

Emotional intelligence and leadership effectiveness



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Contemporary organizations are faced with demands and pressures of ever expanding magnitude that the quest for effective leadership continues to intrigue educators, researchers, and practitioners. In this context, the present paper focuses on the importance of emotional intelligence (EI) in relation to leadership effectiveness. A significant amount of research and attention has been given to identifying relationships between emotional and social intelligence regarding, life satisfaction, personality, social relationships, team performance, education and leadership. Today, in light of the increasingly complex and changing world, researchers have highlighted the need for a new leadership approach. Through research in the area of “personal-best” experiences, Kouzes and Posner’s five identified leadership practices, which were identified through studies associated with the stories of leaders who were able to get “extraordinary things done in their organizations” Underlying Kouzes and Posner’s Model is the leader’s ability to generate, encourage, and promote healthy, reciprocal, and collaborative relationships. This interpersonal or relational aspect of leadership has recently been connected to the emotional intelligence constructs that have gained popularity in recent decades. Emotional intelligence skills provide developing leaders with an increased understanding of the impacts of emotions within a team or organization. Caruso and Salovey demonstrated the advantages EI has with respect to six common challenges in leadership: (a) building effective teams, (b) planning and deciding effectively, (c) motivating people, (d) communicating a vision, (e) promoting change, and (f) creating effective interpersonal relationships. This paper ends by highlighting the impact of Emotional Intelligence in the leadership style of resonant and dissonant leaders.

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Introduction

Contemporary organizations are faced with demands and pressures of ever expanding magnitude that the quest for effective leadership continues to intrigue educators, researchers, and practitioners. Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee (2002) explained that, “ leaders everywhere confront a set of irrevocable imperatives, changing realities driven by profound social, political, economic, and technological changes.” During these changing times, it is most important for organizational leaders to stay attuned to their own emotional reactions to pressures, as well as how those environmental pressures affect their constituents. Hence today’s organizations need a transformational change, calling for new leadership. In this context, the present paper focuses on the importance of emotional intelligence (EI) in relation to leadership effectiveness.

EI Research

The concept of emotional intelligence has gained popularity in recent decades; however, the characteristics and concepts associated with EI are rooted in research conducted throughout the twentieth century. Earlier works identified competencies, other than general intelligence, that contributed to life success. Thorndike (1937) reported the concept of “ social intelligence.”

Wechsler (1940) fought for the addition of “ non-intellective aspects” as a measure of general intelligence. Likewise, Leeper (1948) purported that “ emotional thought” should be considered when reviewing the concept of “ logical thought.” However, it was not until the 1980s that the current concepts related to emotional intelligence started to emerge.
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Gardner (1983) shared a theory of multiple intelligences that encouraged researchers to step outside the notion that human beings are confined to a singular or plural view of intelligence. Gardner purported that there were five more intelligences that were equally important to collective human intelligence: musical intelligence, spatial intelligence, bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, interpersonal intelligence, and intrapersonal intelligence. Within these multiple levels of human development or intelligences, a movement evolved that expanded two particular areas of Gardner's approach (i. e., interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences).

According to Bar-On (2002), several researchers expanded Gardner's interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences into six primary components of emotional intelligence: emotional self-awareness, assertiveness, empathy, interpersonal relationship, stress tolerance, and impulse control.

Researchers generally agree that EI addresses one's ability to identify, interpret, and control his or her own emotions, as well as stay in tune with, understand, and relate to the emotions of groups and individuals (Goleman et al., 2002; Bar-On, 2002; Mayer & Salovey, 1993). Additionally, EI stems from one's ability to utilize emotional information to appropriately solve problems and make environmentally savvy decisions.

In the last two decades of the 20th century and more recently in the 21st century, a significant amount of research and attention has been given to identifying relationships between emotional and social intelligence regarding, life satisfaction (Palmer, Donaldson, & Stough, 2002), personality (Higgs & Rowland, 2001; Schulte, Ree, & Carretta, 2004), social relationships

(Lopes, Salovey, & Straus, 2003; Massey, 2002), team performance (Rapisarda, 2002), education (Jaeger, 2003; Zeidner, Roberts, & Matthews, 2002), outdoor leadership training (Thompson, 2004) and leadership (Goleman, 1998, 2001; Dulewicz & Higgs, 2003; Cherniss & Goleman, 2001).

