Emotional Intelligence and Leadership Styles in China

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Abstract

This study explored the emotional intelligence level and leadership styles of Chinese managers and their employees, in comparison to Western contexts. The study participants were employees and managers in two organisations in Shanghai, China. Consistent with previous studies in the West, the results of this study in China show that the relationship between emotional intelligence and transformational leadership style are positively correlated. The results also show that among the four dimensions or components of emotional intelligence, the employees obtained the highest score in self-awareness and the lowest in social awareness, while managers also obtained the highest score in self-awareness, but the lowest in self-management. On leadership style, managers obtained their highest score on transformational leadership style, followed by transactional leadership style and the lowest score for laissez-faire style. Within the dimensions or components of transformational leadership styles, managers scored highest at inspirational motivation and lowest at idealised influence (attributed) and individual consideration. Various implications for theory and practice arise from the study, in the context of traditional Chinese values and culture, alongside ongoing changes in terms of China’s increasing interaction with Western managerial practices.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence, transformational leadership, transactional leadership

1. Introduction

While many previous studies of emotional intelligence and leadership style have been conducted in the West, relatively few studies on these themes have been carried out in China. Levels of emotional intelligence and leadership style vary between cultures; therefore, there is scope to better understand these themes within the Chinese context. Currently, one fifth of the world’s population (1.3 billion people) live in China. China adopted economic reform and the policy of opening to the outside world in 1978 and successfully obtained membership of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001, creating opportunities for private enterprises and business investments. Measured on the basis of purchasing power parity (PPP), China in 2003 stood as the second largest economy in the world (The World Factbook, 2004). The economist Angus Maddison (China Daily, 2008) predicts that China will be the
number one economic power in the world by 2015. As more foreign enterprises are actively pursuing cooperation with China. Thus, this study provide information to improve our understanding of emotional intelligence and leadership style, as it functions in China, valuable information for foreign investors to better deal with Chinese corporations, as well as for Chinese organisations themselves to understand their own behavioural dynamics.

Emotional intelligence has been found to be important for individuals, groups and organisations, with a positive influence on employees’ work attitudes, behaviours and performance. High emotional intelligence makes work efficient and pleasant (Goleman, 1998a). Studies have shown that emotional intelligence relates to various job-related outcomes, including performance (Bachman et al., 2000; Goleman, 1996; Tischler et al., 2002), leadership success (Cooper and Sawaf, 1997; Gates, 1995; Goleman, 1998b; Higgs, 2003; Sivanathan and Fekken, 2002), citizenship behaviours (Day and Carroll, 2004), quality problem solving (Rahim and Minors, 2003) and academic success and retention (Downey et al., 2008). Ciarrochi et al. (2002) suggested that emotional intelligence moderates the relationship between stress and mental health.

Conversely, leadership style is a critically important function of the manager, as it is one of the most critical variables upon which the success or failure of any organisation depends. Leadership style, shown to be related to emotional intelligence, is a critically important function of the manager. Transformational leadership style is considered one of the important essentials for an organisation’s leaders and their subordinates. It also produces a variety of positive outcomes in organisational settings, as it is positively correlated to organisational success (Eisenbach et al., 1999), consolidated-business-unit performance (Howell and Avolio, 1993; Geyer and Steyrer, 1998), team performance (Bass, 1990), trust in the leader (Podsakoff et al., 1990), and subordinates’ extra effort and satisfaction (Seltzer and Bass, 1990; Yammarino and Bass, 1990).

2. Literature review and conceptual framework

2.1 Emotional intelligence

Emotional intelligence has its roots in studies of “social intelligence” by Thorndike, who firstly defined social intelligence as “the ability to understand and manage men and women, boys and girls – to act wisely in human relations” (Thorndike, 1920). Following Thorndike, Gardner (1983) included interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences that are closely related to social intelligence in his theory of multiple intelligences, although he did not use the term emotional intelligence. Intrapersonal intelligence is the ability to “symbolize complex and highly differentiated sets of feelings” (Gardner, 1993). Interpersonal intelligence is the ability to “notice and make distinctions among other individuals and, in particular, among their moods, temperaments, motivations and intentions” (Gardner, 1993). Put simply, intrapersonal intelligence is the ability to manage one’s own emotions and interpersonal is the ability to manage the emotions of others as well as dealing with others. In 1990, psychologists Salovey and Mayer (1990) first formally identified the term Emotional Intelligence (EI) and defined it as “the subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one’s own and others’ feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and actions”.

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In the past decade, interest in emotional intelligence has grown. There are many definitions of emotional intelligence, and although many of them are similar, there is no simple, developed and unique definition. The most well-known emotional intelligence model was developed by Goleman who defined emotional intelligence as “the capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves and for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships” (Goleman, 1998a). In 2000, Boyatzis et al. refined Goleman’s 1998 emotional intelligence model from five dimensions or components (self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills) to four dimensions/components – self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management – to capture the full scope of emotional competencies. This has become a commonly used model of emotional intelligence.

