

The Relationship Between Emotional Intelligence and Leadership Styles of African American Law Enforcement Executives

B. Bernard Ferguson, Ph.D.

Abstract

Ineffective leadership within police organizations has resulted in worker disengagement, absenteeism, and high turnover. This quantitative study examined the relationship between ethnicity, emotional intelligence (EI) and leadership styles of African American law enforcement executives. Hypotheses were tested using data collected from 130 members of the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives (NOBLE), and comparing results to data from a prior similar study using Caucasian law enforcement executives. Results indicated that ethnicity had a statistically significant relationship with EI and leadership style factors.

Problem

Law enforcement has become increasingly more complex in response to globalization, technology crimes, and increased demands placed upon police organizations in general. The research literature indicates a strong relationship between EI and leadership effectiveness (Côté, Lopes, Salovey, & Miners, 2010; Hong, Catano, & Liao, 2011; Kotze & Venter, 2011; Maloş, 2011); however, this relationship has not been investigated among African American law enforcement executives.

Purpose

To extend prior research conducted by Campbell (2012) relative to correlations between EI and leadership styles of law enforcement executives.

To help African American law enforcement executives understand the relationship between EI and leadership styles to address organizational change.

To provide African American law enforcement executives with leadership information to address operational, political, and economic challenges facing their agencies.

Relevant Literature

The new reality in American policing for law enforcement executives required an examination of several EI and leadership models and theories.

Theoretical Framework

- Full range leadership model (Avolio & Bass, 2002)
- Situational leadership theory (Hersey & Blanchard, 1977)
- Trait EI theory (Petrides, 2009)

Key Research Articles

- Social Intelligence Theory (Thorndike, 1920)
- Model of Multiple Intelligences (Gardner, 1983)
- Model of Well-being (Bar-On, 1988)
- Model of Intelligences (Salovey & Mayer, 1990)
- Theory of Performance (Goleman, 1995)
- Trait Emotional Intelligence (Petrides, 2001)

Research Questions

Does ethnicity influence the leadership style of African American law enforcement executives who possess high levels of EI?

RQ1: What, if any, correlation exists between a transformational leadership style and EI among African American law enforcement executives?

RQ2: What, if any, correlation exists between a transactional leadership style and EI among African American law enforcement executives?

RQ3: What, if any, correlation exists between a laissez-faire leadership style and EI among African American law enforcement executives?

RQ4: What, if any, correlation exists between leadership style, EI, and ethnicity among African American law enforcement executives?

Procedures

Sample

- A convenience sample of 130 participants out of 2,500 NOBLE law enforcement executives participated in the study via an Internet survey.

Instruments

- Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire Short Form (TEIQue-SF)
- Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ 5X-Short)

Data Analysis

Hypotheses were tested using Pearson's correlation coefficient and stepwise linear regression analysis.

Statistical analysis consisted of a two-tailed test with a .05 alpha level.

Findings

Hypothesis 1: Indicated a significant positive relationship between EI and a transformational leadership style ($r = .42, p < .001$).

Hypothesis 2: Indicated no evidence of a relationship between EI and a transactional leadership style.

Hypothesis 3: Indicated a significant negative relationship between EI and a laissez-faire leadership style ($r = -.49, p < .001$).

Hypothesis 4: *t*-test comparisons between selected scores from the current study and those related scores obtained from the Campbell (2012) study indicated a significant relationship existed between EI, ethnicity and leadership styles of African American law enforcement executives (Scores from this sample were significantly higher for all four *t*-test comparisons at the $p = .001$).

Limitations

The use of a correlational design and causation was not determined.

The use of a self-report questionnaire, which precluded me from asking probing questions to gain additional information about the perceptions of superiors or direct reports.

The use of a convenience sampling method, in which participants were selected from one law enforcement organization.

Conclusions

The results showed a linkage between ethnicity, EI, and leadership styles of African American law enforcement executives.

The results of the study could be useful to African American law enforcement executives and management practitioners in making decisions regarding a wide range of organizational change and leadership practices.

Organizational leaders may want to place an emphasis on creating comprehensive leadership development programs that include full range leadership and EI.

Social Change Implications

Expanding training and leadership development programs for emerging leaders and developing EI competencies and skills of executives within law enforcement.

Increase awareness of law enforcement executives on how certain leadership styles and EI skills contribute to organizational effectiveness.

Promote future research in the area of ethnicity, EI and leadership.