Emotional Intelligence in Succession Management.

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Disclosure: The first author has a financial interest in the 360 measure of emotional intelligence that was used in the study.

Abstract

This paper reports the results of, and discusses methods for, using a behavior-based 360-degree emotional intelligence (EI) assessment to help determine the readiness of frontline leaders to step up into more senior leadership positions. Participants (n = 485) were frontline school leaders in a public school system who were rated by 2435 raters on a 360-degree leadership assessment measuring leadership performance proficiency (LPP), the Genos Social and Emotional Competency Survey (SECS), and two global items measuring leadership capability. Specifically, a single item measuring how well the participants interacted with others at work and a single item measuring the participants' overall job performance. The EI 360 was shown to account for an additional 17% of the variance in how well the participants interacted with others at work, and an additional 8% of the variance in their overall job performance over the LPP. Participants (n = 70) deemed 'not yet ready' for more senior leadership positions (based on low observer-rated EI scores) participated in a longitudinal EI development program. Their EI was then re-tested using the same raters 6 months or more later. Comparisons of their Time 1 and Time 2 EI 360 results show that the EI Development program improved how well participants demonstrated their EI by on average 43 percentile points. While further research is needed to substantiate the claim, we argued these results show that an EI assessment can contribute significantly to organizational decisions on leadership talent above and beyond the more traditional measures used in this context.

Keywords: *emotional intelligence, 360 feedback, talent management, leadership development*

Introduction

While numerous studies have been published on the efficacy of EI development programs (Hodzic et al., 2018), few studies, if any, report on, or discuss methods for, using an EI assessment in leadership talent management. Here an EI assessment could contribute significantly to decisions on leadership talent for two key reasons. Firstly, because the capabilities of EI are arguably foundational to, and different from, more general leadership capabilities typically assessed in leadership talent management (e.g., decision-making, the capacity to communicate vision and enhance the performance of others, as measured by 360 assessments, interviews, simulations, etc.). An EI assessment may provide an additional lens on the potential of aspiring leaders' readiness for frontline leadership positions and the readiness of leaders to step up into more senior leadership positions. Secondly, the capabilities of EI can be developed (Hodzic, et al., 2018; Koc & Boz, 2020; Mattingly & Kraiger, 2019; Palmer & Jennings, 2007; Schutte et al., 2013), and the development of a leader's EI has been reported to improve leader effects on variables that contribute to the performance and culture of organizations such as subordinate performance, well-being, psychological safety, and organizational citizenship behaviors (Boyatzis, 2018, Crummernerl et al., 2019). These points frame the purpose of this paper which seeks to explore the value of using behavior-based assessments of EI in leadership talent management and development, particularly in emotionally demanding roles such as school leadership (Patti & Stern, 2023)

How EI is Foundational to Effective Leadership

While EI has been conceptualized several different ways it can be commonly described as a set of capabilities to do with emotions (and relatedly feeling and mood states). These include: the capacity to perceive and understand emotions within oneself and others; effectively

express emotions; manage emotions; and the capacity to positively influence the emotions of others (Palmer et al., 2009). Various research studies have demonstrated how these EI capabilities are foundational to effective leadership. The capacity to perceive and understand one's own emotions for example, is an important capability for leaders because emotions influence the way leaders think, behave, and perform (Fredrickson, 2000; Wang & Seibert, 2015). Leaders with high levels of emotional self-awareness are more aware of their moods, feelings, and emotions. Consequently, they can better respond effectively to their emotions to improve the quality of their decisions, behavior, and performance. The capacity to perceive and understand the emotions of others helps leaders pick up on the way employees are feeling, demonstrate empathetic responses when necessary, and be more situational in their approach (i.e., adjust either the context for a direct report or their leadership style), to better connect with, communicate to, and positively influence them (Jackson & Naziri, 2020). The capacity to express emotions effectively helps leaders create an environment of psychological safety and trust, where direct reports feel comfortable sharing how they feel about their work or colleagues, or about issues that are affecting their work (Ghosh et al., 2012). The capacity to manage emotions within oneself helps leaders cope with the emotional labor of leadership work (Wang & Seibert, 2015), high work demands (Nikolaou & Tsaousis, 2002), and perform requirements of their work that involves regulating emotions such as conflict management (Schlaerth et al., 2013). Finally, the capacity to positively influence the emotions of others, helps leaders motivate and manifest subordinate job satisfaction (Miao et al., 2016). While 360-degree measures of leadership provide valuable insights, it could be argued that they often do not adequately measure these intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions of emotional intelligence related to leadership effectiveness.

The Potential Value of Using EI Assessments in Leadership Talent Management

For an EI assessment to be of value in a leadership talent management context it needs to achieve two key objectives. Firstly, it needs to provide additional meaningful insight on talent being considered for leadership positions over and above other measures typically used in this context thereby increasing the quality of talent decision-making. Secondly, the EI assessment needs to provide credible and actionable insight to individual leaders participating in the process about things they can change or develop within themselves to enhance their leadership potential and/or leadership effectiveness (Nowack, 2009). In the field of EI, there are a wide number of different models and measures available that could potentially be used in leadership talent management. Over the years these different approaches have been categorized by different authors (e.g., Ashkanasy & Daus, 2005) to help create clarity about their respective merits and uses. Recently Boyatzis (2018) differentiated measures of EI into four streams: Stream 1 - ability measures designed to assess individual differences in emotional abilities (Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test [MSCEIT]; Mayer et al., 2000); Stream 2 - self-assessment measures of ability models of EI that assess individual's beliefs about their EI (e.g., Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale [WLES];Wong & Law, 2002); Stream 3 trait-based measures designed to assess an array of emotion-laden traits (e.g., Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire [TEIQue]; Petrides & Furnham, 2001); and Emotional Quotient Inventory 2.0 [EQ-I 2.0]; Bar-On, 1997); and Stream 4 – behavior-based measures that assess how well a person demonstrates emotionally and socially intelligent behavior as rated by observers e.g., Emotional and Social Competence Inventory [ESCI]; Boyatzis & Goleman, 2007)

There are reliable and valid measures within each of these streams and indeed leading measures in each may potentially fulfill the first objective. However, it could be argued that

behavior-based measures of EI may be better suited than other EI assessment approaches at fulfilling the second objective - leadership development.