Goleman (1996) and Bar-On (1997) identified self-awareness as the most important dimension of emotional intelligence. Goleman (1996) stated self-awareness is “knowing one’s emotions, recognizing a feeling as it happens – is the keystone of emotional intelligence”. If someone knows their internal states of emotion, it allows self-control and leads to empathy in others. Goleman (1996) defined self-management as “handling feelings so they are appropriate is an ability that builds on self-awareness … the capacity to soothe oneself, to shake off rampant anxiety, gloom, or irritability … People who are poor in this ability are constantly battling feelings of distress, while those who excel in it can bounce back far more quickly from life’s setbacks and upsets”. In other words, self-control or self-managing of emotions can prevent anger, anxiety and gloom and in turn allow effective proactivity. Social awareness is recognising emotions in others, or the ability to know how another feels. Goleman (1996) stated, “Empathy, another ability that builds on emotional self-awareness, is the fundamental people skill”. In fact, “empathy and relating to others builds on self-awareness, the more open we are to our own emotions, the more skilled we will be in reading feelings … who have no idea what they feel themselves, are at a complete loss when it comes to knowing what anyone else around them is feeling. They are emotionally tone-deaf” (Goleman, 1996). Relationship management is the skill of managing emotions in others. Goleman (1996) explained “people who are emotionally adept – who know and manage their own feelings well, and who read and deal effectively with other people’s feelings – are at an advantage in any domain of life, whether romance and intimate relationships or picking up the unspoken rules that govern success in organizational politics”. Goleman (2001) further stated “relationship management that ability in turn builds on other domains of emotional intelligence, particularly self-management and social awareness. If we cannot control our emotional outbursts or impulses and lack empathy, there is less chance we will be effective in our relationships”.

Based on Goleman’s emotional intelligence model, Bradberry and Greaves (2002) defined emotional intelligence based on a connection between what a person sees and does with the self and others:

2.2 Focus on you

(1) “Self-awareness: your ability to accurately perceive your own emotions and stay aware of them as they happen. This includes keeping on top of how you tend to respond to specific situations and people”. 

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(2) “Self-management: your ability to use awareness of your emotions to stay flexible and positively direct your behavior. This means managing your emotional reactions to all situations and people”.

2.3 Focus on your contact with other people

(1) “Social awareness: your ability to accurately pick up on emotions in other people and get what is really going on. This often means understanding what other people are thinking and feeling even if you don’t feel the same way”.

(2) “Relationship management: your ability to use your awareness of your emotions and the emotions of others to manage interactions successfully. This includes clear communication and effectively handling conflict” (Bradberry and Greaves, 2002).

2.4 Leadership style

The volume of research on leadership has increased rapidly. The research has given rise to various models, among which the foremost is a model that identifies three types of leadership: transformational, transactional and laissez-faire leadership (Bass, 1997).

2.4.1 Transformational leadership

“Leaders transform the needs, values, preferences and aspirations of followers from self-interest to collective interests. Further, they cause followers to become highly committed to the leader’s mission, to make significant personal sacrifices in the interest of the mission, and to perform above and beyond the call of duty” (Shamir et al., 1993).

2.4.2 Transactional leadership

“Using a carrot or a stick, contains three components usually characterized as instrumental in followers’ goal attainment” (Bass, 1997). Transactional leadership comprises three components: (1) Contingent reward – subordinates’ performance is associated with contingent rewards or exchange relationship; (2) Active Management by exception – leaders monitor followers’ performance and take corrective action if deviations occur to ensure outcomes achieved; and (3) Passive Management by exception – leaders fail to intervene until problems become serious (Bass, 1997).

2.4.3 Laissez-faire leadership

Laissez-faire leadership consists of non-leadership or the avoidance of leadership responsibilities. Leaders fail to follow up requests for assistance, and resist expressing their views on important issues (Bass, 1997).

The transformational leadership style is considered the most effective one (Bass, 1997). Rouche et al. (1989) defined transformational leadership in terms of the ability of a leader to influence the values, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of others by working with and through them in order to accomplish the organization’s mission and purpose. The theory of transforming leadership was developed primarily by Burns in 1978. He defined a transforming leader as someone who “looks for potential motives in followers, seeking to satisfy higher needs, and engages the full person of the follower” (Burns, 1978).

Based on the work of Burns (1978), Bass (1990) developed a model of transformational and transactional leadership and established four clear components of transformational leadership:
- Idealised influence (charisma): Leaders display conviction, emphasise trust, take stands on difficult issues, present their most important values, and emphasise the importance of purpose, commitment, and the ethical consequences of decisions. Such leaders are admired as role models generating pride, loyalty, confidence, and alignment around a shared purpose.
- Inspirational motivation: Leaders articulate an appealing vision of the future, challenge followers with high standards, talk optimistically with enthusiasm, and provide encouragement and meaning for what needs to be done.
- Intellectual stimulation: Leaders question old assumptions, traditions, and beliefs, stimulate new perspectives and ways of doing things, and encourage the expression of ideas and reasons in others.
- Individualised consideration: Leaders deal with others as individuals, consider their individual needs, abilities, and aspirations, listen attentively, further their development, advice, teach and coach.

2.5 Managers’ emotional intelligence and transformational leadership

The reason for focusing on managers’ emotional intelligence and transformational leadership in this study is because these two particular elements have been found to be important for business success. Goleman (1998a) asserted that “IQ and technical skills do matter, but mainly as threshold capabilities … recent research clearly shows that emotional intelligence is the sine qua non of leadership. Without it, a person can have the best training in the world, an incisive, analytical mind, and an endless supply of smart ideas, but still will not make a good leader”.

