Original Article

The Influence of Age on Emotional Intelligence Among NGO Leaders in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

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Abstract:
This study investigates how age influences emotional intelligence (EI) among 144 leaders working in non-governmental organizations (NGOs) based in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Emotional intelligence is crucial for effective leadership, as it helps leaders understand and manage their own emotions and those of others. Building on recent research emphasizing the importance of EI in leadership, an attempt was made to explore whether age plays a role in shaping EI levels among NGO leaders. To answer this question, the ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) test was employed to analyze the data in comparing the EI scores of leaders across different age groups based on their age. The results of the analysis revealed significant differences in EI scores among NGO leaders of different ages indicating that older leaders tend to exhibit higher levels of emotional intelligence. This suggests that older leaders may have different emotional skills compared to younger leaders. These findings highlight the importance of considering age-related differences in EI when assessing leadership effectiveness within NGOs. By understanding how age influences EI, organizations can better tailor their leadership development programs to meet the diverse needs of leaders across different age groups. Ultimately, this research contributes to our understanding of the complex interplay between age and emotional intelligence in the context of NGO leadership.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Age Influence, NGO Leaders

Introduction

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are pivotal in tackling societal challenges, necessitating adept leadership characterized by emotional intelligence (EI). However, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, a significant challenge persists as many NGO leaders lack a comprehensive understanding of EI, crucial for effective leadership in today's dynamic landscape. Existing literature on EI and leadership within NGOs, particularly in African contexts like Ethiopia, is scarce, leaving a critical gap in knowledge. Additionally, studies from developed countries may not directly apply to the African context, further exacerbating this gap.

This study aims to bridge this void by investigating the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and age among NGO leaders in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
Despite the recognized importance of EI in leadership, empirical examinations within the Ethiopian NGO context, especially concerning the influence of age on EI scores, are notably lacking. Drawing upon recent literature emphasizing EI's significance in leadership effectiveness, this research seeks to explore how age influences EI as it has a subsequent impact on leadership effectiveness.

To address this gap, the study targeted NGO leaders responsible for managing organizations in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, including Country Directors/Representatives, Program Directors, Finance Directors, Human Resource Directors, Program Coordinators, and Project Managers. Using convenience sampling, 41 NGOs were selected, representing 30% of the legally registered NGOs in the region, and their leaders were invited to participate. Collaborating with the Consortium of Christian Relief Development Association (CCRDA), permission was obtained to collect data.

By examining the role of EI in leadership best practices within the Addis Ababa NGO sector, this research aims to provide invaluable insights for NGOs in the region to select and develop effective leaders, thus contributing to the advancement of organizational effectiveness and societal impact.

The literature review explores into the substantial body of research that underscores the pivotal role of emotional intelligence (EI) in driving leadership effectiveness across a spectrum of organizational settings. Avolio and Hannah along with Goleman et al. offer robust empirical evidence highlighting the significant impact of EI on organizational performance, productivity, and overall success. Their studies emphasize that leaders equipped with high levels of EI are better equipped to navigate complex social interactions, manage interpersonal dynamics, and foster positive workplace relationships, thereby contributing to enhanced organizational outcomes (Avolio and Hannah, 2020; Goleman et al. 2017).

Building upon this foundation, Bradberry and Greaves elaborate on the nuanced components of EI that are particularly salient for effective leadership. They emphasize the importance of self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and social skills as core elements of EI that enable leaders to navigate challenging situations with emotional intelligence and finesse. By understanding and managing their own emotions effectively, as well as demonstrating empathy and understanding towards others, leaders can foster a climate of trust, collaboration, and mutual respect within their teams, ultimately driving organizational performance and success (Bradberry and Greaves, 2020).

Cherniss and Boyatzis as well as Goleman advocate for the creation of supportive organizational environments that foster the development of EI among leaders and employees alike. They highlight the importance of implementing targeted training programs, coaching initiatives, and organizational practices that promote emotional well-being and resilience. By creating a culture that values and prioritizes EI development, organizations can cultivate a cadre of emotionally intelligent leaders who are equipped to navigate the complexities of the modern workplace with grace and agility (Cherniss and Boyatzis, 2021 and Goleman et. al, 2017).

Furthermore, research by Miao, Humphrey, and Qian sheds light on the positive correlations between EI and various workplace outcomes, such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and interpersonal relationships. Their findings underscore the instrumental role of EI in shaping employee attitudes and behaviors, highlighting its potential to foster a more engaged, cohesive, and productive workforce (Miao, Humphrey, and Qian, 2020).
In addition, studies by Jordan et al. underscore the significance of EI in team dynamics and performance. They demonstrate that teams characterized by high levels of EI exhibit greater cohesion, communication, and collaboration, leading to enhanced team effectiveness and outcomes. By fostering a culture of emotional intelligence within teams, organizations can harness the collective strengths of their employees to drive innovation, creativity, and problem-solving (Jordan et al. 2019).

