

## Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Effective Leadership: A Case Study of a Mining Company in Zimbabwe.

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### Abstract

*The study aimed at assessing emotional intelligence as a strategic tool for effective leadership. The research was a case study of a mining company in Zimbabwe. To ensure the aim of the research is achieved 70 people participated in the research, 18 being those in leadership positions and 52 being subordinates without any leadership positions. Face to face interviews were conducted to elicit data from the management. Questionnaires were distributed to all the respondents. The research was based on Goleman's (1998) mixed model of emotional intelligence which looks at self awareness, self management, social awareness and relationship management as factors of emotional intelligence. The major objective of the paper was to assess the relationship between emotional intelligence and effective leadership. Leaders viewed effective leadership style as a combination of the application of both emotional intelligence skills and expertise. Subordinates were of the view that emotional intelligence has greater influence on effective leadership behavior and their performance. The thematic approach was used for data analysis. The research implications are that leaders should be aware of emotional intelligence and learn to separate emotions and real facts.*

Key words: emotional intelligence, emotional labor, leadership, effective leadership, subordinates

### Introduction

Whilst most organisations have the necessary resources like capital both financial and human, IT and infrastructure, they have still failed to attain their goals. This has been partly because they have failed to acknowledge emotional quotients as a key leadership competency in organisational success. Goleman (1998) states that emotional intelligence competencies are not the traditional IQ (innate talents), but learned abilities, that can be worked on to achieve outstanding performance. Contemporary researchers explained emotional intelligence as the ability to understand emotions and the impact they have on human behavior. It has been noted that emotional intelligence requires managers to understand how others feel since this has the benefit of not only managing relationships but also developing managers who are 'socially savvy' and able to forge relationships for a long time

(Bono 2007). These learned abilities (emotional muscles) have been seen as key to effective leadership, sales, customer loyalty, retention, increased productivity and team performance.

According to Miskel (2006 in Bono 2007), leadership is a social process involving both rational and emotional elements whereby a member or members of a group or organisation influence the interpretation of internal and external events, the choice of goals or desired outcomes, organisation of work activities, individual motivation and power relations. Effective leadership is getting the job done through people requiring their satisfaction and commitment (Luthans 1998). As a result, emotional intelligence provides a way of understanding and assessing attitudes, people's behaviors, management and leadership style as well as interpersonal skills. Emotional intelligence plays an important role in effective organisational leadership. Successful managers have been identified as those that have achieved better financial results, developed more effective and supportive organisational culture and achieved higher productivity gains with their workforce. According to Goleman (1998) the difference between effective and ineffective leaders is accounted by emotional intelligence. In conjunction with the organisational and management components of an effective leader, the components of emotional reaction, emotional wellbeing, passion and managing emotionally also contribute to the leader's success. Emotional Intelligence provides a new way of understanding and assessing attitudes, people's behaviors leadership style and interpersonal skills. An emotional intelligent individual is thus capable of controlling his/her emotions in order to achieve desired goals. According to Goleman (1998), this emotionally intelligent person is able to vary these emotions to improve on self awareness, self management, social awareness and relationship management skills. Emotional intelligence is a set of traits that define the character of an individual's personal or social competitiveness. It is thus regarded as an important skill that can surpass the cognitive abilities of an individual.

The main problem indicator of this study is the apparent poor employment relations within the mining Company that have been expressed through divisions amongst departments. According to the human resource records on labour turnover, the company has been experiencing an increase in labour turnover since 2008. In 2008 the labour turnover was 8%, in 2009 it was 12% and in 2010 it increased to 20%, which was a hard blow to the organisation. Reports from the exit interviews conducted showed that poor relations between leaders and subordinates was the major reason for the labour turnover. Bureaucracy was also another problem prevailing in the organisation as depicted by the red tape when it came to decision making. The major question asked to leaders was; Is there any impact on the way you manage your emotions and those of others on the organisational performance

and relations at work? Responses to this question and others were then analysed through thematic analysis.

