

Emotional Intelligence and Leadership Skills among Postgraduate students at Kampala International University, Uganda

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Abstract: This study was conducted in 2017 among postgraduates students pursuing a business qualification at Kampala International University, Uganda; emotional intelligence (EI) was the predictor variable and leadership skills was the response variable. Testing four hypothesis: (i) Emotional intelligence has a significant positive effect on Leadership skills among postgraduate students in business management at Kampala International University, Uganda, (ii) There is a significant difference between gender and level of Leadership skills among postgraduate students in business management at Kampala International University, Uganda, (iii) There is a significant difference between age groups and level of Leadership skills among postgraduate students in business management at Kampala International University, Uganda, (iv) There is a significant difference between work experience and level of Leadership skills among postgraduate students in business management at Kampala International University, Uganda; the study adopted a descriptive- correlational research design. Purposive sampling was used to identify the 93 employed/working students who were considered for the study. The findings of the study revealed that there was a significant effect between emotional intelligence and leadership skills ($r^2 = .33$, $p < .001$); there was no significant difference between gender and leadership skills; there was a significant difference between age groups and leadership skills; and there was no significant difference between work experience and leadership skills. On the basis of the findings, conclusions and recommendations were made. The study provided additional evidence confirming the role of emotional intelligence in leadership and how age influences leadership skills as called for by Van Solinge, 2014.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Leadership Skills, Students, Business Management.

INTRODUCTION

Since Goleman [1] postulated that emotional intelligence is vital for leadership skills, several researchers have explored the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and leadership. Mohan and Sudarsan [2] refer to emotional Intelligence (EI) as an individual's aptitude to distinguish, manage and assess emotions which enables him or her to manage relationships more effectively. Although several researchers and practitioners have emphasized the importance of EI in organizations, several remain skeptic [3]. EI remains an area of significant interest in organizations due to its perceived role in influencing job performance [4]. Organizations constantly change

and reinvent themselves by reorganizing, re-engineering, downsizing and adopting new technologies. These endless evolution and changes not only put strains on the people in the organization, but more particularly on the leader or leadership of the organization who have to have the foresightedness and the temperament to see them manifest [5].

Several studies [1, 6, 2] suggested that individuals with high EI are more capable of understanding and managing their emotions, which allows them to adjust to their surroundings and become more tolerant to challenging conditions, including stress. Mohan and Sudarsan [2] asserted that Goleman

[1] recognized that EI leads to more effectiveness in leadership. In fact Føllesdal and Hagtvet [47] pointed out that emotional intelligence (EI) is assumed to be vital trait in leadership.

According to Goleman [1] an emotionally intelligent person and leader at that can be more motivated, self-aware, self-confident, satisfied and socially proficient, this makes for an effective and efficient leader. As a leader this can have a profound effect on the commitment level of the employees [2]. Leadership is essentially an emotional process, due to the fact that the leader has to be familiar with followers' emotional states, try to appeal to the emotions of the followers, and then attempt to manage followers' emotional states as the conditions dictates [7]. The ability of a leaders to dictate the emotional climate significantly influences performance in organizations; through shared emotional experiences leaders increase group coherence and morale. In addition to this Leadership being a social driven process where the leader's aptitude to persuade the behavior of their followers and subordinates can significantly affect performance outcomes [8].

Several authors [9] proposed a model that identified four different components of EI namely, perception of emotion, ability to understand emotion, ability to reason using emotions, and ability to manage emotions. Nourollahi, Nikbaksh and Esmaeili [10], noted that Goleman [11] believes that emotional intelligence is a extensive variety of skills by which an individual can deliberately regulate his or her mind through self-awareness, develop it through self-regulation, comprehend its influence using sympathy, and augment one's own and other's spirit by managing relationships. Goleman [11] presented five dimensions for EI: (i) evaluation of emotions, (ii) regulation of emotions; (iii) motivation and self controlling of emotions; (iv) understanding and recognizing the emotions; (v) communication and emotions. In this study the five dimension of Goleman [11] were adopted and worded as: (i) self-awareness, (ii) self regulation, (iii) self-motivating, (iv) empathy, and (v) social skills.

Nabih, Metwally and Nawar [12] pointed out that it is imperative that all organization strive to equip their employees with leadership skills since leadership roles and processes are indispensable in setting direction, creating configuration, and encouraging commitment in organization. In this study leadership skill was conceptualized as communication skills, problem solving skills, team work and leading.

