

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOR IN THE NIGERIAN CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

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ABSTRACT

Different authors have investigated the various competences, skills or abilities that constitute emotional intelligence. However the relative importance of each of the emotional competence components has not been investigated, especially as regards relationship management. A descriptive survey research design was adopted, with questionnaire as the major research instrument, in which the relationship management skills of construction leaders in Victoria Island and Ikeja areas of Lagos State Nigeria were studied. The study also investigated the emotional competences under the relationship management domain, and the behavioral attributes within the competences. Data gathered were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Relative-importance index ranking using the Severity Index shows that the variable 'Identify and encourage opportunity for collaboration across and within groups' under Teamwork and Collaboration ranked highest amongst all attributes of relationship management identified, while 'Use non-verbal cues like tone of voice to focus on the message' under Communication skills ranked least. ANOVA test showed that there is no significant difference between the contributions of developing others, leadership, influence, communication, change catalyst, conflict management, building bonds, teamwork and collaboration to relationship management. Possession of all relationship management competences by construction industry leaders is strongly advocated. Furthermore, it is recommended that knowledge of communication skills by members of the industry should be improved and diversified as a way of improving relationship management competences.

KEYWORDS: Emotional Intelligence, Leadership, Relationship Management

INTRODUCTION

The primary focus of leadership is on effectiveness irrespective of its domain of application – managerial, military, parliamentary, religious, political, formal or informal. Yukl (2002, cited in Reed, 2005) asserts that leadership effectiveness is more conveniently quantified by organizational outcomes and results. Bass (1990) and Goleman (2000) conclude that leadership can be regarded as the single most important factor in organizational success or failure, and a leader's singular job is to get results.

One primary concern for the construction industry over the next decade is the development of leaders at all levels of the organization (Butler and Chinowsky, 2006).

Strohmeier (1992) observes that 88% of project managers spend more than half of their working time cooperating with others. Possession of effective leadership skills by project managers is thus an imperative if project goals must be achieved (Loo, 1996).

Sunindijo and Hadikusum (2005) make elaborate enumeration of effective leadership behaviors that leaders exhibit to influence people. The approach to research had been to investigate these themes. However, as pointed out by Reed (2005), an emerging body of research examining emotional intelligence in leadership

may serve as a common thread that binds together discrete leadership themes.

Leadership will continue to dominate in significance among core competences required of construction industry executives.

Emotional Intelligence (EI) is increasingly being recognized as an important issue in the workplace. Research by Sunindijo and Hadikusum (2005) shows that for an individual to be a star performer in every field, EI is twice as important as Intellectual Quotient (IQ).

Pool (1997) states that IQ predicts only about 20 percent of career success, while EI predicts about 80 percent of a person's success in life.

Butler and Chinowsky (2006) also identify interpersonal skills and empathy as key EI behaviors that need additional attention during the development of construction industry executives.

The aim of this research is to investigate the relationship management (social skills) abilities of construction industry leaders.

The following objectives will be pursued.

- i) Identification and ranking of important attributes of competences under the relationship management domain of EI among construction industry leaders.

- ii.) Determination of which competence under the relationship management domain contributes most significantly to the leaders' relationship management abilities.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Leadership

Much disagreement still exists among researchers regarding the precise definition of leadership. Perhaps the reason for this is that offered by Bosman (2003) that leadership is a phenomenon involving complex interaction between the leader, the followers and the situation.

Leadership has therefore elicited numerous definitions from different authors. Avery and Baker (1990) define leadership as the process of influence between a leader and his follower to attain group, organizational and social goals. Fertman and van Linden (1999) view leaders as individuals who think for themselves, communicate their thoughts and feelings to others, and help others understand and act on their own beliefs. Kashiwagi, Sullivan, Badger, and Kashiwagi (2007) perceive leadership as the ability to align resources, manage change, and increase organizational efficiency, quality and stability.

