



THE IMPACT OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE OF LEADERS ON THE MOTIVATION AND DEVOTION OF EMPLOYEES IN SPA & WELLNESS CENTERS

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Abstract:

The aim of this research is to find out whether leaders with emotional intelligence competences have influence on the motivation of the employees in spa and wellness centers, as well as on the team spirit and sense of belonging which makes them devoted to the company's goals. Motivated and devoted employees are one of the key factors for the successful development of spa and wellness tourism, along with natural resources, developed infrastructure, and hotel capacities. Data was collected by distributing questionnaires to 116 respondents among employees in spa and wellness centers within city hotels, as well as mountain and spa resorts. According to this study, managers with emotional intelligence competences have a direct impact on the motivation and devotion of their employees. Therefore, managers should constantly develop their leadership competences and adapt their leadership styles according to the different personality profiles of employees. Emotionally intelligent leaders are emphatic, they have a better understanding of their own and other people's emotions, and they adapt to changes more easily.

Keywords:

motivated and devoted employees, leadership competences, emotional intelligence, leadership styles, employees in spa and wellness.

INTRODUCTION

In these modern times, when changes occur rapidly, leadership is one of the key elements of success. Leaders possess strategy, vision, and ideas. Their role is to motivate people to adapt to changes easily and to follow their vision and ideas. Leaders should be aware of the fact that talented people are valuable for companies, and that they have to be motivated and inspired by their leaders in order to reach their full potential at work.

Leaders should be connected to their followers on a personal and emotional level by adapting their leadership styles to them according to their personalities, as well as the situation. In that way, they build enthusiasm and positive energy among their employees, which leads to them becoming devoted to mutual goals.

Leaders in tourism in general, and in spa and wellness centers in particular, should delegate tasks and responsibilities to employees in lower positions and line staff. They should be role models to the line staff, which is in direct contact with the customers. In the hospitality

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industry, employees are crucial for the service quality offered by the company. That is why it is very important that leaders have strong personal communication with their employees. The human factor is specifically important in hospitality because the overall customer satisfaction depends on the quality of the customer service. The personal values of employees are key factors for their job satisfaction and performance levels. (Montes et al., 2016.)

Employee satisfaction is undoubtedly crucial to the hospitality industry. Satisfied employees are hard-working, loyal to the company, and able to provide exceptional service experience for customers who will find such experience valuable. Furthermore, studies suggest that employee satisfaction impacts a company's financial goals. This argument is based on the assumption that if a company cares about its employees, it will care about its customers. Over time, the customers will become loyal, which will generate profit for the company. Although indirectly, employee satisfaction significantly influences financial performance. This relationship is mediated by customer satisfaction. (Chi and Gursoy, 2009)

In the literature review in this paper, different definitions of leadership are presented, as well as different approaches to leadership research. New approaches to leadership point out that personal characteristics, such as a leader's charisma, enthusiasm, and emotional intelligence competences are essential for employees' commitment to an organization. This research is meant to examine the influence of leaders' emotional intelligence on employees' motivation and devotion.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Many definitions of leadership exist. According to Yukl (1989), different authors provide different definitions in accordance with their individual perspective and point of interest. Leadership can be defined as the behavior of an individual when he is directing the activities of a group. Leadership is the process during which an organized group is influenced towards the achievement of goals.

Leadership has been studied in different ways. Almost all leadership research can be classified into one of the following approaches:

- ◆ Power-influence approach
- ◆ Trait approach
- ◆ Behavior approach
- ◆ Situational approach (Yukl, 1989, p. 7)

Power-influence approach implies that leadership is researched in terms of the power that a leader possesses.

Power is the ability to influence other people and the ability to change the attitude or behavior of an individual or a group. There are different types of power: reward power, coercive power, legitimate power, expert power, referent power. The leaders who have self-control over the use of power are more efficient than those who use power for dominance. (Čerović, 2009, pp. 326-327)

Trait approach implies that the personal characteristics of leaders, such as energy, persuasive power, intuition, self-confidence, or intelligence are important for leadership effectiveness. However, there is no strong evidence that any of these characteristics guarantee effective leadership. The focus in recent years has been more on specific leadership skills rather than personal attributes.

