



An Examination of The Link Between Emotional Intelligence and Leadership Skills: Review of Existing Literature

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Abstract

Leadership stands as one of the most extensively studied subjects throughout history, with numerous theories positing factors influencing effective leadership. This article delves into investigating the relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership skills. Emotional intelligence emerged as a concept as early as the 1920s and is now recognized as a crucial element in achieving success in management and leadership roles. The authors conducted a thorough review of existing literature on this topic, compiling pertinent and insightful information. Through their analysis, the authors ascertain that existing research indicates a robust positive correlation between emotional intelligence and entrepreneurial capabilities.

Keywords: EI, EQ, IQ, Leadership

INTRODUCTION TO EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE:

From time immemorial, human beings have strived to understand and analyze the concept of 'intelligence', since human species is the most generously gifted by this aspect of life. Till the early twentieth century, it was believed that intelligence is only unidimensional and was best explained by the concept of "Intellectual Intelligence". This theory was rooted in the belief that intelligence is a function of rational logic.

Emotional Intelligence, in essence, can be traced all the way back to 1920, when Thorndike first spoke about the concept of 'social intelligence'. Taking that forward, the first attempt to measure 'social intelligence' in children was made by Edgar Doll in 1935. On similar but more advanced lines, in 1983, Gardner did some path breaking work and introduced the concept of 'multiple intelligence', which basically spoke about two different types of intelligences – the interpersonal intelligence and the intrapersonal intelligence. Gardner (1999) clarified the difference between what is known as inter-personal intelligence and intra-personal intelligence. It is believed that interpersonal skills focus on how one person deals with the behavior and desires of others, whereas intrapersonal intelligence means to understand our own internal behavioral attributes.

The term 'emotional intelligence' was used in literature prior to 1990 also, (Greenspan, 1989; Leuner, 1966; Payne, 1986), but it is believed that the first proper definition of 'Emotional Intelligence' was made available by Mayer and Salovey in 1990.

However, in the mid 1990s, Daniel Goleman started popularizing a concept called "Emotional Intelligence" (and its corresponding measure called 'Emotional Quotient' or 'EQ') based on earlier work done by researchers John Mayer and Peter Salovey.

In 2004, The Encyclopedia of Applied Psychology suggested three different frameworks or models of EI. These are:

- (i) The Ability Model of Mayer and Salovey (1997)
- (ii) Daniel Goleman's Model (1998)
- (iii) Bar-On Model (1997b, 2000)

EQ or Emotional Intelligence is understood to be the capacity to recognise emotions as they occur and appear in oneself and also as they happen in others; and also the capacity to discriminate between different feelings and to give these feelings suitable names or labels; and to then use this learning to guide thoughts and behaviour patterns.[1].

According to Goleman (1998, p. 317), EI is to be seen as the power to recognise feelings within oneself and feelings within other people and then figuring out a way to manage these feelings and emotions within oneself and within others. There are two primary schools of thought as far as EI is concerned. One school of thought which argues that emotional intelligence should be seen as an ability and another school of thought which professes that emotional intelligence should be seen as a trait. Mayer and Salovey are of the opinion that EI should be seen as an ability. (Mayer and Salovey, 1997). However, an alternate proposal suggests and recommends that EI be seen in a broader framework including personality traits (e.g., Bar-On, 2000; Boyatzis, Goleman and Rhee, 2000; Goleman, 1995, 1998).

INTRODUCTION TO LEADERSHIP ABILITIES:

After a comprehensive review of literature, Stogdill (1974) concluded that there were as many definitions of the term 'leadership' as there were number of individuals who have attempted to define the term. The concepts of leaders and leadership have changed as historians, political scientists, sociologist, psychologists, philosophers, theologians, feminists, academics, anthropologists, and others have tried to define and measure it.

Different from management, Kouzes and Posner (1996) see leadership as the ability to mobilize other people to want to achieve a shared aspiration. This definition focuses more on the interaction between leaders and followers, and the movement towards shared goals.

Rost (1993) defined leadership as a relationship between leaders and followers based on the intention to bring about significant changes for their mutual purposes.

This definition distinguishes leadership from management where we cannot assume that managers automatically become leaders and we cannot rule out the possibility that non-managers can become leaders. Influence, intended change, and mutual purpose are present in leadership, but not essential to management. There can be more than one leader, and there must be more than one follower. Leadership is not static, as an individual can be a leader in one situation and not in another.

Recent leadership theories emphasize leadership more as a process and that everyone has the potential to lead, depending on the context and the issues, not just those who hold a formally recognized position of authority and responsibility. Kouzes and Posner (1993; 1996; 1999; 2000), Rost (1993, 1995, 2000, 2001; Rost & Smith, 1992), and Heifetz (1996; Heifetz & Laurie, 1997) are just a few theorists that focus on leadership as a process. Rost (1993), for example, indicated that it is not necessary that leaders and followers have to produce changes for leadership to necessarily occur. Results are not important in determining if leadership is occurring. Kouzes and Posner (1996) explained that leadership is like a performing art and not a position. We have to realize that positions keep changing. Heifetz (1996) echoed this statement by pointing out that focusing on adaptive work allows us to evaluate leadership in a process rather than waiting until the outcome is clear.

