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## INSURANCE LEADERS AND ENTREPRENEURS ON EMOTIONAL MANAGEMENT AND PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT

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### ABSTRACT

*Emotional management and psychological empowerment are vital tactics influencing the behaviour and activity of the leaders of Insurance sector organizations. The present paper sheds light on the emotional competencies and cognitions of empowerment among the middle-line managers of one of the pervasive Indian corporate organization viz. Insurance. In this regard, male middle-line managers from the three departments (sales, operations, human resources) of private Insurance Companies were compared on their emotional intelligence and psychological empowerment and the differences between them were explored. For this purpose, Emotional Intelligence Test by Schutte et al. (1998), and Psychological Empowerment Scale by Spreitzer et. al (1995) were conducted on a sample of 150 male middle-line managers of the above said departments randomly selected from the private Insurance companies of the tri-city (Chandigarh, Panchkula, and Mohali) in India. The results revealed significant differences between the leaders of sales, operations, and HR departments of Insurance companies on their emotional intelligence and cognitions of empowerment namely self-determination, and impact. However, no significant differences were found among the managers from the three departments of Insurance companies on their cognitions of empowerment namely meaning to work, and self-efficacy. The findings points to the development and sustenance of cognitions of empowerment among the leaders of the Indian corporate organizations due to its imperative importance in recruiting, promoting and sustaining the talented human capital to meet the challenges of competition and uncertain economy in this era of globalization.*

### KEYWORDS

Emotional Management, Empowerment, Insurance, Sales, OPT (Operations), HR (Human Resource)

### INTRODUCTION

In a competitive and turbulent environment in which organizations are anticipated to be faster, leaner and provide more qualitative services, empowering employees is considered to be a sine qua non work practice (Bowen & Lawer, 1995; Fulford & Enz, 1995). In recent years the concept of empowerment has emerged as a vital tactics influencing the behaviour and activity of corporate leaders as an individual level initiative. As organizations struggle to compete in an increasingly competitive external environment (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990) and are downsizing complete layers of management, they are expecting the remaining managers to perform the work of those who have been laid off (Brockner & Wiesenfeld, 1993). Particularly, in the insurance sector where employees and customers interact, the development of an empowered workforce is of utmost importance. Managers who come into contact with clients are responsible for clients' satisfaction and therefore are a crucial part of the entire organization's effort to win and retain the later. Organizations seeking to survive in such an environment have turned to empowerment as a means of getting employees to work to their full potential. Thus, it has become important for managers to take initiatives, to be autonomous, to experience satisfaction from their work and, thus they need to feel emotionally competent and psychologically empowered in their working environment.

Emotional Intelligence is the capacity to recognize own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, and managing emotions well in ourselves, and in our relationships (Goleman, 2001). Emotional intelligence gives the ability to know what feels good, what feels bad, and to get from bad to good in an effective, healthy, and appropriate manner (Jensen, 1998). As theorized, a dynamic combination of emotional intelligence competencies informs cognition and guides leadership behaviour. More specifically, emotionally informed cognition drives decision-making processes and regulates a leader's deployment of power and authority. The resulting leadership behaviour, guided largely by an individual's emotional intelligence capacity, can have either a positive or negative effect on organizational climate (Goleman, 1996). A healthy and open organizational climate generates high levels of commitment to the mission of the organization as well as high levels of trust and collegiality (Hoy & Tarter, 1997; Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002). Leaders approach their charge mindfully, identifying mistakes early and avoiding crises, resisting temptations to oversimplify, and exhibiting resiliency in the face of challenges (Langer, 1989; Weick & Sutcliffe, 2001; Hoy, 2003). The ability-based model of emotional intelligence as formulated by Mayer and Salovey (1997) proposes that emotion and cognition work together in adaptive ways in four related emotional abilities:

*Perceiving Emotions* - The ability to perceive emotions in oneself and others as well as in objects, art, stories, music, and other stimuli.

*Facilitating Thought* - The ability to generate, use, and feel emotion as necessary to communicate feelings or employ them in other cognitive processes.

*Understanding Emotions* - The ability to understand emotional information, to understand how emotions combine and progress through relationship transitions, and to appreciate such emotional meanings.

*Managing Emotions* - The ability to be open to feelings, and to modulate them in oneself and others so as to promote personal understanding and growth.

