

# Teachers' Perceptions of Their Principals' Interpersonal Emotionally Intelligent Behaviours Affecting Their Job Satisfaction

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**Abstract**—For schools to be desirable places in which to work, it is necessary for principals to recognise their teachers' emotions, and be sensitive to their needs. This necessitates that principals are capable to correctly identify their emotionally intelligent behaviours (EIBs) they need to use in order to be successful leaders. They also need to have knowledge of their emotional intelligence and be able to identify the factors and situations that evoke emotion at an interpersonal level. If a principal is able to do this, then the control and understanding of emotions and behaviours of oneself and others could improve vastly. This study focuses on the interpersonal EIBS of principals affecting the job satisfaction of teachers. The correlation coefficients in this quantitative study strongly indicate that there is a statistical significance between the respondents' level of job satisfaction, the rating of their principals' EIBs and how they believe their principals' EIBs will affect their sense of job satisfaction. It can be concluded from the data obtained in this study that there is a significant correlation between the sense of job satisfaction of teachers and their principals' interpersonal EIBs. This means that the more satisfied a teacher is at school, the more appropriate and meaningful a principal's EIBs will be. Conversely, the more dissatisfied a teacher is at school the less appropriate and less meaningful a principal's interpersonal EIBs will be. This implies that the leaders' EIBs can be construed as one of the major factors affecting the job satisfaction of employees.

**Keywords**—Emotional intelligence, teachers' emotions, teachers' job satisfaction, principals' emotionally intelligent behaviours.

## I. INTRODUCTION

SCHOOL principals' demonstration of emotionally intelligent behaviours (EIBs) in their interpersonal relationships with their staff evokes the importance of principals to develop their emotional intelligence (EI), in addition to their cognitive intelligence (IQ). A definition of EI offered by [1] refers to the ability to *tune into* one's own and others' emotions, identify and understand them, and then take appropriate action which, according to [1], may also be referred to as advanced common sense. EI is regarded as a major predictor of leadership success and is described by [2] as that which differentiates exceptional performance from mediocre performance. It is a form of intelligence that comprises a set of non-cognitive abilities in the affective domain that influences one's ability to perceive or sense and understand the emotions of others (interpersonal or social EI)

or to identify and manage one's own emotions (intrapersonal or personal EI) in a manner that elicits appropriate responses and behaviour. It works synergistically with IQ rather than separate from it [3]. It can be measured, learned, and developed. It is regarded as a powerful motivational tool, as it inspires confidence and trust in leaders who demonstrate high levels of EI [4], [5].

In order for schools to be more desirable places in which to work, it is necessary for principals to recognise their teachers' emotions, and be sensitive to their needs. This necessitates that principals are able to correctly identify their EIBs they need to use, in order to be successful leaders [6]. They also need to have knowledge of their own capabilities and limitations and be able to identify the factors and situations that evoke emotion at an interpersonal level. If a principal is able to do this, then as [6] states, the control and understanding of emotions and behaviours of oneself and others could improve vastly. The principals' ability to understand, identify and empathise with their teachers' emotions, and then react appropriately are, according to [7], integral factors which could help foster a feeling of job satisfaction amongst employees in their workplace: *Those who are emotionally intelligent can connect with people quite smoothly, be astute in reading their reactions and feelings, lead and organise, and handle disputes that are bound to flare up. They are the natural leaders, the people who can express the unspoken collective sentiment and articulate it so as to guide a group towards its goals. They are emotionally nourishing – they leave people in a good mood.*

EIBs refer to those observable actions and reactions that determine one's level of EI or as [6] suggests; the level of EI determines the potential for learning the practical skills that create emotional competencies or EIBs. If there is a link between the EIBs of a principal and a teacher's sense of job satisfaction, then a principal's leadership qualities and observable EIBs could influence a teacher's attainment of job satisfaction. EIBs are EI actions or reactions that can be observed and measured by others [4]. They can be regarded as either being appropriate or inappropriate. They comprise a number of characteristics that make them identifiable as manifestations of EI and are important measures of a leader's ability to handle others and themselves in a manner that is regarded as compassionate, sensitive, and appropriate. They are observed in the interpersonal domain as indicative of the appropriateness of a leader's response and subsequent actions

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to the emotional signals emanating from others within a specific environment [5].

