

Emotional Intelligence and Perceived Leadership Behaviour Effectiveness in Organizations

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Abstract

This study investigated the impact of emotional intelligence on the perceived effectiveness of leaders in organisations. Emotional intelligence is seen as an individual's capacity to appropriately regulate his/her emotions, and to use the information to guide one's thinking and action. Most managers would rather steer away from dealing with emotional issues, whereas emotions that are properly managed can have successful outcomes. Carefully managed emotions can drive trust, loyalty and commitment as well as increase productivity, efficiency, and effectiveness in the individual, team and organizations. Information was gathered from a sample of 232 respondents, using two instruments. The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire was used to determine leadership style within the organisation, while the Emotional Competency Profiler was used to determine the emotional intelligence of the leaders. Two hypotheses were tested and the results showed that there was a significant relationship between emotional literacy and transactional leadership ($r = .791, N=232, P <0.5$). Also, the multiple regression findings revealed that there was a joint effect of all the variables of transformational leadership on emotional intelligence. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that emotional intelligence tests should be designed to measure competencies associated with the understanding, and management of leaders.

Keywords: emotional intelligence, leadership behaviours, leadership effectiveness, organizations

Introduction

Emotional intelligence (EI) is seen as an individual's capacity to appropriately regulate his/her emotions, and to use the information to guide one's thinking and action. Most managers would rather steer away from dealing with emotional issues, whereas emotions that are properly managed can have successful outcomes. Carefully managed emotions can drive trust, loyalty and commitment as well as increase productivity, efficiency, and effectiveness in the individual, team and organizations. The concept of EI has been conceptualized as an important predictor for success at work (Goleman, 1995). Recently, considerable research attention has been dedicated in search of traits of effective leaders and identifying leadership potential (e.g. Thornton & Byham, 1982). Successful leadership is largely underpinned by the need of leaders to possess EI (Goleman, 1998) irrespective of the model of leadership that is being examined. Palmer, Gardner and Stough (2003a) also pointed out that EI is increasingly becoming popular within industrial and organisational psychology as a determinant of occupational success. Much of this popularity stems from the notion that EI may underlie various aspects of workplace performance that could not be accounted for by IQ or personality (Goleman, 1998). Goleman (1998) claimed that well developed training programmes could enhance emotional abilities (contained in EI) within, and amongst employees, and thus positively influence overall organisational performance and success.

A growing body of research attests to the importance of studying the role of EI in successful leadership (Carmeli, 2003). The central notion underlying this research is the view that people with high EI competencies are more likely than less emotionally intelligent people to display leadership success in the workplace. O'Connor and Little (2003) also provide arguments in support of the potential value of EI for improving a leader's professional and personal life. They support the notion that suggests that EI is a more effective predictor of success in a leadership role and life achievement, than general intelligence.

According to Stuart and Paquet (2001) EI is a vital factor in determining one's ability to succeed in life and directly influences one's psychological wellbeing or overall degree of emotional health, leading them to propose that emotional health should also have some impact on the presence or absence of leadership ability (Stuart & Paquet, 2001).

Gardner and Stough (2003) also acknowledged the fact that much of the popular management literature on EI has described the construct as an underlying attribute of leadership success, and that it has been proposed that screening for EI in the recruitment process may aid in the identification of potentially more successful leaders.

Statement of Problem

Emotions can lead to an increased morale amongst employees, but, can also prove to be destructive. Negative emotions such as fear, anxiety, anger and hostility usually use up much of the individual's energy and lower morale, which in turn leads to absenteeism and apathy. Authors have suggested that EI is essential for effective leadership (e.g. Bagshaw, 2000; Klausner, 1997; Cooper, 1997). It is believed that when a person has the best training the world has to offer and high level of intelligence, without emotional intelligence, the person still cannot be a good leader. EI is far more important at all levels in the workplace than technical skills and intelligence quotient (Goleman, 1988).

This study is aimed at discovering the extent to which EI affects leadership effectiveness.

Relevance of Study

Leadership issues are recurrent in every facet of human endeavor. Because of its imperativeness and its importance to the development and growth of any society, it was considered important to conduct an exploratory study in order to identify some of these EI factors that affect the success and performance of leaders. The results of such a study would contribute to knowledge and help increase the level of awareness.

Research Hypotheses

1. There will be a significant relationship between emotional literacy and transactional leadership.
2. There will be a joint effect of all the variables of transformational leadership on emotional intelligence.