### **Literature review**

There exist little empirical research which examines the relationship between emotional intelligence in the work place and effective leadership. Bennis (1994) developed a complimentary leadership model that looks at the transformational and transactional leaders. Burns in Gardener and Stough (2002) defines transformational leaders as those who are able to orient their subordinates towards performance beyond established goals through empowering them while transactional leaders addresses current needs of subordinates through rewarding for performances, mutual support and exchanges. Both transformational and transactional leaders are able to build confidence in subordinates. There is a third component to this model known as non transactional model or laissez-faire consisting of those leaders who do nothing and create a negative relationship between leadership and subordinate performance. These leaders are absent when needed, avoid accepting responsibility and fail to follow up on subordinates requests for assistance (Bass 1997). In comparison transformational leadership has been found to promote greater organisational performance than transactional leadership. Ashforth and Humphrey (1995) noted that transformational leadership appears to be dependent upon the evocation, framing and mobilisation of emotions whereas transactional leadership appears to be more depended upon subordinates, cognitions and tend to rely more on rewards. The paradigm of transformational leadership is associated with high levels of subordinate effort and performance which reflects as the success of the leader.

Research has shown that there are three streams of emotional intelligence. The first stream is based on the abilities model by Salovey and Mayer's (1997:76) which enlightens on the 'ability to perceive emotion, use emotions, understand emotions and manage emotions'. The second model is the trait model that looks at the fifteen components of personality factors that covers capabilities, competencies and skills that influence one's ability to succeed in coping with environmental demands. The third stream of emotional intelligence is the mixed model or competency based model by Daniel Goleman which includes traditional social skill measures as well as emotional intelligence measures. In the third stream of Emotional Intelligence there are four domains which include self awareness, self management, social awareness and relationship management. The research used Goleman's mixed model as its conceptual framework.

The coming of emotional intelligence gave birth to emotional quotient which according to Goleman help understand and assess people's behavior, management

styles, attitudes and interpersonal skills. In 1985 an influential psychologist called Howard Gardner also challenged the current views of intelligence and proposed (7) multiple intelligences which included social intelligence. In 1995 Daniel Goleman published the best seller, 'Emotional Intelligence' which has done a great deal in popularising the concept. Contemporary research has shown that there is a connection between emotional intelligence and the ability to lead and also that emotional intelligence can play a big role in improving the effectiveness of leaders. The idea is that success in both life and in work has become highly credible and organisations have recognised how their best leaders and managers need to develop their understanding of themselves and others.

The new world order reflects an accelerated rate of change: changes in the workforce, impact of technology, industrialisation, globalization, competition and market demand. People currently need to function in a world vastly different from that of previous generations. Goleman (2002: 1) states that '... great leaders move us; they ignite our passion and inspire the best in us. When they try to explain why they are so effective, we speak of strategy, vision and powerful ideas but the reality is much more primal. Great leadership works through the emotions'.

The research focused on emotional intelligence in different styles of leadership. Kurt Lewin (1999) led a group of researchers to identify different styles of leadership. These early studies have been very influential and they established three major styles of leadership which are authoritarian, participative and delegative. However, leadership style or behaviour theory maintains that successful leadership is not dependent on the possession of a single universal pattern of inborn abilities but on the application of these traits in behavior patterns or preferred styles.

To prevent organisations getting from getting out of business, today's business climate demand high flexible and quick responses due to the fast changing business environment. It is expected that organisations should have effective leaders at all hierarchical levels. An effective leader should be able to influence people towards the attainment of organisational objectives and should be able to manage conflicts whenever they arise. Leadership competencies depend on many factors such as emotional intelligence, integrity, drive, self confidence, intelligence and knowledge of the selective discipline. Goethals (2004) summarises the evolution of leadership theories in four phases which are trait, behavioral, situational and transformational leadership. On the other hand Mintzberg (1980:80) and other extensive literature reviews identify thirteen behaviors associated with leadership and leaders which are:

*visioning, inspiring, stimulating, coaching, rewarding, punishing, delegating, leading by example, sharing and open communication, listening, directing, participating and proactive.*

According to Dulewicz (2005:25) the focus of the leaders' ability to manage complex social and dynamics is centered in the concept of emotional intelligence and has made the role of emotions in organisations prominent in the leadership literature. The transformational leadership is particularly appealing in this changing environment because it focuses on leaders' concern about transforming the present condition of the organisation and follower requirements.

Emotional intelligence is the key to handling our relationship with others in a way that helps us rather than destroy us. As people we do not live in a vacuum, hence more often what we have to do in our professional and personal lives entails dealing with others. It has been noted that very few people in organisations have been dismissed because of lack of technical skills or failure to achieve the job requirements. With the exception of layoffs and retrenchment, most people have been dismissed because of reasons related to lack of emotional intelligence and not because of deficiency in innate intelligence or technical expertise.

