Role of Emotional Intelligence and Leadership Traits in an Organization

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ABSTRACT

Leaders are an essential element of the business world. While good leaders can provide many benefits for an organization, unsuccessful leaders can be detrimental. The notion that emotional intelligence plays a part in whether a leader is effective or not effective has recently been introduced. This study sought to unify the literature evaluating the possible link between emotional intelligence and leadership effectiveness. Met analytic techniques were used to analyze this relationship. Results revealed that overall, there is a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership effectiveness. Also, while the type of emotional intelligence measure used served as a moderator to this relationship, a second and third meta-analysis supported the overall positive relationship of emotional intelligence and leadership effectiveness.

INTRODUCTION

Great responsibility comes with each leadership role. For this reason and others, leaders should be chosen wisely. Organizations have been obsessed with the idea of pinpointing specific traits or characteristics that can predict an effective leader (Kets de Vries, 1993; Higgs, 2002; Parry & Meindl, 2002). Because organizations can ultimately succeed or fail due to their leaders, a large amount of research has been devoted to this. Brown and Moshavi (2005) explained that organizations and scientists alike want to find the "X" factor of leadership. However, psychologists are still not certain whether there is one factor that may determine whether a leader succeeds or fails. With the growth of today's service-oriented businesses, leaders are not just expected to manage, but to also lead with a sensitive aspect (Hogan et al., 1994). With these new types of demands, organizations and scientists are even more determined to find a successful selection method to choose leaders. One idea that has emerged recently is that emotional intelligence may play a part in why a leader succeeds or fails.

The topic of leadership is complex. One important aspect to examine while studying the effectiveness of leaders is the set of characteristics of today's leaders.

Dulewicz and Higgs (2003) claim that the need for effective leadership has become paramount in this growing age of the 21st century. Changes in the business environment, including globalization of markets, advances in technology, and an impending labor shortage make the selection of leaders a crucial task (Harris & Kuhnert, 2007). In addition to these changes in business, recent concepts of leadership have incorporated people skills issues. Dearborn (2002) stated that current leaders are expected to motivate, engage, and retain employees. Fostering positive attitudes and creating a sense of contribution and importance are all added to the task list of a contemporary leader (Hogan et al., 1994; Palmer et al., 2001). It seems as though leaders are constantly being faced with new challenges, and a successful leader in today's organization must be able to adapt to these developing issues. Despite decades of leadership research, no clear-cut conclusions have been reached about the specific personal characteristics that constitute an effective leader.

LEADERSHIP

Many researchers have made attempts to define leadership and the factors that determine a good leader. One of the first approaches to explaining leadership potential was based on individual characteristics. Trait theory examined specific characteristics that were thought to be predictors of effective leaders (Chemers, 2000; Stogdill, 1948). Traits such as dominance, assertiveness, intelligence, physical stature, and social sensitivity were some noted traits that were thought to determine whether an individual was best suited for leadership or followership (Chemers, 2000).

Leadership theorists soon adopted a behavioral approach, which suggested that there are patterns of leader behaviors associated with high productivity or good morale (Chemers, 2000). Unlike the trait theory that stated that good leaders are born, the behavioral approach advanced the notion that good leaders may be taught or trained to be effective (Horner, 1997; Saal & Knight, 1988). Research using the behavioral approach also helped in broadening the idea of leadership from only taskoriented responsibilities to also people-oriented responsibilities (Horner, 1997). During the

mid-1960s, leadership researchers explored a more complex representation leader effectiveness (Chemers, 2000). This approach was based on a contingency model that encompassed leader traits, leader behaviors, and the situation in which the leader works (Horner, 1997). According to such a contingency model, effective leader performance will result when there is a match between the leader's personality (including goals, needs, and motivation) and the leader's situational control (including leader-member relations, task structure, and position power) (Fiedler & Mahar, 1979).

