

An Assessment of the Effect of Emotional Intelligence On Leadership Performance in Local Government Administration

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Abstract

There is growing evidence that fundamental ethical stances in life stem from underlying emotional capacities. Since the local communities are the engines of national development, they should be managed by transforming leadership which requires managing emotions in order to get things done effectively. This study examines the impact of emotional intelligence on leadership performance in the context of local Government administration in Delta State, Nigeria. A survey research design method was employed. The sample objects were 130 staff stratified into top and middle management levels. They were representations from six departments in Directorate of Local Government Services and fifteen departments from the Local Government Commission. A 25-item validated structured questionnaire served as the research instrument. The correlation and multiple regression analysis were used as the major analytical tools. The findings revealed that self awareness as a dimension of EI exhibited the strongest direct effect on leadership performance in the local government administration, which indicates that self awareness is important psychological insight and key to self control that fosters EI. The Study concludes that Managing emotions through EI is found to be a critical element to leadership performance, this implies that carefully managed emotions are associated with successful outcomes which can drive employees loyalty and commitment. Finally it is recommended that effective leadership requires training and retraining on EI skills in order to inculcate the need to understand ones moods, emotions and drives and their impact on better employees morale in the work place.

Keywords: emotional intelligence, self awareness, social skills, self regulations, managing emotions

INTRODUCTION

There is growing evidence that fundamental ethical stances in life stem from underlying emotional capacities. The modern business environment requires leaders to provide moral leadership that will be able to read their employees emotions and enhance their work related attitudes and performance. Emotional intelligence (EI) is regarded as an important concept that leaders have to learn for organizational success (Kappagoda, 2003).

In an increasingly competitive global market place effective leadership is as crucial in every organization as it is throughout the world. The hallmark in conceptualization of emotional intelligence is the understanding that revolves around the outcome of the individual behaviour especially those that involve effectiveness or success. In this regard emotional intelligence seems to gain much popularity as an absolute necessity for effective leadership.

In the same vein Palmer *et al* (2001) and George (2000) affirmed that leaders with greater emotional intelligence will be more effective leaders. This suggests that ability to understand and manage moods and emotions in oneself and others appear to contribute to the leader's effectiveness in enhancing employees work related attitudes.

Today there seems to be increasing awareness among many organizations, management practitioners and researchers that EI skills are critical to fostering the qualities that are instrumental to guiding an organization to success. In this regard, EI leaders seem to promote self awareness, self regulation, social skills and empathy towards guiding the employees through the use of these skills (Kappagoda, 2012; Cavallo and Brienza, 2001; and Coleman 1998).

Mayer and Salovey (2000) identified EI as "a type of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor ones own emotions and others emotions to disseminate among them, and to use the information to guide one's thinking and actions". Underlying this premise there has been increase in the study of EI and its potential benefits for both the organization and the individual. There appears to be a growing interest that EI is essential to effective leadership. Thus there is a perception that one with a high intelligence level, without EI may not make a good leader. George (2000) contended that leaders high in EI will be able to use positive emotions to envision major improvements on organizational performance. That a

high EI leader will promote increase in corporation, motivation, and performance.

Today's market place is more demanding and fierce. Leaders in all works of life are redefining how they approach their staff and colleagues to compete in the new economy. Any organization that deserves to survive and thrive in the current economic landscape must begin a push towards the development of its leadership and employees soft skills. Leadership is the single, most critical element to manage and continuously renew organization in this dynamic and constantly evolving times. It is the driving force of every entity cutting across functions, sectors and professions. As the closest tier of government to the people, local; government administration has attracted series of attention since local government reform of 1996. Rural and grassroots development is the concern of every responsible government in any political system.

Nigeria will develop only when the rural communities are developed. This will only happen when the administrators are committed to development of the communities. However, to develop and implement good policies, an administrator must possess good skills to develop and analyse data. But most administrators seem to be dangerously lacking in required skill and emotional intelligence. Since the local communities are the engines of national development, they should be managed by transforming leadership which requires EI to build on man's need for meaning, leadership that creates institutional purpose and can manage emotions in order to get things done effectively.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Despite the importance of emotional intelligence it has been one of the important factors that seem abandoned in the context of local government administration in Nigeria. The seemingly failure of local government in the area of service delivery over the years has made people to loose faith in local government administration thereby posing a challenge on leadership and managerial skills to deliver the gains of governance to the people. There is no gainsaying that local government administration in Nigeria is faced with numerous challenges, which appear to require skills, knowledge and emotional intelligence. The emotional intelligence of a leader appears to significantly affect the organizational environment. Leaders should attempt to understand how each of their actions impact on the morale of their subordinates and their ability to produce superior performance.

