

## Relationship between Attributes of Leadership Effectiveness and Emotional Intelligence within Saudi Arabian Educational System

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### Abstract

*Effective leadership encompasses the ability to influence people such that they are able to realise the set objectives. It is the ability to synergize people's abilities, knowledge, skills, talents and experiences towards the attainment of common goals as well as influencing people's feelings, thoughts, perspectives and behaviour and redirecting them towards the realisation of goals. A majority of studies which have explored the relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership outcomes have supported the proposition that effective leadership depends on understanding the abilities and emotions associated with emotional intelligence. This study seeks to investigate the relationship between specific aspects of emotional intelligence and leadership effectiveness. It particularly focuses on investigating the relationship between leadership effectiveness and specific aspects of emotional intelligence used by the Director of Supervisors in two Offices of Education in Saudi Arabia. The study utilised Goleman's 1995 model of intelligence to investigate whether the Directors exhibit different aspects of emotional intelligence in their leadership by collecting data from a conveniently selected sample of 22 participants based in two Offices of Directors of Educational Supervision in Asir region, Saudi Arabia. In this study, the questionnaires administered and interviews conducted aims to establish whether the Directors demonstrated the attributes that characterize leadership effectiveness within the educational context as it relates to emotional intelligence.*

**Keywords:** Leadership Effectiveness, Emotional Intelligence, Directors of Education, Educational Leadership

### 1. Introduction

Over the years, the education system in Saudi Arabia has undergone significant metamorphosis. The Saudi government has instituted a wide range of reforms in an attempt to improve education standards and outcomes. In a bid to facilitate improvements and ensure that high standards of education standards are upheld, the Office of the Director of Supervisors was established in 1957. Under the leadership of the Director of Supervisors, this Office is expected to oversee the management of schools, carry out inspections, supervise, support teachers and provide guidance on how to improve student outcomes. In essence, the Director acts as the overall leader and overseer of supervisors' work. Supervisors working under the Director perform a wide range of roles. Firstly, they are work with teachers in ways that promote teachers' professional development and lifelong learning (Zepeda 2007). Secondly, supervisors should support teachers by advising, counseling, guiding and coaching teachers to ensure that education policy and school programs are being implemented effectively. They are also monitor, inspect and assess teaching practices (Stimpson et al 2000; Sullivan & Glanz 2009). In order for supervisors to effectively carryout these roles; there is a requirement for the Directors to employ effective leadership skills and approaches (Hebert 2011).

It is therefore worth questioning what effective leadership entails within the educational context. According to Hereford (2010), effective leadership encompasses the ability to influence people so that they are able to realize the set objectives. It is the ability to synergies people's abilities, knowledge, skills, talents and experiences towards the attainment of common goals. Similarly, Santa aria & Santa aria (2012) note that effective leadership involves influencing people's feelings, thoughts, perspectives and behavior and redirecting them towards the realization of goals.

Harris et al (2003) explore in-depth the prerequisites of effective leadership within the school context. They establish that within the school context, effective leadership can be measured in terms of how school leaders are able to motivate teachers and guide them towards the use of effective teaching approaches or strategies. They argue that effective leadership can be measured in terms of the impact it has on school outcomes and that of individual students. Harris et al (2003) further observe that effective leadership within the school context can be characterized in four key ways. Firstly, effective leadership involves defining or setting clear and specific school goals and mission. Secondly, it involves efficient management of school functions that support effective teaching and learning. In this case effective leadership may entail efficiently managing school resources, time, and curriculum and school staff. Thirdly, effective leadership entails developing an environment that promotes professional learning by setting high standards and expectations. Lastly, Harris et al (2003) argue that effective leadership within the educational context entails developing a strong culture characterized by cohesive and collaborative work relations.

