



Understanding Emotional Intelligence in School Leadership of Private Schools in Lahore: A Qualitative Exploration

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Abstract

“Understanding the Emotional intelligence of school leadership” refers to measure the ability of school leaders regarding their own emotions and how they manage other’s behavior. The qualitative study adopting phenomenological approach to find out the use of Emotional intelligence in school leadership practices. Semi-structured face-to-face interviews were conducted with six private school’s principals in Lahore. The study finds out the ways in which Emotional intelligence competencies help them to perform their role as leaders. The audio-recorded interviews were transcribed and data was analyzed in six stages defined by Creswell, (2014). The findings showed that there is pivotal role of Emotional intelligence in developing positive relationships, have positive impact on subordinates. The findings of the study also indicate the importance of EI integration through training to develop and enhance the leadership abilities of principals. Further, the conclusion of this study emphasizes on further research in different geographical regions to explore the role of EI in the field of education.

Keywords: emotional intelligence, school principals, school leadership practices

1. Introduction

Effective leadership of school is vital in the continually evolving education landscape as it creates the learning environment and fosters students' overall development. According to (Moore, 2009) Leaders requires to reforms school and transform them into independent, systems-thinking institutions focused on creating professional learning communities that are able evolving to change and maintaining an excellent educational setting for students as well as teachers. “there is an increasing recognition of the importance of school leadership in supporting change and providing for educational equality” (Pashiardis, 2011) Schools have also become more dynamic institutions than they were in the past due to societal developments. (Crow, 2006). To enable schools to achieve student success, the guidelines for educational leaders emphasized the significance of establishing a common objective, developing a school culture that emphasizes the development of both staff and students, and forming deep connections with families and communities.

1.1. Background of the study

Salovey and Mayer’s concept of emotional intelligence, which was popularized by Goleman, has now exists in many fields, including leadership (Goleman, 1995; Mayer et al., 2016). It is very crucial to understand how emotional intelligence shapes school leadership’s practices. Through this qualitative approach which is adopted for this study allowed for a detailed and in-depth exposure of experiences, contextual influences, and the complex ways in which emotional intelligence appears in school leadership.

1.2. Problem Statement

Despite the significance of Emotional intelligence in effective leadership has been widely established, a gap remains in recent literature regarding integration of Emotional intelligence in leadership roles. Although theoretical framework was established by (Goleman, 1995; Mayer et al,2016). Sufficient examination of lived experiences of school leaders was not adequately explored. In recent literature the importance of EI in leadership remain underscored in many sectors. There was a notable gap of in-depth qualitative investigations of leadership challenges and issues when applying EI in their leadership. Therefore, the school leadership’s behavior and daily practices were of crucial importance. It was very important to examine the EI ‘s effects on Leadership performance due to high level of human interaction found in schools.

1.3. Objectives

The objective of the study was to explore how school leaders understand and perceive Emotional intelligence’s role in their practice, help in shaping their leadership style and how leaders deal with their emotions.

1.4. Research questions

Q 1: How do school leaders interpret the role of emotions in the performing their duties?

Q 2: What specific characteristics of emotional intelligence do school leaders highlighted when they articulating their leadership practices?

1.5. Significance of the study

This study will be important in adding to the body of research that can improve school leaders’ performance as it can be find in previous researches that EI plays valuable role in effective leadership which is directly related with students’ achievements. The research findings will provide insight of great value which could help in training and preparing school leadership. Using qualitative approach, the study provides deeper and deep understanding of Impact of emotional intelligence on educational leadership which helps in leaders training, making better policies and makes school community a place where everyone feels emotionally supported. In other words, the aim of the study is to closely know the lived experiences of school leaders and what makes them emotionally intelligent to deal with challenges faced by them in their performing their daily job.

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2. Literature Review

Until the early 1980s, principals and other school administrators primarily focused on administrative leadership by overseeing daily operations and maintaining a hierarchical, supervisory system in schools (Hitt & Tucker, 2016). The release of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983 significantly changed public perception of the American school system and prompted extensive national changes in educational institutions. Critics of public education have suggested a review of school leadership, since principals and school administrators are responsible for school performance and are held accountable by parents and higher authorities (Ashworth, 2013; Bumphus, 2008). The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) standardised state-level educational achievements in 2001 (Ashworth, 2013; Elmore, Forman, Stosich, & Bocala, 2014).

