

## The Level of Emotional Intelligence and its Differences Among School Principals

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**Abstract.** Emotional Intelligence is a common concept which is applied for all occupations. The present study aimed at identifying the level of emotional intelligence at school settings. 92 school principals were volunteered to participate in this study. Frequency, descriptive statistics, t-test and ANOVA were used to analyze the study objective. However, the results showed that the level of emotional intelligence among school principals was moderate which represent positive result. The result also indicated that there were no significant differences on the level of emotional intelligence among school principals based on their gender, age, and work experience. Discussions and limitation were discussed.

**Key words:** Emotional Intelligence, School Principals, Individual Differences.

### Introduction

Education plays a key role for the economic development and the development of a country. However, a tremendous improvement has been noticed in Saudi Arabia especially in education since consider as one of the factors that determine the success of the country. The effectiveness of the school is highly dependent on the leadership skills of the principals (Rowena, 2014). Maulod, Piaw, Alias and Wei, (2017) indicated that principals are the leaders who played an important role in the achievement of excellence or success of a school. Principals must comprehend, appreciate and manage the emotional nature of those affiliated with the school at all levels to create an environment which foster high expectations and motivation towards meeting those expectations. Therefore, principals need skills and abilities to lead the school and its members to carry out teaching process effectively. Recently, the ability of emotional intelligence is important in determining the success of a school.

Emotional intelligence can generally describe as a non-cognitive ability for understanding of and skill in developing relationships and the importance emotions play in the role. Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee, (2002) indicated that people possessing emotional intelligence are observed when they demonstrate competencies that constitute self-awareness, and social skills at appropriate times and ways sufficient to be effective in the situation. Therefore, emotional intelligence is important for success as a leader than cognitive intelligence (Goleman, 1995). Principals emotionally intelligent leadership abilities may significantly impact the learning environment of a school. Goleman et al. (2002) argue it does not necessarily make a difference what school principals do; it is how they perform their responsibilities that matters. They added that the manner they complete their responsibilities, interact, read and respond to others can determine their success as a leader. It is leading with emotional intelligence that makes the difference in principals' impact on teacher and students' success (Barent, 2005).

### Problem Statement

Researchers over the past decade have shown that in the education setting a positive correlation exists between academic success and emotional intelligence (Barent, 2005; Goleman et al., 2002). Bradberry and Greaves (2003) suggested that individuals high in emotional intelligence tend to perform at a higher level than their counterparts with

low emotional intelligence, and those who tend to improve or work on their emotional intelligence outperform cohorts who do not. Furthermore, emotional intelligence has a greater influence on the outcome of a leader (Cherniss & Goleman, 2001). In the realm of education, little attention has been given to emotional intelligence, and few studies were conducted on school principals' emotional intelligence. A principal task was found to be in varieties including the need for long-term working hours (Juhana, 2007) led to the pressure is the result of their need to respond to the needs of various parties which sometimes create conflict. Thus, principals have to control and balance his emotional intelligence. A principal with a high emotional intelligence will show a greater influence on their school as compared to a leader who has a lower emotional intelligence (Cherniss, 1999).

Based on the above statements, this study is important because research on emotional intelligence and school principals rarely done especially in Saudi Arabia as well as recommendations by Cliffe (2011) which encourages more research conducted to investigate the emotional intelligence among school principals. Therefore, this study added to literature by investigating the emotional intelligence level of school principals in Saudi Arabia as well as identified the difference level according to the individual factors such as gender, age and working experiences.

### **Literature Review**

Goleman (2001) defined emotional intelligence as the ability to recognize own feelings and the feelings of others, the ability to motivate and manage the emotions of his own and other better. The importance of emotional intelligence is divided on the importance of social aspects, education and leadership. Goleman et al. (2002) stated that emotional intelligence can lead to success, whether at home, school or in the workplace. Previous studies conducted by several researchers have shown the importance of emotional intelligence of principals in influencing their school success. A principal with a high emotional intelligence will show a greater influence on their school as compared to a leader who has a lower emotional intelligence (Cherniss, 1999). In the school settings, emotional intelligence can improve teachers and students' success.

