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Assessing the Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Transformational and Transactional Leadership Styles

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ABSTRACT

Emotional intelligence is increasingly recognized as a key leadership competency and an essential component of behavioral aspect of managing organizations. Research show that managers' ability to recognize and control their emotions leads to increase in employees' contribution to organization, commitment, productivity, and customers' satisfaction. Thus, This research primarily aims to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and transformational and transactional leadership styles. To collect data, a questionnaire was distributed among high school teachers and Vizinger's and Burk's measures were used to analyze data. The results did not show a meaningful relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership styles.

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Introduction

Organizations are facing never-ending changes in an uncertain and competitive environment. Employees and managers in such a working condition need to be flexible and adaptive. It is commonly known that changes in leadership capacity are by-product of growing alterations in organizational life and enhanced cooperation based on trust and innovative interpersonal relationship in the work environment. (Lajevardi & Jamali, 2010). Effective social interaction is an essential element of leadership in organizational change management (Yaghoubi, Oraei & Moghadami, 2009). This reveals the need for diverse leadership skills to manage emotions effectively.

According to previous studies, leaders who manage to establish an effective communication system with their human resources are more likely to succeed. In order to survive the turbulent flows of innovative changes, they must find effective ways to latch on and stabilize their powerful positions (Mokhtaripour et al., 2006; Yaghoubiet al., 2009). In this context, emotional intelligence (EI hereafter) plays a noteworthy role as an influential competency in leader-employee relationship. In studying the relation between EI and leadership styles and its relation enhancement of understanding sense of male managers, Downey, Papageorgiou and Stough (2006) reported that the managers possessing high EI have better ability in recognizing the status of organization in society and identification of problems in a proper and timely manner. This demonstrates that a competent leader needs to have a good understanding of his emotions and those of his subordinates, in order to monitor and control these emotions effectively. Thus, the main purpose of this is to study examine the impacts of EI on transformational and transactional leadership style in educational setting in an oriental culture.

Literature Review

Emotional Intelligence

Leaders make desired goals achievable by influencing their followers in an emotionally sensitive manner. EI aids leaders to deal with the emotions of others, to recognize their needs and

motivate them effectively. EI is believed to acts as a resource, along with other resources involved, in fulfilling the organization's goals and differentiating a firm from its competitors. Hopkins, O'Neil and Williams (2007) reported that EI is a critical factor in leaders' effectiveness and identify a set of six core EI skills: transparency; achievement; initiative; organizational awareness; conflict management; and teamwork and collaboration. Day (2001) concentrates on the importance of EI in effectiveness of leadership and argue that interpersonal competency is key leadership competency that can increase individual knowledge, trust, and personal power. According to Cooper and Sawaf, the EI is the ability of using the emotions' power and acumen effectively, as a source of human energy, information, connection and influence (Yazici, Seyis & Altun, 2011).

Goleman (1995) is organized EI into five key components, including (1) self-awareness of one's emotional state, (2) self-regulation of one's emotional state, (3) self-motivation, (4) awareness of others' emotional states, and (5) proficiency in managing relationships with others. When a leader is emotionally intelligent, he is able to control his moods well through self-consciousness, improve them by self-regulation, conceive their effects through sympathy, and boost the morale of others with an attitude based on relationship management (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2001). Such leaders are easily able to deal with obstacles, provide better solutions, make less rigid and inflexible decisions and finally encourage their followers through enthusiasm, confidence and a sense of cooperation (George, 2000).

Leadership Style

As a matter of concern, leadership is a complex concept; thus numerous theories have been developed to explain it. The main purpose of these theories is to determine how leadership accomplishes organizational objectives. Leadership style is a one of the most important features of management, which if developed early on, can have a significant effect on the success of the organization. Many perspectives and styles for leadership

are identified based on different assumptions and theories, including democratic and autocratic styles, relationship-oriented and task-oriented styles, imperative and participatory styles, active and passive styles. This study is fundamentally inspired by Avolio and Bell's model, which divides leadership styles into three main categories: transformational style, transactional style and liberal style (non-interference), where the two former styles are the focus of the present research.

Transformational leadership: Transformational leadership is the focus of several theories of leadership, including charismatic, servant and participatory management. Transformational leadership has been identified as an effective strategy to manage the changing environment of modern organizations (Nielsen & Cleal, 2011). Transformational leadership attempts to create emotional links with followers and inspires higher values (García-Morales, Jiménez-Barrionuevo, & Gutierrez, 2011; Lian & Salleh, 2011). Transformational leaders transform the needs, values, preferences and aspirations of followers from self-interests to collective interests (San Lam & O'Higgins, 2012). Followers are strongly committed to the leader's mission, reveal remarkable dedication to it and fulfill their duties beyond what is expected of them (Weinberger, 2003). A transformational leader motivates followers to reach desired performance levels and prepares them to fly solo, in cases when he leaves the company (Avolio and Bass, 1995). These behaviors are effective in leading especially in dynamic environments (Crossan & Nanjad, 2008). There are essentially four dimensions to considering describing transformational leadership: (1) The idealized influence-as attributes (leader's charisma) and behaviors (a charisma based on the values, beliefs and mission), (2) inspirational motivation (to energize followers through optimism, goals giving and vision sharing), (3) individualized consideration (assistance, support and to care for people), and (4) intellectual stimulation (innovative challenge to solve a problem).

While several studies in the area of evaluating leaders' effectiveness suggest, adopting transformational leadership style yields more effective leaders (Barling, Slater, & Kelloway, 2000; George, 2000), others that have recognized the importance of EI in effective leadership primarily emphasize the significant relationship between EI and transformational leadership (Barling, et al, 2000; Gardner & Stough, 2002; Mandell & Pherwani, 2003; San Lam & O'Higgins, 2012). Still other studies have found that EI poorly predicts transformational leadership (Scott, 2003). Given these contradictory findings, it seems proper to examine such association. Hence, our first hypothesis is as follows:

Hypothesis 1: EI and transformational leadership style are positively related.

