

Does the Emotional Intelligence of leaders influence the emotional climate of the organisation?

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Key digested message

Evidence suggests that the Emotional Intelligence and behaviour of leaders can significantly influence the emotional climate and effectiveness of groups within an organisation (e.g. Kelner et al., 1994; Momeni, 2009). This study looked at the relationship between the Emotional Intelligence of leaders, as measured by the Emotional Intelligence Profile (EIP) (Maddocks, 2014), and the perceived climate this creates, as measured by external raters on the Leadership Climate Indicator 360 (LCI) (Maddocks, 2013). The findings show a clear relationship between specific facets of leaders' Emotional Intelligence (based on their self-perceptions) and the emotional climate or tone they set within the organisation. Results also suggest that negative leadership behaviours have greater impact on all rater groups than positive leadership behaviours.

Context

EVIDENCE SUGGESTS that the organisational climate can significantly promote or inhibit Emotionally Intelligent behaviour (Wong & Law, 2002; Cartwright & Pappas, 2008). For example, creating an 'Encouraging' organisational environment may raise team 'Morale' helping to increase individuals' 'Self Regard'.

Equally, findings show that coaching individuals to raise their 'Self Regard' at work will ripple into their team relationships, which in turn will cascade across the organisation (Kozlowski & Doherty, 1989; Litwin & Stringer, 1968). This study examines the relationship between an individual leader's EI, measured using the Emotional Intelligence Profile (EIP), and its impact on organisational climate, measured using the Leadership Climate Indicator 360 (LCI).

The measures

The EIP was developed in 1998 as a tool for leadership development and comprises 136 items that measure 16 scales¹ of Emotional Intelligence. The scales are organised within a six part framework with their primary relationship as shown in Figure 1.

The LCI measures six positive leadership behaviours (Visioning, Stretching, Encouraging, Collaborative, Trusted and Appreciative) that reflect a positive emotional climate, and six negative leadership behaviours (Competitive, Aggressive, Demanding, Avoidant, Dependent and Rigid) that reflect a negative emotional climate, illustrated in Figure 2.

¹ Five of the EIP scales are comprised of three sub-scales, which reflect 'too little', 'too much' and 'the right amount' on the scale. For example, the 'Trust' scale includes 'Mistrustful', 'Carefully Trusting' and 'Over Trusting' as separate sub-scales.

	Personal Intelligence	Interpersonal Intelligence
Behaviour	Self Management	Relationship Management
Feeling	Self Awareness	Awareness of Others
Attitude	Self Regard	Regard for Others

Figure 1: The EIP framework.

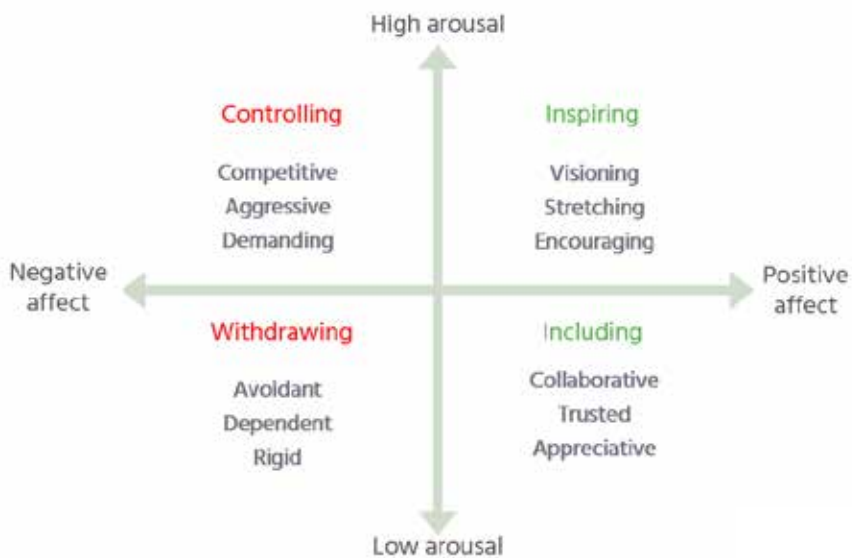


Figure 2: The Leadership Climate Indicator (LCI) model.

The twelve scales are grouped into four clusters positioned as opposite pairs; *Controlling* versus *Inspiring*, and *Withdrawing* versus *Including*. The four clusters fit within an established circumplex model of emotion (Russell, 1980) that separates emotional climate by valence (positive versus negative) and arousal (high versus low).

Methodology

A sample of 108 senior managers and directors (leaders) within both public and private sector UK organisations completed the EIP and LCI. The leaders were rated on the LCI 360 by their line manager, peers, direct reports and 'others'. Three research questions were considered:

1. Does a leader's self-perceived Emotional Intelligence, as assessed by the EIP, correlate with the emotional climate or tone they set within the organisation, as measured by external raters on the LCI?
2. Do scores on the EIP scales correlate positively with the positive clusters of the LCI?
3. Do scores on the EIP scales correlate negatively with the negative clusters of the LCI?

Results and discussion

In terms of the first research question, almost all of the correlations were in the expected direction. Positive EIP scales correlated positively with the six positive LCI scales and negatively with the negative LCI scales, thus supporting the first research question. The majority of LCI correlations for external raters were with interpersonal aspects of the EIP (*Regard for Others*, *Awareness of Others* and *Relationship Management*), indicating that interpersonal relations with leaders are particularly influential on the organisational climate.

