

Emotional Intelligence as a Catalyst for Successful Educational Leadership: Evidence from UAE

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Abstract: *The purpose of this study is to investigate the role of emotional intelligence (EI) in shaping successful educational leadership practices (SELP) among educators in secondary schools in the UAE. It investigates their perceptions about using EI in the contexts of interactions with students, colleagues, and other stakeholders as well as the relationship between EI dimensions and SELP. The study adds to the investigation of the demographic aspects of gender, experience, and educational background, concerning SELP. The study found that there is a strong positive relationship between dimensions of EI and SELP and it is quite clear that higher levels of EI lead to improved leadership effectiveness. It was found that there were also significant differences in SELP according to demographic differences. This proves to be important in terms of enhancing leadership effectiveness in education.*

Keywords: Emotional intelligence (EI), educational leadership, leadership effectiveness

1. Introduction

A leader in education has the responsibility for facilitating educative processes for both the teachers and the learners. It is a fact that EL influences the thinking, the course, and the efficiency of educational organizations. School administrators are not only required to perform organizational tasks but also to perform several roles of encouraging people to work towards excellence thus fostering academic accomplishment in an organization in this case a school (Schoeps et al., 2021). The need for effective leaders is so high because of challenges like increasing students' diversity, advancing technology, and new progressive teaching methodologies in modern learning institution environments (Valente et al., 2020). Such leaders as agents of transformation are those who are adaptable to change, emotionally intelligent with good interpersonal communication skills make the environment in educational institutions better (Garaigordobil, 2020).

Secondary schools' academic leaders are important because the field of education is expanding with new prospects every day. The United Arab Emirates is a country with the vision of providing quality education to its citizens and educational reforms headed the country towards high-level educational goals (Warner & Jonathan Burton, 2022). The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is a nation dedicated to growth of its educators. Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, UAE's founding father, was fundamentally right when he said: "The wealth of any nation is judged by the level and extent of education they reach" (Mohamed et al., 2012). Therefore, the

present study acknowledges the stakes for proper leadership practices in the UAE setting. Educational institutions in the UAE are trying to find out how they can meet the challenges of the 21st century (Kayan-Fadlelmula et al., 2022).

Employees with high EI are believed to help boost commitment and productivity, according to both theoretical and empirical data (Doe & Phipps, 2015). Recently, it has become clear that EI is important for both positive and negative outcomes in leadership. "Emotional intelligence" is best described as ability of a person to identify, value, evaluate, as well as apply the emotions associated with a situation, as stated by Salovey and Mayer's (1990) research (Aurangzeb et al., 2020) The objective of research is to investigate connection between effective educational leadership practices within UAE and EI.

2. Theoretical background

2.1 Emotional Intelligence

The term "EI" has been originated from the word social intelligence. According to the EI mixed model developed by Daniel Goleman, EI is comprised of emotional skills and a host of traits, and interpersonal skills. The components of the mixed model of EI include: Proper self-awareness, self-regulating mechanisms, well-developed motivation, empathy skills, and social behaviors (Yang & Duan, 2023).

EI was described as "the ability to understand people" by Thorndike. In his multiple intelligence theory, Gardner refers to intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligence using this phrase. According to Russell, EI is widely recognized as a substantial subcategory of social intelligence. Salovey and Mayer were first to give a specific definition of EI, which they eventually refined to "the capacity to recognize and express emotion, integrate emotion and cognition, comprehend and reason with emotion, and regulate emotion in the self" (Warrier et al., 2024).

2.2 Transformational leadership

Numerous significant outcomes are impacted by transformational leadership. Research has shown that transformative leadership exhibits favorable impact over several important outcomes, like performance. In its best forms, transformational leadership raises followers' morale and motivation by empowering leaders along with their moral and motivational support (Burns, 1978).

Transformational leadership can therefore be described by its impact upon followers or by attributes like intellectual stimulation, idealistic influence, or personalized attention (Bass et al., 1994; Bass, 1999). Foundation for implementing change is the way leaders as well as employees interact, which states the way team functions and integrates with one another. Team units and entire organizations rely on leadership, which is characterized by the individuals who make daily decisions at work (Deng et al., 2023).

Effects of transformative leadership on in-person work settings have been extensively discussed and studied. In a face-to-face setting, transformational leaders foster perceived group effectiveness, empowerment, as well as group cohesion (Bass & Riggio, 2023).