Using Behavior-Based 360-Degree Measures of EI in Leadership Talent Management

Arguably, behavior-based 360-degree measures of EI provide leaders with insight into behaviors they can readily adopt and learn to demonstrate more effectively (Boyatzis, 2018). Contrast this with insight from ability measures that feedback to leaders how much emotional ability they have. While many authors in EI assert the superiority of ability-based measures (because they do not rely upon self-insight and are not susceptible to potentially manipulated responding by raters), ability-based measures give little insight into what people do with their abilities in the workplace or insight into what to do to improve them. Practitioners tend to spend time translating ability-based results into behaviors leaders can adopt to improve how they act. Self-report assessments (both of ability and trait-based EI models) depend on an individual's self-awareness and honesty. In contexts beyond just EI development, the temptation to respond in a socially desirable fashion has been shown to be high (Grubb & McDaniel, 2007). Trait-based measures of EI tend to be lengthy and measure a wide array of traits, behaviors, and competencies making the feedback to leaders esoteric. Practitioners tend to spend a considerable amount of time in debrief sessions explaining the model and results rather than helping leaders identify behaviors they can adopt to improve their EI (Palmer et al., 2009). While there are 360-degree versions of the TEIQue and EQ-I 2.0, emotionally and socially intelligent behaviors may be far easier to improve than more fundamental characteristics of oneself such as emotion-laden traits (Boyatzis, 2018).

There is debate on whether 360-degree assessments should be used beyond development contexts (McCauley & Brutus, 2019). There is evidence that observer ratings are susceptible to

various forms of bias and manipulation (Nowack, 2019). Colleagues can provide overly positive or negative responses based on personal relationships or ulterior motives. For example, direct reports may inflate responses out of fear of repercussions, peers might downplay a colleague's capabilities to improve their own standing while managers may inflate their responses to help one of their direct reports into a talent pool. Proponents of using 360 assessment data more broadly than just development argue that these issues can be minimized by specific implementation processes and protocols such as rater selection and training, transparency around how the data is used and by a supportive, developmental environment (McCauley & Brutus, 2019).

We believe that behavior-based EI 360 assessment data may be used more broadly than just development in some circumstances and in a considered way. More specifically, where the organization has established a successful history of using 360 assessment data and has determined effective processes and protocols for things that minimize rater bias issues like rater selection, training, and anonymity, and a well-defined process for how the feedback is examined, delivered, and utilized. Moreover, we believe that it may be particularly valuable to use EI 360 assessment data to aid in decisions about leadership talent in contexts that involve high levels of emotional labor and require high levels of emotional regulation to do well such as those found in healthcare (Riley & Weiss, 2016), hospitality (Xu et al., 2020), and educational leadership (Blasé & Blasé, 2004). In these leadership contexts the impact of having low EI may be particularly acute and it may be in the best interests of the leader, their direct reports, and the organization itself not to put such people into these emotionally demanding leadership roles without sufficient levels of EI or having developed EI to sufficient levels.

EI in School Leadership

School principals can encounter numerous situations daily that demand experience, perspective, and high levels of self-awareness, empathy, and emotional regulation. One moment a school principal may be inspiring the performance of their teachers; the next moment they may be helping a student reflect on the impact of challenging behavior; then the same school principal may be dealing with a difficult parent over a highly sensitive topic or managing a challenging performance issue with a teacher resistant to change (Robinson et al., 2014). Consistent involvement in emotionally demanding work situations like these has been associated with significantly higher levels of stress, burnout, and depressive symptoms in school principals compared to healthy working population samples (Riley et al., 2021). As such it could be argued that people with low levels of EI may not be equipped with the social-emotional competency, and therefore 'ready' to lead others in these contexts. Research has indeed shown, that how well school leaders, perceive, understand, and respond to emotions relates to their well-being and leadership effectiveness, the quality of their interactions with students, staff, parents, and community stakeholders, the quality of their school's culture and overall student achievement (Gómez-Leal et al., 2022; Sánchez Núñez et al., 2023).

Standards for EI in School Leadership

In recognition of the importance of EI skills in educational leadership, numerous Federal and State Departments of Education, now include reference to EI in professional standards for educational leaders. For example, the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (2015), Standard 2: Ethics and Professional Norms, point 'E' states that: "Effective Leaders: lead with interpersonal and communication skill, social-emotional insight, and understanding of all students' and staff members' backgrounds and cultures". Similarly, the Australian Institute for

Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) third Leadership Requirement (Personal qualities, social and interpersonal skills), "… recognizes the importance of emotional intelligence in the leadership and management of the school and its community" (AITSL, 2014). In line with these Professional Standards, many Departments of Education and Independent School Systems have been providing existing and aspiring school leaders with professional learning designed to enhance their EI skills. However, there is a limited understanding of whether EI can be systematically developed, particularly in aspiring leaders with low EI, and how such development translates into improved leadership capabilities. There is also limited information on how school systems specifically assess for EI in recruitment or in selection-oriented talent management or on the outcomes of doing so.

Summary

The literature reviewed here suggests that a reliable and valid behavioral 360 assessment of EI may help determine frontline school leaders' readiness for more senior school principal positions and support the development of those aspiring to these positions with low levels of EI. In this paper we examine the extent to which the Workplace 360 Genos Social and Emotional Competence Survey (SECS, Palmer & Gignac, 2024, a behavior-based 360 assessment of EI), could provide additional insight on school leadership talent aspiring for more senior leadership positions over and above a customized measure of leadership performance; and secondly, the extent to which this type of EI feedback helps provide insight to individual leaders about things they can change or develop within themselves to enhance their leadership potential and leadership effectiveness. Accordingly, we examine the following research questions.

Research Questions:

R1: Will the SECS provide additional insight on leadership talent aspiring for more senior leadership positions over and above a customized measure of leadership performance?

R2: Can the EI of aspiring leaders low in EI be developed?

R3: Will the development of EI result in improvements in leaders' leadership capability?

We choose to use the SECS in this context because like the ESCI (Boyatzis & Goleman, 2007), it measures how well a person demonstrates workplace behaviors, based on abilities to do with identifying and regulating emotions within oneself (emotional competence) and others (social competence). The emotional and social competencies measured by the SECS, as EI dimensions, are to an appreciable degree learned capabilities that contribute to effective performance at work (Boyatzis, 2018). The emotional competencies of the SECS include the capacity to perceive, understand, express, and regulate one's own emotions (Self-Awareness, Authenticity, and Self-Management respectively). These competencies fall within the Self-Awareness and Self-Management clusters of behavioral EI described by Boyatzis (2018). The social competencies of the SECS include the capacity to perceive, understand, and positively influence the emotions of others (Awareness of Others and Positive Influence). These competencies fall within the Social Awareness and Relationship Management clusters of Social Intelligence described by (Boyatzis, 2018). A more unique competency of the SECS is Emotional Reasoning – the skill of using the information in feelings (from oneself and others) and combining it with other facts and information when decision-making. This competency crosses both the EI and SI domains of behavioral EI discussed by (Boyatzis, 2018).

