

Dimensions of Emotional Intelligence for Supporting Childless Employees in Higher Education Institutions: A Systematic Review

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Abstract: In recent years' childlessness as a workplace inclusion issue has developed from a taboo topic into an important awareness subject, especially being childless not by choice. This issue has become challenging for employers and leaders not only in business organisations but also in educational institutions. That includes such aspects as to be prepared with how to support employees within different struggle of life and to be aware of discussion and conversation topics. The article presents the systematic literature review on subject of emotional intelligence as an attribute of effective leadership which can be increased into higher education institutions. The aim of the study is to explore main findings of emotional intelligence in the context of effective leadership for supporting childless employees in higher education institutions. Since the context of childlessness and emotional intelligence has not been previously studied, author of this article decided to use the systematic review method including publications which were published in respectable databases (EbscoHost, Scopus, Science Direct, Emerald Publishing, Elsevier, Sage Journals) during the past ten years. The authors' review has helped to identify some of the main findings about models and dimensions of emotional intelligence, importance of emotional intelligence as an attribute of effective leadership in organisations and higher education institutions. Conclusions include future recommendations for higher education institutions and development of leaders and employees about emotional intelligence aspects and future research perspectives about terminology of childlessness and childlessness aspects at workplace. Most important conclusions highlight the necessity to improve work-life programs and policies of organisations including childlessness aspects as a workplace inclusion issue; the importance to study relationship between emotional intelligence of higher education institutions leaders and childlessness aspects in higher education institutions. The significance of the results is due to the fact that this is a completely new topic in management science in Latvia and future research should be carried out.

Keywords: emotional intelligence, higher education institutions, leadership, childlessness, leader

Introduction

The concept of emotional intelligence (EI) has gained popularity as a potential primary attribute of effective leadership. Soft skills such as EI have become relevant in leadership effectiveness and organizational success. Organizations the world over face challenges today which require reforms in the management and governance styles. Higher education institutions (HEI) are not exempt from it and therefore need to rethink their strategies to address the issue. (Mamuli, 2020)

In author's opinion, EI serves as a significant tool that helps the leaders of HEI to meet the societal challenges that disturbs the balance of inclusive workplace environment. Nowadays leadership is about human qualities and ability to understand, to use and to manage emotions. The need for humanizing leadership has become a topicality.

Studies have demonstrated that leaders who consistently outperform their peers not only have the technical skills required, but more importantly, have mastered most of the aspects of EI. There is growing evidence that the range of abilities that constitute what is now commonly known EI plays a key role in determining success, both in one's personal life and in the workplace. (Batool, 2013)

According to Mård (2020), there is still something at workplace that is barely touched related to organizational life and work life. Differences in parenthood status often remain hidden under the surface of the formal sides to organizations, but it still greatly affects life at work. Hearing news about pregnancies, meeting co-workers' new born babies or interacting with parents who are proud or deeply anxious over their children's endeavours are often inevitably features of work life. For those who are childless not by choice it may cause tensions, struggles and feelings of inadequacy in relation to

certain professional identities, causing existential identity work that is accompanied with demanding internal emotional struggles.

Referring to it author of this article stresses that childlessness in contemporary societies is a relatively new research topic and there is no established theoretical framework for studying it. Previous studies have distinguished childlessness as a voluntary decision (childfree) from involuntary childlessness (childless), although there is considerable ambiguity in how these two are defined. (Miettinen & Szalma, 2014)

According to The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2018), rates of childless at age 40-44 or around are increasing in most of those OECD countries where data are available for both time points. In many cases the size of changes is not directly comparable across countries because of differences in the years of reference and in some cases also definitions. Nonetheless, in Finland for example, the proportion of 40-44 women that are childless increased by over 5 percentage points between 1990 and 2010, while in the United Kingdom rates of childlessness for women aged 45 increased by 6 percentage points between 1995 and 2010. Only four OECD countries (Chile, Luxembourg, Slovenia and Turkey) with available data see the rate of childlessness fall between their two time points, with the decrease in Luxembourg (from 19% in 1991 to 15% in 2001) particularly large.