In a meta-analytic test of the validity of transformational and transactional leadership, Judge and Piccolo (2004) found that transformational leadership has relatively high levels of validity and seems to generalize across many situations. While the theory of transformational leadership focuses on leader and follower interactions, scientists have begun to revisit the idea that an effective leader may be determined by a capability (Brown & Moshavi, 2005). One idea that has come into its own in recent years is that emotional intelligence may play a part in the effectiveness of leaders.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter introduces the multifaceted concept of leadership and attempts to define and conceptualise it, based on literature. Different approaches to leadership are discussed as well as a brief history of leadership, including mention of current developments in leadership such as transformational leadership, positive leadership, authentic leadership and Ubuntu are considered. Effective leadership is imperative for leadership success, and hence a section is spent on discussing effective leadership and what leaders need to be effective. Lastly, the literature review on leadership concludes with discussing the three different leadership styles used for the purpose of this study, namely transactional leadership, transformational leadership and laissez-faire. According to Herbst and Maree (2008), the difference between leaders and non-leaders stays a source of disagreement among experts. To get this discussion started, a short definition offered is offered, summarising leadership as "the ability to turn vision into a reality" (Alon & Higgins, 2005, p. 502).

Defining and conceptualising leadership

Leadership is a subject with very many facets and aspects. At the very essence, leadership is about understanding and managing human behaviour. Hitt (1993, p. 5) states that "leadership is generally defined as the art or process of influencing people so that they will strive willingly towards the achievement of group goals." Groenewald (2008) concurs by stating it is "the art of moving people and situations profitably". Leadership is a way of persuading others rather than dictating and controlling them (Charlton, 1993; Goleman, 1995 & Locke, 1991). Accordingly, excellent leadership is about movement, where all stakeholders move towards defined outcomes. Ilbury (2004) describes leadership as follows: "A leader is someone who emerges, especially in times of uncertainty, because they offer ways forward that others haven"t yet identified and will therefore enthusiastically follow.........A great leader shows opportunity where others only see confusion and uncertainty." (Ilbury, 2004, p. 45).

It follows that leadership is a highly complex process, calling for a set of finely developed skills, as leadership mistakes and poor leadership are costly, both in terms of human and organizational costs. Meyer (2004) considers various aspects concerning leadership, which includes the need to understand leadership within a context (e.g. spiritual, emotional, organizational and cultural) as well as a specific point in time. A host of issues are considered such as enabling ordinary people to do extraordinary things and setting them up for success, the ability to manage through exceptionally difficult times and crises, getting people involved in a goal with a specific purpose, helping people to understand the history current situation and the outlook and prospects (where they are going to), as well as understanding the role and influence of followers.

Approaches to leadership

Since the time of Plato and others, leadership has been an issue that is debated and explored (Bower, 2010). However, in many organizations world-wide the same concern relating to lack of leadership seems to be raised repeatedly, be it small organizations, start up or dinosaur conglomerates. Seemingly, the concern with leadership is a topical point on the agenda in highly developed and industrialised countries, as well as emerging economies, and each is concerned with lack of leadership skills and what it may take to develop leaderships skills required for the challenges at hand (Bower, 2010; Goffee & Jones, 2000). Over the years, research into leadership has received significant interest (Yukl, 2002). Nkomo and Kriek (2004) summarise these as including the early trait, behavioural and situational approaches, to the more current topics of charismatic, ethical, transformational, spiritual or principled styles of leadership. The more modern leadership paradigms highlight values, traits and personality of the leaders. Increasingly not only the skill but also the personality of leaders has become important. "We not only need to know what the leader does, but who he or she is" (Atwater & Yammarino, 1993, p. 646). In the early 1900"s leadership theories focussed on Traits distinguishing leaders and followers. Later on, this evolved to include other variables, such as situational factors and differing skills levels. Over time, many differing leadership theories have evolved. These can be summarised as follows:
Leaders have a major impact on the well-being of their followers (Pina e Cunha, Campos e Cunha, & Rego, 2009), and most people have an opinion about leadership, good or bad and possible Traits expected from leaders (Bower, 2010).