Since leaders are tasked to achieve organizational outcomes such as innovation, effectiveness, efficiency, performance, and satisfaction [12]; this study therefore seeks to investigate the effect of emotional intelligence on leadership skills among postgraduate students in business management at

Kampala International University Uganda by testing the following hypothesis:

- H₁: Emotional intelligence has a significant positive effect on Leadership skills among postgraduate students in business management at Kampala International University, Uganda.
- H₂: There is a significant difference between gender and level of Leadership skills among postgraduate students in business management at Kampala International University, Uganda.
- H₃: There is a significant difference between age groups and level of Leadership skills among postgraduate students in business management at Kampala International University, Uganda.
- H₄: There is a significant difference between work experience and level of Leadership skills among postgraduate students in business management at Kampala International University, Uganda.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Emotional Intelligence and Leadership skills

Though studies on emotional intelligence and leadership has causation that goes both directions [13]. Past researchers [14-18, 8, 19-22, 12] have provided inconsistent results when it come to the effect of emotional intelligence on leadership skills. This underlines the need for further research.

Weinberger [17], Modassir & Singh [19] found no significant relationship between the two variables. Sayeed and Shanker [20] found a significant relationship, while Hebert (2011) and Nabih *et al.*, [12] revealed that there was a significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership. Others researchers [15, 16, 18, 21] have all argued that EI as an ability is important in leadership skills in general. In fact Harms & Credé [21] have pointed out the assumed positive relationship between EI and transformational leadership. Côté, Lopes, Salovey & Miners [23] carried out a study on emotional intelligence and leadership emergence in small groups. Their findings observed that when emotional intelligence was measured with an ability test, emotional intelligence was associated with leadership emergence, but not when it was measured with a self-report scale. They [23] also observed that among the dimensions of emotional intelligence, the ability to understand emotions was most consistently associated with leadership emergence. Rosete & Ciarrochi [18] investigated the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI), personality, cognitive intelligence and leadership effectiveness; their correlational and regression analyses revealed that higher EI was associated with higher leadership effectiveness. Similarly Kerr, Garvin, Heaton & Boyle [8] explored the relationship between managerial emotional intelligence (EI) levels and a rating of leadership effectiveness. Their study discovered a significant relationship ($r=0.50, p<0.001$). In Khorramrooz & Ghasemi [24] Emotional intelligence has significant

relationship with leadership ($r= 0.71, p<0.01$). Several others studies [25, 26] found a similar relationship. Since more studies found a positive relationship, the hypothesis was stated:

H₁: *Emotional intelligence has a significant positive effect on Leadership skills among postgraduate students in business management at Kampala International University, Uganda.*

Gender and Leadership skills

The debate on who makes a better leader and difference in male and female leadership style has been waged among scholars, some of them emphasize the sex differences in leadership roles especially in the feminist literature and some scholars emphasize the similarities [27, 28]. The finding is not conclusive, since some scholars found a difference [29] while others found none [30, 28]. Hasan and Othman [29] established that female leadership styles can be more effective and productive in the contemporary flexible organizations; they also found that women leaders are participatory or collaborative in nature than their male counterpart. Thus emphasizing a difference in styles between the genders. Kent *et al.*, [28] examined the differences between men and women leaders with respect to their transformational leadership behaviors. The results of the study show that men and women leaders behave as leaders in the same way. It was also found that men and women do not differ in their general perceptions of others as leaders. Similarly Manning [31], who examined male and female transformational leaders and did not find significant differences between genders in leadership style. To top it off, Clark and Waldron [30] in their study of 243 working MBA students found that gender was not a differentiator of leadership skills. It is important to note that most scholars found no significant difference. On the basis of the conflicting findings the hypothesis is stated:

H₂: *There is a significant difference between gender and level of Leadership skills among postgraduate students in business management at Kampala International University, Uganda.*

Age and Leadership skills

Though several studies [32-38] have explored relationship between age and leadership. However, Van Solinge [38] pointed out that an area not studied extensively is how age influences leaders. The studies on the effect of age and leadership show that findings are quite patchy and sometimes opposing [37, 34]. This is confirmed by the fact that several studies find that age has a negative relationship with leadership behaviors [32]; others show non-significant [34] or positive relationships [33, 36]. Walter and Scheibe [37] observed that generally negative or non-significant relations have been documented more frequently than positive ones. A number of studies have shown that older leaders are more likely to exhibit passive

behaviors. Zacher, *et al.*, [34], for instance, identified a positive relationship between age and passive-avoidant leadership. Whether leadership and leadership style improves or changes with age, one thing is sure, age creates a variation in leadership skill. On the basis of this, the hypothesis is drawn:

