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Emotional Intelligence and Leadership in Indian Context

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Abstract

Emotional Intelligence (EI) has been claimed important for performance of leaders and workers in organizations. But, little research has examined these issues in Indian context. The present study explores the relationship between the four dimensions of Emotional Intelligence: self awareness, self management, social awareness and social skills and Six styles of Leadership: pioneering, strategic, management/administration, and team, pastoral and encouraging styles. The findings support the claim of positive impact of emotional intelligence on leadership.

Keywords - Emotional intelligence, Leadership.

1. Introduction

Emotional Intelligence attracted the attention of research in organizations and academia after the publication of Danile Goleman's best-seller book "*Emotional Intelligence*" (1995), which claimed EI as a best predictor of work and life success (Goleman, 1995; 1998). Many claims have been made about the ability of EI to predict work outcomes, such as job satisfaction, turnover (Goleman, 1998), and performance (Bachman et al., 2000). Mayer, Salovey, et al. (2000b) suggested that EI may have an impact on many work-related outcomes, including job performance and interpersonal interactions, such as job interviews and interacting with coworkers on a daily basis. Goleman made the argument that EI accounts for the remaining 80% of the variance (Neely-Martinez, 1997). Claims have also been made about the role of EI in the prediction of job performance. Goleman (1998) also claimed that employees who are high in EI are "star performers." The claims made have been strongly criticized as being implausible and lacking empirical support (Barrett et al., 2001; Mayer et al., 2000a). Critics argue that many of these claims are made on the basis of unpublished studies, anecdotal accounts, and misinterpreted data (Barrett et al., 2001; Jordan et al., 2001).

Although claims are made about the importance of EI to organizations and to the successful performances of employees, little research has examined these issues. Moreover, the connection between leadership and EI has not been addressed in detail. In order to further examine this issue, we must first take a more detailed look at different leadership theories and perspectives.

Leadership can be defined as a process of influencing other people's orientation towards and achievement of goals (Greenberg et al., 2000; Johns & Saks, 2001). Researchers in this field have given many different theories and approaches to leadership. Transformational leadership involves inspiring followers and communicating a vision. Intuitively, it may appear logical to expect aspects of the ability-based model of EI to have important consequences for the study of leadership. Charismatic leadership has been associated with increased organizational effectiveness (Lowe et al., 1996), subjective and objective performance (Fuller, Patterson, Hester, & Stringer, 1996), organizational financial performance (Howell & Avolio, 1993), subordinate ratings or effectiveness (Lowe et al., 1996). Similarly, transformational leadership has also been associated with higher follower attitudes, organizational commitment, and performance (Barling et al., 1996; Kirkpartick & Locke, 1996), increased organizational financial performance (Avolio et al., 1988; Barling et al., 1996). According to Hersey & Blanchard's Situational Leadership Theory, effective leadership style is based on the followers' characteristics, in terms of willingness and ability to do the job (Greenberg et al., 2000). Other theories incorporate both situation and follower characteristics. For example, according to Fiedler's Contingency Theory (Fiedler, 1967; Fiedler, 1978; Fiedler & Chemers, 1974), the orientation of leadership style (i.e., relationship vs. task-oriented) used is dependent on the favourability of the situation. The impact that leaders have on their followers is influenced by the characteristics of these followers (Lord, Brown, & Frieberg, 1999).

In the present six styles of leadership- pioneering, strategic, management/administrative, team, pastoral and encouraging are considered. Pioneer leaders are those who stretch themselves, and are willing to take appropriate risks in striving to move forwards to discover and reach long term goals. Pioneering leaders are passionate about the vision, and are wholly committed to it. Pioneering leaders are at their strongest in the early stages of a vision or project. However as time passes they may lose interest in implementing a vision and start looking to next challenge. Strategic Leaders can break down visions and large aims into manageable chunks that are vital for the project. Strategic leaders have the insight and focus to work out ways of achieving the vision, the "how", and are able to persuade the rest of the group to accept this plan. Strategic leaders can put common sense to a difficult task and are able to help people see how the seemingly impossible can be achieved. However, they may be less interested in the implementation of a task and prefer to leave this to others. Any vision or change need people be able to

