

# **Emotional Intelligence and Leadership Styles**



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Exploring the Relationship between  
Emotional Intelligence and Leadership  
Styles Among Information  
Technology Professionals

**Eniola O. Olagundoye, Ph.D.**



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*Emotional Intelligence and Leadership Styles: Exploring  
the Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Leadership Styles  
Among Information Technology Professionals*

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Universal Publishers  
Irvine • Boca Raton  
USA • 2019  
Dissertation.com

ISBN: 978-1-61233-469-1 (pbk.)

ISBN: 978-1-61233-470-7 (ebk.)

Typeset by Medlar Publishing Solutions Pvt Ltd, India  
Cover design by Ivan Popov

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Olagundoye, Eniola O., author.

Title: Emotional intelligence and leadership styles : exploring the relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership styles among information technology professionals / Eniola O. Olagundoye.

Description: Irvine, California : Dissertation.com, [2019] | Originally presented as the author's doctoral thesis. | Includes bibliographical references.

Identifiers: LCCN 2019034285 (print) | LCCN 2019034286 (ebook) | ISBN 9781612334691 (paperback) | ISBN 9781612334707 (ebook)

Subjects: LCSH: Leadership--Psychological aspects. | Information technology--Management. | Emotional intelligence.

Classification: LCC BF637.L4 .O43 2019 (print) | LCC BF637.L4 (ebook) | DDC 152.4--dc23

# DEDICATION

*Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good!  
Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!*  
Psalm 34:8

First and foremost, I thank GOD for sustaining me through the rigors of this doctoral program. Without Him, it would have been impossible for me to accomplish this goal. I thank Him for His protection, His promotion, and His provision. I dedicate this dissertation to my lovely wife and best friend, Geneva (“Sis”), with whom I recently celebrated our 33<sup>rd</sup> wedding anniversary. Thank you, Geneva, for your unfeigned support, unconditional love, unwavering patience, and caring spirit. I will always love you. I further dedicate this dissertation to my deceased parents, Chief Benjamin and Caroline Olagundoye, who instilled in me the value of education throughout my childhood. Thank you, Mom and Dad. I hope I have made you proud by obtaining this degree. I wish you were here to witness this milestone in my life. I love you both, and I miss you very much. To my father-in-law, the late Leonce Miller, and my late uncle, Mr. Yele Adeseyoju, thank you both for your love. I also wish both of you were here to witness this accomplishment in my life. I love you both and I miss you very much. To my mother-in-law, Anna Lou Miller, thank you for your prayers and unwavering support throughout my journey in this program. I love you. Finally, to my daughter, Ashley Olatokunbo Williams, my-son-in law, Trenton Antwon Williams, and my grandson, Blake Anthony Oluwaseun Williams, thank you for the constant support and the unparalleled love that I received from each one of you. I hope this accomplishment will inspire you to pursue your dreams, with GOD leading the way. I love all of you dearly.



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# ABSTRACT

All around the world, information technology is evolving at an alarming rate, and it could be challenging keeping up with the growing changes that we are witnessing with it. This paper explores the relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership styles among information technology professionals. Does emotional intelligence predict leadership style and do leadership styles predict emotional intelligence components? A total of 185 participants were involved in this study. The leadership styles, which are comprised of transformational, transactional, and passive-avoidant, were measured by the *Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire – MLQ 5X* (Bass & Avolio, 1995). The emotional intelligence components, which are comprised of perception of emotion, managing own emotions, managing others' emotions, and utilization of emotion, were measured by the *Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test – SSEIT* (Schutte et al., 2009). The demographic areas controlled in this study include gender, age, ethnicity, education, and tenure.

Multiple regression was conducted on each of the seven hypotheses in this study, and it was determined that transformational leadership style and transactional leadership style were predictors of perception of emotion, managing others' emotions, and utilization of emotion. This study also revealed that transformational leadership style was a predictor of managing own emotions. Surprisingly, transactional leadership style was not a predictor of managing own emotions. As expected, there was no significant correlation discovered between passive-avoidant leadership style and emotional intelligence. Furthermore, the results showed that emotional intelligence was a predictor of both transformational and

transactional leadership styles. This study discovered that gender was a significant variable and females scored higher than males in the emotional intelligence component of managing others' emotions.