Rosete and Ciarroch (2005) investigated the reason why intelligent and experienced leaders are not always successful in dealing with environmental demands and life in general. They examined the relationship between emotional intelligence, personality, cognitive intelligence and leadership. The results revealed that higher emotional intelligence was associated with higher leadership effectiveness. Other scholars also revealed that effective leaders were identified as transformational rather than transactional leaders and transformational leaders always paid special attention to the needs of subordinates (Barling et al., 2000; Gardner and Stough, 2002). Similarly, Sivanathan and Fekken (2002) argued that leaders with higher levels of emotional intelligence were perceived by their followers as higher in transformational leadership.

In addition, the relationship between emotional intelligence and transformational leadership has been found to be positively correlated (Barling et al., 2000; Duckett and Macfarlane, 2003; Leban and Zulauf, 2004; Palmer et al., 2001; Sivanathan and Fekken, 2002). There are many empirical studies supported their relationship, for instance, Palmer et al. (2001) studied 43 managers and found that there were significant correlations between emotional intelligence and several components of transformational leadership. Within the four components of transformational leadership, only intellectual stimulation did not correlate significantly with any of the emotional intelligence component scales. Palmer et al. found that “specifically, the inspirational motivation and individualized consideration components of transformational leadership were significantly correlated with both the ability of emotional monitoring and emotional management in oneself and others” (Palmer et al., 2001). Leaders who motivated and inspired subordinates to work towards common goals (inspirational motivation), and paid special attention to the achievement and developmental
needs of subordinates (individualised consideration), reported that they monitored and managed emotions both within themselves and others. In a study of 49 managers and 187 subordinates, emotional intelligence was associated with three aspects of transformational leadership: idealised influence, inspirational motivation, and individual consideration (Barling et al., 2000). The authors asserted that emotional intelligence predisposed leaders to use a transformational leadership style.

Leban and Zulauf (2004) showed that overall emotional intelligence was correlated with the transformational leader behaviour component of inspirational motivation, and the individualised consideration components of transformational leadership were significantly correlated with both strategic emotional intelligence and understanding emotions. They concluded that emotional intelligence contributes to transformational leadership and subsequent actual project performance. A study by Gardner and Stough (2002) not only showed that emotional intelligence correlated highly with all components of transformational leadership, but also found that the components of understanding of emotions and emotional management were the best predictors of transformational leadership style. Palmer et al. (2001) in reporting the research of Yammarino and Dubinsky (1994) claimed that “transformational leadership is more emotion-based compared to transactional leadership and involves heightened emotional levels”.

Apart from those studies mentioned above, Kupers and Weibler (2006) first employed a qualitative method to investigate the significance of emotions in transformational leadership based on Goleman’s (2001) current refined emotional intelligence model. Goleman’s emotional intelligence model comprises 20 competencies to capture the full scope of emotional competencies in four clusters emotional intelligence dimensions, including self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A Self</th>
<th>B Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal competencies</td>
<td>Social competencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recognition</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Self-awareness (the ability to understand feelings and accurate self-assessment)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional self-awareness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accurate self-assessment</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-confidence</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Regulation</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Self-management (the ability to manage internal states, impulses and resources)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-control</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trustworthiness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conscientiousness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adaptability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievement drive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Social awareness (the ability to read people and groups accurately)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service orientation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisational awareness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Relationship management (the ability to induce desirable responses in and with others)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Conflict management</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change catalyst</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Building bonds</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork and collaboration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Goleman (2001, p. 28)

Figure 1. Goleman’s framework of emotional competencies
Kupers and Weibler (2006) summarise the involved emotions, and personal and social emotional intelligence competencies related to transformational leadership components in Figure 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transformational components</th>
<th>Personal EI competencies</th>
<th>Social EI competencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Idealised influence</td>
<td>All personal EI competencies, particularly:</td>
<td>Empathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-confidence</td>
<td>Organisational awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-control</td>
<td>Influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspirational motivation</td>
<td>All personal EI competencies, particularly:</td>
<td>Visionary leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Achievement drive</td>
<td>Change catalyst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Initiative</td>
<td>Empathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual simulation</td>
<td>All personal EI competencies, particularly:</td>
<td>Developing others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Initiative</td>
<td>Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual consideration</td>
<td>All personal EI competencies, particularly:</td>
<td>Conflict management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adaptability</td>
<td>Building bonds</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Kupers and Weibler (2006, p.377)

Figure 2. Involved emotions, personal and social emotional intelligence competencies related to transformational components

In summary, based on the significant previous studies, emotional intelligence could positively correlate for the transformational leadership style in western contexts.

In the past decade, interest in transformational leadership and emotional intelligence has grown. While many previous studies of leadership style and emotional intelligence have been conducted in the West, relatively few studies on these themes have been carried out in China. Levels of emotional intelligence and leadership style vary between cultures, especially the West and in China. For this reason, there is scope to better understand the dynamics of these topics within the Chinese context. Thus, this study attempts to gain a clearer picture of leadership styles and emotional intelligence level as well as their dimensions in the Chinese context. What is the relationship between emotional intelligence and transformational leadership style in Chinese context? Is a transformational or transactional leadership style dominant among Chinese managers? What is the level of emotional intelligence of Chinese managers and employees?

