The Intersection of Leadership and Emotions

Lessons and Actions Leading to Change

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Abstract

Emotions affect us, and they affect our work. Yet there is a tendency to view the role of emotion in leadership as something that must be under control and out of sight. This presents a gap in leadership practice. Emotional intelligence is one tool for capitalizing on the powerful role of emotions in human interactions for more effective leadership. In this article, we describe the relationship between emotions and leadership. We present findings based on data collected from participants in a recently implemented emotional intelligence leader development workshop aimed to increase participants' understanding of emotional intelligence and improve their emotional intelligence skills toward the generation of positive organizational change.

Foreword

It is my command's responsibility to find, recruit, educate, and develop officers for the U.S. Army. With that responsibility, Cadet Command is left to determine "who" to select and "how" to develop them to lead our nation's young men and women in a complex and dangerous world.

In my role as commanding general of the U.S. Army Cadet Command and Fort Knox, I have spent many hours reflecting on what makes a good leader. I have asked myself, "What are the greatest leadership attributes, and how can they be taught or nurtured to develop the best leaders possible?"

In that effort, I have come to one indisputable conclusion after thirty-five years of military service: the very foundation of good leadership is *an individual's intimate understanding of self and those they lead.*

An appreciation for, and understanding of, emotional and social intelligence is essential to any good leader. I define "good" as an emotionally savvy leader who can positively motivate others to persevere beyond all known or perceived personal limitations.

The U.S. Army is a leader-centric organization that does not and cannot hire outside help. It must develop and grow its own leaders from the bottom up. In this article, members of Cadet Command and the University of Louisville explore the criticality of integrating emotional intelligence into the leader development curriculum within Cadet Command and the United States Army.

I believe their efforts are the start of a revolution in the way the Army will look at developing leaders in the coming years. This article and associated debate will further the Army's efforts to develop agile, adaptive, and innovative leaders for the twenty-first century.

Maj. Gen. Christopher P. Hughes

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Introduction

Emotions affect us, and they affect our work. In fact, several large companies, including PepsiCo, Southwest Airlines, and Zappos, have incorporated dialogue regarding emotions into their management principles.[1] Some companies have even started to track employee emotions in order to display the relationship between emotions and productivity. Research is clear—it is impossible to remove emotion from leadership. Leadership involves motivating humans, and humans react to and express messages through emotions. A failure to address the role of emotions in interactions may result in physical stress such as pain, headaches, or sleeplessness. It also may result in psychological stress such as memory loss, lack of clarity, and diminished cognitive ability.

Military Inclination to Downplay Emotion

There is a tendency in the military to view the role of emotion in leadership as something that must be under control and out of sight. This presents an area of need in leadership practice. Emotional intelligence is one tool for capitalizing on the powerful role of emotions in human interactions for more effective leadership. Emotional intelligence can better equip leaders to motivate others to achieve their desired goals and outcomes. There are many definitions and models of emotional intelligence. For the purposes of this study, we adopt the empirically tested approach of John Mayer, Peter Salovey, and David Caruso, who defined emotional intelligence as the capacity to reason about emotions, and of emotions to enhance thinking. It includes the abilities to accurately perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth.[2] According to this definition, one's emotional intelligence is not fixed but, importantly, can be strengthened.

To address the need for effective leader development around emotional intelligence, the U.S. Army Cadet Command recently implemented a professional development workshop for professors of military science, the Emotions and Leadership Workshop. For this study, we analyzed participant feedback data from the workshop to determine its effectiveness in increasing participants' understanding of emotional intelligence and emotional intelligence skills.

In the pages that follow, we provide a brief overview of emotional intelligence and leadership. We then describe the workshop and workshop design. We present findings from our analysis to identify lessons learned and conclude with a brief overview of their implications.