The findings in this study coincide with the body of literature that exists, which reveals positive relationships between emotional intelligence components and transformational and transactional leadership styles.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This is a dream come true. There are just so many people that I would like to acknowledge who immensely contributed to my achieving this personal goal. This journey was not easy by any means, but I was able to reach the finish line with prayers, motivation, help, support, and encouragement from friends and family.

I would like to acknowledge my committee chair, Dr. Yu Sun, who guided me throughout the whole process of this dissertation. Thank you very much, Dr. Sun, for your encouragement and the “can do” attitude that you constantly reminded me of during this dissertation period. I could not have achieved this without your patience and guidance. I am most grateful to you. I also want to thank my other committee members, Dr. Phyllis Duncan and Dr. Mark T. Green. Dr. Duncan, you are a very special person. Thank you for all the advice, points, and suggestions that you gave me throughout this process. You encouraged me to think outside the box and to explore further than my first thought. These were greatly appreciated. And to Dr. Green, way before the beginning of this dissertation, I learned a lot from you from all the classes that I had with you, and I have always admired your brilliant method of teaching. You are a one-of-a-kind leader and your constructive points and suggestions went a long way in helping me to complete this dissertation. Thank you for all that you have done for me.

I am very thankful to the faculty of the Department of Leadership Studies at Our Lady of the Lake University, especially Dr. Malcolm Ree, Dr. Esther Gergen, Dr. Lamar Odom, Dr. Ashley Fields, Dr. Serge Ryno, Dr. William Ishee, Dr. Dawn Benitez, Dr. Carol Wheeler, and Dr. Horacio

Salinas, and to the staff, including Melinda Kirtley, Amy Tijerina, and Lauren Thompson.

I would like to seize this opportunity to acknowledge my manager, Ciree Loftus, my employer, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), and my colleagues at TCS. Thank you, Ciree, for your encouragement and advice throughout this doctoral program. I sincerely appreciate it.

I would also like to thank my dear friend and Houston Cohort 3 colleague, James Eastham, for proofreading my manuscript. This was greatly appreciated. Many thanks to my other classmates, Carla and Rocio, for the study time that we had during this dissertation period. This was greatly appreciated. I would also like to thank the remaining members of my Houston Cohort 3 family: Amy, Annette, Ben, George, Jemma, Jennene, Jennifer, Kenya, Kisha, Omar, Rhonda, and Sarah. I thank you for your friendship. Thanks to each of you for passing through this journey with me. The relationship that we built together during the years in this program is priceless.

To my brothers Chief Olushegun, Oladipo, Olushile, Bolanle, and Barrister Rotimi; their respective wives Abimbola, Oluwakemi, Stephanie, and Modupe; my sister, Pastor Olufunke Zubair, and her husband, Pastor Adeniyi Zubair: thank you. This is what family is all about. You were all there for me in your own ways and helped me with whatever I needed. Thanks to each one of you for the constant support and encouragement that I received throughout this program. I will forever be grateful to each one of you and your respective families. I would also like to acknowledge my brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law: Etna, Christine, John, Ronald, David, Lisa, Dennis, Stephanie, Denise, and Nicholas. Thanks to each one of you and your household for the support and encouragement. I want to thank my auntie, Mrs. Julie Agun, and her husband, Professor Ibitayo Agun, for their prayers, support, and encouragement. To my cousins Adeyemi, Folushade, Oluwole and Funmilayo: thank you for your encouragement and support. I would like to acknowledge everyone who completed my survey. Wherever you may be, you were part of this success, and for that I say thank you.

Lastly, I would like to thank the following people who have prayed, helped, supported, and encouraged me one way or the other throughout this program: Theodis Williams, Tchernavia Williams, Daryl Everett, Keenan Johnson, Reginald Addo-Ankrah, Akin Allen, Modupe Allen, Rod Washington, Dr. Paulette Gaddison, Richard Akinbobola, Dr. Ingrid Martin, Dr. Stephanie Wilson, Dr. Jarvis Thomas, Eddie Carr, Cynthia Carr, Juliet London, Dr. Anthony Miles, Dr. Ekere Williams, David DeBenedictis, Christopher Lane, Dr. Sergio Martinez, Sumbo Tijani, Dr. Kimberly Andrews, Dr. Joe Fomukong, Dr. Femi Ayanwale, Taj Clark, Dr. Lashun Griffin Jenkins, Dr. Adriana Ababiak-Vazquez, Dr. Luis Vazquez, Augustine Njoku, Dr. Wenonah Ecung, Dr. Seth Batistie, Vivian Sepe, George Sepe, Dr. Bruce O’Neal, and Dr. Richard Rodriguez. Thank you very much to each of you. I truly appreciate your support.



## CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION

**T**echnology is a rapidly evolving concept and it could be challenging keeping up with the growing changes. Just look back 10 years ago, and one can clearly notice all around, how much the world has changed due to technology. With the constant advancement of technology, organizations' reliability on information technology (IT) professionals, who are the force behind technology, has simultaneously taken a paramount dimension. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, information technology projected employment is expected to grow by 22% through the year 2020. With constant technology growth, the need for information technology professional leaders striking the right leadership style in conjunction with the accurate emotional intelligence component to steer an organization into the right direction and or to a higher level may not be overly emphasized. Technology is an important criterion in our everyday life, as it positively contributes immensely to the day to day standard of living. According to Green (2014), Woodward argued that the technology an organization used seemed to influence the type of structure the organization created and that, to some degree, technology determines organizational structure (page 72). Despite the high level of information technology investments, information technology is underutilized (Eseryel, 2013), which leads us to the importance of connecting the right leadership style and emotional intelligence with information technology. Glen (2003) states that information technology professionals are moving from the backroom to the forefront more and more and because of that, their "people" skills need to be more developed, since these

have not been the focus historically. Studies have shown that emotional intelligence is beneficial to both individual and organizations (Sunindijo, Hadikusumo, & Ogunlana, 2007).

Despite the abundance of literature on emotional intelligence and leadership styles, limited studies exist connecting these theories with information technology professionals, which is the purpose of the current study. From this study, the researcher explored adding to the existing body of knowledge of these theories of emotional intelligence and leadership styles by focusing on the relationships that exist between these two theories as they pertain to information technology professional leaders.

## **Background**

Leadership is the process of influencing people to accomplish common goals. In the 1970s, James Downton coined the term transformational leadership, in his book *Rebel Leadership* (Downton, 1973), and in 1978, James MacGregor Burns described transformational leadership as behaviors that occur when leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality. (Burns). In 1985, Bass extended the work of James Burns by explaining the mechanisms that underline transformational leadership and transactional leadership (Bass), and in 1991, Bass and Avolio developed the full-range model of leadership, which contains nine constructs that form the three leadership styles of transformational, transactional and passive avoidant (Bass & Avolio). These three leadership styles from the full range leadership model were part of the variables in this study.

Emotional Intelligence is a fairly new concept that emerged in the early 1990's. John D. Mayer and Peter Salovey coined the term emotional intelligence in 1990, but Daniel Goleman's book titled *Emotional Intelligence*, brought this topic to the forefront (Goleman, 1995). John D. Mayer and Peter Salovey defined emotional intelligence as "the ability to perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional meanings, and to reflectively



regulate emotions so as to promote both better emotion and thought” (Mayer & Salovey, 1997 p. 22).

## **Statement of Problem**

This study explored the relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership styles among information technology professionals. How much of a role do the demographic variables play in this relationship, even while controlled?

Within the narrow area of emotional intelligence, limited studies exist in the common scholarly databases that used the *Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test* (SSEIT) in exploring the concept of emotional intelligence, and the use of *Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire* (MLQ 5X) in measuring leadership styles as they relate to information technology professional leaders. The researcher explored this option. In addition, the lack of extensive empirical studies in this area has prompted this research.

## **Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of this study is to measure the relationship between information technology professionals’ emotional intelligence, measured by *Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test* (SSEIT), and their leadership styles, measured by the *Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire* (MLQ 5X), when controlling the information technology professional leaders’ gender, age, ethnicity, education, and tenure.

## **Conceptual Definitions**

**Perception of Emotion** is described as how individuals perceive emotions within themselves and others (Salovey & Mayer, 1990).