Dynamics of Emotional Intelligence and Empowerment: The Perspectives of Middle Managers

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Abstract
This study examines employee perspectives of leader behavior to better understand how these perspectives influence and shape employee work experiences. Creating empowering work environments in today’s workplace is an ongoing challenge for leaders and managers. Research has shown that leaders who work to build interpersonal relationships with workplace subordinates are using emotional intelligence (EI) to lead individuals to work more effectively, and thereby increase overall job satisfaction. We employed a qualitative descriptive design using in-depth interviews to elicit and explore managers’ perceptions of their leader’s behaviors and their own sense of empowerment in the workplace. We present the findings within two major categories: perception of leader’s behavior and feelings of empowerment. This study adds to the body of evidence that demonstrates how the use of leadership skills that focus on the EI construct is necessary to build relationships and empower employees, thus creating conditions for creativity in the workplace.

Keywords
emotional intelligence, empowerment, leadership, engagement, management style

Introduction
Significant investments are made in resources and effort to attract, select, and retain leaders in business organizations. In a work environment restrained by financial constraints and organizational changes, leaders and managers are responsible and remain accountable for the organization’s success (Yukl, 2013). There is an ongoing need to identify organizational factors that best promote positive employee attitudes and behaviors and positive organizational performance (Albrecht & Andreetta, 2011). Leader behaviors have been found to influence employees’ abilities to meet and exceed employers’ expectations in accomplishing organizational goals (Cummings, 2004; Heckemann et al., 2015). In general, job performance is a result of organizational behavior and is critical to an organization’s success (Brady Germain & Cummings, 2010; Yukl, 2013). Attitudes and behaviors of the executive in an organization play a dominant role as they interact and lead subordinates in the workplace.

Empowering Leadership
Exacerbated by the acknowledged difficulties in responding to turbulent change and complexities in the workplace (Ceja & Navarro, 2011), it has been suggested there should be an even greater focus on the interpersonal nature of leadership and managerial behavior in the workplace. Interest in empowerment has increased over the years as organizations move to flatter organizational structures and fewer levels of management. Positive work relations with others are important in the context of change in the workplace (Kotter, 1995; Yukl, 2013). Leaders are responsible for creating an environment in which employees are able to respond and adapt effectively to the demands of an ever-changing business environment (Fowlie & Wood, 2009; Greasley et al., 2008; Koskinen & Lamsa, 2016). Leaders who focus on relationship management enable individuals to deal more effectively to challenges in the workplace and be more productive (Deutschman, 2007; Fowlie & Wood, 2009; Kotter, 1995). Leaders have the ability to influence employees and facilitate thoughts and actions that lead to the achievement of organizational goals and positive outcomes. Empowering

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leadership originates from high-involvement management research (Lawler et al., 1992; Wood & De Menezes, 2011) and emphasizes the importance of leaders motivating and enabling employees to lead themselves (Manz & Sims, 1987).

**Employee Empowerment**

The concept of empowerment can be understood by drawing upon approaches in organizational and social psychological theory (Bradbury-Jones et al., 2008; Casey et al., 2010). Significant research from an organizational perspective has been based on the work of Kanter (1995) suggesting that the leader’s characteristics influence access to opportunity, resources, information, and support by providing employees with the power to accomplish tasks. According to Kanter (1995), employees who enjoy the information necessary to carry out their jobs, resources in the form of rewards, support in the form of feedback from their superiors and peers, and the opportunity to develop their knowledge and skill in their work setting are empowered and able to accomplish organizational goals. Research in health care shows that empowerment plays a significant role in increasing employee job satisfaction (Wong & Laschinger, 2013). For example, an organizational framework has been drawn on to examine nurses’ work life and performance, revealing that leaders’ characteristics and competencies play a pivotal role in creating empowering work environments (Greco et al., 2006) and relationships with supervisors were important to job satisfaction (Laschinger & Finegan, 2005).

Empowerment research has focused primarily on the individual within organizations and reveals that empowered employees take the initiative to respond autonomously to job-related challenges with the encouragement and support of management (Raub & Robert, 2010). From a social psychological perspective, Spreitzer (1995) developed a four-dimensional scale in an attempt to measure the four cognitive domains comprising empowerment: *meaning* (the fit between a given activity and one’s belief, attitudes, values, and behaviors), *competence* (belief in one’s capability to perform a task), *impact* (individual’s belief that he or she can influence organizational outcomes), and *self-determination* (sense of control over how one carries out his or her job). All four cognitions are required to capture the full essence of empowerment. Psychological empowerment is a process beginning with the interaction of the work context and personality characteristics shaping empowerment conditions, which in turn motivate individual behavior (Spreitzer, 1995). Leaders can influence positive empowerment processes to create a favorable work climate.

