

Principals' leadership styles: the role of emotional intelligence and achievement motivation

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to investigate the effect of emotional intelligence (EI) and achievement motivation (AM) on elementary school principals' leadership styles. This study investigates the contribution of EI and AM on the two major leadership categories: the task-oriented and relationship-oriented leadership.

Design/methodology/approach – This paper is a quantitative study with the implementation of correlation and hierarchical regression analysis. The surveys (i.e. EI scale, AM scale, leadership style questionnaire) were sent randomly to 280 elementary school principals in South Sulawesi, Indonesia, and 90 of them completed the survey (mostly male = 77.78 percent).

Findings – Principals' EI significantly predicted both task-oriented and relationship-oriented leadership. In contrast, the principals' AM yielded non-significant results in predicting both task-oriented and relationship-oriented leadership style. The results also suggested that the effect of EI on two major leadership styles (i.e. task- and relationship-orientation) outperformed the leader's AM.

Research limitations/implications – This study did not consider the principals' performance in the analysis. Future studies should also address this issue by considering leadership performance as well as different culture and context. On the other hand, the authors developed new measures rather than using preexisting measures. Although the measures have been constructed according to the scale construction principles and reached an acceptable standard, future research should advance the psychometric property of the scales.

Originality/value – This study discusses the effect of EI and AM on task- and relationship-orientation leadership. In addition, this study has also brought a new insight into understanding leadership styles in collective culture such as Indonesia.

Keywords Emotional intelligence, Leadership styles, Achievement motivation, School principal

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Leadership styles such as task- and relationship-orientation affect a follower's attitude, motivation and behaviors (Bass, 1990). To illustrate, an abundance of studies have also found that transformational leadership style and charisma positively influence performance (Bass, 1990; Shea and Howell, 1999), organizational citizenship behavior (Humphrey, 2012) and organizational commitment (Dai *et al.*, 2013), and bring positive effects (Deichmann and Stam, 2015; Jacquart and Antonakis, 2015; Nohe *et al.*, 2013; Wells *et al.*, 2014; Yucel *et al.*, 2014). Regardless of the number of investigations in the area of leadership style, the transformational and transactional style emerged from the task-oriented and relationship-oriented leadership approach (Bass, 1990). The effect of some leadership styles on employees' behavior and attitude has been well documented (Bass, 1990; Shea and Howell, 1999; Jacquart and Antonakis, 2015). However, there is a paucity in understanding the antecedents of one's leadership style.

The concept of emotional intelligence (EI) had been around for decades. Salovey and Mayer (1990) introduced one of the most cited EI definitions among researchers. Salovey and Mayer (1990) defined EI as "the subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and use this information to guide one's thinking and actions." Salovey and Mayer (1990) also defined EI as the ability to manage, recognize, use, understand and regulate emotions. Moreover, Bar-On (2000)



postulated that emotional and social intelligence is a “multifactorial array of interrelated emotional, personal, and social abilities that influence our overall ability to actively and effectively cope with daily demands and pressures.”

Emotion (feeling and moods) serves important aspects of human lives which also includes the aspects of leadership practices. Decision making is one of the major components of leadership practice, and effective decision making is greatly influenced by the ability to manage emotion or in other words EI. As claimed by George (2000), people’s cognitive capabilities are informed and influenced by their emotions and their abilities to manage their emotions effectively. Thus, leaders’ behaviors and decisions are potentially impacted by the leaders’ emotions and capability to maintain controls over their emotions.

Based on the works of Mayer *et al.* (2001), Salovey and Mayer (1990) and Mayer *et al.* (2004), there are at least four major aspects of EI: the appraisal and expression of emotion, the use of emotion to enhance cognitive process and control decision making, knowledge about emotions, and management of emotion. Higgs and Aitken (2003) also claimed that the aspects of EI (i.e. self-awareness, emotional resilience, influence, interpersonal sensitivity, motivation, intuitiveness, and conscientiousness and integrity) predicted leadership potential.