The view of effective leadership within the educational context as purported by Hereford (2010), Harris et al (2003) and Santamaria & Santamaria (2012) indicates that effective leadership encompasses certain characteristics or traits that make it possible for leaders to exert influence on their subordinates. Over the years, numerous studies have explored different aspects pertaining to effective leadership (Chi, Lan & DorjGotov 2012; Northouse 2007). Some studies suggest that perhaps there is a link between emotional intelligence and effective leadership (Banihashemian & Moazen 2011; Hamidi & Azizi 2012; Hebert 2011). Conversely, some studies refute these claims. The subsequent section of this study seeks to critically examine whether there exists any link between emotional intelligence and effective leadership.

## 2. Leadership Effectiveness

Leadership effectiveness is vague and multidimensional concept that lacks a standard definition. Nevertheless, following a critical review of various relevant literatures it was established that there are certain common attributes or aspects that characterize leadership effectiveness within the educational context. These aspects include: ability to influence others towards the attainment of goals, setting clear and specific goals, motivating others, efficient management of functions and impact on performance outcomes. In this study, these aspects were used to gauge the level of leadership effectiveness exercised by the Directors of supervisors.

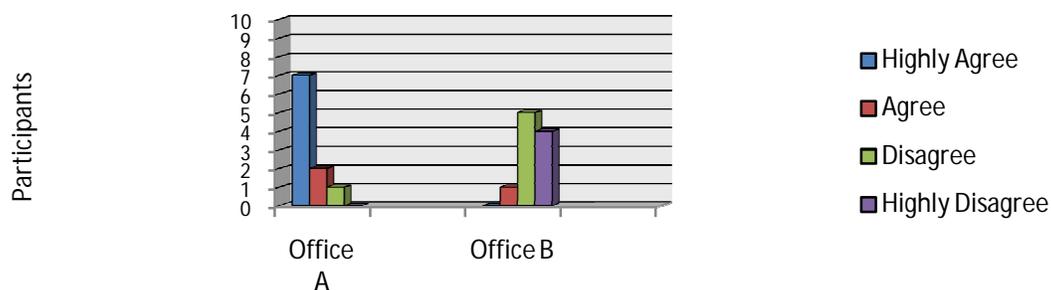
### 2.1 Ability to Influence Others

One of the key attributes of leadership effectiveness within the educational context is the ability to influence people such that they are able to realize the set objectives. It is the ability to synergize people's abilities, knowledge, skills, talents and experiences towards the attainment of common goals. In order to establish whether the Directors of supervisors possessed this ability, the supervisors were asked whether their Director is influential and able to influence our workplace behavior, views, perspectives and beliefs.

In Office A, 7 out of 10 supervisors indicated "Highly Agree", 2 indicated "Agree" whereas 1 supervisor indicated "Disagree".

In Office B, only 1 supervisor indicated "Agree" that their director is influential and able to influence our workplace behavior, views, perspectives and beliefs. 5 supervisors indicated "Disagree" whereas 4 supervisors indicated "Disagree." These findings are represented in the Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Ability to Influence Others**



These findings show that in Office A, 90% of the supervisors who took part in this study consider their supervisor to be influential. However in Office B, only 10% of the supervisors in this office consider their supervisor to be influential. In general, there was a 50% affirmative response in both offices that the Director has the ability to influence people such that they are able to realize the set objectives. Furthermore, the interviews conducted with the Directors from the two offices provided significant insight on the ability of the Director to influence the supervisors such that they are able to realize the set departmental objectives. During the interviews, the Directors were asked how strong their influence is towards employees' workplace behavior, attitudes and beliefs. The Director from Office A explained that; "Because I am constantly communicating with staff, enthusing them with new ideas and motivating them, I think I have a strong influence over my staff. I like to think that they respect me and my choices as I like to involve them in the decision making processes and encourage them to take ownership of ideas and projects. Therefore I believe that my employees share my vision and attitudes towards the way in which we do things here" Similarly, the Director from Office B, described that, "I have a strong work ethic and am professional in my approach. I believe that this has rubbed off on my team".

