

The Impact of Trait Emotional Intelligence and Regulation of Emotions for Educational Leaders when Dealing with Emotionally Charged Adults

B.P. Finnigan
University of South Alabama

W. Maulding-Green
University of South Alabama

The purpose of this study was to identify the desired emotional intelligent traits successful educational leaders possess, how they regulate their emotions, and the strategies they use when interacting with emotionally charged adults. The results of this two-group study (practicing and aspiring school administrators) revealed higher emotional intelligence scores in the factors of self-control and sociability for the practicing group. The aspiring group scored low, as compared to practicing principals, in the facets of assertiveness, emotion regulation, and social awareness. Similarly, a subset of principals with greater than 10 years' experience scored higher in self-control and sociability as compared to the aspiring group.

Key Terms: Ability EI, Emotional intelligence, MSCEIT®, Trait EI, and TEIQue®

**Education Leadership Review of Doctoral Research, Vol. 6. Fall/Winter 2018
ISSN: 1532-0723**

**© 2018 International Council of Professors of Educational Administration.
This manuscript may not be used commercially or edited. When quoting portions of
this text, full attribution to the author/s is required.**

Everyone has emotions; how leaders manage those emotions help to determine a leader's effectiveness. School administrators have daily encounters with parents most of which are routine, however, some meetings can be emotional and stressful. A leader will meet people "with different levels of ability in handling their emotions" (Wong, 2016, p. 12). Petrides (2009b) noted, "individuals differ in the extent to which they attend to, process, and utilize affect-laden information of an intrapersonal or interpersonal nature" (p. 10). How an administrator defuses an emotionally charged situation can result in a positive or negative outcome for all parties involved. Administrators need a strategy on how to best handle their emotions and the emotions of others, especially when dealing with adults who have become emotionally charged.

This study is important to leaders and educators who interact with people. A loss of emotional control can be detrimental to a leader's or educator's relationships, whether with a student, teacher, or parent. A leader's emotions can have a positive or negative influence on others. When a leader is faced with an emotionally challenging situation they must remain in control of their emotions. Leaders are always in the spotlight and must remember they present an emotional model for others to follow. Leaders can have a profound influence on others. If an educator's actions are impulsive in nature, then the results of their actions may be disastrous. At times, educators face emotionally charged adults, and must have the skills to manage the emotions of others, and effectively calm or console those adults. For these reasons, the study of trait emotional intelligence and the regulation of emotions for educational leaders provides much-needed skills for aspiring and practicing educational administrators.

Do these skills needed to respond to emotional confrontations come naturally or can they be taught? Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee (2002) found that "emotional intelligent competencies are not innate talents, but learned abilities, each of which has a unique contribution to making leaders more resonant, and therefore more effective" (p. 38). Furthermore, Roy (2015) noted, "many scholars (Goleman, 1998a; Nelis, Kotsou, Quidbach, Hansenne, Weytens, Dupuis, & Mikolajczak, 2011) argue that training can improve the development of trait EI skills in leaders and educators and that these improvements are sustainable over time" (p. 312). Training may be equated to learning through life experiences (Bariso, 2018; Wong, 2016).

Trait emotional intelligence (trait EI) is the measure of a person's *ability* to understand and to manage his or her own emotions, as well as the emotions of others when interacting with them, and adjusting his or her behavior accordingly (Goleman, et al., 2002). Because trait EI skills can be learned, future and current leaders can acquire emotional competencies to become successful administrators. With this as the case, it would then seem logical that emotional intelligence competencies would serve the student/aspiring administrator well as part of a leadership curriculum (Petrides, Mikolajczak, Mavroveli, Sánchez-Ruiz, Furnham, & Pérez-González, 2016).

Any practicing administrator faced with an emotionally charged adult will immediately experience their stress level rise. How an administrator handles their emotions and the emotions of others is important in an emotionally charged interaction. The researcher chose the factors *self-control* and *sociability* to examine in aspiring and practicing administrators. The accompanying facets of emotion regulation, impulsiveness, stress management, emotion management of others, assertiveness, and social awareness can have a profound affect when dealing with an emotionally charged interaction. The factors emotionality and well-being also have important facets and skill sets, but the researcher chose, as a matter of personal benefit, to narrow the study to just the two factors self-control and sociability (Merino-Tejedor, Hontangas, & Petrides, 2018; Mortiboys, 2012; Petrides, 2009a, 2009b, 2017; Roy, 2016, Wong, 2016).