3. Methods

The data of this study was obtained from two privately owned enterprises (POEs) in Shanghai. This city is the vanguard of the modern movement of Chinese business, with a population of more than 20 million. GDP growth in Shanghai has averaged eleven percent per annum for the last ten years. Recently, the Chinese government decided to speed up the process of turning Shanghai into a major international financial centre. Chen (1999) asserted that Shanghai can and must lead the nation by example. The city has been and will remain at
the leading edge of China’s experimentation with foreign investment. Thus, conducting the study in Shanghai allows the research to draw conclusions about the future direction of Chinese business in domestic privately owned enterprises (POEs).

3.1 Participants

The study participants came from two construction companies in Shanghai. China’s real estate industry has been developing rapidly as Shanghai property has appreciated on average eleven percent per annum for the last three years. Construction companies (buildings materials companies) that supply the main building materials, including bathtubs, wood floorings and tiles, are also growing in step with the building boom. In this study, only Chinese local construction companies from Shanghai were approached in order to provide and reflect the emotional intelligence and leadership styles of indigenous Chinese employees and managers.

Of the 709 questionnaires distributed, 323 valid samples were obtained – 50 managers and 273 subordinates. A total of 54 teams were involved in the study. Within the non-managers, 72.9% was male and 27.1% was female. The age of respondents ranged from 19 to 65 and the mean was 36.16 years old. The largest percentage of respondents (22.9 percent) was in the 28- to 32-year-old age group. Within the managers, the age of respondents ranged from 23 to 67 and the mean was 44.12 years old. The significant percentage of respondents (19.5 percent) was in the 33- to 37-year-old age group. Of the non-managers, most participants had a secondary education level (47.1 percent). Of the managers, most participants had a third level Diploma (54.2 percent). Of the non-managers, the highest percentage of work experience is within the range six to ten years (26.4 percent). Within the managers, the highest percentage of work experience is within the range of 31 years or above (20.8 percent). More detail about the participant sample is shown in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Managers</th>
<th>Subordinates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>72.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>27.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Min.</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max.</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>44.12</td>
<td>36.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Largest % group</td>
<td>33-37</td>
<td>28-32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Largest % group</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Diploma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Experience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Largest % group</td>
<td>31 years or above</td>
<td>6-10 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.2 Measures

Questionnaire surveys were employed as a data collection instruments. The Chinese version of the Wong Emotional Intelligence Scale (WEIS) and Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) were employed as are provided by the authors. All respondents (both
managers and subordinates) completed a self-report emotional intelligence measure scale to assess their own emotional intelligence level. For objectivity, to evaluate the leadership style of managers, both the managers themselves and their direct subordinates provided ratings of their managers’ leadership style. This rating method was consistent with a number of previous studies (Barling et al., 1996; Brown et al., 2006; Ozaralli, 2003; Rosete and Ciarroch, 2005).

Each of the manager’s emotional intelligence scores was applied to each of their subordinates’ data part to run on Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) in order to discover how a manager’s emotional intelligence level related to leadership style, it mean that two different sources were used: self-ratings of Managers’ EI and their direct subordinates ratings of leadership. Based on the information provided by the top management of the companies, a coding system on the surveys was used to associate subordinates with their direct manager in pairs.

3.3 Wong emotional intelligence scale (WEIS)

Although there are many emotional intelligence instruments in the market, for instance: Emotional Competence Inventory – ECI 360 (Goleman and Boyatzis, 2002), Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory (Bar-On, 1997), Multifacet Emotional Intelligence Scale-MEIS (Mayer et al., 1997), Emotional Intelligence Appraisal (Bradberry and Greaves, 2002) etc., most of them were developed based on Western countries. The other concern related to these scales is that they are too lengthy to be used here, as other variables also need to be measured.

In 2004, Wong et al. used a large sample to develop and validate a 40-item forced choice emotional intelligence measure for Chinese respondents in Hong Kong, the Wong Emotional Intelligence Scale (WEIS), with high Coefficient $\alpha=0.83$. The authors believed that to develop a tailor-made forced choice measurement for Chinese people was necessary because there are cultural differences between Chinese and Western countries. Chinese respondents may provide biased responses because of social desirability by using the Likert-type self-report items. Chen et al. (1995) examined cross-cultural differences in response style regarding the use of rating scales. Results showed that Japanese and Chinese people were more likely than the two North American groups to use the midpoint on the scales. The WEIS measure can reduce the biased responses and potential problem of social desirability by asking respondents to choose one out of two equally desirable ability pairs, while only one of them represents the emotional intelligence of the subjects (Wong et al., 2004).

In 2007, Wong et al. further tested this instrument in Hong Kong and mainland China. The results provided clear evidence for the instrument’s practical utility. Thus, it is both suitable and necessary to employ the WEIS for Chinese people in this study as this takes account of cultural propensities in completing such questionnaires. An example WEIS item is: “When you are very down, you will: A. Try to do something to make yourself feel better. B. Just ignore it because you know your emotion will be back to normal naturally”. The Cronbach’s $\alpha$ (alpha) for this scale in this present study was 0.66.