plan and solve problem, delegate and organize tasks. Without this gift, the best plans may not get implemented well. Managers having a leadership style which is less "up-front" than some of the other styles are often under appreciated. However, much of the work would not get done without Management / Administration leaders. They are able to organize and follow up all the necessary tasks and activities to ensure that the project is completed on time. They may find it difficult to relate to the visionary pioneers - dreaming of achieving the impossible is not their home ground. Team Leadership refers to leadership in a group context in spite the fact that the leader has a formal leadership role in a group or not. The ability to work with others and trust them is the strength of a team leader. The sole aim of team leaders is to ensure that the team achieves its goals and what they as individuals achieve is secondary. Team leaders are invaluable - if the organization is truly to function as a body, team leaders are needed for harmony and effectiveness in the team work. Pastoral leaders are real "people's people", who play an important role in supporting the pioneers, strategists, team leaders and the rest of the workforce, particularly when times are difficult. Vision and implementation of vision seem less important to pastoral leaders, therefore, they are often unappreciated publically. These leaders are sometimes threatened by the pioneers and strategists - and at times are irritated by the attention to detail shown by the managers. Yet their contribution to a team is invaluable and generally they command huge respect and support. Encouraging leaders have the ability to motivate teams and individuals. They have great discernment into people's talents, feelings and what motivates them and are able to release them into fulfilling their goals. Encouraging leaders know when to challenge and when to support, when to coach and when to give space to people. Sometimes they may appear less "involved" than other leadership styles when people want more than just encouragement.

2. Comparison of EI abilities to leadership traits

Several of the traits and behaviors associated with effective leaders (e.g., emotional stability, self-confidence, adaptability, and tenacity) overlap with the trait-based view of EI. An integral part of impression management is managing own emotions (which requires an ability to perceive others' emotions and one's own emotions). Theoretically, an individual who is high on impression management must also be adept at managing his or her own emotions and must also be able to correctly perceive others' emotions and one's own emotions. Charismatic leaders must have "insight into the needs, values, and hopes of their followers" (Bass, 1985, p.46). This insight may be facilitated through a higher level of emotional awareness and sensitivity. Bass (1985) also claimed that charismatic leaders are great actors, because they are engaging in impression management. Charismatic leaders create, communicate, and instill commitment toward a common vision (Bass, 1985). They create emotional responses (e.g., sense of excitement) in followers. Charismatic leaders create shared norms and tend to "actively shape and enlarge audiences through their own energy, self-confidence, assertiveness, ambition, a seizing of opportunities" (Bass, 1985; p.40).

Bass (1985) noted that when focusing on their individual followers, leaders must be supportive, considerate, empathetic, caring, and must give personal attention. These requirements may be easy to fulfill for an individual high in emotional intelligence, which is able to accurately perceive and understand others' emotions, while managing one's own emotions.

3. Objectives of the study

The purpose of the present study is to explore the relationship between emotional intelligence, and leadership in Indian context.

4. Sample

A sample of 100 working mid-level managers from different organizations of north India was selected. The subjects were the willing participants drawn from a mix of socio-economic backgrounds in the 28-45 years age range.

5. Data Collection

The study was limited to organizations established in North India. The managers were contacted personally with each organization and requested to complete the survey questionnaire in 35 minutes. All participants completed the surveys in their scheduled time.

6. Instrumentation

The indicator of emotional intelligence that was used in this study was the *Emotional Competence Inventory* (ECI) (Boyatzis et al., 1999). It consists of 80 items that reflect adaptive tendency toward emotional intelligence. Each item in the questionnaire described a work-related behavior. Respondents used a 7-point Likert scale. The higher the score, the greater the tendency an individual possessed to exhibit emotionally intelligent behavior. ECI is divided into the following four sub-skills, as defined in Goleman's (2001) emotional intelligence model: *Self-awareness, Self-management, Social awareness, and Relationship management*.

An average for each cluster was found by summing responses (1-7) to the corresponding questions that pertain to a cluster.

In addition to the ECI, The Teal Trust leadership style indicator was used. In this questionnaire, 30 items were used to assess six different styles of leadership- pioneering, strategic, management/administration, and team, pastoral and encouraging. For each style, five items inquired respondent's own behaviors. Conceptually, these indices measure the overall usage of each style by respondent. The style items assessed these behaviors on 7-point scales ranging from 1 (never) to 7 (always).

