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Emotions and Leadership: The Role of Emotional Intelligence

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Abstract:

The concept of emotional intelligence (EI) has emerged as a prominent research stream in leadership field. Emotional intelligence is all about understanding and exploiting one's own and other's emotions for personal and professional growth. Emotionally intelligent leaders can be thought of as core competence of an organization as it is linked with the productivity of the followers. This paper suggests that feelings (emotions) play a central role in the leadership process. The objective of this paper is to throw light on emotional intelligence and its effect on leaders' effectiveness which is imperative for the growth and success of the organization. As this area of study is overwhelmed with numerous theories and researches, this paper is a descriptive research entirely based on secondary data. In this paper, the role of emotional intelligence on leadership effectiveness is studied based on secondary data.

1. Introduction

In present Indian Scenario the role of a corporate leader has changed dramatically due to widespread globalization & capitalization. Now their role is not only to guide their followers but also to motivate and inspire them, promote a positive work environment, understand and manage emotions, building teamwork and so forth. In today's work environment where we work with intercontinental teams, sound technical knowledge, fancy strategies, and established experience are no longer only criterion of effective leadership. Effective leadership requires a wide range of skills. Leadership is gaining importance and therefore coming into the center of attention of management research. The primary contributor to the area of emotional intelligence and leadership is Daniel Goleman, who has written several books on implementing emotional intelligence in an organization, including *Working with Emotional Intelligence* (1998) and *The Emotionally intelligent Workplace* (2001). The main research questions within leadership research are what makes a leader effective? Are there certain traits, abilities or behaviors that might be identified, how could those be measured and developed and which other abilities might be of importance? Despite the large amount of research, there seems to be little consensus regarding the characteristics of an effective leader. This notion that, different situations call for different types of leadership (Goleman & Harvard Business Review, 2000:2-3). However, research suggests that the most effective leaders are identical in one crucial way: they all have a high degree of what has come to be known as emotional intelligence (ibid). Emotional intelligence is one skill that distinguishes great leaders from merely good ones. (Goleman). As this area of study is overwhelmed with numerous theories and researches, this paper is a descriptive research entirely based on secondary data. In this paper, the impacts of emotional intelligence on leadership effectiveness are analyzed. We begin by discussing Emotional intelligence.

2. Emotional Intelligence

The term Emotional Intelligence (EI) was first introduced in the scientific literature in 1990. As a fairly new concept, emotional intelligence has only been discussed for the past twenty years and valid researches on the effects of emotional intelligence in the work environment are still not very common. It will remain new as long as its occurrence is not accepted and inculcated by each and every member in the organization. Due to the increasing popularity of the concept, mainly from Daniel Goleman's (1995) best-selling book entitled *Emotional Intelligence*, many- definitions have been proposed. However, only one appears to equally consider both the emotions and intelligence. According to Mayer and Salovey (1997), emotional intelligence is defined as "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 thinking and actions". In short it means that individuals have varying abilities, to recognize and understand the emotional information, thus leading to variations in their behavior to the same type of emotional stimuli. This definition is attractive because it refers to a form of reasoning that takes emotions into account and reflects "heightened emotional or mental abilities" (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). Intelligence is inferred from the "recognition and use of one's own and others' emotional states to solve problems and regulate behaviors" (Salovey & Mayer, 1989-1990). The conceptualization "combines the ideas that emotion makes thinking more intelligent and that one thinks intelligently about emotions," thus providing the necessary correlation between emotion and intelligence

Emotional intelligence connects a leader's cognitive abilities with their emotional state (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). The leader's control over his emotions plays a paramount role over his decision making. Employers want more than just academically intelligent leader. He must be able to understand and manage the emotions of his/her peers and employees in order to be as

efficient and effective as possible. Leaders in the business world shouldn't overlook emotions but should be intelligent enough to use them in the workplace. Goleman stated new insight into our "two minds"—the rational and the emotional—and how they together shape our destiny. Emotional and social skills give people advantages in realms where such abilities make the most difference, like love and leadership. EI trumps IQ in "soft" domains, where intellect matters relatively little for success. Another such arena where EI matters more than IQ is in performance at work, when comparing people with roughly the same educational backgrounds. (Goleman 2008)