The researcher investigated the trait EI attributes of practicing school administrators of several schools. Petrides (2009b) identified two trait emotional intelligent factors which deal with intrapersonal and interpersonal emotions: *self-control* and *sociability*. Exhibiting the factor of self-control includes the ability to excel at regulating emotions, managing stress and controlling impulses. Those leaders who demonstrate the sociability factor are good listeners, strong communicators, and can deal with all types of personalities. Leaders high in the sociability factor are assertive with people, socially aware and can manage the emotions of others. The researcher investigated whether the selected practicing school administrators had these traits.

Problem Statement

School administrators encounter many personalities throughout the school day. Some of those encounters are with adults that are unhappy, frustrated, or confrontational. Leadership skills and emotional intelligence (EI) competencies are critical to the success of educational administrators especially when dealing with unhappy or frustrated adults. Principals must examine data, read reports, observe staff, and encounter parents daily, all the while directing their school towards success (Costanza & Hanrahan, 2001). Moreover, administrators face many stressful issues each day, and addressing emotionally charged adults is a huge part of that. Schultz (2007) maintains, “a principal’s skill in the area of human relations, decision-making, control of subordinates and conflict resolution are indicators of leadership traits and behaviors” (p. 3). Practicing principals may have a bad day and be susceptible to losing their temper, yet they must keep their emotions in check as not to affect those surrounding them. Moreover, leaders must monitor their own health, such as their eating and sleep habits, as not to affect their overall disposition (Roy, 2016). Goleman, et al. (2002) wrote, “great leadership works through the emotions” (p. 1). The researcher investigated desirable emotional intelligent competencies needed for the educational leader. Furthermore, the study analyzed the strategies and skills administrators utilize when dealing with emotionally charged adults in a professional and timely manner. The aim of the researcher was to determine whether there are trait EI score differences between aspiring and practicing administrators. Additionally, the study was focused on identify critical strategies and skills, used by practicing principals, through the use of the TEIQue® questionnaire, a Situational Judgement Test (SJT), and open-ended questioning. Once identified these skills and strategies can be passed onto aspiring administrators to shorten the learning curve which novice administrators experience. The EI skills a leader possesses affects everyone with whom they interact (Bariso, 2018; Roy, 2015). These are the skills that enable leaders to manage their emotions as well as the emotions of others.

Research Questions

Research Question One

Are there differences between *self-control* and *sociability* scores of experienced administrators and educational leadership students?

Research Question Two

Are there differences between *self-control* and *sociability* scores of administrators and years of

experience in the role?

Review of Related Literature

Theoretical Framework

The origins of and support for emotional intelligence have roots in the social intelligences. Thorndike in the 1920's defined social intelligence as "the ability to understand and manage men and women, boys and girls, and to act wisely in human relations." Gardner, nearly half a decade later (1983), in his highly acclaimed work, *Frames of Mind*, further developed the ideas of social intelligence as introduced by Thorndike to include both the interpersonal intelligence and intrapersonal intelligences. These intelligences include the ability to recognize and understand other's motivations, moods, and emotions; and to recognize those same characteristics in oneself. These two intelligences, as identified by Gardner were the basis for emotional intelligence as we know it today. Defined in 1990 by Salovey and Meyer 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" and popularized in 1995 by Dan Goleman, emotional intelligence utilized by leaders has been identified as a driver for significant bottom line results (Freedman, 2006). The notion that this ability in a leader can undergird success for the school leader when dealing with adults in the school building is the premise of this research study.

Emotional Intelligence

Most people are familiar with Intelligence Quotient (IQ), "the index of human intelligence as measured by a test score" (Sternberg, 1994, p. 591). At an early age, students take tests to measure IQ. Based on the results, they are placed into curriculum programs that reflect their IQ. But unlike IQ, which deals with mental cognition, EI deals with human emotions. Bradberry and Greaves (2009) argue that EI and IQ are not related, and that IQ is set at birth, based on genetic make-up. Sternberg (1994) notes, "IQ is a substantially heritable trait, but dissimilar from nonintellectual personality traits" (p. 438). Sternberg (1988) wrote "there is overwhelming evidence that suggests that intelligence is *in part* genetically determined" (p. 75). Furthermore, genetics sets a limit on an individual's intelligence, "the standard 50 percent figure for heritability of intelligence does not imply anything at all about how much intelligence can be increased" (p.75). Sternberg (1988) asserts that heritability can be affected by time, location, and environmental surroundings. Moreover, intelligence can improve. Intellectual improvements can be made through cognitive stimulation and training.