**Emotional Intelligent Leadership**

Among various leadership theories, the concept of emotional intelligent leadership (Cummings et al., 2005; Heckemann et al., 2015) has received considerable attention. Emotional intelligence (EI) is defined as an individual’s ability to manage themselves and their relationships effectively (Goleman, 1998b), and the capacity to learn EI and enhance work performance over time (Freshman & Rubino, 2002; Goleman, 1998a). Goleman et al. (2002) argued that EI consists of four dimensions that are integrated into a individual’s personality: *self-awareness* (the ability to understand and accurately self-assess one’s feelings), *self-management* (the ability to manage internal states, impulses, and resources), *social awareness* (the ability to read people and groups accurately), and *relationship management* (the ability to interact with others constructively to achieve a positive outcome). According to this model, EI abilities range on a continuum of the recognition of emotions to the management of emotions (Mayer & Salovey, 1997).

The above discussion was aimed to integrate lines of theoretical and empirical research that influence and shape employee work experiences. Many business experts consider EI necessary for effective leadership and work performance because emotions affect organizational behavior (Ashkanasy & Daus, 2005; Conte, 2005; Goleman et al., 2002; O’Boyle et al., 2011; Prufeta, 2017; Samad, 2009). There is a link between leader behaviors, a key component of EI, and the ability of employees to respond positively to challenges in the workplace; this pattern is vital to employee engagement, affective commitment leading to job satisfaction, improved performance, and job satisfaction (Albrecht & Andreetta, 2011; Laschinger & Fida, 2015). An employee’s perceptions and abilities to shape his or her work role are foundational to promoting change through collective action. The capacity for employees to exercise control over their work lives can lead to positive and productive forms of power that enhance their sense of empowerment (Udod, 2012). EI with its emphasis on empowerment through the management of emotions appears to be a complementary tool to support effective leadership. Consistent with positive employee attitudes and behavior for organizational performance, there is limited research on employee perceptions of empowerment, especially from a qualitative paradigm. This study examines employee perspectives of leader behavior to better understand how these perspectives influence and shape employee work experiences. Therefore, the objectives of the current study included the following: (a) to explore the workplace situations influencing employee’s perceptions of leaders’ behavior and (b) to explore the situations around employees’ perceptions of feelings of empowerment in the workplace.

**Method**

A descriptive qualitative design was used to gain a comprehensive understanding of everyday work experiences (Sandelowski, 2000). The purpose of the study sought to discover the work-related perceptions of participants, and qualitative approaches are an ideal and appropriate method to
understand the daily experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2014). By employing a qualitative design, we were able to obtain information-rich data that probed the employee perspectives of leader behavior related to their perceived empowerment in their current work role and situation. The institutional review board at a large university in Western Canada approved the study. Ethics approval was also obtained from the organization as well as administrative approval.

Sample Recruitment

Using purposeful sampling, we recruited mid-level managers who reported directly to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of a large nonprofit service organization in rural Western Canada consisting of a network of stores and services. Purposeful sampling involves selecting cases that can provide the most in-depth information about the phenomenon (Patton, 2015). We identified 15 potential participants at one organization who met the inclusion criteria: (a) manager subordinate to the CEO, and responsible for at least one lower level frontline manager and (b) at least 1 year of managerial experience. All 15 individuals were sent an invitation letter via email from the research assistant who detailed the purpose of the study, guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality, and invited those interested to contact the research assistant. Individuals who agreed to participate received printed information about the study. Five individuals agreed to participate in this study (33%). They provided written informed consent to participate in the study.

The participants worked in various departments of the organization in a rural context and had varied knowledge and experiences as mid-level managers. Participants’ ages ranged from 31 to 60 years. The amount of time in the current organization varied from 1.5 to 14 years (M = 10 years). The length of time in their current managerial role also varied from 1.5 to 22 years (M = 9 years). Participants were responsible for as few as five employees to as many as 230. No work-related incentive was offered for participating in the study and the voluntary and confidential nature of the study was emphasized. Each participant was assigned a numerical identifier to maintain confidentiality.