The components of EI which have been constructed by the previous findings (Mayer *et al.*, 2001, 2004; Salovey and Mayer, 1990; Schutte *et al.*, 1998) were closely related with effective leadership behaviors. Leadership tasks require a high level of decision making whereas effective decision making involves some degree of EI. Leaders who possess high EI have the capability of monitoring their expression of emotion, enhance their cognitive process and control their decisions. Also, the leaders may have better interpersonal sensitivity, motivation and influence. All those aspects are determinants for effective leader behaviors and later also influence certain leadership styles such as relationship-oriented leadership.

To support, Sosik and Megerian (1999) highlighted some intersections between EI and the aspects of authentic transformational leadership (Bass and Steidlmeier, 1999). For instance, leaders with high EI tend to motivate their followers in completing tasks while “Individual focus on others” is also related to individualized attention. The leaders also have professional controls over their behaviors which they are related to idealized influence or charisma. In addition, high EI allows leaders to control and influence life events (Mcenrue and Groves, 2006).

Another important predictor for leader behaviors is achievement motivation (AM). EI and AM are closely linked because the two constructs determine and even direct executive functions (Pessoa, 2009). Similar to EI, leaders’ AM potentially acts as the antecedent of leader behaviors. AM is an effort to attain successful completion and avoid failure (McClelland *et al.*, 1953; Murray, 1938), meaning that people’s behavior is centered on these two orientations, to attain success or to avoid failure. Later, Ames and Archer (1988) suggested that two goal-orientations influenced AM: the performance and the mastery goal. The performance goal focused on the demonstration of competence, while the mastery goal focused on developing competence. Both orientations had distinct consequences, for example, people with performance goal would withdraw their effort in the face of failure while people with mastery goal would persist (Elliot and Church, 1997). However, although the performance and mastery goal have different consequences, Elliot and Church (1997) considered both as the “approach” form of motivation or AM.

Leaders are expected to complete various tasks in organizations. Like other employees, leadership position also required some degree of AM to complete difficult tasks successfully. In this case, the effect of AM on leaders’ behaviors is crucial. This has been supported by some previous findings where AM is correlated with leadership behaviors (Alston *et al.*, 2010; Hur *et al.*, 2011).

Considering the above AM theory, leaders are motivated to either approach “success” or to avoid “failure.” The “performance vs mastery” is a form of “success” approach motivation (Elliot and Church, 1997). Leaders with performance or mastery orientation would seek for successful completion and minimize any potential failure. Successful accomplishment becomes a source of motivation (Bandura, 1982). Leaders may persist to succeed as they have successfully accomplished challenging tasks. As the leaders are persisted to completing tasks or goals, they tend to be more task oriented. Some studies have documented various claims that the task-oriented leaders were more transactional and motivated to use rewards and punishment (Bycio *et al.*, 1995; Dai *et al.*, 2013; Den Hartog *et al.*, 1997; Odumeru and Ifeanyi, 2013).

School principals also face a similar challenge in leading their organizations (schools). There are numerous tasks that must be accomplished on a daily basis and a principal-teacher relationship must be maintained. Wahlstrom and Louis (2008) argued that the effective principal-teacher relationship positively impacted teacher’s instructional practices. Further, an effective principal at school leads to many students and school achievements. To illustrate, an effective principal leadership style encourages teachers to develop competencies and build school organisational capacity (Youngs and King, 2002).

Implementing one particular leadership style (or approach) is an important aspect of effective leadership (Yukl, 2012). Although there are some considerable factors, the principal’s choice of a particular approach determines effective leadership at school. A previous call from Yukl (2012) also stated that a future study needed to investigate why a leader commits to a particular leadership style. Therefore, investigating the antecedents of leadership style contributes important information to the field.

Given the above discussions, this study aims to focus on investigating the role of EI and AM on two leadership styles (i.e. task-oriented and relationship-oriented leadership).