### **Methodology**

The study used both qualitative and quantitative data. This is a case study of a mining company in Zimbabwe which will not be mentioned for reasons of confidentiality. A case study design was used because the researchers wanted to understand the dynamics present within a single setting.

Purposive sampling was used to select managers as these are the leaders in the organisation. A total of 18 managers participated in the research. 52 employees who are not in any leadership position (subordinates) were randomly selected from departments. These subordinates were selected to evaluate their leaders. The total number of people who participated were therefore 70.

Face to face interviews were carried out to gather information from management due to its small sample size. The interview questions were crafted basing on the objectives of the research paper. Each interview took at most 30 minutes. Questionnaires that required open-ended answers were distributed to the general employees who were given two weeks to respond to the questions. The use of questionnaires was effective in that it gave the respondents ample time to respond at their own time without interfering with their work. It should be noted that there was no appropriate instrument to measure emotional intelligence at the mine hence the research relied on interviews and questionnaires that gave respondents opinions.

Both secondary and primary sources of data were used in this study. The primary source was gathered from the respondents who participated in the study and those that completed the questionnaire. The secondary sources of data were the company records such as disciplinary hearing records and grievance procedure reports.

## Discussion

The information analysed was obtained from the questionnaires and interviews. Table 1. Employee category of the respondents

Employee Category	No. of respondents	
	Male	Female
MANAGEMENT		
Human Resources	2	1
Finance	3	2
Production	7	0
Marketing	2	1
Total (Mgt)	14	4
SUBORDINATES		
Total	49	21

The organisation has a number of departments among which four departments were identified from which thirteen managers out of eighteen were interviewed as the other five managers were out of office when interviews were carried out. Forty two subordinates out of the fifty two who were randomly picked across the organisation were able to complete the questionnaires.

### Link between emotional intelligence and effective leadership

85% of the subordinates argued that there was a link between emotional intelligence and effective leadership. They revealed that leaders who are emotionally intelligent recognise and understand other people's emotions thereby managing them well. One employee in the production department indicated that; '*shifu chaiye anofara nevanofara achichema nevanochema*' (the real manager should be happy when his subordinates are happy and cry when they cry as well). According to Lamb (2004) effective leadership has the following characteristics which are trust, confidence and effective communication which help employees to understand how they contribute in achieving organisational goals.

5% of the subordinates further noted that effective leaders know when, where and how to make use of their emotions. They also noted that leaders who are emotionally intelligent can effectively manage employees at work. They know how to motivate distressed employees and this is an important leadership skill. The findings above confirm George's (2000) view that leaders with high emotional intelligence can easily appraise how their subordinates feel and use the information to influence subordinates' emotions so that they are receptive and supportive to organisational goal.



10% of the subordinates however argued that there was no relationship between emotional intelligence and effective leadership. They noted that with or without emotions one can still be an effective leader if he/she is able to meet the organisational goals. One employee in the finance department explained that most leaders have failed because they have tried to be too analytical and emotional yet some issues at work are factual and have nothing to do with emotions. This argument was found to be more inclined to the transactional leadership style where leaders address current needs of subordinates by focusing attention on exchanges like rewards. The remaining 5% of the subordinates did not respond to the questionnaire which may be a reflection that they were either committed elsewhere or the concept of emotional intelligent was not understood.

Employees were also tasked to rate their leaders in terms of emotional intelligence and relate that to the performance of the department. In the Human Resource and Marketing Departments, 80% of the employees considered their leaders emotionally intelligent. They considered them as empathetic and sociable leaders who could put their employees at ease in a tense environment. They revealed that this has improved the way they do their work. They can actually work hard for the betterment of the organisation. This supports George (2000) argument that emotional intelligence plays an important role in leadership effectiveness. She further proposed that the ability to understand and manage moods and emotions in one self and in others theoretically contributes to the effectiveness of leaders. The author also suggests that emotional intelligence enhances leaders' ability to solve problems and to address issues and opportunities facing them and their organisation. However, 20% alluded to the fact that their leaders' emotional behavior change and sometimes emotional intelligence was not applied at all.