Though IQ is important in a leadership position, it is a baseline indicator of success (Goleman, 1995). It is the control and mastery of one's emotions that propel a person to success (Boyatzis, Goleman, & Rhee, 2000; Bradberry & Greaves, 2009; Goleman, 1995, 1998b, 2005; Petrides, 2010, 2011; Roy, 2015; Wong, 2016).

Skills Associated with Emotional Intelligence

Bradberry and Greaves (2009), Goleman, et al. (2002), and Salovey and Mayer (1990) indicate that EI is made up of five components: self-awareness, personal motivation, social-awareness, empathy, and relationship management. These components are categorized into two

competencies: personal and social.

Personal competencies are comprised of self-awareness, personal motivation, and self-management traits. A person with personal competency can recognize his or her emotions and can manage the resultant expression of those emotions (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009). Social competence is comprised of social-awareness and relationship management. Bradberry and Greaves define social competence as “your ability to understand other people’s moods, behavior and motives in order to improve the quality of your relationship” (p. 24). Moreover, social competence skills address interactions between people, whereas personal competence focuses on the individual.

Ability Emotional Intelligence versus Trait Emotional Intelligence

Ability EI “refers to one’s actual ability to recognize, process, and utilize emotion-laden information, which pertains to personality” (Wong, 2016, p. 257). Roy (2015), Petrides (2011), Petrides and Furnham (2003) note that ability EI measures EI through the cognitive intelligences of: accurately perceiving emotions, using emotions to guide thinking, understanding emotional meaning, and managing emotions. The measurement of ability EI is through the use of maximum performance tests, which are scored by correct and incorrect answers, developed by emotions experts (Mayer, et al., 2003; Petrides, 2009b). The most common ability EI measurement tool is the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT®). However, Roberts, Schulze, O’Brien, MacCann, Reid, and Maul (2006) report that the MSCEIT’s® “validity of certain EI components, as currently assessed, appears equivocal” (p. 663). Furthermore, Wong (2016) refutes test items in the MSCEIT®, which may not be cross-culturally valid.

Contrariwise, trait EI is the measurement of personality traits as they relate to emotions. Trait EI is emotion-related dispositions and self-perceptions as they pertain to emotional experiences (Petrides, 2009a; Petrides, 2009b; Petrides & Furnham, 2001; Petrides, Furnham, & Frederickson, 2004). Trait EI measures EI through the subjectivity of self-report questionnaires such as the TEIQue® where there are no correct or incorrect answers. Likewise, several studies (Gardner & Qualter, 2010; Mikolajczak, Luminet, Leroy, & Roy, 2007; Petrides, 2009a, 2009b) acknowledge the use of trait EI measurement (TEIQue®) as a reliable and valid assessment of emotional intelligence.

Petrides (2011) and Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso (2008) assert that it is the understanding of one’s emotions that dictates how to regulate one’s own life. Trait EI is the perception of emotions through the measurement tool of self-report. To determine the emotional state and personality traits of leaders, the selection of trait EI and its measurement tool (TEIQue®) were utilized for this study.

Trait Emotional Intelligence

Trait Emotional Intelligence theory was developed by Dr. K.V. Petrides in 2001. Petrides (2010) defines trait EI “as a constellation of emotional self-perceptions located at the lower levels of personality hierarchies” (p. 137). Operationally, trait EI is made up of the sampling domain of 15 facets, four factors and global trait EI. The 15 facets of the trait EI theory are as follows: *Adaptability, Assertiveness, Emotion expression, Emotion perception, Emotion regulation, Low impulsiveness, Relationships, Self-esteem, Self-motivation, Social-awareness, Stress management, Trait empathy, Trait happiness, and Trait optimism*. The 15 facets are grouped into the following

four factors and their definitions: *Emotionality, Self-control, Sociability, and Well-being.*

