

A New Era of Leadership: Emotional Intelligence, Self-Reflection, Agility

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ABSTRACT

The concept of leadership evolves over time. Therefore, specific characteristics or skills required by leaders today especially those that working in the fast moving technologies, highly developed economic, dynamic and turbulence business environment such as in Singapore. This study aims to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence, self-reflection, and agility toward new era leadership. This study applied quantitative method. Data was collected through questionnaire among 300 managers in 10 different organizations in Singapore. Pearson correlation and multiple regression were used to analyse the data by using SPSS software. The findings suggested that emotional intelligence, self-reflection, and agility have positive significant relationship toward new era leadership.

Keywords: *New era leader, Emotional intelligence, Self-reflection, Agility, Singapore*

Introduction

Today, we are moving from an era of individual leaders to an era of networked leadership teams that steer the organization. This new approach calls on leaders to make fundamental evolutionary shifts, well beyond the standard expectation that they continually developed additional skills. In addition, the Covid-19 pandemic had dramatically change many things such as the way the leaders lead their employees, as a new era leader required to provide fast and reasonable actions. A new era leader are expected to demonstrate modern leadership skills such as visionary, consensus building, adaptation, flexibility, cultural awareness, and etc. With the required skills, it may benefit all stakeholders by enabling people to work and learn together to build and operate a continually evolving system for creative value. In the past few years more and more company aimed how leaders are moving forward, where they are making the most progress and what sets the most effective leaders apart.

According to Renjen (2019), poor leadership could be the biggest barrier to a successful Fourth Industrial Revolution strategy. Along the same line, Neal (2020), mentioned that public need leaders with different skills to help navigate crisis and recovery. About 65% of respondents agreed with the above-mentioned statement. This shown the important role of leaders in crisis situation and leaders need to be equipped with different types of skill to survive in the crisis situation. In the area of new era, working environment presents a challenge to leaders in supervising their employees due to digitalization work process, remote work environment practices, and diversified team of employees. Therefore, there is a need to establish a leadership model that can fit in the new era. Previously, the

leader is seen as the one who dictates power and 'how to' approaches in maintaining work standards. However, in the new era today, leader is seen as motivator that able to capitalize employees strength, take a team approach to solve problem, initiating innovation, and continuous improvements. Therefore, this study is aim to examine what are the required skills to foster a new era leadership.

Research Objectives

There are three specific research objectives for this study. The research objectives are articulate as follow:

RO1: To examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and new era leadership.

RO2: To examine the relationship between self-reflection and new era leadership.

RO3: To examine the relationship between agility and new era leadership.

Research Questions

Three research questions are formulated as follow:

RQ1: Is there any relationship between emotional intelligence and new era leadership?

RQ2: Is there any relationship between self-reflection and new era leadership?

RQ3: Is there any relationship between agility and new era leadership?

Literature Review

In this new era, leaders must be equipped to succeed in a significantly transformed world of work specifically in remote, hybrid and flexible working practices which are the cornerstones of the new era (Niewerth, 2020). According to George (2012), new era leadership should be able to create diversity among senior leadership, focus on values not hierarchy, broaden the reach of leadership development and practicing new methods for developing global leaders. To be successful of new era leadership, Mehta and Mckenna, (2020) state several important criteria such as global mindset, positive relationship with others, maintaining positive attitudes, well-defined perspective, focus and skillset. On the other hand, Groves and Feyerherm (2022) claimed that one of the factor that become a management priority is when the leader are concern on employee's well-being. In a similar vein, Pei (2018) mentioned that new era leadership must be able to be expansion power and influence around the world. Despite all the claims from previous researcher, this study triggered on the claim quoted by Niewerth (2020), there are several skills need to be equipped by new era leaders such as emotional intelligence, self-reflection, agility, and many more skills. Yet, there is no empirical study to support this statement. In reviewing the literature, the three skills mentioned by Niewerth (2020) could contribute to new era leadership. Therefore, this study serves as a shed light to this scenario.