Data Collection

In constructing the interview schedule, we relied on existing literature on EI and workplace empowerment to encourage an open dialogue that explored the experiences of participants. A trained research assistant conducted face-to-face, individual, semi-structured interviews. Each interview lasted approximately 45 min. Participants were invited to share examples of interactions with their own senior manager and other leaders in the organization who they perceived to be effective and empowering. During the interview, participants were asked broad questions focusing on workplace issues such as leader’s behavior, work relations, leadership practices, and support received from managers. Some of the interview questions included the following: Do you find your manager is aware of his or her own emotional responses as they come up in the workplace? Is your manager aware of the emotions of colleagues as s/he interacts with them? What kind of input do you provide to your manager? What is his or her response? Tell me about how the policies and practices in your workplace affect your ability to carry out your work?

Data Analysis

Interviews were digitally recoded and transcribed verbatim. Each transcript was read and reread to understand the meaning of the phenomenon. Content analysis was used to identify, organize, and categorize the content of narrative text to describe meaning of participants’ experiences (Cho & Lee, 2014; Patton, 2015). The research team developed a coding scheme based on the two major categories explored in the interviews: employee perceptions of leader behavior in the workplace and employee perceptions of feeling empowered in the workplace. An initial set of codes was developed based on patterns to identify core meanings (Patton, 2015). Analysis consisted of concurrent data generation and analysis and constant comparison of data. Constant comparison of data occurred across the data set both within and between transcripts to identify codes. The codes were labeled and operationally defined to clarify meaning. To allow for a deeper understanding of the codes, we then reorganized the codes according to patterns, developed categories which then related to emergent themes. Transcripts were analyzed using post-it notes in different colors to code data segments deemed relevant to emerging concepts and ideas. Preliminary themes identified early in the analyses guided the probes used in subsequent interviews to follow up and explore common themes. Additional interpretive analysis resulted in refining the categories and themes.

To ensure rigor in the analysis process and produce trustworthy results, various quality enhancement strategies were employed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility was established through writing memos, and negotiation of the analyses among team members. Dependability and confirmability involved verbatim transcription and the use of an audit trail that outlined the development of emerging themes.

Results

We present the analytic themes under the two major categories of content: perception of leader’s behavior and feelings of empowerment (Figure 1).

Perceptions of Leader Behavior

Participants spoke in specific terms about their perceptions of the leader or general manager’s personal and social
competence, and how that leader’s behavior influenced their functioning in the workplace. The following behavioral characteristics of leaders and/or senior managers were identified: self-managing emotions and the capacity to build interpersonal bonds with employees.

**Self-managing emotions.** Participants expressed direct opinions about their manager’s capacity to manage his or her own emotions to consistently achieve a positive outcome. Their comments indicated the complexity and sophistication of emotional awareness in organizations today. Participants clearly valued leaders who could self-regulate their emotions during interactions. A participant described a leader in the organization with this emotional stability:

There’s no ups and downs in his emotions. He’s not coming in angry one day and throwing things around and the next day he’s all flowery. I mean everybody can pretty much read him and know what to expect, what they’re going to get, which is a fairly calm . . . professional, well-balanced individual. (P02)

At the same time, another participant discussed how the leader-manager reacted authentically to stressful situations in the workplace, and as such, the participant appeared to empathize with his superior. “He is a human, he has some real good days and has some real bad days when he’s stressed and he’s got deadlines like all of us.” (P04)

Participants spoke frankly about the capacity of their manager to identify emotions, moods, and impulses as they occurred in the workplace and explained how these feelings influenced them. A participant discussed how much they admired their manager for being open to professional and self-development as manifested by his enrollment in leadership courses:

He’s very open to do things like [leader training] that and he’s not bashful about saying, “hey I was weak in this area.” I’m going to start doing it this way in order to bring out my strengths . . . he’s willing to try new things . . . He is open to changing who he is and becoming a better leader. It’s amazing. (P02)

Another participant concurred with the notion of openness and self-knowledge as important leader qualities stating: “I think he does a pretty good job of being self-aware . . . I guess it shows to a degree when we’re dealing with situations that involve areas of responsibility.” (P05)

Overall, participants valued a leader who was open, willing to self-disclose, and indicated interest in self-improvement. They also valued a leader who could recognize moods and issues in the work culture in general. Participants lauded managers who were able to identify employees’ emotions during social interactions and could respond in a personable and empathetic manner. These behaviors were construed as facilitating the senior manager’s ability to nurture work relationships with employees. A participant shared a memory of her manager’s capacity for empathy: “I can relate a story where someone’s lost a loved one, and he is a very compassionate man. He’ll pull the door open and business stops.” (P04) Another participant emphasized the balance leaders require to allow a degree of emotional expressiveness in the workplace, but to also put boundaries on employees who blur personal and professional conduct:

