DEVELOPING EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE OF EMPLOYEES: THE ROLE OF LEADERSHIP

Yu-Shan Chen  
Yu-I Lee  
Tai-Wei Chang

Abstract—This study examines whether emotional intelligence of employees can be enhanced from leadership of supervisors. Based on the literature discussion and empirical results, this study finds that, as employees perceive more leadership, they are more likely to show more emotional intelligence, because that these employees learn more emotional skills from their leadership of supervisors. These findings let managers understand how to foster emotional intelligence of employees for their work to accomplish organizational efficiency.

I. INTRODUCTION

Emotional intelligence (EI) is a hot issue for various disciplines, because it can increase positive behaviors of employees [1, 2, 3]. Mayer and Salovey [4] propose that EI is “the ability to perceive accurately, appraise, and express emotion; the ability to access and/or generate feelings when they facilitate thought; the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge; and the ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth (p. 10).” Many firms encourage employees to participate in education and training courses to improve their EI [5]. Despite the excessive extension of EI, little EI training courses (programs) are based on theory framework or to perform a rigorous EI test [6]. That is, these EI courses (programs) are short of theoretical and methodological rationale, and use an unreasonable techniques [6]. For example, these courses (programs) only contain some of the EI dimensions, and teachers teach a series of skills which are not related EI concept, such as brainstorming, violence prevention, and compressive capacity…etc. On the other hand, these skills are restricted to subjective expression after the EI courses (programs), and teachers and students never pay attention to the long-time utility [6, 7].

Past EI study saw EI as a trait-like variable which is developed by [8]’s EI test. He argued that EI is a non-cognitive variable, composing by motivation,
optimism, adaptability, and warmth, and it is hard to be changed. However, Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso [2] proposed the other perspective of EI, and they defined EI as a state-like variable, composing by self-emotional appraisal, others’ emotional appraisal, regulation of emotion, use of emotion. State-like variables are import for positive organizational behavior [9], because organizations can employ management methods (e.g., leadership) to develop the state-like variables (e.g., EI) to accomplish organizational efficiency. Indeed, Antonakis, Ashkanasy, and Dasborough [10] have suggested that an individual’s emotional management (e.g., EI) is a decision heuristic and can be changed by cognitive processes, and it is similar to working memory [11]. That is, EI can be changed by management methods or learning.

Brown and Moshavi [12] have addressed three relationships between leadership and EI from past studies, and suggested further study to examine other mechanisms. The first relationship is that EI is a moderator between leadership and outcomes. The second relationship is that EI positively influence leadership. The final relationship is that EI is unrelated with leadership. Based on the list, we open the fourth relationship to propose that leadership can positively influence EI. The goal of this research is to explore how leadership of supervisors can foster EI of employees. More specifically, this research borrows from social learning theory to elaborate the mechanism [13].

II. Theory and Development of the proposition
Salovey and Mayer [3] are earliest to argue the name “emotional intelligence” to express the ability of an individual to manage his or her emotions. They also defined it as “the subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one’s own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions” (p. 189). Mayer and Salovey [4] explore EI with respect to four emotional factors. The first emotional factor is self-emotional appraisal, which is an individual’s ability to understand deeply his or her emotions and he or she can show the emotions in nature. The second emotional factor is others' emotional appraisal, which is an ability to understand emotions in other people. The third emotional factor is regulation of emotion, which is an ability of individual to handle his or her emotions and can rapidly recovery form a distress situation. The final emotional factor is use of emotion, which is an ability of individual to employ emotions to direct him or her toward constructive activities and performance.

Emotional intelligence is a crucial element on the process of leadership, because the leadership facilitates the feelings of employees by managing and expressing their emotions well at work to obtain high performance [14, 15]. That is, a leader employs expressing emotions to train their followers, which can increase employees’ self-emotional appraisal, use of emotion, and regulation of emotion. George [16] also argued that leadership process contain five factor. The first factor is establishing and maintaining meaningful identity for the organization. The second factor is encouraging flexibility in decision making and change. The third factor is generating and maintaining enthusiasm, confidence, optimism, cooperation, and trust. The fourth factor is instilling in others a sense of appreciation and importance of work. The final factor is developing collective goals and objectives. For example, when a leader employs the first factor to instill enthusiasm, confidence, optimism, cooperation, and trust to their follows,
which may increase their regulation of emotion. That is, EI is increased from the leadership process.