3. Effective Leadership

Through the ages, researchers and organizational development consultants have pursued the essence of leadership. Rastogi and Dave (2004) define Effective Leadership as the ability of a leader to manage a situation appropriately, resulting in good outcome or be able to meet the target of the activities and objectives set by organizations. Effective leadership is not possible without having the right set of behaviour and traits, which are the consequence of high EI.

Changes in the market environment and diverse workforce over the decades have resulted in the need for leaders to become more transformational and less to use other styles if they want to be effective. (Bass 1999) The extent, to which a leader is effective, is measured first, in terms of his influence on the followers. The followers of such a leader feel trust, admiration, loyalty and respect for the leader and because of the qualities of the transformational leader motivate their followers to work harder beyond their capability. In today's competitive era these skills are very essential in a leader to be effective. The disparity between good and great leaders often comes down to emotional intelligence. (Goleman) No matter what professional conduct leader display; their emotion and how they manage them play an important role in their success at work. Leaders with a high level of emotional intelligence know what they're feeling, what their emotions mean, how they can control them and how these emotions can affect other people. Such leaders will not instantly emit his feelings and emotions but will carefully evaluate the alternatives before him and react in an appropriate manner. Emotional intelligence plays a vital role in making leader more effective and grabbing constant attention of the corporate world.

4. Emotional Intelligence and Leadership

While emotional intelligence can lead to improved functioning in a variety of aspects of life such as achievement and close relationships (Goleman, 1995; Salovey & Mayer, 1989–90), I propose that for leaders having emotional intelligence is essential for his effectiveness. In order to investigate the implications of emotional intelligence for effective leadership, it is necessary to identify the basic nature of effective leadership. Based on the work of Yukl (1998), Locke (1991), and Conger and Kanungo (1998), as well as the larger leadership literature, specific elements of leadership effectiveness can be identified;

- Development of a collective sense of vision, goals and objectives and how to go about achieving them;
- Inculcating in others knowledge and appreciation of the importance of work activities and behaviors;
- Generating and maintaining enthusiasm, confidence, and optimism in an organization as well as an environment of cooperation and trust;
- Encouraging flexibility in decision making and change;
- Below, consider how emotional intelligence may help leaders carry out these activities and therefore contribute to leader effectiveness.

4.1. *Development of a Collective Sense Vision, Goals and Objectives and How to Go about Achieving Them*

Emotional intelligence may contribute to leaders developing a compelling vision for their groups or organizations in a number of ways. Leader creates vision and motivates his followers to attain that vision. Research linking positive moods to creativity suggests that when leaders are in positive moods they may be more creative (Isen et al., 1987) and, hence, more probable to come up with a compelling vision that contrasts with existing conditions. Leaders who are high on emotional intelligence will be better able to take advantage of and use their positive feelings and emotions to envision major improvements in their organizations' functioning. Leaders high on emotional intelligence also are likely to manage and understand followers' emotions and may cause them to be overly optimistic. Importantly, leaders need not only to come up with a convincing vision, but also to effectively communicate it throughout the organization in such a way that it does come to be shared and is 'collective'.

4.2. *Inculcating in others knowledge and appreciation of the importance of work activities and behavior*

In order to inculcate in others the importance of work activities leaders need to ensure that their followers are aware of the problems which their organization is facing as well as potential opportunities which can be grabbed to successfully overcome problems and meet challenges. Leadership involves both the rational and emotional aspect of human experience. Since employees are both logical & emotional, leaders can use rational technique and/or emotional appeals in order to influence followers but they must also meditate on the rational and emotional consequence of their actions.