Cook (2006) conducted a study on a sample of school principals selected from different schools in Montana. The study revealed that emotional intelligence has a positive effect on principal's leadership performance. Furthermore, gender, age, year of experiences had no significant effect on emotional intelligence. Cliffe (2011) also explored the relationship between emotional intelligence and educational leadership based on the in-depth responses of seven female secondary school head teachers to emotional intelligence domains as defined by Goleman (1998). Positive correlations were found, notably that head teachers had been able to, either knowingly or subconsciously, make intelligent use of their emotions. Wong, Wong, and Peng (2010) also conducted two major studies in China to investigate the impact of middle-level leader and teacher emotional intelligence on teachers' job outcomes, showing a positive impact of teacher and middle-level leader emotional intelligence for school teachers' job satisfaction. A study completed by Reynolds and O'Dwyer (2008) observed effective leadership in terms of behavioral characteristics. The study sought to determine whether the emotional intelligence of a school principal coupled with coping mechanisms for stress predicts leadership effectiveness. An exploratory study conducted by Shipper, Kincaid, Rotondo, and Hoffman (2003), examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and managerial effectiveness among three cultures including the United States, United Kingdom, and Malaysia. The results showed a positive relationship between managerial

effectiveness and the emotional intelligence component of self-awareness. This positive relationship existed between interactive skills and managerial effectiveness in the United States and the United Kingdom samples and between controlling skills in the United Kingdom and Malaysian samples.

A study completed by Tang, Yin, and Nelson (2010) investigated the relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership practices, focusing on a cross-cultural sample of academic leaders in Taiwan and the United States. The researchers used a causal comparative research method to ascertain if cross-cultural differences existed in the emotional intelligence of the 50 Taiwanese and 50 American academic leaders surveyed. The results demonstrated that for all participants a positive correlation existed between emotional intelligence and the five areas of leadership practices described by the Leadership Practices Inventory, which include modeling, challenging, enabling, encouraging, and inspiring.

In their study's, Pervez, Dahar, and Laeef, (2016) among 80 government school principals examined the impact of emotional intelligence of principals on school outcomes at secondary school. The study found the impact of emotional intelligence of principals on the school outcomes especially students' achievement. Hayat, Rehman, and Hayat, (2016) conducted a study on the effect of gender on emotional intelligence and professional development in 200 male and female secondary school teachers in Islamabad. The results revealed that female secondary school teachers were more emotionally intelligent and professionally developed than male secondary school teachers. Shipley, Jackson and Segrest, (2010) examined the effects of emotional intelligence, age, work experience and academic performance among 193 students. The result showed that emotional intelligence associated with work experiences but not with academic performance and age.

### **Objectives of the Study**

This study extends the current literature on emotional intelligence at school environment. The overall objective of this study is to look at the different level of emotional intelligence among school principals. The objectives of the study are as follow:

- To determine the level of emotional intelligence among school principals.
- To determine the different levels of emotional intelligence based on school principals' gender.
- To determine the different levels of emotional intelligence based on school principals' age.
- To determine the different levels of emotional intelligence based on school principals teaching experiences.

### **Methodology and Study Design**

#### *Study Design*

The present study adopted a survey design involving significant number of individuals, comprised in an unbiased sample, to represent the characteristics of the study population.

#### *Sample*

The study population was the Southern region's school principals in Saudi Arabia, whose consent was sought and selection of 92 principals was made using convenient sampling method. There were 67 male principals and 25 female principals.

#### *Measure*

The present study utilized the emotional intelligence measure (Bradberry & Greaves, 2004) using six likert scale ranged from 1 never to 6 always. The initial items generated were scrutinized by 5 experts in education school who made their contributions. The final copy of the items was agreed to have content validity. In terms of reliability, the cronbach alpha for the all variables were (emotioanl intelligence .92).

### **Data Analysis**

This exploratory study aims to investigate the relationship of psychological strain and individual characteristics of school principals in the Southern region of Saudi Arabia, using a cross-sectional survey design. The demographic information of the sample in light of gender, age and work experience are presented in Table 1. To begin with, majority of the sample were men numbering 67 (72.8%) and the remaining were women (25 respondents, 27.2%). As for their ages, the highest number of respondents fell into the age range of 40-50 years old (68 respondents, 73.9%) and the least number fell into the age range of above 50 years old (8 respondents, 8.7%) and 30-40 years old (16 respondents, 17.4%). Moving on to the experience as principals, majority of the respondents had 10-15 years of experience (53 respondents, 57.6%), followed by those that had above 15 years of experience (28 respondents, 30.5%), and those less than 10 years of experience (11 respondents, 11.9%).

**Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Participants**

Gender	Male	67	72.8%
	Female	25	27.2%
Age	30-40 Year	16	17.4%
	40-50 years	68	73.9%
	Above 50	8	8.7%
Work Experience	less than 10 years	11	11.9%
	10-15 years	53	57.6%
	Above 15 years	28	30.5%

The first assumption involved normality of data and the presence of outliers, which were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics result indicated that principals are having moderate level of emotional intelligence (M= 4.05; SD= .742), which represent that they can manage stressful work situation as well as they are having good ability to socialize with people in the workplace. An independent sample t-test was adopted for the comparison of the mean scores of the emotional intelligence in light of gender among the school principals. Table 2 presents the results of the t-test, and from the table, it is evident that no significant difference was found on the emotional intelligence level between male and female principals (t value=.060; p> 0.05).

**Table 2. Differences of Emotional Intelligence Based on Gender**

Factor	Gender	N	M	SD	Mean Diff	df	Sig- (2-taild)
Emotional Intelligence	Male	67	3.96	.757	-1.908	90	.060
	Female	25	4.29	.657			

Moving on to the difference in emotional intelligence level on the basis of the respondents' ages, the study used a one-way ANOVA to compare the mean scores. Table 3 displays the results and it is evident that no significant difference was found in the emotional intelligence level of the principals based on their ages,  $F=2.494$  (.088;  $p> 0.05$ ).

Table 3. ANOVA Results of emotional intelligence based on Age Groups

Emotional Intelligence	SS	DF	MS	F	Sig
Between group	2.664	2	1.332	2.494	.088
Within group	47.518	89	.534		
Total	50.182	91			

In the same way, one-way ANOVA was employed for the comparison of the emotional intelligence level mean scores based on the school principals' experience as shown in table 4. From the next table, the results show that there is no significant different in the principals' psychological emotional intelligence levels based on their working experience,  $F=1.048$  (.355,  $p> 0.05$ ).

Table 4. ANOVA Results of Emotional Intelligence based on Work Experience Groups

Strain	SS	DF	MS	F	Sig
Between group	1.154	2	.577	1.048	.355
Within group	49.028	89	.551		
Total	50.182	91			

### **Discussion and Implication**

Emotional intelligence characteristic is important for principals and teacher which may enable them to lead the school effectively as well as respond to the changes taken place properly. However, the result of the study showed that the level of emotional intelligence among principals was above average. The result behind that is due to the teacher perceived their work and carrying their leadership duty effectively. Furthermore, the principals may have good intra-person and interpersonal skills which may lead them to have good level of emotional intelligence. In any job, there are wide variety of emotions represented the status of the employees towards their workplace and its activities. However, the result supported the previous studies (Nik, 2013; Mohd, 2005). The result of this study showed that the level of emotional intelligence was same for men and woman. However, the result supported the previous studies (Jubran & Saleh, 2018). Emotional intelligence level for the respondent of the study was in the, some of which are common to both men and women. The results of the present study were somehow inconsistency with the previous studies (Sharma, 2017; Shipley, Jackson, & Segrest, 2010). The individual differences with the emotional intelligence levels of principals revealed that there were no significant differences principals age and work experience. This may be because, teachers generally have similar job responsibilities as their nature of job remains unchanged and same number of working hours. However, the results of the present study were somehow inconsistency with the previous studies (Shipley et al., 2010).

### **Limitation and Recommendation of the Study**



The current study possessed some limitations such as the sample of the study may not represent a bigger population because it was taken from schools in Southern Saudi Arabia disregarding others. In other words, generalization across geographical as well as demographical areas was not confirmed. Based on the limitation of the current study, ample opportunities were presented for future research. Future researches should look into and studied all Saudian public and private schools and the difference emotional intellgience level between them. Second limitation, due to the fact that quantitative data is taken through self-report measures, the current study recommended that future researches use qualitative methods to shed a light on principals perception of the emotional intelligence.

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