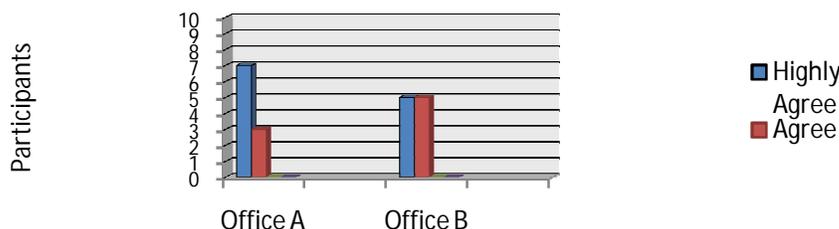
**2.2 Setting clear and specific goals**

Effective leaders within the educational context set clear and specific goals. The questionnaires administered to the supervisors sought to establish whether the Director of supervisors in the Offices of Education in Saudi Arabia set clear and specific goals. In their questionnaires, the supervisors were asked whether their Director often sets clear work priorities, goals and missions.

In Office A, 7 out of 10 supervisors indicated "Highly Agree", the rest indicated "Agree".

In Office B, 5 supervisors indicated "Highly Agree" whereas the rest indicated "Agree". These findings are represented in the Figure 2.

**Figure 2: Setting clear and specific goals**



According to these findings, it is evident that in Office A, 100% of the supervisors who took part in this study agrees that their Director often sets clear work priorities, goals and missions. Similarly in Office B, there was 100% consensus on this issue.

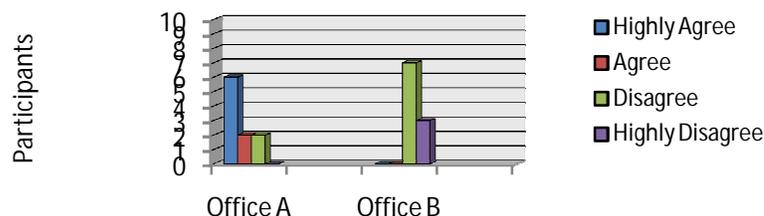
**2.3 Motivation on work performance**

The ability to motivate employees to improve their work performance was identified as a key aspect of leadership effectiveness. In order to establish whether the Directors possess this ability, the supervisors were asked whether their Directors are inspirational and often encourage them to improve their work quality and performance.

In Office A, 6 out of 10 supervisors indicated "Highly Agree", 2 supervisors indicated "Agree" whereas the rest indicated "Disagree".

In Office B, 7 out of 10 supervisors who participated in this study indicated "Disagree", the rest indicated "Highly Disagree". The Figure 3 below represents these findings.

**Figure 3: Motivation on work performance**



Based on these findings it is apparent that, in Office A, 80% of the supervisors agree that their Director possess the ability to motivate them to improve their work performance. Nevertheless, in Office B, there was no affirmative response on this issue. Generally in both offices, there was 40% affirmative response.

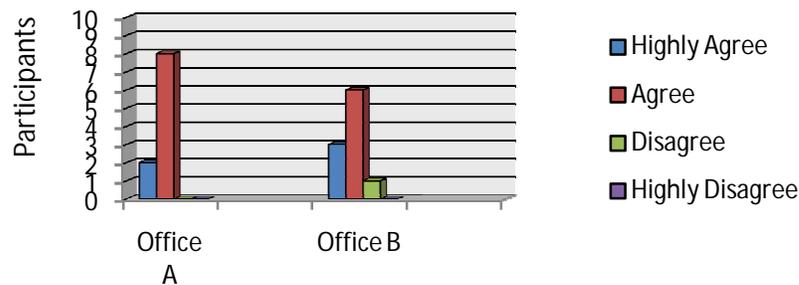
**2.4 Efficient management of functions**

To establish whether the Directors efficiently manage various functions in their department, the supervisors were asked whether their Directors are good planners, whether they review, forecast, budget, prepare and organise activities required to achieve the required goals.

