IMPLEMENTING EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE COMPETENCIES IN AN EDUCATIONAL BUSINESS SERVICE

Renee Winter, Grand Canyon University
Kimberly McCann, Grand Canyon University

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to understand how knowledgeable higher education leaders are about the competencies of emotional and social intelligence. The perceived need to utilize these competencies with subordinates was also explored. The theoretical frameworks of emotional intelligence and social intelligence support this study and consist of four competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. The questions that drove this study were "How knowledgeable are leaders about the competencies of Emotional Leadership Theory and Social Leadership Theory?" and "How do leaders in an educational business service perceive the need to utilize emotional and social intelligence with followers?" The sample consisted of six online faculty leaders from an education business service. Participants were interviewed and videotaped using Zoom. Data were obtained through semistructured interviews with open-ended questions that focused on online faculty leadership knowledge and perception. The interviews were transcribed and coded to identify themes. The findings showed that promoting the four competencies should be done through modeling effective behaviors and efficient coaching while supporting and encouraging each of the team members. Future research should focus on the emotional-social intelligence model from the perspective of the full-time online faculty members and other operational environments.

Keywords: leadership, education, emotional intelligence, social intelligence, online, followers, team

INTRODUCTION

Theories of emotional intelligence and social intelligence have been identified as effective strategies for leadership to manage their organization and its followers (Parrish, 2015). Leadership should develop emotional-social intelligence traits and skills to direct and guide the positive behaviors of followers for the organization's success. Some leaders may either lack the skill set or struggle with implementing emotional intelligence and social intelligence when engaging with employees. Any insincerity the leader expresses may cause a negative effect when attempting to build positive follower relationships (Nisar et al., 2021). This approach from leadership can cause a lack of trust, poor performance, and low-quality relationships. Research suggests that emotional-social intelligence can be an effective leadership approach for an educational business service (Bar-On, 2006). The purpose of this study was to understand how knowledgeable higher education leaders are about their competencies of emotional and social intelligence. The perceived need to utilize these competencies with subordinates was also explored.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The current study seeks to answer the following questions:

How knowledgeable are leaders about the competencies of emotional intelligence and social intelligence?

How do leaders in an educational business service perceive the need to utilize emotional and social intelligence with followers?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Goleman and Boyatzis's (2006) emotional intelligence and social intelligence theory was the theoretical foundation for this study to identify knowledge about the competencies of emotional and social intelligence.

Emotional and Social Intelligence

Emotional intelligence and social intelligence is the process of acknowledging one's own emotions and the emotions of others while effectively connecting and influencing others (Goleman, 2006). Leaders should be able to control their emotions and understand the influence their behaviors have on others. The emotional intelligence and social intelligence leadership model consists of four competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management (Goleman & Boyatzis, 2017). There are five factors of emotional intelligence model identified for this study: self-awareness, self-regulation, internal motivation, empathy, and social skills (Goleman, 1998). Leaders who understand and utilize emotional and social intelligence theory are aware of their strengths and weaknesses while managing their thoughts and feelings in a positive approach to leadership. Leaders should have the ability to acknowledge others' emotions and feelings to support healthy, satisfying relationships within the work environment. Leaders should be able to handle the daily demands by implementing effective decisions that lead to efficient outcomes (Bar-On, 2006). Bar-On's (2006) Emotional-Social Intelligence model supports the cross-sections of emotional intelligence and social intelligence competencies and factors. Emotional-social intelligence connects emotional and social competencies, skills and factors that allow for understanding and managing of one's emotions, to build positive relationships, provide effective outcomes to daily situations, and to cope with stressful situations that

may arise within the organizational environment (Bar-On, 2006).

Defining the Four Competencies and Five Factors of Emotional-Social Intelligence

Self-Awareness. Recognizing the impact that one's emotions can have on personal decisions and outcomes of situations.

Self-Awareness. Being aware of strengths and weaknesses while demonstrating confidence to meet daily issues (Livesey, 2017).

Self-Management. The ability to establish and work towards achieving realistic goals (Livesey, 2017).

Self-Regulation. Recognizing and controlling one's emotions while maintaining integrity and aligning with personal values (Bar-0n, 2006; Livesey, 2017).

Internal Motivation. Presenting a positive outlook and being content with oneself and others about life (Bar-On, 2006).