There are two facets that are not included in the four factors: *Adaptability and Self-Motivation.* Though not included, these auxiliary facets are important in calculating global trait EI scores (Petrides, 2009b). The 15 facets combined into the four factors combine to make-up *Global trait EI.*

Petrides (2011) believes that there is not one set of trait EI skills that automatically label a person to be successful. Trait EI theory asserts that during an emotional situation, certain emotional profiles may be more favorable over other profiles. Moreover, Petrides (2010) believes there is not an exemplary EI model which people should imitate to guarantee success. There is “no magic profile of the ‘emotionally intelligent’ individual who will excel in all aspects of worklife [*sic*] exists” (p. 138). Furthermore, Roy (2015) notes an on-going battle between the cognitive mind and the emotional heart. When the emotional heart takes over, behavior could become irrational, resulting in poor decisions. Emotions are a key component of human relationships. The balance of emotions with the cognitive mind is at the heart of the study of emotional intelligence. As humans, our need for balanced relationships causes us to evaluate our own emotions and recognize and understand the emotions of others to achieve this goal. For this reason, trait EI is the measurement of our ability to recognize and manage our own emotions as well as others’ and modify our behavior as needed.

Scholarly literature supports utilizing trait EI and identifies trait EI as critical in effective leadership (Dulewicz, Young, & Dulewicz, 2005; Emmerling & Goleman, 2003; Goleman, 1998b; Goleman, 2005; Goleman, et al., 2002; Johnson, Aiken, & Steggerda, 2005; Rajah, Song, & Arvy, 2011; Rao, 2006; Roy, 2015; Stichler, 2007).

Emotions and the Emotional Adult

Of the many challenges a school administrator faces, dealing with emotionally charged adults can be the most exhausting. Whitaker and Fiore (2001) note when meeting with a difficult parent, administrators should never argue, yell, be sarcastic or unprofessional. The leader must keep his/her composure and remain the professional, “you never argue with difficult people. Not only because you cannot win because they have a lot more practice arguing than you do” (p. 8). The most important reason for not arguing is that we are examples to children and in some cases, parents. Whitaker and Fiore declare that no one wants to engage with people who are confrontational, obnoxious, rude, disrespectful, indignant, or argumentative. Even the most successful educational leaders dread interacting with these people. When encountering a confrontational adult, an administrator must remember not to take the emotional situation personally. The issue at hand may not be the reason the person is upset. Ingram and Cangemi (2012) wrote that emotions are the result of an action and the way a leader responds to these emotions can be the difference between becoming overwhelmed by them or using them to their benefit.

Patterson, Grenny, McMillan, and Switzler (2012) believe that to establish a dialogue, the leader must create a safe environment for the emotional person to express their feelings. The emotional person may be reluctant to enter a dialogue due to the perception of vulnerability. Creating a safe environment may lead the emotional adult into a dialogue. A safe environment consists of one free of verbal attacks and a concerted effort by both parties to address the issue. Once in a dialogue, Patterson et al. assert the leader to monitor the dialogue and determine when the safe environment is at risk:

You should step out of the conversation and restore it. When you have offended others through a thoughtless act, apologize. Or if someone has misunderstood your intent, use contrasting. Explain what you do and don't intend. Finally, if you're simply at odds, find a Mutual Purpose. (p. 156)

This will allow the emotional adult to feel safe to share his or her feelings in meaningful dialogue.

Patterson et al. (2012) contend leaders must be sincere, curious, remain curious, and most importantly exhibit patience when engaging an emotional adult in a confrontational conversation. To be sincere, the leader must show interest, and be willing to listen. Instead of mimicking the emotional adult's behavior, the leader must be curious about what has caused the emotional behavior. The leader must get at the source of the fear and irritation the emotional adult is expressing. Patterson et al. (2012) remark "Look for chances to turn on your curiosity rather than kick-start your adrenaline" (p. 158). Moreover, the leader must stay curious to avoid attaching negative meaning to the emotional adult's story. The leader must discover what circumstance has caused the emotional behavior. The leader's goal is to understand the adult's reasoning, not necessarily agree or support their reasoning. Lastly, the leader must be patient with the emotional adult. They too have had a release of adrenaline as a result of their emotional behavior. Patterson et al. note that although people can move from one thought to the next, strong emotions may remain, and take some time to relent. It will take time for the adult to regain control over their emotions. The emotionally intelligent administrator must be sure to give adequate time to an angry or upset adult.