In Office A, 2 out of 10 supervisors who participated in this study indicated “Highly Agree”, the rest indicated “Agree”.

In Office B, 3 supervisors indicated “Highly Agree”, 6 indicated “Agree” whereas 1 indicated they “Disagree”. These findings are represented in the Figure 4 below.

**Figure 4: Efficient management of functions**



In reference to these questionnaire responses it is apparent that, in Office A 100% of the supervisors who took part in this study believe that their Director is efficient when it comes to managing various functions in the department. In Office B, 90% also believe that their Director efficiently manages various functions. Overall in both offices, there was a 95% affirmative response on this issue.

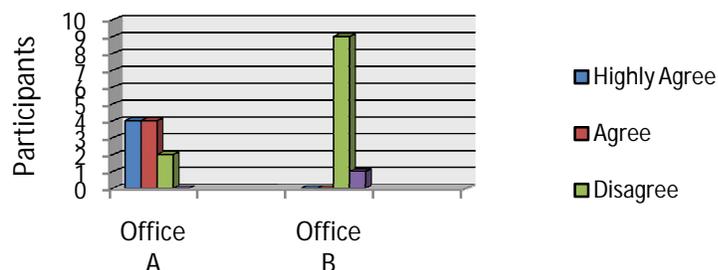
**2.5 Impact on performance outcomes**

Another key aspect of leadership effectiveness revolves around the ability of a leader to significantly impact on performance outcomes. In order to establish whether the Director possesses this quality, the supervisors were asked whether their Director’s leadership directly impacts on their performance and overall school outcomes.

In Office A, 4 out of 10 supervisors indicated “Highly Agree”, 4 supervisors indicated “Agree” whereas 2 supervisors indicated “Disagree”.

In Office B, 9 out of the 10 supervisors who took part in this study indicated “Disagree” whereas 1 supervisor indicated “Highly Disagree”. The Figure 5 below represents these findings.

**Figure 5: Impact on performance outcomes**



According to these questionnaire responses it is evident that, in Office A 80% of the supervisors who took part in this study believe that their Director’s leadership directly impacts on their performance outcomes. Conversely in Office B, none of the supervisors affirmed this statement. Generally, in both offices there was a 40% affirmative response on this issue.

### 3. Leadership Effectiveness in the offices of the Directors of Education

Similar to the concept of emotional intelligence, leadership effectiveness was also found to be a broad and multidimensional concept. Some studies have postulated that effective leadership encompasses the ability to influence people (Hereford 2010; Santa aria & Santa aria 2012), motivate others and impact on their outcomes or performance (Harris et al 2003). Nevertheless, despite the existence of different views and perspectives, following a critical review of literature, this study identified five overarching aspects of leadership effectiveness within the educational context. These characteristics include: ability to influence others, setting clear and specific goals, motivation on work performance, efficient management of functions and positive impact on performance outcomes. These aspects were used as benchmarks in this study for assessing whether Directors in Offices A and B exhibit leadership effectiveness. The table below summarizes the total percentage of supervisors from each office who believe that their Directors exhibits the five aspects of leadership effectiveness. It also provides the total average percentage showing the overall score of each Director when it comes to leadership effectiveness. In this case, it is assumed that K represents an affirmative response from each supervisor regarding each aspect of leadership effectiveness. The percentage scores were thus obtained using the following formula ( $\frac{K}{20K} \times 100$ ). See Table 1.

**Table 1: Percentage score of Directors from A and B on five key aspects of leadership effectiveness.**

Aspects of Leadership Effectiveness	Office A	Office B
Ability to influence others	90%	10%
Setting clear and specific goals	100%	100%
Motivation on work performance	80%	0%
Efficient management of functions	100%	90%
Positive impact on performance outcomes	80%	0%
<b>Total Average Score</b>	<b>90%</b>	<b>40%</b>

#### Director, Office A

Based on the responses provided by the supervisors, the Director of Education in Office A demonstrated key aspects of leadership effectiveness. A majority of supervisors in this Office believed that the Director possesses the ability to influence others (90%), sets clear and specific goals (100%), acts as motivation for work performance (80%), efficiently manages functions (100%) and positively impacts on performance outcomes (80%). On average, 90% of supervisors who participated in this study affirmed that their Director exhibits leadership effectiveness. See Figure 6.