Emotional Intelligence

In 1993, Howard Gardner introduced the idea there are multiple forms of intelligence. Gardner's research supported intelligence in eight areas; however, he never identified emotions as a measure of intelligence.[3] Subsequent to Gardner's groundbreaking study, other scholars have suggested emotions represent a measurable intelligence and affect leadership and learning.[4]

Several models have emerged in the literature to depict the constructs that formulate into emotional intelligence. Daniel Goleman presents an accessible model drawing on four domains of emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management (presented in the table).[5] He structured the domains across self and social or group settings, cross-linked with levels of awareness and management of the setting or context. Goleman suggested the domains in which one falls may be adjusted through learned competencies. For example, social awareness is associated with the competencies of empathy and organizational awareness, while self-management is associated with emotional self-control, adaptability, achievement, and positive outlook.

Table. Overview of Daniel Goleman's 2011 Mixed Approach to Emotional Intelligence

	Self	**Social**
Awareness	**Self-awareness** · Emotional self-awareness	**Social awareness** · Empathy · Organizational awareness
Management	**Self-management** · Emotional self-control · Adaptability · Achievement · Positive outlook	**Relationship management** · Inspiring leadership · Influence · Conflict management · Teamwork and collaboration

(Table by Jeffrey C. Sun, PhD)

Leadership and Emotional Intelligence

Researchers have demonstrated a relationship between leadership behaviors and emotional intelligence. For instance, Zhidong Li et al. examined how emotional intelli-

gence related to addressing work performance issues.[6] Li et al. found participants who preferred to use support immediately before pressure tended to have higher levels of emotional intelligence than participants who opted for any other style. This study and others suggest the value of emotional intelligence in positively influencing behavior. However, conceptualizations of leadership have yet to fully realize the connections between emotional intelligence and leadership.
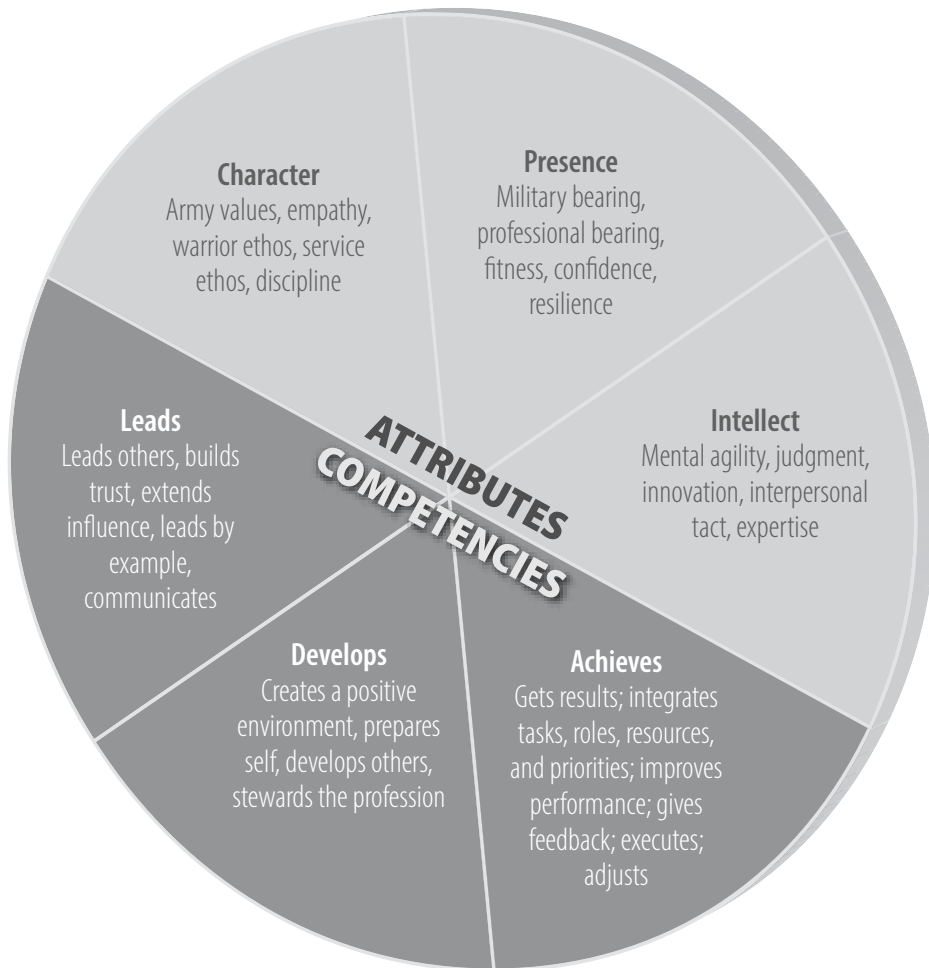
One can become easily overwhelmed when trying to identify a single leadership theory, model, or style that covers all organizations and situations. In *The Bass Handbook of Leadership: Theory, Research, and Managerial Applications*, Bernard Bass and Ruth Bass cited over three thousand leadership studies.[7] Many of these theories and models have been used by industry, academia, the military, and the government in the United States for over eighty years. Leadership theories and models continue to shape modern leadership understanding and practice; yet there remains a gap between leadership theories and emotional intelligence. Consequently, we turn next to consider leadership as conceptualized in Army doctrine. The Army leadership doctrine and strategy discussed will show linkage to the four classical leadership theories, and a need to codify emotional intelligence as another component of leadership in today's Army.