Whitaker and Fiore (2001) emphasize that educators must show appropriate ways of interacting with people and act as an example of appropriate behavior. Getting into arguments with difficult adults reinforces their poor behavior. Patterson et al. (2012) assert, when an adult becomes disrespectful, during a heated discussion, the leader must immediately address the behavior before continuing with the discussion. Otherwise, the behavior will be perceived as being acceptable, and could undermine the leader's authority. Moreover, if leaders end up displaying poor behavior the focus of the argument is lost.

Bradberry and Greaves (2009) explain that "our brains are wired to make us emotional creatures; your first reaction to an event is always going to be an emotional one. You have no control over this part of the process" (p. 16). But Roy (2015) argues that, if a leader practices the *emotion regulation* facet of trait EI, then he or she can fight against physiological evolution. When an administrator experiences a trigger event (a prolonged emotional reaction), resulting in emotional hijacking, then a professional resolution to the encounter may be lost. To avoid emotional hijacking, Laborde, Lautenbach, Allen, Herbert, and Achtzehn (2014) believe the strategies of *emotion regulation* can help control or modify emotions. Moreover, Peng, Wong, and Che (2010) contend identification of emotions in others and displaying the correct emotional response while controlling individual true emotions is critical to successful interactions.

Lastly, Whitaker and Fiore (2001) believe when dealing with angry parents, educators must acknowledge their anger and not marginalize it. When engaging adults, an administrator should, as Covey stated in his 1990 best seller "seek first to understand, then to be understood" (p. 235). Once emotions have been identified, along with those triggers, emotion management is possible.

Managing Emotions

Caruso and Salovey (2004) believe:

People with a strong ability to manage emotions can be passionate, but they also have a good emotional self-control, tend to be even-tempered, think clearly when they are experiencing strong feelings, make decision based on their hearts and their heads, and generally reflect on their emotions often. (p. 65)

When an administrator finds himself or herself in an emotionally charged situation, they should acknowledge their emotions and then control their feelings through emotion management. Ingram and Cangemi (2012) note how a leader can manage his or her emotions when dealing with people:

- 1) **Identifying** their own emotions in a given situation (how they feel).
- 2) **Managing** their own emotions in that situation and reflecting on them.
- 3) Then **Understanding** the emotions of the individual/group with whom they are interacting. Next, after sensing the feelings—emotions—of the individual or group, blending their own managed emotions and thinking with understanding of the emotions/feelings of the other(s), which leads to:
- 4) A more positive **Interpersonal** relationship and the probability of a more successful outcome. (p. 775)

New school administrators may find that they lack the emotion management experience that more experienced colleagues may possess. Bradberry and Greaves (2009) acknowledge that people have basic knowledge such as how to read and write, but lack the emotional skills needed to deal with people, especially during emotional confrontations. Furthermore, when people make decisions they must have facts, self-knowledge and mastery of their emotions. Wong (2016) believes the ability to identify and understand people's emotions provide the leader with a skill to deal with emotional situations. Leaders that are strong in regulating emotions can modulate their emotions as to avoid having a negative impact on their work. When faced with an emotional situation, these leaders do not let the event affect their work performance.

Interactions

Bradberry and Greaves (2009) imply that any interaction takes time and effort. A person can only control his or her part of an interaction. How he or she reacts to another person, in an emotional encounter, depends on his or her emotional intelligence. Even though in a leadership position, it should not be assumed that a leader is gifted with a high EI. Even though all leaders are not necessarily gifted with high EI, emotional intelligent skills can be learned.

Aristotle (n.d.) is quoted with saying “anyone can become angry--that is easy. But to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose, and in the right way, this is not easy.” When used correctly, anger can be utilized to manage a relationship in a positive manner. Ingram and Cangemi (2012) assert that when interacting with people, do not avoid the inevitable. Some relationships may be uncomfortable and challenging. It is these types of relationships that require one to utilize the managerial EI skills. Moreover, the emotionally intelligent leader may have to utilize different emotional strategies to challenge people to be more productive. A leader that continuously conveys positive emotions may not get the desired performance results they seek.