Psychological empowerment is concerned with a person's internal feelings of efficacy, personal value or worth, and the ability and freedom to make decisions affecting outcomes in his or her environment (Van Oudtshoorn & Thomas, 1995; Quinn & Spreitzer, 1997; Lashley, 1999). Modern empowerment theory believes that in essence empowerment is the process of releasing the knowledge, experience and motivity that employees themselves possess but don't make use of, and increasing employee's self-efficacy, thereby eliminating employee's sense of powerlessness (Conger & Kanungo, 1988). Meaning for work, self-efficacy, autonomy and control over outcomes at workplace empowers one internally towards the actions which helps to achieve a preferred task and employ effectiveness in a way which can inspire the workforce to bring more work motivation towards the commitment to their jobs.

Spreitzer (1995) defined empowerment as the intrinsic task motivation manifested in a set of four cognitions viz. meaning to work, self-efficacy, self-determination, and impact reflecting an individual's orientation to his or her work role. The above components constitutes a sense of Psychological empowerment which is concerned with a person's internal feelings of efficacy, personal value or worth, and the ability and freedom to make decisions affecting outcomes in his or her environment.

*Meaning* - Meaning serves as the "engine" of empowerment (i.e., the mechanism through which individuals get energized about work). It is the value of a work goal or purpose, judged in relation to an individual's own ideals or standards.

*Competence/Self-efficacy* - Competence refers to self-efficacy specific to one's work, or a belief in one's capability to perform work activities with skill. It reflects individuals' beliefs that they have what it takes to do their particular job well.

*Self-determination* - Self-determination is a sense of choice in initiating, regulating one's actions and making decisions regarding how one's work is carried out. It reflects a sense of autonomy over the initiation and continuation of work behaviours and processes; making decisions about work methods, pace, and effort.

*Impact* - Impact is the degree to which one can influence strategic, administrative, or operating outcomes at work. Impact has been defined as the perception that one's behaviour has an effect on one's task environment and as the perception of environmental resistance to personal impact regardless of ability.

During the past half-century, various approaches have examined leadership skills and attributes, contingency leadership, participative leadership, transformational leadership, and the impact of leadership on organizational climate (Likert, 1961; McClelland, 1985; Fiedler, 1967; Blake & Mouton, 1985; Hershey & Blanchard, 1982; Bass, 1985; Bennis & Nanus, 1987; Hoy & Tarter, 1997). Yukl (1994) indicated that the Leaders who were high on *self-efficacy*, the more likely they were to initiate, engage in and persist with tasks that were difficult (i.e., *self-determination*), to attempt to influence others (i.e., impact), to set challenging goals, and have increased commitment from their subordinates. Simon (1997) asserted that the essential confront for all companies nowadays, is to have intrinsically motivated and empowered managers for the organizational goals. Pfeffer (1998) reported that the companies who had learn the tactics of how to hold and sustain their talent pool would be victorious in long term. Koberg et. al (1999) indicated that many factors influences cognitions of empowerment and classified them as individual (tenure, age, self-concept, locus of control, self-efficacy, self-esteem); group (leader approachability, group effectiveness, worth of group, mutual influence, trust); organizational (position in the hierarchy, type of organization, organizational climate). Hay/McBer Research and Innovation Group (1997) indicated that insurance sales agents who were very strong in *emotional competencies viz. self-confidence, initiative, empathy* sold policies with an average premium of \$ 114,000 as compared to those who were weak in those competencies sold policies worth \$ 54,000. For sales reps at a computer company those hired based on their emotional competence were 90% more likely to finish their training than those hired on other criteria. Chen, Jacobs and Spencer (1998) found that *emotional competencies* were 53 percent more frequent in human resource managers than other competencies, such as cognitive competencies, which only rated 27 percent. Seligman (2002) demonstrated that training in the skills and competencies of emotional intelligence will assist in developing one's self-awareness and emotional-awareness, leading to a change towards more adaptive attitudes and the augmentation of more positive perceptions of one's work. Zaccaro, Kemp, Bader (2003) reported key attributes of leaders as emotional intelligence; social intelligence; cognitive abilities. Significantly, Lee (2005) studied the emotional intelligence and psychological empowerment of school leaders (n=125) of a county public school system and reported that the administrative leaders embodies a good degree of empowerment with mean scores of 11.67, 13.23, 13.12, 10.71, and 9.62 on psychological empowerment and its four dimensions and emotional intelligence with mean score of 129.03 respectively.