Army Leadership Requirements Model

The Army grows its own leaders from within the ranks of commissioned officers and noncommissioned officers. Leadership and leader development are at the heart of the Army. Current Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 6-22 and Army Doctrine Reference Publication 6-22, both titled *Army Leadership*, and supporting Field Manual 6-22, *Leader Development*, have been in force since 2012, 2012, and 2015, respectively.[8]

Since publishing its first leadership doctrine in 1948, the Army has made many refinements. Although it does not directly teach or mandate use of a preferred leadership theory, model, or style, it provides a common framework of required leadership attributes and competencies to enable all Army leaders to accomplish a full range of missions. The Army uses FM 6-22, the Army Leadership Requirements Model (ALRM) (see figure 1, page 85), and the Army Leader Development Strategy as foundations for leader development.[9] ADP 6-22 defines an Army leader as "anyone who, by virtue of assumed role or assigned responsibility, inspires and influences people to accomplish organizational goals."[10] The Army requires its leaders to "motivate people both inside and outside the chain of command to pursue actions, focus thinking, and shape decisions for the greater good of the organization."[11] ADP 6-22 further defines Army leadership as "the process of influencing people by providing purpose, direction, and motivation to accomplish the mission and improve the organization."[12]

Even a cursory view of the ALRM provides evidence of opportunities to integrate emotional intelligence into the model. The attributes of empathy, confidence, resilience,

Character
Army values, empathy, warrior ethos, service ethos, discipline

Presence
Military bearing, professional bearing, fitness, confidence, resilience

Leads
Leads others, builds trust, extends influence, leads by example, communicates

ATTRIBUTES
COMPETENCIES

Intellect
Mental agility, judgment, innovation, interpersonal tact, expertise

Develops
Creates a positive environment, prepares self, develops others, stewards the profession

Achieves
Gets results; integrates tasks, roles, resources, and priorities; improves performance; gives feedback; executes; adjusts

(Figure from FM 6-22, *Leader Development*, June 2015)

Figure 1. Army Leadership Requirements Model

mental agility, and interpersonal tact have clear connections to understanding and managing one's own and others' emotions; as do the competencies of building trust and creating a positive environment. Emotional intelligence is important, not only for leading and developing others but also for achieving results.

Despite these clear connections, there remains a need to develop, implement, evaluate, and refine leader development strategies around emotional intelligence within the Army. Others have also identified this need and have begun to offer insights to address it. For example, Tanekkia Taylor-Clark considered the connections between the ALRM

and emotional intelligence; but that prior analysis did not account for an application to leaders within Army Reserve Officers' Training Corps programs.[13]

Emotions and Leadership Sessions Overview

In an effort to advance the integration of emotional intelligence and leadership development, the Emotions and Leadership Workshop was developed as part of the Mission Command Workshop for the United States Army Cadet Command's professors of military science. Cadet Command is a geographically dispersed command with eight brigades and 274 Senior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (SROTC) host programs (each led by a professor of military science) with additional extension and cross-town satellite programs. In total, Cadet Command has a presence on over 950 college and university campuses across the United States and its territories. Cadet Command employs over 3,500 cadre, faculty, and staff members across the brigades and college-level programs with responsibility for training and educating over 30,000 SROTC Cadets. This group of 3,500 includes approximately 1,800 active duty SROTC instructors (cadre/faculty members) and 180 contracted civilian instructors. The remainder are support staff who provide administrative, logistical, and recruiting support.

