

# Emotional Intelligence of Team Leader and Virtual Team Effectiveness during COVID 19

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## Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has wreaked havoc on the workplace, raising unpredictable market and leadership challenges. Some businesses are rushing to implement new delivery platforms, products, and operating models without thoroughly understanding the repercussions of their decisions. As Child (2015) puts it, today's organisations have incorporated the idea of virtual teams into their system to bring people from various places together to collaborate on unique tasks in order to become internationally competitive. A virtual team (O'Leary, Wilson, and Metiu, 2014) is a community of people from various geographical locations who work together despite the distance by using modern computer-mediated technology as a means of communication. Since virtual teams do not communicate in person, trust and efficient communication are important to their efficacy and performance. According to Mukherjee et al. (2012) Team leaders must be effective in leading virtual project teams without face-to-face contact. Opinions expressed by psychologist Dr. Martyn Newman in People Management in 2017: "For the success of the project, it is important that the team is highly engaged, can adapt quickly to internal and external changes, and shows a thought fresh and come up with new ideas". Further Goleman (2006) states, an emotionally intelligent leader can recognize the particular drivers that engage and inspire teams to collaborate and work more effectively..

This article will provide a conceptual structure that connects the team leader's emotional intelligence to the success of virtual teams during COVID times. The current literature highlights the need for further research into how the leader's emotional intelligence influences the virtual team's effectiveness.

**Key Words-** Emotional Intelligence of Team Leader, Virtual Team Effectiveness, Employee Engagement, Project.

## 1. Introduction

Movement of global, cultural and economic environments due to the predominant impact of emerging media is witnessing real-world changes. Since the 1980s, both electronic and analogue systems have shifted into digital. The dominance of new technologies focuses on surviving in the modern age. It transforms life perceptions and generates major revolutions across the globe, beginning with connectivity in several ways, which often contribute to unforeseen technical difficulties. It is an organization which in the Modern Age is

facing a challenging market. Progress in technology and interpersonal connectivity has helped companies to create virtual teams (Gilson et al. 2015). The formation of virtual teams in the 21st century has also led to the success of organizational decentralization (Lee, 2013).

A virtual team consists of individuals operating together in diverse geographical environments through the use of digital computerized technologies as a means of contact amid the gap (O'Leary, Wilson, & Metiu, 2014). In a short period, organizations can manage a range of tasks and provide professional results, while automated teams can solve time constraints (Kerzner, 2013). The use of the simulated team system does, however, provide its team members with possible compound coordination difficulties (Tannenbaum et al., 2012).

Leaders are named to successfully lead and sustain a concentration of the job team member on the business priorities in order to overcome communication-related difficulties, amplification of space, timescale gaps and cultural diversity (Sleeman et al., 2016). However, virtual team leaders face obstacles such as team success enhancement and successful team growth management, as participants are remote from each other geographically (Gilson, 2015). Digital teams must collaborate effectively with leaders with appropriate leadership habits (Daim et al., 2012). Accordingly, successful leaders also display high levels of emotional intelligence, the capacity to recognize and control emotions and incorporate them in the problem solving and decision-making process, similar and Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee (2013).

Many analyses of the importance of leadership emotional intelligence and its effect on employees in the workplace have been carried out (Druskat, Mount, & Sala, 2013; Jung & Yoon, 2012). But because previous reports concentrated mainly on the attributes of different types of management, there was a lack of examination into increasing factors for the performance of the virtual teams with emotional intelligence were most beneficial. Therefore, in the current study, it has been tried to identify the impact of emotional intelligence of team leader on Virtual team effectiveness with the mediation of employee engagement.

## **2. Review of Literature**

### ***2.1. Emotional intelligence of Leader***

The potential for emotional intelligence is strongly related to the success of individuals (Boyatzis, 1982). The capacity to perceive, monitor and cultivate one's own emotions and to also consider and handle one's feelings is emotional intelligence (EI). Emotional intelligence extends beyond being a leader in terms of management and how to control others with their feelings and to use them to achieve good results – both individually and in teams.

As stated by Lee & Ok (2012), emotionally aware leaders control their thoughts, measure their moods, understand their empathy and understand the feelings of others, and encourage others to use principles in

relationship management. The critical goals of the emotionally intelligent Leader are relational control and mood usage (Lam & O'Higgins 2012). Besides, fostering a healthy atmosphere by generating positive feelings to followers is an emotionally intelligent leader's most important mission. Besides, such leaders will affect the emotions and success of their followers and steer them into a positive path.

Companies are more mindful that cognitive intelligence capabilities must become a central part of the organizational philosophy of a company. As stated by Zeidner et al. (2004), Four out of five companies have already been shown to foster relational maturity in their departments. Research by Palmer et al. (2003) reported positive effects on the workplace for people with elevated levels of emotional intelligence. For example, people with higher levels of emotional intelligence were seen to be more likely to do well at work, to be attentive, to demonstrate a greater level of commitment towards the organization, to have more happiness at work and to be less susceptible to job stress (Palmer et al. 2003).