Behavior approach implies that leaders' behavior is examined in research (their roles, functions, and practices in daily activities, such as delegating tasks, motivating employees, managing people and tasks). Methods that are used include descriptive methods, such as direct observations of their behavior and information from interviews. Numerous studies examine the correlation between the measures of leadership behavior and the measures of employee satisfaction and performance. A smaller number of studies investigate how leader behavior influences employees' satisfaction and performance.

Successful leaders are able to perform two important leadership functions: the function of problem solving and the function of keeping the group united.



In performing these two leadership functions, leaders apply two different leadership styles: task-orientation and people-orientation. Leaders who are task-oriented care more about performing tasks than about people motivation, satisfaction, and development. On the other hand, people-oriented leaders care more about their employees' satisfaction and motivation. They want to create a friendly and respectful relationship, without much control over their employees. Employees participate in making decisions. (Stoner, et al., 2002, p.434)

Situational approach examines the extent to which different situations influence leaders' behavior (for example, the level of leaders' authority, the type of work they do, the ability and motivation of employees).

A subcategory of the situational approach is the contingency approach. It assumes that different behavior or trait patterns will be effective in various situations, and that the same behavior is not the most effective in every situation. (Yukl, 1989)

There are four contingency models that attempt to define a leader in different situations:

- ◆ Fiedler's model
- ◆ The path-goal theory
- ◆ Hersey and Blanchard's theory
- ◆ Vroom and Yetton model (Robbins and Coulter, 2005)

NEW APPROACHES TO LEADERSHIP

In recent years, companies and organizations have been faced with changes that happen rapidly. At the same time, those changes should represent motivation and inspiration for managers and leaders. Leaders must be flexible and adaptable to new paradigms and apply new ways of thinking and working in order to respond adequately to constant market changes.

Recent research is more interested in charismatic leadership, transformational leadership, and the relationship between leadership and the creation of culture in organizations.

Charismatic leadership implies that charisma is a positive personal characteristic and a personal quality that makes people want to follow a person possessing such a quality as their leader. The most frequent definition of charisma is that it is the perception of a leader's attributes as viewed by his/her followers. (Vlahović, 2008, p.114)

Charismatic leadership is determined by the employees' trust in the correctness of their leader's vision and mission; strong acceptance of the leader's values by followers and their emotional engagement and commitment to the organizational goals.

According to Milisavljević (2008), charisma is the ability of leaders to use, expand, and intensify impact on the beliefs, values, behavior and performance of others through their own behavior, beliefs and personal example. The relationship between leaders and their followers is crucial. Charismatic leadership is the interaction between leaders and followers. Charismatic leaders create visions for the future of organizations, and they transform their followers' needs, values, preferences, and aspirations from personal interests into group interests. They make their followers willing to show personal commitment and sacrifice for their mission.

Transformational leadership is similar to charismatic leadership. According to Yukl (1981), Burns (1978) stated that transactional leadership is a process in which leaders and their followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality, while Bass (1981) stated that when employees show trust, respect, and admiration towards their leader, they are motivated to do more than their leaders expect them to do. A leader can transform employees by explaining the importance of task outcomes to them and by making them willing to place their personal interests behind the interests of the team and the company.

Transformational leadership drives organizational commitment. Supervisors and line managers have the most interactions with employees. The way they practice their leadership influences employees' attitudes and behavior. Higher motivation and work effectiveness are identified. Leaders can affect their employees' self-identity, behavior social identity. Moreover, they can enhance their employees' collective identity and organizational commitment. (Luo, Z. et al., 2016)



Charisma is necessary, but not sufficient for transformational leadership. Apart from influencing their followers by provoking strong emotions, transformational leaders may transform their followers by acting as coaches, teachers, and mentors. (Yukl, 1989, pp. 210-211)

Transformational leaders are coaches who teach and advice their followers according to their individual needs. Verbal and non-verbal communication are important for transformational leaders. Through inspiring communication, leaders pass on positive and encouraging messages to their followers. Moreover, they use emotional language effectively to change the values of their followers. Supportive and empathic communication is related to emotions, which connects leaders and followers on an emotional level. (Rabiul, and Fee Yean, 2021)