Patterson et al. (2012) notes most leaders are the recipients of other adult's emotional behavior. Leaders enter a confrontation at the point after the adult has made an observation, assigned a meaning, and developed an emotional response. This can cause the leader to be at an emotional disadvantage. Ingram and Cangemi (2012) believe administrators should acknowledge

the other person's feelings. By doing this, the administrator shows caring and may validate the other adult's feelings. They further suggest that the leader should complement the person's emotions or situation. This indicates listening and concern regarding the other person's situation. Administrators must acknowledge other's efforts and positive contributions. Recognizing what people do can produce dividends in a relationship. Explain decisions, do not just *make* decisions. Managing conflict is part of leadership and leaders must learn how to skillfully resolve intense interpersonal encounters.

Patterson, et al. (2012) note, crucial or tough conversations can be planned or can occur spontaneously. Roy (2015) reports, administrators will have tough conversations as a leader. This can be with a teacher, parent or other adult. In this situation, the leader must remain calm and dispassionate when meeting with another adult. The leader must not project their own personal feelings, should speak slowly and clearly, and listen to the other person's perspective. In tough conversations, the leader must promote the emotion regulation and management (others) facets to avoid emotional escalation in a meeting. Moreover, an administrator may have to give feedback to the emotional person(s). The leader must remain assertive, but not aggressive. In the end, the leader is in charge of the school. Within the feedback, the leader must show understanding while delivering feedback. Furthermore, feedback should consist of constructive criticism as well as positive. As in giving feedback to parents and a student, the administrator must provide corrective actions as well as identifying positive aspects. Patterson et al. (2012) discuss that people who are skillful at conducting stressful conversations are able to suggest contentious ideas, without adverse resistance. Lastly, the administrator should separate the incident from the person, thus building instead of tearing down which could lead to an emotionally distraught person (Roy, 2015).

Patterson et al. (2012) believes effective leaders have the skill to manage emotional and political tough issues. These types of leaders facilitate the dialogue as to ensure that relevant information is shared among participants in a tough conversation. Leaders make certain all ideas are presented in order to come to an informed consensus. Roy (2015) discussed that a leader must be ethical in their decision making. Creating an honest and ethical persona establishes trust and respect in the leader. A leader with integrity will stand up for what is right without being aggressive. These character traits go a long way in the educational environment. A leader must avoid the fear of giving negative feedback due to perceived damaging relationships. Failing to have the necessary tough conversations may result in the leader's authority being undermined. Lastly, a leader knows when to say "no" and not compromise their position by trying to appease whomever.

Methodology

Overview of Methodology

For this study, data was gathered using the Trait EI Questionnaire® (TEIQue®), a Situational Judgment Test (SJT), and open-ended questions. The focus of these instruments was to gather data pertaining to leadership characteristics, and as well as strategies utilized in emotionally charged confrontations from selected school administrators and educational leadership students in a southern state in the United States. Only the acting principals were asked to complete open-ended questions and two situational judgment (SJT) questions. These two questions were developed by Hope (2011).

Participants. This study utilized purposive sampling. According to Johnson and

Christensen (2014), purposive sampling occurs when “the researcher specifies the characteristics of population of interest and then tries to locate individuals who have those characteristics” (p. 264). The sample consisting of 21 principals and 10 educational leadership students were invited to participate in this study. The principals’ group contained seasoned administrators from various schools in the region of the study; consisting of elementary, middle and high school principals. The principals’ group was comprised of 67% male and 33% females. The student group included 60% female and 40% male. The principal group was made up of 85% Caucasian, 5% African-American, 5% Spanish-American, and 5% other. The administrative experience, in the position of principal, ranged from 2 years to 20 years. The age range of principals was from 36 to 64 years old. The student group age range was from 36 to 54 years old consisting of 50% African-American, 40% Caucasian, and 10% other.

Design. This study followed a nonexperimental, correlation research design where all participants were subjected to the same experimental conditions (Johnson & Christensen, 2004). This research design was selected for a southern state where there was limited access to aspiring and practicing administrators. Moreover, data collection via the TEIQue® consisted of 153 questions, two SJT questions, and two open-ended questions. Finding those aspiring and practicing administrators that took the time to complete the questions were limited. Those administrators who have low trait EI scores should have greater challenges in managing emotionally charged adults, but administrators with high trait EI scores should have greater success. Moreover, the scores from the SJT were compared to the scores of the TEIQue® to determine any correlations. Those principals who score high trait EI should have a high SJT score. Conversely, principals who score low in trait EI should have low SJT scores. Additionally, educational leadership students who have no administrative experience would be expected to have a lower trait EI score than practicing administrators.