STUDY OBJECTIVES

The central focus of this study therefore is to assess the effect of emotional intelligence among top and middle level management in the Directorate of local

government services and local government commission in Asaba Delta, Nigeria.

Specifically the study examined the influence of self awareness and social skills dimensions on EI leadership performance. The study also determined the impact of self regulation as well as managing emotions components of EI on leadership performance.

STATEMENT OF HYPOTHESES

In order to achieve the stated study objectives, this study is anchored on the following testable hypotheses:

HO₁ : There is no statistically positive relationship between self awareness and leadership performance in the context of local government administration in Delta State.

HO₂ : There is no statistically positive relationship between social skills and leadership performance

HO₃ : Self regulation has no significant positive relationship with leadership performance.

HO₄ : There is no significant positive relationship between managing emotions and leadership performance.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

Concept of Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence is a concept that is growing in popularity for its ability to enhance and capitalize on the human potential of an organization, seek to identify, assess and control emotions of oneself, of others and of groups. There are various definitions of what emotional intelligence is and what the concept actually encompasses. Goleman (1998) opined that emotional intelligence is about;

- knowing what you are feeling and being able to handle those feelings without having them swamp you.
- Being able to motivate yourself to get jobs done, being creative and performing at your peak
- Sensing what others are feeling, and handling relationships affectively.

Martinez (1997) Says Emotional Intelligence is “ an array of non-cognitive skills, capabilities and competencies that influence a person's ability to cope with environmental demands and pressures”. Emotional intelligence also includes the ability to perceive, appraise and express emotion accurately and adaptively; the ability to understand emotions and emotional knowledge; the ability to access and generate feelings where they facilitate cognitive activities and adaptive actions; and the ability to regulate emotions in oneself and others (Mayer et al, 2000). It can be concluded that feelings and emotions are intimately connected to the human experience and are intricately bound up in the ways that people think, behave and make decisions.

Self Awareness

Self awareness is a vital component of emotional intelligence that helps one to recognize and regulate his/her emotions, personal strengths and weakness. This means the ability to recognize and understand one's moods, emotions and drives as well as their impact on others in the work place. Self awareness means knowing one's internal states, preferences, resources and intuitions

It refers to an awareness of ourselves on many different levels; our body and our physical reactions; our emotional preferences and intentions; our goals and value; and our knowledge about how we come across to others. The more self-awareness we have the more easily we can adjust our responses to others and the more mutually satisfying our interactions and transactions. Turning into ourselves and becoming more aware of what we are experiencing as we are experiencing it improves emotional intelligence.

Self-Regulation and Emotional Intelligence

Self-regulation or Emotional management enables the individual to manage his own internal states, impulses and controls. Self regulation also involves self monitoring, which allows the individual to adjust his behaviour according to external situational factors. The element of self regulation includes aspects such as trustworthiness, self-control, conscientiousness; adaptability and innovation (Goleman, 1998).

Self regulation is mostly about being able to control your emotions and responses to situations and other people. It is also about feeling positive emotions to others.

Managing Emotions

Managing emotions necessitates figuring out effective strategies that use one's emotion to help in achieving intended goals and solving problems rather than being used by one's emotions (Alhashemi, 2006). There are some things one can start doing to improve self regulation. They include to:

- Become more aware of your emotion (self awareness) and how you react to them
- Take time out get away from a difficult situation for a short time and get some exercise, drink water or breathe deeply
- Make time to think about situations and your emotions
- Plant new thoughts: when you have identified emotions and reactions that are not useful, replace them with new ones that are more positive.

According to Low and Nelson (2003) as cited in Alhashemi, (2006) the EI has five steps which includes;

Step 1: (*Self-Assessment: Explore*) requires the development of an intentional self-assessment habit, this includes discovering as well questioning.