Managers committed to service quality can create a transformational climate in the manner in which they pass on their commitment and dedication to their followers. The followers become more likely to share the values of the organization as they become aware of their roles and perform a higher level of service quality. (Clark and Jones, 2009)

Leadership and organization culture can be examined from two aspects: leadership as intercultural, which implies adapting the leadership style to a specific culture (national culture, industry/business culture, organizational history); and leadership as a crucial factor for creating a certain culture in the organization. (Vlahović, 2008)

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

One of the key elements of leadership is the relationship between leaders and their followers. Emotions are important for building and developing any relationship, including that between leaders and followers. Great leaders have great ideas, strategies, visions. However, there is one more crucial characteristic- they are able to trigger emotions. If leaders can find the best possible way to manage their emotions and those of their followers and adapt their leadership styles according to this, the result can include better results, as well as increase motivation and devotion. Positive emotions, such as enthusiasm, lead to better performance. On the other hand, if the leader provokes negative feelings, the performance is lower, since the followers are unable to give their maximum effort and to demonstrate full commitment to the leader's vision.

Positive atmosphere in the organization is important for every company, especially for service-oriented companies in the hospitality industry, such as hotels and spa and wellness centers. Enthusiastic employees naturally devote extra effort to make sure their customers are satisfied. In providing services, it is of vital importance that employees share a positive atmosphere with their customers. Strong emotions, both positive and negative, can be easily transferred from employees to customers. The leader's role is to use emotions to create a positive atmosphere, and such an emotional climate in the company that leaves the employees optimistic, enthusiastic, self-confident, and empowered to provide extraordinary service.

According to Goleman et al. (2006), emotions are enormously important for leadership, while **emotionally intelligent leadership** is the most important dimension which determines whether the other efforts of the leader are ultimately successful or not. If leaders are able to share their enthusiasm and optimism with their followers, and to provoke their best abilities and positive emotions, it means that those leaders are resonant. On the other hand, dissonant leaders provoke destructive and toxic emotions, such as fear, hate, apathy, and worry.

Emotionally intelligent leaders are resonant leaders, which means that their energy, passion, and enthusiasm easily find their way to the emotions of all group members. Team members feel good because they feel a strong emotional connection to one another, they are empathetic to each other and feel empathy, support, and understanding for their leader, which makes them secure and self-confident.

There are four domains that compose the structure of emotional intelligence:

- ◆ Self-awareness
- ◆ Self-management
- ◆ Social-awareness
- ◆ Relationship management (Goleman et al., 2006)



Self-awareness:

Emotional self-awareness means that leaders possessing it recognize the impact of their feelings on their performance. Emotionally self-aware leaders are able to speak openly about their emotions.

Accurate self-assessment means that leaders are aware of their limitations and strengths.

Self-confidence is the ability to help leaders welcome challenging assignments.

Self-management:

Self-control: leaders find a way to manage their disruptive feelings and disturbing emotions. They stay calm when they are under stress or in a crisis.

Transparency- an authentic openness to others in their feelings, beliefs, and actions.

Adaptability- adaptable leaders are flexible in adapting to changes.

Achievement- leaders set measurable and challenging goals. They have high personal standards and seek performance improvement both for themselves and the people they lead.

Initiative- initiative leaders do not just wait for the right opportunity; they seize the opportunity or create it, and they take control over it.

Optimism- optimistic leaders see others positively, expecting the best of them.

Social-awareness:

Empathy- empathetic leaders can view things from others' perspective; they are able to listen attentively.

Organizational-awareness- such leaders can understand unspoken rules and guiding values of an organization.

Service- oriented leaders carefully monitor customer satisfaction to ensure they get what they need, making themselves available.

Relationship management:

Inspiration- leaders are able to inspire their followers.

Influence- leaders able to influence and persuade their followers.

Developing others- leaders able to develop others are natural coaches and mentors who give constructive feedback.

Change catalyst- leaders recognize the need for change. They provide practical solutions to overcoming barriers for change.