**Figure 1.** Leader’s emotionally intelligent behavior and workplace empowerment.
It depends too, like I think too if somebody comes in and they’re upset about something, if it’s, if it’s um legitimate, but if it’s somebody that’s kind of going way off on a tangent and freaking out about something like I think he’ll change the way he’ll react—he’ll maybe be a little bit stronger in his responses and guidance towards that. And maybe more, just kind of let them vent and then just kind of say OK, well that’s enough now, you know? (P03)

We interpreted these comments as evidence for how participants could discriminate between emotional self-regulation and the value and tolerance for leaders’ authentic expressiveness at times.

Building bonds. Successful senior managers were described as employing a variety of strategies to constructively manage interactions with employees and achieve positive outcomes. Participants generated examples of skilled leadership such as being visible, accessible, and flexible, which they perceived as a way to build harmony with others and nurture a positive workplace culture. A participant discussed how her or his manager recognized the need to communicate and interact differently with diverse groups of people and situations:

He is in every department at least once a day to see how it’s going—which is great because if you have a question or whatever, you know, you don’t have to chase him down, eventually he’s going to be coming by so that’s great. (P01)

Several participants noted their manager’s willingness to be visible and accessible in the organization, proactively checking to see how staff was doing and how operations were proceeding. This strategy facilitated the senior manager’s ability to get to know his employees, and allowed his staff to get to know him, perhaps decreasing the power relations between the senior manager and subordinates. A participant shared her appreciation for an approachable manager saying, “We interact an awful lot—we have coffee together twice a day . . . He’s very easy to talk to. And he’s very easy to go with different suggestions or ideas. And he has a very open-door policy.” (P05) Another participant expressed similar sentiments about the value of senior managers who cultivated interpersonal relationships with employees:

He always makes the effort at least once a week to pop in, sit down and say, so how’s your week going? . . . He does a time strategy for himself where he is out of his office, so much everyday and he’s on the floor, in the department, chatting up our employees just to see what’s going on . . . he gets to know who they [are], how many kids they’ve got, what’s going on. (P02)

Empowerment in the Workplace

Participants perceived the following aspects of their role and workplace environment to contribute to a sense of empowerment: sharing power, valuing others, giving free reign, catalyzing change, and being mentored.

Sharing power. When superiors were perceived to share information, knowledge, and support, participants talked about how they experienced the ability to accomplish their work more easily. In many ways, these features of the workplace were the direct result of the manager sharing power, and participants described themselves as feeling motivated and positively contributing to the workplace with this style of leadership. A participant explained:

You know, during the year I can get myself to conferences or seminars that are within my area. All I got to do is run it past [leader] and the expenditure would be approved. So that support is there. (P02)

A participant spoke enthusiastically about modeling this style of management herself:

You need to be able to justify your decisions . . . I think people really appreciate that openness because they feel involved. Or even ask their opinion you know about this . . . why I’m thinking this way and why I want to make this decision. You know kind of involve them in that, make them feel engaged and just be fair and open. (P03)

There was a sense that managers felt motivated to be creative and use their energies to enhance workplace productivity.

Valuing others. The importance of respect and trust from a superior who appreciated an employee’s skills, knowledge, and role in the organization was critical for participants. When participants felt they were an important contributing member of the team, they suggested they felt motivated and empowered to improve their job performance. Feeling valued bestowed participants with a sense of ownership and meaning in their work. A participant noted this characteristic of an empowered workplace:

Well I think it’s pretty simple—pretty basic. People like to feel that they’re important to the organization. I see many cases where the managers don’t delegate any responsibility. The managers in our organization that have staff that are the most empowered and feel the best about their jobs are the managers who let the staff do their job. (P02)

Some of the effective strategies that participants said resulted in feeling valued included senior managers who shared information with them, provided them with access to supports and resources to do their work, and built relationships with staff. When these kinds of events characterized the workplace, a participant said, “our staff feel they are empowered and engaged, and then, that’s when things really start to happen.” (P02) Another participant showed the importance of feeling valued in the face of adversity and workplace challenges, not merely when outcomes flowed. She recalled how the senior manager responded:
calculated risks, as one participant explained, it’s even pride in working, it’s ... even a bad day when things haven’t gone all right, it’s— you still feel proud that you’ve at least tried. You gave it your best. He acknowledges the fact that it’s your best. (P04)