7. Results

FIRST OF ALL, THE RELIABILITY OF THE DATA WAS TESTED BY COMPUTING CRONBACH'S ALPHA MODEL. THE VARIABLE WISE RELIABILITY COEFFICIENTS ARE EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE $\alpha = .823$ AND LEADERSHIP $\alpha = .762$. THE DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF THE DATA ARE GIVEN IN TABLE 1

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of the Data N=100

Variable	Range of scores	Min score	Max score	Mean score	Std. Dev
Self-awareness	0 - 105	44	99	73.11	10.38
Self-management	0 - 182	59	169	127.24	18.37
Social-awareness	0 - 105	28	116	80.65	11.27
Social-skill	0 - 168	13	165	125.37	21.02
Emotional Intelligence	0 - 560	180	514	406.36	51.46
Pioneering Leadership	0 - 35	15	35	25.57	4.19
Strategic Leadership	0 - 35	15	35	24.82	3.45
Management Leadership	0 - 35	14	34	25.18	4.04
Team Leadership	0 - 35	6	34	25.11	4.28
Pastoral Leadership	0 - 35	14	30	23.45	3.29
Encouraging Leadership	0 - 35	11	35	23.41	3.53

The Pearson product-moment correlations and associated significance (Hays, 1963) between the subscales of the two constructs were explored in order to investigate the nature and significance of the relationship between EI skills and leadership behavior. Table-2 Summarizes the correlation between the EI subscales and leadership styles. All the correlations between the EI subscales and leadership styles are highly significant at 0.01% level of significance and are positive correlations.

Table 2: Correlation between the Emotional Intelligence sub-scales and leadership styles

Variables	Pioneering	Strategic	Management	Team	Pastoral	Encouraging
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↓→	Leadership	Leadership		Leadership	Leadership	Leadership
Self-awareness	0.055	0.350**	0.428**	0.335**	0.347**	0.276**
Self-management	0.078	0.447**	0.524**	0.536**	0.423**	0.476**
Social awareness	0.040	0.556**	0.518**	0.543**	0.483**	0.479**
Social Skills	0.048	0.468**	0.498**	0.623**	0.479**	0.556**
Emotional Intelligence	0.072	0.547**	0.596**	0.643**	0.528**	0.545**

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

Table 2 shows the correlation between EI scales and leadership styles. All the EI skills correlate significantly with all the leadership styles except the pioneering leadership style. Self-awareness is positively correlated with all styles of leadership except pioneering style of leadership. It indicates that subjects perceive self awareness as an important aspect of authentic leadership.

Self management has significant positive correlation with all styles of leadership except pioneering style. It shows that management of emotions in trying situation is important for leadership behavior. Social awareness is the ability to accurately read other people's emotions and understand undercurrents in a situation relating strongly to their leadership behavior. It has a significant positive correlation with all styles of leadership except pioneering style

Social skills entail empathy with his/her associates' capabilities need and desires. It also includes supporting, encouraging and coaching ones followers. It correlates significantly with all styles of leadership except the pioneering style. The results suggest that there is significant impact of emotional intelligence on strategic, management/administrative, team, pastoral and encouraging styles of leadership.

8. Discussion

In the present study, we examined the correlation between sub-scales of emotional intelligence - self awareness, self management, Social awareness and social skills and six styles of leadership - pioneering, strategic, management/administrative, team, pastoral and encouraging. The results showed significant influence of EI on strategic, management/administrative, team, pastoral and encouraging styles of leadership. EI has no significant relationship with pioneering style of leadership. Social awareness or empathy refers to the awareness of others' feelings, needs, and concerns. According to Goleman (1995), empathy involves understanding others, developing others, and having a service orientation. It implies that the more an individual understands others/colleagues, the more likely he or she will use the team and encouraging styles of leadership. . The findings of this study are important to Indian organizations in developing leadership among its employees.

9. Limitations and future directions

This study is exploratory in its examination of the relationship between EI and leadership styles in the Indian context. As in any cross-sectional studies, data collected at a single moment in time may limit the accuracy of this research. As such, a longitudinal study could be considered in order to get convincing evidence of the relationship between EI and conflict management styles.

In this study, the data is self reported, therefore, subject to limitation of the process. In addition, the scales used to evaluate EI and conflict management styles were developed by Western scholars and tested in a Western setting. Thus, the investigators' indigenous culture is likely to bias the design of the research instrument (Hofstede, 1991). Therefore, it would be desirable to develop a scale to measure EI and leadership styles based on the Indian context.

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