From the point of view of the author, childlessness is one of the topical aspects to pay attention to in any workplace, including HEI, and which requires high level of EI from the leaders. On this basis firstly the theoretical research needs to be done to understand how EI as an attribute of effective leadership could relate to childlessness in HEI as a workplace.

The research presented in the article is part of larger project analysing how emotional intelligence as an attribute of effective leadership could be used for supporting childless employees. This is one of the first part of extensive study discovering theoretical background of main findings.

The aim of the study is to explore dimensions of emotional intelligence in the context of effective leadership for supporting childless employees in higher education institutions.

Methodology

The research questions of this article are: (1) what is the framework of EI models and dimensions and (2) how does it look the perspective of future recommendations.

Since the context of childlessness and emotional intelligence has not been previously explored, author of this article chooses to use the systematic review method to focus on exploring a new direction on the topic of emotional intelligence of leaders in HEI as this type of method is intended to address new, emerging topics.

A systematic review should be conducted before empirical research, and a subset of the literature from the systematic review that is closely related to the empirical work can be used as background review. In that sense, good stand-alone reviews could help improve the quality of background reviews (Xiao&Watson, 2019).

Author started the literature search by using the keywords “emotional intelligence in higher education”, “emotional intelligence and higher education”, “emotional intelligence and leadership”, “emotional intelligence and leadership in higher education institutions”, “emotional intelligence and childlessness”. For each manuscript, preliminary relevance was determined by title. From the title, if the content seemed to discuss the topic of emotional intelligence, leadership or/and HEI, author obtained its full reference, including author, year, title, and abstract, for further evaluation. Unfortunately, no literature by using such keywords as “emotional intelligence and childlessness” was found.

To survey articles in the literature, the following databases were used: EbscoHost, Scopus, Science Direct, Emerald Publishing, Elsevier, Sage Journals. The limit of publication date was set for past ten years (2011 – 2021). After reviewing potentially relevant articles a total of sixteen (16) studies were included in this research. Author only included studies written in English.

From each study, author extracted information on the following subtopics: (1) models and dimensions of EI, (2) summary of main findings of the study about EI and leadership in higher education, (3) common keywords and (4) future recommendations.

As Snyder (2019) states, systematic review can be explained as a research method and process for identifying and critically appraising relevant research, as well as for collecting and analysing data from said research. By using explicit and systematic methods when reviewing articles and all available evidence, bias can be minimized, thus providing reliable findings from which conclusions can be drawn and decisions made.

Results and Discussion

HEI are primarily people focused organizations, where leaders in every level can benefit from having an understanding of EI and usage of it within their leadership roles. Author emphasizes that EI is more than simply being nice. It's about developing an environment that respects each other's emotions and allows inclusion of diverse people and discussion topics.

According to the article of Gentil (2021) in *Harvard Business Review*, for decades, the traditional view was that to be successful, leaders had to be infallible, unflappable, in control, and fearless. These leaders appeared to be born hero leaders, but that are no longer what companies need. The most effective leadership today - at all levels - isn't about technical expertise and having all the answers. Besides articulating a compelling vision, it's about being human, showing vulnerability, connecting with people, and being able to unleash their potential.

Models of EI of different authors has been the subject of practically all articles included in this review. Framework of EI models and dimensions and authors discussing these models are described in (Table 1). As seen, the most popular is Goleman's model, Bar-On's model and Salovey and Mayer model where EI is defined as set of different competencies for effective leadership.