3.4 Leadership style

A widely accepted Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ-5x Short) (Bass and Avolio, 1997) was employed in this study to assess the leadership style of the subjects. This
short questionnaire is considered a valid measurement of transformational, transactional and laissez-faire leadership styles. A 5-point Likert-type frequency scale is used to measure how frequently each statement fits the respondent: 0=Not at all; 1=Once in a while; 2=sometimes; 3=Fairly often; 4=Frequently, if not always. An example of these items is: “Supervisor provides me with assistance in exchange for my efforts”. The Cronbach’s α (alpha) for transformational, transactional and laissez-faire leadership styles scale in this study was 0.90, 0.68 and 0.72 respectively.

4. Results

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics including the number of valid samples, mean and standard deviation of the main variables in this study.

Table 2. Samples, means and standard deviations of main variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Sd</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All participants’ emotional intelligence</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>22.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Self-awareness</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>6.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Self-management</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>5.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Social awareness</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>5.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Relationship management</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>5.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subordinates’ emotional intelligence</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>22.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Self-awareness</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>5.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Self-management</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>5.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Social awareness</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>5.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Relationship management</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>5.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managers’ emotional intelligence</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>24.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Self-awareness</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>6.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Self-management</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>5.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Social awareness</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>5.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Relationship management</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>6.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformational leadership</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>2.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Idealised influence (behaviour)</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>2.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Idealised influence (attributed)</td>
<td>322</td>
<td>2.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Inspirational motivation</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>2.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Individual consideration</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>2.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Intellectual stimulation</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>2.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transactional leadership</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>2.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Contingent reward</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>2.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Management by exception-active</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>2.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Management by exception-passive</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>2.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laissez-faire</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>1.86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.1 Paired samples t-test

Results from the paired samples t-test show that the transformational leadership style score (2.40) is significantly higher than the transactional leadership style score (2.26) at the 95 percent confidence interval. The level of the transformational leadership components of
inspirational motivation (2.49) is significantly higher than idealised influence (behaviour) (2.41), intellectual stimulation (2.37), idealised influence (attributed) (2.36) and individual consideration (2.36) at the 95 percent confidence interval.

The average score for managers’ emotional intelligence (24.28) was significantly higher than subordinates’ average score (22.62) at the .05 level. Although each of the managers’ four emotional intelligence component scores were also higher than those of subordinates, none of the differences were significant. Among the four dimensions of subordinates’ emotional intelligence, the mean of self-awareness (5.97) is higher than relationship management (5.61), social awareness (5.47) and self-management (5.56) at the .05 significance level. Regarding the four components of managers’ emotional intelligence, paired samples t-tests showed no significant differences among them.

4.2 Pearson correlation analysis

Results of the Pearson Correlation Analyses indicating the inter-relationship between the variables is presented in Table 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Managers’ Emotional</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Employees’ Emotional</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.47**</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Transformational Leadership</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.23**</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Transactional Leadership</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.51**</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Laissez-faire</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.38**</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Education Level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Work Experience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cronbach’s alpha values are provided along the diagonal in parentheses; N/A not applicable.
**correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed)
*correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Based on Table 3, managers’ emotional intelligence (#1) is positively correlated to transformational style (#3) ($r=.23, p<.01$) and negatively correlated to laissez-faire (#5) ($r=-.18, p<.01$). Managers’ emotional intelligence (#1) does not show any relationship with transactional leadership (#4). Regarding demographic characteristics, this shows that managers’ emotional intelligence (#1) is positively correlated to age (#7) ($r=.25, p<.01$) and work experience (#9) ($r=.16, p<.01$).
Employees’ emotional intelligence (##2) is positively correlated to managers’ transformational style (##3) ($r=.23$, $p<.01$) and negatively correlated to managers’ transactional leadership style (##4) ($r=-.16$, $p<.01$) and laissez-faire (##5) ($r=-.24$, $p<.01$) respectively. Employees’ emotional intelligence also correlated to age (##7) ($r=.30$, $p<.01$) and work experience (##9) ($r=.27$, $p<.01$). There is no correlation between either managers’ and employees’ emotional intelligence to gender and education level. In addition, there is also no correlation between managers’ transformational leadership style to any demographic characteristics. Interestingly, both managers’ transactional leadership (##4) and laissez-faire (##5) are negatively related to age (##7) ($r=-.25$, $p<.01$) and ($r=-.18$, $p<.01$) respectively.

5. Discussion and conclusions

Conclusion 1. The relationship between emotional intelligence and transformational leadership style

Consistent with previous studies in the West, the results of this study in China show that the relationship between emotional intelligence and transformational leadership style are positively correlated. This implies that managers with high emotional intelligence are more sensitive to their own and others’ emotions and feelings, and more likely to use a people-oriented transformational leadership style. Moreover, results in this study were consistent with those of Gardner and Stough (2002), which show that emotional intelligence is negatively correlated to laissez-faire. Gardner and Stough (2002) claimed that “those leaders who considered themselves as avoiding accepting responsibility, who are absent when required, who fail to follow up on requests for assistance and resist expressing their opinion on important issue components of laissez-faire leadership were more likely to be unable to identify their own feelings and emotional states, be unable to understand the emotions of other in the workplace, be unable to manage their own positive and negative emotions, and be unable to effectively control emotional states experienced at work”. Managers holding this kind of non-leadership or the avoidance of leadership responsibilities, fail to follow up requests for assistance of subordinates.