Data suggests that Leader with a high level of emotional intelligence have successful leadership traits than their emotionally less knowledgeable peers (Cooper 1997). They can create deeper cherished relationships (Cooper 1997) and experience greater well-being. Some researchers claim that emotional intelligence can affect working behaviour, such as employee motivation, cooperation, skill growth, creativity, client satisfaction, and service quality (Zeidner et al . 2004).

## 2.2. *Virtual Team*

Owing to rapid external shifts such as digitization, globalization and rising uncertainty, companies have now switched to team systems where they can adapt rapidly to a changing landscape in order to remain competitive. At the same time, it was important for companies to put together internationally scattered groups with gaps in culture and abilities, thanks to innovation, collaboration and competition.

In order to reduce the spatial and temporal obstacles and satisfy the job demands (Alnuaimi, Robert & Maruping 2010), "VTs have been made a favoured option for conducting jobs, information and communication technology has become unavoidable". In the earlier century, Henry and Hartzler (1998) defined Virtual Teams (VT) as 'group of individuals, who collaborate closely even though geographically divided by miles or even continents' and later as 'groups of staff, organizationally and time-spread, unified by IT to accomplish one or more organizations.

The virtual definition involves permeable interfaces and constraints, quickly creating, reorganization and disintegrating teams that shift the need for a diverse marketplace and individuals of various experiences through various times, spaces and cultures (Bell & Kozlowski 2002). These teams often handle emerging millennial workers, with the world's best workers and with growing criteria of technical maturity and human versatility (Burn & Robins, 2002).

On the rise is the simulated office. More and more people want to work from home, and companies accept the tremendous advantages of recruiting remote staff. However, specific difficulties in handling simulated teams cannot be denied.

In comparison, the scope of the contact that the team members have access to is minimal. Traditional teams usually have the opportunity, if not day by day, to communicate face by face, then at least periodically. However, nearly all automated collaboration and cooperation infrastructure mediate simulated team experiences. As per the study conducted by Duarte and Snyder (2001) communications has been categorized in four sections: (1) similar locations (like face-to-face meetings); (2) separate locations (e.g. an audio conference or video conference); (3) different sites, hours and positions (e.g. e-mail exchange and voice mail messages).

The use of virtual teams is very exhilarating since virtual teams can do something that collocated teams cannot individually. Digital teams' benefits include the potential to assemble teams that optimize the technical experience by including globally scattered experts to maintain consistent 24-hours efficiency using various time zones, minimize commuting expenses, and relocate and overhead costs and exchange skills across regional and corporate boundaries.

Research has found that virtual teams face a variety of difficulties in contrast to the co-locating teams, considering the benefits of virtual teams. There are some drawbacks such as coordination and teamwork challenges, a low degree of media capital as opposed to the co-location of the team, possibly lower team commitment from the team members. There are issues of building trust and mutual accountability among team members.

### 3. Research Gap

Due to rapid transition to remote work, many executives are currently unable to communicate deeply with stakeholders and achieve consensus on the path forward through their normal channels.

It's never easy to assess, monitor, and hold people accountable for their results. How to identify and reward great success while still grappling with performance issues in this increasingly virtual environment, where it's much easier for workers to become almost invisible? Even if the tension of their own lives may have risen as a result of the pandemic, leaders must be more attuned to the needs of their corporations and their people than ever before.

### 4. Research Methodology

As this is a conceptual study, the data has been collected from secondary sources. For data, various research papers, printed resources, online websites, leadership blogs, and survey reports available by various international companies and research organization has been utilized.

## 5. Purpose of the Study

Despite the fact that the current crisis is disrupting all businesses, astute executives must take the opportunity to gain an edge in the midst of the turmoil. The best will devise new ways of working, leading, and developing development strategies. Now is the time to prioritise what work is genuinely critical to achieving their objectives, and to use this opportunity to reconsider their future operating models.

A successful leader can motivate teams and encourage them to complete the project through the adaptation process (Rubin, 2012). Linking teamwork, relational intelligence and the commitment of the virtual team can improve virtual environments effectiveness. With the current dialogue on virtual team performance, the usefulness of the conventional theory of leadership in this non-co-located environment appears. In particular, the influence of a simulated leader's emotional intelligence is essential even in a non-co-located world when it understands that essential basic human feelings occur independently of co-location.

The purpose of the study is to develop a conceptual framework to study the impact of emotional intelligence of Leader on virtual team effectiveness.

## 6. Theoretical Framework

The use of virtual teams in the corporate context to achieve innovation has already been investigated (Cummings & Worley, 2014), and assessing the factors that contribute to team success is critical in project execution.

If team members are not located in the same place, coordination and socialisation, both important informal aspects of team capability, are severely hampered. Since the international team is not based in the same location, cohesion, unity, and ways of socialising with new members of the team become more difficult to create.