The convergence of state and federal education requirements led to an increased need for accountability and standardised testing, as discussed by Ashworth (2013), Bumphus (2008), Elmore et al. (2014), Moore (2009a), and Summers (2015). Accountability measures have been intensified by societal changes, impacting classroom practices and school leadership evaluations. These societal changes include financial constraints, state funding problems, evolving student and community demographics, incorporating technology in education, introducing character education and anti-bullying programmes, and embracing Common Core Standards initiatives (Bedessem-Chandler, 2014).

Several schools, totaling 27, have failed to meet external demands for enhancement despite the risk of losing financing or being shut down (Elmore et al., 2014). One major reason for this is because accountability and standardised testing systems have focused on measuring performance without offering specific measures or suggestions for enhancing performance (Elmore et al., 2014). Principals are now expected to demonstrate advanced leadership qualities that go beyond traditional management practices. They need to possess not just organisational abilities but also social and emotional competence.

School reform scholars have found that stakeholders often face turmoil, resistance, stress, anger, and frustration when trying to meet the demands of increasing mandates and accountability. If these pressures are not addressed, they may have a detrimental impact on a school's culture, therefore affecting the institution's efficacy and the learning environment. School leaders need to recognise the diverse needs and emotions of stakeholders and react properly to reduce the fear associated with change and have a positive influence on it (Nelson & Low, 2011).

Emotional intelligence is increasingly acknowledged as vital for school leaders, however emotional competence is often neglected in the training of educational leaders (Bumphus, 2008; Moore, 2009b; Yamamoto, Gardner, & Tenuto, 2013). Although emotion in educational leadership has been extensively discussed in the literature, its role in theory and practice has been mostly overlooked in research (Yamamoto et al., 2013).

The lack of funding and opportunities for professional growth, mentorship, and feedback on emotional intelligence exacerbates the personal challenges that leaders have in emotional competencies (Moore, 2009b).

3. Methodology

The following chapter explains the research procedure of this study. It explains the research's nature, method of research, the population for study and size of the sample, an instrument used for research, collection of data, & analyses. The basic purpose of the research was to Understand the Impact of Emotional Intelligence in School Leadership of Private Schools in Lahore.

3.1. Nature and Design of the Study

The nature of the study was qualitative approach; the researcher used a phenomenological approach to understand and explore the impact of emotional intelligence of school leadership. For investigating lived experiences of an individual the phenomenology approach is most suitable approach. It allows to explore deeper the practices of Emotional intelligence and effects of EI on leadership within educational settings.

3.2. The Population of the Study

In qualitative research the population is often select with the use of purposive sampling technique based on the criteria of the research questions. For this study, the population of the study were persons on leadership positions in schools including Principals and vice-principals. The criteria of selection were their current position as leaders in an educational institution. Secondly, the diversity of school leaders from different levels of school including elementary, middle and high school. And lastly, their experience of working as leaders in schools which allows them provide in depth lived experience and its impact of emotional intelligence.

3.3. Sample of the Study

The researcher purposively selected six principals from private schools in Lahore because of the unique dynamics and challenges associated with them. They were selected from different private schools to ensures that the perspectives and experiences shared by them may contribute in exploration of impact of Emotional intelligence on their leadership practices.

3.4. Research Instrument

The instrument for this study was semi structured interview which was conducted by researcher. The responses of participants from the semi-structured face to face interviews were gathered using voice recordings.

3.5. Data collection

For data collection, detailed information about the study was provided to the participants including purpose of the study. Along with consent obtained from participants, the assurance of confidentiality was also given to participants. Semi-structured interview's questioning allowed flexibility to answer. Questions were designed in such a way that key topic of emotional intelligence and school leadership were covered. So that in-depth reflections and narratives of the leaders can be gained. Both researcher and principals mutually agreed and select time and place for interviews. Principals were comfortable in their offices. Therefore, interview was conducted in their office with minimal disturbances. It was informed to every participant about the audio recordings. The purpose of using device for recording for accurate transcription and analysis. The duration of interviews with every participant varied in time

because of responses of every individual. Interviews recording were transcribed for analysis. To enhance the validity of the findings, the copies of transcribed data was offered to participants for checking the accuracy of every principal’s perspective.