Literature review

Task-oriented vs relationship-oriented leadership

Despite the growing definition of leadership, Northouse (2010) identified four components of leadership: leadership is a process, leadership involves influence, leadership occurs in groups and leadership involves common goals. These are four important components to define leadership. Furthermore, leadership is a complex field of study, and it attracts many scientists and practitioners. To respond to this issue, many scientists explained the emergence and the existence of either leader or leadership using various approaches. Northouse (2010), for example, introduced some approaches to understanding leadership (e.g. trait approach, skill approach and style approach).

Many of the previous studies investigated the various form of leadership styles. Transformational vs transactional (Avolio *et al.*, 1999), charisma (Jacquart and Antonakis, 2015) and authentic leadership (Avolio and Gardner, 2005) are among the most studied leadership behaviors. However, those constructs emerge from two leadership taxonomies: task and relationship orientation (Yukl, 2012; Blake and Mouton, 1982). The task orientation is more closely to explain the degree to which a leader focuses on goal achievement, defining the roles of followers and introducing well-defined patterns of communication, while the relationship-orientation leader shows concern and respect for their followers, focuses on their well-being and expresses support. Then, this concept is developed and well known as the transactional and transformational leadership style (Bass, 1990).

In terms of positive effect, Taberero and others (2009) found that a task-oriented leader influenced group efficacy and positivism while relationship-oriented leaders increased cohesion among the group’s members. The transformational leadership and charisma (relationship-oriented leader) had been found positively influenced followers’ performance (Bass, 1990; Shea and Howell, 1999) improved organizational commitment (Dai *et al.*, 2013) and

fostered organizational citizenship behavior (Humphrey, 2012). Transactional leadership (task-oriented) could also leverage performance for a short-term project and a very specific task (Tyssen *et al.*, 2014). Additionally, Dai and others (2013) also postulated that transactional leadership style influenced organizational commitment via distributive justice.

EI and relationship-oriented leadership

Goleman (1995) introduced the EI as an important factor for leadership effectiveness, and its effect was more vital than cognitive ability. Some studies suggested that EI positively predicted transformational leadership (Alston *et al.*, 2010; Corona, 2010; Hur *et al.*, 2011). Similarly, Corona (2010) found a statistically significant positive correlation between EI and transformational leadership. It appears that emotion plays an important part in predicting the leader-follower relationship.

The above findings were consistent with the theory of EI (Mayer *et al.*, 2001; Salovey and Mayer, 1990; Mayer *et al.*, 2004). Leaders with a sufficient level of EI can master and regulate their own emotion. Interpersonal relationship between leader and followers would be fostered and supported by the leaders' capability to control their emotional expressions. The Appraisal and expression of emotion, the use of emotion to enhance cognitive process and control decision making, knowledge about emotions, and management of emotion are very supportive of maintaining a leader-follower relationship. Therefore, followers may perceive the leaders as more relationship-oriented rather than task-oriented leaders.

However, some cultural differences might apply in this case. Tang *et al.* (2010) contended that in Taiwan, EI had a significant and positive correlation with all areas of transformational leadership practice. In contrast, involving managers in Russia as participants, Van Genderen (2012) found a weak relationship between EI and transformational leadership style. These two contrasting findings indicated that different culture could change the relationship between EI and transformational leadership.

Given the above findings, it appears that the evidence supports the relationship between EI and transformational leadership behavior. However, transformational leadership behavior was initially developed from the idea of relationship-oriented leadership (Bass, 1990). Thus, the first hypothesis EI predicts relationship-oriented leadership.

AM and task-oriented leadership

AM is necessary for every employee and anyone who aims to complete tasks. It directs people either to approach success or to avoid failure (McClelland *et al.*, 1953; Murray, 1938). To approach successful accomplishment, individuals tend to demonstrate (performance-focused) or develop (mastery-focused) their competence (Ames and Archer, 1988). This mechanism does not only occur among subordinates but also explains leadership orientation toward tasks.