Social Awareness. The awareness of others' feelings, recognizing the organization's issues, and meeting the needs of all stakeholders (Livesey, 2017).

Empathy. Acknowledging that others have feelings, perspectives, and interests while taking an interest in their goals and issues (Bar-On, 2006).

Relationship Management. Interacting effectively with groups to control the tone, needs, and growth of followers (Livesey, 2017).

Social Skills. To inspire and manage the cultural group dynamics through changes, disagreements, and individuals' growth to achieve goals while building satisfying leader/follower relationships (Livesey, 2017).

Emotional-Social Intelligence and Leadership

Leaders who demonstrate self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management can be sufficient and effective in handling the daily situations of organizational environments (Livesey, 2017). Leaders who are able to adapt to change, manage stress, cope with feelings, and identify others' feelings genuinely maintain positive relationships in the environment. Being aware of their reactions to situations and pressures can help leaders effectively make decisions to solve problems (Cavins, 2021). Leaders should demonstrate flexibility with themselves and

with the needs of others. As change occurs in an organizational environment, the positive and/or negative impact a leader demonstrates can influence the cultural tone. The leader can develop and maintain a stable, satisfying environment or a chaotic, unsatisfied environment. As change or growth occurs, the followers' perspective of the leader is critical during the transition (Nisar et al., 2021). Organizations need to focus on developing the leader's understanding of emotional-social intelligence to establish positive relationships while supporting personal growth and creating organizational success.

METHODS

Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand how knowledgeable higher education leaders are about the competencies of emotional and social intelligence. The perceived need to utilize these competencies with subordinates was also explored. The review of literature revealed that leaders who focus on the emotions of oneself and others can have a positive influence on organizational success. Leaders who implement positive management strategies such as congruence, respect, inquiry, and supportive communication are more approachable, collaborative, and adaptable (Gordon, 2017).

Participants

In order to obtain an in-depth understanding of higher education leaders' knowledge, the sample population came from operational front line faculty managers who lead full-time online faculty in a higher education setting. An email was sent to eight operational front line faculty managers with a request to participate in the study. Out of the eight, six (two females, four males) agreed to participate in the study and be interviewed using Zoom.

Data Collection

This study commenced using two data collection methods. An email was sent to the operational faculty managers with a link to SurveyMonkey inviting them to complete an online questionnaire. The questionnaire had two main objectives. The first objective was to gain demographic information about their personal leadership experience. The second was to understand the background knowledge the online faculty leaders had about emotional and social intelligence theory.

Eight operational faculty managers completed the questionnaire. After completing the questionnaire, six faculty managers responded by email agreeing to participate in the study. The responses were analyzed and the six faculty managers met the criteria to participate in the study.

Personalized emails were sent to the six faculty managers to participate in Zoom interviews. The interviews were conducted using Zoom Video Conferencing and were recorded for later transcription. The interviews were each 35–45 minutes long. The faculty managers were asked open-ended questions that focused on their perception of the impact the competencies of emotional and social intelligence may have on followers' goals and organizational outcomes. Some examples are:

What knowledge or background information do you have about emotional and social intelligence theory?

Tell me about a couple of your daily interactions with your faculty members?

Thinking about internal motivation, when working with faculty members, how do you demonstrate your passion for the organization's goals to sustain motivation, clear decision making, and a better understanding of the organization's aims?

How would utilizing these five emotional and social intelligence competencies provide individual success as a leader?

Data Analysis

A basic qualitative approach was used to analyze the data. Following the completion of the interviews, the recorded interviews were transcribed. The transcribed interviews were provided to the participants to check for accuracy and reliability. To determine content relevant to the study and begin identifying patterns in the responses, the transcriptions were read and reread to synthesize the responses into a whole analysis. The analysis focused on keywords and phrases to categorize for common themes and/or patterns based on the participants responses.

RESULTS

The semistructured questions focused on Goleman and Boyatzis's (2017) four competencies of self-awareness, self-management, social

awareness, and relationship management. The analysis resulted in the following keywords: reflection, listening, remaining calm, motivation, empathy, and positive interaction. The keywords aligned with Goleman's (1995) five emotional intelligence factors: self-awareness, self-regulation, internal motivation, empathy, and social skills. The six keywords were grouped into categories that matched the four competencies. The participants described these as skills needed to guide their teams efficiently and effectively.