To conclude, organizational research has established significant relationships between a leader's leadership behaviour and emotional competencies as well as leader's cognitions of empowerment and organizational climate (Goleman, et al, 2002; Cooper & Sawaf, 1996; Spreitzer, 1995; Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Lee & Koh, 2001; van Oudtshoorn & Thomas, 1995). As a result, important questions come to light viz. how leaders' from sales, operations, HR departments of private Insurance companies differ on the perceptions of their emotional competencies and cognitions of empowerment which affect their leadership behaviour in managing and retaining the talent pool to meet the global challenges of today and tomorrow. Thus it is imperative to explore the possible differences among the leaders from the above mentioned departments of Insurance sector with distinct job profiles in regard to their emotional management and psychological empowerment.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research question was addressed by the study:

How the leaders of sales, operations, and HR departments of private Insurance companies differ on their emotional intelligence; and cognitions of psychological empowerment namely meaning to work, self-efficacy, self-determination, and impact.

## METHODOLOGY

*Hypothesis:* Leaders of sales, operations, and HR departments of private Insurance companies would differ on their emotional intelligence; and psychological empowerment in terms of meaning to work, self-efficacy, self-determination, impact as leaders.

*Participants:* The participants for the present research comprised of 150 middle-line managers i.e., (50 – Sales, 50 – Operations, 50 – HR departments) selected using purposive random sampling technique from the private Insurance companies viz. (ICICI Prudential Life Insurance, HDFC Standard Life Insurance, Birla Sunlife Life Insurance, Met Life Insurance, and AVIVA Life Insurance) of the tri-city of Chandigarh, Panchkula, and Mohali. The demographic variables that were controlled in the study are age of the managers (30-40) years, gender (males), marital status (married), average monthly income (40000INR) and work experience as team managers (varying from 8 to 10 years).

*Measures:* Schutte Self Report Emotional Intelligence Test by Schutte et. al. (1998), and Psychological empowerment scale by Spreitzer (1995) were administered to assess the emotional intelligence and psychological empowerment among leaders of sales, operations, and HR departments of Insurance companies. Schutte Self Report Emotional Intelligence Test by Schutte et. al. (1998) is a self-report 33-item instrument rated on a 5-point Likert-type with responses ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). It assesses to what extent individuals perceive, understand, regulate, and harness emotions adaptively. The internal consistency reliability has a cronbach alpha of 0.90 to 0.87. Psychological empowerment scale by Spreitzer (1995) is a multidimensional scale which measures psychological empowerment according to four dimensions: meaning to work, self-efficacy, self-determination and impact. The 12 item scale consists of statements concerning the extent to which a person experiences different feelings when performing his or her job, each is measured on a 5-point likert scale with responses ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Composite reliabilities for each subscale ranges from 0.79 - 0.88. Factor loadings of the four factors ranges from 0.66 - 0.90. The reliability for overall empowerment was 0.72 for industrial sample and 0.62 for insurance sample. Validity of dimensions is around 0.80.

*Procedure:* Before administration of the tests, the permission to collect the data was requested from the Branch Heads of the respective Companies. After procuring the approval from the middle-line managers to participate in the study the confidentiality of their submissions was assured. The testing schedule was conducted personally in the group of 3-4 managers at a time and the respective tests described above were responded by them in two sessions. In the first session, demographic information schedule was conducted and nature and purpose of the research was explained to them. In the second session, emotional intelligence test and psychological empowerment scale were administered.