Methodology

Participants

Participants in this study consisted of 485 school leaders who applied to complete an assessment process designed to determine their readiness for school principal positions. The participants had various tenure and experience working and leading in schools. Approximately 9% were lead teachers, 50% were assistant principals or acting principals and the remainder were learning specialists with existing leadership responsibilities. These participants were rated by 2435 raters as described below. Due to General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the collection and reporting of further participant demographic information (such as age, gender, ethnicity, etc.) was not possible as is common in applied research contexts.

Rater Type, Numbers, and Rater Selection.

As per the standard practice of 360 feedback raters included themselves, and their Manager (which was typically the principal of their school), two Peers (people in the same or similar positions/levels as the candidate, which were typically members of the school leadership team), two Direct Reports (people the aspiring leader was typically leading/managing in some capacity, which were typically teachers at their school), and one Community Member (people from outside the school however with a working context with the aspiring leader such as school council members, parents or a community member from a local sporting club). Participants, who were voluntarily participating in the assessment process, were working in a wide range of school contexts both large and small. While rater numbers were not optimal, our client required a process they could standardize across various contexts. Their reasoning was that varying the process (i.e., increasing the number of raters according to school size), may lead to perceptions amongst participants of unfairness or bias in the process. Due to the number of raters in each of

these categories, all rater responses were combined into a single ‘rater’ category. All analyses reported herein are based on the average of all observer ratings (excluding self-ratings).

A rater selection approach that maximized rater anonymity was adopted. Raters were selected by the participant’s manager and kept confidential from the participant. Participants could nominate raters they preferred to exclude, with exclusions kept anonymous from the manager. If additional raters were needed due to exclusions, an assessment coordinator contacted the manager to select replacements within the required category. This rater replacement process occurred only 11 times (out of 485). Rater selection criteria were provided to managers. These criteria included: 1) that raters must have worked with the participant for at least six months and within the last 12 months; 2) that raters should work with the participant frequently and have opportunities to observe their behaviors in various contexts; and 3) that raters should be able to provide fair and objective ratings of the participant’s behaviors. The first two criteria were adopted to ensure that raters were familiar with the participant’s workplace behaviors. The third criterion aimed to minimize the potential for rater bias in their responses.

Measures

SECS

As previously described, the participant’s EI was assessed with the SECS (Palmer & Gignac, 2024). The items of the SECs invite raters to indicate how well the subject demonstrates the behavior in question in comparison to others on a 5-point social comparison scale where 1 = significantly less than others, 2 = less than others, 3 = about average/typical; 4 = more than others and 5 = significantly more than others. Below, by way of example, are the behaviors used to indicate how well someone demonstrates the social competency Awareness of Others.

1. Accurately acknowledges the way others feel.

2. Recognizes others' non-verbal emotional cues (e.g., body language).
3. Notices when someone needs support.
4. Relates well to others' feelings.
5. Accurately views situations from others' perspective.
6. Adjusts their behavior so that it fits well with others.
7. Accurately anticipates responses or reactions from others.

The SECS Technical Manual reports internal consistency reliabilities for the demonstration scales, range from .76 to .86 for self-rated data and .88 to .93 for observer-rated data. The internal consistency reliability of the SECS overall EI rating (or Total EI, which is the aggregate score across the 6 competencies measured) is reported to be equal to .94 or greater across self and observer data.

Leadership Performance Proficiency - LPP

The leadership 360 assessment was a customized 360-degree assessment designed to evaluate participant's performance against a framework aligned with the Australian Professional Standard for Principals (AITSL, 2014). This framework is made up of 5 Professional Practice areas including:

1. Leading Teaching and Learning
2. Developing Self and Others
3. Leading Improvement, Innovation and Change
4. Leading the Management of the School
5. Engaging and Working with the Community.

How well a leader demonstrates each Professional Practice Area is assessed via a series of Performance Indicators expected of a first-time school principal. There are a total of 47

Performance Indicators across the 5 Professional Practice Areas each measured by several Proficiency Levels indicating an increasing level of proficiency for the Performance Indicator. For example, for Leading Teaching and Learning, raters are asked to indicate what Proficiency Level they have observed the candidate demonstrate in their work across 8 Performance Indicators. One of these Performance Indicators for this Professional Practice Area is "Monitor impact of teaching on student learning." The corresponding Proficiency Levels for this Performance Indicator (as an example) include (from lowest to highest)

1. Not yet applied these skills and/or knowledge (insufficient evidence)
2. Builds understanding of the impact of teaching (e.g., peer observation)
3. Tracks the progress of students against the agreed standards
4. Leads professional conversations and reflection on effectiveness
5. Strategically allocates resources for a whole school approach to improving teaching impact.

Higher scores on this LPP assessment indicate a higher degree of leadership performance for the corresponding performance indicators.

Leadership Capability

To examine the first research question (will the SECS provide additional insight on leadership talent aspiring for school principal positions), we conducted regression analyses to examine whether the SECS could predict variance in two global items of leadership capability above and beyond the LPP. Namely, a single item asking raters to indicate the overall quality with which the participant interacted with others at work (the 'how' of leadership effectiveness), and a single item asking raters to indicate how well the participant performed in their role in comparison to others (the 'what' of leadership effectiveness). The first item asked raters

‘Compared to others you know, how well does this person interact with others at work?’ Raters responded using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Very poorly, 2 = Below average, 3 = Average, 4 = Above average, 5 = Very well). The second item asked raters ‘Overall, how well does this person perform their job?’ using the same 5-point Likert scale. We reasoned that the first research question would be supported if the SECS was found to account for significant additional variance in these global items of leadership capability above and beyond the LPP.