Transactional leadership: The primary focus of several theories, such as Ohio State University study, Fiedler's model and House's Path-Goal Theory is on transactional leadership, in which are described as a tool to achieve pre-determined objectives. In this style, leadership is mainly based on leader-follower exchanges that occur in specific situations and comprises three essential elements:

- Contingent rewards, which associates subordinates' performance with reward. In other words, leaders establish different rewards to fulfill organizational objectives and employees will be rewarded or punished based on their performances and outcomes.

- Management by exception, whereby leaders monitor followers' performance for corrective actions, if deviations occur.

- Passive management on the basis of exception, whereby leaders neither encourage any initiative nor make any attempt to identify the needs of subordinate and avoid any intervention as long as no serious problems are expected (San Lam & O'Higgins, 2012).

Therefore, our second hypothesis is:

Hypothesis 2: EI and transactional leadership style are positively related.

Although, all leaders are partially transactional -since they encourage followers based on performance, only a few are transformational and go beyond a simple leader-follower exchange (Bass, 1985). In other words, effective leaders generally act more transformational than transactional (Gardner & Stough, 2002; Palmer, et al. 2001) and are considered more efficient and more satisfactory (Avolio & Bass, 1995; Kirby, Paradise, & King, 1992). Hence, our third hypothesis is proposed as follows:

Hypothesis 3: EI equals in average with transformational and transactional leadership.

Methodology

Two questionnaires, both widely used and valid, were used to collect quantitative information from 640 high school teachers. The first questionnaire, Wisinger's measures (1998) evaluate main variables of EI, including self-awareness, self-control, motivation, empathy and social skills, using a five-item Likert scale. The second instrument, Bork's questionnaire (1993) assesses leadership style and consists of 10 items, each representing transformational and transactional leadership style in two parts. Of 170 questionnaires that were distributed, 128 were collected and finally 120 were qualified for further analyses. Cronbach's alpha for two questionnaires was 0.829 and 0.703 respectively, indicating good levels of reliability.

Findings

The results of descriptive statistics showed that more than 76.7% of teachers were female and up to 95.8% were married and their average age was 42 years old. Teachers with a bachelor degree and more than 15 years of work experience comprised the highest proportions with rates of 70.8% and 84.2%, respectively.

EI scores for each person varied between 25 and 125, where a person with a score of less than 50 is considered low on emotional intelligence, between 100 and 50 is considered moderate and more than 100 is considered high. In this study, most participants were either high or moderate in the level of emotional intelligence (Table 1).

Table 1: Scores' frequency for EI

Emotional Intelligence	Frequency	% of Frequency
more than 50	1	0.8
between 50 and 100	53	44.2
more than 100	66	55

Given that Kolmogorove-Smirnov test did not support the data normality assumption, the Spearman correlation coefficient was applied and rejected the first hypothesis of the study. Correlation between EI and transformational leadership style was 0.156 at the significance level of 0.312. In other words, there was no significant correlation between EI and transformational leadership. The correlation between EI and transactional leadership style was 0.156 at the significance level of -0.312, indicating that the relationship between EI and

transactional leadership style is not significant. Test of independence was used in order to examine the equality of EI and transactional and EI styles, by comparing corresponding means. Due to the results, presumed equities are supported by research data; Hence, The third hypothesis is to be confirmed. Finally, the relationships between Eland demographic variables of gender, marital status, level of education and work experience were not considered significant.

Variables	Size	Pearson Correlation measure	Sig. (2-tailed)
EIX Gender	120	-0.047	.76
EIX Level of Education	120	0.090	.56
EIX Work Experience	120	-0.140	.36
EIX Marital Status	120	0.102	.51

Discussions & Conclusions

This study investigated the relationship between EI and leadership styles, among high school teachers. It aimed to achieve two main goals to determine: 1) whether there is any significant relationship between EI and leadership styles, and 2) how well personal attributes predict EI features. The previous research findings on the effects of EI on leadership style have been inconsistent and somehow contradictory. For example, while Karimi Shahri (2006), Palmer (2000), and Alinejad (2009) confirm the positive relationship between EI and transformational leadership, other research have rejected this relationship, including of Mortazavi et al, (2005), Yaghoobi et al (2009), Downey et al (2006), Duckett and Macfarlane (2003), Stein et al, (2009), and Scott (2003).

Similarly in several studies conducted in educational settings, the relationship between EI and leadership style has not been confirmed. Meyer et al. (1999) highlight the importance of high intelligence in job success and satisfaction in some careers, such as psychiatry and social work. Although, teaching is not identified as high EI career in their study, it may be argued that EI is an essential competency in careers that require directly interaction with people. The relatively high EI scores of most participants in this study supports this position.

Given that EI represents individual's ability to process information regarding affections and emotions, and the high level of teachers' emotional intelligence in the current study, the absence of relationship between EI and leadership style indicates that these teachers have failed to apply such information in cognitive tasks and behaviors leading to the use of a particular style of leadership with adverse or ineffective outcomes.

In conclusion, it seems that national educational system philosophy and processes somehow encourage teachers to apply lower levels of EI in leadership. Therefore, it is suggested that teachers are made aware of the effective role of EI in leadership and appropriate strategies are adopted to utilize EI competency, including enriching in-job training with topics in emotions, sensitivity training and relationship management. In addition, application of EI in teaching and work involvement should be part of teacher evaluation, promotion and rewards.

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