Leadership is the ability to envision a goal and harness available human and material resources for the attainment of the goal in a cordial, safe and sustainable way, even in the face of crisis, constraints or opposition. Kouzes and Posner (1987) in Leech (2007) posit that leadership is an observable, learnable set of practices. According to Leech (2007) the following 14 attributes or 'traits' possessed by leaders can be learned or emulated: 1) physical vitality, 2) intelligence, 3) eagerness to accept responsibility, 4) task competence, 5) understanding of followers and their needs, 6) skill in dealing with people, 7) need for achievement, 8) capacity to motivate people, 9) courage and resolution, 10) trustworthiness, 11) decisiveness, 12) self-confidence, 13) assertiveness, and 14) adaptability/flexibility.

Leaders transcend their own self-interest for the good of the organization. They activate followers' higher order needs and promote trust leading to emotional identification with these leaders, inspirational motivation, and intellectual stimulation.

Leadership has been identified as one of the major challenges of the construction industry in the present decade. While technology is slowly modernizing activities such as project management, influences such as globalization, evolving delivery mechanisms, and changing organizational structures require business decisions that challenge the traditional transactional focus of the industry (Butler and Chinowsky, 2006).

Emotional Intelligence (EI)

Before the early 90s, emotions were not considered to be of value to business relationships and teamwork. Emotions were seen as subtracting from objectivity and were therefore an unwanted influence, to be controlled or sublimated since it reflected weakness and instability in the organization man (Prins, 2006).

EI is the ability to perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth (Mayer and Salovey, 1993). Goleman (1998) defined EI as the capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, and for managing emotions well in us and in our relationships. EI is an array of non-cognitive capabilities, competencies and skills that influence one's ability to succeed in coping with environmental demands and pressures (Bar-On, 1997). These definitions present different reflections of the true identity of the concept of EI. EI is the possession of behavioral competencies to control one's emotions and that of others, and harness both for organizational or project success.

Emotional intelligence of the project manager is key among several other competences for overall project success.

Measurement of EI

Mayer, Salovey, Caruso and the MSCEIT

Mayer, Salovey and Caruso developed Mayer Salovey Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT). They argued that EI can be measured by one's ability to read emotions in faces, or in group interactions. The MSCEIT is a test, and your EI depends on your answers. The MSCEIT is useful in understanding your ability, or lack of ability, in recognizing emotions in others. (Renaissance Lawyer, 2008).

Reuven Bar-On and the EQ-I

Based on 19 years of research, and tested on over 48,000 individuals world wide, the Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-I) was developed by Dr. Reuven Bar-On. The EQ-i was designed to measure a number of constructs related to emotional intelligence. Like the MSCEIT, the EQ-i is a self-report and your score is a reflection of your answers. The EQ-i is well regarded for selection purposes and career development (Renaissance Lawyer, 2008)

Daniel Goleman and the ECI

Goleman views EI as a set of competencies that can be assessed using the Emotional Competence Inventory (ECI). Described as a 360 feed back tool, a person's score on the ECI is determined by the feed back from the person's boss, peers and those who report to him at work. Renaissance Lawyer (2008) indicates that the instrument is for use only as a development tool, not for hiring or compensation decisions.

3.0 RESEARCH METHOD

The Design

Data for this research were gathered by the use of questionnaire containing scaled questions, structured to answer the questions posed. The work focused on Relationship Management inspite of the four critical areas of emotional intelligence. There are four critical areas of emotional intelligence encompassing eighteen competences that exist in theory viz:

Self-Awareness: Emotional Self-Awareness, Accurate Self-Assessment, Self-Confidence

Self-Management: Emotional Self-Control, Transparency, Adaptability, Achievement Orientation, Initiative, and Optimism.

Social Awareness: Empathy, Organizational Awareness, and Service Orientation

Relationship Management (social skills): Developing Others, Inspirational Leadership, Change Catalyst, Influence, Conflict Management, Teamwork and Collaboration.

38 questionnaires were administered on project managers, construction managers and executives of construction firms in Victoria Island and Ikeja Areas of Lagos State Nigeria. These categories of construction workers carry out leadership functions in the construction industry in Nigeria. The data collection was by a self-report process in which respondents rated themselves in a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire. Companies covered by the research were those registered with the Federation of the Construction Industry (FOCI) and the Nigeria Institute of Building (NIOB) who operate in the research area.

Response Rate

Overall, 31 properly completed questionnaires were returned giving an acceptable response rate of 82%.