Conclusion 2. Emotional intelligence level in China

As previously mentioned, the WEIS were employed to measure the Chinese emotional intelligence level in this study. In 2004, Wong et al. used a large sample to develop and validate this 40-item forced choice emotional intelligence measure for Chinese respondents. They paid attention to the measure of construct development and found that the mean emotional intelligence score of Chinese is 24.1 (SD 3.42). Three years later, in 2007, Wong et al. further examined the validity and applicability of the WEIS in Hong Kong and mainland China and found a mean score of emotional intelligence of 25.6 (SD 4.17) and 26.1 (SD 3.99) respectively in two separate studies. The results in our study show that the mean score of the total participants’ sample (22.87) as well as managers’ emotional intelligence (24.28) are quite similar to the Chinese emotional intelligence mean score as found by Wong et al. in 2004 and Wong et al. in 2007. However, the scores of the four emotional intelligence components were not separately addressed by Wong et al. in their studies in 2004 and 2007. Thus, this study adds more insights about the four emotional intelligence components of the Chinese. As might be expected, the emotional intelligence scores of the managers were
significantly higher than subordinates. It stands to reason that more emotionally mature
individuals should be promoted to more senior and responsible positions.

Wong et al. (2004) claimed that “Asians will accept a greater difference in power
between superior and subordinate roles. Furthermore, Asians, especially Chinese, are trained
to suppress and regulate their emotions, while Westerners are trained to express their
emotions. Thus, a non-reactive quiet response when one’s boss is making unreasonable
demands may be regarded as a high emotional intelligence response in Chinese culture but
probably not in Western cultures”. In addition, the role of emotions in Chinese culture is
found to be quite different from the one in the US and other Western countries. The Chinese
culture does not recognise itself as utilising the emotional life of individuals in the service of
the social order (Potter, 1988). The Chinese believe that experienced emotion is irrelevant
either to the creation or to the perpetuation of social institutions of any kind. They certainly
recognize the existence of emotions, and are aware of them as aspects of experience, but
emotions are not thought of as significant in social relationships. An emotion is never the
legitimizing rationale for any socially significant action, and there is no cultural theory that
social structure rests on emotional ties. Thus, social relationships persist legitimately without
an emotions basis, either real or fictive. This view might be tagged the “image of irrelevant
affect. Because the Chinese assume the existence of a continuous social order that requires
no affirmation in inner emotional response, but only in behaviour, there is no need for them
to treat emotions as inherently important” (Potter, 1988).

Hsu (1949) described the social setting in China as suppressive rather than repressive.
Instead of being unwilling to, they are in fact not allowed to express their emotion in their
workplace. There is always a gap between the emotion they are supposed to display and what
they actually feel (Hsu, 1949). Generally, Chinese employees have to exercise positive
emotional display in front of managers regardless of their true feelings. The study of Parker,
Gladstone and Kuan (2001) claimed that China is one of the representative countries with a
culture where “display rules” govern emotional expression, where Chinese view emotional
distress as part of life. In addition, Chinese people are primarily shaped by their traditional
cultural value system with a focus on high power distances and hierarchy, different from
Western values. Thus, based on the above literature, it appears the Chinese are trained not to
express their negative emotions to people with power over them. This may well also be the
case in Western cultures, but perhaps not as pronounced, and for different social and
emotional reasons.

In fact, Chinese people having these cultural value influences may have an advantage
over those from other countries in some aspects of their emotional management, certainly in
the Chinese context. This particular cultural background of the Chinese people, in which high
power distance, “display rules’ and an emphasis on the Confucius” Five Cardinal Relations
(Wu Lun) values in respecting others may be one of the reasons that the Chinese are trained
not to express their negative emotions while simultaneously having the competence to
accurately perceive their own emotions. Middleton (1989) claimed that people should pay
attention to the conflict between genuinely felt emotions and emotions required to be
displayed in organisations as “emotional dissonance”. Workers may experience emotional
dissonance when the emotional expression required by the job’s display rules clashes with
their inner or ‘real’ feelings, so emotional dissonance occurs when expressed emotions are in
conformity with organisational norms, but clash with true feelings (Rafaeli and Sutton, 1987).
However, it is believed that Chinese people may not have negative emotional dissonance since they are high in self-awareness and their stoicism and non-expression of negative feelings is so inherent that it does not create any distress.

Moreover, consistent with the reasoning above, the results of this study show that both the employees and managers obtained the highest scores in self-awareness within the four emotional intelligence components. It is a great advantage for the manager as well as for subordinates to possess high self-awareness. In fact, Goleman (1996) and Bar-On (1997) identified self-awareness as the most important dimension/component of emotional intelligence. Goleman stated that self-awareness as “knowing one’s emotions, recognizing a feeling as it happens – is the keystone of emotional intelligence” (1996). If someone knows their internal state of emotion, it allows self-control and leads to empathy to others. Goleman (1996) argued that self-management, social awareness, and relationship management build on self-awareness. He suggested that in the workplace, self-awareness is a prerequisite for effective self-management, which in turn predicts greater social skill through a secondary pathway which runs from self-awareness to social awareness (particularly empathy) to social skill (relationship management).