4.3. *Generating and maintaining enthusiasm, confidence, and optimism in an organization as well as an environment of cooperation and trust*

In order for leaders to generate and maintain enthusiasm, they must be able to assess how their followers feel, and be knowledgeable about how to influence these feelings. They must also be able to predict how followers will react to different circumstances, events, and changes, and effectively manage these reactions. Leaders who are high on emotional intelligence may instill in their organizations a sense of enthusiasm, excitement, and optimism as well as an ambiance of cooperation and trust through their being able to develop high quality interpersonal relationships with their followers. George (1992, p.84) asserted,

“Leaders who feel excited, enthusiastic, and energetic themselves are likely to similarly energize their followers, as are leaders who feel distressed and hostile likely to negatively activate their followers.” The behavior of a leader has a direct effect on the outcome of their followers. High quality interpersonal relationships between leaders and their followers have been documented to produce numerous advantages for organizations, leaders, and followers (Gerstner & Day, 1997; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Recognizing, appropriately responding to, and influencing followers’ emotions is necessary for leaders to develop high quality interpersonal relationships with them (Salovey & Mayer, 1989–90) and positive affect is a critical ingredient for high levels of trust (Jones & George, 1998).

4.4. Encouraging flexibility in decision making and change

When leaders are high in emotional intelligence, they may be able to use them to improve their decision making. Damasio (1994) noted that emotions help us to make choices and decide among varying options. When leaders know and manage their emotions, they may be better able to flexibly approach problems, consider alternatives, and avoid rigidity effects in decision making. Leaders tend to make their best choices when they are “cool”, calm and rationally isolated from emotion. Damasio’s (1994, p. 53) work suggests, “reduction in emotion may constitute an equally important source of irrational behavior.” Emotional intelligence, therefore, enables leaders to both effectively use emotions in decision making and manage emotions which interfere with effective decision making. When leaders know and manage their emotions, they may be better able to flexibly approach problems, consider alternative scenarios, and avoid rigidity effects in decision making.

In the past decade many studies of leadership and emotional intelligence have been conducted using different constructs of emotional intelligence and of leadership effectiveness. A review of the history of leadership research suggests that a many researchers’ have contributed towards better understanding of this relationship. Some researchers have found significant positive correlation between these variables. And other researchers are doubtful about the predicting ability of emotional intelligence construct. In India also few studies have been conducted using these variables.

5. Review of Literature

This paper reviews literature related to characteristics that influence the effectiveness of a leader. Specifically, this includes research that examines the role of emotional intelligence on leadership effectiveness. The literature review includes the following topics: (1) context of emotional intelligence, & research and findings on emotional intelligence, (2) leadership effectiveness (3) research finding on emotional intelligence and effective leadership.

5.1. Context of Emotional Intelligence

One area evolving from the growing interest in emotions in the workplace is the study of emotional intelligence (Salovey and Mayer, 1990). Emotional intelligence is a relatively new theoretical construct and can be defined in numerous ways. Emotional intelligence is not just being nice, putting on a good face, and giving free reign to feelings, nor is it about controlling, exploiting, or manipulating people (Cooper & Sawaf, 1997; Cherniss & Adler, 2000). Basically, emotional intelligence is the “ability to accurately identify and understand one’s own emotional reactions and those of others” (Cherniss & Adler, 2000). Over the course of the history of psychology, research and theory on emotions has risen and ebbed (Goleman, 2003). Emotional intelligence can trace its roots to the beginning of the 20th century when Thorndike (1920) identified and called it social intelligence. He identified three intelligences, (1) mechanical, (2) social, and (3) abstract. He described the concept of “social intelligence” as the ability to get along with other people. Emotional intelligence emerged again when Gardner (1983) introduced the concept of multiple intelligences. He divided personal intelligences into interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence. Gardner asserted that interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences were as important as the type of intelligence that was typically measured by IQ tests (Gardner, 1983; Cherniss, 2000). The roots of emotional intelligence can arguably be traced back to the start of the last century, but the majority of books and research addressing emotional intelligence has appeared within the last fifteen years (Shulze & Roberts, 2005).