H₃: *There is a significant difference between age groups and level of Leadership skills among postgraduate students in business management at Kampala International University, Uganda.*

Work Experience and Leadership skills

The Center for Creative Leadership [39] emphasized that Leaders are made, not born. And they're made over many years, shaped by professional and personal experiences. Several studies [40, 41] have pointed out that leadership is a result of experiences. In fact Ambler [42] pointed out that: "The power of experiences to shape a leader's mindset and perspective is huge, in fact experiences are so powerful they can have the opposite effect, just as experiences can make us stronger they can also paralyze us, causing us to cower and retreat from life." Meers [43] investigated the relationship by studying fifteen effective leaders from various backgrounds who described their significant life experiences and the effect it has on their development as leaders. The study developed six propositions that point to a strong link between life experience (work experience included) and leadership skills. Leadership experience can be very valuable; on this basis the hypothesis is made:

H₄: *There is a significant difference between work experience and level of Leadership skills among postgraduate students in business management at Kampala International University, Uganda.*

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive- correlational research design; purposive sampling method was used to collect data from 93 postgraduate students in a Business ethics course on the basis of being gainfully employed. The data was collected through structured questionnaire which was divided into three parts: first part focused on personal characteristics, second part of the questionnaire is to measure the emotional intelligence level of students construct by Goleman [11] was used and the third part focused on leadership. Covering 40 items, the emotional intelligence questionnaire is widely applied to measure five subscales (self-awareness, self regulation, self-motivating, empathy, and social skills) of emotional intelligence. Similarly four subscales (communication, Problems solving, team work and leading) was used for leadership skills which covers 34 items. Using Cronbach's alpha method, the reliability coefficient values were 0.76 and 0.83 for the leadership skills and emotional intelligence questionnaires, respectively, both satisfying the 0.70 or higher coefficient [44]. Content

validity ratio was used to test validity, with a mean score of 0.91 (emotional intelligence) and 0.87 (leadership skills), both exceeding the prescribed minimum by Lawshe [45]. The descriptive data was interpreted using the following guide: 0-1.25 (very low); 1.26-2.50 (low); 2.51-3.75 (Moderate); 3.76-5.00 (High). Using Eta squared ($\eta^2 = t^2/t^2 + (N1 + N2 - 2)$) and its proposed guidelines for interpretation as suggested by Cohen's (1988), the magnitude of the differences in the means was confirmed. Cohen classifies 0.01 as a small effect, 0.06 as a medium effect and 0.14 as a large effect.

FINDINGS

Demographic profile of respondents

Out of the 93 respondents 54(58.1%) are female; the majority are in the age range of 31to 35 (33.3%), most of the respondents are 45 years old and below(88.2%); most respondents are married (58.1%), followed by singles (36.6%); a majority of the respondents have a bachelors degree (46.2%); 46 of the respondents have a work experience of 6 to 10 years (accounting for 49.5%); 35.5% are low level managers, 43.0% are middle level mangers and 21.5% are top level managers.

Descriptive statics and Correlation Matrix for the study variables

This section provides descriptive statistic on terms of means, standard deviations and interpretations. A correlation matrix was also used to explore the relationship between the variables and their constructs.

Table-1: Descriptive statics for the study variables

Emotional Intelligence	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretations
Self-awareness	4.00	0.41	High
Self regulation	3.73	0.55	Moderate
Self-motivating	4.20	0.58	High
Empathy	4.00	0.59	High
Social skills	4.00	0.51	High
Total	3.99	0.53	High
<hr/>			
Leadership Skills	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretations
Communication	3.51	0.71	Moderate
Problem solving	3.25	0.90	Moderate
Team work	3.73	0.90	Moderate
Leading	3.51	0.84	Moderate
Total	3.50	0.84	Moderate

Table 1 shows that the levels of emotional intelligence is very high (mean= 3.99), however self regulation scored the lowest (mean = 3.73) and self motivating (mean =4.20) ranked the highest compared to the other constructs of emotional intelligence. In the

case of leadership skills, the score was ranked as moderate (mean=3.50) with problem solving ranking the least (mean = 3.25) and team work (mean = 3.73) the highest.

