DOES EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AFFECT LEADERSHIP SUCCESS?

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ABSTRACT. Emotional intelligence has been a subject of long debate for researchers and practitioners. The current review is aimed at investigating the impacts of emotional intelligence on leadership success. Previous literature on the subject revealed that success of leaders and organizational managers largely depends on the level of emotional intelligence. People with higher level of emotional intelligence were found more successful as compared to those who were low at emotional intelligence scale. Implications for practitioners and future research have been discussed.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence; leadership Success.

1. Introduction. Studies on emotional intelligence are not free from criticism. Researchers are debating over its models, measurement tools, and pedagogy. However this controversial debate has motivated the researchers to study the construct in more details (Stys & Brown, 2004). This controversy gives contrasting views about the study of construct of emotional intelligence. Some are of the view that it is a “myth” (Matthews, Zeidner, and Roberts, 2004:3). Becker (2005) thinks that emotional intelligence is general intelligence and has no science in its study, while Stys & Brown (2004) are of the view that study of emotional intelligence is scientific in nature.

Same like the controversies about the study of Emotional intelligence, its relationship with leadership success has also been a subject of debate among researchers. For researchers and practitioners it is important to know about the nature of leadership, the ways leaders make decisions and role of emotions in decision making (George, 2000). She advised to study emotional intelligence and leadership relation in more depth. Similarly for better understanding of the concept of emotional intelligence, Antonakis, Ashkanasy, & Dasborough (2009) suggested to study its role in leadership. Leban & Zulauf (2004) are of the view that success of a project depends on the emotional intelligence ability of the leader. But contrary to it, Brown, Bryant & Reilly (2006) found no significant relationship between leadership success and emotional intelligence ability of the leaders. This study is aimed at investigating the previous literature that does emotional intelligence really affect leadership success or it is a buzzword as claimed by Matthews, Zeidner, and Roberts, (2004). This will help HR practitioners in career development decisions which can improve the performance of the employees as well as of the organizations. It will also be helpful for future researchers to empirically test these relations.

2. Emotional Intelligence: Emotional Intelligence has been a subject of debate since long. For better understanding of the concept of emotional intelligence, Antonakis, Ashkanasy, & Dasborough (2009) suggested to study its role in leadership. Goleman (1998) is of the view that to be the most successful and effective leader one must be Emotionally Intelligent along with strong IQ level and analytical ability. He identified five components of Emotional Intelligence which are self awareness, self regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills. Also it was Goleman’s child brain that came with the idea of Emotional
Intelligence. In the words of Salovey and Mayer (1990) “Emotional Intelligence is the ability to monitor one’s own and others’ feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one’s own thinking and actions”. According to them major utilizations of emotional intelligence include “flexible planning, creative thinking, mood redirected attention and motivating emotions”. George, (2000) identified four aspects of emotional intelligence which can affect the effectiveness of leadership. These are the appraisal and expression of emotion, the use of emotion to enhance cognitive processes and decision making, knowledge about emotions, and management of emotions (p. 189). Carmeli ((2003) suggested to empirically test the impact of Emotional Intelligence on leadership success. Gardner & Stough (2002) found that success of leadership largely depends on emotional intelligence of the leader. Downey, Papageorgiou & Stough (2006) asserted that major reason for the success of managers was their level of emotional intelligence. Similarly Transformational leadership was associated emotional intelligence (Julian, Frank, & Kelloway, 2000). Also Benjamin, Walls, Burgess & Stough (2001) identified Emotional Intelligence as an important indicator of effective leadership. And effectiveness of leadership was found to be higher due to higher level of Emotional Intelligence (David & Joseph, 2005). Similar to this Brown & Moshavi (2005) are of the view that EI influences the leadership success and ultimately the organizational outcomes. Sivanathan, & Fekken, (2002) found that perception of the followers about the effectiveness of a leader was his/her emotional intelligence. Humphrey (2002) is of the view that emotionally intelligent leaders were found as good performer at work.

As discussed earlier that Goleman (1998) identified five components of emotional intelligence, let us see the relationship between leadership effectiveness and each component of emotional intelligence.

**Empathy and Leadership Effectiveness:** Goleman (1998) defined empathy as, “The ability to understand the emotional make-up of other people”. It is proposed that a leader who is well aware of the emotions of followers is an effective leader as George (2000) is of the view that effectiveness of a leader depends on his empathetic ability i.e. how he/she treats people according to their emotions. Wolf, Pescosolido & Druskat (2002) concluded that empathy a component of emotional intelligence has positive impact on the success of a leader. Skinner & Spurgeon (2005) concluded that empathic concern makes an organizational leader effective. Choi, J. (2006) is of the view that empathetic ability of a leader influences the behavior of the employees makes them committed to the organization. Almost same results were found by Butler & Chinowsky (2006). However Gunther, Evans, Mefford & Coe (2007) found a weak positive relationship between empathy and success of a leader. Kellett, Humphrey & Sleeth (2002) are of the view that to influence the followers, leaders get help from empathy. Later in 2006 they found the same results. So from the above evidences from the previous literature, it can be said that empathy, a component of emotional intelligent can positively influence the success of leadership.