The Assessment Process

The talent management process required participants to 1) undertake the LPP and SECS 360 assessments); 2) submit a Portfolio of their work (i.e., purposefully selected and concisely annotated artifacts as evidence of their skills, knowledge, competencies and/or behaviors across a select number of Performance Indicators); and 3) undertake an Interview with an experienced school principal. Participants were deemed ‘ready’ for school principal positions if they scored above certain thresholds on these assessments (the exact figures being kept commercial and in confidence by our client). If participants scored below the thresholds on either the LPP or the SECS demonstration scores, they were deemed ‘not yet ready’ for school principal positions. All participants were debriefed on their results by experienced coaches (who were also experienced school principals). Participants deemed ‘not yet ready’ were given various development options they could voluntarily undertake to help develop their leadership and EI capabilities and the option to go through the process additional times six months or more post their initial assessment.

The EI Development Program

All participants deemed ‘not yet ready’ for school principal positions because of low SECS demonstration scores (i.e., a percentile score as determined with SECS population norms), were given the option to voluntarily participate in a longitudinal EI Development Program. The Program involved participating in 6 x 2hr development sessions (1 session on each of the EI competencies measured by the SECS), in cohorts of approximately 20 people over a period of 6 weeks (i.e., 1 session per week for six weeks). The program included experiential exercises, practical models, tools and techniques, and practice applications of them, to build participants' knowledge, confidence, and experience in demonstrating emotionally intelligent workplace behaviors. The six sessions also involved reflective exercises and facilitator-led discussion in both large and small groups, to drive participant-led learning. At the conclusion of each session, participants conceptualized a personal action plan detailing how they will personally apply the content at work. At subsequent sessions participants shared how they had been applying the course material and the insights they have gained from doing so, driving further participant-led learning. To examine the second research question (can the EI of aspiring leaders low in EI be developed), we then re-tested the participants' EI (Time 2), using the SECS 6 months or more later than their initial assessment (Time 1). We reasoned that the second research question would be supported if participants' Time 2 EI scores were found to show statistically significant improvements in the demonstration of their EI. Finally, to test the third research question (would the development of these leaders' EI result in improvements in their leadership capability), we also re-tested the participants' scores on the two global items of leadership capability. We reasoned that this final research question would be supported if the participants' Time 2 scores on the single items measuring the overall quality with which the candidate interacted with others

and how well the candidate performed in their role in comparison to others showed statistically significant improvements.

Results

Descriptive Statistics and Intercorrelations

SECS Demonstration

As seen in Table 1, on average raters tended to rate the participants as demonstrating more than average levels of social-emotional competence equal to approximately 4.0 to 4.2. The overall level of social-emotional competence was estimated at 4.14. Such values correspond to 'more than others' on the five-point social comparison scale (3 = average/typical). Furthermore, the standard deviation was equal to .40, implying a coefficient of variation equal to .10, which is relatively lower than what one would expect in the general population and suggests the assessment suffered somewhat from rater leniency. As can be seen in Figure 1, the overall SECS scores distribution was relatively normal with no evidence of a ceiling effect.

Leadership Performance Proficiency

Mean scores on the LPP across the 5 Practice Areas assessed, varied from 2.36 (Leading Improvement, Innovation and Change) to 2.79 (Engaging and Working with the Community). The overall level of rated Performance was 2.53. Such values indicate performance proficiency levels equal to between 2 and 3 on the proficiency scales. The standard deviation was equal to .37, implying a coefficient of variation equal to .15. As seen in Figure 1, the LPP score distribution was negatively skewed (-0.98).

Leadership Capability

As reported in Table 1, mean scores on the two global items of leadership capability were 4.5 (SD =.49) for Quality of Interactions and 4.58 (SD .45) for Job Performance. As shown in

Figure 1, scores on these items were more substantially negatively skewed (-1.08 and -1.35, respectively), with some evidence of a ceiling effect. However, in both cases, there was nonetheless, an appreciable amount of variability in the data.

Table 1

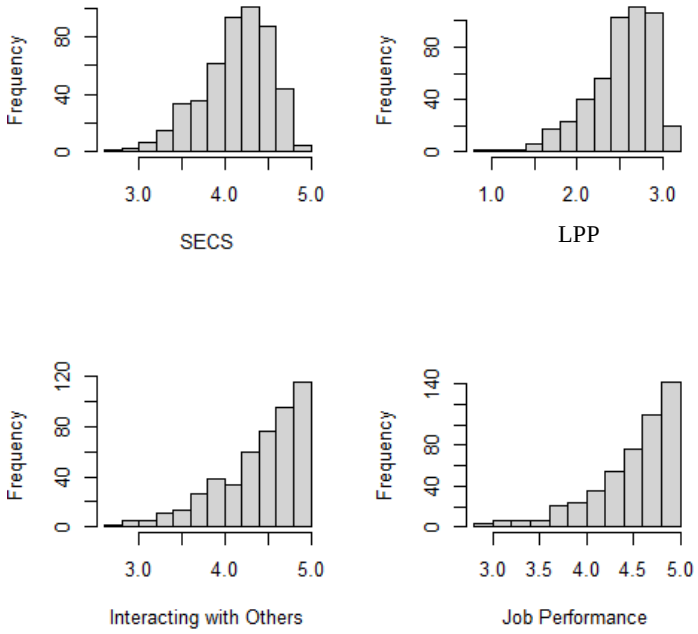
Descriptive Statistics and Intercorrelations

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.	14.	*M*	*SD*	Skew
1. SA	1.0														4.03	0.42	-0.47
2. AO	.90	1.0													4.08	0.44	-0.66
3. AU	.88	.88	1.0												4.11	0.40	-0.80
4. ER	.88	.90	.89	1.0											4.10	0.41	-0.58
5. SM	.86	.82	.87	.84	1.0										4.29	0.40	-0.78
6. PI	.87	.89	.89	.88	.90	1.0									4.22	0.44	-0.74
7. SECS Avg.	.95	.95	.95	.95	.93	.96	1.0								4.14	0.40	-0.67
8. LTL	.71	.71	.73	.74	.73	.76	.77	1.0							2.46	0.37	-0.95
9. DSO	.79	.78	.78	.78	.80	.82	.84	.88	1.0						2.59	0.39	-0.90
10. LIIC	.71	.70	.74	.74	.75	.77	.77	.86	.90	1.0					2.36	0.40	-0.91
11. LMS	.71	.70	.74	.73	.75	.75	.77	.86	.90	.89	1.0				2.44	0.36	-1.01
12. EWC	.70	.71	.71	.74	.71	.75	.76	.86	.86	.85	.88	1.0			2.79	0.43	-0.94
13. LPP Avg.	.76	.76	.78	.79	.79	.81	.83	.94	.96	.95	.95	.94	1.0		2.53	0.37	-0.98
14. IntWrk	.77	.80	.76	.75	.78	.82	.83	.67	.73	.67	.67	.68	.72	1.0	4.50	0.49	-1.08
15. JobPerf	.73	.73	.79	.74	.81	.81	.81	.80	.80	.79	.78	.73	.82	.77	4.58	0.45	-1.35

Note. N = 485; SA = Self-Awareness; AO = Awareness of Others; AU = Authentic; ER = Emotional Reasoning; SM = Self-Management; PI = Positive Influence; SECS Avg. = overall SECS composite score; LTL = Leading Teaching and Learning; DSO = Developing Self and Others; LIIC = Leading Improvement, Innovation and Change; LMS = Leading the Management of the School; EWC = Engaging and Working with the Community; LPP Avg. = overall LPP composite score; IntWrk = Quality of Interactions; JobPerf = Overall Job Performance; all correlations statistically significant, $p < .001$.