In September 2017, the Cadet Command's commanding general hosted an annual three-day Mission Command Workshop attended by over three hundred senior leaders. This forum provided the commanding general an opportunity to share his intent and guidance with all professors of military science and brigade leadership teams. The theme of the Mission Command Workshop was "Emotions and Leadership." This article examines the Emotions and Leadership leader development sessions within the three-day workshop.

Emotions and Leadership Sessions

The Mission Command Workshop comprised a series of six sessions held over seven hours on emotions and leadership. The impetus for the design, development, and implementation of the sessions was the need for innovative ways to begin to develop senior leaders at Cadet Command. The sessions were designed to address the gap in the Army's understanding of how emotions impact team performance, critical thinking, and communication. The commanding general recognized this omission and challenged his team to look differently at themselves and those with whom they work.

The design team members posited the Army lacks a formal, institutionalized curriculum that addresses emotional management and the role of emotions in leadership. This gap had the potential to negatively affect morale, unit cohesiveness, leadership, and decision-making. The overarching outcome was to educate

participants on the importance of emotions in leadership. The desired learning outcomes for the workshop sessions were that participants would (a) understand a common definition of emotional intelligence, (b) develop an understanding of the role of emotional intelligence in personal and social behaviors, (c) develop an understanding of six specific leadership styles as they relate to getting results and influencing workplace climate, (d) understand the strategies to develop emotional intelligence in self and others, and (e) develop and implement a personal development plan for improving personal and social competencies.[14]

Sessions design. The design team was comprised of two educational design experts, one research psychologist specializing in emotional management, and two professional facilitators with experience designing and teaching emotional intelligence to senior Army leaders. Emotional intelligence is based on a set of abilities that can be improved through education and experience. Emotions have been connected to leader behaviors, influence, and transformational leadership.[15] The design team worked within a paradigm that assumed that adult learners could become more emotionally intelligent and make adjustments in their behaviors based on the learning offered through the sessions.

The team leaned on the adult learning theory developed by Malcolm Knowles.[16] Knowles's model includes an adult learner's need to know why something is important, desire to be responsible for their own learning, need to be respected for the knowledge they bring to the learning environment, and need for learning to be problem-centered and relevant.

Learning experts have found learning occurs best when learners grapple with ideas, challenge their assumptions, and reexamine their paradigm of reality.[17] Based on adult learning principles and the concept that learning occurs best when learners are engaged with the content, the design team used a learner-centered (learning is challenging, reflective, within the control of the learner, and collaborative) and constructivist (learning is constructed by the learner based on prior experience, preconceptions, and interactions) approach to designing the sessions.[18]

Sessions learning sequence. Two groups of approximately 150 participants engaged in a full day of sessions. The workshop sessions included a large fifty-minute group presentation with 150 participants, followed by four separate fifty-minute facilitated small-group breakouts (approximately sixteen per group), and one separate ninety-minute culminating activity. Session one was led by an expert researcher in the area of emotional management. This session focused on how emotions are made and the roles of emotions in our daily lives.

Sessions two through five included topics such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship management, emotional intelligence and leadership styles, and applying emotional intelligence. The small-group sessions included a variety of learner-centered instructional strategies and activities. Participants worked collaboratively to analyze a leadership case study

related to social awareness, relationship management, and leadership. They co-constructed knowledge related to the six leadership styles and their connections to emotional intelligence.[19] Additionally, in session five, participants developed strategies to improve their personal or social competencies and shared those with their group.