Moreover, research by Allen and Eby, Day et al., Ng et al., and Sessa et al. further elucidate the importance of mentorship and intergenerational collaboration in leadership development and organizational innovation. They underscore the value of leveraging diverse perspectives, experiences, and skill sets to drive organizational growth and adaptability in an ever-evolving business landscape (Allen and Eby 2021; Day et al. 2019; Ng et al. 2022; and Sessa et al. 2021).

While the reviewed studies do not explicitly focus on the influence of age on EI, Avolio and Hannah and Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee suggest that age may play a role in shaping a leader's EI (Avolio and Hannah, 2020; Goleman et. al, 2017). Cherniss and Boyatzis offer strategies for enhancing EI regardless of age (Cherniss and Boyatzis, 2021), while Nishii and Mayer indirectly address the impact of EI on organizational outcomes through inclusive leadership practices (Nishii and Mayer, 2020). Brackett, Rivers, and Salovey contribute to our understanding of EI applications across diverse contexts, further underscoring its relevance and importance in leadership and organizational settings (Brackett, Rivers, and Salovey, 2021).

In summary, the reviewed literature collectively provides compelling insights into the multifaceted nature of EI and its pivotal role in driving leadership effectiveness, organizational performance, and team dynamics. By understanding and leveraging the principles of EI, leaders and organizations can cultivate a culture of emotional intelligence that fosters collaboration, innovation, and sustainable growth.

**Methods**

This study adopted a quantitative research design which follows a positivist paradigm examining what connection exists when dealing with EI and leaders age put into use in NGOs in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The data was collected from 144 NGO leaders in Addis Ababa. An online available survey instrument was administered. The MSCEIT by Mayer, Salovey and Caruso tool was administered to all top managers/leaders from 41 NGOs. (Mayer, Salovey and Caruso, 2002) The short version of the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (TEIQue-SF) was designed to measure global trait emotional intelligence (trait EI). The 15 facets of the TEIQue (emotion perception, trait empathy, emotion expression, relationships, emotion regulation, stress management, impulsiveness, adaptability, self-motivation, assertiveness, emotion management, social awareness, self-esteem, trait happiness, and trait optimism) was used as suggested by Petrides (Petrides (2009). Physical questionnaires were distributed to NGO leaders via convenience sampling, with some leaders unable to participate. Two experienced data collectors with master's degrees were hired to assist in data collection. In summary, the study involved NGO leaders in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, using convenience sampling to select participants from a pool of 36 NGOs, with data collection facilitated by CCRDA and two hired data collectors. The data was collected through standardized EI assessments, and the data was entered in the SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) and cleaned and the ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) test was employed to analyze the data. Purposive sampling
techniques were utilized to ensure demographic diversity within the sample. Statistical analyses, including ANOVA, were conducted to examine the relationship between age and EI scores, supplemented by thematic analysis of qualitative data.

**Independent Variable: Age**

This variable represents the age of NGO leaders and is considered the independent variable in the study. Age is categorized into different groups or treated as a continuous variable to examine its influence on emotional intelligence.

**Dependent Variable: Emotional Intelligence (EI)**

These variable measures the emotional intelligence of NGO leaders and serves as the dependent variable in the study. EI scores are obtained through standardized assessments or self-report measures and are used to assess leaders’ ability to perceive, understand, and manage emotions, both in themselves and in others.

**Control Variables**

The study also considered other demographic variables or factors that could potentially influence emotional intelligence or confound the relationship between age and EI. These control variables were factors such as gender, education level, and years of experience in leadership roles.

**Hypothesis**

As age increases (independent variable), emotional intelligence levels among NGO leaders (dependent variable) will demonstrate significant variation.

**Null Hypothesis**

There is no significant relationship between age and emotional intelligence levels among NGO leaders.

**Results**

Table 1. Demographic and Professional Characteristics of NGO Leaders in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>32.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>67.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age (in years)</td>
<td>31-40 years</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>41-50 years</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>45.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>51-60 years</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>46.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest Education Level</td>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>21.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Master’s Degree</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>65.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience (in years)</td>
<td>1-5 years</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>21.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11-15 years</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Above 16 years</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>31.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of Organization</td>
<td>International NGO</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>36.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Local NGO</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>63.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 presents a comprehensive overview of the research participants’ demographic and professional characteristics of NGO leaders operating within Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
Ababa, Ethiopia and each variable, including sex, age, highest education level, experience, and type of organization, is analysed in the subsequent sections.

NGO leaders exhibit a diverse age distribution, with the majority falling within the 41-60 years age bracket. Specifically, 45.1% of leaders are aged 41-50 years, while 46.5% are aged 51-60 years. This suggests a predominance of middle-aged and older individuals in leadership positions, potentially reflecting accumulated professional experience and expertise.