The ability of principals to recognise interpersonal emotions and then react appropriately will depend to a large degree on their own level of compassion [7]. Reference [8] states that compassion is described as empathy combined with insight. It is the ability to be sensitive to people's emotions on the one hand, and acknowledging that people need sensitive treatment from time to time, on the other. According to [8], people with high levels of EI have a strong sense of compassion that nurtures people and their organisations. The success of organisational effectiveness, therefore, is greatly enhanced through the leaders' use of emotionally intelligent techniques and measures such as compassion and trust [9]. These emotionally intelligent techniques are reflected in the EIBs of principals and are referred to by [6] as emotional competencies. Principals may either enhance or retard a teacher's sense of job satisfaction, depending on the appropriateness of their interpersonal EIBs. If EI is the distinguishing factor between great leaders and average leaders, as [10] suggest, then the appropriateness of principals' interpersonal EIBs should correlate with the success, efficiency, and levels of job satisfaction of teachers at schools.

Apart from their own increasing administrative demands that need to be met, principals also need to guide their teachers through the turbulent process of curriculum transformation, development and change. They need to remain sensitive to their teachers' needs and in control of their own emotional behaviours. The principals' demonstration of interpersonal EIBs therefore could be critical to the enhancement of teachers' job satisfaction regardless of the inequalities that may exist, and the uncertainties that may lie ahead [11]. The interpersonal EIBs of a principal must transform the work ethics and consequently, the job satisfaction level amongst teachers at a school [5]. This should result in a positive work ethic which would increase the potential for optimum levels of organisational effectiveness to be achieved, and consequently, this would create a climate of effective teaching and learning [4]. Hence, the focus of this study is on teachers' perceptions of their principals' interpersonal EIBs affecting their job satisfaction [4], [5].

## II. LEADERS' EMOTIONAL COMPETENCIES

One's EI will determine the appropriateness of one's EIBs which are regarded by [12] as an array of non-cognitive capabilities, competencies and skills that influence one's ability to succeed in coping with environmental demands and pressures. Consequently, the level of emotional behaviour demonstrated determines one's emotional competencies which [6] defines as those learned capabilities based on EI that are evident in outstanding performances at work. This is further highlighted by [12] in the following definition of EI: *Emotional and social intelligence is a multi-factorial array of interrelated emotional, personal and social abilities that*

*influence our overall ability, to actively and effectively cope with daily demands and pressures.*

According to [7], EI is almost wholly responsible for the superior performance in leadership roles and when one is asked to consider what makes memorable leaders so special, one's response may correspond with one's level of EI. Such leaders, [7] claims, may be described as showing emotional competence because of their ability to utilise their EI effectively. There is a clear distinction made by [6] between EI and emotional competence, which is clearly evident in the following definition: *Emotional competence is a learned capability based on emotional intelligence that results in outstanding performance at work.* In other words, EI determines the potential we have for learning the interpersonal skills linked to EI, and our emotional competence indicates how much of that potential has been translated into capabilities that we need while we are on the job [6]. Productivity could be more than doubled if employees' needs were consistently met as they would be more satisfied in the workplace and, therefore, should be more willing to give of their best [6]. The extent to which one is able to identify and meet others' needs is a significant characteristic of one's EI. As aptly pointed out by [13], the more emotionally competent principals become, the more they will be able to engage with, and make full use of the strengths of the human resources at their disposal.

Reference [14] states that there is a close similarity between EI and social intelligence, and they suggest that the two concepts should be regarded as being synonymous and referred to as *emotional and social intelligence*, and that the definitions for both should be combined into the following basic competencies or abilities:

- The ability to understand and express emotions constructively;
- The ability to understand others' feelings and establish cooperative interpersonal relationships;
- The ability to manage and regulate emotions in an effective manner;
- The ability to cope realistically with new situations and to solve problems of a personal and interpersonal nature as they arise; and
- The ability to be sufficiently optimistic, positive and self-motivated in order to set and achieve goals.

These are not innate competencies, and according to [14], they can be learned. When the basic competencies are put into practice and when they are improved upon, then [7] notes that people become more emotionally intelligent and more emotionally competent than they were previously. People with established emotional competencies, according to [15], have a mature sense of self-awareness, are able to control their impulses, are self-motivated, they display empathy towards others, and have social deftness. These competencies could translate into opportunities for creating job satisfaction and overall performance effectiveness [15]. For the purpose of this study on EIBs, as described in this paper, the definition of EIB combines the main criteria listed by [6], [9], [12], [16], [17]:

*EIB is an expression of the ability of the principals to recognise, understand and regulate emotional behaviour on an interpersonal (social) and intrapersonal (personal) level. It involves their ability to monitor and guide thinking and feeling through the understanding, development and management of emotional competencies in order to achieve desired optimum results in the school and a sense of job satisfaction amongst teachers.*