Figure 1

Histograms for Composite SECS and LPP scores and Dependent Variables



Note. N = 485; SECS = Social and Emotional Competency Scale; LPP = Leadership Performance Proficiency; Interactions with Others = Quality of interactions; Job Performance = Overall Job Performance.

The SECS competencies and the LPP Practice Areas inter-correlated positively to a high degree. For example, the mean inter-subtest correlation was .87 for both the SECS and LPP. SECS competencies and LPP Practice Areas all inter-correlated with each other substantially as well, with a mean inter-correlation of .74. Thus, higher levels of social and emotional competence were associated with higher levels of leadership performance consistent with the existing research studies (Stern & Patti, 2024).

All the SECS and LPP scores correlated positively with the two global items measuring leadership capability. The overall SECS composite score correlated more strongly with the Quality of Interactions indicator than the overall LPP composite score (r = .83 vs r = .72). Conversely, SECS and LPP scores similarly correlated with the Overall Performance indicator (r = .81 vs r = .82).

Incidentally, we examined the relationship between self-and observer rated EI and LPP scores (as well as the observer rated (only) global measures of leadership capability (Quality of Interactions and Job Performance). As shown in Table 2 below there were small positive correlations between self and observer rated EI and LPP. Self-rated EI and LPP was found to correlate to a very small degree with observer rated measures of overall leadership capability. As a result, no further analyses with self-rated scores were conducted.

Table 2

Correlations between self and observer rated EI and LPP together with observer ratings of the dependent variables (Job Performance and Interactions at Work).

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. JobPerfor	1.0					
2. IntWrk	.77**	1.0				
3. SECS Total-Rater	.81**	.83**	1.0			
4. LLP-Rater	.82**	.72**	.83**	1.0		
5. SECS Total-Self	.04	.11*	.13*	.05	1.0	
6. LLP-Self	.16**	.13*	.19**	.15**	.49**	1.0

$N = 485$; $p < .05$; $p < .001$. For abbreviation labels see Table 1.

Regression Analyses

Regression analyses were performed to examine whether the SECS could predict variance in the two global items of leadership capability above and beyond the LPP.

Predicting Quality of Interactions with Others at Work

A hierarchical stepwise multiple regression was conducted to examine variables predicting individual differences in Quality of Interactions, where the five LPP Practice Areas were entered in block 1 and the six SECS competencies were entered in block 2. As can be seen in Table 3, two LPP Practice Areas were retained in the model at step 1, Developing self and others ($\beta = .28$, $p < .001$), and engaging and working with the community ($\beta = .09$, $p = .012$). When the SECS competencies were analyzed in Block 2, only one LPP Practice Area remained in the regression equation (Engaging and Working with the

Community), however, four of the six SECS competencies were found to be statistically significant contributors to the model. The numerically two largest predictors included in the model were Awareness of Others (β = .19) and Positive Influence (β = .18). The model R^2 increased from .54 to .71 across the two blocks. The addition of the SECS increased the predictive capacity of the model appreciably from 54% to 71% of the variance in Quality of Interactions.

Table 3

Hierarchical (Stepwise) Multiple Regression Predicting Ratings of Quality of Interaction: Subscale Scores as Predictors

	b	β	SE	*t*	*p*	r_{sp}
Block 1: LPP						
LPP – DSO	.72	.28	.08	8.68	<.001	.30
LPP – EWC	.20	.09	.08	2.51	.012	.09
	R^2 = .543; $F(2, 482) = 288.80$, $p < .001$					
Block 2: LPP + SECS						
LPP – EWC	.13	.06	.05	2.80	.005	.07
SECS – AO	.43	.19	.08	5.61	.000	.15
SECS – ER	-.20	-.08	.08	-2.45	.015	-.06
SECS – SM	.24	.09	.08	3.12	.002	.08
SECS – PI	.41	.18	.09	4.72	.000	.12
	R^2 = .708; $F(5, 482) = 236.01$, $p < .001$					

Note. N = 485; SE = robust standard errors; b = unstandardized beta-weight; β = standardized beta-weight; r_{sp} = semi-partial correlation. For further abbreviation labels see Table 1.

As shown in Table 4, when examined with a simplified model with just two predictors, SECS and LPP composite (or total) scores, SECS yielded a standardized beta-weight of .35, whereas LPP total scores yielded a much smaller standardized beta-weight of .06, suggesting that social and emotional competence was a strong, unique predictor of social interaction effectiveness, whereas leadership performance proficiency was less so.

Table 4

Multiple Regression Predicting Ratings of Quality of Interactions with Others at Work: Total Scores as Predictors

	b	*β*	SE	*t*	*p*	r_{sp}
SECS Total	.89	.35	.06	14.40	< .000	.37
LPP Total	.16	.06	.06	2.58	.010	.07
	R^2 = .685; $F(2, 482) = 526.22$, $p < .001$					

Note. N = 485; SE = robust standard errors; b = unstandardized beta-weight; β = standardized beta-weight; r_{sp} = semi-partial correlation. For further abbreviation labels see Table 1

Predicting Job Performance

We conducted a hierarchical stepwise multiple regression to predict individual differences in overall job performance, where the five LPP dimensions were entered in block 1 and the six SECS competencies were entered in block 2. As can be seen in Table 5, the five Practice Areas measured by the LPP were retained in the model at step 1. Leading Teaching and Learning (LTL) yielded the numerically largest beta-weight at $\beta = .15$, $p < .001$.