Step 2: (*Self-Awareness: Identify*) involves the process of identifying one's experience as either a thought or a feeling. Being aware of one's own feelings and inner thoughts and how such feelings would influence others and how others feel.

Step 3: (*Self-knowledge: Understand*) involves insight and an understanding that allows one to make choices about how to behave.

Step 4: (*Self-Development: Learn*) involves learning various ways to improve one's behaviour.

Step 5: (*Self-Improvement: Apply and Model*) requires the individual to apply and model an emotionally intelligence behavior to achieve personal career and academic goals.

Importance of Emotional Intelligence

Emotional Intelligence can lead to an increased moral amongst employees. An individual's emotional intelligence can be seen to dictate interpersonal relationships. In his findings, Cooper (1997) affirmed that emotions that are properly managed can, and do have successful outcomes. Carefully managed emotions can drive trust, loyalty and commitment as well as increase productivity, innovation and accomplishment in the individual, team and organizational sphere.

Several authors: Salovey and Shyter (1997) and Goleman (1998) suggest that emotional intelligence is essential for effective leadership. It is believed that even if one has the best training in the world as well as a "high intelligence" level without emotional intelligence, the person would still not make a good leader.

Studies show that emotional intelligence facilitates individual adaptation and change. Other research findings revealed that emotional intelligence is associated with effective outcomes such as greater optimism, less depression and less impulsivity.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical background used in this study is anchored on Salovey and Mayers Ability Model of Emotional Intelligence and Goleman's Emotional Intelligence Model. **The Ability Model of EI** was developed by Salovey and Mayers (1990). This model is conceptualized on the idea that emotions contain information about relationships which may be actual, remembered or imagined, but coexist with emotions, which imply felt signals of relationship status.

This model facilitates an ability to recognize the meanings of emotions and their relationships, and employ them to enhance cognitive activities. The ability model divides EI into the following four categories:

- (i) Perceiving emotions: entails the perceptual skills of self identification of emotion in

thoughts, identifying emotion in other people, accurate expression of emotions, and the ability to differentiate between accurate/real and inaccurate emotions.

- (ii) Using emotions: addresses their use in prioritizing and facilitating thinking by directing attention to important factors/invents, to generate emotions, assist judgments and facilitates decision making to utilize self-mood swings to change perspectives and to use different emotional states to promote various ways to problem solving
- (iii) Understanding Emotions: concerns the ability to understand complex emotions and emotional chains, the transaction of emotion through stages, the ability to understand relationships among emotions and interpret the meanings emotions convey.
- (iv) Managing Emotions: involves the ability to effectively monitor emotions, stay open to them and eager to detach from them. Ability to solve emotion based problem in a manner that enhances personal growth and social relations.

Coleman's Emotional Competence Model

Coleman (1996) model addresses the fusion of EI and the organization. He defines emotional competence as a learned capability based on EI that results in outstanding work performance. He aligns psychological and organizational management theory; it includes 25 competences that were grouped into 5 categories:

(i) Self Awareness, self regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills. In their findings, Goleman, Boyatzis and Mckee, (2002), presented a new version of his original model that is more organizationally aligned to provide a means of EI-based performance and specifically for leaders. The five main domains are further grouped into two: personal competence and social competence:

- Personal competence capabilities determines how we manage ourselves and is categorized into self awareness and self management.
- Social competence capabilities determine how we manage relationships and comprise: social awareness and relationship management .

The ability model of EI provides suitable medium for examining why leaders need EI which is germane to identifying, using understanding and managing emotions. It provides the platform which establishes that the ability for a leader to identify emotions and feelings within themselves also allows them to accurately identify the emotions of others, to express emotions accurately and to differentiate between honest and phoney emotional expressions.

The competency model is described as it includes multitude of traits, wide in scope and covers most

current theory on effectiveness and is an amalgam of many of the standard competence models used by human resources practitioners (Mandeviya, 2013). However the proponents EI(s) attribute both models to effective leadership. In this regard both models complement each other towards explaining why leaders need emotional intelligence and how they use EI.