### III. JOB SATISFACTION OF TEACHERS

According to [18], of all the problems and hurdles facing education, poor leadership is identified as the prime cause of low teacher morale, but teachers believe that their low morale can be improved if principals offer emotional support by showing teachers trust and respect, instrumental support when they ask for help, informational support by removing ambiguities, and by giving them more praise. Principals, therefore, need to adopt a leadership style that, as [18] suggests, is conducive to the establishment of a collegial environment in order to encourage teachers to become more motivated. The school principal is not only required to lead teachers through a period of change, but is also a catalyst for ensuring that teachers are happy at work. In order to achieve this, [19] suggests that school principals need to understand the emotional stress that they, and teachers, could face as they try and cope with the enormity of the challenges that curriculum changes bring about. According to [20], principals need to understand empathetically what the fears and needs of teachers are, and where their strengths and weaknesses lie. They need to comprehend that teachers display a variety of emotions that should be handled with professional sensitivity. The specific people-centred leadership skills that are necessary for principals to develop job satisfaction in teachers must be the foundations upon which EIBs displayed by the principal are built. When these skills are developed, they could enhance the possibility of teachers attaining a sense of job satisfaction [5].

The job satisfaction of educators can be described as the extent to which individuals are happy in their jobs. Job satisfaction and happiness at work are regarded as being synonymous with this study. According to [21], the level of one's job satisfaction is a predictor of performance, staff turnover, rate of absenteeism, school effectiveness and commitment, and it contributes to a high level of productivity and success. The level of a teacher's sense of job satisfaction is regarded by [21] as a factor that will influence motivation, loyalty and a willingness to become empowered and accept responsibility. Reference [22] also believes that teachers have a basic emotional need to experience levels of self-gratification through the validation of their self-esteem in order to reach optimum levels of achievement. A principal's EIBs should, therefore, clearly demonstrate an acute awareness and empathetic understanding of teachers' emotions and behaviours and their possible desire to accept

responsibility [23]. As [19] explains, the principal must understand that innovations can cause dissatisfaction and discontent amongst teachers, as they try to cope with continuous curriculum pressures placed on them.

One cannot simply take for granted that principals will be emotionally intelligent enough to adapt to a new education dispensation, and new experiences that accompany curriculum change and transformation, without undergoing extremely stressful experiences themselves [6]. Principals as leaders need to be resilient and demonstrate appropriate behaviours if they are to cope with their own stressors on the one hand, and be able to lead others in equally stressful circumstances on the other [24]. Resilience is most prominent when, in the face of adversity and extreme difficulty, one is able to make a meaningful and effective contribution to an organisation. It is in these most difficult times that the emotionally intelligent people become most prominent. Resilient people remain focused, they are positive, flexible, organised, and above all, they are proactive [8]. Resilient people don't take setbacks personally; rather they see them as positive challenges that need organisational planning, proactive decision-making and flexibility in understanding the needs of others in such negative circumstances [5].

The encouragement and motivation of teachers, the setting of standards in an environment of joint decision-making, mutual support, and respect, are identified by [13] as being essential for the establishment of a school where people find meaning and fulfilment in their work. Traditionalists who advocate that the role of a leader is to control, are out of place in an education system that promotes a culture of transformation and participation. Reference [8] suggests that traditional ways of thinking need to change so that things are perceived in less conventional ways. Reference [25] affirms that part of the improvement of school effectiveness, teacher professionalism, and commitment lies in a principal's people-centred leadership style and the ability to recognise and react appropriately to *emotional signals*. A strategy suggested by [25] is one where a sense of involvement is sustained in order for the teaching staff to remain happy and committed: *Without involvement there is no commitment*. According to [26], a team is unable to function efficiently if there are individual members who do not have a sense of commitment to the school, do not share the vision, have not actually bought into the values, and are not totally committed to the common purpose. In a people-centred environment, [27] points out that it is people who make the resources work effectively, not the other way round. Hence, the need for principals to take the initiative, empower, and motivate their teachers to become problem solvers requires that a participatory, *collegial leadership* approach be used which, according to [28], involves viewing the school as a set of integrated and independent processes and sub-processes that require leadership, rather than a mere collection of assets, resources, and rules that require management. The process of leadership, therefore, is people-centred, but according to [29], combines management know-how with values and ethics. It requires an

element of IQ from the principal of how to organise the skills of teachers in order to get the job done on the one hand, and EI to keep them satisfied at school on the other [20]. School principals need to empathise with their teachers, identify the severity of the emotional turmoil that exists, and help them deal with their stress and curriculum concerns in order to keep them motivated, focused, and happy. The leadership skills and EIBs of principals must ensure that schools function at their optimum levels of performance at all times, and that high teacher morale is maintained within a collegial working environment [4]. It is clear that one's EI represents the potential for learning emotional competencies and [6] suggests that it does not necessarily mean that people are able to utilise this potential in the workplace. They need to change their potential EI into emotional competencies, which are observed by their emotionally intelligent performances.