**Figure 6: Percentage of supervisors’ affirmative response about the leadership effectiveness attributes displayed by the Director in Office A.**



#### Director, Office B

As compared to Office A, the responses provided by supervisors showed that the Director in Office B demonstrated less leadership effectiveness. Key areas of weakness in relation to leadership effectiveness were evident in areas such as; ability to influence others (10%), motivation on work performance (0%) and positive impact on performance outcomes (0%). The two key areas in which the Director showed most strength include; setting clear and specific goals (100%) and efficient management of functions (90%). On average, only 40% of supervisors who participated in this study affirmed that their Director exhibits leadership effectiveness. See Figure 7.

**Figure 7: Percentage of supervisors' affirmative response about the leadership effectiveness attributes displayed by the Director in Office B.**



### 3.1 Link between Aspects of Emotional Intelligence and Behaviors Associated with Leadership Effectiveness

By comparing the scores of the Director in Office A and B when it comes to emotional intelligence and leadership effectiveness, a certain prevailing pattern is evident. In relation to emotional intelligence, the average score of the Director in Office A is 94%. With regards to leadership effectiveness her average score is 90%. Generally, these scores are almost similar with only a variation of 4%. On the other hand in Office B, the average score of the Director in relation to emotional intelligence is 34%. With regards to leadership effectiveness, the average score of the Director is 40%. Overall, these scores are also similar with only a variation of 6%.

Based on these findings, it may be plausible to argue that there is a positive correlation between emotional intelligence and leadership. By comparing the scores of the Director in Office A and B, it becomes apparent that their scores in relations to emotional intelligence and leadership effectiveness are directly proportional. Generally, these findings suggest that there is a link between emotional intelligence and leadership effectiveness. Similar to the findings of this study, a number of studies support the notion that there is a direct relationship between certain elements of emotional intelligence and leadership effectiveness (Barling et al 2000; Hamidi & Azizi 2012; Hebert 2011; Kerr et al 2006). A study by Barling et al (2000) concludes that a leader's emotional intelligence strongly influences how employees or subordinates rate their effectiveness as a leader. Furthermore, Goleman (1998) debates that emotional intelligence is the distinguishing factor between effective and ineffective leaders. He argues that a leader may possess many of the prerequisites such as the best training, an analytical mind and even smart ideas but without emotional intelligence they would not amount to great leaders. Despite the numerous studies which have postulated a positive correlation between emotional intelligence and leadership, there are several studies which dispute this correlation and even the validity of emotional intelligence as a construct (Antoniadis 2004; Locke 2005).

Locke (2005) particularly critiques the extension or application of emotional intelligence in leadership by Goleman (1998) by arguing that reason and emotion are two very different cognitive processes. He contests that effective leadership is more of an intellectual process and not an emotional one. Antonakis (2004) also contends that leaders, without high or inordinate levels of emotional intelligence, are also capable of demonstrating the emotional appraisal and social skills necessary for effective leadership. Therefore, cognitive ability or actual intelligence plays as much of, if not a more influential role, in shaping an effective leader (Antonakis 2004).

In reference to the various arguments in literature regarding the relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership effectiveness, it may perhaps be a causal oversimplification to suggest that, since this study found that the Director who exhibited high scores in emotional intelligence exhibited high scores in leadership effectiveness and vice versa, there is a relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership effectiveness. Given the multidimensional nature of emotional intelligence and leadership effectiveness, it is perhaps necessary to examine whether specific elements of emotional intelligence can be linked to certain behaviors associated with leadership effectiveness.