3. Aim of study

- Examine perception of secondary school academic leaders towards using emotional intelligence for their interactions with students, stakeholders, and other academic colleagues in the UAE.
- Investigate impact of dimensions of emotional intelligence (self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, motivation, and relationship management) on the successful educational leadership practices among secondary school academic leaders in the UAE.
- Examine relationships between dimensions of EI and successful educational leadership practices (SELP) among secondary school academic leaders in the UAE.
- Determine whether there is significant difference in the SELP among secondary school academic leaders in terms of their educational experience, gender, and leadership training.

4. Research questions

- What are the perceptions of secondary school academic leaders towards using emotional intelligence for their interactions with students, stakeholders, and other academic colleagues in the UAE?
- Do the dimensions of emotional intelligence (self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, motivation, and relationship management) have a significant effect on the successful educational leadership practices among secondary school academic leaders in the UAE?
- Is there any significant relationship between the dimensions of EI and successful educational leadership practices (SELP) among secondary school academic leaders in the UAE?
- Are there any significant differences in the SELP among secondary school academic leaders in terms of their educational experience, gender, and educational background?

5. Methodology

The quantitative approach is used to comprehend how educational leadership practices and EI relate to one another. Information from secondary school academic leaders in the UAE is gathered through a cross-sectional survey. The positivist paradigm is the basis used for the research, presupposing reality to be objective and measurable through empirical observation and statistical analysis.

Population and sample of the study

The targeted population in this research includes academic leaders of secondary schools in the UAE. This includes the principal, vice-principals, departmental heads, and other senior educators who hold any leadership or management position within a school or institution. The focus on secondary education schools arises from the fundamental role these leaders perform in influencing students' educational experiences and associated results. The UAE's Ministry of Education reports that 64520 educational leaders are working in secondary schools (Amna Puri-Mirza, 2020).

The Raosoft website has been utilized to determine sample size. Considering population size is 64520, intended margin of error is 5%, the population percentage is 50%, and the desired confidence level is 95%. Therefore, 382 is the required sample size.

Data Collection

Data were collected from 382 teachers through a survey containing 44 items of which are 15 EI-related items, 25 SELP-related items, and 4 demographic questions. 131 responses were given by male educators and 251 responses were of female Educators. (Shown in Appendix 1)

6. Data Analysis

Data collected by using the survey method among educators is analysed using the SPSS software. Descriptive statistics are used to determine how educators perceive EI in interactions with students, stakeholders, as well as colleagues. Employing EI dimensions as independent variables as well as SELP total score as dependent variable, multiple regression analysis has been used for determining the importance of EI dimensions over SELP. The association between SELP and EI dimensions has been determined using Pearson's correlation. Additionally, the SELP differences by demographic characteristics were examined using a one-way ANOVA for educational background, school type, and experience, and an independent samples t-test for gender.

7. Findings

Research question 1: perceptions of secondary school academic leaders in the UAE towards using emotional intelligence for their interactions with students, stakeholders, and colleagues.