A growing body of empirical support is building up for the case of emotions, intelligence and its positive relationship with leadership. Such that Cavallo & Brienza (2000) found a positive strong relationship between superior performing leaders and emotional competence which implies that EI is a distinguishing factor in effective leadership.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in the Directorate of Local Government Services and Local Government Commission in Asaba Delta State, Nigeria. The primary data were collected from 130 staff from two hierarchical levels. Stratified into top management and middle management levels. They were representations from six departments in Directorate of Local Government Services and fifteen departments from the Local Government Commission.

The research instrument was a 25-item validated structured questionnaire. All items were assessed on a five point likert scale to measure responses, with anchors ranging from 1 to 5 (with higher numbers indicating higher levels of agreement). Cronbach Alpha index was used for estimating the reliability of the questionnaire. Favourable reliable scores were obtained from all the items since all values were above the coefficient values of 0.06, exceeding the common threshold of Cronbach alpha value recommended by Malthra (2004). Out of the 130 sets of questionnaire administered, total number of 120 (92%) were retrieved and 10 were rejected. The major analytical tools used were correlation and multiple regression analysis.

RESULTS

Table 1: Correlation Matrix Among the Dimensions of E1 and Leadership Performance

	Self Awareness	Social Skill	Self Regulation	Managing Emotions	Leadership Performance
Self Awareness (SA)	1				
Social Skill (SS)	0.511**	1			
Self Regulation (SR)	0.621**	0.535*	1		
Managing Emotions (ME)	0.592**	0.601*	0.488**	1	
Leadership Performance (LP)	0.421**	0.502*	0.398**	0.444**	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The correlation analysis as shown in table 1 depicts the information on relationship among dimensions of emotional intelligence under study. It is reported that Self Awareness (SA) exhibited positive and significant correlation with social skill (SS) ($r = .511$, $P < .01$) Self Regulation (SR) ($r = .621$, $P < .01$), Managing Emotions (ME) ($r = 0.592$, $P < .01$) and leadership performance (LP) ($r = 0.421$, $P < .01$). Similarly social skill was positively significantly correlated with self regulation, managing emotions and leadership performance. Also self regulation (SR) displayed positive and significant positive relationship with managing emotions (ME) and leadership performance (LP) while managing emotions (ME) was positively and significantly correlated with leadership Performance (LP).

Table 2: Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis of Self Awareness, Social Skills, Self Regulations, Managing Emotions on Leadership Performance

Coefficients

Model	Unstandardize d Coefficients		Standardize d Coefficients		
	B	Std Error		T	Sig
1 constant	9.447	1.705		5.517	0.00
Self Awareness (SA)	.412	.103	.405	3.979	0.000
Social Skill (SS)	.389	.099	.401	3.938	0.002
Self Regulation (SR)	.374	.143	.311	2.272	0.029
Managing Emotions (ME)	.327	.148	.268	.291	0.031

Dependent Variable: Leadership Performance

Table 3: Model Summary

Model	R	R ²	R ² Adjusted	Standard Error of the Estimate
1	.407a	.171	.162	1.988

DISCUSSION

The study is focused on an assessment of the relationship between dimensions of emotional intelligence and leadership performance in the context of a local government administration in Delta State, Nigeria. The results of the correlation analysis involving all indicators of emotional intelligence exhibited an overwhelming positive correlation coefficient values among the variables. This is indicative that they are appropriate dimensions and measures of emotional intelligence. The results from the multiple Regression analysis (MRA) recorded the effects of items of emotional intelligence on leadership performance. The four constructs of emotional intelligence: self awareness ($\beta = .405$, $P < 0.01$), social skill ($\beta = .401$, $P < 0.01$), self regulation ($\beta = .311$, $P < 0.01$) and managing emotions ($\beta = .268$, $P < 0.01$) exhibited statistically significant positive effect on leadership performance and collectively

explained 16% of the change in leadership performance.

The result provided support for the H_{01} test result which indicated that there is statistically significant positive relationship between self awareness and leadership performance in the context of local government administration. This evidence is in agreement with findings of Goleman (1998), Rozell et al (2002) and Nilson and Cambell (1993). They emphasized that self awareness is important to psychological insight and self-understanding, that being self aware is the key to self control and freedom of action out of which can come empathy and genuine human connection. This implies that the more self awareness we have, the more easily we can adjust our responses to others and the more mutually satisfying our interactions and transactions that foster emotional intelligence which has a major influence on leadership performance.