Literature Review

Emotional intelligence

The roots of emotional intelligence follow the lines of the intelligence testing movement. Thorndike (1920) acknowledged there are multiple intelligences and social intelligence is one of them. Social intelligence was problematic from its inception because it is inherently difficult to measure. Examining humans in interactions is a much more difficult task than measuring the cognitive abilities of an individual solving a math problem. Despite the challenges, researchers still made efforts to measure social intelligence. Thorndike and Stern (1937) reviewed these attempts and concluded social intelligence was composed of three components: attitude toward society, social knowledge, and degree of social adjustment. They also determined social intelligence was too complex to be measured and the difficulties inherent in measuring interactions with people were too large an obstacle to overcome.

The field of psychology's emphasis on behaviorism and IQ testing resulted in social intelligence essentially being ignored during the coming decades, despite Weschler's (1952) acknowledgment of the «affective capacities» of individuals when he developed his first intelligence test. The recognition of social intelligence received a major boost by Gardner (1983) when his highly regarded theory of intelligence was published referencing two types of personal intelligence: interpersonal and intrapersonal. The term, emotional intelligence, was first mentioned in a doctoral dissertation nearly 20 years ago (Payne, 1985). This qualitative study proposed one can overcome deficiencies in emotional functioning and regulation by showing strength in the face of fear or desire. Three years later, another dissertation referred to the «emotional quotient,» which is the term commonly used today to refer to an individual's emotional intelligence score (Bar-On, 1988).

Researchers John Mayer and Peter Salovey conducted research a few years later attempted to answer why some individuals were better at reading emotions than others (Mayer, DiPaolo, & Salovey, 1990). It was in this study where they first published the term «emotional intelligence». Mayer and Salovey followed with a second study shortly thereafter that proposed the first model of emotional intelligence and brought its attention to the research community (Salovey & Mayer, 1990).

The article provided an overview of research in a number of previously unrelated areas and suggested findings from those areas were indicative of the presence of a new cognitive ability: emotional intelligence. In this influential article, emotional intelligence was defined as «the ability to monitor one’s own and other’s feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and action» (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Mayer and Salovey described emotional intelligence as a unique cognitive ability based upon emotion that is operationalized in an individual’s social environment.

Subsequent editorials and studies by the authors in the early 1990s implicated the importance of emotional intelligence as a variant of standard intelligence, a component of coping mechanisms, and a key component of self-regulation (Mayer & Salovey, 1993; Mayer & Stevens, 1994; Salovey, Hsee, & Mayer 1993). Goleman (1995) brought emotional intelligence to the mainstream public. He reviewed the work of Mayer and Salovey, presented his own similarly construed model of emotional intelligence, and forever changed the landscape of public awareness of the term. One of the areas that quickly latched onto emotional intelligence was the leadership development community. Emotional intelligence is attractive to organizations because it provides a framework from which emotionally-based soft skills can be designed and measured.

The awareness of emotional intelligence brought about by Daniel Goleman’s book also fueled much research that was subsequently published during the second half of the 1990s. One of the biggest complaints surrounding emotional intelligence upon its inception was the lack of research to support its validity. Indeed, this skepticism was well founded at the time because emotional intelligence was thrust into the public eye by Goleman’s (1995) book that was largely theoretical. Some skepticism continues today, criticizing the methodology of the flood of research during the last seven years (Barrett, 2001).

Taxonomy of emotional intelligence

While there are three predominant emotional intelligence taxonomies in widespread use today, the Goleman (2002) taxonomy offers a four-part structure which focuses on an individual’s ability to understand his or her own emotions and emotional state, to manage and regulate responses to these emotions, to recognize the emotional state of others, and to respond to the emotions present in others to interact effectively. Although it follows the same theoretical foundation and structure of the other models, Goleman et al’s (2002) model is designed for application in organizational theory, research and practice. This framework operates under the assumption that it can be used to develop the effectiveness of individuals in the workplace and in leadership positions (Goleman, 2001).

Personal competence	Social competence
Self awareness	Social awareness
Self-management	Relationship management
Note: from Goleman et al (2002)	

Fig. 1: Goleman’s taxonomy of EI

Personal competence encompasses an individual’s capacity to manage him or herself. Therefore, it includes both self-awareness and self-management (Goleman et al., 2002). Self-awareness includes emotional self-awareness, accurate self-assessment, and self-confidence. Self-management consists of emotional self-control, transparency, adaptability, achievement, initiative and optimism. Social competence is a factor that includes an individual’s capability to manage relationships. Social competence is composed of both social awareness and relationship management (Goleman et al., 2002). Social awareness includes empathy, organizational awareness, and service. Relationship management comprises inspirational leadership, influence, developing others, catalyzing change, managing conflict, and teamwork and collaboration.

Most models of emotional intelligence support both personal and social competencies (Bar-On, 2000; Bar On, 2006; Goleman, et al., 2002; Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Brackett & Salovey, 2006). Thus far, only one large-scale study has sought to confirm the structure of Goleman’s model of emotional intelligence. This study looked at 596 respondents to the Emotional Competence Inventory (ECI), a multi-rater measure of emotionally intelligent behavior, in multiple industries. Findings suggested strong support for a model of emotional intelligence based upon personal and social competence (Boyatzis, Goleman, & Rhee, 2000), but the study did not support splitting the taxonomy into additional skills.