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence (EI) is the ability to perceive, interpret, demonstrate, control, evaluate, and use emotions to communicate with and relate to others effectively and constructively (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). This ability to express and control emotions is essential, but so is the ability to understand, interpret, and respond to the emotions of others. Therefore, it is notable that emotional intelligence is a crucial element of the competencies that are necessary for effective leadership. In addition, some experts suggest that emotional intelligence is more important than intelligence quotient for success in life (Lamba, Jagadeesh, & Deshpande, 2023; Cornelia, 2023; Sharma & Tiwari, 2023). According to Coronado-Maldonado and Benitez-Marquez (2023), management today is increasingly recognize the importance of EI in addressing the role of EI in leadership. In today era, with a tremendous change in the organizations, there is a need for leaders to play a new role such as coordinating and facilitating others' behavior in the workplace. The importance of emotions in the workplace has led researchers to increasingly recognize that new era leadership can also have strong emotional component, making it

vital for leaders to be emotionally intelligent. Consequently, new era leaders are able to proactively and reactively manage emotions under them. This is consistent with statement from Coronado-Maldonado and Benitez-Marquez (2023) stated that those who possess EI are able to demonstrate empathy for other' emotions and behaviours. Based on the above discussion, the below hypothesis is formulated:

H1: There is a positive significant relationship between EI and new era leadership.

Self-Reflection

Self-reflection is "serious thought or consideration," and to reflect is "to think deeply and carefully about" something (Oxford Dictionaries, 2022). It is a set of cognitive activities that include considering and examining the various dimensions that make up an individual's work (Boud, Cressey, & Docherty, 2006), allowing individuals to make sense of it (Ellström, 2006) and enhancing their ability to achieve positive outcomes (Argyris & Schön, 1978; Schön, 1983). Individuals typically engage in reflection by thinking or in expressive writing (Lanaj, Foulk, & Erez, 2019; Pennebaker, 1997). Both management practitioners and scholars have suggested a connection between self-reflection and leadership. For instance Brown's (2006), *A Leader's Guide to Reflective Practice* offers practical suggestions for how individuals may enhance their leadership effectiveness through reflection. Similarly, Smith and Shaw (2011), as well as Shepherd and Smyth (2012), suggest that a leader's ability to reflect is key to effective leadership. In addition, scholars such as Alvesson, Blom, and Sveningsson (2016) present a theoretical case for a reflective approach to leadership, arguing that individuals' ability to scrutinize, challenge, or reconsider their ideas and actions offers them a path to leadership. Although we know reflection helps one grow as a leader over the long term, we still know little about its link to new era leadership. Therefore, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H2: There is a positive significant relationship between self-reflection and new era leadership.

Agility

In the rapidly changing organizational climate of today, agility is emerging as a core need for leaders, and 'agile leadership' has become a buzzword. Ulrich and Yeung (2019) defined agility as the ability to learn, unlearn, change and act spontaneously with resilience. An agile leader creates a future on its own, adopts changes, and learns quickly. One of the noteworthy characteristics of an agile leader is walking along with all the followers. An agile leader makes sense of agility in advance, prepares the workforce, and follows the required changes. Creating an agile workforce requires a leader's support, commitment, extraordinary resilience, and quick decision making. This is very crucial in today's work setting. Several numbers of study reported the connection between agility and leadership. For instance, Ray (2023) highlighted the importance of agility in leader to ensure organizational success. Agile leaders take a non-traditional approach to leadership, based on supporting and motivating individuals and teams. They build real relationship with people and attempt to understand what drives them. With this understanding, they can lead through subtle guidance and mentoring rather than through command and control. Based on the above-mentioned discussion, the following hypothesis is developed:

H3: There is a positive significant relationship between agility and new era leadership.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework for this study. There are three independent variables that may contribute to the new era leadership. The independent variables are; emotional intelligence, self-reflection, and agility. Meanwhile, the dependent variable is new era leadership.