#### IV. RESEARCH DESIGN

The quantitative research method was used to determine the teachers' perceptions of their principals' interpersonal EIBs. A sample of four hundred and seventy four participants from two hundred schools participated in this study. The subjects chosen to participate in the study were selected following a process, described by [30] as nonprobability convenience sampling because the group of subjects was selected on the basis of their accessibility and availability in South Africa [4]. A multi-respondent survey design was used. In such a design, the focus is on relationships between and among variables in a single group [4], [31], [32]. Section A of the survey focused on the demographic variables of the participants while section B collected data on their job satisfaction. In section C, the questionnaire identified six (C1-C6) interpersonal skills that the respondents' employers should possess as collegial leaders. These are: leadership (C1), communication (C2), conflict management (C3), relationships (C4), empathy (C5), and trust (C6). The 55 questions asked the respondents to rate their leaders according to the strength of their leaders' observable interpersonal EIBs in a collegial working environment. The value of Cronbach's Alpha was used to determine the reliability of the research; it verified that the research was reliable, that the questionnaire was consistent and the scores had insignificant error. The score of 0.923 was regarded as significant. Also, in order to ensure the content and construct validity of the questionnaire, a study of relevant literature on EI was undertaken. There is a similarity that exists between the interpersonal EI skills described by [8], the scales of emotional intelligence presented by [12], and the five dimensions of EI designed by [6].

#### V. RESULTS

Six interpersonal EIBs were investigated as part of this comprehensive study on the EIBs of principals. Based on the 474 respondents' own observations, they were asked to rank their principals according to the observable characteristics given for each of the interpersonal EIBs that their principals

demonstrate. The responses to C1 to C6 are summarised in Table I. This provides an indication of whether the respondents' principals are rated as being either strong or weak in each of the interpersonal EIBs. A descending order of rank scores, which represent the principals' interpersonal EIBs, is presented in Table I.

TABLE I  
DESCENDING ORDER OF PRINCIPALS' INTERPERSONAL EIBS

Ranking	Interpersonal EIBs	High Ranking Responses (N=474)	% High Ranking Responses
1	Communication	353	74,5
2	Relationships	337	71,1
3	Trust	327	69
4	Leadership characteristics	309	65,2
5	Empathy	290	61,2
6	Conflict management	72	15,2

Of the 474 respondents in the study, 309 ranked their principals as being high (strong) in the leadership behaviour (C1) and 165 ranked their principal as being low (weak) in this behaviour. The second interpersonal EIB displayed by principals, namely their communication is measured in C2. Of the total number of respondents, 353 ranked their principals as being high (strong) in this behaviour and 121 ranked their principal as being low (weak). Of all the respondents, 72 ranked their principals as being high (strong) in the conflict management behaviour (C3) and 402 ranked their principal as being low (weak). Of the total number of respondents, 337 of them ranked their principals as being high (strong) in the relationships behaviour (C4) and 137 ranked their principal as being low (weak). In the empathy behaviour (C5), 290 of the respondents ranked their principals as being high (strong) and 184 ranked their principal as being low (weak). C6 measured the principal's trustworthiness, which is the sixth and final interpersonal EIB. There were 327 of the respondents who ranked their principals as being high (strong) in the trustworthiness behaviour (C6) and 147 ranked their principal as being low (weak).

Two measures of relationship were also used in this study, namely the Pearson Product – Moment Correlation ( $r$ ) (see Table II) and Spearman Rank ( $\rho$  or  $\rho$ ) (see Table III). The calculation of  $r$  is to show the linear relationship between any two of the variables. According to [33], the calculation of  $r$  and  $\rho$  provides an objective measure of the strength of the relationship between the two variables. The level of significance for a two-tail test is 0.01. It is pointed out by McMillan and Schumacher [16] that the degree to which subjects maintain the same relative position on any two measures is shown by  $\rho$ . In other words  $\rho$  shows how much agreement exists between each of the variables. The correlation coefficients indicate that there is a statistical significance between the respondents' level of job satisfaction, the rating of their principals' EIBs and how they believe their principals' EIBs will affect their sense of job satisfaction.