*Statistical analysis:* Keeping in view the hypotheses of the study descriptive statistics consisting of mean, standard deviation, and percentages were calculated. One-way ANOVA was computed to identify the significant differences between the managers of all three departments on their emotional intelligence and psychological empowerment. To further identify the significant mean differences in-between the managers of the three departments of private insurance, unplanned multiple comparisons were carried out using Bonferroni post-hoc test. The rationale behind choosing the unplanned or post-hoc comparisons design is that the differences among the means of three groups were explored after the data has been collected. SPSS system was used for data analyses.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results (Table-1), revealed significant differences between the leaders of sales, operations, and HR departments of private Insurance companies on their cognitions of empowerment namely self-determination ( $F(df) = 143.4, p < 0.005$ ); and impact ( $F(df) = 121.6, p < 0.005$ ) respectively. The mean scores and standard deviation values of sales, operations, and HR leaders on self-determination were ( $M = 13.4, 10.8, 13.4; S.D = 0.86, 0.89, 0.86$ ), and impact were ( $M = 6.2, 9.6, 6.2; S.D = 1.4, 0.85, 1.4$ ) respectively. However, no significant differences were found among them on emotional intelligence ( $F(df) = 0.502, p > 0.005$ ); and cognitions of empowerment namely meaning to work ( $F(df) = 0.035, p > 0.005$ ), and self-efficacy ( $F(df) = 0.037, p > 0.005$ ). The mean scores and standard deviation values of sales, operations, and HR leaders on emotional intelligence ( $M = 23.7, 24.2, 23.8; S.D = 1.55, 1.64, 1.68$ ); meaning to work were ( $M = 13.4, 13.4, 12.3; S.D = 0.88, 0.86, 0.87$ ); and self-efficacy were ( $M = 12.6, 12.5, 13.4; S.D = 0.85, 0.83, 0.86$ ) respectively. These results brings out the fact that the managers from all the three departments of private Insurance sector viz. sales, operations, and HR can manage their own and subordinates' emotions, highly value their work goal or purpose which is judged in relation to their own ideals or standards; and there is a goodness of fit between the requirements of their work roles, beliefs, mission of the organization and their individual values and behaviours. Additionally, these managers from the above mentioned departments have high beliefs in their own capabilities specific to their work to perform their work activities with skill and to do their particular job well.



TABLE-1: DIFFERENCES AMONG THE LEADERS OF DIFFERENT DEPARTMENTS OF PRIVATE INSURANCE SECTOR ON EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND COGNITIONS OF EMPOWERMENT

	Sales (N = 50)		Operations (N = 50)		HR (N = 50)		'F' value
	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	
Emotional Intelligence	23.7	1.55	24.2	1.64	23.8	1.68	0.502 p>0.0005
Meaning to Work	13.4	0.88	13.4	0.86	12.3	0.87	0.035 p>0.0005
Self-efficacy (Competence)	12.6	0.85	12.5	0.83	13.4	0.86	0.037 p<0.0005
Self-determination	13.4	0.86	10.8	0.89	13.4	0.86	143.4* p<0.0005
Impact	6.2	1.4	9.6	0.85	6.2	1.4	121.6* p>0.0005

\* p < 0.005 level

To further identify the significant mean differences between the leaders of sales, operations, and HR departments of the Insurance companies on cognitions of empowerment namely self-determination and impact unplanned comparisons were carried out using Bonferroni post-hoc test as indicated in Table-2.

TABLE-2: POST-HOC COMPARISONS ON SELF-DETERMINATION AND IMPACT AMONG LEADERS OF DIFFERENT DEPARTMENTS OF PRIVATE INSURANCE SECTOR

Self-determination				Impact			
Managers		Mean Diff.	Sig.	Managers		Mean Diff.	Sig.
Sales	Operations	2.56*	.000	Sales	Operations	-3.4*	.000
HR	HR	0.00	1.000	HR	HR	0.00	1.000
Operations	Sales	-2.56*	.000	Operations	Sales	3.4*	.000
HR	HR	-2.56*	.000	HR	HR	3.4*	.000
HR	Sales	0.00	.000	HR	Sales	0.00*	1.000
Operations	Operations	2.56*	.000	Operations	Operations	-3.4*	.000

\* p < 0.05 level

Employing the Bonferroni post-hoc test, significant differences were found between the leaders of sales, operations, and HR departments of private Insurance companies on self-determination indicating that leaders from sales department were significantly higher (p < 0.005) than their operations department counterparts on self-determination which implies that majority of insurance managers have better autonomy over the initiation and continuation of work behaviour and processes; making decisions about work methods, pace, and effort; choice in initiating, regulating one's actions and making decisions regarding how their work is carried out than their operations' counterparts. However, no significant differences were found between the leaders of sales and HR departments of private Insurance companies on self-determination. Whereas, significant differences were found between leaders of operations and HR departments on self-determination indicating that leaders from HR sector were significantly higher (p < 0.005) than leaders from operations department on self-determination which suggests that HR leaders have better autonomy over the initiation and continuation of work behaviour and processes; making decisions about work methods, pace, and effort; choice in initiating, regulating one's actions and making decisions regarding how their work is carried out than their operations' counterparts than their operations department counterparts.

