

DO HIGH POTENTIAL EMPLOYEES ALWAYS POSSESS EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE? A Narrative Review of The Competency Based Model in Indonesian Multisector Organizations (2024–2025)

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Abstract

This narrative review explores whether high-potential workers (HiPo) within Indonesian organizations across various sectors consistently exhibit elevated levels of emotional intelligence (EI), and it assesses the relevance of the Competency-Based Model proposed by Boyatzis in the identification and development of HiPos. The review compiles freely accessible scholarly articles from 2024 to 2025, with a focus on research from Indonesia and includes one primary benchmark study on high-potential individuals for comparison, as studies specific to Indonesian HiPo are scarce. Findings reveal that being classified as a HiPo does not necessarily correlate with having high EI. Research directly related to high-potential employees indicates that cognitive-intrapersonal skills such as initiative, desire for learning, and the ability to think outside conventional limits are stronger indicators of high potential than emotional-interpersonal skills. Research from various Indonesian sectors, including manufacturing, energy, construction, and public services, suggests that while EI plays a significant role in enhancing employee productivity, work performance, job satisfaction, and effectiveness in management, its influence typically operates through mediating factors instead of serving as a direct predictor. Furthermore, talent management research in Indonesia shows that numerous organizations still depend on performance evaluations and fragmented methods instead of comprehensive competency frameworks. This review concludes that the Competency-Based Model is relevant in Indonesian organizations across different sectors; however, it should be viewed as encompassing a range of competencies rather than a single attribute. While EI is valuable, it is not an essential or sufficient criterion for determining high-potential employees.

Keywords: *High Potential Employees, Emotional Intelligence (EI), Competency Based Model, Talent Management, Indonesia, Narrative Review.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The identification of high-potential employees has become a strategic concern because organizations increasingly depend on internal talent pipelines for leadership succession,

innovation, and long-term competitiveness. In Indonesia, this issue is especially relevant because talent management is growing across both private and public sectors, yet the evidence suggests that many organizations still have not embraced it fully or consistently. A recent systematic literature review on talent management in Indonesia found that the concept is gaining traction, but significant gaps remain in both the public and private sectors. In parallel, a large Bank Indonesia study showed that talent management influenced organizational climate, employee engagement, and organizational commitment, but did not directly improve employee performance in a straightforward way. This indicates that talent systems in Indonesia are real but still structurally incomplete, making the question of what actually constitutes “high potential” highly urgent.

Within that debate, emotional intelligence remains one of the most commonly discussed competencies in work and leadership research. Recent open-access studies in Indonesia show that EI is positively associated with employee performance, work ability, job attitude, and project outcomes. In one Indonesian manufacturing study, EI had the only significant partial effect on performance among the variables examined, while self-efficacy and work stress did not show significant partial effects. In construction, EI significantly influenced project manager performance, particularly through self-awareness and social relationship skills, while job attitude acted as a bridge between EI and performance outcomes. These results suggest that emotional intelligence matters in work settings, but it typically functions through broader behavioral and contextual mechanisms rather than acting as a single, isolated cause of high performance.

The foundational concept for this analysis is the Competency-Based Model linked to Boyatzis. This model considers successful performance as stemming from groups of competencies instead of just one characteristic. Current conversations about Boyatzis’s contributions also clarify that emotional intelligence competencies, while related, are separate from intelligence itself. This distinction is crucial for understanding high potential, as the competency framework suggests that no single trait defines it. Rather, it indicates that high potential arises from a well-organized blend of cognitive, motivational, social, and emotional skills that meet the needs of the organization. This is why using a competency-based perspective is valuable for assessing whether emotional intelligence is an essential element of high potential or merely a component of a wider profile.

The gap in the literature is clear. Indonesian talent management studies rarely test whether HiPo employees always have high EI. Most local research examines EI as a predictor of performance, work ability, or leadership effectiveness rather than as a criterion for identifying high potential. At the same time, a direct high-potential talent study shows that cognitive-intrapersonal competencies contribute more heavily to HiPo prediction than emotional-interpersonal competencies, which directly challenges any simplistic assumption that emotional intelligence is the defining marker of HiPo. The novelty of this review is relational: it does not only ask whether HiPo has EI, but whether EI is a universal feature of