Not only academics and management experts, but increasingly a very wide general audience appears to be interested in leadership, possibly due to its far reaching consequences and impact leaders have on the lives of the general population. A host of popular management literature focuses on leadership, ranging from management gurus to sports celebrities or politicians. A literature review would not be complete without incorporating some of the essence of this information and trying to place it somewhere between academic literature, research results and popular realities. In the best-selling book, "Leadership Gold", Maxwell (2008) summarises a lifetime of leadership advice filled with elaboration of successes and failures and shares the wisdom gained from these. According to Maxwell, 90% of failures can be ascribed to quitting and not to actual defeat. Brady and Woodward (2005), describe the five levels of influence a leader should master on the way to become a successful leader.

Leadership styles

Currently, leadership research is enjoying wide ranging interest world-wide. Recent reviews have commented on a sudden increase in this field, and there are a host of styles worth considering. However, in literature, transactional and transformational leadership enjoys a primary interest (Antonakis & House, 2002). Schriesheim, Wu and Scandura (2007) concur and refer to a strong research interest, indicating that the most widely studied leadership area currently appears to be the domain of transactional and transformational leadership. Antonakis & House (2002) regard the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) as the currently most widely used instrument for measuring transformational and transactional leadership. Based on this observation, the three leadership styles mentioned were chosen as a basis for the research.

In conclusion, it is argued that leadership is a complex concept. This literature review discussed some of the important aspects of it. No doubt, there will be many more aspects of leadership and issues influencing leaders and leadership. Nevertheless, effective leaders need the skills and ability to navigate the various challenges posed to them, expected or unexpected, for the good of their organizations, regardless of the circumstances. The study will focus on important aspects around leadership that will contribute towards making the complex and intricate topic more easily understood for human resource managers and industrial psychologists involved in recruitment and leadership development. In the next chapter the concept of emotional intelligence will be explicated, and its possible relationship to leadership, as depicted in literature, will be discussed.

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

"Emotions are implicated in many aspects of everyday life. Their impact and relevance, in combination with the subjective nature of emotional experience, suggest it is important to work towards a comprehensive scientific model of emotion-related self perceptions, as envisaged in the trait emotional self-efficacy conceptualisation." (Petrides, Pita, & Kokkinaki, 2007, p. 287). This chapter will define emotional intelligence, distinguish between different schools of thought in the field of emotional intelligence, such as the trait, mixed model and ability based theories, elaborate on trait emotional intelligence, discuss how emotional intelligence contributes to work performance, and how individuals may improve their emotional intelligence. The chapter will then go on to discuss the impact of emotional intelligence on leadership. The conclusion will wrap up important findings from literature and present them in support of anticipated research findings. In 1920, the concept of social intelligence was first mentioned by Edward Thorndike (1920) to explain the ability to appreciate and manage others. Since then it has developed significantly, and these developments were spearheaded by Reuven Bar-On, Daniel Goleman and Jack Salovey, expanding the concept and developing a separate field of emotional intelligence (Bar-On, 2006). In 1990, Salovey and Meyer first published an article confirming the existence of emotional intelligence, and in 1995,.

Being a relatively new concept, there is on-going debate around the concept of emotional intelligence (Ashkanasy & Daus, 2005; Conte, 2005; Famborough & Hart, 2008; Landy, 2005; Locke, 2005; Spector, 2005). Over the past decade and longer, the concept of emotional intelligence (EI) received extensive notice in research. It enjoyed interest in both the popular literature (for example Goleman, 1995a; Hein, 1997; Wall, 2008) as well as the scientific literature (for example Davies, Stankov & Roberts, 2000; Petrides & Furnham, 2000; Salovey & Mayer, 1990). In short, EI, a popular concept in modern management literature, aspires to provide a scientific framework to explain individual differences in how people manage and deal with their own and others" emotions (Petrides & Furnham, 2003).

