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Emotional Intelligence and Leadership Success of Secondary School Principals in Rivers State, Nigeria

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Ekeh, P. U. - Department of Educational Psychology, Guidance & Counselling, University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State

GSM: +2348033401358

E-mail: ndukwuekeh@yahoo.com

Oladayo, O. T. Department of Educational Psychology, Guidance & Counselling, University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State

GSM: +2348054034416)

E-mail: olaoguno@yahoo.com

Abstract

This is an ex post facto research designed to determine the influence of emotional intelligence on leadership success of secondary school principals in Rivers State of Nigeria. The population consisted 441 principals (243 in public and 198 in private) secondary schools in Rivers State. A sample of 208 principals drawn through simple random sampling technique (balloting) was used. Three research questions and three null hypotheses guided the study. The instruments used for data collection were Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS) with a Cronbach alpha reliability co-efficient score of 0.89 by Schutte, Malouff, Simunek, McKenley, Hollander, Bobik, Coston, Greeson, Jedlicka, Rhodes, Wendorf, (2001) and Leadership Success Scale (LSS)

adapted from the Development Dimensions International DDI (2009) and Bryan (2005) respectively with a reliability co-efficient score of 0.83. Data of the study were analyzed using Mean (x), Standard Deviation (SD) and t-test. Results got after data analysis indicated that principals of high emotional intelligence demonstrated greater leadership success than their counterpart of low emotional intelligence. While gender was found to be a significant factor of leadership success among principals of high emotional intelligence, age was not found to be a significant factor. It was also found that gender and age were not significance factors of leadership success among principals of low emotional intelligence. Based on these results, recommendations were made including that there should be pre-service assessment of teachers on emotional intelligence and that principals on the job should be given emotional intelligence training to enhance leadership success.

Introduction

Emotion is a psychological construct; the exact and precise meaning of which psychologists have argued about over the years and are yet to come to terms with. In effects, it has been variously perceived and defined. Goleman (1995) defined the term emotion as “any agitation or disturbance of mind, feeling, and passion, any vehement or excited mental state”. On the basis of this definition, the author concluded that emotion is “a feeling and its distinctive thoughts, psychological and biological states, and range of propensities to act”. Gasby and Rundell in Goleman (1998) defined emotion as “a strong human feeling such as love, hate and anger”. There are other forms of emotion like sadness, fear, enjoyment, surprise, shame, remorse, joy, happiness, disgust, etc (Goleman, 1995).

These emotions receive expression as one interacts with his/her environment, especially with other human beings at home, workplace, in school or other social settings. When emotions are aroused, the individual is either in a disturbed or excited mental state with accompanying distinctive thoughts and feelings. To achieve a stable emotional disposition, these emotions have to be recognized, managed and be brought under control to enhance social interaction. This whole idea about man being aware of his/her emotions and managing them properly for effective human interaction revolves around the concept of Emotional Intelligence.

Emotional intelligence as defined by Colman (2003) is ability to monitor one’s own and other people’s emotions, to discriminate between different

emotions and label them appropriately, and to use emotional information to guide thinking and behaviour. Emotional Intelligence as defined by Salovey and Mayer (2000) means “the awareness of an ability to manage one’s own emotion as well as the emotions of others”. Salovey and Mayer in Colman (2003) identified and specified four different groups of competencies that Emotional Intelligence encompasses. These include: ability to perceive, appraise and express emotions accurately; the ability to access and evoke emotions when they facilitate cognition; the ability to comprehend emotional messages and to make use of emotional information; and the ability to regulate one’s own emotions to promote growth and well-being.

A close look at the above components of emotional intelligence reveals that it is an indispensable tool for effective management of human interaction and promotion of the psychological wellbeing of the people or individuals who engage in certain relationships for the purpose of achieving some desired goals.

In providing leadership, the scenario presented above emerges; as it is the duty of the leader to galvanize the available human and material resources to ensure that goals and aspiration of an organization/institution are actualized. In describing an effective leader, Marzano (2003) highlighted three components, including functioning as a strong cohesive force; providing strong guidance while demonstrating respect and demonstrating behaviours that enhance interpersonal relationships. The above three principles of effective leadership revolve around emotions and their management. Thus, emotional leadership means being aware of how one and others feel and what to do about it; knowing what feels good, what feels bad, and how to get from bad to good; to maintain a high degree of self-motivation to motivate others to continuously be in control of one’s emotion and be able to effectively manage emotions (Damon, 2008).