Emotional intelligence and performance

Emotional intelligence has been linked to numerous important organizational outcomes and is frequently studied as a correlate with performance (Boyatzis, 2006; Goleman, 1995, 2001, 2002). The findings linking emotional intelligence to leadership performance are highly important. However, the significance of the emotional intelligence construct is truly felt only when one considers that, unlike other predictors of success such as general intelligence, emotional intelligence can be learned. Studies conducting emotional intelligence training with university students show a marked increase in emotional intelligence measured by a pre- and post-test measure (Ashkanasy, 2001; Clark, Callister, & Wallace, 2002). This finding has also been observed with leaders in corporate settings (Sala, 2001b; Young & Dixon, 1996). A follow-up study of increases in emotional intelligence as a result of direct learning efforts has revealed the maintenance of changes as long as seven years after the intervention (Wheeler, 1999).

Emotional intelligence is an excellent correlate of job success for leaders. Sosik and Megerian (1999) found leaders high in emotional intelligence outperformed their low emotional intelligence counterparts when measured by organizational performance data. Other carefully conducted studies have correlated emotional intelligence with performance on job-related cognitive ability tasks (Graves, 1999; Lam & Kirby, 2002). Perhaps the strongest evidence to date for the utility of emotional intelligence for predicting on-the-job success for leaders comes from a study by Cavallo and Brienza (2002). This study assessed the leadership behavior of 358 leaders at Johnson and Johnson Corporation, at locations across the globe. The study found the best performers were those high in emotional intelligence as rated by their supervisors, peers, and subordinates in the Emotional Competency Inventory (ECI), a 360-degree feedback instrument based upon Goleman's (2001) model. Emotional intelligence competencies that were the best predictors of success in this study were self-confidence, achievement orientation, initiative, leadership, influence and catalyzing change.

Method

Research Design

The design used for this study is the survey design. The independent variable is emotional intelligence and the dependent variable is perceived leadership effectiveness.

Subjects

The subjects for this study were 232 respondents from an organisation in Lagos who were purposively selected for this study. The respondents covered the various levels (upper, middle and lower). The demographical information of the respondents is shown in Table 1.

Research Instruments

The instrument for this study was a questionnaire and it was divided into three parts. The first part measured respondents demographics. The second part measured EI with a scale named Emotional Competency Profiler (ECP) which was developed by Wolmarans and Greeff (2001). The scale has 46 items and cover factors such as emotional literacy, self-esteem/self-regard, self-management, self-motivation, change resilience, interpersonal relations, and integration of head and heart. The scale uses a 7-point Likert scale with Cronbach alpha 0.98. Part three measures perceived leadership effectiveness with a scale named MLQ, which is a 45 item questionnaire with a 5-point response format ranging from 0=not at all to 4=frequently if not always. The scale was by Bass and Avolio (1997). Cronbach alpha was 0.73 for transformational and 0.94 for transactional leadership.

Statistical Analyses

The demographic data were analyzed using frequency counts and simple percentages. Hypothesis 1 was tested with Pearson Correlation and hypothesis 2 was tested with multiple regression.

Results

Presentation of demographic data

Table 1: Summary of Simple Percentages and Frequency Counts of the Demographic Variables.

Age	Frequency	Percentage
20-30 yrs	134	57.8
31-40 yrs	52	22.4
41-50 yrs	28	12.1
Above 50 yrs	18	7.8
Total	232	100.0

In table 1, 134(57.8%) of the respondent were within the age range of 20-30 years, 52(22.4%) were within the age range of 31-40 years, 28(12.1%) were within 41-50 years while 18(7.8%) were above 50 years.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Sex

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	118	50.9
Female	114	49.1
Total	232	100.0

Table 2 shows that males comprised 50.9% (118) of the respondents and females 49.1% (114).

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by Education

Education	Frequency	Percentage
SSCE	60	25.9
NCE/OND	54	23.3
B.Sc/HND	77	33.2
M.Sc	24	10.3
Ph.D	17	7.3
Total	232	100.0

Table 3 indicates that 60(25.9%) have SSCE certificate; 54 (23.3%) have NCE/OND; 77(33.2%) have B.Sc/HND; 24(10.3%); and 17(7.3%) possess Ph.D degree.

Table 4: Distribution of Respondents by Marital Status

Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage
Single	88	37.9
Married	136	58.6
Others	8	3.4
Total	232	100.0

Table 4 shows that 88 (37.9%) are single and 136(58.6%) are married.