Table-2: Correlation Matrix for the study variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Leadership Skills (1)	1.00										
<i>Problem solving (2)</i>	0.70**	1.00									
<i>Team work(3)</i>	0.72**	0.23*	1.00								
<i>Leading (4)</i>	0.80**	0.48**	0.50**	1.00							
<i>Communication (5)</i>	0.87**	0.57**	0.52**	0.63**	1.00						
Emotional Intelligence(6)	0.45**	0.15	0.31**	0.23*	0.33**	1.00					
<i>Self-awareness (7)</i>	0.21*	0.09	0.06	0.21*	0.10	0.69**	1.00				
<i>Self regulation (8)</i>	0.53**	0.33**	0.34**	0.33**	0.42**	0.76**	0.47**	1.00			
<i>Self-motivating (9)</i>	0.49**	0.12	0.31**	0.18	0.42**	0.77**	0.39**	0.55**	1.00		
<i>Empathy (10)</i>	0.23*	0.01	0.18	0.12	0.16	0.80**	0.49**	0.37**	0.45**	1.00	
<i>Social skills (11)</i>	0.24*	0.01	0.27**	0.04	0.14	0.85**	0.45**	0.55**	0.54**	0.75**	1.00

** : p < 0.01, * : p < 0.05

A correlation matrix of all variables (and their constructs) used in the analysis is included as Table 2. This indicates that there is a significant positive

relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership skills ($r= 0.45, p< 0.01$).

Emotional intelligence and Leadership skills

Table-3: Multiple Regression result for Emotional Intelligence and Leadership Skills

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta(β)		
(Constant)	1.545	.517		2.990**	.004
Self-awareness	-.129	.143	-.095	-.903	.369
Self regulation	.483	.117	.472	4.123**	.000
Self motivating	.352	.107	.359	3.290**	.001
Empathy	.139	.132	.143	1.059	.293
Social skills	-.306	.163	-.275	-1.880†	.063
Adjusted R ² = .334 (F=10.229, p<.001)					

† p < .10, *p < .05, **p < .01.

Multiple regression analysis was used to test for relationships between the personal characteristics (see table 3). Three of the constructs of emotional intelligence are significant at conventional levels: self regulation ($\beta=.47$), self motivating ($\beta=.36$) and social skills ($\beta=-.28$). Table 3 confirms the set of predictors is significantly ($F = 10.23, p < .00$) related to leadership skills and explains 33.4% of the variance. These finding confirms the first hypothesis: Emotional intelligence has a significant positive effect on Leadership skills among postgraduate students in business management at Kampala International University, Uganda.

This findings of this study contradicts scholars [19, 17] who found no significant relationship between the two variable and agrees with other studies [24, 22, 20, 8, 18] that found a significant relationship and more

specifically concurs with Hebert [22] and Nabih, *et al.*, [12] by revealing a significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership skills. As is the case in Côté, *et al.*, [23] the ability to understand emotions (self regulations) in terms of self was a significant contributor, but empathy was not. In Kerr, *et al.*, [8] the relationship was significant and positive ($r=0.50, p<0.001$), as is the case in Khorramrooz & Ghasemi [24] where the relationship is quite strong ($r= 0.71, p<0.01$), this study has a more modest relationship ($r=0.45, p< 0.01$) compared to their, but all the same, significant.

Gender and Leadership skills

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the leadership skills rating for males and females.

Table-4: Independent-samples t-test results on difference in leadership skills

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Leadership Skills	Male	39	3.6702	.50734	.08124
	Female	54	3.6141	.60396	.08219

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
Leadership Skill		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
	Equal variances assumed		2.066	0.154	0.472	91	0.638	0.05613	0.11886	-0.17997
Equal variances not assumed				0.486	88.856	0.628	0.05613	0.11556	-0.17349	0.28576

† p < .10; *p < .05; **p < .01

There was no significant difference in scores for males ($M=3.67, SD=0.51$) and females [$M=3.61, SD=0.60; t(91) =0.47, p=0.638$], as indicated in table 4.4. Using Eta squared ($\eta^2 = t^2/t^2 + (N1 + N2 - 2)$) and its proposed guidelines for interpretation as suggested by Cohen (1988), the magnitude of the differences in

the means was very small ($\eta^2=.001$). These results suggest that gender really does not have an effect on leadership skills. Specifically, the results suggest that there is no difference in leadership skills when it comes to man and women. Therefore the hypothesis that states: There is a significant difference between gender

and level of Leadership skills among postgraduate students in business management at Kampala International University, Uganda is rejected and the null hypothesis is accepted. In other words: There is no significant difference between gender and level of Leadership skills among postgraduate students in business management at Kampala International University, Uganda

The findings agree with Clark and Waldron [30], Kent *et al.*, [28], and Manning [31] we all emphasized that there was no difference when it comes

to gender and leadership skills. Though leadership style may vary with gender, leadership effectiveness and of course skills (as documented in this study) do not differ.