The leadership theories above do not exhaust this field of study, which is not the intent of this discussion. It is to emphasize that leadership definitions, models, and theories have changed over the last century as the business environment has changed.

Top-down managerial direction is not always a valuable talent in today's business environment. Aspects of management are still necessary, but there is greater emphasis on leadership. For the purpose of this research, "leadership" will be referred to as the process a supervisor, manager, or executive (one with a given title of authority within an organization) or leader (one who mobilizes others towards shared aspirations, but may not have a given titled position in an organization) uses to make things happen.

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND LEADERSHIP

In the past few decades a lot of research has been conducted trying to study the connection, if any, between high emotional intelligence quotients and leadership abilities of individuals. A lot of research does point out a positive correlation between these two attributes.

Cavallo (2001) after conducting a study for 358 managers and 1400 employees of a leading multi-national firm concluded that individuals who had a higher degree of 'emotional competence' were best performing leaders compared to those with low degrees of emotional competence.

In an interesting study on the impact of emotional intelligence on leaders in the academic world (i.e. principals of educational institutes), Ayiro (2009) found that there was a positive correlation between EI scores and performance ratings of these academic leaders and EI was found to be the strongest predictor of leadership performance.

Recently, there has been interest to understand the impact of emotions displayed by the leader on leadership abilities and behavior of the followers for that leader. Emotional contagion is now believed to be one of the most important factors to understand and study leadership. Emotional contagion is nothing but a tendency for an individual to mimic the verbal/non-verbal cues of another person and then to start feeling the emotions conveyed by the sender (Hatfield, Cacioppo, & Rapson, 1994).

EXPLORING THE DARK SIDE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE:

Although a lot of research present exhibits that emotional intelligence is an important aspect of good leadership, we need to keep in mind that emotionally intelligent leaders can still suffer from mindsets of manipulation and unethical behavior. Emotionally intelligent leadership has to be benevolent and only then can be seen as a positive trait, otherwise, can be seen as a negative trait. As such, the knowledge of regulating emotions may be seen as neither a positive nor a negative but it can help individuals to fulfill either positive interests for the greater good or negative interests in overall harm. (Côté, S., DeCelles, K. A., McCarthy, J. M., Van Kleef, G. A., & Hideg, I. (2011).

Most research on emotional intelligence in context of leadership is very positive and hence it might be worthwhile to also look at some plausible disadvantages of highly skilled emotional individuals climbing the leadership ladder. An emotionally intelligent leader can strategically disguise his/her emotions and can also manipulate others' emotions for personal gains in the corporate world. (Kilduff, M., Chiaburu, D. S., & Menges, J. I., 2010).

Researchers also advice that a good strategy for organizations is to hire intellectually competent and technically proficient resources who have the right domain knowledge for the job, however, as far as leadership positions are concerned,

organizations need to look at more than technical and domain skills and consider skills like emotional intelligence because in leadership roles relationships matter (Caruso, D. R., Fleming, K., & Spector, E. D. 2014).

It is revealed that leaders who possess a high EI score are perceived by their subordinates are more effective leaders which means EI can be considered as a determinant of perception of effective leadership (Kerr, R., Garvin, J., Heaton, N., & Boyle, E, 2006). We learn from past research that leaders who are successful connect with the employees on emotional level which is important for the firm's success (Goleman, D., Boyatzis, R. E., & McKee, A 2013). Another work demonstrates that emotional intelligence can have positive contributions towards effective leadership in more than one ways (George, J. M., 2000)

It has been reported by researchers that when a leader displays a negative affect (negative feelings and emotions), the followers might also start showing a negative affect due to emotional contagion and this over time disturbs the level of leader endorsement in the organization and increases the level of cynicism towards leadership in the organization, which overtime shall hurt the leader directly (Dasborough, M. T., Ashkanasy, N. M., Tee, E. Y., & Herman, H. M., 2009)

Emotions can be created in an individual by various events in the day. It has been noted that emotionally intelligent people have the ability to recognize whether the emotion created in them by a particular event is relevant to the decision they are taking about a particular issue. It was found that people with lower measures of understanding their emotional anxiety fall prey to the effect of those emotions and let them influence their decisions about topics which are irrelevant to the activities that caused those emotions. For instance, if a financial investor meets with a car accident, and if this financial investor has a low ability to understand his/her emotions, they will let this emotional anxiety caused by the car accident influence their decision about financial investments not realizing that the anxiety is irrelevant to the financial decision. The ability to identify the right reason for emotional anxiety is critical to developing a high sense of emotional intelligence. It has been seen that individual with lower understanding of emotional and the relationship between events and emotions tend to attribute the wrong events as the cause of a particular emotion. For instance, the financial investor with reduced levels of emotional understanding might incorrectly attribute the anxiety to a business meeting rather than the car accident which happened while he/she was on the way to work and this gives rise to a whole set of other behavioral issues. Yip, J. A., & Côté, S. (2013).