3.6. Data Analysis

Six stages of data analysis were defined by Creswell (2014). The researcher followed the pattern set by Creswell and started process of data analysis by familiarizing with data collected. The researcher started data analysis by listening to the recorded interviews and write them word to word. After transcribing, researcher listened and read the transcription many times. Data was break down into words and phrases using open coding which help researcher to get deep insight, compare and contrast the patterns identified while transcribing the interviews. The ideas were coded into groups and sections by important quotes and experiences. In the end themes were developed which expressed the content. Common themes were emerged and data were written in descriptive narrative form.

3.7. Data analysis procedure

The objective of this study was to grab the understanding of School Principal’s Emotional Intelligence. For this purpose, one to one semi structured interviews from six principals were conducted and after interpretation of audio-recorded interviews. Then, the process of data coding was done and data elements were grouped together. Next, themes were generated and lastly data was interpreted.

4. Results

Research Question 1

According to Research question one “How do school leaders interpret the role of emotions in the performing their duties” two themes were merged

1: Nurturing positive connection 2: Emphasizing positive impact.

Theme 1: Nurturing positive connection

All principals indicated that they used emotions in performing duties to nurture positive connection with the staff members through Goleman EI domains social awareness and relationship management. Table 1 shows the Goleman EI competences used by school principals for nurture their relationship and perform their duties.

Table 1: Goleman EI competencies used in Nurturing positive connection

EI competences	Principal 1	Principal 2	Principal 3	Principal 4	Principal 5	Principal 6
Empathy	✓	✓		✓		✓
Inspirational Leadership		✓	✓		✓	
Organizational Leadership	✓			✓	✓	✓
Influence	✓	✓	✓		✓	

For nurturing positive connection, Principal 1 stated that empathizing and influencing the staff members remains very helpful as a team leader. “Our emotions will have impact on subordinates, either positive or negative”. To remain connected, appropriate feedback will help leadership to handle organization. Principle 2 stated that in case of any impulsive behavior, “I try to find the root cause. Inspirational leadership always try to dig in the root cause of issues, then they can handle the situation, which can help in establishing positive connection among leadership and staff”. Leaders 3 and 5 believe that by providing healthy criticism, rewards, and incentives, positive connection can be nurtured and which eventually influence the subordinates to be productive and this will be helpful for organization and students. Leaders 4 prioritize self-awareness, feedback, and mindful practices to help in nurturing positive connection. Generalizing emotions positively helps to understand feelings of others. “Patience is the key element to avoid conflicts”. stated by leader 6. Empathy and organizational leadership can be helpful to flourish the relationship between principal and staff members.

Theme 2: Emphasizing positive Impact

All principals indicated that they used emotions to emphasize positive impact on their staff members through Goleman EI domains self-management, social awareness, self-awareness and relationship management. Table 2 shows the Goleman EI competences used by school leaders for emphasizing positive impact.

Table 2

EI competences	Principal 1	Principal 2	Principal 3	Principal 4	Principal 5	Principal 6
Developing other	✓			✓	✓	✓
Transparency		✓	✓		✓	
Emotional self-awareness	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Organizational awareness	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓

Leader 1 stated that” Optimism is critical to success. By supporting myself with optimistic thinking, I always feel more positive, happier, and hopeful about my future”. Leader 2 highlighted the positive impact of emotional self-awareness on her subordinates.

Leader 3 prioritized encouragement and appreciation for staff members, remain positive in every situation. By using relationship management, she tried to have a positive relationship with her staff. Leader 3, 5, and 6 emphasized transparencies, helping others in developing themselves, and always remain calm and maintain composure and staying positive in even challenging scenarios to effectively manage their duties. Leader 4 also advocate for an optimistic approach, social awareness used by Leader 3 to understand the values of optimism and its positivity. All six principals agreed on continuous improvement, learned from their mistakes, interaction with subordinates, and practicing empathy.

Research Question 2

Research question 2 “What specific characteristics of EI do school leaders highlighted when they articulating their leadership practices three themes were emerged

1: *Building relationship*, 2: *Self Awareness*, 3: *Social Awareness*

Theme 3: Building relationship

All principals indicated that they build relationship with their staff members through Goleman EI domains self-management, and relationship management. Table 3 shows the Goleman EI competences used by school leaders for building relationship.