HiPo or simply one competence among several inside a broader model. The objective is to synthesize 2024–2025 evidence from Indonesian multisector organizations and evaluate whether the Competency-Based Model remains valid for HiPo identification and development.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The method explains the design of activities, how to select the target audience, the This research employed a systematic narrative review approach. The focus of the review was on freely available literature from the years 2024 to 2025, emphasizing peer-reviewed research included in DOAJ, journals hosted on Scopus, and platforms providing open-access publications, while prioritizing evidence from Indonesian organizations when accessible. The search strategy involved terms like “high-potential employee,” “HiPo,” “emotional intelligence,” “talent management,” “competency model,” “Indonesia,” “performance,” and “work ability.” Studies that were relevant had to cover high-potential identification, emotional intelligence as a competency in the workplace, talent management practices in Indonesian settings, or performance explained through competency-based frameworks. Earlier foundational studies published before 2024 were only referenced to support the conceptual framework and were not regarded as current empirical data. The analysis was conducted through thematic synthesis, structuring the findings around three main questions: the predictors of high potential, the significance of emotional intelligence, and whether the evidence aligns with a multidimensional competency model.

Because the direct HiPo literature in Indonesia is still sparse, the review triangulates across adjacent evidence streams. First, it uses the global high-potential benchmark study published in the *Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, which directly examined the competencies predicting HP in a multinational service firm. Second, it uses Indonesian studies on emotional intelligence and performance in manufacturing, construction, and leadership contexts. Third, it uses Indonesian talent management reviews and a large-scale Bank Indonesia study to establish the organizational context in which HiPo identification takes place. This approach is appropriate for a narrative review because the goal is theoretical evaluation and synthesis rather than effect-size pooling.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Talent management in Indonesia is growing, but the system remains incomplete

The literature indicates that Indonesian organizations are moving toward talent-based thinking, but implementation remains uneven. Linawati et al. (2024) reviewed 29 Indonesian studies and found that while talent management is gaining traction, significant gaps remain in both public and private sectors. Hartono et al. (2024) added an important organizational-level finding: in Bank Indonesia, talent management positively affected organizational

climate, employee engagement, and organizational commitment, but did not directly improve employee performance in the model tested. Taken together, these studies suggest that talent systems in Indonesia are increasingly visible, but they are still more mature in rhetoric than in full competency architecture. This matters because when talent systems are weak, HiPo labeling often becomes informal, performance-centric, and dependent on managerial impression rather than on a validated competence profile.

In practical terms, that means many Indonesian organizations may identify “high potential” too early or too loosely. A person who performs well today may be treated as future leadership material even when the underlying competencies needed for future roles have not been assessed systematically. This is precisely where the Competency-Based Model becomes useful: it provides a more stable logic for distinguishing current performance from future potential. The Indonesian evidence does not contradict this logic; instead, it shows why the logic is needed.

3.2 High potential is not the same as high emotional intelligence

The most direct evidence comes from de Haro García et al. (2023), the benchmark high-potential study included because direct HiPo-specific evidence is otherwise limited. In a sample of 806 employees in a multinational service firm, the researchers found that cognitive-intrapersonal competencies contributed more strongly to high-potential prediction than emotional-interpersonal competencies. Specifically, initiative, appetite for learning, and thinking beyond boundaries were significantly related to the HP criterion. This is an important result because it directly undermines the assumption that high potential is primarily, or necessarily, a function of emotional intelligence. Instead, it suggests that high potential is better explained by a broader competence profile in which emotional competencies are present but not dominant.

This finding is theoretically compatible with Boyatzis’s competency tradition. Boyatzis’s model does not reduce effective performance to one trait. It conceptualizes competence as an underlying characteristic tied to effective performance and managerial effectiveness, and later work in this tradition explicitly treats emotional intelligence competencies as related but different from intelligence. Therefore, if cognitive-intrapersonal competencies turn out to be stronger predictors of high potential than emotional-interpersonal competencies, the correct conclusion is not that the model fails, but that the model supports a multidimensional reading of potential. In other words, HiPo is a competency constellation, not an EI label. (Wiley-VCH)

3.3 Emotional intelligence still matters, but mostly as a performance enabler

Although EI is not sufficient to define HiPo, the literature clearly shows that EI remains a significant contributor to workplace effectiveness. In the Indonesian manufacturing study by Mayyora and Sumartik (2024), emotional intelligence significantly

affected employee performance, and the study reported that EI had the only significant partial effect among the variables tested. In the Indonesian construction-sector study by Hernadi et al. (2025), EI significantly affected project manager performance, especially through improved self-awareness and social relationship skills, while job attitude served as a bridge linking EI to better outcomes. Rasyid et al. (2025) similarly found that EI significantly improved employee performance directly and also strengthened work ability, which then mediated performance. These studies consistently show that EI helps employees function effectively, but usually through work ability, attitude, or relational behavior rather than by simply signaling future leadership potential.