Age groups and Leadership skills

A one-way between-groups analysis of variance was conducted to explore the effect of age on leadership skills. Respondents were divided into eight groups according to their age (Group 1: 20 or less; Group 2: 21 to 25; Group 3:26 to 30; Group4: 31 to 35; Group 5: 36 to 40; Group 6: 41 to 45; Group 7: 46 to 50; Group 8: 51 and above).

Table-5: One-way ANOVA results of Age groups and Leadership skills

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	5.340	6	.890	3.210	.007*
Within Groups	23.845	86	.277		
Total	29.185	92			

*: p< 0.05

According to table 5 there was a statistically significant difference at the $p<.05$ level in leadership skills for the eight age groups { $F(6, 86) = 3.21, p=.007$ }. The statistical significance emphasizes the actual difference in mean scores between the groups which was quite large. This is confirmed by the fact that in table 5 the Sum of squares for between groups (5.34) was divided by the Total sum of squares (29.19). The resulting eta squared value is 0.18, which in Cohen’s [46] terms would be considered a large effect size. Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for age group 26 to 30 ($M=3.41, SD=0.63$) was significantly difference from age group 41 to 45 ($M=3.99, SD=0.51$). Similarly there as a significant difference between age group 46 to 50 ($M=3.16, SD=0.57$) was significantly difference from age group 41 to 45 ($M=3.99, SD=0.51$). On the basis of these findings, the hypothesis that states: There is a significant difference between age groups and level of Leadership skills among postgraduate students in

business management at Kampala International University, Uganda is confirmed and accepted.

This findings confirms the findings in other studies, regardless of the negative relationship [32] or positive relationships [33, 36], it confirms that there is a significant difference when it comes to age and leadership skills. This study therefore disagrees with Zacher *et al.*, [34] which did not observe any significant difference.

Work experience and Leadership skills

As reflected in table 4.3 the one-way between-groups analysis of variance was conducted to explore the effect of work experience on leadership skills and showed there was no significant difference. Respondents were divided into eight groups according to their years of work experience (Group 1: less than 1; Group 2: 1 to 5; Group 3:6 to 10; Group4: 11 to 15; Group 5: 16 to 20; Group 6: 21 to 25; Group 7: 26 to 30; Group 8: 31 and above).

Table-6: One-way ANOVA results of Work experience and Leadership skills

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	3.204	6	.534	1.768	.115
Within Groups	25.981	86	.302		
Total	29.185	92			

Table 6 shows there was a statistically insignificant difference at the $p<.05$ level in leadership skills for the eight work experience groups { $F(6, 86) = 1.77, p=0.12$ }. These findings therefore reject the hypothesis that states: There is a significant difference between work experience and level of Leadership skills among postgraduate students in business management at Kampala International University, Uganda. The null hypothesis is therefore accepted which states: There is no significant difference between work experience and level of Leadership skills among postgraduate students

in business management at Kampala International University, Uganda.

Contrary to the findings of other studies [40, 41] that found that experience has an effect on leadership, this came as a surprise and was not expected, especially when a significant difference was confirmed with age. In the case of the finding of this study and contrary to the Center for Creative Leadership [39], leaders are born and not made (through their experiences). In truth however, a combination of both might suffice.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The conclusion can be drawn that emotional intelligence has a significant positive effect on emotional intelligence among the respondents in this study. In addition to that there is a significant difference in age group and leadership skills, while there is no significant difference in gender or work experience when it comes to leadership skills among postgraduate students in business management at Kampala International University, Uganda.

On the basis of the findings of this study the recommendations can be made that when considering a candidate for leadership position, emotional intelligence should be a vital consideration and not just age or work experience. It is also advised that leadership positions should be given on the basis of merit and not influence by gender biases since there is no significant difference in leadership skills when it comes to gender. The third recommendation is that though age plays a big role in leadership skills according to this study, it is important not to overly rely on work experience, since it does not influence leadership skills and life experience would be an even better factor [42, 43].

Due to the fact that this study is in one sample, the results may not be generalizable to other population or contexts, added to the fact that this study looks purely at the relationships/effect and difference; further research is called for in terms of qualitative design and research that might look at more intricate dimensions of the variables considered in this study. A specific area of interest would be to explore the impact of life experience on leadership skill.

That said, this study has provided additional constituency to the area of leadership as being influenced by emotional intelligence and has also hearkened to Van Solinge's [38] for more studies in the area of age and its influence on leadership.

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