Leadership requires a set of competence to complete tasks and achieve leadership mission. Motivation to achieve goals encourages leaders to focus on observable targets such as everyday tasks in organisation. High AM directs to perform effectively according to particular achievement standard (Alston *et al.*, 2010; Corona, 2010; Hur *et al.*, 2011). The leader may use rewards and punishments to maintain high accomplishment standard (Bycio *et al.*, 1995; Dai *et al.*, 2013; Den Hartog *et al.*, 1997; Odumeru and Ifeanyi, 2013). According to some previous findings (e.g. Avolio *et al.*, 1999; Odumeru and Ifeanyi, 2013), leaders who implement the reward-punishment approach, motivated toward task completion and lead followers to a specific task would be perceived as a task-oriented leader (or transactional leadership).

The effect of AM on task-oriented leadership could bring some advantages to the organization, particularly in completing specific tasks (Tyssen *et al.*, 2014). As the leader focuses on achieving the immediate task accomplishment, his/her orientation shifts to task oriented. Although the leader might still possess some degree of transformational

leadership, his/her high motivation to accomplish goals would make him/her perceived as more task oriented by followers. Follower perceptions play a dominant part in determining either the leader is transformational (relationship oriented) or transactional (task oriented) (Jacobsen and Bøgh Andersen, 2015). Thus, when a leader is highly motivated by focusing on demonstrating or developing competence, committing to reward-punishment approach and targeting specific task achievement, he/she do not only perform as a task-oriented leader but also perceived as task-oriented leaders.

Brandmo *et al.* (2014) suggested that the achievement goal theory was a fruitful tool to understand principal school leadership. They analyzed two goal-orientations; the mastery-goal and performance-goal orientation. The mastery-goal orientation correlated significantly with principals' efficacy, belief for leading, autonomy and teacher-principal trust (Caillier, 2014). In respect to the AM, the performance-approach goal was positively correlated with the intention to perform well on tasks and break achievement limits (Corker and Donnellan, 2012).

Linking EI, AM and leadership

Leaders may approach their followers with task-oriented or/and relationship-oriented style (Stogdill, 1950; Blake and Mouton, 1982; Northouse, 2010). These two leadership styles affect followers in different ways (Bass, 1990). To illustrate, leaders who put more attention on task achievement prone to be more task oriented while leaders who care about followers' emotion tend to display the relationship-oriented approach. In general, these two major approaches have formed different terms in leadership studies such as transactional, transformational and charisma (Yukl, 2012).

Consistent with the previous discussions, this study argues that the EI predicts leader's relationship-oriented approach (Alston *et al.*, 2010; Corona, 2010; Hur *et al.*, 2011), while AM predicts leader's task-oriented approach (Corker and Donnellan, 2012; Caillier, 2014; Brandmo *et al.*, 2014). The ability to effectively understand emotion and manage emotional expressions is an essential element of a leader-follower relationship. EI would favor the leader to express emotions to the followers and help to cultivate a leader-follower relationship. Therefore, high EI predicts relationship-oriented leadership. On the other hand, some leaders are motivated to achieve goals by focusing on tasks, regular targets and measurable performance index. In this case, the leaders commit to high AM, and they potentially utilize rewards and punishment, set specific task accomplishment and implement the transactional approach. This, then, leads to task oriented as the leaders repeatedly treat their followers with such behaviors.

The relationship-orientation style is also closely related to the servant leadership where the leaders place the needs of their followers before theirs (Sendjaya and Sarros, 2002) and they make sure the needs of followers are fulfilled (Greenleaf, 2002). On the other hand, the servant leadership style is positively associated with public service motivation (Liu *et al.*, 2015). It is plausible that leaders in public service such as school principals employ high EI to satisfy the need of teachers and students. Consequently, it forms a relationship-oriented leadership as the leaders attempt to fulfill others' needs. Similarly, leaders in many sectors (i.e. public and private) are assigned particular targets and tasks. As the leaders focus on the accomplishment and prone to display high AM, they start to form a task-oriented approach.

