially during conflict and assigned tasks, thereby strengthening positive OC, which is essential for WTE ([AlMulhim 2023](#); [Reiter-Palmon et al. 2021](#)). This empathetic and adaptive approach to team management not only facilitates conflict resolution, but also fosters a work environment that values trust and collaboration, critical elements for WTE ([Smith et al. 2020](#); [Stinkeste et al. 2021](#)). The results of this study also highlight that positive WL significantly improves perceptions of OC, and vice versa, because a work environment that emphasizes support, security, and innovation strengthens organizational values and improves team cohesion ([Etikariena and Kalimashada 2021](#); [Li and Patterson 2024](#)). Finally, SC emerges as a determinant of WTE because teams that manage to integrate individual skills and knowledge to produce innovative results tend to be more effective; that is, EI and leadership play a crucial role in promoting this synergy by creating an environment where emotions are appropriately

managed and the free expression of ideas is encouraged ([Componential Theory of Creativity 2013](#); [Gurrutxaga 2015](#)).

Limitations and Future Research

One of the limitations is that the sample studied was limited to employees of a private university, which limits the possibility of generalizing the findings to other populations or participants outside the period studied. In particular, the roles that employees play may have different meanings before and after the period evaluated. Therefore, future research could make valuable contributions by including samples from other contexts, genders, and social classes. In addition, the current study relied on self-report measures that were not supported by other data sources, which may have introduced bias. Future research should include diverse data sources, such as third-party assessments or observational data, to counteract these potential biases. Furthermore, due to the cross-sectional design of this study, it is not possible to establish causality. The observed effects should be interpreted with caution. To capture the temporal dimension and provide a better understanding of causal relationships, future research should employ longitudinal designs. This approach would allow us to observe how the variables in the model change and influence each other over time.

6. Conclusions

The results of this study reveal the importance of emotional intelligence, team leadership, organizational culture, work environment, and creative synergy as determinants of team effectiveness. These findings not only provide a solid theoretical understanding, but also offer important practical applications that can benefit both the university population and the educational field in general. For example, the implementation of emotional intelligence and leadership training programs can improve communication and conflict resolution, creating a more harmonious and collaborative work environment. Likewise, fostering a positive organizational culture and work environment can increase job satisfaction and staff retention, contributing to the stability and continuity of the institution. Furthermore, fostering creative synergy through spaces dedicated to innovation can increase competitiveness and adaptability, allowing the institution to remain at the forefront of education.

These findings also provide practical guidance for educational institutions seeking to improve the effectiveness of their work teams. Applying these findings can have a positive impact on the quality of education provided, improving the student experience and the institution's reputation. For example, faculty who work in effective teams are better able to design and implement innovative curricula, respond quickly and effectively to pedagogical challenges, and collaborate on high-impact research projects. Together, these strategies not only improve the individual and collective performance of work teams, but also contribute to the overall development of higher education institutions by fostering an academic environment of excellence and sustainability.

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