

SHORTER COMMUNICATIONS

Emotional Intelligence and Leadership: Interplay of the Variables

Rafia Naz, National University of Samoa

Abstract

This study explores the interplay between emotional intelligence (EI) and leadership and advocates that there's a strong positive relationship amid the variables. Practical implications for leaders are provided.

Keywords: EI, leadership

Introduction

Emotional intelligence (EI) is the ability to perceive accurately, appraise, and express emotion; the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge; and the ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth (Mayer and Salovey, 1997a, b). Salovey and Mayer (1990) categorized EI into five key domains as follows: self-awareness, managing emotions, self-motivation, empathy, and relationships' handling. Goleman (1995) later developed four key dimensions of EI to include knowing and managing emotions of oneself, self- motivation, empathy toward others, and social deftness. Comparatively, leadership can be defined as a process of influencing other people's orientation towards the achievement of goals (Greenberg et al., 2000; Johns and Saks, 2001). The purpose of this study is to establish the relationship between the two variables: EI and leadership.

Literature Review: Correlation between EI and Leadership

Scholars identify that leaders who are able to perceive not only their own emotions but also of their followers are more effective leaders (Barling et al., 2000; George, 2000). Leaders with higher emotional understanding possess the ability to anticipate how others will respond in different situations and are able to strategies likewise (Mayer et al., 2000b). Assessing accurately and perceiving followers' emotions and comprehending reasons of differing emotions in diverse situations by followers is beneficial to the leader in communicating a sense of the organization's vision to followers (George, 2000). George (2000) further stipulates that effective leaders may use their emotions to promote positive emotions among their followers whilst Mayer et al., 2000) states that leaders with an enhanced emotional integration skills are able to use emotions to promote critical thinking, display higher level of empathy and are able to use interpersonal relationships to their advantage. Scholars have generally summed up that leaders with heightened emotional understanding possess the ability to understand followers' emotions and to interact with followers in order to achieve their desired goals (Barling et al., 2000; George, 2000). Effective leadership is essential in demarcating authentic and unauthentic emotions and expressed emotions vis-a-vis real emotions (George, 2000). Effective leadership requisites higher level of problem solving skills and understanding of human resources and social systems (Marshall-Meis et al., 2000;

Zaccaro et al., 2000). Leadership with higher EI display, impacts self-control and problem solving, leading to greater trust and respect (Barling et al., 2000). Leaders able to manage their emotions possess the ability to adapt their behaviour to match their followers' emotional needs to gain respect of their followers (George, 2000). Scholarships have established a positive relationship between EI and leadership (George, 2000; Kerr et al., 2006; Leban and Zulauf, 2004; Rosete and Ciarrochi, 2005; Sehrawat and Sharma, 2014a, b; Singh, 2007; Wong and Law, 2002). Positive relationship has also been reported in the literature between EI and transformational leadership (Downey et al. 2006; Duckett and MacFarlane, 2003; Gardner and Stough, 2002; Mandell and Pherwani, 2003; Palmer et al., 2001; Sivanathan and Fekken, 2002) and other studies reported no relationship (Brown et al., 2006; Weinberger's (2002). Gill (2002) study deliberates that manager's need planning, organising, and controlling skills while leaders need EI. Goleman et al. (2002) study states that EI is twice as important as IQ and technical skills and as one progresses upwards in their career in an organisation, EI becomes critical.

Methodology

The study utilized exploratory research and depended on scholastic reviews of the literature to explain "correlation amid EI and leadership". Key implications are elucidated in the study from the reviews.

Discussion

It is prudent that leaders have understanding of themselves first and their emotions and how to manage it, before they understand their followers. The context in which emotions co-exist is critical as well. "Emotional intelligence can help leaders solve complex problems, make better decisions, plan how to use their time effectively, adapt their behaviour to the situation, and manage crises" (Yukl, 2010, p. 213). In view of the challenges of the 21st century coupled with new work environment and the impact of the global pandemic, training future leaders is significant to develop EI for effective leadership. This has implications for performance management and training ie: Human resource management. Leaders need to mirror themselves well, which means they need to mirror their behaviours and impact of their behaviour on others. Mirror Leadership ought to be an ever-evolving leadership practice. Leaders cannot expect followers to change if they themselves are not willing to change. It is pertinent for the leader to comprehend their blind spots and display adaptability, self-confidence, innovation, and initiative by serving as change catalysts thereby further displaying true EI. This will affirmatively trickle down to greater employee engagement, commitment, and satisfaction. EI has proven to have a positive impact on leadership. However, more scholarships should examine the relationship between EI and different leadership styles in the university context. Another important aspect is to examine the difference in the practice of EI itself. The rigorous findings would not only be noteworthy for the whole organization and its leadership but also for the employees themselves and would enhance human resource management at the workplace.

Conclusion and Implications

Organisations can become psychic prisons if leaders do not set the right tone of the organization. If they lack emotional intelligence, it could have more far-reaching consequences, resulting in lower employee engagement and a higher turnover rate. Some leaders may shine at their jobs and be highly prolific but without EI they cannot survive the tides of complexity presented by the environment.

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