

TITLE The Relationship of Self-Awareness to Leadership Effectiveness for Experienced Leaders

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OBJECTIVE The purpose of this research was to investigate the relationship between leaders' self-awareness and their effectiveness.

METHODOLOGY

The sample group was obtained using a snowball chain-sample method using the researcher's network of contacts from various industries, of which 89 participated (response rate = 20%), and yielded a sample of 179 leaders, with at least four direct reports responding (N=761). Fifty-two percent of the leaders were female, over 80 percent had completed a minimum of four years of college, and their years as a leader was more evenly distributed between the three categories, five to 10 years of leadership experience (38%), 11 to 20 years (26%), and over 20 (26%). Approximately 20+ percent were each in manufacturing or finance/insurance, and another eleven percent each in either healthcare or technology/telecom. Respondents completed either the Self or Observer forms of the LPI and the Emotional and Social Competency Inventory (ESCI; Boyatzis, Good & Massa, 2012).

KEY FINDINGS

The most frequently used leadership practice reported by leaders was Enable, followed by Model, Encourage, Inspire, and Challenge. Each of the five leadership practices and self-awareness were positively correlated, although at a low level of effect (ranging from .16 to .29).

The correlations between the five leadership practices and self-awareness was not significantly different between male and female leaders. All but Challenge showed significant differences by level of education. Specifically, the correlation between self-awareness and Model was noticeably higher in the Graduate/Post Graduate degree participants ($r = .5556$), whereas those with Bachelor degrees showed almost no correlation at all ($r = .0389$); Inspire was also highly correlated with Grad/Post participants ($r = .8771$), and again the Bachelor level participants showed the least relationship ($r = .1490$). Enable showed the greatest correlation with the No Degree participants ($r = .6959$), and Grad/Post Grad participants were also highly correlated ($r = .6331$). The strongest correlation in terms of education was noticeable in the Encourage the Heart practice, where the Grad/Post Grad participants correlation was $r = .9739$. Only Model showed significant differences in correlations with self-awareness on the basis of time in leadership roles, with those with 5-10 years showing the lowest correlations ($r = .1705$) compared to those with 11-10 years ($r = .5933$) and 20+ years ($r = .5509$).

The most frequently used leadership practice reported by observers was Enable, followed by Model, Encourage, Inspire, and Challenge (the same rank order as reported by leaders, although the average scores of leaders were higher than that reported by their observers). Each of the five leadership practices and self-awareness were positively correlated at a relatively high level of effect (ranging from .73 to .83).

The author notes: “The Leadership Practices Inventory has provided over 40 years of research validating that these five practices reflect exemplary leadership practices (Kouzes & Posner, 2012). The direction and strength of the relationship between leaders’ self-awareness and their direct reports ratings for each of the five leadership competencies appears to support the need for self-awareness development and leadership effectiveness development” (p. 84).