Addressing the second research question, higher scores on several EIP scales were found to correlate positively across rater groups with the six positive LCI scales. These include: *Regard for Others*, *Awareness of Others*, *Connecting with Others*, *Trust and Interdependence*. This suggests that leaders who value others, understand their motivations and endeavour to build close and trusting relationships are more likely to create a positive emotional climate, in particular a climate that is 'Appreciative' (Multiple R = .47, R² = 21%) (Table 1).

Addressing the third research question, several EIP scales were found to correlate negatively with the six negative LCI scales across rater groups. These include low *Regard for Others*, low *Awareness of Others*, low *Connecting with Others*, low *Over Independent*, low *Aggressive* and low *Reflective Learning*.

Table 1: Leaders EIP scale correlations with positive LCI scales (only scales with significant correlations shown).

LCI scales						
EIP scales	Visioning	Stretching	Encouraging	Collaborative	Trusted	Appreciative
Regard for Others	.19*					.22*
Awareness of Others	.28**	.25**	.25**	.26**	.23*	.38**
Connecting with Others	.27**	.26**		.20*		.25**
Mistrustful ¹	-.22*					
Interdependent	.29**	.23*		.23*		.23*
Over Independent ¹	-.26**	-.27**	-.19*		-.27**	-.36**
Multiple R	.29	.26	.21	.26	.27	.47
R ²	8%	7%	5%	7%	7%	21%

All rater groups combined N=108 * p<0.05, **p<0.01

¹ Subscale that reflects lower EI

This suggests that leaders who are less attentive, less caring and sensitive to others, less disposed to building close and trusting relationships and less concerned with their self-development are more likely to create a negative emotional climate, in particular a climate that is 'Competitive' (Multiple R = .48, R² = 23%) and 'Aggressive' (Multiple R = .45, R² = 20%). One climate scale that shows a different pattern of results is 'Dependent' (Multiple R = .43, R² = 18%), which is more likely to be demonstrated by leaders who have low *Self Regard*, low *Emotional Resilience*, low *Goal Directedness*, are *Over Trusting*, *Passive* and *Dependent* (Table 2).

Table 2: Leaders EIP scale correlations with negative LCI scales (only scales with significant correlations are shown).

LCI scales						
EIP scales	Competitive	Aggressive	Demanding	Avoidant	Dependent	Rigid
Self Regard					-.28**	
Regard for Others		-.24*				
Awareness of Others	-.27**	-.22*		-.22*		-.22*
Emotional Resilience					-.26**	
Goal Directed					-.31**	
Connected with Others		-.19*				-.26**
Over Trusting ¹					.21*	
Pessimistic ¹					.22*	
Emotional Expression & Control		-.23*	-.28**			-.27**
Passive ¹					.23*	
Aggressive ¹		.31**				
Over Independent ¹	.35**	.41**	.21*	.24*		
Dependent ¹					.21*	
Reflective Learning			-.23*		-.20*	-.25**
Multiple R	.48	.45	.35	.24	.43	.27
R ²	23%	20%	12%	6%	18%	7%

All rater groups combined N=108 * p<0.05, **p<0.01

¹Subscale that reflects lower EI



Although the majority of correlations were in the expected direction, there were a few exceptions for the group 'direct reports'. Specifically, leaders who are more *Passive*, *Dependent* and have lower *Personal Power* were rated as more Trusted and Appreciative by their direct reports, while leaders with higher *Self Regard*, *Emotional Resilience*, *Personal Power* and *Assertiveness* were rated as more Avoidant by their direct reports. One interpretation is that leaders with high Self Management need to balance this with strong Relationship Management so as not to be seen by their direct reports as too self-sufficient, arrogant or invulnerable.

Finally, results showed that negative leadership behaviours have greater impact on all rater groups (in particular on their direct reports) than positive leadership behaviours do. This contrasts with leaders' self-ratings (i.e. their self-perception) that showed stronger correlations with positive than negative leadership behaviours. A recommendation is that leaders need to be more aware of how negative leadership behaviour impacts on others (particularly on direct reports) as these may easily eradicate the benefits of positive leadership behaviours.

Conclusion

To summarise the key findings:

1. A leader's EI is strongly related to both positive and negative aspects of climate.
2. Interpersonal aspects of EI leadership have a stronger relationship with climate than Intrapersonal aspects of EI.
3. Leaders with strong Self Management may be seen as too self-sufficient, arrogant or invulnerable by their direct reports.
4. Low EI leadership behaviours have a stronger relationship with climate than high EI leadership behaviours.

In conclusion, these findings suggest a clear relationship between certain facets of leaders' Emotional Intelligence and the emotional climate or tone they set within the

organisation. A key implication for organisations wishing to build a positive emotional climate is to develop particular aspects of leaders' Emotional Intelligence and perhaps more importantly to avoid emotionally *unintelligent* behaviours.

The author

Jo Maddocks is chief psychologist, co-founder of JCA Global and author of the Emotional Intelligence Profile.

Statement of interest

Jo Maddocks and JCA Global are the authors and distributors of the Emotional Intelligence Profile and the Leadership Climate Indicator 360 (LCI).

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