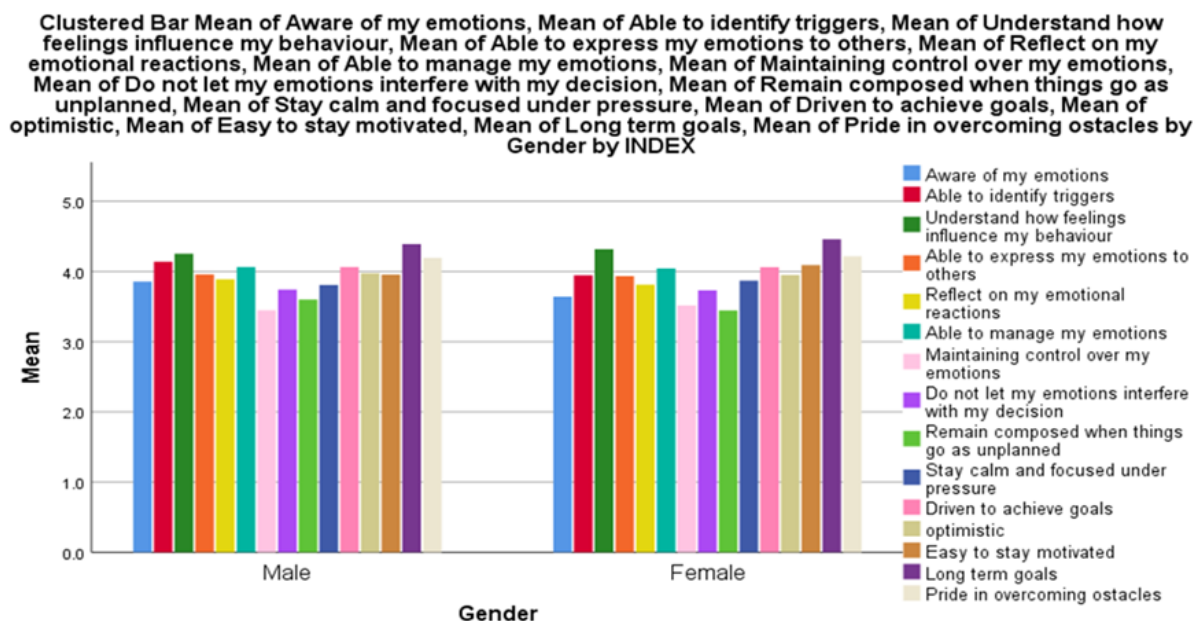


Figure 1: Means of the dimensions of EI

The table demonstrates that there are differences in SELP between male and female instructors in secondary schools in the UAE. Educators in the female category scored higher SELP than male educators' category ($M = 104.30$, $SD = 6.032$) rather than males ($M = 102.63$, $SD = 5.362$). Statistical significance was achieved with a mean difference of -1.676 ($t(380) = -2.675$, $p = .008$). Results indicate that such women who are in the position of a leader in an educational institution in the UAE secondary schools are more competent in applying effective educational leadership practices which include the utilization of distinct EI when fully engaged in the various scopes of her duties.

Research question 2: Significant effect of Emotional intelligence on dimensions of Successful Educational Leadership Practices in the UAE.

The multiple regression analysis showed some degree of EI dimension-influenced contributions towards SELP. The most influential factors include ‘Easy to stay motivated’ ($B = 8.051, p < 0.001$) on the other hand ‘Driven to achieve goals’ ($B = 4.296, p < 0.001$), goal aggrandizement is an absolute trait of every effective leader. Likewise, ‘Do not let my emotions interfere with my decision’ ($B = 4.095, p < 0.001$) stresses self-efficacy regarding emotional control in the course of making decisions. However, some dimensions such as ‘Maintaining control over my emotions’ ($B = -4.092, p < 0.001$) and ‘Long-term goals’ ($B = -6.374, p < 0.001$): both showed inverse effects, implying that too much control and concentration on future objectives disable leadership practices. (Shown in Appendix 2)

Research question 3: Relationship between Emotional Intelligence dimensions and SELP

The correlation research revealed the relationships between EI traits and leaders' achievement during education. Strongest correlation was obtained with motivation management ($r = 0.584, p < .001$), which signifies leaders who manage to sustain motivation are likely to practice more successful leadership practices. There was also an important positive correlation on understanding how feelings affect behaviour ($r = 0.464, p < .001$), implying further, that leaders who are in touch with their emotions about their effectiveness are likely to be more effective. Then just as important, the ability of restraining the emotions from interfering with decision-making illustrated a significant positive correlation ($r = 0.414, p < .001$), thus confirming the value of emotional regulation in leadership practice. (Shown in Appendix 3)

Research question 4: Differences in the SELP in terms of their educational experience, gender, and educational background.

The independent t-test results proved females' SELP scores to be significantly higher than those of males (Mean= 104.30 versus Mean= 102.63, $p = 0.008$). On the issue of experience, descriptive statistics showed SELP improvement with increasing years of lead experience, showing the importance of actual knowledge.

Results from ANOVA indicate significant differences within educational backgrounds, with those having further degrees performing positively in SELP. Thus, all these findings seem to imply the impact of demographic variables such as gender, experience, and community on leadership effectiveness. (Shown in Appendix 4)

8. Conclusion

Programs for professional development, education, and leadership training should prioritize EI due to the significant relationship between EI as well as educational leadership success. The impact of education and experience on successful educational leadership practices is visible it indicates that both formal education and practical experience are important in creating successful educational leaders. These findings will surely provide valuable insights for improving leadership and professional training in the UAE. Moreover, this study contributes to the UAE's literature on education.

9. Limitations of the study

The findings in this study specifically contribute to UAE's educational sector but cannot be generalizable to other countries or states, as UAE's cultural setting, educational landscape differ from other countries. The sample collected may not completely represent all types of schools and educational frameworks in the UAE as there are private, public, national, and international schools and institutions across the country.