When the SECS variables were analyzed in Block 2, one LPP dimension lost its statistical significance as a contributor to the model (Developing Self and Others). Furthermore, five of the SECS dimensions were statistically significant contributors to the model, with Authenticity ($\beta = .11$) and Positive Influence ($\beta = .10$) yielding the numerically largest standardized beta-weights. Furthermore, the model R^2 increased from .69 to .77 across the two blocks (i.e., the addition of SECS to the model increased the predictive capacity of the model appreciably from 69% to 77% of the variance in Job Performance).

Table 5

Hierarchical (Stepwise) Multiple Regression Predicting Ratings of Job Performance

	b	*β*	SE	*t*	*p*	r_{sp}
Block 1: LPP						
LPP – LTL	.40	.15	.09	4.40	< .001	.14
LPP – DSO	.26	.10	.10	2.67	.008	.08
LPP – LIIC	.29	.11	.08	3.44	.001	.10
LPP – LMS	.18	.07	.10	1.87	.062	.05
LPP – EWC	-.09	-.04	.07	-1.43	.153	-.04
	R^2 = .692; $F(5, 479)$ = 218.40, p < .001					
Block 2: LPP + SECS						
LPP – LTL	.35	.13	.07	4.87	.000	.12
LPP – LIIC	.22	.09	.07	3.23	.001	.08
LPP – LMS	.10	.04	.08	1.34	.181	.03
LPP – EWC	-.10	-.04	.06	-1.68	.093	-.04
SECS – SA	-.12	-.05	.06	-2.07	.039	-.04
SECS – AO	.28	.11	.07	3.91	.000	.09
SECS – ER	-.16	-.07	.07	-2.32	.021	-.06
SECS – SM	.29	.12	.08	3.91	.001	.10
SECS – PI	.23	.10	.07	3.19	.002	.08
	R^2 = .771; $F(9, 475)$ = 181.82, p < .001					

Note. N = 485; SE = robust standard errors; b = unstandardized beta-weight; β = standardized beta-weight; r_{sp} = semi-partial correlation. For further abbreviation labels see Table 1.

As shown in Table 6, when examined with a simplified model with just two predictors, SECS and LPP composite scores, LPP and SECS yielded standardized beta-weights of .22 and .18, respectively (both p < .001). Based on the semi-partial correlations, LPP and SECS accounted uniquely for 7.8% and 5.3% of the variance, respectively, in job performance. The model R^2 implied that 73.1% of the variance in job performance was accounted for.

Table 6

Multiple Regression Predicting Ratings of Job Performance: Total Scores

	b	*β*	SE	*t*	*p*	r_{sp}
SECS Total	.46	.18	.05	8.61	< .001	.23
LPP Total	.59	.22	.06	9.79	< .001	.28
	R^2 = .731; $F(2, 482)$ = 654.80, p < .001					

Note. N = 485; SE = robust standard errors; b = unstandardized beta-weight; β = standardized beta-weight; r_{sp} = semi-partial correlation. For further abbreviation labels see Table 1.

Path Analytic Model

Based on the pattern of results found we decided to test an exploratory path analytic model to estimate direct and indirect effects with the aim of predicting job performance. Specifically, we specified SECS as a predictor of LPP, Quality of Interactions, and Overall Job Performance. Additionally, we specified LPP as a predictor of Quality of Interactions, and Overall Job Performance. Finally, we specified Quality of Interactions as a predictor of Overall Job Performance.

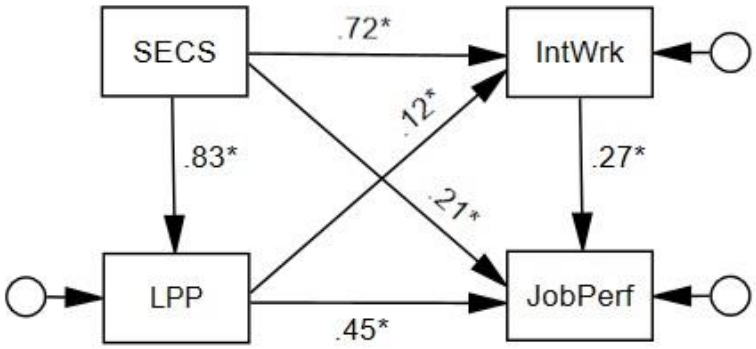
As can be seen in Figure 2, LPP yielded a significant, positive direct effect of β = .45, 95% CI [.37, .54], p < .001, onto Overall Job Performance. SECS also yielded a significant, positive direct effect onto Overall Job Performance at β = .21, 95% CI [.11, .32], p < .001. Thus, both LPP and SECS were positive, unique predictors of Overall Job Performance. It is noteworthy that LPP yielded a relatively small direct effect onto Quality of Interactions at β = .12, 95% CI: [.03, .22], p = .011, whereas the SECS yielded a large direct effect equal to β = .72, 95% CI [.63, .81], p < .001. As Quality of Interactions yielded a direct effect onto Overall Job Performance at β = .27, 95% CI [.16, .37], p < .001, there was the possibility of indirect effects.

SECS yielded a relatively substantial indirect effect, β = .19, 95% CI [.12, .28], p < .001, onto Overall Job Performance via its effect onto Quality of Interactions. By contrast,

LPP yielded a comparatively smaller indirect effect onto Overall Job Performance, β = .03, 95% CI [.01, .07], p = .021, via its effect on Quality of Interactions. A total of 75.3% of the variance in Overall Job Performance was accounted for by the model.

Figure 2

Path Analytic Model Predicting Overall Job Performance: Observer-Report



Note. N = 485; For abbreviation labels see Table; all coefficients completely standardized; *p < .05.

In summary the first research question was supported. Observer rated EI as measured by the Workplace SECS was shown to account for significant additional variance in two global items measuring leadership capability over and above the customized 360 assessment of leadership performance (LPP).

EI Development

Of the 485 participants who participated in the assessment process, 70 were identified as ‘not yet ready’ for school principal positions, as they had not met the threshold level of EI as determined by their observer rated SECS results. These participants were debriefed on their assessment results. Together with their coach, they conceptualized personal development plans and participated in the previously described EI development program. After completing the program, and at least six months after their initial (Time 1) SECS assessment, these participants completed the SECS a second time with the same raters. The

raters were also asked to reassess the participants' leadership capability via the two items measuring their quality of interactions and job performance. Table 7 presents the descriptive Time 1 and Time 2 observer rated assessment results expressed as percentile scores for ease.

Table 7.