Similarly, the findings indicate that social skill is found to have significant positive relationship with leadership performance ($\beta = .401$, $P < 0.01$). The findings provided support for the result of H_{02} which stated that there is a statistically significant positive relationship between social intelligence and leadership performance. This is in consonance with the views of Goleman (1995), that social skill relates to ability to handle the emotions of other people, strengthens communication skills and effective handling of interpersonal relationships. This implies that social skill through emotional intelligence will help to promote appropriate relational behaviour that will reinforce teamwork and leadership skill.

Furthermore, result of the regression analysis revealed that self-regulation has positive effect on leadership performance ($\beta = .311$, $P < 0.01$). This finding provides support for result of H_{03} test which indicated that self-regulation has statistically significant relationship with leadership performance. This is consistent with Sterrett (2006) findings, which emphasized that self-regulation involves self monitoring which enables the individual to control and re-direct his emotions towards adapting his behaviour to environmental imperatives. This implies that self regulation fosters emotional management and control of impulses especially destructive emotions which has important influence on leadership performance.

In the same vein, managing emotions is found to have positive effect on leadership performance ($\beta = .291$, $P < 0.01$). This findings provide support for the result of H_{04} . This is in agreement with the findings of cooper (1997) which highlighted that carefully managed emotions have successful outcomes which can drive trust, loyalty and commitment of employees. This suggests that managing emotions

through emotional intelligence is a critical element for leadership success.

CONCLUSION

Managing emotions allow leaders alleviate the effects of negative events, provide redirection and focus towards more positive events and moods. Based on the analysis and discussion, the four constructs of emotional intelligence individually and collectively exhibited positive effects on leadership performance.

Specifically, self awareness dimension of EI is important to psychological insight and self-understanding, which is key to self control that can elicit empathy towards adjusting responses to others. Thereby fostering EI which has major influence on leadership performance.

In the same vein, social skills through emotional intelligence which result to effective handling of interpersonal relationship, help to promote appropriate relational behavior that enhance teamwork and leadership performance

Self-regulation through emotional intelligence which involves self monitoring fosters emotional management and control of impulses which has important influence on leadership performance in local government administration.

Managing emotions through EI is found to be a critical element to leadership performance, this implies that carefully managed emotions are associated with successful outcomes which can drive employees loyalty and dedicated commitment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Separate measures of EI are developed and validated in this study. In the context of Local government administration, there should be concerted efforts to determine which dimensions of EI based leadership are appropriate in addressing leadership and managerial skills challenges towards delivering the gains of good governance to the people.

There seems to be a major shift in leadership skills required of today's administrators. In this regard, effective leadership at local government level requires training and retraining of particularly top and middle level management on EI skills in order to inculcate the need to understand ones moods, emotions and drives and their impact on better employees morale in the work place.

Towards better service delivery at the local government level, there should be increase awareness on self-regulations and managing emotions which may enhance emotional management system, that can lead to an increased morale amongst employees for improved performance.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

This study has several limitations that can be addressed in further research. Data used were collected from few sample objects in the Directorate of Local Government Services and Local Government Commission in Asaba Delta State, Nigeria. Thus, the findings may not be generalized to the larger population of 774 local government administration in the entire Nigeria. Therefore, future research would need to involve a larger sample size by extending the research to other states in Nigeria.

Also, further research may attempt to explore the potential of emotional intelligence in other sectors of the economy. This is because there seems to be increasing awareness among many organizations, management practitioners and researchers that EI skills are critical to fostering the qualities that are instrumental to guiding an organization to success.

This research is a cross sectional study, but to study the causal paths of the variables a longitudinal study would have been more appropriate. Thus further research may require a longitudinal research design technique in order to avoid limitations of examining sample objects by taking a snap shot of a situation and analyzing it. The use of longitudinal design will help in generating data from different sample objects at different points in time for the analysis.

The overall influence of only four dimensions of EI – self awareness, self regulation, social skill and managing emotions – were employed in this study. Further research would be needed to explore other dimensions of EI towards developing a consolidated view in this area.

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