In secondary schools (as in Nigeria), principals are expected to possess and demonstrate these important qualities of effective leaders, one of which is that they should be emotionally intelligent. Thus, from the definitions of emotional intelligence above, an emotionally intelligent principal is one who is aware, understands and manages his own emotions and those of others in order to achieve healthy interpersonal relationship with the school staff and students. A situation such as this will positively influence the attainment of institutional goals as people are happier and more committed to work together.

However, experience has shown that frictions do exist at times in schools between principals, staff and students; hindering healthy interpersonal relationships and co-operation among staff towards attainment of the goals of the institution. Could one of the reasons be principals' lack of awareness of their emotions in relation to others or their inability to manage their emotions and those of others? It is also logical to note here that people (in this case principals) may not be equally emotionally intelligent. Could it also be that the extent to which a principal succeeds as a leader is dependent upon the extent to which he is emotionally intelligent? The main question in this study therefore is: what is the influence of emotional intelligence (high/low) on leadership success of secondary school principals? The need to provide answers to the above questions, led to the conduct of this research.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study therefore, was to determine the influence of emotional intelligence (high/low) on leadership success of principals. In specific terms, the study sought to:

1. Determine the influence of high emotional intelligence (EI) on leadership success of male and female principals.
2. Ascertain the extent to which high emotional intelligence (EI) influences leadership success of old and young principals.
3. Ascertain how low emotional intelligence (EI) influences leadership success of male and female principals.
4. Determine the influence of low emotional intelligence (EI) on leadership success of old and young principals.

Research questions

The understated research questions directed the conduct of this research.

1. What is the influence of emotional intelligence (high and low) on leadership success of secondary school principals?
2. How does high emotional intelligence influence leadership success of principals due to their gender and age?
3. What influences has low emotional intelligence on leadership success of principals due to their gender and age?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 alpha levels.

1. Principals of high and low emotional intelligence (EI) do not differ significantly in leadership success.
2. There is no significant influence of high emotional intelligence on leadership success of principals due to their gender and age.
3. There is no significant influence of low emotional intelligence on leadership success of principals due to their gender and age.

Method

The researchers adopted the *ex post facto* research design in conducting this study; with the aim of determining the influence of emotional intelligence on leadership success of secondary school principals. Three (3) research questions were postulated and answered, while three (3) null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

The target population for the study was all the 441 principals (243 in public and 198 in private) secondary schools in Rivers State of Nigeria. However, a sample of 208 principals made up of 124 males and 84 females on one hand and 132 old (46 to 60 years) and 76 young (30 to 45 years old) principals on the other hand, was used in this study. This sample was drawn from 208 secondary schools (110 public and 98 private), using simple random sampling technique via balloting.

Two research instruments were used for data collection. The first is a 33 items emotional intelligence scale by Schutte, Malouff, Simunek, McKenley, Hollander, Bobik, Coston, Greeson, Jedlicka, Rhodes, Wendorf (2001) and the other is Leadership Success Scale (LSS), adapted from Development Dimensions International DDI (2009), and Bryan (2005). They are both five point likert type instruments with the following response options – Strongly agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree and Strongly disagree. These response options were weighted 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively.

The EIS is a standardized instrument, already validated, with a reliability coefficient of 0.89. The Emotional Intelligence Scale was used to classify the subjects into high/low emotional intelligence groups. The lowest score to make was 33, while the highest score was 165. However, a mid-point score of 99 was adopted as the criterion for subjects' classification. Therefore, any subject who scored 99 and above on the Emotional Intelligence Scale was

classified high in emotional intelligence. The reverse was the case for subjects who scored less than 99. The Leadership Success Scale was used to assess levels of leadership success among principals. It was validated by experts in test construction and educational psychology. It had reliability coefficient of 0.83 when the Cronbach alpha technique was applied in reliability testing. The researchers with the help of two research assistants, administered copies of the two research instruments on the subjects. Data collected with the Leadership Success Scale were analyzed with mean (\bar{x}), standard deviation (SD), and t-test.