Instrumentation. The primary instrument in this study was the TEIQue®. The TEIQue® instrument is “predicated on a sampling domain that aims to capture the affective aspects of personality, in the form of self-perceptions, which gives rise to a particular factor structure and, more important, a particular way of distributing and interpreting variance” (Petrides, 2009a, p. 2). The selected instrument for this study was the long form of the TEIQue® and is comprised of 153 items, due to the evidence of construct validity.

The TEIQue® questionnaire used in this study was based on a 7-point response scale; data analysis distributions tend to be leptokurtic (more values closest to the mean). The structure of the TEIQue® consists of 15(facets)-4(factors)-1(global TEI) and is analyzed at the facet level and not at the item-level (question) (Petrides, 2009b). The secondary instrument used in this study was a SJT. Tests are designed to determine how a prospective employee would react to a given work-related situation.

Hope (2011) designed a SJT known as the Tacit Knowledge Inventory for Predicting Success in Administration (TKIPSA) which contains 17 situations. For this study, two situations were selected from the Hope (2011) study. The selected questions represented situations in which emotionally charged adults could be present. The SJT questions were administered to the school principals. Lastly, upon completion of the two SJT scenario questions, principals completed two opened ended questions designed to obtain their opinion on EI skills and strategies.

Presentation of Data

Research Question One

Are there differences between *self-control* and *sociability* scores of experienced administrators and educational leadership students? Data were collected through the TEIQue® developed by Petrides (2009b). Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviations for principals and students as well as the results of independent *t*-test between the groups.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Principal and Student Comparison. Degrees of freedom (df). Principals' and students' t-test (t) representing a significant difference between the two groups. Calculated probability (p).

Principals <i>n</i> = 21 Variable	Students <i>n</i> = 10					
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>
Emotion regulation	5.29	0.51	4.91	0.73	29	1.62
Impulse control	5.12	0.84	5.03	0.80	29	0.27
Stress management	5.00	0.62	4.86	1.00	29	0.46
Social awareness	5.45	0.55	5.32	0.83	29	0.49
Emotion management	5.31	0.48	5.10	0.60	29	1.03
Assertiveness	5.48	0.72	4.76	0.82	29	2.43*
Self-control	5.14	0.47	4.93	0.73	29	0.90
Sociability	5.14	0.45	5.06	0.56	29	1.84

**p* < .05

The table reveals that students scored lower in all categories than principals. However, the results from the data show there is a statistically significant difference (*p* < .05) in the trait *assertiveness* between students and principals. There were no other statistically significant differences found with the remaining variables.

In the final analysis, students scored lower in *assertiveness* and *emotion management* which are facets of the *sociability* factor. Additionally, students scored lower than principals in *emotion regulation* a facet of the *self-control* factor. An overall score showed students were weaker in the factor *self-control* as compared to principals. In addition, students scored low in *emotion regulation* versus the principals' higher scores. The two groups were equivalent in scoring for the factor *self-control* and the facet *impulse control*.

Research Question Two

Are there differences between *self-control* and *sociability* scores of administrators and years of experience in the role? Data were collected through the TEIQue®. An independent *t*-test was performed on all TEIQue® scales for the trait EI of administrators. The results from the data revealed there are no statistical significant difference in less and more experienced principals.

To summarize, though there were some principals with less than 10 years' experience that scored low on the TEIQue®, there were several principals that had an average score. Additionally, some principals with greater than 10 years' experience scored low as well. Less experienced principals were not as strong as experienced principals in the area of *assertiveness*, *impulse control*, and *emotion regulation*. Both groups were equally strong in the trait *emotion management* and *stress management*. Comparing the results of the two groups shows a shift to higher TEIQue® scores as a principal gains experience, indicating an increase in EI with experience.

Conclusions

Discussion

When considering the qualitative portion of the study, the researcher noted that the first situational judgment question proved to be the most difficult question for principals to answer. Their responses to the SJT produced a wide range of answers. Though not all of the principals participated in the SJT, the strategy decision responses may have been influenced by similar past scenarios, resulting in the wide range of answers. Sevdalis, Petrides and Harvey (2007) believe decision makers are influenced by the outcome of past choices. This recollection can have a profound influence on a current decision. Alternately, principals' answers might have been culturally influenced. Finally, the SJT experts' key may not have been properly vetted.