David and Kim (1998) stated that “he that would govern others must first master himself”. People looking for advanced emotional intelligence must first develop their self-awareness … “self-management depends first and foremost on self-awareness. Other skills are also closely linked to, and build upon, self-awareness. We cannot improve ourselves or develop new capabilities unless and until we know what level of capabilities we currently possess”. Goleman et al. (2002) further stated “a leader can’t manage his emotions well if he has little or no awareness of them”. Goleman (1996) suggests also that people who have a high level of self-awareness are very honest with themselves and avoid unrealistic hope. Thus, people with strong self-awareness are realistic – neither overly self-critical nor naively hopeful (Goleman et al., 2002). Abraham (1999) and George (2000) suggested that self-awareness allows individuals to prioritise problems, where inconsequential issues are set aside and more important and urgent issues are addressed. Therefore, it is logical to argue that managers with high self-awareness will set demands that are more reasonable with realistic expectations of subordinates, avoiding inappropriate criticism. Individuals’ self-awareness has the ability to alter team members’ responses to their actions (Eisenberg and Fabes, 1992). Thus, managers’ self-awareness possesses the ability to guide subordinates’ interactions to meet desired goals (Miller and Leary, 1992). Goleman (1996) also demonstrated that leaders high in self-awareness are more likely to consider the needs of others over his or her personal needs, explaining that, “self-aware leaders … recognize, for instance, how their feelings affect themselves and their job performance. Instead of letting anger build into an outburst, they spot it as it crescendos and can see both what’s causing it and how to do something constructive about it” (Goleman et al., 2002).

The employee sample in this study obtained their lowest scores in social awareness, and their second lowest in self-management. This implies that Chinese people are better in knowing their own emotions but weak in recognising emotions in others and the ability to know how another feels. Managers obtained the lowest score in self-management. Here, managers are better in their emotional recognition but weak at handling and repairing negative emotions. According to Boyatzis et al. (2000), competencies of self-management include “trustworthiness” (maintaining standards of honesty and integrity), “adaptability”
flexibility in handling change), and “achievement orientation” (striving to improve or meeting a standard of excellence). This indicates that individuals high in self-management express internal emotions honestly and handle the flexible changing working environment effectively in order to strive for excellent performance in emotional control. However, both the employee sample and managers in this Chinese study seem to be less effective in self-management than self-awareness, within the emotional intelligence medium.

Unlike the leadership style measurement instrument, when it comes to emotional intelligence, there are numerous measurement instruments. Thus, although there are many previous studies of emotional intelligence conducted in the West as well as a few in Asia, it would not be valid to compare the emotional intelligence mean level in this study with that research. However, instead of comparing the mean score of emotional intelligence, it would be valid to compare the patterns among the four components of emotional intelligence in this study to other samples conducted in other parts of Asia and the West.

Bradberry and Greaves (2002) found that North and Central American and Australian respondents obtain the highest score in social awareness and the lowest score in self-management. Western European respondents obtain the highest score in social awareness and the lowest score in relationship management. South American, Eastern European, Middle Eastern, Asian and African respondents obtain the highest score in self-awareness and the lowest score in relationship management.

Interestingly, the results of this study are somewhat consistent with Bradberry and Greaves’ (2002) study. This study found that both the employee sample and managers have the highest score in self-awareness. Bradberry and Greaves (2002) found that Asian respondents obtain the highest score in self-awareness and the lowest score in relationship management. China is one of the large countries in Asia that shares these similar characteristics. However, this study shows that the employee sample obtains the lowest score in social awareness and managers obtain the lowest score in self-management, which is inconsistent with previous findings.

**Conclusion 3. Managers’ leadership styles in China**

The results show that managers obtained the highest score for transformational leadership style (2.40), followed by the transactional leadership style (2.26), and the lowest score for laissez-faire style (1.86). Den Hartog et al. (1997) conducted a study consisting of approximately 1,200 employees in eight Dutch organisations by employing the same measurement as this study. The results show that the mean of transformational leadership is 3.03, transactional leadership is 2.48 and laissez-faire leadership is 2.34. Palmer et al. (2001) found that the mean score of transformational leadership in Australia is 3.1, and for transactional leadership is 1.85. Krishnan (2004) found that the mean score of transformational leadership in India is 3.49. Walumbwa et al. (2005) found that the mean of transformational leadership in the US is 2.46, in China is 1.85, and in India is 2.95. Brown et al. (2006) conducted their study in a large US company using a sample of 2,441 people, and found that the mean transformational leadership score was 2.42. In the same year, Xenikou and Simosi conducted a study in Greece, and found that the mean of transformational leadership is 3.43. The summary of the mean score about these studies is shown in Table 4.
Table 4. Summary of leadership styles in previous studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>Transformational</th>
<th>Transactional</th>
<th>Laissez-faire</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>Mean 2.40</td>
<td>Mean 2.26</td>
<td>Mean 1.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>Mean 3.03</td>
<td>Mean 2.48</td>
<td>Mean 2.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Mean 3.10</td>
<td>Mean (N/A)</td>
<td>Mean (N/A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>Mean 3.49</td>
<td>Mean (N/A)</td>
<td>Mean (N/A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>Mean 2.46</td>
<td>Mean (N/A)</td>
<td>Mean (N/A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>Mean 1.85</td>
<td>Mean (N/A)</td>
<td>Mean (N/A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>Mean 2.95</td>
<td>Mean (N/A)</td>
<td>Mean (N/A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>Mean 2.42</td>
<td>Mean (N/A)</td>
<td>Mean (N/A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>Mean 3.43</td>
<td>Mean (N/A)</td>
<td>Mean (N/A)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although the Chinese managers obtained a higher score for transformational leadership than transactional leadership in this study, a mean score of 2.40 in transformational leadership appears lower compared with other countries. The MLQ has also been used to study leadership across two large sample groups from the People’s Republic of China and Australia in 2003 (Steane et al.). These matched perfectly with this study. The authors also completed the study in the construction and concrete industries in Shanghai. Within transformational leadership styles, the results of the present study show that the dimension of inspirational motivation transformational leadership is significantly higher than stimulation, idealised influence (attributed) and individual consideration. More detail about these results is shown in Table 2.