Table 1

Summary of authors discussing models of EI

Framework of EI models and dimensions	Authors
In Goleman's model EI is defined as a set of competencies falling into five broad areas as follows: self-awareness, self-regulation (self-management), motivation (awareness of others), empathy and social skills (management of social relationships). The first three skills relate to personal competences and the last two to social ones.	Batool, 2013; Kahtani, 2013; Parrish, 2013; Junias & Abigirl, 2015; Kadagidze, 2017; Livesey, 2017; Maamari & Majdalani, 2017; Issah, 2018; Othman & Muda, 2018; Cherkowski et al., 2020; Mamuli, 2020; Rajee et al., 2020; Halimi et al., 2021; Sadiku et al., 2021; Shehhi et al., 2021
Bar-On's model consists of the key components of effective emotional function and the social that leads to psychological well-being. It covers five broad areas of competencies: the intrapersonal skills (self-regard, emotional self-awareness, independence, assertiveness and self-actualization), the interpersonal skills (interpersonal relationship, social responsibility and empathy), stress management (stress tolerance and impulse control), adaptability (reality testing, flexibility, and problem-solving) and general mood (optimism and happiness).	Batool, 2013; Kahtani, 2013; Parrish, 2013; Junias & Abigirl, 2015; Maamari & Majdalani, 2017; Cherkowski et al., 2020; Halimi et al., 2021
Salovey and Mayer model defines EI as a type of intelligence reflecting the ability to process emotional information in four dimensions: self-emotional appraisal (perceiving emotion), others' emotional appraisal (using emotion to facilitate thought), regulation of emotion (understanding emotion) and use of emotion (managing emotion).	Batool, 2013; Kahtani, 2013; Parrish, 2013; Junias & Abigir, 2015; Li et al., 2015; Kadagidze, 2017; Livesey, 2017; Issah, 2018; Othman & Muda, 2018; Cherkowski et al., 2020; Sadiku et al., 2021
Higgs and Dulewicz model states that there are seven skills of EI which are self-awareness, emotional resilience, motivation, accuracy,	Kahtani, 2013

Framework of EI models and dimensions	Authors
integrity, influence and interpersonal sensitivity.	
Goleman-Boyatzis model identifies the competencies associated with awareness of the self and others and the management of one's self and others. EI is observed when a person demonstrates the competencies that constitute self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and social skills at appropriate times and ways in sufficient frequency to be effective in the situation.	Livesey, 2017

All models of EI included in (Table 1) explained the dimensions of EI differently but the researchers stated the EI in same basic which are recognizing emotions, understanding them and use them effectively. Singh et al. (2007) cites Goleman, that three of the most important aspects of EI for a leader's ability to make effective decisions are self-awareness, communication and influence, and commitment and integrity. Managers who do not develop their EI have difficulty in building good relationships with peers, subordinates, superiors and clients.

From the literature review emerges the premise that the EI attributes of self-awareness, self-management and self-confidence are important in leadership and play a part in sustaining emotional resilience; and that a deep sense of self-awareness as well as self-acceptance are necessary if leaders are to avoid putting themselves under unreasonable pressure. (Steward, 2014)

EI is an essential attribute of the leadership of all leaders in higher education (HE). The literature in this emerging field contains a range of information which can tend to be confusing and includes the term EI and HE. While it is helpful to have a relatively concise dimensions of EI to guide leaders' thinking, deeper analysis of its scope and meaning in HE is needed. (Table 2) provides a summary of the main findings of the study about EI and leadership in HE, developed from a content analysis of the literature.

Table 2

Summary of common keywords and main findings about EI and leadership in HE

Theoretical category	Author/s	Common keywords
Emotional intelligence	Batool, 2013; Kahtani, 2013; Maamari & Majdalani, 2017; Issah, 2018; Othman & Muda, 2018; Halimi et al., 2021; Sadiku et al., 2021	Emotional intelligence, leadership, performance, organization, emotions
	Summary of the main findings	
	Findings show (Maamari & Majdalani, 2017; Sadiku et al., 2021) that EI is a key component of effective leadership which is crucial to the performance and success of individuals and organizations. Also there is a positive and meaningful relation between EI and functional factor and contextual performance (Kahtani, 2013). Authors (Batool, 2013; Issah, 2018; Othman & Muda, 2018) emphasize that EI can be applied to effectively manage the change process; manage, understand and perceive emotions of leaders themselves and others; help to reduce stress, improve performance and sense of achievement by motivating employees within the organization; achieve organizational goals in an ethical way by putting positive impact on the society as a whole. Some authors have studied gender differences but study results show that the overall EI levels are equivalent in men and women and no gender differences exist (Halimi et al., 2021).	
Leadership, leader	Author/s	Common keywords
	Batool, 2013; Parrish, 2013; Kahtani, 2013; Junias & Abigirl, 2015; Li et al., 2015; Kadagidze, 2017; Livesey, 2017; Maamari & Majdalani, 2017; Othman & Muda, 2018; Cherkowski et al., 2020; Sadiku et al., 2021; Shehhi et al., 2021	Emotional intelligence, leadership style, effective leadership, performance
	Summary of the main findings	
	The idea of findings of more authors (Batool, 2013; Kahtani, 2013; Parrish, 2013; Junias &	