Table 3: Goleman EI competencies used for Building relationship

EI competences	Principal 1	Principal 2	Principal 3	Principal 4	Principal 5	Principal 6
Building Bonds		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Teamwork and Collaboration	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Achievement	✓	✓		✓		✓

According to Principal 1, a leader is the one who guides a team to achieve organizational goals by motivating them and guide them towards the direction. Emotional intelligence competency teamwork and collaboration helps her to fostering relationships with her team. Leaders should be like a shepherd, stated by a principal 2. A leader should be capable of monitoring and also listen to others' perspectives. Without knowing others' point of view, it will be difficult for the principal to engage her staff in organizational activities. Building bonds with subordinates help principals achieve their organizational goals. Leader 3,4,5 believe that the leader is the one who leads from the front. He should be knowing the direction and guide her staff members towards the goals. All this will be possible when principals believe in collaboration and teamwork.

Theme 4: Self-Awareness

All principals indicated that they practice Self-awareness for performing their duties through Goleman EI domains self-management, self-awareness and relationship management. Table 4 shows the Goleman EI competences used by school leaders for emphasizing positive impact.

Table 4: Goleman EI competencies used in practicing self- awareness

EI competences	Principal 1	Principal 2	Principal 3	Principal 4	Principal 5	Principal 6
Emotional Self-control	✓			✓	✓	✓
Influence		✓	✓		✓	
Self confidence	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Leader 1 believes in being responsible for building and maintaining team members' morale through hard work. Principal should be inspiration and motivator for others. She should have positive attitude, honest, and should be visionary. Leader 2 stated that she believes that Principal should be able to meet the challenges, keep her skills updated, she should be welcome new things and should be able to learn new things so that she can aware of new directions and then able to guide her staff. Leader 3 should be able to accept the failure and try to learn from her mistakes, overcome those shortcomings. She should not be afraid of failure. Goldman's self-management competency helps to handle her failure, relearn, and move ahead. Transformational leadership is always my style, stated Leader 3. Principal should be ready for upcoming challenges and get herself and her staff members up to date and skilled. Her broader vision should be aligned with organizational goals. Leader 3, 4, and 5 believe that Leader is a manager who manages all stakeholders altogether in benefit of students. Principal is a facilitator who provides supportive environment to her staff to make them empowered. Principal should be good communicator. Goldman's competency guides leaders to be understanding, have positive attitude towards her staff, and make them learn new skills.

Theme 5: Social Awareness

All principals stated that they utilized social awareness in their duties. EI domains self-management, social awareness, self-awareness and relationship management are practiced by them. Table 5 shows the Goleman EI competences used by school leaders for social awareness.

Principal 1 used relationship management of Goleman's competences to promote teamwork and assigned responsibilities. By providing support and time to staff members conflicts can be avoided. Principal 2 and 3 were at same point about collaboration and teamwork. Building network with staff helped them to understand their individual differences. Using Goleman's competencies empathy and adaptability help them accept the diversity among staff members. Principal 4,5,6 believe in open dialogue and they

said everyone should be free to speak and share their thoughts. By engaging team in decision making process, empowering their teams and admiration help their team to grow and perform well in favor of organization.

Table 5: Goleman EI competencies used in practicing social awareness

EI competences	Principal1	Principal 2	Principal 3	Principal 4	Principal 5	Principal 6
Emotional self-control		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Conflict management	✓	✓	✓			✓
Empathy		✓		✓	✓	
Adaptability	✓		✓			✓

5. Discussion

The study was conducted to examines school leaders' practices & Emotional intelligence's role in their job. The theoretical framework of the study included Goldman's (1998) Theory of Emotional intelligence. Goldman's work focused on the impact of emotional competencies on an individual's professional performance.

5.1. Findings

Research question 1

How do school leaders interpret the role of emotions in the performing their duties? T

All six principals agreed that emotions play essential role in performing their duties specially relationship building with staff members. According to literature, emotions and school environment are not linked and empirically not proven. In fact, its obvious that culture and environment of school have direct impact on achievements of students. It has been less accepted that principal effect directly on achievement of students. (Ashworth,2013; Berry, 2013; Juma, 2013; Hanlin, 2014; Grunes et al., 2014; Harney, 2015). Two main themes surfaced after data analyzing, which showed principals perceptive regarding emotion's significance in the performing of their duties. (i) Nurturing positive connection(ii) Emphasizing positive impact

Theme 1: Nurturing Positive connection

All six principals agreed on using emotions in their execution of duties. Principals also indicated they nurture positive connection through Goleman EI domain of social awareness and relationship management. According to Taliadorou and Pashiardis(2015) principals who have strong emotional competences affect their staff's job satisfaction, because they give time for nutriment of connection at work, show their genuine concern, they understand their staff members and develop good relationship within workplace. One principal said that empathizing with staff help in nurturing positive emotions. Principal 5 agreed that inspirational leadership can be possible if one empathize and keep everyone need and differences in mind. Craig(2008) defined emotionally intelligent principals as leader who are attuned with their and other's feelings. Therefore, it can be said that results of research were mostly agreed with the literature.