Similarly, significant differences were found between the leaders of sales and operations departments of private Insurance companies on impact indicating that leaders of operations department were significantly higher (p < 0.005) than leaders from sales departments on the degree of control they have over their organizations suggesting that leaders of operations department have good degree of control over strategic, administrative, and operating outcomes at work, perceive themselves as influencing the organizational outcomes in a positive way, and their work as making a difference in achieving the overall purpose of the work task when compared to their sales department counterparts. However, no significant differences were found between the leaders of sales and HR departments of private Insurance companies on impact. On the other hand, significant differences were found between leaders of operations and HR on impact indicating that leaders from operations department were significantly higher (p < 0.005) than their HR counterparts on impact implying that they have better degree of control over strategic, administrative, and operating outcomes at work, perceive themselves as influencing the organizational outcomes in a positive way, and their work as making a difference in achieving the overall purpose of the work task than their HR department counterparts.

These findings were also aligned and congruent with various researches and surveys done by organizational researchers and psychologists to assess the emotional competencies and psychological empowerment of different organizational leaders in relation to their work activities. Yukl (1994) indicated that the Leaders who were high on self-efficacy, the more likely they were to initiate, engage in and persist with tasks that were difficult (i.e., self-determination), to attempt to influence others (i.e., impact), to set challenging goals, and have increased commitment from their subordinates. Simon (1997) asserted that the essential confront for all companies nowadays, is to have intrinsically motivated and empowered managers for the organizational goals. Pfeffer (1998) reported that the companies who had learn the tactics of how to hold and sustain their talent pool would be victorious in long term. Koberg et. al (1999) indicated that many factors influences cognitions of empowerment and classified them as individual (tenure, age, self-concept, locus of control, self-efficacy, self-esteem); group (leader approachability, group effectiveness, worth of group, mutual influence, trust); organizational (position in the hierarchy, type of organization, organizational climate). Hay/McBer Research and Innovation Group (1997) indicated that insurance sales agents who were very strong in emotional competencies viz. self-confidence, initiative, empathy sold policies with an average premium of \$ 114,000 as compared to those who were weak in those competencies sold policies worth \$ 54,000. For sales reps at a computer company those hired based on their emotional competence were 90% more likely to finish their training than those hired on other criteria. Chen, Jacobs and Spencer (1998) found that emotional competencies were 53 percent more frequent in human resource managers than other competencies, such as cognitive competencies, which only rated 27 percent. Seligman (2002) demonstrated that training in the skills and competencies of emotional intelligence will assist in developing one's self-awareness and emotional-awareness, leading to a change towards more adaptive attitudes and the augmentation of more positive perceptions of one's work. Zaccaro, Kemp, Bader (2003) reported key attributes of leaders as emotional intelligence; social intelligence; cognitive abilities. Significantly, Lee (2005) studied the emotional intelligence and psychological empowerment of school leaders (n=125) of a county public school system and reported that the administrative leaders embodies a good degree of empowerment with mean scores of 11.67, 13.23, 13.12, 10.71, and 9.62 on psychological empowerment and its four dimensions and emotional intelligence with mean score of 129.03 respectively.

**IMPLICATIONS**

All the facts discussed so far provide evidence for the key role of emotional intelligence and psychological empowerment in facilitating leadership behaviour of the leaders of sales, operations, and HR departments of private Insurance companies. It also reveals important questions that guide more extensive research related to organizational leaders' emotional management and cognitions of empowerment and other variables presumed related, either directly or indirectly, to organizational effectiveness. These findings suggest need for a greater focus on the development and sustenance of intrinsic task motivation and empowerment among the leaders of Insurance sector organizations due to its imperative importance in sustaining and holding the talented human capital to meet the challenges of uncertain economy and competition in this era of globalization. The results of the present study have lot of implications for the corporate in the Indian market in the selection of the talent pool i.e., recruiting the effective managers, evaluating their effectiveness for the work roles assigned to them

according to their empowerment indicators as well as assessing their work-related task behaviours for promoting, and assigning them to particular projects or assignments.

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