Both EI and AM are essential for leadership practices in any organisations (Barbuto *et al.*, 2002; Brown, 2014; Modassir and Singh, 2008). In public service, like a school, principals, as well as other leaders, also possess a various degree of EI and AM. Accordingly, school principals would form a particular leadership approach to deal with day-to-day tasks and cultivate a leader-follower relationship. One of the antecedents (i.e. emotion and motivation) of leadership approach could dominate a leader's behaviors and eventually created either task or relationship orientation.

Based on the above reviews, this study proposes two hypotheses:

H1. EI significantly predicts the leader's relationship-orientation style.

H2. AM significantly predicts the leader's task-orientation style.

Method

Participants

Participants were schools principals in South Sulawesi, Indonesia. Initially, the questionnaires were sent randomly to 280 school principals. There were 100 participants returned the questionnaires by the deadline (ten workdays to complete). However, ten participants were discarded from analysis due to incomplete responses. Most of the participants were men (77.78 percent) with ages ranging from 35 to 58 years ($M = 42.32$, $SD = 4.75$). The majority of participants had served as a school principal for two to four years with educational level included Bachelor ($n = 60$) and Masters ($n = 30$).

Measures

EI measure. The 22-item EI scale was constructed in the Indonesian language. The scale was a five-point Likert scale (1 = not at all to 5 = very often) with eight reverse-scored items. The scale was constructed by generating items based on Goleman's (1995) dimension of EI (i.e. self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, and empathy and social skill). The initial scale had 36 items, and 14 of them were dropped due to low inter-item correlation ($r < 0.30$). The final scale had 22 items with a Cronbach's α of 0.77. An example of the items is *saya dapat mengendalikan ekspresi emosi diri yang berlebihan* (I can control my excessive emotional expression).

AM measure. The 16-item AM scale was constructed in Indonesia language. The scale was a five-point Likert scale (1 = not at all to 5 = very often) with eight reverse-scored items. The scale was constructed based on Hartono's (2007) three facets of AM (i.e. wishes, desire and drive). Of 33 initial items, 17 of them were dropped due to low inter-item correlation ($r < 0.30$) resulting 16 final items with a Cronbach's α of 0.72 (e.g. *saya bekerja keras untuk menyaingi prestasi rekan kerjaku*/I work harder to achieve better than my colleagues).

Leadership style measure. The leadership style measure was constructed in Indonesia language based on two leadership taxonomy categories: task orientation and relationship orientation (Yukl, 2012). Samson (2006) suggested that the task orientation had five facets (i.e. planning, organizing, executing, directing and controlling), and relationship orientation had four facets (i.e. supporting, accessible interaction, active listening and feedback). Researchers preferred using these two categories of facets in constructing leadership style measures since they had been used by the prior study (Samson, 2006). The measure was a 28-item Likert scale (1 = not at all to 5 = very often) with seven reverse-scored items. Out of 56 items, 28 items were dropped due to low inter-item correlation ($r < 0.30$), resulting in 28 final items with Cronbach's α 0.74 (e.g. *saya menyelesaikan pekerjaan yang lebih prioritas terlebih dahulu*/I complete the job with higher priority first, and *saya memberikan target yang harus dicapai oleh guru dan staf*/I assign target that must be attained by teachers and staff).

Procedure

Researchers sent all questionnaires (i.e. EI scale, AM scale and leadership style scale) randomly to potential participants. In order to reach the potential participants, three research assistants distributed the questionnaires to 280 schools where each school led by

one school principal. Each school principal received one package of surveys containing three separate questionnaires and a letter from the principal investigator. The letter informed the principals that the study aimed to collect information about the principal's own experience. The researchers had complied with the ethical code standard, and the data were only treated confidentially and collectively.

Results and discussion

Results

The descriptive analysis yielded results for all variables in the study. The mean scores were 69 (SD = 6.93), 87 (SD = 8.36), 54 (SD = 4.42) and 63.16 (SD = 4.92) for motivation, EI, task orientation and relationship orientation, respectively.