As a result, creating community harmony in the virtual world to accomplish shared goals is a challenge. Influential business leaders are required to lead the virtual team in quality growth (Kahai, Huang, & Justice, 2012), and further to understand the core components of a leader and their connection to active virtual team projects is critical as it provides additional details on emotional intelligence.

## 7. The nexus between Emotional Intelligence of Team Leader and Virtual Team effectiveness

Employees who are more mindful of and able to understand and control emotions themselves and others can develop more significant and more productive relationships with others. These people can also be more able to elicit optimistic feelings, which is beneficial in building and sustaining an organizational team that approaches disputes more efficiently and less harm. By context, relevant emotional expressions, such

individuals can become better positioned to create, sustain or restore trust and act as emerging leaders more effectively.

The design of the working atmosphere can play a crucial role in virtual collaboration and coordination. Since virtual teamwork depends heavily on computer interaction and teams are not expected to work together in face-to-face meetings, a sense of social isolation can have a profound impact on virtual team members' attitudes toward sharing information in a team. Individual psychological feelings about contact and cooperation with other team members are affected by this form of communication, which has an effect on the simulated team members' cooperation. When conflicts or inconsistencies occur during interactions with other team members, team members may fail to comply.

Digital Team members with strong individual abilities cannot do well in virtual team teamwork, since the only way to pass the information through computer-based communication. Besides, their understanding of working with the various cultures is shaping team members' interpersonal skills in a cross-national team. This will help employees to be conversant about culture as they are interacting with teams of other cultural backgrounds and can gain an understanding of valuable cross-cultural relations. Unique cross-cultural interactions can also affect human cultural transparency.

The unpleasant environment in the team will lead to adverse consequences as individuals with diverse backgrounds can be able to work and contact the virtual team. With less ability to cooperate with other team members, the involvement and the debate in team collaboration are diminished by virtual team members.

At the beginning of the collaboration, individual virtual team participants interact more effectively with other team members; however, they are unable to interact more frequently because they discover that the other members of the team are not as receptive as they had hoped. Many members of the virtual team continue to express regret and affirm that team interaction has remained constant during the collaboration time, and as a result, personal brainstorming online has been reduced. As a result, team interaction is the most important factor influencing virtual teamwork because it can have a direct impact on individual attitudes toward working in a virtual team.

Despite the fact that videoconferencing and remote work arrangements have made steady progress in recent years, many important business discussions and relationships are still conducted in person. Trust and openness, which are essential for efficient communication, knowledge sharing, and commitment fulfillment, are better developed and preserved in person. The failure to get external and internal stakeholders together in person for the near future brings more difficulty to decision-making and raises the potential for conflict.

The crucial challenge for organizations in the current climate is how senior leaders can digitally interact with stakeholders and internal team members in key decision-making processes in ways that improve trust,

openness, and teamwork. The crisis also presents an important opportunity to reconsider how decision-making is distributed and handled on a local and global scale.

These are recurring concerns that workplace experts have addressed for decades, but when an employee is in a physically isolated work environment, the need for employee engagement increases team performance and effectiveness. The virtual team effectiveness challenges are interconnected, which means that leaders must take steps to improve engagement, improve collaboration and communication, and vice versa. Together, moving toward these challenges drives sustainable organizational success.

## 8. Conclusion

The objective of this study is to identify the significance of leaders' emotional intelligence on virtual team's effectiveness during COVID time. In recent years, workers' participation in virtual teams has seen an increase in the distribution of global teams due to accelerated technical progress and globalization. Our interpretive research emphasizes that organization need to concentrate on sufficient team members (members who are high in maturity and cultural knowledge) assisted by sufficient technologies and effectively structured and informal contact in order to improve their degree of participation in virtual teams. Finally, it could help to cultivate an atmosphere in a highly desirable virtual team that helps to build a climate of confidence among participants.

New enhanced approaches such as video calls, newsletters for staff, unique cultural and personal activities, etc. should be researched and implemented. The emotionally knowledgeable Leader cultivates the characteristics of a team such as appreciation, helpfulness and teamwork. Improving Team Leaders and Project Managers' social intelligence capabilities helps them to be optimistic while they minimize barriers to team progress.

Emotional intelligence lets administrators deal via collective consciousness with the complexities of the simulated world. The ability to use feelings and a simulated team structure has a strong connection. The style of the project consists of explicit emotional encryption. Many that use emotions better understand which emotions are valuable for promoting their reasoning processes for a specific purpose.

## 9. Limitations and scope for future research

This paradigm examines and explains the relationship between leaders' IT and the efficacy of the virtual team. In latent, though, interactions will be shown within a system evaluated empirically. To empirically validate the structure, quantitative analysis methodology using an inquiry approach should be employed. The data collected will then be evaluated using sophisticated statistical methods to explore the relationship between the proposed system variables. Insights learned from observational studies can help implement training strategies that affect the efficacy and efficiency of the interactive team.

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