Defining and Conceptualising Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence is a practical expression for a specific capacity of people, relating to the understanding, expression and management of emotions. As such it forms part of the complex array of ability or personality of people, and is usually mentioned alongside cognitive or interpersonal ability. Salovey and Meyer (1990) originally used this term and explained it in four fields, namely knowing and handling one"s own as well as others" emotions. Other authors, such as Goleman (1998), elaborate on this view and offer definitions such as "Emotional intelligence refers to the capacity for recognising our own feelings.

Another definition, concurring with Goleman, states that emotional intelligence is "the ability to perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth" (Mayer & Salovey, 1997, p. 5). Emotional intelligence basically illustrates and describes the capacity to join emotions with reasoning to arrive at a decision. Cognitive ability or competence, measured as intelligence quotient (IQ), often does not explain the difference between average and superior work performance, including that of a leader, and this hence indicates that there is another dimension that contributes towards effective leadership (Cameron, 2008; Spencer, 2001).

An important question is, whether trait emotional intelligence belongs to the domain of intelligence or personality (Caruso, 2003; Freudenthaler, Neubauer, Gabler, Scherl, & Rindermann, 2008; Petrides et al., 2007). It is argued that trait EI belongs into the context of personality, as it refers to behavioural inclinations and self-perceived skills (Petrides, 2010; Petrides & Furnham, 2001) and not into the actual, measured cognitive skills domain. This concurs with Cronbach''s (1949) description that self-report tools describe characteristic performance. To minimise misconceptions about emotional intelligence, Petrides and Furnham (2001) highlighted a clear difference between trait EI and ability EI. In contrast, according to Mikolajczak, Luminet, Leroy and Roy (2007), the two EI concepts (trait and ability EI) are based on the belief that intellectual aptitude is not the singular predictor of adjustment and performance but that emotional ability needs to be taken into account as well.

Trait emotional intelligence

Trait emotional intelligence does not assume there is an ideal emotional intelligence level, but rather different profiles may be relevant to and effective in different situations. This is similar to personality traits, where different personality traits match different job requirements (Petrides, 2010). Trait emotional intelligence is a "constellation of emotional self-perception located at the lower levels of personality hierarchies" (Petrides, 2010, p. 137). According to Mikolajczak et al. (2007), trait EI is mostly used in the health, educational and organizational field. In education, low IQ pupils with a better EI score achieve better at school than their low IQ peers who have a low EI (Petrides, Frederickson, & Furnham, 2004). Research furthermore suggests that trait EI plays a role in work accomplishment (Herbst & Maree, 2008; Petrides, 2010; van Rooy & Viswesvaran, 2004), that it promotes an improved understanding and prediction of certain behaviour and is more relevant amongst workers and managers who have to include some form of emotional or inter-personal work in their job (Mikolajczak et al., 2007).

This study seeks to explore the possible relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership. Should a relationship be found, areas of interception to train managers to become effective leaders could be identified, with the view to possibly improving work performance. Based on literature, the following section explicates the possible impact emotional intelligence may have on work performance.

LEADERSHIP TRAITS FOR AN ORGANIZATION

Leadership is a process of influencing the behaviour of people at work towards the achievement of specified goal. The following elements must be present in the leadership:

(a) It is the process of influence.

(b) The influence is always for achievement of common goal.

(c) There must be minimum two or more persons present influencing your own behaviour is not leadership.

(d) The influence should be to get the willing co-operation of the employees and not the forceful co-operation.