Conflict management- leaders acknowledge the feelings and views of all sides and find solutions that would satisfy all sides.

Teamwork and collaboration- leaders create a friendly atmosphere and are respectful, helpful, and cooperative. (Goleman, 2011)

METHODOLOGY

The aim of this study was to investigate the correlation between the emotional intelligence of leaders and employees' commitment and motivation. Data was collected from 116 front-line employees from ten spa and wellness centers (four in city hotels, one in a mountain resort, and five in spa resorts).

The questionnaires were designed to collect data from employees. They were sent by e-mail to human resource managers and spa managers, who distributed them to the line staff employees who were directly in contact with clients. The questionnaires were anonymous, and consisted of 18 questions: 3 general questions about employees' age, gender, and the time period spent in the company, and 15 pairs of questions about their supervisor's or manager's characteristics and their motivation in relation to those characteristics. For the first question in each pair, their task was to choose one of the three given answers (Yes; No; I do not know) in order to assess whether their supervisors or managers possessed certain characteristics, qualities, or ways of behavior typical for emotionally intelligent leaders. Every question about the leaders' characteristics and



behavior was followed by another question in the pair. The respondents could choose one of the answers (*Yes*; *No*; *I do not know*) to the question whether that leader's characteristics and behavior made them feel motivated and devoted.

Data description is shown as n (%). The proportion of agreement between categories of paired answers was assessed.

Fisher's exact test was used to test the differences between the nominal data. Statistical hypotheses were tested on the level of statistical significance (alpha level) of 0.05. The results are shown in charts. All data were analyzed in IBM SPSS Statistics 22 (SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL, USA) software package.

RESULTS

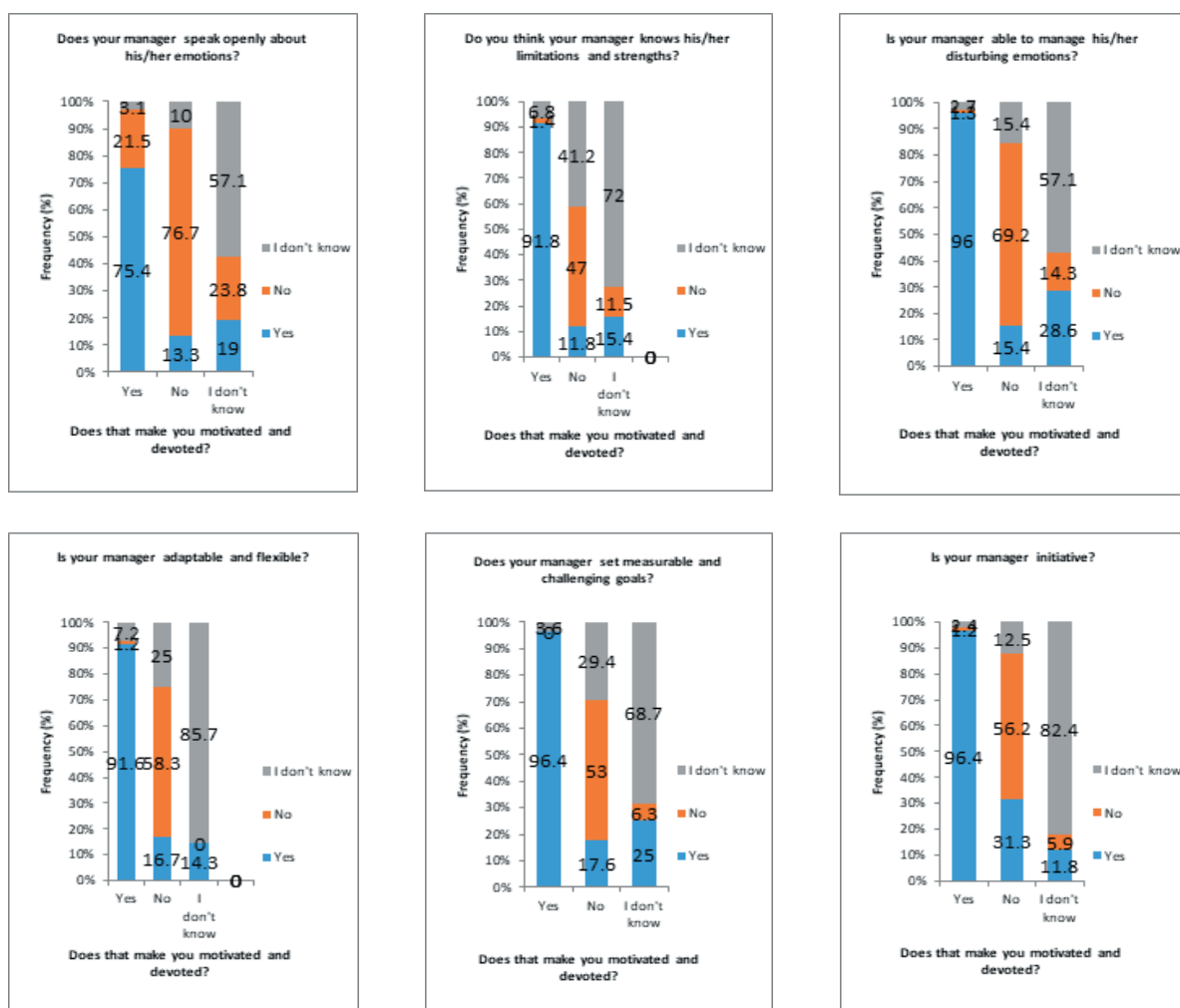
Among the total number of participants in this study, there were 39 % of male respondents and 61 % of female respondents.