In session six—the culminating event—two participants from each small group engaged in a fishbowl activity. This activity, "Emotional Intelligence on the Big Screen," required participants to apply the concepts learned as they analyzed film clips and responded to facilitator questions. At the conclusion of session six, participant feedback was collected to evaluate the effectiveness of the sessions and to report lessons learned, as described in the following section.

Data Collection and Analysis

Drawing on a thematic analysis of participant responses, we were interested in understanding what participants learned about emotional intelligence during the sessions. This included their plans to change behaviors; especially leadership practices based on what they had learned about emotional intelligence.

Data collection. At the closing of the emotions and leadership workshop sessions, participants were asked to provide feedback. A total of 274 of the 300 participants completed the questionnaire. Two of the three questions were relevant for the purposes of this article:

Q1: What are three things you learned during the sessions?

Q2: What is one thing you may change based on the sessions?

Due to the size of the group and the data being collected, participants were asked to anonymously self-report their responses to the open-ended questions; thus relying on the honesty of participants, the ability of participants to be introspective, and their comprehension of the questions. The data may be limited when trying to generalize but provides insight into what this specific group took away from learning about emotions and leadership.

Data analysis. The first two authors of this article designed and implemented the workshop and the third and fourth authors conducted data analysis. This strategy reduced the likelihood of bias in interpretation of findings and increased the reliability of findings. We engaged in inductive coding by reviewing participant responses to each of the research questions and establishing a coding scheme that reflected emergent patterns. We then expanded and collapsed codes as needed toward the generation of themes.

Findings

Research Question #1: What are three things participants learned during the sessions? As indicated in figure 2 (on page 90), participants most frequently reported learning about leadership styles, emotional intelligence, and the value of emotional intelligence in leadership. Participants also reported learning about the four components of emotional intelligence. Participants reported learning about self-awareness, followed by social awareness, relationship-management strategies, and self-management strategies, respectively.

Leadership styles. The most frequent response to the question of what participants learned was leadership styles. At times, this focused on new knowledge about their own leadership. One person reported, "My leadership style is affiliative," and another shared, "I am more self-aware of my preferred leadership style." At other times, responses were less about participants' own styles and more related to the concept of leadership styles. For example, one person wrote about "the potential impact on climate of various leadership styles."

Emotional intelligence. Findings also suggest participants learned about the concept of emotional intelligence. One person wrote, "I had not heard of emotional intelligence until today." Someone else shared, "I am not as emotionally intelligent as I thought," and another discussed new knowledge about "how to implement the emotional intelligence framework." This suggests the importance of foundational knowledge of emotional intelligence as a component of training and development and about its application and connections to leadership—another theme in participants' reported knowledge gains.

Value of emotional intelligence for leadership. Given the focus of the sessions, participants acquired knowledge about the value of emotional intelligence for leadership and their leadership practices. One shared, "Not displaying emotion properly can limit my leadership just as much as negatively displaying emotion." Another participant wrote of understanding the connections between emotional intelligence and the ALRM. A new desire to become "more socially and emotionally effective as a leader" was described by another participant.

Components of emotional intelligence. Participants explained how they learned more about each of the four components of emotional intelligence and provided rich examples of how this new knowledge affected their leadership abilities and goals for ongoing development. Some examples include increasing self-awareness, specifically regarding things such as "facial expressions and body language"; improved "self-management strategies"; acknowledgment of the "2nd, 3rd, and 4th order effects" of social awareness; and needed areas for growth in relationship management.

The finding regarding participants' knowledge gains about emotional intelligence and how it connects to effective leadership is of interest. As one participant responded, "Emotional intelligence plays a huge role in leadership and one's ability to influence an organization and the people within it." We suspect participants