Leadership Theory

Historically, social changes have been charted, coordinated, and led by a few leaders who had the ability to energize and motivate constituents or community members to stand tall, shed fears, and push forward the need for change. Today, in light of the increasingly complex and changing world, researchers have highlighted the need for a new leadership approach (Yukl & Lepsinger, 2004; Kouzes & Posner, 2002; Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002).

Though researchers have been studying leadership and leadership development since the days of Aristotle and Plato (Leonard, 2003), the study of leadership has been plagued with an overabundance of theories with little common direction (Chemers, 1993; Northhouse, 1997; Day, 2001).

Chemers (2000) conducted a historical overview and analysis of leadership theories and concluded that common findings in leadership studies have led to the following three tasks that leaders must achieve to be effective: (a) establish the legitimacy of their authority, (b) coach, guide, and support their constituents in ways that allow for both group and individual goal attainment, and (c) identify and employ the strengths and abilities found in themselves, as well as their constituents, to accomplish the organizational mission.

Astin and Astin (2000) called for a leader who can be adaptive and promote creative solutions to modern societal problems. They further explained that to cope effectively and creatively with these emerging national and world trends, future leaders will not only need to possess new knowledge and skills, but will also be called upon to display a high level of emotional and spiritual wisdom and maturity. Hence, there is little doubt that our turbulent world requires a new perspective on leadership (Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 1998).

Through research in the area of “ personal-best” experiences, Kouzes and Posner’s five identified leadership practices, which were identified through studies associated with the stories of leaders who were able to get “ extraordinary things done in their organizations” (Kouzes & Posner, 2002). These leadership practices include Modeling the Way, Inspiring a Shared Vision, Challenging the Process, Enabling Others to Act, and Encouraging the Heart.

Relational Leadership: Five Practices of Exemplary Leaders

Effective leadership is about creating reciprocal relationships between the leader and followers, subordinates, or constituents that in turn creates the foundation for organizational and group success (Bass, 1985; Chemers, 1993; Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 1998; Kouzes & Posner, 2003; Potter, Rosenbach & Pittman, 2001).

The Kouzes and Posner’s Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership Model has been noted for its contributions to the Relational Leadership paradigm (Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 1998; Endress, 2000; Berg, 2003). Kouzes and

Posner (1987) conducted research in the area of “ personal best” leadership experiences. They developed a “ Personal-Best Leadership Experience” questionnaire, asked thousands of managers to complete the questionnaire, and conducted many follow-up interviews to gather additional information. The personal-best questionnaire asked managers to pick a project, program, or event that they characterized as their “ personal-best” leadership experience. After analyzing the data collected from questionnaires and interviews, Kouzes and Posner found that despite the variety in situations and types of leadership experiences, similar patterns were identified related to actions taken by the leaders during the experience. Through the analysis process they identified “ Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership” that contributed to “ getting extraordinary things done in organizations”:

Modeling the Way

Inspiring a Shared Vision

Challenging the Process

Enabling Others to Act and

(e) Encouraging the Heart.

The first practice is “ Modeling the Way,” in which leaders role model the behaviors they want the see in their constituents. Through action and involvement, leaders earn the right to lead and the respect of their followers.

The second leadership practice is “ Inspiring a Shared Vision.” This is when the leader imagines what the organization could be and then creates a vision

that is attainable and attractive. The leader connects this new vision to the hopes and dreams of his or her constituents to generate passion and enthusiasm for realizing the vision.

The third leadership practice is “ Challenging the Process.” Exemplary leaders are pioneers who know that innovation and change involves “ experimentation, risk, and failure”. A leader understands that change can feel uncomfortable and then builds constituent confidence by pursuing change incrementally and by accomplishing small victories.

The fourth leadership practice involves “ Enabling Others to Act.” Successful leaders understand that leadership is a team effort and are not afraid to share the leadership process. Leaders foster collaboration and build trust by supporting and encouraging their constituents to do good work. Leaders who are able to build trusting and collaborative relationships find that their constituents are higher performers and even exceed their own personal expectations.