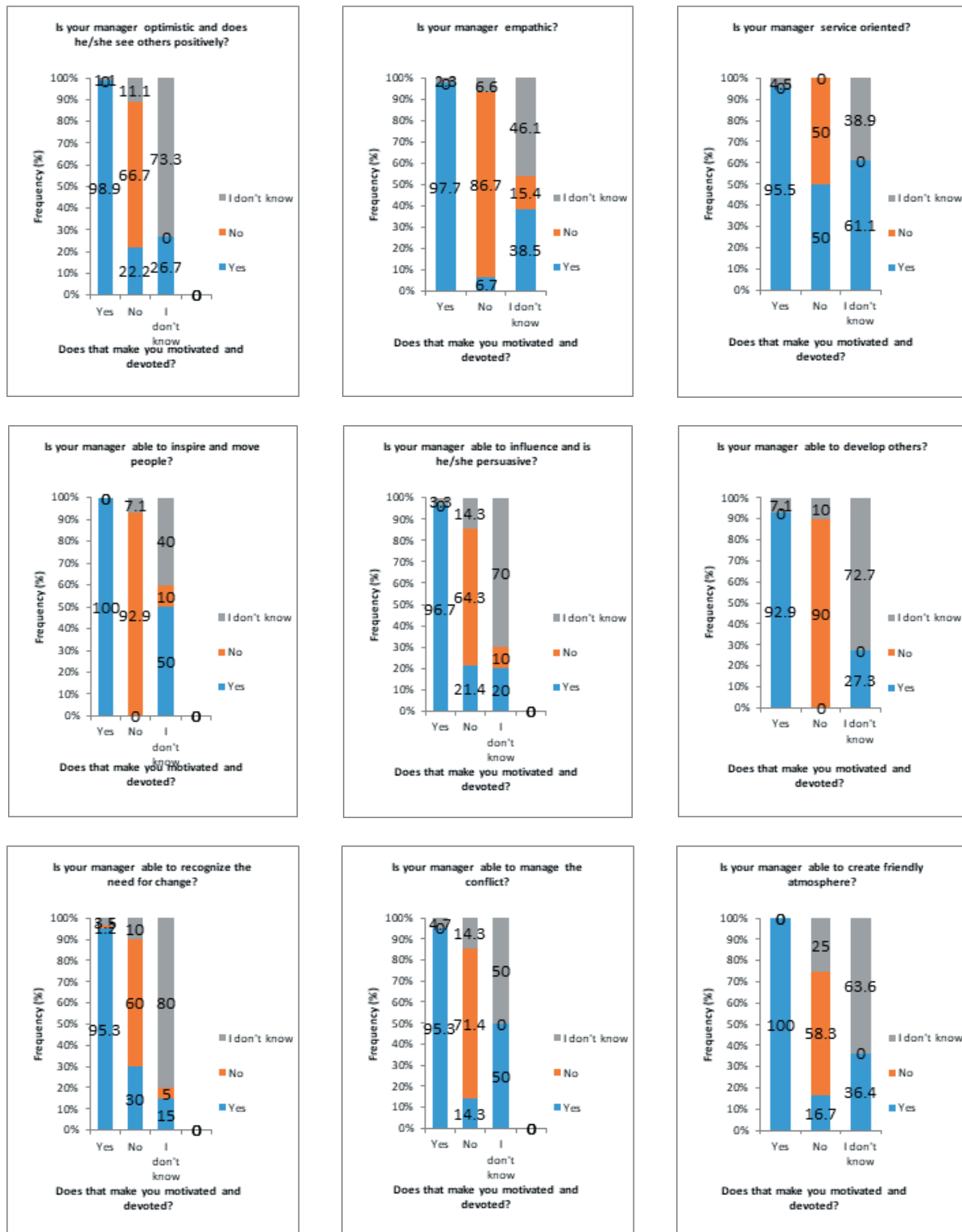
22% of them were between 18 and 25 years old; 38% were between 25 and 34 years old; 28% were between 35 and 44 years old; 10% were between 45 and 54 years old; and 3% were between 55 and 64 years old.