According to Santa aria & Santa aria (2012) effective leadership involves influencing people's feelings, thoughts, perspectives and behavior and redirecting them towards the realization of goals. Similarly, effective leadership encompasses the ability to influence people in such a way that enables them to realize set objectives (Horsford 2010). It is the ability to synergies people's abilities, knowledge, skills, talents and experiences towards the attainment of common goals. Therefore, the ability to influence others directly relates to the social skills aspect of emotional intelligence.

Social skills entail adeptness in evoking desirable behavioral responses in others (Goleman 1995; McKenzie 2011). In order for a leader to be able to influence others, they must have the ability to evoke certain responses in others. Therefore it is plausible to argue that social skills enhance leaders' ability to influence others. The high rate of consensus in Office A (100%) regarding the ability of the Director to influence others can be perhaps linked to the high rate of consensus that the Director exhibits social skills. Conversely, the low rate of consensus in Office B (10%) when it comes to the Director's ability to influence others can be linked to the low rate of consensus that the Director exhibits social skills. Drawing on these results, we can conclude that there exists a direct relationship between social skills and the ability of leaders to influence others. Perhaps, we can also conclude that social skills enhance leaders' ability to influence others.

Another aspect of leadership effectiveness that is significantly influenced by emotional intelligence is motivation on work performance. Harris et al (2003) argue that within the educational context, effective leadership can be measured in terms of how school leaders are able to motivate the staff to perform better. In relation to this aspect of leadership effectiveness, there was 80% consensus among the supervisors who participated in this study in Office A that the Director is a significant motivator on work performance. Conversely in Office B, there was no consensus on this issue. Nevertheless, data collected through the use of interviews contrast with these findings. Drawing from the interview conducted with the Director in Office B, it was established that significant effort is exerted towards motivating employees to enhance their performance. Although these findings are to some extent conflicting, it is plausible to conclude that as an element of emotional intelligence, motivation contributes to leadership effectiveness. Boyatzis, Smith & Blaize (2006) concur with these findings by arguing that aspects of motivation can assist in improving performance.

According to Harris et al (2003) effective leadership within the school context involves defining or setting clear and specific school goals and mission. Although the findings established through this study did not show any significant correlation between this aspect of leadership effectiveness and emotional intelligence. Coco (2011) suggests that self-awareness translates to understanding of one's values, emotions and motivation. This in turn causes a leader to communicate and exhibit a strong sense of purpose, passion and direction (Harris et al 2003). Hence, as a result of self-awareness, a leader is likely to develop clear goals and visions for the team he or she is leading. Similarly, no correlation was established between efficient management of functions and several aspects of emotional intelligence. This finding concurs with the sentiments of Locke (2005) who observes that good leadership is not about making people feel good but involves understanding issues such as the role of different corporate functions, the integrating vision, how to fit different parts of the organization together, how to attain a competitive advantage and other technical aspects such as cash flow and evaluation of talent when recruiting. This contrasts with conceptualizations of good or effective leadership postulated by Goleman (1998) and Kerr et al (2006) as primarily dependent on leaders' ability to appraise or perceive and manage the emotions of others.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Through this study, it was established that, emotional intelligence enhances the ability of Directors to impact on the performance outcomes of supervisors. By critically examining the differences between the score of Directors in Office A and B when it comes to leadership effectiveness, it is evident that based on the benchmarks used, the Director of Office A is considered to be more of an effective leader than the Director in Office B. Similarly, in relations to different aspects of emotional intelligence, the Director in Office A was considered to demonstrate a higher level of emotional intelligence than the Director in Office B. These results suggest that a high level of emotional intelligence is directly proportional to a high level of leadership effectiveness. These findings correspond with the findings of a study carried out by Kerr et al (2006) which found a positive correlation between the scores of the emotional intelligence tests and ratings of leadership effectiveness.

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