Giving free reign. The senior managers who provided autonomy to capitalize on participants’ ideas and abilities were perceived to be creating satisfying and rewarding work experiences for themselves and their staff. All participants felt they had influence over their work, but the amount and way in which they were able to express creativity and innovation varied. A participant noted how a senior manager expressed confidence in employees’ abilities to perform at a higher level and facilitated their ability to make autonomous decisions: “We have leeway, freedom to succeed, he is open to suggestions, and I can do whatever I want.” (P01)

Another participant expressed the outcome of autonomy as “the freedom to use our imagination” (P02), and “it’s amazing how much more you can put on yourself when you’re asked, instead of being told to do things.” (P04)

Catalyzing change. Across the interviews, participants narrated the importance of senior managers who had the ability to motivate and encourage employees to make workplace improvements, coaching them to maximize their full potential. Some senior managers were perceived to inspire creativity and innovation and even encouraged participants to take calculated risks, as one participant explained,

He motivates quietly, challenging us with different ideas. It’s that kind of attitude that’s been here for the last probably 10 years, and that has taken us to where we are. I mean, we’ve gone from ... $30 million in gross annual sales to over $75 million. (P02)

Another participant expressed how he was coached by the senior manager to support his team:

We set the bar pretty high for ourselves—we just made a new mission statement, I don’t know if I have it in here yet, and it said “we are committed to providing excellence in service” and then we went on further to define what excellent service was. That means when we fix something once, it’s done. (P04)

Being mentored. Under the guidance of the senior manager, the opportunity to experience a mentoring relationship provided a nurturing foundation between the more experienced manager and the participants. Mentoring was described as being coached, promoting growth, and contributing to skill development within the organization. A participant stated,

We would walk into the room and the chairman will say “you’re chairing the meeting today”... some people just cannot chair a meeting without being terribly nervous. Others have no problem. But by the end of this year we had taken turns often enough that everybody was comfortable chairing a meeting and I think that is really going to pull people together. . . (P02)

Participants described mentoring from a senior manager as a tool to create a supportive learning and work culture. Employees considered an effective manager as a role model, consistently ready to give his best to help participants become successful.

Working alongside them, knowing when to delegate and when to let them, you know, I’m not here to do their job either, you know, that’s what they get paid for. But at the same time, working with them, realizing that, you know, if they don’t have the tools, they’re not going to get the results that I want or that they want to feel good about. (P01)

Discussion

The results of the current study extend previous research findings by pointing toward leader’s emotionally intelligent behavior as significantly influencing middle managers’ sense of empowerment in the context of a large nonprofit service organization in a rural context.

Our findings suggest that an empowering leadership style aligns with a leader’s self-management of emotions, social awareness, and a focus on relationship management. In addition, managers who perceived their CEO to be self-aware in the decision-making process and manage interactions felt their work setting provided access to sources of structural empowerment (information, resources, and support) which in turn provided them with more autonomy in their work. These findings support previous research that has shown when leaders demonstrate highly developed relationship management skills, employees experience a higher propensity to stay engaged in the organization, which decreases employee turnover (Akerjordet & Severinsson, 2008; Heckemann et al., 2015). Importantly, the results provide evidence that the components of empowering leadership may explain the influence that leadership exerts on important outcomes such as turnover intentions. This is an important finding because managers’ appraisal of empowerment will influence the degree to which employees feel motivated and engaged, leading to a sense of belonging and connection in the organization and therefore less likely to leave their position (Laschinger & Fida, 2015).

It has been argued that a leader’s beliefs, values, and interpersonal competencies are of critical importance to the overall style of leadership they adopt (Bulmer-Smith et al., 2009). To understand emotional processes and deal with them effectively, a leader needs to possess self-awareness and self-regulation, hallmarks of EI. In the current study, EI leaders who were approachable, encouraging, visible, and engaged in face-to-face communication were able to achieve
These findings mirror previous research in which empathy and social skills have been identified as integral to a leader’s ability to understand the emotions, feelings, and needs of others in their workplace and manage positive and negative emotions in themselves to achieve desirable goals (Cote, 2017; Polychroniou, 2009).