When asked to describe if their leaders were sociable and empathetic 60% of the employees in the production and finance departments described their leaders as passive and not willing to socialize with them. They also went on to say this really affects the way they do their work in that they do not feel as part of the organisation. They just work for the sake of working. This type of leadership is linked to *laissez-faire* which has no link to emotional intelligence. However, it should be noted that *laissez-faire* has a place in human resource management where worker maturity is high. 90% of the subordinates argued that some leaders avoided accepting responsibility. This supports Bass (1997) who argues that some leaders are absent when required, fail to follow up on request for assistance and resist expressing their opinion on important issues. This demotivates employees such that they end up working because they are paid and not because they have a passion for work. Managers who were interviewed found high performers to be stronger in self awareness and self management. Seventy per cent (75%) of managers viewed

effective leadership style as a combination of both emotional intelligence skills and expertise. Managers supported Lowe and Kroeck (1996) who suggested that any given leader may be both transformational and transactional depending on the situation. Managers considered emotional intelligence skills as relationship building and adaptability as more vital to leadership success of effective practices than traditional competencies such as planning and financial acumen. In addition all the managerial employees agreed that situational or transformational style of leadership is the best and they also agreed that there is a link between emotional intelligence and high performing leaders.

Management from the HR department alluded to the fact that in their profession emotional intelligence was very critical as it could reveal their leadership capabilities. They noted that they deal with employees all the time and therefore have to be emotionally intelligent in order to manage them effectively. The Human Resources Office is concerned with the recruitment and selection, motivation, training and development of employees and for all these to be effectively implemented an emotionally intelligent leader is required. Leaders need to be open-minded, empathetic and understand the generic behavior of employees.

The marketing manager revealed that emotional intelligence is quite critical for effective leadership especially in their profession where they deal with customers. He noted that for the company to be marketable emotional intelligence was very critical to lure customers and increase their market share. This in turn would be a measurement of their leadership capabilities.

The production and finance managers argued that there is a relationship between emotional intelligence and effective leadership. However they argued that this sometimes depends on one's profession. They highlighted that in some professions like accounting, they dealt with figures and facts such that emotions played a minor role. Asked to rate themselves in terms of emotional intelligence both managers rated themselves as highly intelligent in terms of building subordinates, and change management.

From the findings it was noted that there is a strong relationship between emotional intelligence and effective leadership. Both subordinates and leaders acknowledged and appreciated the importance of emotional intelligence and its link to effective leadership. George (2000) suggests that emotional intelligence plays an important role in leadership effectiveness and emphasises that the ability to understand and manage moods and emotions in oneself and in others is vital. Theoretically this contributes to effectiveness in leadership. A research conducted by Gardner and Stough (2002) concluded that successful leaders who are able to manage positive



and negative emotions within themselves and within others are able to articulate a vision for the future, talk optimistically, provide encouragement and meaning, stimulate in others new ways of doing things, encourage the expression of new ideas and intervene in problems before they become serious.

It was noted from the research that some managers were passive. This had a negative effect on the way they perform their duties. Gardner and Stough (2002) concluded that leaders who are considered passive are likely unable to identify their own feelings and emotions, be unable to understand the emotions of others in the workplace, manage emotions, and to effectively control emotions at work.

Bass (1997) also highlighted that extra effort is needed to be able to get others to do more than they are expected, to try harder and desire success. Effectiveness occurs when job related needs are met and the individual is leading an effective group and finally satisfaction is achieved when the individual is working with other team members satisfactorily.

The study revealed a strong relationship between superior performing leaders and emotional competence. This supported the view that emotional intelligence is a distinguishing factor in leadership performance. Effective Leaders were identified across the organisation as those with self confidence, an achievement orientation and initiative while being approachable, team players and change catalysts. This supports McClelland (1998) where he concluded that most powerful leadership differentiators were not only self confident, but could adapt, develop and influence others. Apart from these, subordinates described the characteristics of good leadership style as democratic, flexible and situational. Thus all the respondents agreed that all the competencies that are associated with effective leadership practices focus on the emotional intelligence of the leader.

### **Emotional Intelligence and Gender**

Seventy seven per cent of both leaders and subordinates had high scores for female managers on several aspects of the interpersonal social competencies measured. Women leaders were said to apply emotional intelligence. Women were rated highly in comparison to their male counter parts. They were regarded as empathetic, sensitive and considerate of other people's emotions which they handled quite well. Eagly and Johnson (1990) found females to have better social skills and to be described as "interested in other people". Eagly (1990) concluded that women leaders as a group, when compared to male leaders as a group; tend to be described as more friendly, pleasant and socially sensitive. This is also consistent with the view of Baron (2000) who concluded that while men and women did not differ on the emotional intelligence, women scored significantly higher on empathy,

interpersonal relationships and social responsibility while men scored higher on self actualisation, assertiveness, stress tolerance, impulse control and adaptability.