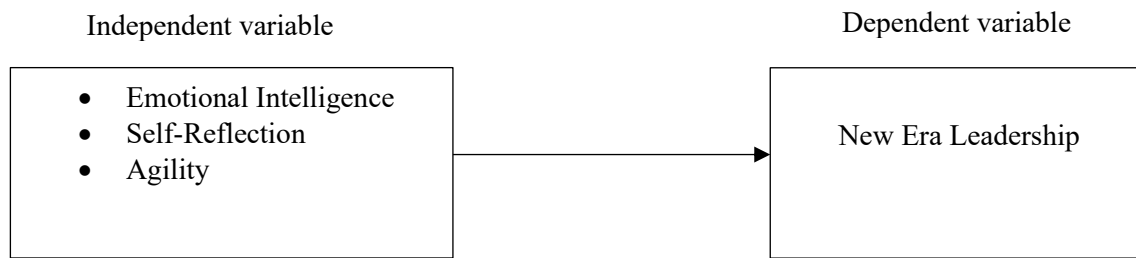


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Research Methods

This study adopted positivism approach by testing the hypothesis as mentioned above. Quantitative method is applied in this study. The researchers used adopted questionnaire from reliable sources as a method to collect the data from respondents. All the instrument used showed high reliability and consistency with Cronbach’s alpha values more than 0.7. The scaling technique is using Likert scale, where the alternative score in this research is 1 (strongly disagree) up to 5 (strongly agree). Table 1 shows the sources of instrument used in this study together with their Cronbach’s alpha values. This study was take place in ten selected private organizations in Singapore. However, due to privacy concern, the name of the ten selected private companies cannot be disclosed. Researchers decided to conduct the study in Singapore because the country can be considered as one of the highly developed. With the high-income economy generated under fast moving technologies and advanced work setting arrangements, leaders that working in Singapore are required to adapt new era leadership characteristics. Therefore this study is carried out to examine the skills that may contribute to new era leadership. By using the simple random sampling technique, there were 30 managers selected in each ten private companies in Singapore as the respondents in this study. In total, 300 respondents were choose to answer the survey questionnaire. Prior to this study, pilot study was conducted in three different organizations in Singapore. There were 30 managers participate in the pilot study. Apart from that, this research is supported by the acquisition of secondary data from various sources of publication. The main statistical techniques used in this study are correlation and multiple regression from SPSS software.

Instrument	Sources	Item	Cronbach’s Alpha Values
Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS)	Wong and Law (2002)	16	0.91
Self-Reflection	Madeline, Ashford, & Bindl (2022)	16	0.89
Agility	Joiner & Joseph (2007)	5	0.86

Table 1: Detail of Instruments

Results and Findings

Demographic Background

Table 2 shows the summary of demographic background of the respondents. It can be seen that most of the respondents were male with 59.2% and female 40.8%. In addition, majority of the respondents are in the age of 41-50 years. Along the same line, it can be seen that most of the respondents are having more than ten years working experiences.

Demographic Information	Percentage (%)
Gender	
Male	59.2
Female	40.8
Total	100
Age	
20-30 years old	6.5
31-40 years old	31.6
41-50 years old	46.1
50 years and above	15.8
Total	100
Working experiences	
Below 3 years	2.6
4-6 years	18.4
7-9 years	31.6
Above 10 years	47.4
Total	100