A Pearson product-moment correlation revealed the relationship among EI, AM and two leadership style variables (i.e. the task orientation and relationship orientation). As can be seen in Table I, the relationship between EI and AM was found to be significant ($r = 0.55, p < 0.01$). EI and the two leadership styles also indicated a significant correlation. The correlation between EI and the task orientation ($r = 0.48, p < 0.01$) and the correlation between EI and the relationship orientation were both significantly positive ($r = 0.41, p < 0.01$). Moreover, the relationship between AM and two leadership styles was also significant. AM was found to be positively correlated with the task orientation ($r = 0.39, p < 0.01$) and the relationship orientation ($r = 0.26, p < 0.05$). Nevertheless, these two correlations were lower than the correlations among EI, the task orientation and the relationship orientation. The two leadership styles also indicated a significant positive correlation ($r = 0.53, p < 0.01$).

Table II revealed the results of hierarchical regression for participant's task orientation as the criterion. In Step 1, EI contributed significantly to the regression model ($\Delta F = 26.73, p < 0.001$) and accounted for 22 percent of the variance in the task orientation. In Step 2, the combination of EI and AM also yielded a significant contribution to the regression model ($\Delta F = 14.94, p < 0.001$). Additionally, Step 1 revealed significant β weight ($\beta = 0.25, p < 0.001$) for the model. However, after including AM in Step 2, it only added 2 percent of the variance to the regression model. Moreover, the AM variable did not contribute significant β weight ($\beta = 0.11, p > 0.05$) to the regression model. This first hierarchical

Table I.
Bivariate correlations among emotional intelligence, achievement motivation, task orientation and relationship orientation

Variable	1	2	3	4
1. Emotional intelligence	-	0.55**	0.48**	0.41**
2. Achievement motivation		-	0.39**	0.26*
3. Task orientation			-	0.53**
4. Relationship orientation				-

Notes: $n = 90$. * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$

Table II.
Hierarchical regression analysis summary for task orientation as a criterion

Variable	β	t	R	R^2	Adj. R^2	ΔR^2	ΔF
<i>Step 1</i>							
Emotional intelligence	0.25***	5.17***	0.48	0.23	0.22	0.23	26.73
<i>Step 2</i>							
Emotional intelligence	0.20**	3.45**	0.51	0.26	0.24	0.02	2.65
Achievement motivation	0.11	1.63					

Notes: $n = 90$. * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

regression analysis suggested that adding AM to the model did not contribute significant incremental value to the regression model. Thus, AM was not considered a variable that can contribute unique and significant variance to the participant's task orientation.

The second hierarchical regression for the relationship orientation as a criterion is described in Table III. In Step 1, EI contributes significantly to the regression model ($\Delta F = 18.01, p < 0.001$) where the model contributes 17 percent to the variance of relationship orientation. In contrast, Step 2 contributes non-significant amount of change ($\Delta F = 0.14, p > 0.05$) to the variance. Moreover, the EI yields significant β weight for Step 1 ($\beta = 0.24, p < 0.001$) and Step 2 ($\beta = 0.23, p < 0.01$) but not for AM ($\beta = 0.03, p > 0.10$). These results suggest that adding AM to the model contributes no incremental value. AM is not a significant predictor of the leader's relationship orientation. However, EI explains 17 percent variance in the leader's relationship orientation with significant β weight. The use of EI as a predictor is more effective than adding AM to the model.

Discussion

This study aimed to investigate the effect of EI and AM on two leadership styles: the task-orientation and relationship-orientation leadership. This study hypothesized that the Principals' EI significantly predicted their relationship orientation, while their AM significantly predicted their task-oriented approach. The results suggested that all variables were significantly correlated. However, the hierarchical regression analysis indicated that only EI significantly accounted for variance in both styles (task orientation and relationship orientation). AM did not add significant contribution to the model.