Results

After data analysis, the results, as presented in the tables below were got. These were based on the research questions and hypotheses.

Research question 1: *What is the influence of emotional intelligence (high and low) on leadership success of secondary school principals?*

Data of Table I showed that principals of high emotional intelligence (EI) obtained leadership success mean (\bar{x}) and standard deviation (SD) scores of 108.58 and 11.86 respectively; while their counterparts of low emotional intelligence (EI) obtained mean (\bar{x}) and standard deviation (SD) scores of 86.66 and 4.10 respectively on leadership success. This result indicated that principals of high emotional intelligence (EI) demonstrated greater leadership success than their counterparts of low emotional intelligence.

Research question 2: *How does high emotional intelligence influence leadership success of principals due to their gender and age?*

Information in Table 2 showed that male principals of high emotional intelligence (EI) had mean (\bar{x}) and standard deviation (SD) scores of 104.38 and 10.26 respectively on leadership success, while their female counterparts got leadership success mean (\bar{x}) and standard deviation (SD) scores of 112.77 and 13.45 respectively. This result shows that female principals of high emotional intelligence (EI) are higher in leadership success, compared to their male counterparts. On the other hand, further information in Table 2 showed that old principals of high emotional intelligence earned leadership success mean (\bar{x}) and standard deviation (SD) scores of 108.93 and 12.25 respectively; and their counterparts, young principals of high emotional intelligence obtained 108.22 and 9.71 as mean (\bar{x}) and standard deviation (SD) scores respectively in leadership success. This result indicated greater

influence of high emotional intelligence on leadership success among old principals than the young principals.

Research Question 3: *What influences has low emotional intelligence on leadership success of principals due to their gender and age?*

Data of Table 3 showed that male principals of low emotional intelligence (EI) obtained leadership success mean (\bar{x}) and standard deviation (SD) scores of 86.42 and 4.62 respectively. Their female counterparts of low emotional intelligence had 86.89 and 3.58 as mean (\bar{x}) and standard deviation (SD) scores respectively, on leadership success. By this result, female principals of low emotional intelligence demonstrated greater leadership success than the males of low emotional intelligence. Information in Table 3 also indicated that old principals of low emotional intelligence obtained mean (\bar{x}) and standard deviation (SD) leadership success scores of 86.92 and 4.53 respectively. Their counterparts (young principals) got leadership success mean (\bar{x}) and standard deviation (SD) scores of 86.39 and 3.77 respectively. This result shows that the old principals of low emotional intelligence demonstrated greater leadership success than their counterparts (young principals of low emotional intelligence).

H1: *Principals with high and low emotional intelligence do not differ significantly in leadership success.*

In Table 4 the t-calculated value of 20.04 at 0.05 alpha level and df of 206 is greater than the t- critical value of 1.96. The null hypothesis one was therefore rejected. This implied that there is significant difference in the leadership success of principals of high and low emotional intelligence in favour of those of high emotional intelligence.

H2: *There is no significant influence of high emotional intelligence on leadership success of principals due to their gender and age.*

Result of Table 5 showed that the t-test analysis of influence of high emotional intelligence on leadership success of male and female principals gave a t-calculated value of 3.97 which is greater than the critical t-value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance and df of 141. The null hypothesis two in respect of influence of high emotional intelligence on leadership success of principals due to gender is rejected. This implied that there is significance influence of high emotional intelligence on leadership success of male and female principals, in favour of the females. Further observation of Table 5

indicated that the t- test analysis of influence of high emotional intelligence on leadership success of old and young principals produced a t-calculated value of 0.38 which is lower than the t-critical value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance and df of 141. The null hypothesis two in respect of influence of high emotional intelligence on leadership success of principals due to age is accepted. This implied that there is no significance influence of high emotional intelligence on leadership success of old and young principals.

H3: *There is no significant influence of low emotional intelligence on leadership success of principals due to their gender and age.*

Table 6 showed that the t-test analysis of influence of low emotional intelligence on leadership success of male and female principals gave a t-calculated value of 0.45 which is lower than the t-critical value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance and df of 63. The null hypothesis three in respect of influence of low emotional intelligence on leadership success of principals due gender is therefore accepted. This implied that there is no significance influence of low emotional intelligence on leadership success of male and female principals. In the same vein, t-test analysis of influence of low emotional intelligence on leadership success of old and young principals produced a t-calculated value of 0.51 which is lower than the t-critical value of 1.96 at 0.05 alpha level and df of 63. The null hypothesis three in respect of influence of low emotional intelligence on leadership success of principals due to age is therefore accepted. This implied that there is no significant influence of low emotional intelligence on leadership success of old and young principals.