may have walked into the sessions with little forethought about the connections between leadership and emotional intelligence. These findings suggest it became clear to participants through the sessions that emotional intelligence is importantly connected to effective leadership via the skill sets of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management.
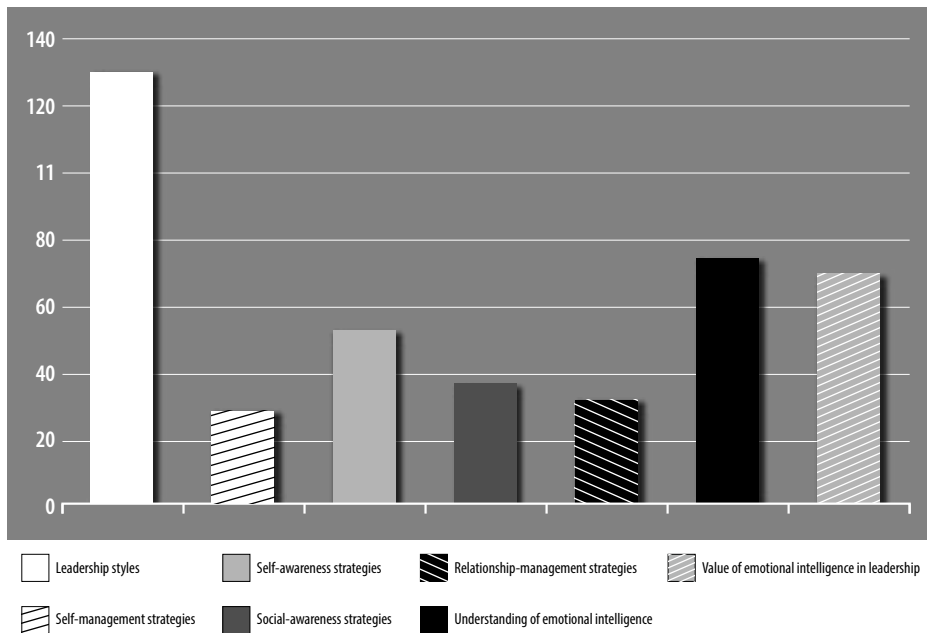
(Figure by Wes Smith, EdD)

Figure 2. Responses to Question, "What are Three Things You Learned during the Sessions?" (Total responses=421)

Research Question 2: What is one thing participants may change based on the sessions? Key findings related to the second research question are reported in figure 3 (on page 91). Of the 274 respondents, 251 reported they would continue their self-assessment, including various reports of using the "15 percent strategy"—which is a strategy of focusing on the 15 percent of one's work environment over which one has control. The top two reported priorities for change were improving self-awareness skills and relationship management skills.

Change related to self-awareness. Themes captured participants' desire to "[focus on] self-awareness behaviors." Participants were particularly interested in extending their self-awareness to understand how they affect others so as to improve the working environment. These responses included: "Becoming more self-aware of how my emo-

tion impact others," "Recognizing what makes me uncomfortable and working to overcome the stimulus," and "Naming the emotion to avoid/mitigate an emotional hijack."

Change related to relationship management. Participants recognized the value of exchanges with others in the workplace. Their responses offered improvement actions to influence others, inspire leadership, develop greater collaboration, or strengthen teamwork. For instance, one person shared plans to "take into consideration the emotions of others when I interact with them." Many stated plans to seek strategies to cultivate those relationships.

Other areas for change. As indicated in figure 3, other themes that emerged were improving social awareness skills, varying leadership styles, continued self-assessment, and improving self-management skills. Respondents reported plans to be more emotionally aware and described multiple areas in which they would apply what they learned about themselves. For instance, participant responses included: "I would like to be more deliberate about identifying the emotional state of people in my organization," and "Improve my way of complimenting others' emotions to balance the situation."