37% of the respondents had worked in the company for less than 1 year; 39% of them had worked between 1 and 3 years in the company; 20% between 3 and 10 years; and 4 % over 10 years.

There were 15 pairs of questions, where the first question in every pair was related to the employee's perception of his/her manager's characteristics, followed by the second question in the pair, which was the same for all questions- *Does that make you motivated and devoted?*

The following charts (author's analyses) show the results obtained by the statistical analyses of these 15 pairs of questions from the questionnaire.





Source: Authors' analysis

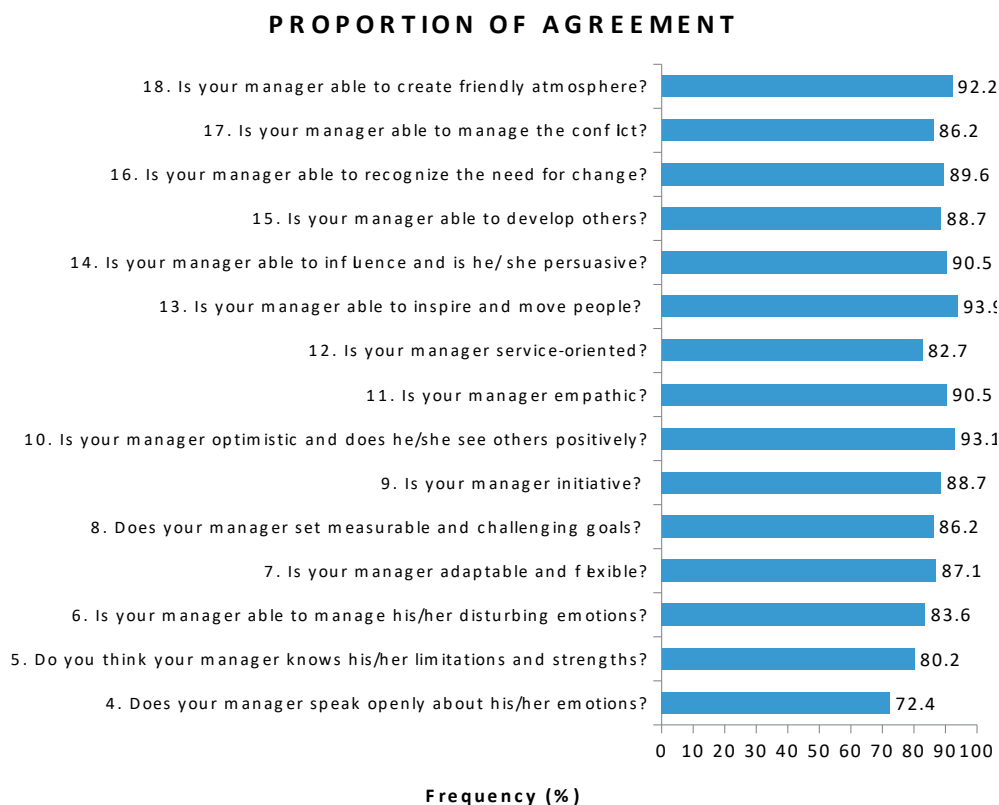
As can be seen from these charts, statistically significant correlation can be found between the same answers to both questions (*Yes*; *No*; *I do not know*) for each of these 15 pairs of questions. In each of the 15 pairs of questions, employees who responded positively the first question concerning their managers' emotional intelligence characteristics (being adaptable and flexible, being optimistic, empathetic, service-oriented, taking initiative, being able to speak openly about their emotions, to recognize their limitations and strengths, to manage disturbing emotions, to set measurable goals, to inspire, influence, and develop people, to recognize the need for change, to manage conflicts and to create friendly atmosphere), also answered the second question positively concerning their motivation in relation to those characteristics. Significant correlation was also