Self-Awareness

Focusing on self-awareness, all participants indicated that reflection was important in guiding their faculty teams. Most of the participants felt that reflecting and being aware of their behaviors helped with controlling situations effectively.

> *Participant B stated, "reflection helps with personal growth to assist with mentoring, coaching, and counseling the faculty."*
> *Participant F stated, "being able to reflect helps identify their personal errors and accept ownership to make necessary corrections."*

Self-Management

Listening and remaining calm were keywords mentioned throughout the interviews that aligned with the emotional intelligence factor self-regulation.

> *Participant D stated, "it is important to listen to all sides of the story, stay calm, and not react negatively."*
> *Participant E stated, "try to look at the big picture, stay calm, and avoid knee jerk reactions."*

The key phrase "internal motivation" falls under this competency. When describing internal motivation, the participants felt this was important for building relationships with each other.

Participant C responded, "leading by example through growing and sharing values."

> *Participant A discussed, "sharing my own enthusiasm, have the same expectations for myself and for the faculty on my team. … Have the faculty share good things about their class or students."*

Social Awareness

Empathy as it related to social awareness included a variety of practices.

Participant A prioritized "personal zoom calls to discuss problems." Participant A also explained an example of a faculty member that seemed off during a Zoom meeting. She questioned herself on how she can help the faculty member and had to stop and think. After the all-team faculty Zoom meeting, she touched based later with the individual faculty member.

Participant B "took training in autism to connect with a faculty member."

Participant C said that reframing in the form of "listen and repeat back their problem" was critical to awareness.

Participant D found that inclusivity and collaboration during team meetings was an opportunity to "make sure each one is doing ok."

Participants E and F "allow for personal space and if need a day to work from home" and provide "individual support" depending on the situation.

Relationship Management

Positive interaction was a keyword used by all participants to build relationships with the individual faculty members and within the teams.

> *Participant A responded, "with a new hire spending all day helping them integrate into the culture, introducing them to the team, and assigning a colleague mentor."*
> *Participant B stated, "building team collaboration through group activities."*
> *Participant E discussed, "everybody is different. It is important to get to know each faculty and what they need from me. Be supportive, helpful, and hands-on."*

Each interview ended with three questions: How would applying/promoting these four emotional competencies provide individual success as a leader? How would you use self-awareness to promote social awareness with the faculty members? How would you use self-management to promote relationship management?

Participant D responded, "applying the four emotional competencies would help with focusing on the outcome as a whole, bigger picture."

> *Participant E felt, "applying the four*

emotional competencies would help with overall support and better communication."

All six participants felt that promoting the four competencies should be done through modeling effective behaviors and efficient coaching while supporting and encouraging each of the team members.

LIMITATIONS

As with any qualitative study, the findings may not be generalizable to all faculty management populations. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, remote teams are becoming more common. Whether or not the same approaches described above, in a face-to-face management scenario, will translate directly into leading remote teams is unclear. The population for this study was front-line operational managers. The same approaches used by these managers may not be applicable to larger, more dispersed teams. The team sizes for this sample population were between 10 and 25 members. For larger teams, the one-on-one personal relationship between manager and employee may not be as easy to cultivate and maintain.

All data were collected by self-reporting by the participants. Self-report data is considered biased toward the perspective of the participant, and my personal biases may have shaped participant responses to the interview questions. Not all participants were equally open to sharing examples and reflecting critically upon their management styles. Finally, and perhaps most limiting, the participants for this study did not have a shared definition of either emotional intelligence or social intelligence. Some participants were more informed about emotional intelligence and social intelligence concepts than others, which likely limited the overall quality of the data.

CONCLUSION

This study was conducted in an educational business setting focusing on faculty managers' knowledge about emotional-social intelligence. It is not clear whether this type of leadership approach would be feasible long term with faculty managers leading full-time online faculty in a remote operational higher educational setting, nor is it clear that this type of approach would be feasible in other settings. The results of the study only described the participants involved within the study and their perception of emotional-social intelligence.

This study investigated only faculty managers; full-time online faculty members were not examined. While the focus was on the faculty managers knowledge, the anticipation is that the findings may contribute to faculty managers success working with full-time online faculty members individually and in a team setting. It would be beneficial to examine full-time online faculty experience with leadership that may use the emotional-social intelligence model. Leading and working remotely in an online education business environment differs from a traditional ground education business environment setting. Understanding ways to enhance the environment for faculty managers and full-time online faculty members would be beneficial.

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