Finally, exemplary leaders “ Encourage the Hearts” of their constituents to help them carry on in the face of challenge, frustration, and discouragement. Leaders know that “ celebrations and rituals, when done with authenticity and from the heart, build a strong sense of collective identity and community spirit that can carry a group through extraordinarily tough times”.

Relational Leadership and EI

Underlying Kouzes and Posner’s Model of Exemplary Leadership Practices is the leader’s ability to generate, encourage, and promote healthy, reciprocal, and collaborative relationships. This interpersonal or relational aspect of <https://assignbuster.com/emotional-intelligence-and-leadership-effectiveness/>

leadership has recently been connected to the emotional intelligence constructs that have gained popularity in recent decades (Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Bar-On, 2002; Goleman, 1995).

Researchers agree that there is considerable overlap between relational leadership and EI competencies in both content analysis and empirical evidence (Higgs, 2002; Dulewicz & Higgs, 2003). Goleman (1998) made connections between emotional intelligence and leadership practices in which he boldly claimed that highly emotionally intelligent leaders and work teams contribute significantly to the overall success and “bottom line” of the organization.

Goleman, et al. (2002), when talking about building a culture of change in an organization, assert the following: Emotionally intelligent leaders know how to manage their disruptive emotions so that they can keep their focus, thinking clearly under pressure. They do not wait for crisis to catalyze a need for change; they stay flexible, adapting to new realities ahead of the pack rather than just reacting to the crisis of the day. Even in the midst of vast change, they can see their way to a brighter future, communicate a vision with resonance, and lead the way.

Positive emotional leadership is a necessity in times of chaos and change because constituents closely examine and then emulate or “mirror” their leaders’ behaviors and actions (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002). In other words, constituents, either consciously or unconsciously, react to a leader’s verbal and non-verbal responses to a specific crisis or challenge (Caruso & Salovey, 2004).

Dulewicz and Higgs (2003), identified common EI elements that have been linked to effective leadership characteristics: (a) self-awareness, (b) emotional resilience, (c) motivation, (d) interpersonal sensitivity, (e) influence, (f) intuitiveness, and (g) conscientiousness and integrity. Ultimately, leadership is a social and emotional process, and effective leaders are able to harness those social and emotional ties to successfully pilot organizations through chaos and rapid change.

EI and Leadership Challenges

Emotional intelligence skills provide developing leaders with an increased understanding of the impacts of emotions within a team or organization. Caruso and Salovey (2004) demonstrated the advantages EI has with respect to six common challenges in leadership: (a) building effective teams, (b) planning and deciding effectively, (c) motivating people, (d) communicating a vision, (e) promoting change, and (f) creating effective interpersonal relationships.

Throughout Caruso and Salovey's descriptions of the six challenges, they cited a connection with Kouzes and Posner's Effective Leadership Practices Model.

1. Building effective teams

The first challenge was building an effective team. Caruso and Salovey discussed the need for clarifying personal values before attempting to formulate team values. Like Kouzes and Posner's model, Caruso and Salovey explained that leaders must identify their own values before clarifying team values. A significant level of trust is important for leading teams, and a <https://assignbuster.com/emotional-intelligence-and-leadership-effectiveness/>

leader must generate positive opportunities for meaningful team communication and interaction. Additionally, a leader must have significant self-confidence to give team members credit for accomplishments and not blame them when shortfalls occur.

2. Planning and deciding effectively

Caruso and Salovey went on to explain that even though planning and decision-making can seem cognitive and practical, emotions contribute significantly to these activities. Emotionally intelligent leaders possess the ability to remain flexible and open to other alternatives. Additionally, EI leaders take into account how their team members may react to a decision, and then attempt to make decisions that will fit in with the shared values of the team. In the end, this type of flexible decision-making will contribute to the successful implementation of the decision.

3. Motivating people

Every leader at one point or another is faced with the question of how to motivate a team. Caruso and Salovey cited Kouzes and Posner's (2002) "encouraging the heart" model as a significant contribution to motivating a team. When a leader expresses appreciation for the accomplishments of team members, they are in many ways providing that added incentive for future successes. Caruso and Salovey also explained that it is important for a leader to celebrate team member successes without promoting or encouraging envy throughout the team.