found between the other two categories of answers- negative answers and answers where employees were not able to define whether their managers possessed certain characteristics or not.

The total correlation between the categories of leaders' characteristics typical for emotionally intelligent leaders recognized by employees and employees' motivation and devotion is shown in the chart below (author's analysis).

Fisher's exact test was $p < 0.001$ for all categories.



Source: Authors' analysis

DISCUSSION

This study enables leaders to gain a new way of looking at their employees' attitude, especially their motivation and commitment to the company. According to the study, leaders with emotional intelligence competences (being able to speak openly about their emotions, being aware of their limitations and strengths, being able to manage disruptive emotions and to stay calm under stress, being adaptable and flexible and able to recognize the need for change, being able to set measurable and challenging goals, taking initiative, being optimistic, empathetic, service oriented, being able to influence, inspire, and move people, being able to develop people, being able to manage conflicts and to create friendly atmosphere, being a role model for respect and helpfulness) have a direct impact on the motivation and devotion of their employees. According to the study, if when employees recognize that their managers possess some of these competences, this makes them motivated and devoted. Therefore, leaders should work on these competencies, and use them for promoting a sense of belonging to the company among their employees. This is the simplest way of gaining the commitment of their employees and boosting their motivation. Only motivated and devoted employees can produce the best possible service to the customers. However, this study is based on employees' personal perception of their managers, as well as of their own motivation and devotion, so the level of service provided and customer satisfaction were not analyzed and they could be subject of further researches. On the other hand, if employees



do not think their managers have emotional intelligence competences, that does not make them motivated and devoted. There is no evidence whether this lack of motivation and devotion leads to the opposite feelings, such as frustration and job dissatisfaction, hence it could be investigated in some future researches. Another limitation of this study is the fact that only employees from spa and wellness centers on similar positions participated. Future studies could be expanded to other service industries, or different departments within hotels.

CONCLUSION

Emotional intelligence of leaders has a strong correlation with employees' commitment and motivation. The above results show that a leader with emotional intelligence can enhance commitment from his/her followers. These findings may be applied in the hospitality industry in general and specifically in spa centers. Leaders who are trained regarding the emotional intelligence competencies, can bring higher commitment among their followers. The emotional attachment of employees to the company may be attributed to the leadership style of the supervisor and his/her emotional intelligence and the way they use these skills and competencies. This study has provided a better understanding of emotional intelligence and its role in relation to different attitudes among employees, like motivation and devotion.

There can be concluded according to results that a leader with a high level of emotional intelligence can play a vital role in enhancing his/her employees' commitment and motivation, due to the level of understanding of the employees' emotions, needs and demands. Motivated and satisfied employees are more flexible, they take initiative in the dynamic surrounding and make decisions promptly. Leaders should aim to get to know their employees well and to understand them. Their role should be to develop themselves, as well as their employees and to empower them so they can provide extraordinary service.

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