Data from the SJT was compared with data from the TEIQue®. Those principals that scored well on the SJT, (who matched up with the experts' scores), generally had average scoring on the TEIQue®. The principals that scored low in the TEIQue® did not score well with the SJT. Additionally, there were some high scorers on the TEIQue® that did not participate in the SJT. Due to the mixed results, a distinctive correlation between the two assessments was not established. The researcher believes if there were additional participants in the SJT a clearer relationship between the high TEIQue® scorers and the high SJT scorers might well have been established.

From the convenience sample of principals and educational leadership students analyzed, the finding was students' scores were weaker than principals' in the factor *self-control*. Specifically, *assertiveness*, *emotion management*, and *emotion regulation* were weak facets for the students; principals were very strong with most scoring average or better. This may be due to the nature of their position. The principals had years of experience to hone their interactive skills with people whereas the students were not yet in the position to be exposed to multiple daily interactions, especially with emotional charged adults. The facet *impulse control* had relatively similar scores between the principal and student groups.

Furthermore, students were weak in *emotion regulation* with no high scorers. The evidence indicated this may be due to a lack of coping skills and strategies used to address personal stress. Principals had a mixture of scores with no definitive relationship to experience or age. As with students, principals may need help with coping skills and strategies. The position consumes much time and energy; therefore, it is that much more important that this trait is not neglected.

The principals' group scored higher in the factor *self-control*. *Social awareness* and *emotion management* collectively were stronger with the principals' group than the student group. This result reflects upon the encounters which principals have with adults daily whereas, students would not have the same exposure experience as principals do.

Limitations

The most obvious limitation of this study was the size of the convenience sample of principals and students. Of those principals that participated in the study, not all took the SJT. Some contacted the researcher and expressed their concern that the questionnaires required too much time, and as principals they did not have the time to complete the assessments. Furthermore, prior principals' administration or leadership experience was not captured. Based on the evidence, two questionnaires and two open-ended questions did prove to be too much to complete for a busy administrator. The researcher postulates that if the questionnaires consumed less time, then perhaps the study would have resulted in more principals participating. Likewise, a sample of educational leadership students were obtained without any incentive. The researcher believes that an incentive may have helped increase the numbers of students participating in the study.

Summary

The purpose of this research study as identified by the researcher was to identify coping skills and strategies for new and aspiring administrators when dealing with emotional and confrontational adults. Through the research, the researcher learned that when comparing the normative mean to the principals' mean, principals scored higher in all traits including the overall *global trait EI* mean category. This indicates that those selected to lead schools tend to possess high emotional intelligence traits. Furthermore, the researcher found that educational leadership students scored higher than the normative group in all facets except in *assertiveness*. Not only did students score lower on *assertiveness* than principals, but also students scored lower than the normative group. Further comparison by gender showed both principals' groups outscored the normative groups. The normative population was similar in demographics to this study's participants. Uniquely, the normative population had a wide spectrum of different levels of education, ranging from the least (no high school diploma) to the most educated (Ph.D.). Furthermore, the normative group's average age was significantly lower than this study's principals' average age. Moreover, the principals' group was a selected group of education professionals uniquely different from the overall normative TEIQue® population. Similarly, males in both groups, the normative group and the principal group, scored higher than females on *emotion regulation*. Due to the evidence presented the researcher believes the principals in this study have been selected for their positions, based on their strong personality traits. Considering this evidence, this study's participants would be considered the "best of the best" and would be expected to score higher than the normative population. Equally important, the principals' group in this study scored higher in trait EI than the normative population.

As mentioned above, the principals' group has a higher trait EI than the normative population. Because of this, the principals' group operates at a higher level of trait EI and any discrepancies within the group would not be as large as within the normative population. The general description of people with high trait EI is that they are more apt to deal with resultant stress and have a large social network for support. This describes the characteristics that a principal would need to succeed at his or her job. Those with low trait EI are those people who have problems dealing with stress and tend not to have strong social networks for emotional support. This description would not reflect the lower scores of this study's principals group.

Principals face their greatest challenges during times of high stress. A principal must manage their anger when dealing in an emotionally charged situation. In the end, their success