Table 2: Demographic Background of Respondents

Correlation Analysis

Table 3 shows the correlational analysis between each independent variable to dependent variable. Based on the results, it can be concluded all the three independent variables have significant relationship with dependent variable. Self-reflection is having strong positive significant relationship toward new era leadership ($r = .920, p < 0.05$). Therefore, hypothesis 1 is supported. This finding is consistent with previous study from Madeline, Ashford, and Bindl (2020) who indicated self-reflection plays in facilitating individuals' leadership in teams. As new era leader, they are required to work in teams most often. Furthermore, the finding also consistent with notion from Kross and Ayduk (2017), those with self-reflection able to distancing from one's experiences, especially one's negative experiences, allows individuals to see the bigger picture. This is because self-reflection is about creating a space or distance for focusing on problems and slowly deliberating on them (Cressey, Boud, & Docherty, 2006). Similarly, emotional intelligence is also equally important in showing the relationship with new era leadership ($r = .884, p < 0.05$). Therefore, hypothesis 2 is supported. The finding is aligned with notion from Bradberry and Greaves (2009) indicated emotional intelligence plays an important role in fostering leadership abilities and enhancing effectiveness of leaders, by upgrading their capacities, negotiation abilities, and communication skills. In a similar vein, emotional intelligence is considered as one of the explanatory factors of success in performing numerous functions related for instance to decision-making, open communication, creativity and innovation (Basim & Amina, 2021). On the other hand, agility shows moderate relationship to new era leadership ($r = .600, p < 0.05$). Therefore, hypothesis 3 is supported. The plausible reason behind this finding could because leadership agility is the ability to lead effectively during times of rapid change, uncertainty, and mounting complexity (Muafi, 2018). New era leadership need to adapt the rapid changes in the turbulence business environment.

		Emotional Intelligence	Self- Reflection	Agility	New Era Leadership
Emotional Intelligence	Pearson	1	.919	.548	.884
	Correlation				
	Sig.		.000	.000	.000
	N	300	300	300	300
Self- Reflection	Pearson	.919	1	.622	.920
	Correlation				
	Sig.	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	300	300	300	300
Agility	Pearson	.548	.622	1	.600
	Correlation				
	Sig.	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	300	300	300	300
New Era Leadership	Pearson	.884	.920	.600	1
	Correlation				
	Sig.	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	300	300	300	300

Table 3: Correlation Analysis Results

Multiple Regression

Table 4 shows the results of multiple regression for this study. Multiple regression is used to examine the strength of the relationship between new era leadership and emotional intelligence, self-reflection, and agility. Based on the Table 4, it can be concluded 85% of the predictors namely emotional intelligence, self-reflection, and agility explained the new era leadership. The remaining 15% could be explained by other factors such as personality traits, intelligence quotient, strategic thinking, collaborating and many more. The multiple regression findings show the importance of emotional intelligence, self-reflection, and agility as a combined set required by new era leadership in the rapid changing of business environment today.

Model	R	R-Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.926	.858	.852	.31868

Table 4: Multiple Regression Results

Conclusion

Although previous research have proposed the importance characteristics or skills as a leader, limited empirical studies conducted in examining the importance characteristics or skills required by leader that need to work in today's era. Therefore, this study provides empirical evidence that the combination of three skills; emotional intelligence, self-reflection, and agility could useful as a contributing factors toward new era leadership specifically in Singapore context. As new era leaders in Singapore are required to work under fast moving technologies with special work arrangements and excessive turbulence business environment. This study contributes to the theoretical body of knowledge and practitioners. Although prior researchers examine the relationship between emotional intelligence, self-reflection, and agility toward leadership, but it was done separately in other context. Up to date, there is no empirical study examine the factors contributing to new era leadership specifically in Singapore context. Therefore, the findings from this study contributes to theoretical body of knowledge. Additionally, the findings from this study would provide insights to the practitioners about necessary skills required to be a new era leaders. Management could provide necessary training such as emotional intelligence training to equip their leaders. Alternatively, future studies may highlight more important factors that contribute to new era leadership.

Author Contributions

C.Y.W Author: Conceptualization, Writing Original Draft Preparation;
N.Z. Author: Methodology, Software, Data Curation, Validation, Supervision, Writing-Reviewing and Editing

Conflicts Of Interest

The manuscript has not been published elsewhere and is not under consideration by other journals. All authors have approved the review, agree with its submission and declare no conflict of interest on the manuscript.

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