Features of Leadership:

1. Leadership indicates the ability of an individual to influence others.

2. Leadership tries to bring change in behaviour.

3. Leadership shows interpersonal relationship between leader and followers.

4. Leadership is to achieve common goal.

5. Leadership is a continuous process.

DISCUSSION

Effective leadership has long been the focus of researchers. Only recently, emotional intelligence has been linked to effective leadership. While the available research is still limited, the topic of a possible relationship of emotional intelligence and leadership effectiveness seems to be gaining momentum. The present met analysis of the literature was done under the assumption that there is a positive relationship between EI and leadership effectiveness. Hypothesis 1 was supported, indicating that there is indeed, a positive relationship between EI and leadership effectiveness regardless of the nature of the measure used for EI or leadership effectiveness. Because definitions and theories of both EI and leadership effectiveness still vary greatly in the literature, these results should be considered exploratory in nature. However, these results do suggest that the specifics of EI and leadership effectiveness measurements are not crucial. Hypotheses 2 and 3 were also supported, indicating that a positive relationship between EI and leadership effectiveness exists for both the ability model measures and for the mixed model measures of EI.

These results build upon a meta-analysis conducted by Martin (2008) that also investigated the relationship of EI and leadership effectiveness. While both the present study and the study by Martin resulted in support for the positive relationship of EI and leadership effectiveness, the method of reaching those conclusions differed. Specifically, the present study controlled for measurement error in addition to sampling error, whereas the meta-analysis by Martin only corrected for sampling error. The present study also added to the previous meta-analysis by examining the potential EI measure moderator in the subset meta-analyses that were conducted. The results suggest that a variety of measures of EI will be positively related to leadership effectiveness. While, at face value, the number of different measures of EI would seem to only decrease the reliability and validity of the research, this study suggests that any EI measure will positively predict leadership effectiveness.

A primary limitation of this study is the small number of available studies used in the meta-analysis. Because the interest in this particular topic is rather recent, the studies were somewhat scarce. This scarcity also did not allow for quality control of the studies. Future research may want to take caution in the inclusion of studies to better control for quality. Another general limitation that potentially affects meta-analyses is the file drawer problem (Rosenthal, 1995). This problem refers to the well-supported idea that because studies that have achieved statistical significance are more likely to be published, the studies sampled are not truly random. Studies that were not significant may still remain in file drawers and not available to the researcher conducting a met analysis. This potential problem can affect the research conclusion (Rosenthal, 1995). Practical implications for these results include the idea that EI is a fairly good predictor of leadership effectiveness. While leaders were once only expected to meet business goals, it seems that today's effective leader may also increase the likelihood of his or her success by being emotionally intelligent. EI is still a young theory, and still in development, as can be seen in the varied EI measures in use. However, this study has suggested that any EI measure may suffice in predicting leadership effectiveness.

Organizations cannot ignore the importance of selection and detection of successful leaders. A better understanding of why leaders are, or are not effective, is crucial to organizations. The selection of leaders may also affect other aspects of an organization, such as employee job satisfaction, job performance, attendance, turnover, etc. Future selection, and development of current leaders or managers, may want to consider EI as a critical success factor.

CONCLUSION

After offering a definition for emotional intelligence, this chapter outlined the different schools of thought of emotional intelligence, distinguishing between the trait, ability and mixed model approaches. As the trait emotional intelligence model is used in this study, it is elaborated on in more detail. It goes to explain how emotional intelligence is related to the different leadership styles. Transactional leaders clarify objectives and offer incentives in exchange for performance. They use emotional intelligence to understand what followers need and through goal setting and other means, offer rewards to fulfil those needs. Followers will be motivated to achieve the stated goals (Avolio & Bass, 2004). Transformational leaders display certain attributes that instil pride in others and earn respect as well as use certain behaviours that use inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individual consideration (Bass, 1997; Avolio & Bass, 2004; Vrba, 2007). This makes transformational leaders well liked, appreciated and trusted (Gardener & Stough, 2002). In displaying the attributes and behaviours mentioned, transformational leaders use a number of emotional intelligence skills or have emotional intelligence traits to achieve the stated transformational leadership outcomes. While both leadership types use a certain level emotional intelligence to achieve their goals, the effective transformational leadership requires significant higher levels of emotional intelligence to influence and motivate followers towards achieving higher order goals, as it influences followers to achieve much more than the stated goals outlined by the transactional leader.

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