Descriptive statistics of participants' time 1 and time 2 SECs and Leadership Capability scores

Competency	Mean	Median	SD	SE
Total EI Time 1	20	19	10.2	1.21
Total EI Time 2	63	68	21.9	2.62
Self-Awareness T1	17	17	11.2	1.34
Self-Awareness T2	67	67	22.8	2.73
Awareness of Others T1	18	16	12	1.43
Awareness of Others T2	61	63	22.4	2.68
Authenticity T1	21	18	14.3	1.71
Authenticity T2	63	71	23.7	2.83
Emotional Reasoning T1	18	19	12	1.44
Emotional Reasoning T2	65	69	22.6	2.70
Self-Management T1	26	22	17.5	2.09
Self-Management T2	65	69	26.2	3.13
Positive Influence T1	19	18	12.2	1.46
Positive Influence T2	59	64	23.6	2.82
Quality of interactions with others T1	3.76	3.80	.53	.06
Quality of interactions with others T2	4.31	4.35	.14	.05
Overall job performance T1	3.91	4.00	.43	.05
Overall job performance T2	4.45	4.50	.35	.04

Note: N = 70

Participants improved their EI by on average 43 percentile points. Of the 70 participants, 65 of them (93%) improved by 10 percentile points or more. Three of the participants' EI scores remained relatively unchanged (within 5 percentile points) and 2 participants scores went backward at Time 2 (by 12 and 16 percentile points respectively). Participants also improve observer rated leadership capability, specifically the quality of their interactions with others at work and their overall job performance. To test the statistical significance of these improvements a series of paired samples t-tests (which assume normality and no outliers) and corresponding Wilcoxon W tests (which can handle non-

normal distributions and outliers) were performed. The results of these analysis are presented in Table 8.

Table 8

Paired Samples T-Tests and Wilcoxon W Tests

		TEST	STAT	df	p	MD	SED		Esize
Total EI T1	Total EI T2	p-t	-15.2	69	<.001	-43.1	2.84	Coh d	-1.82
		WW	14.0		<.001	-44.5	2.84	Rbc	-0.99
Self-Aware T1	Self-Aware T2	p-t	-15.9	69	<.001	-49.2	3.10	Coh d	-1.90
		WW	9.50		<.001	-51.0	3.10	Rbc	-0.99
Aware of others T1	Aware of Others T2	p-t	-14.7	69	<.001	-43.0	2.93	Coh d	-1.75
		WW	17.5		<.001	-44.5	2.93	Rbc	-0.99
Authenticity T1	Authenticity T2	p-t	-14.0	69	<.001	-42.0	3.00	Coh d	-1.67
		WW	15.5		<.001	-43.0	3.00	Rbc	-0.99
Emotional Reasoning T1	Emotional Reasoning T2	p-t	-15.7	69	<.001	-46.2	2.94	Coh d	-1.88
		WW	14.0		<.001	-47.5	2.94	Rbc	-0.99
Self Mgt T1	Self Mgt T2	p-t	-11.4	69	<.001	-38.1	3.34	Coh d	-1.37
		WW	62.5		<.001	-39.0	3.34	Rbc	-0.95
Positive Influence T1	Positive Influence T2	p-t	-13.1	69	<.001	-39.5	3.01	Coh d	-1.57
		WW	24		<.001	-40.5	3.01	Rbc	-0.98
Quality of Interactions T1	Quality of Interactions T2	p-t	-7.3	69	<.001	-0.55	0.08	Coh d	-0.87
		WW	166.5		<.001	-0.55	0.08	Rbc	-0.85
Overall Job Perform T1	Overall Job Perform T2	p-t	-9.38	69	<.001	-0.55	0.06	Coh d	-1.12
		WW	98.5		<.001	-0.60	0.06	Rbc	-0.91

Notes n = 70; p-t = paired t-test; WW = Wilcoxon W; df = degrees of freedom; MD = Mean difference; SED = standard error difference Esize = Effect size

As shown in Table 8, all Time 1 and Time 2 differences were statistically significant. The effect sizes (Cohen's d values) were substantial for EI (-1.37 to -1.90). The effect sizes were not as large but still significant for Quality of Interactions and Overall Job Performance. In summary research questions two and three were supported. Participants low in EI were found to show statistically significant improvements in the demonstration of their EI and their leadership capability. These findings show that the EI Development program improved how

well participants demonstrated their EI, the quality of their interactions and their overall job performance as judged by the same raters who originally rated them on these variables.

Discussion

Practical Implications

In selection-oriented talent management activities it is common practice to utilize a number of different assessments and assessment methods to aid in decision-making (Kaiser & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2019). The practical value of including additional assessments in this context is typically made on a cost-benefit type basis (Church et al., 2018). Considering the additional time and resources required to administer and interpret the additional assessment, will it lead to improved decision-making that produces meaningful outcomes (e.g., performance improvements), or cost savings (e.g., reduced voluntary turnover or stress related leave claims), that make it worth it? The purpose of this paper was to make the case for, and report on, how a 360-degree behavior-based assessment of EI was improving decision-making in a talent management context where a large school system was examining the readiness of aspiring school leaders to step up into more senior school principal positions. Our criterion for the EI 360 assessment's value in determining leaders' readiness was its ability to predict additional variance in leadership capability beyond a customized 360 measure of leadership performance (the LPP). The research question that the EI 360 would predict additional variance in leadership capability was supported. Although the SECs and the LPP were highly intercorrelated, the EI 360 was shown to account for an additional 17% of the variance in how well the participants interacted with others at work, and an additional 8% of the variance in overall job performance.

Further analyses showed that observer rated EI was a strong, unique predictor of how well the participants interacted with others at work (the LPP considerably less so), and a unique predictor above and beyond the LPP of job performance (albeit to a lesser extent).

These findings suggest the EI 360 was providing a meaningful additional lens on the social-emotional capabilities of participants that were related to leadership capability. Although 360-degree assessments of leadership typically include items measuring elements of interpersonal effectiveness (for example one dimension of the LPP measured participants' performance proficiency for developing themselves and others), we've argued that it might be of particular value to include a more in-depth assessment of foundational social-emotional competencies in leadership contexts that involve high levels of emotional labor and require high levels of emotional regulation capability to perform well. The addition of a second 360-degree assessment in any context may be particularly burdensome (say in comparison to a self-report measure of personality), however, the effect sizes found in the current study, taken together with the existing research on the relationship between EI and school leadership effectiveness suggests the benefits could outweigh the costs considerably.