Table 5: Distribution of Respondents by Length of Service

length of service	Frequency	Percentage
1-5	224	96.6
6-10	7	3.0
11-15	1	0.4
Total	232	100.0

Table 5 indicates that 224(96.6%) have spent between 1-5 years; 7(3%) have spent 6-10 years and 1(0.4%) have spent 11-15years in the organization.

Hypotheses Testing

H1: There will be a significant relationship between emotional literacy and transactional leadership

Table 6: Summary of Pearson Correlation Showing the Significant Relationship between Emotional Literacy and Transactional Leadership

	Mean	Std. Dev.	N	R	P	Remark
Emotional literacy	23.0474	9.2700				
Transactional leadership	43.4914	19.0499	232	.791**	.000	Sig.

** sig at .01 level

It is shown in the above table that there was a significant relationship between emotional literacy and transactional leadership ($r = .791^{**}$, $N = 232$; $P < .05$). The hypothesis is therefore accepted.

H2: There will be a joint effect of the factors of transformational leadership on emotional intelligence.

Table 7a: Summary of Multiple Regression Showing the Joint Effect of the Factors of Transformational Leadership on Emotional Intelligence.

Model	Sum of squares	Df	Mean Square	F	P	Remark
Regression	1005291.3	5	211058.252			
Residual	173664.31	226	768.4267	261.649	.000	Sig.
Residual	1178955.6	231				

**sig at .01 level; $R = .923$; $R \text{ squared} = .853$; $\text{Adj } R \text{ squared} = .849$

It is shown in the above table that the joint effect of the factors of transformational leadership on emotional intelligence was significant $F(5, 226) = 264.649$; $R = .923$; $R \text{ squared} = .853$; $\text{Adj } R \text{ squared} = .849$; $p < .05$. About 85% of the variation was accounted for by the independent variables.

Table 7b: Summary Table Showing the Relative Effect of the Independent Variables on Emotional Intelligence

Model	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error			
(Constant)	40.342	4.460		9.045	.000
Idealised attributes	2.611	.705	.148	3.703	.000
Idealised behaviours	.939	.763	.053	1.231	.220
Inspirational motivation	3.899	.745	.253	5.230	.000
Intellectual stimulation	2.823	1.004	.157	2.811	.005
Individual consideration	6.932	.854	.409	8.112	.000

The result above shows the relative contribution of each of the independent variables on the dependent: Idealised attributes ($B = .148$; $p < .05$), Idealised behaviours ($B = .053$; $p > .05$), Inspirational motivation ($B = .253$; $p < .05$), Intellectual stimulation ($B = .157$; $p < .05$), and Individual consideration ($B = .409$; $p < .05$). The result shows that all the variables were found significant except Idealised behaviours.

Discussion

The results of the hypotheses agrees and confirms results from previous studies that leadership is a critical factor in the success or failure of an organisation, or even, any given society. Excellent organisations begin with excellent leadership and successful organisations reflect their leadership. Emotional intelligence has been linked to leader performance in a variety of corporate settings (Cavallo & Brienza 2002; Graves, 1999; Lam & Kirby, 2002; Sosik & Megerian, 1999). Hypothesis two investigated the joint effect of the dimensions of leadership behavior on emotional intelligence. Four dimensions of leadership emotional intelligence (Inspirational motivation, Intellectual stimulation and Individual consideration) had a significant and unique impact upon the emotional intelligence of leaders in the study. One dimension, idealized behaviours, did not.

A study by Cavallo and Brienza (2002) found relationship management to be the best correlate of leader performance compared to the four factors of emotional intelligence. Hypothesis three suggested the same and this unique finding was replicated by the present study.

Managing the emotional side of relationships had greater impact on job performance than awareness of emotions or management of the self. Relationship management is considered to be the ultimate outcome of emotional intelligence; a skill whose foundation is built upon the other three skills in the model (Goleman et al., 2002).

Conclusion

The findings of this study showed that EI has a statistical significant relationship on perceived leadership effectiveness and outcomes. Emotional intelligence has been found important because it provides an excellent framework to look at how people understand and manage emotions. Emotional intelligence considers how people interact in a way cognitive ability theories cannot fully account for. Research findings such as this suggests that this intuition is accurate and that leaders who use emotional intelligence to build solid relationships usually well in their jobs. Emotional intelligence is very appealing to most leaders, at the same time daunting for some to explore emotions and feelings in a work setting. Hence, providing a leadership assessment that is not too cumbersome or abstract is important in achieving successful outcomes.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following are recommended:

1. Understanding EI should be encouraged because it contributes to the effectiveness of leadership outcomes.
2. EI tests and constructs could better predict success in leadership competencies than personality; hence, organisational decision makers will be more effective in the selection and development of individuals that should be successful in leadership roles.
3. EI tests should be designed to measure competencies associated with the understanding and management of leaders.

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