In 1990, Salovey and Mayer first formally recognized the term Emotional Intelligence (EI) and defined it as ‘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 thinking and actions’. When Mayer and Salovey first coined the term emotional intelligence, little attention was given to the construct. Emotional intelligence was brought to the forefront when Daniel Goleman’s 1995 bestselling book, *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More than IQ* was published. It continues to be a topic of great interest among researchers and within the workplace.

Though different definitions and a variety of approaches to applying emotional intelligence in the workplace exist, research indicates that it does have a positive effect in the workplace (Cherniss & Goleman, 2001; Caruso & Salovey, 2004). Emotional intelligence can be a contributing factor to the financial success of an organization (Cherniss, 2003).

5.2. Effective Leadership

Leadership is one of the most researched and debated issues in the organizational sciences. There is a wide variety of approaches to leadership, and researchers have analyzed what leaders do, what they are like, how they motivate, how they react in a variety of situations, and how they bring about change in their organizations (George, 2000). Effective leadership is crucial to an organization’s success. There are a number of common characteristics that effective organizational leaders share. Without these characteristics, initiatives and change can fail. Among these characteristics emotional intelligence is the most important one.

5.3. Emotional Intelligence and Effective Leadership

A growing body of literature suggests that emotions play a central role in making a leader more effective. Studies indicate that effective leaders use their emotional intelligence to effectively manage themselves, others, and their organization. Damasio (1994) noted that emotions help us to make choices and decide among varying options. When leaders know and manage their emotions, they may be better able to flexibly approach problems, consider alternatives, and avoid rigidity effects in decision making. Leaders tend to make their best choices when they are “cool”, calm and rationally isolated from emotion. Damasio’s (1994) work suggests, “reduction in emotion may constitute an equally important source of irrational behavior.”. Goleman (1995, & 1998) postulates that emotional intelligence plays a significant role in leadership. Leaders who have high levels of emotional intelligence have a greater effect on an organization than their counterparts who have lower levels of emotional intelligence. Since Goleman (1998b) argued that emotional intelligence is critical for successful leadership, many researchers have focused on the relationship between EI and leadership.

Studies have indicated that effective leaders consistently have possession of greater emotional intelligence competencies, such as self-awareness and self-management (Boyatzis & Oosten, 2003; Bradberry & Greaves, 2003; Cherniss, 2003). Effective leaders are able to apply their emotional intelligence to make good decisions and effectively manage themselves and others (Caruso & Salovey, 2004). Leadership is not always about being smarter or tougher. It is more about the qualities of motivation, empathy, integrity, and intuitive abilities, which are part of the domain of emotional intelligence (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2004). Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee (2002) contend that what sets the best leaders apart from the rest is understanding the powerful role of emotions in the workplace. Developing stronger emotional intelligence is a great challenge that is faced by leaders in all levels of an organization (Covey, 2004). . George (1992, p.84) asserted, “Leaders who feel excited, enthusiastic, and energetic themselves are likely to similarly energize their followers, as are leaders who feel distressed and hostile likely to negatively activate their followers.” The behavior of a leader has a direct effect on the outcome of their followers. . Gardner and Stough (2002) found out that leaders become more flexible to handle a variety of demands and use the right approach at the right time. They concluded that EI is correlated highly with all components of transformational leadership, with the components of understanding of emotions and emotional management the best predictors of leadership style. Prati et al. (2003a) discuss that EI presents a critically important role for effective leadership and team performance in today’s organizational environment. Leaders who are high in EI can proactively select team members that are able to manage high stress & build up positive working relationships and manage the emotions of themselves and those around them. Caruso and Salovey (2004) emphasize that if we can deal with our emotions by blending emotion and thought, we increase the chances that our decisions will be more effective. Emotionally balanced leader focuses on their targets rather than diverting their attention. Mandell and Pherwani (2003) conducted a small study and found an overall significant positive relationship between the total EI scores and transformational leadership scores of the managers. Rahim & Psenicka (2005) studied the relationship of EI-empathy and social skills and found that supervisors need to acquire and use their social skills and empathy competencies to enhance their own effectiveness of leader role. Rosete and Ciarrochi (2005) finding revealed that higher EI was associated with higher leadership effectiveness. The study seeks to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI), personality, cognitive intelligence and leadership effectiveness. Correlation and regression analyses revealed that higher EI was associated with higher leadership effectiveness. Butler and Chinowsky (2006) conclude that a strong relationship between EI and leadership behaviors exists . Singh et al. (2012) found that motivation, an indicator of EI shows significant correlation with the effectiveness of the leader. Their research examines the impact of EI on EL among managers from Miri ship building industry . Out of five EI indicators; only one indicator (motivation) has shown a positive correlation with effective leadership.