The correlations (or lack thereof) between self-reported EI, observer-rated EI and observer rated outcome measures found in the analyses, were consistent with those discussed by Boyatzis (2018), and further inform the ongoing discussion about the pros and cons of self and observer-reported EI. More specifically, that observer rated behavioral measures of EI are more predictive of work outcomes than self-report only. The findings are also consistent with those of studies examining self-evaluations of leadership and social skills more broadly, that have shown self-ratings to be poor predictors of objective performance measures (Atkins & Wood, 2002; Zell & Krizan, 2014). Collectively these findings suggest that organizations using behavior-based 360-degree assessments of EI in talent management should base input into their decisions using observer-rated data only. Nonetheless, examining discrepancies between self and observer rated EI data (i.e., those who over and underestimate their EI compared with observer ratings) may be useful in informing approaches to EI development. For example, as discussed by Nowack (2019), over-estimators in the 360-degree literature

have been found to be generally less receptive to feedback from others and have negative reactions to it.

Potential benefits of using an EI assessment in school leadership talent management

What might the benefits be of placing aspiring school leaders with the required level of leadership performance and social-emotional competence? Based on existing correlational studies, it could be argued that putting more emotionally and socially competent school leaders into school principal positions should improve the way first time school principals interact with their students, parents, and community stakeholders (Patti & Stern, 2023). This in turn should lead to better school culture and overall student achievement (Gómez-Leal et al., 2022). Given the correlation between levels of EI, wellbeing and resilience (Schneider et al., 2013), school systems may also see improvements in how well first-time school principals adjust to the work demands and emotional labor of the role. This might result in less occupational stress, more job satisfaction and manifest in lower absenteeism, burnout, and voluntary turnover. These implied outcomes need to be substantiated by future studies and are all avenues for further research both within Education and in other industries.

The secondary benefit of using a behavior-based EI 360 in leadership talent management activities relates to the fact that studies have shown EI can be developed (Hodzic et al., 2018; Mattingly & Kraiger, 2019) and the development of leaders EI has been reported to improve leader effects on variables that contribute to organizational culture and performance (Boyatzis, 2018; Crummernerl et al., 2019). This may be of value in tight labor markets where there is a need to increase the pool of available leaders capable to lead, and in contexts where there are high performing technical leaders that require more developed social-emotional competence to lead well. In the current study comparisons of leaders Time 1 and Time 2 EI results (of those who were initially found to be low in EI and therefore deemed not yet ready) showed that the EI development program improved how well participants

demonstrated their EI by on average 43 percentile points. Collectively, they were also found to improve their observer rated leadership capability. Time 2 scores pertaining to the quality of their interactions and their overall job performance significantly improved.

The level of EI development found in the current study was consistent with those reported in a recent meta-analysis of EI development programs that had a particular set of learning methods in the design. Mattingly and Kraiger (2019), found greater levels of EI development and effect sizes where evident in programs that involved practice (participants actively practiced applying EI theory, tools, and techniques), feedback (on how well they did), and where the training is spread out over multiple sessions (compared with more lecture style training that occurred in a single event). The current study contributes to this literature providing additional evidence that EI development programs with these learning methods show significant improvements in EI and outcome variables. In the current study participants' motivation to develop may also have been higher given the talent management context. As noted by Nowack (2019) "the likelihood that an employee will or will not engage in a particular behavior following a 360 Feedback discussion is influenced heavily by their predictions of the effects and consequences of that behavior in relation to their own professional goals and objectives." (pp. 176).

Limitations

While the data presented in the current study showed variability and corresponding correlations, there was evidence of rater leniency and halo effects. This occurred despite an implementation process designed to maximize clarity of purpose, rater anonymity and rater selection criteria used to ensure those selected were likely to be the most objective in their assessments possible. Future studies should consider implementing further techniques to prevent rater bias such as those discussed by (Bracken & Rotolo, 2019), and the use of statistical methods designed to help account for it, such as those discussed Brown et al.

(2017). Of these, training on rater biases and EI may help improve variability in rater responses. Training on EI could include examples of how leaders with low, average, and high levels of social-emotional competence demonstrate the competencies and behaviors thereof. It should also be noted that this study was conducted with participants in Australia, a low power distance country. The cultural context may limit the generalizability of the findings. As Eckert et al. (2010) highlight, high power distance cultures exhibit more significant discrepancies in 360-degree feedback due to hierarchical norms and limited bidirectional communication. Future research could examine the application of behavior-based EI 360 assessments in countries with higher power distances to examine how cultural dimensions influence EI ratings and the interpretation of feedback.

Another limitation of the current study was the number of raters in the rater categories which resulted in us rolling all raters up into a single rater category. This limited our capacity to examine whether specific rater groups (e.g., Direct Reports vs Managers) were more predictive of leadership capability than others. Future studies could address this limitation by increasing the number of raters in each of the 360 rater categories. This may allow the examination of how rater numbers affect the reliability of EI 360 ratings and help establish optimal numbers. Greater rater numbers would also allow for a more thorough examination of how rater categories and social-emotional competencies may be more and less predictive of leadership outcomes. Future research could also more thoroughly examine the relationship between EI over-estimators (those who self-rate their EI significantly higher than raters) and EI under-estimators (those who self-rate their EI significantly less than raters) and leadership capability. This would allow for a more detailed examination of how differences in social-emotional competencies contribute to leadership effectiveness and the development of EI (see Nowack, 2019, for a discussion on reactions to feedback by over and under-estimators). Here work on the leadership Arena-Reputation-Identify (LARI) model by Loignon et al. (2024)

provides a guide for how to more precisely capture the shared and unique perspectives that underlie multisource ratings.

Future Research

To help quantify the benefits of using EI 360-assessment in leadership talent management and development future studies could examine variables such as levels of occupational stress, student achievement, staff absenteeism, voluntary turnover, wellbeing and job satisfaction and compare them to a Control Group (where EI is not assessed or development), post 12 or more months of employment in a school principal position. Longitudinal research of this nature tracking the sustainability of these outcome variables would also be of much benefit. Future research could also examine whether other approaches to the conceptualization and measurement of EI are beneficial in this context. We have made the case here, as have others (i.e., Boyatzis, 2018), that a behavior-based EI 360 assessment may be both more predictive of workplace outcomes and better suited to assisting leader development. However, this claim remains untested and future research could help clarify which approach to EI is best used in talent management. Similar research looking at whether EI contributes to decision-making about leadership readiness and development in other countries, industries and organizations is also needed.

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