Table 1: Rate of Return of Questionnaires

Research hypothesis

This research tested the following hypothesis

H₀: There is no significant difference between the contributions of developing others, leadership, influence, communication, change catalyst, conflict management, building bonds, teamwork and collaboration to relationship management

H₁: There is significant difference between the contributions of developing others, leadership, influence, communication, change catalyst, conflict management, building bonds, teamwork and collaboration to relationship management

Decision Rule:

Accept H₀ if sig ≥ 0.05, otherwise, reject H₀

Methods of Data Analyses

Most of the data collected for this research were ordinal in nature. In order to rank the relationship management

attributes of respondents, it was necessary to weigh the attributes' relative importance. The Severity Index (SI) method was used to rank the attributes.

SI is a non-parametric technique that is based on aggregate weighting of the initial frequency score of each factor. Oladapo (2006) gave the formula for Severity Index as:

$$S.I = \sum_{i=1}^{i=n} \frac{x100\%/n}{Wif_i}$$

Where SI is the severity index and wi is the weight for each rating (i.e. rating in scale/number of points in a scale), fi is the frequency of response and n is the total number.

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software was used to generate an analysis of variance (ANOVA) for the data in order to examine the contributions of the emotional competences under the relationship management domain.

4.0 RESULTS, ANALYSES AND DISCUSSIONS

The data gathered for this research were analyzed and presented in this section.

Table 2 shows the respondents' areas of specialization /professions.

From Table 3, 61% of the respondents have an industry work experience for more than six years. Closely follow this are those whose work experiences fall within 1-5years (39%) – the upcoming leaders of the industry.

Relationship Management

This work investigated relationship management (social competences) variables of the sample under the headings: developing others, leadership, influence, communication, change catalyst, conflict management, building bonds, and teamwork and collaboration. Social Competencies determine how an individual manages his/her relationships with others (Prins, 2006). DevelopingOthers

The ranking of developing others attributes is presented in Table 4. Respondents ranked give directions or demonstrations to develop someone as the most important attribute, with an SI value of 71.0%. It is these writers' conviction that giving directions and demonstrations is an important process of mentoring others.

Leadership

Table 5 shows the ranking of leadership attributes.

The consistently and visibly lead by example and set a clear standard for teams and colleagues factor ranked first (SI = 78.1%). This result confirms that a leader will have great followership if he is good at what he expects

others to do. The 4th ranking factor – *lead by giving direction and by using formal authority or positional power* (SI = 54.2%) indicates that construction workers now resent leaders that are bossy.

TABLE 5: Leadership

Influence

Table 6 showing attributes under *influence* suggests that members of the construction industry in Victoria Island and Ikeja areas of Lagos State, southwestern Nigeria believe in facts and use of empirical evidence, rather than baseless arguments. It also shows that members of the industry tend to use influential people to make others follow their ideas or respond to their demands. The 7th ranking competence – *Take symbolic actions to have a specific impact on the audience* (SI=58.1%) – suggests weak ability to make specific impact on an audience using symbolic actions by industry members.

TABLE 6: Influence

Respondents' use of engaging style in writing or presenting to an audience must be related to the ability to use computer software such as power point. This will however require further research inquiry. Lack of *use of non-verbal cues like tone of voice to focus on the message* (ranking 6th SI = 43.9%) indicates that most respondents are not trained communicators.

Change Catalyst

Table 8 shows respondents' ranking of the *change catalyst* attributes. Respondents of this research ranked *state a need for change* highest (SI=73.5%). The factor *personally lead change initiative* ranked 5th, apparently implying reluctance on the part of respondents to take responsibility for pioneering change. It further suggests that the Nigerian business environment or the nature of the organizations do not allow employees to take the lead in a change effort.

Conflict Management

Table 9 shows the ranking of the attributes under conflict management.

People who are skilled in the conflict management competence have the ability to handle difficult people and tense situations with diplomacy and tact (Goleman, 1998). The ranking of *Focus disagreements on the issues or actions involved rather than the person* as 4th appears to suggest that respondents attack persons rather than issues; however, this is really not the case when we give regards to the SI of 71.6%, which this factor possesses. The authors are of the opinion that construction industry employees in the area covered by this

research do not reduce business issues to personal levels.