**Self Regulation & Leadership Effectiveness:** An emotionally intelligent person is always monitoring his/her actions and also the acts of others according to the norms and values of the organizations, so that he/she could get better outcomes. Salovey & Mayer (1990) are of the view that regulating own-self leads to get desired results from subordinates. Later in 1994 Tsui & Ashford found that one of the major reasons of leaders’ effectiveness was self regulation. Earlier in 1991 both of them found that self regulation through feed-back was positively related to effectiveness of the managers. Sosik, Potoskya & Jung (2002) found a positive relation between self regulation and leadership success. So it can be proposed from the support of previous findings that a leader who is self regulated can be an effective leader at work.

**Self awareness & Leadership Effectiveness:** Self awareness is one of the components of emotional intelligence and Van, Taylor & Leslie (1993) found that it has a significant positive impact on the effectiveness of a leader. Further to this in 1996, Fleenor, McCauley, & Brutus found that people who were well aware of their abilities were found more effective as compared to those who were unaware about themselves. Then in 1999, McCarthy & Garavan found self awareness as a reason for effectiveness of a leader. Later in 2003, Moshavi, Brown & Dodd found that a person who is more aware of his/her self can get better results from the followers. Parati et al (2003) studied that emotionally intelligent leaders always remain in search of feedback from their followers to mend their behaviors accordingly to get the support of their followers. Further to this Fletcher & Bailey (2003) suggested that performance of a leader depends on his/her self awareness and both are positively linked. Sosik & Megerian (1999) concluded that relationship between
emotional intelligence and performance of a leader depend on the level of self awareness, the more the leader is self aware, the more strong relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership effectiveness is. Hence it can be said that a manager/leader that is aware of his/her strengths and weaknesses can tackle the situation at work accordingly and can be an effective leader.

**Motivation & Leadership Effectiveness:** The passion to achieve the objectives i.e. motivation and its appropriate use is one of the component of emotional intelligence. Motivation and leadership were positively related to each other (Masi, & Cooke, 2000), Barbuto (2005) found a positive relationship between motivation level and effectiveness of a leader. It has a positive and significant impact on the success of a leader as found by Barbuto & Xu (2006). Earlier in 2003, Parati et al found that an emotionally intelligent leader has the ability to boost the morale of the employees by motivating them and can get the work done more effectively. Choi, J. (2006) is of the view that a leader who is able to understand the emotions of his followers has the passion to work with more zeal and can effectively persuade the followers to produce the desired results. Similarly Iordanoglou (2007) found that an ambitious and motivated leader not only can produce better outcomes but also motivates his/her subordinates. Recently Gilley, Gilley & McMillan (2009) found that a talented and effective leader has the ability to motivate his/her followers to achieve specific desired goals. So it is concluded in the support of previous literature that an emotionally intelligent leader is motivated, motivate his/her followers and can get the desired results.

**Social Skills & Leadership Effectiveness:** Social networking and strong interpersonal and intrapersonal skills make a person successful in the today’s organizational environment. Riggio & Reichard (2008) has defined social skills as, “Social expressiveness is ability to communicate verbally and skill in engaging others in social interaction”. They are also of the view that social skills and effectiveness of leadership are significantly and positively related with each other. Pratch & Jacobowitz (1996) find that leaders with an ability to express themselves make relationships with others were found more effective in the organizations irrespective of the gender. Parati et al (2003) are of the view that an emotionally intelligent leader develops social networks and builds relations with others to influence them and hence can produce desired results effectively. Similarly Butler & Chinowsky (2006) are of the view that besides empathy, while studying the relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership effectiveness, another important component of emotional intelligence is social skill. They said that leadership success is strongly associated social skills of a leader. Cummings et al (2008) found that extended social networking shows the effectiveness of a leader.

**Conclusion:** A lot of arguments have been given for and against the subject of emotional intelligence and its impacts on leadership effectiveness. Like Judge et al (2004) are of the view that there is no such stronger relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership success as was previously found. Hence contrasting views and results have been found among the researchers. However on the whole it is concluded that most of the researchers found positive relations between the two.

**REFERENCES**