Literature Summary: Emotional Intelligence:

Sr. No	Year	Researcher	Contribution/Ideas Expressed
1	1920	Thordnike	Introduced the concept of 'Social Intelligence'
2	1935	Edgar Doll	Attempt was made to measure 'Social Intelligence'
3	1983	Gardner	introduced the concept of 'multiple intelligence', which basically spoke about two different types of intelligences – the interpersonal intelligence and the intrapersonal intelligence.
4	1990	Mayer and Salovey	Established a proper definition of the term 'Emotional Intelligence'.
5	1995	Daniel Goleman	Popularized and established the concept of 'Emotional Intelligence' and its corresponding measure called 'Emotional Quotient' or 'EQ'
6	2000	Bar-On	Reuven Bar-On suggested a new term called 'Emotional Social Intelligence (ESI)' since he believed that emotional intelligence is like a set of noncognitive abilities unlike what Mayer and Salovey suggested in their theory in 1990. His model is tested with measures like Bar-On EQ-i.

Literature Summary: Emotional Intelligence and Leadership and Success

Sr. No	Year	Researcher	Contribution/Ideas Expressed
1	1990	Bass	For effective transformational leaders, apart from social and cognitive intelligence, emotional intelligence is a must.
2	2000	Ashkanasy & Tse	Empirical research clearly shows positive connections between emotional intelligence and transformational leadership.
3	2000	George, J. M.	Emotional intelligence has the potential to positively contribute to effective leadership in multiple ways.
4	2000	Edum-Fotwe and McCaffer	Some of the key skills required for success in project management were soft skills like communication skills, negotiation skills and problem-solving ability, all of which are essentially related to the overall ideal of Emotional Intelligence.

5	2001	Cavallo, K	Individuals who had a higher degree of 'emotional competence' were best performing leaders compared to those with low degrees of emotional competence.
6	2001	Palmer et al	EI is related to transformational leadership and effective leaders have a transformational leadership style rather than a transactional leadership style.
7	2002	Sivanathan & Fekken	Followers perceive leaders with high EI scores as more effective transformational leaders
8	2003	Mussig ^{1,2}	Value driven leadership is seen in action when leaders work on developing their emotional and spiritual intelligence quotients.
9	2003	Prati et al.	A critical competency for better team performance in organizations today is emotional intelligence.
10	2004	Downey et al.	A study done on female managers revealed better leadership abilities for women with demonstrating higher levels of emotional understanding behavior.
11	2005	Rosete & Ciarrochi	Organizational outcomes and future leadership roles are more likely to be achieved by executives with higher EI scores.
12	2005	Rosete and Ciarrochi	Emotional Intelligence quotient (EI) becomes a far more reliable predictor of a star performance over an average performance.
13	2006	Jordan and Ashkanasy	People with high emotional awareness are able to resolve this conflict between personal and team goals and such team members have a positive impact on overall team interaction and team effectiveness.
14	2006	Kerr, R., Garvin, J., Heaton, N., & Boyle, E	EI can be considered as a determinant of perception of effective leadership since leaders with high EI scores are perceived to be better leaders by their subordinates.
15	2009	Ayiro, L.P	Emotional Intelligence was found to be one of the strongest predictors of leadership performance
16	2009	Dasborough, M. T., Ashkanasy, N. M., Tee, E. Y., & Herman, H. M.	Negative affect by the leader shall invite overtime more cynicism towards leadership and lower leader endorsement which overtime shall hurt the leader.
17	2010	Kilduff, M., Chiaburu, D. S., & Menges, J. I. (2010).	Comments on exploring the dark side of emotional intelligence and pointing out how EI can have negative shades.
18	2011	Côté, S., DeCelles, K. A., McCarthy, J. M., Van Kleef, G. A., & Hideg, I.	As such, the knowledge of regulating emotions may be seen as neither a positive nor a negative but it can help individuals to fulfill either positive interests for the greater good or negative interests in overall harm
19	2012	Mittal, E. V., & Sindhu, E.	The problem with emotionally intelligent leaders is that they can manipulative and unethical also.
20	2013	Goleman, D., Boyatzis, R. E., & McKee, A	Leaders who are successful connect with the employees on emotional level which is important for the firm's success
21	2013	Yip, J. A., & Côté, S. (2013).	Individuals with lower emotion-understanding attribute the wrong emotions to the wrong causes and allow irrelevant decisions to be effected.
22	2014	Caruso, D. R., Fleming, K., & Spector, E. D.	For people in leadership positions where relationships matter and focus is on long-term success, emotional intelligence is a key skill.

SUMMARY

The reviewed literature suggests a positive correlation between Emotional Intelligence and effective leadership, transformational leadership style, leadership performance and real-life success. The reviewed literature also suggests that

Emotional Intelligence can be used as a tool and theory to predict possible leadership attributes amongst individuals. Also, a deep study into literature on Emotional Intelligence reveals that there are all the reasons to believe that Emotional Intelligence as a skill and personality trait can be developed (e.g. Groves, Mckenrue, and Shen 2008).

The above two pieces of information can hold immense value for human resource thought leaders to introduce training on concepts of emotional intelligence which can prepare the next generation for better leadership skills and improve their chances of performing more effectively in today's dynamic corporate and cross-cultural environment.

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