An organizational leader serves to motivate employees toward collective action and facilitates supportive relationships among team members. The results of this study suggest that leadership has the capacity to positively influence team empowerment, an important element in affecting proactive behavior (Hanaysha, 2016). Leaders with a high level of EI can set clear direction and purpose for followers and establish an environment of mutual trust and respect in which employees value team membership (Avolio & Yammarino, 2013; Hanaysha, 2016). Most significantly, this type of leader is able to facilitate cooperative team behaviors, especially during challenging periods of major restructuring, and engage these individuals by valuing them and providing the autonomy they require. Therefore, when participants perceived the leader to have an empowering and emotionally intelligent style, they also reported feeling motivated, inspired, and engaged to perform in their jobs. In a work environment where social exchanges are prevalent and interdependent, investing time in relationships promotes teamwork and collaboration and can decrease conflict (Almost et al., 2016). Nurturing positive relations can result in high levels of engagement in the creative process and create higher quality relationships.

Results of this study provide support for Kanter’s (1995) structural empowerment theory which is a fundamental managerial activity. Specifically, the theory highlights the importance of a leader’s behavior as foundational to shaping and enhancing work experiences and employees’ work life. The results also suggest that when employees have access to empowering work structures, they are more likely to report their leader demonstrated an EI leadership style, and feel more motivated to get things done and achieve work goals. Seminal work by Conger and Kanungo (1988) referred to the most important features of empowerment with terms such as decision-making, influence, acceptance of responsibility, control, and willingness to actively engage in the workplace. It is interesting that empowerment among the participants in our study characterized empowerment with reference to shared decision-making and autonomy, but also to the notion of being valued and mentored. Evidence has suggested there are significant linkages between empowering leadership and employee engagement (Ahmad et al., 2005; Zhang & Bartol, 2010). Empowered employees have a greater sense of job satisfaction, motivation, and organizational commitment (Laschinger & Fida, 2015; Spreitzer et al., 1997); productivity (Koberg et al., 1999); and employee effectiveness (Spreitzer et al., 1997; Zhang & Bartol, 2010). To achieve these goals, contemporary organizations may benefit by focusing on employees’ motivation and empowerment strategies from supervisors. In this way, employees experience trust and satisfaction critical for team and organizational effectiveness.

There are several implications for this study. First, the study contributed to enhancing our understanding of the linkages among EI and empowerment. The relationship between leaders’ emotions and meeting the emotional needs of subordinates affected their ability to create conditions for a quality workplace. Accordingly, identifying the EI attributes of leaders may create a culture of change that emotionally affects subordinates to do more than would normally be expected, especially in a climate of organizational change. Scholars have suggested EI leaders can more effectively navigate the environment and can motivate and activate positive emotions in others to support creativity in the workplace (Carmeli et al., 2014, Jafri et al., 2016). A manager who is in a positive emotional state is in a better position to promote divergent thinking and evaluate various options using their cognitive processes to facilitate creative ideas. In an era of constant change, creative employees may be able to adapt to changing situations more easily. Focusing on an unrepresented leadership phenomenon such as creativity may push research to make further important contributions to this line of inquiry and may be especially valuable in navigating organizational changes.

Second, providing leaders with training and development programs that may include employee self-assessments, reflection, and mentorship opportunities to enhance EI can have a positive impact on organizational outcomes, and ultimately affect employee engagement and intent to stay. Moreover, the provision of empowerment strategies and enhancing employee cognitions about the meaning of work can also promote engagement and decrease turnover intentions in workplace contexts, especially important in a rural context where recruitment is an issue. Third, talent management may also be positively affected. Leaders need to consider and access EI abilities in the process of recruitment and talent management (Al Ariss et al., 2014; Prufeta, 2017). Formal testing and specific questions related to EI could be conducted prior to hiring. Including formal EI training in orientation could decrease time spent in the onboarding process. Senior leaders could also provide frequent coaching for novice leaders to develop and maintain proficient levels of EI (Prufeta, 2017). Ongoing coaching support may be beneficial, especially to those feeling stressed or overwhelmed by challenging workplace situations.

**Conclusion**

The findings in this study suggest an employee’s perceptions and evaluations of leader behaviors are strongly connected to workplace empowerment. Our findings show that manager’s perceptions are important to their engagement and illustrate how EI and workplace empowerment influence.
the CEO–manager relationship. Given the emphasis on understanding the motivational dimension of employee work attitudes, any positive feelings created by leaders who exhibit positive relationship management are likely to be more productive. This can be achieved when leaders value and respect an employee’s opinions, abilities, personal emotions, and character. Feelings of empowerment were a direct result of the support and autonomy given by the leader and a work environment conducive to the employee’s career growth and development. Promoting the development of human capital is a key to staying competitive, especially in the current context of organizational change.

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