This study aims to investigate the relationship between EQ scores and age groups among NGO leaders in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

### O ANOVA: EI Scores (EQ) Based on Age Groups among NGO Leaders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Sum of Squares (SS)</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square (MS)</th>
<th>F-ratio</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>428.391</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>142.797</td>
<td>4.832</td>
<td>0.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>4136.936</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>29.550</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4565.326</td>
<td>143</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The ANOVA table provides statistical insights into the relationship between emotional intelligence scores (EQ) and age groups among the participants. This study investigates the relationship between EQ scores and age groups among NGO leaders in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The ANOVA table provides statistical insights into the relationship between emotional intelligence scores (EQ) and age groups among the participants. The F-ratio of 4.832, with a corresponding p-value of 0.003, indicates a statistically significant difference in EQ scores across age groups among NGO leaders. This implies that there is a notable variation in EQ scores between different age groups of NGO leaders. In other words, the EQ scores of NGO leaders vary significantly depending on their age group.

The analysis conducted on emotional intelligence scores (EQ) among NGO leaders in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, based on age groups reveals significant findings. The results from the ANOVA test indicate a statistically significant difference in EQ scores across different age groups of NGO leaders ($F(3, 140) = 4.832, p = 0.003$). This suggests that age group plays a significant role in influencing EQ scores among NGO leaders in the region. The variability in EQ scores observed among different age groups underscores the importance of considering age-related factors when assessing emotional intelligence among leaders in the NGO sector.

Recent studies support these findings, with research by Johnson et al. and Smith et al. reinforcing the relationship between EQ scores and age groups among organizational leaders (Johnson et al. 2021; Smith et al. 2023). In the same manner, Smith and Jones found that gender and age significantly affect EQ levels among NGO leaders, with women and older individuals exhibiting higher EQ scores (Smith and Jones, 2023). Additionally, meta-analytical studies by Johnson et al. (2020) have provided comprehensive insights into the collective influence of demographic variables on EQ among nonprofit leaders.
Longitudinal investigations, such as Extremera et al., demonstrate that EI tends to increase with age and experience, although individual characteristics and cultural factors may influence this trend (Extremera et al. 2018). The literature reviewed agrees with the finding of this study in which there is a significant relationship between age and EQ. Hence, H06 that there is no statistically significant difference in the Emotional Intelligence of leaders and demographic variables in NGOs in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia is rejected in the case age as a demographic variable.

This study reveals a significant relationship between age and Emotional Intelligence (EI) scores among NGO leaders in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, emphasizing the need to consider age-related factors in EI understanding. It highlights age as a key determinant of EI levels, supported by the rejection of the null hypothesis, which underscores the importance of addressing age-related disparities in EI for assessing leadership effectiveness within NGOs.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings of this study shed light on the pivotal role of age as a determinant of Emotional Intelligence (EI) among NGO leaders in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Through a meticulous examination of the relationship between age and EI, the research underscores the practical implications for both personal development and organizational practices.

The rejection of the null hypothesis, which suggested no statistically significant difference in EI across demographic variables, is in alignment with existing empirical evidence and theoretical frameworks. This signifies that age indeed plays a significant role in shaping the emotional intelligence levels of NGO leaders. These insights highlight the necessity for tailored interventions aimed at enhancing EI skills across different age groups. Such interventions can not only benefit individuals in their personal and professional growth but can also contribute to organizational effectiveness and resilience.

Furthermore, by integrating recent literature and employing methodological rigor, this research contributes substantially to advancing scholarly discourse on EI within the NGO sector. It provides empirical evidence supporting the significant relationship between age and emotional intelligence, offering a foundation for targeted interventions and leadership development initiatives within NGOs.

Ultimately, this study underscores the importance of acknowledging and addressing age-related differences in EI when evaluating leadership effectiveness and implementing strategies for organizational improvement.

Suggestion

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that NGOs in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia implement tailored interventions aimed at enhancing Emotional Intelligence (EI) skills among their leaders across different age groups. These interventions could include training programs focusing on emotional awareness, regulation, and interpersonal skills development. Moreover, organizations should incorporate age-related considerations into their leadership development initiatives, recognizing the influence of age on EI levels among leaders. Additionally, fostering a culture that values and promotes emotional intelligence within the organization can contribute to improved leadership effectiveness and organizational resilience. Furthermore, continuous monitoring and assessment of EI levels among leaders,
considering age-related factors, can inform targeted interventions and ensure ongoing development. By prioritizing EI enhancement and addressing age-related disparities, NGOs can cultivate a more effective and resilient leadership cadre, ultimately contributing to the achievement of organizational goals and mission success.

References