Based on the social learning theory [17], employees can learn various behaviors by observing and imitating others and the outcomes of others’ behaviors. Given these observations and taking note of which actions are rewarded or punished, employees will decide to engage certain behavior. The process of learning is passive, and people can effectively learn from others' mistakes and from the positive or negative outcomes achieved by others. We borrow from this mechanism to infer the relationship between leadership and EI. When an employee observe his or her leader engaged in understanding deeply his or her emotions and he or she can show the emotions in nature, understanding emotions in other people, handling his or her emotions and can rapidly recovery form a distress situation, employing emotions to direct him or her toward constructive activities and performance, he or she may imitate the subsequent behaviors. The employee if he or she desire promotion may be more likely to act within these behaviors after noting the promotion of the leader who acts in that way. Indeed, for example, a leader employs positive emotions to attend employees’ needs, act as mentors or coaches, and listen to them, and the employees may learn the concept of others' emotional appraisal from the leader. That is, the leader can shape the employees’ EI behaviors from the process of role modeling. This research employs social learning theory as a basis for the connecting of leadership and EI. Based on this statement, employees’ EI will be increased from the leadership process. However, little study clears the hypothesis, and we propose the hypothesis as follows.

Hypothesis1: Leadership positively influences EI.

III. Methodology

The research model of this research (Fig. 1) starts from leadership to EI. The leadership was measured by Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ Form) [14], and EI was measured by EI items [18]. This research collected empirical data from Taiwan hotels. We sent questionnaire to 700 employees of hotels, and obtained 510 effective sample. The confirmatory factor analysis was performed to confirm validity. Based on Table 1, the Cronbach’s α, composite reliability, and average variance extracted for these variables were all greater than the modest criteria (e.g., α > .7, CR > .6, AVE > .5, Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Structural equation model was employed to test the relationship between leadership and EI. The overall goodness-of-fit of models (see Table 2) were all fit the criteria [19]. For example, the RMR was less than .05, the RMSEA was less than .08, and the CFI, GFI, and NFI were all greater than .09. As shown in Table 3, the leadership was positively associated with the EI (β = .39, p < .001). The hypothesis that stated that the hotel employees who perceived more leadership was more likely to demonstrate the greater EI was supported. In other words, hotel employees who perceived more leadership from their supervisors were more likely to have already developed the EI via the associated effects.

![Fig. 1 The framework of this research](image)

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reliability and validity</th>
<th>Leadership</th>
<th>EI</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cronbach’s α</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.87</td>
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</table>
composite reliability 0.79 0.69
Average variance extracted 0.69 0.61

Table 2
Overall goodness-of-fit of models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fit Value</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RMR</td>
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<tr>
<td>RMSEA</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CFI</td>
<td>0.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GFI</td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NFI</td>
<td>0.92</td>
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Table 3
Test results of structural equation model

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Emotional Intelligence</th>
<th>Antecedent variable</th>
<th>β</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>0.39***</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Note: *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

IV. Discussion

An important result of our research is that beyond a certain point, there is an emphasis on how the leadership of supervisors influences the EI development of employees. This research proposed the hypothesis concerning a positive link between the leadership and the EI based on leadership process and social learning theory. Thus, the supervisor's leadership does seem to play a significant role, in terms of the relationships reported above with the employees’ EI. Moreover, the EI can further increase the breadth of the activities that employees consider to be part of their roles, and individuals may engage activities that reflect performance [20].

This research has important practical implications for leaders and their organizations, and suggests that, rather than spreading resources over various practices aimed at assessing and improving a variety of attitudes and motivational states, it may be worthwhile to focus resources on practices that assess and enhance the hotel employees’ EI by leadership. The results showed that it is beneficial for managers to emphasize the leadership to enhance the EI. Interventions aimed at enhancing the leadership of supervisors would seem beneficial to the extent they improve followers’ EI. Thus, it might be worthwhile for organizations to invest in the leadership training into the yearly developmental assessments (e.g., managerial skills surveys, 360-degree feedback instruments) that leaders fill out so as to make the improvement of leadership behaviors more continuous.

V. Limitations and Further Research

First, even though this research proposed the positively relationship between leadership and EI based on social learning theory and leadership process, future research should examine this link with more empirical data to confirm external validity. For example, future research can extend this model to other cultural and geographical settings and examine whether these findings can be generalized to organizational contexts across different countries.

Second, this research proposed that leadership may foster EI of employees, but which leadership style is the most effective way to foster EI is very important issue. We suggested follow-up study should be executing to compare effects of different leaderships on EI.

IV. References