Building Bonds

Table 10 shows respondents' ranking of the attributes under *building bonds*.

Respondents indicate a high level of willingness to network with new people and to use opportunities, hence the ranking of *continuously broaden and maintain a wide network of relationships* as the first (SI = 79.4%). The researchers agree to this finding that respondents have strong affinity for building bonds.

Teamwork and Collaboration

Teamwork and collaboration deal with the ability to work with other people to achieve shared goals. Collaboration across and within groups is akin to building network of relationships. It is not surprising that this factor was ranked first by respondents with an SI value of 83.2%. The factor *express positive expectation and respect for others' works* (SI=65.8%) implies that respondents tend to see their works as the best. This tendency discourages participation and further creates a sense of insecurity among team members.

Test of Hypothesis

Table 12 shows the analysis of the relationship management competences using analysis of variance (ANOVA) test statistics computed with the SPSS software.

With reference to Table 12, sig. ≥ 0.05 therefore, we accepted the null hypothesis affirming that no significant difference exists between the contributions of *developing others, leadership, influence, communication, change catalyst, conflict management, building bonds, teamwork and collaboration* to relationship management. This means that statistically, none of the competences under the domain of relationship management determines one's relationship management skills more than the other.

5.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This research took a closer look at relationship management (social skills) as a domain of emotional intelligence; an ability recently found to be an indispensable tool for leadership.

Based on the findings of this study the following conclusions are made:

Among *developing others* attributes of relationship management, *give directions or demonstration to develop someone* ranks highest with SI=71.0%, while *recognize specific strengths or development* ranks least with SI = 50.3%.

For the competence, *leadership, consistently and visibly lead by example and set clear standards for teams and colleagues* ranks highest with SI = 78.1%, while the

least ranking factor is lead by giving direction and, by using one's formal authority and positional power (SI=54.2%).

Under Influence, use factual argument to persuade and influence others e.g. appeal to reason or data ranks highest with SI = 72.9%. Take symbolic actions to have a specific impact on the audience (SI=58.1%) ranks least.

Use engaging style in writing or presenting to an audience (SI=78.1%) and Use non-verbal cues like tone of voice to focus on the message (SI=43.9%) rank highest and least respectively among communication attributes.

Among change catalyst attributes, state a need for change (SI=73.5%) ranks highest while models the change expected of others (SI = 56.8%) ranks least.

Under conflict management, bring disagreement and grievance into the open ranks highest with SI=78.7%, and find a common ideal to which all parties to a conflict can endorse ranks least with SI = 71.0%.

For Building Bonds competence, continuously broaden and maintain a wide network of relationships (SI=79.4%) and use strong mutual relationships towards work goals (SI = 65.2%) rank highest and least respectively.

Among attributes under the Teamwork and Collaboration competence, identify and encourage opportunity for collaboration across and within groups ranks highest with SI = 83.0%, while express positive expectation or respect for others' works (SI=65.8%) ranks least.

It is further concluded that identify and encourage opportunity for collaboration across and within groups

(SI = 83.0%) (an attribute under teamwork and collaboration competence) is the highest ranking attribute under the relationship management (social skills) domain of emotional intelligence. Use non-verbal cues like tone of voice to focus on the message (SI=43.9%) under the communication competence ranks the least.

No significant difference exists between the contributions of developing others, leadership, influence, communication, change catalyst, conflict management, building bonds, teamwork and collaboration to relationship management. In the area of study, none of the emotional intelligence competences under the relationship management domain determines one's relationship management skills more than the other.

Recommendations

For effective leadership in the construction industry, more attention should be paid to communication by professionals. Contemporary communication skills should be taught in tertiary institutions offering construction related subjects. Communication in the construction industry should be facilitated to a point where members of the industry are able to understand and read meanings into non-verbal cues.

All competences under relationship management should be pursued by professionals, and encouraged by construction industry professional bodies to engender competent leadership in the industry

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TABLE 2: Respondents' Areas of Specialization

Note that Odusami, Iyagba and Omirin (2003), found that no significant relationship exists between the project leader's profession and overall project performance.