4. Communicating a vision

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Furthermore, communication is among the most difficult challenges to leadership. EI leaders base their communication efforts “ on delivering a message [they] want to deliver and delivering it in such a way that is heard and understood by others”. Communication also entails a leader’s vision for the future. Caruso and Salovey emphasized that because an EI leader has the ability to understand and empathize with group feelings, he or she will be successful in encouraging team members to buy into their vision of the future.

5. Promoting change

In light of rapid worldly changes, a leader’s ability to facilitate and encourage change has been a hot topic recently (e. g., Kotter, 1995; Higgs & Rowland, 2001). Caruso and Salovey (2004) explained that EI leaders challenge the status quo through innovation, experimentation, and risk-taking. They further explained that most people are resistant to change; however, EI leaders identify, empathize with, and acknowledge resistance and then communicate the need for change and clarify a road map toward successful implementation.

6. Creating effective interpersonal relationships

Building effective interpersonal relationships is the foundation of the emotionally intelligent leader. Caruso and Salovey (2004) explained that effective interpersonal relationships include both “ positive feedback and sincere criticism” (p. 209). EI leaders are able to generate relationships that are healthy and mature enough for members to express honest and tactful reactions with other members. Caruso and Salovey explained that “
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emotions contain data and [those] data are primarily communicating information about people and relationships. Being accurately aware of emotions and their meaning provides the emotional intelligent manager with a solid base of understanding of themselves and of others". Along with understanding and interpreting emotions, it is equally important for leaders to understand the impact of emotions on individual and organizational performance.

EI and Resonant / Dissonant leaders

Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee (2002) shared two leadership styles that relate both positively and negatively to emotional intelligence and contribute significantly to productivity and work satisfaction: dissonance and resonance. Goleman, et al. explained that a dissonant leadership style demonstrated characteristics that are not emotionally effective or supportive within an organization. A dissonant leader is one who offends constituents and creates an unhealthy and unproductive emotional environment within the organization. They described dissonant leaders as leaders who are so out of touch with the feelings of their constituents that they create a negative environment, which in turn moves the organization's attitude toward that leader on a "downward spiral from frustration to resentment, rancor to rage". Dissonant leaders were also described as authoritarian, untrustworthy, uncooperative with constituents, unharmonious with the group, abusive, and humiliating.

Resonant leaders, on the other hand, project an emotional atmosphere that is comfortable, cooperative, supportive, and enthusiastic. They inspire shared values and "rally people around a worthy goal". Goleman, et al. <https://assignbuster.com/emotional-intelligence-and-leadership-effectiveness/>

described four leadership styles that build resonance within the organization: (a) visionary - “ moves people towards a shared dream,” (b) coaching - connects personal desires with organizational goals, (c) affiliative - “ creates harmony by connecting people to each other,” and (d) democratic - values input and builds commitment through participation.

As mentioned earlier within the area of modeling, the concept of mirroring in relationship to resonance and dissonance within the organization is very important when a leader reacts to both positive and negative situations. When a leader reacts to a negative situation in a concerned but positive fashion, his or her behavior becomes a model which the rest of the organization can follow. Goleman, et al. explained that leaders within organizations are observed for acceptance or rejection to thoughts, projects, or ideas. If a leader shows any nonverbal or verbal gestures, constituents quickly notice and react to those gestures. Emotionally intelligent leaders realize and understand how their emotional reaction can guide and steer the emotions of the entire organization. This concept of resonant and dissonant leadership styles is one example of the power of the emotional climate within an organization. Emotional intelligence has been linked to a number of additional factors associated with effective leadership (Goleman, 1998; Kouzes & Posner, 2002; Dulewicz & Higgs, 2003).

Conclusion

With the identified benefits of emotional intelligence related to creating and developing positive relationships, combined with the understanding that positive relationships are the core of effective leadership, the idea of

emotional intelligence and effective leadership is one that has been well
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established in the literature. Researchers have started to develop and assess developmental programs for emotional intelligence that coincide with leadership development programs and initiatives. The question most pertinent to those involved research and practice in the area of leadership development is the process by which leaders learn about emotions and the power of emotion on leadership success.