Theme 2: Emphasizing Positive impact

All principals indicated that using emotions for performing their duties to have positive impact on school environment for their staff. According to principal 3 emphasize on positive impact is related to principal's mood, while most of them indicated that they use all four domains of Goleman's EI. Principals are responsible for the school 's Culture and environment (Moore, 2009; Segredo, 2014; Harney, 2015), also perceptions of teachers' which might significantly impacted by relationship of principal and teacher, therefore Emotional Intelligence of principal (Hanlin,2014; Barnes, 2015; Brinia et al, 2014. Since all principals were agreed on emotional impact and findings also in agreement with literature, shows that emotions effect significantly to staff members in a school and emotions should be consider as highly inspiring factor.

Research question 2

What specific characteristics of Emotional Intelligence do school leaders highlighted when they articulating their leadership practices?

Three main themes were identified in the data analysis process (i) building relationship (ii) self-awareness (v) social awareness. According to Moore (2009) principals used emotions as their source of information to develop trust, empathy and cooperative relationships with their staff members to showcase social awareness and skills in solving. Thus, the results have been in agreement with the statement.

Theme 3: Building Relationship

Six out of six principal stated that they try to built relationship with their staff. Three principals used relationship management competency teamwork and collaboration. Four used binding bonds competency. Berry (2015) and Mak (2014) indicated that participation of teachers in school policy and developing curriculum, and trust on teachers, have direct influence on their job satisfaction.

Research also showed a strong connection among school environment and transactional & transformational leadership measure. (Segredo,2014). Both findings & existing literature reflected agreement, which shows that school principals need to improve the leadership to make overall learning environment better.

Theme 4 and 5: Self-Awareness and Social Awareness.

All six principals agreed upon using self-awareness and social awareness domains of Goleman Emotional Intelligence competencies. Moore (2009) found in his research that social awareness of teacher's emotions and their moods while having pressure from school

reform initiatives can make principals to be more supportive and guide their staff through process and attain school community and teacher's collaboration. The findings, again come out in agreement with literature.

5.2. Findings' Implications

All principals who were interviewed for the study agreed that their emotions definitely have impact on their staff members, as well as on the school environment. This study may be helpful for principals to make changes in their schools. To make changes principals need to be more optimistic, open minded and positive. By make changes in their emotions they can bring change significantly in their schools. The findings and literature of this study showed that leadership skills had impact on the school staff's collaboration and their job satisfaction, and all this indirectly effect positively on students' performance.

The findings also indicated that material on leadership and emotional intelligence should be added in curriculum for the students who are studying to become future teachers. Addition in curriculum will result in those teachers, who when become school principals, have better understanding of leadership. The implementing results in significant effect on students' performance.

6. Conclusion

The study was conducted to examine school principal's practices and part of EI in performing their duties for schools. The study was guided by two questions that develop five themes (i) Nurturing positive connection (ii) Emphasizing positive impact. (iii) Building relationship, (iv) Self Awareness, (v) Social Awareness. The results provide many implications, in which change in school principal's emotions were mentioned. Few recommendations for further research, including replicating and repeating of this research in other regions, and also quantitative study to find out the relationship among EI, satisfaction for job and performance of schools.

6.1. Limitations

The research was limited to specific geographical region, some principals did not agreed to participate in the study & few said that they had low level of Emotional intelligence so they should not take part in the study. Therefore, there was very limited options to select participants for study.

6.2. Delimitations

The researcher selected only private school principals of Lahore due to the ease of data collection. The number of participants also delimit the study. Thus, the findings produced could not be generalized to larger population.

6.3. Recommendations for Future research

It is suggested to repeat the study in different areas. To find out that findings may come out similar or different. Similarity will make study more reliable and in case of difference, this will open new areas for research. Quantitative study also recommended for measuring EI level of principals. For this type of study larger number of populations will be included in study, which make results more applicable.

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