A further contribution comes from A'yunnisa et al. (2024), who showed that perceived leader emotional intelligence positively affected followers' emotional intelligence, which enhanced job flourishing and performance. The same study found that positive team emotional climate strengthened that effect. This matters for the HiPo question because it shows that EI is socially shaped and context-sensitive. It is not only an internal attribute of an individual; it is also cultivated by leadership and team climate. That finding fits the competency view neatly: if the environment can amplify or suppress EI, then EI is a competency embedded in a social system rather than a fixed marker that automatically separates HiPo from non-HiPo employees.

3.4 Emotional intelligence is trainable, which weakens the case for using it as a rigid HiPo gatekeeper

Another key result from the review is that emotional intelligence is developable. Mehler et al. (2024) conducted a systematic review and meta-analysis of workplace interventions and found that emotional competencies can be improved through training, with sustained positive effects. Powell et al. (2024) reached a similar conclusion in the healthcare workforce, showing that EI training among working adults is effective and that EI interventions can influence well-being and professional functioning. Together, these findings imply that emotional intelligence should not be treated as a fixed, pre-existing threshold that only some employees possess. Instead, it is a capability that can be developed through intervention, coaching, and organizational support. That point is highly relevant for HiPo development because it means EI should be part of the development pipeline, not the sole gateway into it.

This trainability also supports the competency-based interpretation. If EI can be improved through learning, then it fits Boyatzis's broader view of competence as something that can be developed through structured experience and feedback. For Indonesian organizations, that means HiPo programs should not assume that emotional maturity has to be fully present at the point of nomination. A more defensible approach is to identify

employees with learning agility and other core competencies, then use developmental interventions to strengthen EI over time.

3.5 The Indonesian multisector evidence favors a multidimensional competency profile

When the Indonesian evidence is read together, the most defensible conclusion is that high potential in multisector organizations is multidimensional. In manufacturing, EI predicts performance, but not necessarily potential. In construction, EI helps project managers perform better, but the effect is closely tied to job attitude and interpersonal functioning. In energy and leadership settings, EI improves work ability and team climate, but those effects are mediated rather than direct. In public-sector and central-bank settings, talent management itself influences organizational climate and engagement more than it directly predicts employee performance. These patterns point to the same conclusion: high potential is not reducible to one emotional measure. It emerges from the interaction of competence, context, and development opportunity.

That conclusion is also consistent with Boyatzis's competency logic as presented in later work. Boyatzis's framework describes competence in terms of motives, traits, self-concept, skills, and knowledge, and the central point is that effective performance requires the right cluster of characteristics for the specific role and organizational environment. In the present review, this means cognitive-intrapersonal competencies such as initiative, learning agility, and boundary spanning are likely to be highly relevant to HiPo, while emotional-interpersonal competencies remain important but not exclusive. Emotional intelligence is therefore best treated as one dimension within a wider profile that also includes cognitive, motivational, and social capabilities.

3.6 What this means for HR practice in Indonesia

For HR practice, the implication is straightforward. Indonesian companies should avoid using emotional intelligence as the single proxy for high potential. A stronger approach is a structured competency model that assesses learning agility, initiative, strategic thinking, adaptability, and EI together. This would reduce the risk of confusing current performance with future potential. It would also align with the Indonesian talent management literature, which shows that firms still often rely on incomplete systems. In a multisector environment, this matters because sectors differ in their behavioral demands: some require stronger relational competence, while others require stronger learning and problem-solving capacity. The point is not that EI is irrelevant; the point is that EI alone does not define HiPo.

A competency-based HiPo system would therefore have three stages. First, organizations should identify high performers without assuming they are high-potential. Second, they should assess the broader competency profile using tools such as assessment centers, structured interviews, and 360-degree feedback. Third, they should use developmental programs to strengthen EI and other competencies that show promise but are

not yet fully developed. This approach is more consistent with the evidence than a one-shot nomination process based on manager intuition. It also matches the direction of current Indonesian talent-management development, which increasingly recognizes the need for systematic assessment rather than ad hoc judgments.

4. CONCLUSION

This narrative review concludes that high-potential employees do not always possess high emotional intelligence. The evidence from 2024–2025 across Indonesian multisector organizations shows that EI is valuable for performance, work ability, leadership behavior, and team climate, but it is not sufficient to define high potential. The strongest direct evidence on high-potential prediction shows that cognitive-intrapersonal competencies contribute more strongly than emotional-interpersonal competencies. Therefore, the Competency-Based Model remains valid for Indonesian organizations, but only when interpreted as a multidimensional framework that integrates cognitive, motivational, social, and emotional competencies rather than reducing HiPo to an EI score.

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