Perhaps most interesting, participants advanced the ideas of demonstrating the linkage between emotions and leadership approaches as an area in which they wish to change. Some participants reported a response similar to this one: "I will change how I approach leadership challenges." Others applied the lesson to appreciate variability in settings/context as a mental shift to apply different leadership styles.
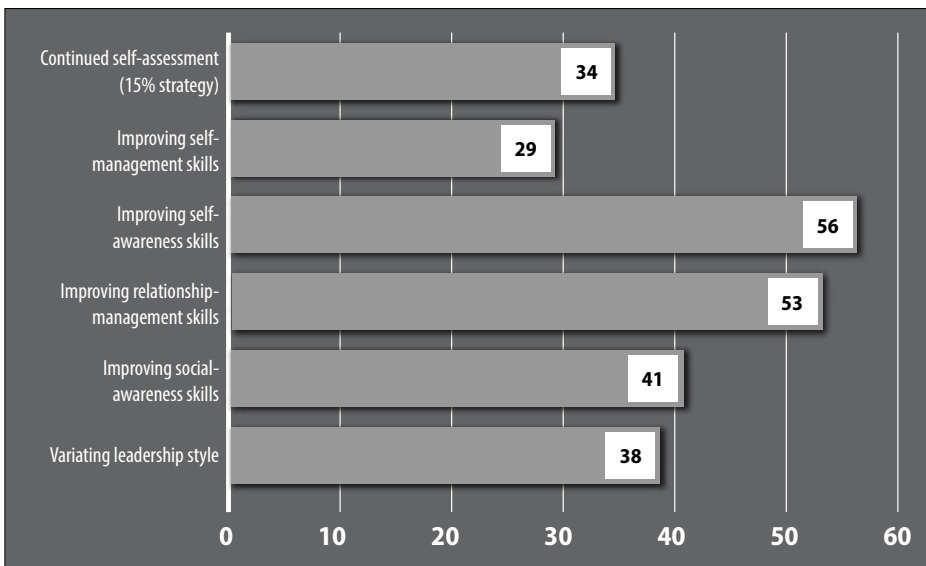
(Figure by Wes Smith, EdD)

Figure 3. Participants' Self-Reported Areas for Development

For instance, selected participants responded in a manner similar to these entries: "My consciousness of the need to change styles based on audience," and "I will use emotional intelligence to adapt my leadership style to change within the context of each situation and apply this to cadet training and my organization."

This session furthered participants' understanding of how emotions are more than feelings to be ignored or warranting desensitized responses; that emotions have a place in leader development and effective organizational performance.

Discussion

There is a gap in leaders' understanding of emotional intelligence and a corresponding need for leader development to close that gap. Our aim was to explore the potential of integrating emotional intelligence into Army leader development strategies, and to describe and report out lessons learned from one attempt to do so. Findings from this analysis support Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso's conclusion that emotional intelligence is a learnable skill.[20] Through a series of six sessions over seven hours, participants demonstrated self-reported growth in their understanding of emotional intelligence, how it relates to their leadership practice, and how they plan to adjust their leadership behaviors as a result.

Interestingly, workshop participants connected their personal leadership styles to their understanding of emotional intelligence. This is likely, in large measure, due to reliance on Goleman's text as prereading and the framing of the workshop around that—which includes an emphasis on six leadership styles.[21] The Army has moved away from leadership styles in its leader development effort due to a lack of empirical evidence that they are related to behavioral outcomes. Yet, that component of the workshop clearly caught participants' attention. This would suggest a need for reliable instruments that allow leaders to quickly come to a greater understanding of their personal styles, personalities, traits, and biases. Such instruments might be incorporated into future emotional-intelligence-focused leader development workshops. It seems participants are likely to engage with workshop material when it teaches them something about themselves, to which they can then connect the more general lessons and applications of emotional intelligence.

We recommend those within the Army training and education enterprise—and related areas across the U.S. military—consider the lessons learned from this intervention and analysis in their own leader development initiatives. Findings suggest the value of emotional intelligence when training leaders in all organizations, including the corporate sector, communities, and even within families. Organizational leadership may benefit from careful consideration of the value of emotional intelligence training within their teams, as well as what actions they may take

toward that end. Examples include resource allocation and addressing emotional intelligence in communications, strategic visioning and priority-setting, and other cultural indicators of one's goals and objectives as a leader.

Conclusion

The leadership of the twenty-first century U.S. Army must demonstrate self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, and relationship management. Taking steps to improve in these areas has the potential to enhance team cohesion, creativity, decision-making, and relationship satisfaction. Effective leadership is directly related to improved team performance. This study, and others, suggest emotional intelligence is connected to effective leadership; as such it is also linked to improved performance. For this reason, we view it as an imperative area for leader development within the U.S. Army. ℭ

Notes

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