Discussion

Influence of emotional intelligence on leadership success of secondary school principals was investigated in this study. Findings indicated that high emotionally intelligent principals demonstrated greater leadership success than their counterparts who are low in emotional intelligence (see Table I). The t-test analysis of this result also showed significant difference in leadership success of high and low emotionally intelligent principals in favour of those of high emotional intelligence. By this result, one can conclude that high emotional intelligence had greater (positive) influence on leadership success than did low emotional intelligence. Consequently, principals of high emotional intelligence have been portrayed by the findings of this study as better and more successful leaders in their schools, compared to those of low emotional intelligence. This result corroborates with the

findings of researchers such as Mills, (2009), Moore, (2009) and Sala, (2003) which portrayed high emotional intelligence as a tool that is positively associated with effective leadership. Marzano, (2003), seem to support this view when he highlighted principals' effective leadership qualities to include, principals functioning as strong cohesive force, providing guidance while demonstrating respect and being characterized by specific behaviours which enhance interpersonal relationships. Ket de Vries (2004) on a general note opined that emotionally intelligent leaders make better team players and are more effective at motivating themselves and others. The above qualities put together could have accounted for the greater leadership success demonstrated by high emotionally intelligent principals in this study.

Significant difference was found in the leadership success of high emotionally intelligent male and female principals, in favour of the females. Specifically, female principals of high emotional intelligence demonstrated greater leadership success, compared to their male counterparts. This could be because as Bush (1995) puts it, women generally have an ethical and caring approach to the leading-managing process; compared to men. Again, Fatt in Dimitriades (2007) also described women as being more aware of their emotions, show more empathy and are more proficient in interpersonal relationships.

In the case of old and young principals of high emotional intelligence, no significant difference in leadership success was found. This means that old and young principals of high emotional intelligence obtained similar leadership success scores and thus demonstrated similar levels of leadership success. In effect, being old or young did not make principals of high emotional intelligence differ in the extent to which they are succeeding as leaders. Age therefore, is not a significant moderator variable of leadership success among principals of high emotional intelligence. Reason for the observed poor moderation of age with high emotional intelligence to determine leadership success was not investigated in this study. This result therefore indicated that the major determining factor of leadership success in this case is the high emotional intelligence status of the subjects, not their age. This situation has been widely corroborated and supported by researchers and scholars like Goleman (1998) and Richards (2007), who have devoted time to emotional intelligence and leadership studies.

In the same vein, no differential significant influence of low emotional intelligence on leadership success was found among male and female, old

and young principals. This means that being male or female, old or young principals of low emotional intelligence did not make the principals differ in the extent to which they are succeeding as leaders. Gender and age in this case are not significant moderator variables of leadership success among principals of low emotional intelligence. This present study again did not directly investigate the reasons for the observed poor moderation of gender and age with low emotional intelligence in determining leadership success of principals. The findings again indicated that the major determining factor of extent of leadership success among principals in this case is their low emotional intelligence status, not their gender or age.

Conclusion

From the findings of this study, it was concluded that:

- Principals of high emotional intelligence demonstrated greater leadership success than their counterpart of low emotional intelligence.
- Significance influence of high emotional intelligence was found in the leadership success of male and female principals in favour of the females.
- No significance influence of high emotional intelligence was found in the leadership success of old and young principals.
- No significance influence of low emotional intelligence was found in the leadership success of male and female, as well as old and young principals.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

- Pre-service school teachers should be assessed for emotional intelligence and their subsequent employment package should include training for further development of these skills.
- Practicing principals should be encouraged to apply emotional intelligence skills to assess and manage their own emotional responses as well as those of other school staff with whom they engage in collaborative efforts for the smooth running of their institutions.

- Government should make provision for regular in-service professional development programmes for practicing principals on how to effectively apply emotional intelligence for collaborative efforts in schools.

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