### **Emotional Intelligence and Functional Differences**

It was also noted by both managers and subordinates that there is a link between emotional intelligence and functional areas. 70% of the subordinates alluded that managers who deal directly with people like those working in the marketing and human resource department tend to have emotional intelligent abilities like socialising with people, empathy, putting people at ease and building others. All the leaders agreed with this view, highlighting the fact that the job one does can affect his or her character. It has also been established that managers in the finance and production departments tend to focus more on meeting targets and working on figures such that they believed that it is expertise that has more influence on the managers' performance.

### **The Impact of Leaders' Behaviour on Subordinates**

Seventy five per cent of the subordinates emphasised that emotional intelligence abilities like empathy, building bonds, team work, emotional self awareness, self confidence and communication were important skills for managers. In addition ninety per cent of the subordinates also agreed that the behaviour of the leader directly and significantly influenced employee satisfaction and job performance. It was also established that when employee satisfaction is high positive business outcomes are seen and when satisfaction is low negative business outcomes result. Subordinates and management all agreed that a leader is positive mood promotes worker productivity and retention while moulding a colleague or subordinate behaviour. According to Ashforth & Humphrey (1993) emotional labour occurs when employees must alter their emotional expressions in order to display rules of the organisation. The importance of emotional labour in a mining sector that is trying to revive its operations after the national economic meltdown is even greater now. Emotional labour may be stressful for employees, especially those lacking autonomy, and the ability for managers to regulate one's emotions may help employees cope with this stress (Grandey, Fisk & Steiner, 2005).

The ability to recognise emotions in others may help one know when to perform emotional labour, just as the ability to recognise one's own emotions may help employees know when they need to pay attention to altering their emotional expressions. According to Brotheridge (2006) the key role of emotional intelligence seemed to be as a predictor of the perceived situational demands, which in turn predicted the nature of emotional labour that was performed. This reflects that emotional intelligence skills can be regulated in situational demands and helps both the manager and subordinate to remain focused.

George (2000) suggests that emotional intelligence plays an important role in leadership effectiveness and stresses that the ability to understand and manage moods and emotions in oneself and in others theoretically contributes to effectiveness in leadership. Bass (1997) also highlights that extra effort is considered capable of getting others to do more than they expected, to try harder and desire success, effectiveness occurs when job related needs are met and the individual is leading an effective group. Finally satisfaction is achieved when the individual is working with other team members satisfactorily.

However, 25% of management believed that effective leadership is associated with efficiency and increased production. It is result oriented and self driven. They explained that they did not consider leaders' behaviour when carrying out their tasks as a result they do not see the impact of the leaders behaviour on their performance.

### **Conclusion**

Emotional intelligence thus was found to be related to the three components of transformational leadership which are idealised influence, inspirational motivation and individualised consideration and reward which is a component of transactional leadership. On the other hand laissez-faire leadership style was found to be unrelated to emotional intelligence.

To sum it up, emotional intelligent leaders are those thought to be happier and more committed to their organisation, achieve greater success perform better in the work place, take advantage of and use positive emotions to envision major improvements in organisational functioning, and use emotions to improve their decision making and instill a sense of enthusiasm, trust and co-operation in other employees through interpersonal relationships.

Unlike technical skills, the pathway in the brain associated with social and emotional competencies are different than those engaged by cognitive learning. This is because the foundations of social and emotional competencies are often laid down early in life and reinforced over several years. According to Cherniss (2000) emotional intelligence skills tend to become synonymous with our self-image and thus need focussed attention over time to bring about change.

### **Recommendations**

- There is need for educational and development programs to be launched across the organisation to familiarise employees with the concepts of emotional, social and relational competency and to share results of the leadership study.

- To date, many companies have focused their selection criteria and training programs on hard skills (e.g, technical expertise, industry knowledge, education) and the assessment of personality traits. Topics including emotional competencies like stress management, assertiveness skills, empathy and political/social acumen were never measured in the selection process or training and development programs. There is need to modify both training programs and selection criteria to include emotional intelligence assessment.
- The organisation needs a 360 degree feedback survey for managers and subordinates to be developed basing on the four dimensions of emotional intelligence which are self awareness, self management, social awareness and social skills. This helps individuals and groups to assess their current level of performance and receive development suggestions for enhancing performance.

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