6. Finding of Study

The review of literature shows that there is a positive relation between EI and effective leadership. Leaders who have high emotional intelligent level are better decision makers and are more capable of handling the day to day conflict. High EI leaders are able to manage their emotion and establish good relationship with their colleagues in their work place to motivate them and to get the best out of them..

Hence we can say that emotionally intelligent and effective leadership are related.

These leaders are more emotionally balanced and able to express their emotions, motivated, empathize with others and have good social skills.

7. Recommendations

In the fast transforming globalized world where challenges are very high, changes are radical; failure to implement effective change and management strategies can have costly results, which may even have an effect on the productivity and performance of the organization. Organizations are forced to look into the importance of EI and leadership skills and they need to develop emotionally sensitive leaders

Organizations now need to realize the benefits of effective leadership by cultivating leaders who generate the emotional resonance that may make the organization a better work place.

Leaders must enhance this skill so that they can lead efficiently, work collaboratively, promote emotional and intellectual growth and be able to cope with daily pressures, conflict and demands.

EI can be improved upon with training and development programs (Cherniss, 2001 & Clark, 2003 & Sosik 1999) . Therefore, organizations should give training not only to their leaders but also to the employees to improve their EI as this skill can be learned at any age; it’s not an inborn characteristic. Emotionally intelligent leader must equip their followers with the same EI technique to ensure their optimal performance.

8. Conclusion

“What really matters for success, character, happiness and lifelong achievements is a definite set of emotional skills – your EQ – not just purely cognitive abilities that are measured by conventional IQ tests.” — Daniel Goleman

The present analysis suggests that, at a minimum, emotions and emotional intelligence are valuable of consideration in the leadership domain. It is very important for the leader to demonstrate the right kind of emotions and behavior. The way the leader behaves in an organizational environment will have an influence on their subordinates. There is also a likelihood that subordinates learn and imbibe what the leader demonstrates. Hence it is very crucial for a leader to have and exhibit the right kind of emotional competencies. The present study has produced some important results that have implications for both research and practice. In general the implications of the study are that supervisors need to acquire and use their emotional and social competences to boost their leadership effectiveness. Supervisors having high EI will persuade their subordinates in putting extra efforts and these subordinates will perceive their supervisors more effectively and will be satisfied with them. If a leader wants their people to give him their best, he should give them the ability to manage their internal states to deliver it. The organizational climate is often the outcome of the attitudes, decision making abilities, emotions, leadership style and actions of the leader. The leader creates the conditions that directly determine people's ability to work well and perform within the organization (Goleman, 2004:18). However, with the notion of emotional intelligence a leader can lead more effectively and create an environment in the workplace that encourages high performance and generates great impact on the success of the organization.

All in all, investigating how leaders' capabilities in the emotion domain or their emotional intelligence add to their effectiveness certainly seems worthy of future empirical research and theorizing. Hopefully, the current analysis has provided researchers and decision makers with some guidance in this regard.

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