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Appendix 1

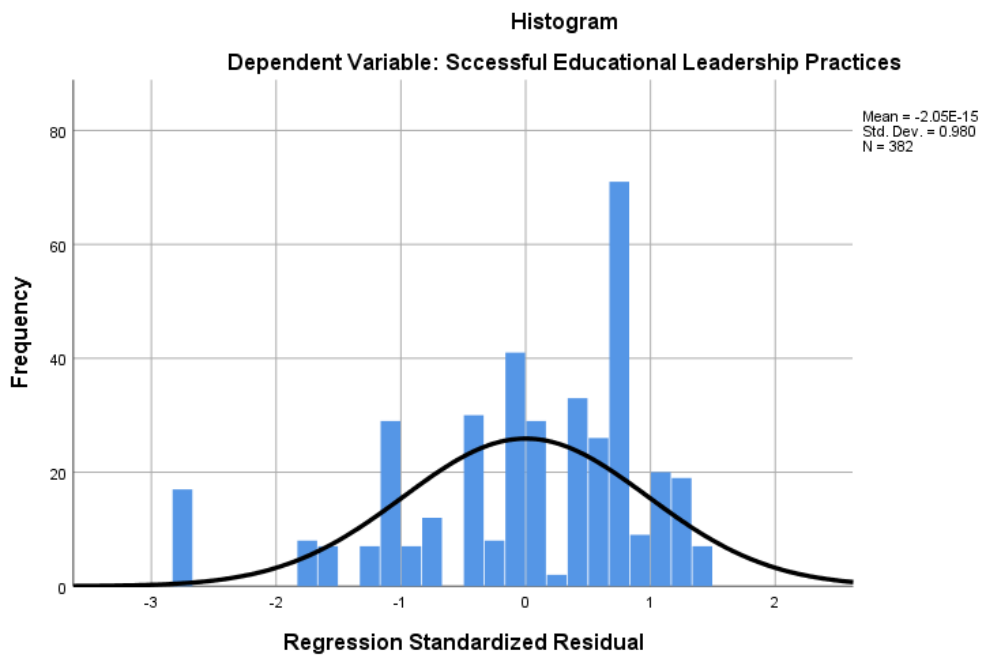
		Gender			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	131	34.3	34.3	34.3
	Female	251	65.7	65.7	100.0
	Total	382	100.0	100.0	

Appendix 2

		Coefficients						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
		B	Std. Error				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	28.201	4.861		5.802	.000	18.643	37.759
	Aware of my emotions	1.258	.432	.120	2.911	.004	.408	2.107
	Able to identify triggers	.049	.293	.008	.169	.866	-.526	.625
	Understand how feelings influence my behaviour	3.324	.650	.253	5.117	.000	2.047	4.602
	Able to express my emotions to others	1.143	.560	.095	2.040	.042	.041	2.244
	Reflect on my emotional reactions	.432	.346	.049	1.249	.212	-.248	1.111
	Able to manage my emotions	2.187	.441	.216	4.953	.000	1.318	3.055
	Maintaining control over my emotions	-4.092	.657	-.471	-6.226	.000	-5.384	-2.799
	Do not let my emotions interfere with my decision	4.095	.650	.302	6.300	.000	2.817	5.373

Remain composed when things go as unplanned	.893	.494	.121	1.807	.072	-.079	1.866
Stay calm and focused under pressure	1.254	.538	.120	2.329	.020	.195	2.313
Driven to achieve goals	4.296	.847	.359	5.072	.000	2.630	5.961
optimistic	-1.328	.498	-.142	-2.669	.008	-2.306	-.350
Easy to stay motivated	8.051	.731	.794	11.013	.000	6.614	9.489
Long term goals	-6.374	.880	-.634	-7.242	.000	-8.105	-4.643
Pride in overcoming obstacles	3.783	.767	.331	4.930	.000	2.274	5.291