Theoretical category	Author/s	Common keywords
	Abigirl, 2015; Li et al., 2015; Maamari & Majdalani, 2017; Cherkowski et al., 2020; Sadiku et al., 2021; Shehhi et al., 2021) is that emotionally intelligent managers know how to build a connection between people; promote decision-making and lead change effectively; do not want to evoke negative emotions in followers; ignite worker passion and create healthy, happy, fully engaged work environments; know when, how and what support employees need; gives more attention to positivity, emotion and engaging with others to create belonging, appreciation and meaningfulness at workplace which develops sustainable wellbeing and shows more sympathy and recognition towards employees. Some authors (Parrish, 2013; Junias & Abigirl, 2015; Kadagidze, 2017) emphasize that leaders with high EI responsibly manage themselves, their emotions, feelings and impulses; they inspire and guide others, and responsibly manage oneself; they rarely make rushed or emotional decisions, stereotype team members or compromise their values; they provide professional relationships with others and maintain a high standard of conduct providing a positive role model for others. Therefore few authors (Batool, 2013; Livesey, 2017; Othman & Muda, 2018) highlights the top competencies for leaders with high EI: organisational and self-awareness; trustworthiness; empathy; teamwork and collaboration; emotional self-control and a strong mix of cognitive capacity (logical, conceptual and creative thinking) and people skills (interpersonal, influence and communication).	
Higher education (HE), higher education institutions (HEI)	Author/s	Common keywords
	Parrish, 2013; Kadagidze, 2017; Maamari & Majdalani, 2017; Cherkowski et al., 2020; Mamuli, 2020; Rajee et al., 2020; Halimi et al., 2021; Sadiku et al., 2021	Higher education, (academic) leadership, (academic) leader, emotional intelligence, management
	Summary of the main findings	
	Findings of few studies show that leaders in HE are often assigned to leadership positions with little or no preparatory leadership training or development and are expected to learn on the job (Parrish, 2013) and that role of leaders of HEI combine the work of both teaching and administrating as they involve lecturing and leadership of their particular faculty, department, centre and unit (Rajee et al., 2020). Following to that authors emphasize that EI is a highly relevant and significant requirement for leadership in HE (Mamuli, 2020; Kadagidze, 2017) and leaders of HEI should learn about it at all. Findings shows that many HEI have started to incorporate EI-related components into their curriculum (Sadiku et al., 2021) and that leadership capacity development initiatives in HE should include a focus on developing EI understanding and skills (Mamuli, 2020). According to Cherkowski et al. (2020) leaders in HE have a role to play in the living ecosystem of the social constructed workplaces of faculty, staff and students. That means that leadership in HE can create conditions in their work cultures that shift toward wellbeing of whole employees. In addition, Maamari & Majdalani (2017) conclude that an awareness of gender and cultural difference related to EI could be beneficial to all parties – students, educators and administrators – in HEI.	

Some of the authors studied in this systematic review discussed future recommendations in purpose to increase the level of EI not only for effective leadership but also for other areas, for example:

1. Few suggestions about professional development and training programs for (further) leaders and employees within organization where highlighted:
 - Shehhi et al. (2021) suggests that leaders of educational institutions need to improve the levels of EI and be aware of emotional knowledge. This can be achieved by implementing professional development and training programs including sessions on EI to increase leaders' effectiveness as HEI leaders.
 - Maamari & Majdalani (2017) recommends organizations add to their people's development agendas the training for EI enhancement to all levels, age groups and educational backgrounds.