Based on the analysis, only the first hypothesis was supported. EI significantly predicted and added incremental values to the relationship-orientation and task-orientation style. In contrast, despite the significant relationship with both leadership styles, AM did not add any significant incremental values to predict the task orientation. Surprisingly, EI became a significant predictor for both task- and relationship-orientation style.

A number of studies found that the EI predicted a transformational leadership style (Alston *et al.*, 2010; Corona, 2010; Hur *et al.*, 2011). Further, in this study, EI also predicted the principals' task-orientation style. The role of emotion and relationship in the public sector is pervasive. The leader's EI did not only influence the relationship orientation but also affected the task orientation.

This study suggested that EI was an important predictor for the two major leadership categories. The results indicated that the school principals utilized their EI to lead with a relationship-orientation or task-orientation approach. EI may have acted as an important factor for cultivating a leader–follower relationship as well as becoming the factor for the task-orientation approach. The principal's EI influenced either or both the relationship orientation or task orientation.

Some studies have documented robust evidence that motivation predicted leadership performance (Corker and Donnellan, 2012; Caillier, 2014; Brandmo *et al.*, 2014). However, motivation toward goal attainment or task completion could not predict a particular

Variable	β	t	R	R^2	Adj. R^2	ΔR^2	ΔF
<i>Step 1</i>							
Emotional intelligence	0.24***	4.24***	0.41	0.17	0.16	0.17	18.01
<i>Step 2</i>							
Emotional intelligence	0.23**	3.31**	0.41	0.17	0.15	0.01	0.14
Achievement motivation	0.03	0.371					

Notes: $n = 90$. * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

Table III. Hierarchical regression analysis summary for relationship orientation as a criterion

leadership style. This study did not find evidence that high AM could lead to task-orientation style. The principals possibly utilized a more task-orientation approach to achieve greater performance. Unfortunately, there was no clear evidence whether or not AM caused the leader task orientation.

The school principal plays important roles in bringing success to school, students and teachers. Like other leaders in private organisations, a principal also prone to display one dominant leadership approach. However, a single leadership approach may not be sufficient for effective school leadership (Day *et al.*, 2016; Marks and Printy, 2003). In this study, it appeared that EI should be fostered and utilized properly to improve principal's effective leadership style. School teachers (followers) possibly perceived effective task- or relationship-oriented leadership if the principal approached them with high EI. EI could also have facilitated integration between two or more leadership styles as suggested by Day *et al.* (2016) and Marks and Printy (2003). Thus, EI became an important aspect of school leadership practices. Further, this claim needs future investigation.

Regardless of the significant contribution of EI and the weak effect of AM, the results should be interpreted with caution. This study did not investigate the effect of EI and AM on the leaders' performance. Researchers only analyzed the influence of the independent variables on the leadership approach and should not be considered as the principal's performance.

Conclusions

This study found that EI significantly predicted school principals' task- and relationship-orientation leadership. In contrast, AM did not add any incremental values to both leadership styles. This finding suggested that EI was a significant predictor and added incremental value to the principals' leadership styles at schools. In contrast, no significant effects of AM on both leadership styles were found.

Limitations and future research directions

In this study, the scales were designed to specifically capture the school principal's leadership styles (i.e. the task- and relationship-orientation style). Albeit all the measures reached the acceptable psychometric standard, further investigation is encouraged to improve the psychometric property of the scales. Therefore, future studies should advance the validity and reliability of the scales.

Second, this study paid less, if any, attention to the effect of the independent variables on the school principal's performances. Future studies should also focus on the effect of emotion and motivation on instructional leadership performance. Moreover, the mediating variables that strengthen the relationship between emotion (or motivation) and leadership performance should be investigated. Some variables such as gender, organizational climate, and prior experience could have mediated the relationship among variables.

Finally, although this study employed random sampling and recruited 90 participants, the generalization of this study should be made with caution. All participants were school principals who mostly lived in the same remote area. The future studies should also consider this issue, whether or not culture or values mediate the relationship between emotion (or motivation) and leadership styles (or performance).

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