a. Dependent Variable: Successful Educational Leadership Practices



Appendix 3

		Correlations															
		SELP	Ei1	Ei2	Ei3	Ei4	Ei5	Ei6	Ei7	Ei8	Ei9	Ei10	Ei11	Ei12	Ei13	Ei14	Ei15
Pearson Correlation	SELP	1.000	0.220	0.144	0.464	0.279	0.281	0.351	0.234	0.414	0.029	0.279	-0.124	-0.049	0.584	0.201	0.164
	Ei1	0.220	1.000	0.357	0.048	0.155	-0.029	0.009	-0.027	0.145	0.284	0.094	0.102	-0.032	-0.109	-0.023	-0.003
	Ei2	0.144	0.357	1.000	-0.134	0.344	0.173	-0.047	0.303	0.162	0.115	0.394	0.179	0.078	0.018	-0.068	0.053
	Ei3	0.464	0.048	-0.134	1.000	0.306	0.220	0.293	0.310	0.389	0.274	0.201	-0.081	-0.099	0.319	0.238	-0.038
	Ei4	0.279	0.155	0.344	0.306	1.000	0.397	0.066	0.275	0.205	0.338	0.181	-0.195	-0.291	0.214	0.047	-0.165
	Ei5	0.281	-0.029	0.173	0.220	0.397	1.000	0.075	0.027	0.239	0.064	0.077	0.128	0.250	0.059	0.103	0.167
	Ei6	0.351	0.009	-0.047	0.293	0.066	0.075	1.000	0.082	0.082	-0.120	-0.228	-0.242	0.013	0.316	0.056	-0.060
	Ei7	0.234	-0.027	0.303	0.310	0.275	0.027	0.082	1.000	0.295	0.280	0.623	-0.114	-0.171	0.324	-0.473	-0.474
	Ei8	0.414	0.145	0.162	0.389	0.205	0.239	0.082	0.295	1.000	0.554	0.284	-0.197	0.155	0.276	0.220	-0.009
	Ei9	0.029	0.284	0.115	0.274	0.338	0.064	-0.120	0.280	0.554	1.000	0.220	-0.327	0.071	-0.103	-0.111	-0.387
	Ei10	0.279	0.094	0.394	0.201	0.181	0.077	-0.228	0.623	0.284	0.220	1.000	-0.157	-0.158	0.318	-0.273	-0.269
	Ei11	-0.124	0.102	0.179	-0.081	-0.195	0.128	-0.242	-0.114	-0.197	-0.327	-0.157	1.000	0.434	-0.547	-0.037	0.378
	Ei12	-0.049	-0.032	0.078	-0.099	-0.291	0.250	0.013	-0.171	0.155	0.071	-0.158	0.434	1.000	-0.364	-0.140	0.189
	Ei13	0.584	-0.109	0.018	0.319	0.214	0.059	0.316	0.324	0.276	-0.103	0.318	-0.547	-0.364	1.000	0.335	0.094
	Ei14	0.201	-0.023	-0.068	0.238	0.047	0.103	0.056	-0.473	0.220	-0.111	-0.273	-0.037	-0.140	0.335	1.000	0.729
Ei15	0.164	-0.003	0.053	-0.038	-0.165	0.167	-0.060	-0.474	-0.009	-0.387	-0.269	0.378	0.189	0.094	0.729	1.000	

SELP- Successful education leadership practices, Ei1- Aware of my emotions, Ei2- Able to identify triggers, Ei3- Understand how feelings influence my behaviour, Ei4- Able to express my emotions to others, Ei5- Reflect on my emotional reactions, Ei6- Able to manage my emotions, Ei7- Maintaining control over my emotions, Ei8- Do not let my emotions interfere with my decision, Ei9- Remain composed when things go as unplanned, Ei10- Stay calm and focused under pressure, Ei11- Driven to achieve goals, Ei12- optimistic, Ei13- Easy to stay motivated, Ei14- Long term goals, Ei15- Pride in overcoming obstacles.

Appendix 4

		Group Statistics				
		Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Successful Educational Leadership Practices	Male		131	102.63	5.362	.468
	Female		251	104.30	6.032	.381

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Successful Educational Leadership Practices	Equal variances assumed	4.438	.036	-2.675	380	.008	-1.676	.626	-2.908	-.444
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.776	292.159	.006	-1.676	.604	-2.864	-.488

ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Gender	Between Groups	9.270	16	.579	2.753	.000
	Within Groups	76.806	365	.210		
	Total	86.076	381			
years of experience	Between Groups	111.939	16	6.996	112.061	.000
	Within Groups	22.788	365	.062		
	Total	134.727	381			
Educational Background	Between Groups	162.253	16	10.141	119.284	.000
	Within Groups	31.030	365	.085		
	Total	193.283	381			