TABLE II  
PEARSON PRODUCT-MOMENT CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS

		B	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6
B	Pearson Correlation	1	.560**	.538**	.288**	.537**	.556**	.574**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	474	474	474	474	474	474	474
C1	Pearson Correlation	.560**	1	.588**	.309**	.599**	.681**	.611**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	474	474	474	474	474	474	474
C2	Pearson Correlation	.538**	.588**	1	.248	.662**	.636**	.664**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	474	474	474	474	474	474	474
C3	Pearson Correlation	.288**	.309**	.248**	1	.244**	.337**	.258**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	474	474	474	474	474	474	474
C4	Pearson Correlation	.537**	.599**	.662**	.244	1	.705**	.659**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	474	474	474	474	474	474	474
C5	Pearson Correlation	.556**	.681**	.636**	.337	.705**	1	.739**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	474	474	474	474	474	474	474
C6	Pearson Correlation	.574**	.611**	.664**	.258	.659**	.739**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	474	474	474	474	474	474	474

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

TABLE III  
SPEARMAN'S CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS

		B	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6
B	Correlation Coefficient	1	.560**	.538**	.288**	.537**	.556**	.574**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	474	474	474	474	474	474	474
C1	Correlation Coefficient	.560**	1	.588**	.309**	.599**	.681**	.611**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	474	474	474	474	474	474	474
C2	Correlation Coefficient	.538**	.588**	1	.248**	.662**	.636**	.664**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	474	474	474	474	474	474	474
C3	Correlation Coefficient	.288**	.309**	.248**	1	.244**	.337**	.258**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	474	474	474	474	474	474	474
C4	Correlation Coefficient	.537**	.599**	.662**	.244**	1	.705**	.659**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	474	474	474	474	474	474	474
C5	Correlation Coefficient	.556**	.681**	.636**	.337**	.705**	1	.739**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	474	474	474	474	474	474	474
C6	Correlation Coefficient	.574**	.611**	.664**	.258**	.659**	.739**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	474	474	474	474	474	474	474

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The correlation coefficients in this study clearly show that the bivariate distribution of the variables has a positive and direct relationship. Both Pearson  $r$  and Spearman  $\rho$  indicate that the two variables, namely the job satisfaction of teachers and the interpersonal EIBs of a principal rated by the respondents are significant and, therefore, directly related [4]. In other words, this confirms that the more satisfied a teacher is at school, the higher a principal's interpersonal EIBs are likely to be. Conversely, the more dissatisfied a teacher is at school, the lower a principal's interpersonal EIBs are likely to be. Both Pearson  $r$  and Spearman  $\rho$  indicate that the bivariate distribution of the variables, the respondent's rating of their

principals' interpersonal EIBs and the respondents' ratings of how each of a principal's interpersonal EIBs affect the respondents' sense of job satisfaction are significantly correlated. The analysis of the results showed that there is a statistical significance of the data in terms of correlations, symmetric measures and relationships between variables. Also, there is a clear indication that the link between the job satisfaction of teachers, the EIBs of school principals and the EIBs that teachers identify as being influential in their attainment of job satisfaction is significant [4].

## VI. CONCLUSION

The findings strongly suggest that teachers have expectations of empowerment and collaboration that will enhance them being satisfied at school. These expectations are supported by their belief that they will feel satisfied at school if their principals give them the opportunity to develop their skills in an environment that nurtures effective communication, healthy relationships, empathy and trust. In order to be satisfied at school, the findings clearly indicate that teachers need to be led by principals who are confident in their leadership role, who send out clear, unambiguous messages, who maintain self-control, who are adaptable and flexible, and who face the future with optimism. It is therefore evident from the findings of the study that a significant correlation exists between a teacher's level of job satisfaction and a principal's observable interpersonal EIBs. In other words, the findings reveal that with the exception of the principals' ability to manage conflict, those respondents whose scores show that they are satisfied at their place of work, rate their principals' interpersonal EIBs as being high. They also believe that a principal's EIBs influence their sense of job satisfaction. Conversely, the findings reveal that those respondents whose scores indicate that they are dissatisfied at their school rate their principals' interpersonal EIBs as being low. They also believed that a principal's EIBs will influence their feeling of job satisfaction.

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