- According to Issah (2018) to build the needed capacity of world-class leaders for organizations, EI skills need to be incorporated in the capacity building program.
2. Specific recommendations for HEI also where stated:
- According to Mamuli (2020) HEI should invest in leadership capacity development initiatives that are designed to prepare and further develop future and existing leaders.
 - Othman & Muda (2018) states that the entrepreneurship education curriculum should emphasise the EI of students in addition to the practical and theoretical aspects of entrepreneurship, allowing them to develop the abilities required to face challenges and competition in the business world.
 - Rajee et al. (2020) believes that responsiveness about EI and its significance in attaining the leadership goals must be recognized among the academic leaders. Also EI and leadership quality skills could be incorporated in the study programs to improve EI skills among students so they can gain leadership competencies which can help to their future success.

Analysing the main findings, author of this article concludes that EI is important for effective leadership in the context of workplace inclusion issues, and need to be given attention nowadays.

Author also agrees with Barchard (2003), that the concept of EI overlaps with constructs such as social intelligence (the ability to understand others and act wisely in social situations), empathy (the ability to understand others' feelings and the tendency to experience others' emotions vicariously), alexithymia (difficulty understanding and describing feelings), and emotion regulation (the ability to regulate ones' emotions as desired).

The author of the article agrees with Dulewicz and Higgs (2003) that the higher one rises within an organization, the more important EI becomes. EI is an important aspect of leadership and that it becomes more significant as one progresses up the leadership hierarchy. There is much evidence that the leadership of an organization has a great influence on its culture.

Conclusions

The authors' systematic literature review reported in this article have helped to identify the main conclusions and future research perspectives:

1. Summary of models and dimensions of EI highlights main EI attributes for effective leadership such as organisational and self-awareness; trustworthiness; empathy; teamwork and collaboration; emotional self-control and a strong mix of cognitive capacity and people skills.
2. Emotionally intelligent managers know when, how and what support employees need giving more attention to healthy, fully engaged and meaningful work environment which develops sustainable wellbeing and recognition towards employees. Leaders with high EI know how to create connections and professional relationships with others, control emotions and feelings of themselves, make non-emotional and responsible decisions, inspire and guide others providing a positive role model for them.
3. Leaders in HE are often promoted to leadership positions from teaching or administrative positions with little or even no preparatory leadership training and are expected to learn on the job which shows possible lack of knowledge of EI as an attribute for effective leadership. Findings show that the overall EI levels are equivalent in men and women as well as no gender differences exist but an awareness of gender and cultural difference related to EI could be beneficial to all parties in HEI (students, educators, administrators, leaders).
4. As the EI can impact the achievement of organizational goals, improve performance and motivation of employees, leaders of HEI need to improve the knowledge about EI and its dimensions by attending professional development and training programs. EI is a highly relevant and significant requirement for leadership in HE, and that not only leaders and employees of HEI need to develop knowledge about EI understanding and skills, but EI-related components should be incorporated into curriculum of study programs.
5. Organizations should improve their workplace policies and work-life programs with trainings or seminars for EI enhancement to all levels, age groups and educational backgrounds. Thus

could include childlessness as a workplace inclusion issue too. Professional development and training programs could be developed to increase leaders' knowledge on EI and effectiveness of HEI leaders.

6. Further research of EI and HEI leaders in Latvia should be explored to evaluate leader's knowledge and skills about EI as well as level of readiness to think about childlessness as a workplace inclusion issue. Relationship between EI of HEI leaders and childlessness aspects in HEI as a workplace should be studied. A survey of HEI employees needs to be performed to find out potential parenthood status of employees in HEI and their opinions of childlessness aspects and problems in HEI of Latvia. Terminology of childlessness needs to be reviewed and compiled to decide which keywords are appropriate to use in future research not only in English, but especially in Latvian as it's a new topic in management science in Latvia at all.

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