The results show that Chinese managers score higher at transformational leadership than transactional leadership. Confucianism is the predominant cultural influence in China for over the past 2,000 years. It is an authoritarian system that emphasizes values such as respect for one’s parents and elders. Confucius’ Five Cardinal Relations (Wu Lun), between sovereign and subject, father and son, elder brother and younger brother, husband and wife, and friend and friend, prescribe precise vertical relations between superiors and subordinates. These status differences are regarded as the main source of the hierarchy system (Bond, 1991). The Chinese people have carried these values into their managerial practices, although Chinese businesses have become as large and complex as those of any other industrial nation; they display a conservative approach to internal management (Limlingan, 1986). The structure is essentially authoritarian, subordinates must show respect and obedience to managers and those of unequal status maintain a social distance from one another without open communication.

Chinese people have lived under a value system of high power distance and strict hierarchy. Powerful men in the top management always execute their power of position; upper management always have the right to tell subordinates what to do while subordinates are supposed to have absolute obedience to their managers. In addition, Chinese are strongly concerned about their appearance to others; “saving face” is the main issue in their social status (Quanyu et al., 1997). Thus, managers who become too close to their subordinates may be considered to have downgraded their status and position. Quanyu et al. (1997) argued that “we believe that China is undoubtedly a hierarchical society, just as other places in the world. Nevertheless, we want to highlight that China is not only a hierarchical society but also a society where hierarchy has been especially emphasized”.
Quanyu et al. (1997) further claimed that, “hierarchy has been emphasized in Chinese internal administration, the decision-making of the internal administration is based on hierarchy … All of the organizations that include companies, factories, banks, departments of governments, hospitals, schools, and even temples or churches are divided and ranged into different levels. These different levels of organization indicate different positions, privileges, and responsibilities. The heads of organization with different levels have different social positions, political privileges, and role responsibilities as well”. Therefore, in such a strict authoritarian and hierarchical system and pyramid type of organisational structure, it is extremely difficult for managers to be concerned with their subordinates’ feelings, opinions and needs. In addition, under this strict authoritarian and hierarchical system, managers do not express their concern for subordinates. This sociocultural system may render all three leadership styles – transformational, transactional, laissez-faire – less relevant than in Western systems.

However, the situation may be in a state of flux. Recently, Tsui et al. (2004) claimed that “there are multiple forces that shape and mold the behaviours of managers in China. The most relevant forces affecting leadership behaviour are: traditional (Confucian) values, Communist ideologies, economic reform, and infiltration of foreign, especially Western, management philosophies and practices as a result of the reform”. Rowlinson et al. (1993) concluded that Chinese people place an emphasis on social harmony, maintaining good relationships, creating harmonious working atmosphere, collectivism and the concept of saving face. They found that Hong Kong Chinese managers are much more relationship-motivated than their Western counterparts in the UK.

Since China adopted economic reform and the policy of opening to the outside world in 1978, Western education has been an influence in the country. Therefore, traditional cultural characteristics have been influenced by Western culture and this has had a significant impact on the leadership style that the Chinese have adopted in the last two decades. China is now the world’s most rapidly developing economy, which is attracting increasing levels of foreign investment. Both highly bureaucratic state-owned enterprises and private sector family enterprises are typically paternalistic and autocratic, with gaunxi decreasing. The Chinese culture is widely believed to be changing, particularly in rapidly growing industries, open to trade with foreign countries (Walumbwa et al., 2005). Ralston et al. (1997) conclude that “younger ones who have grown up since China began to introduce market reforms in the late 1970, are said to be more individualistic and less respectful of and deferential to those in positions of authority” (cited in Walumbwa et al., 2005). Chen et al. (2005), reporting Bass and Avolio’s (2000) study, proposed that “collectivist cultures in Chinese society provide leaders with ready-made opportunities to become transformational leaders”. Chen et al. (2005) examined job satisfaction in nursing faculties and their perceptions of nursing deans’ and directors’ leadership styles in Taiwan. The results showed that nursing deans and directors showed more transformational than transactional leadership. The results of this study show that the highest percentage of age group for managers is 33 to 37, followed by the age group 38 to 42. These groups of young, modern managers have not been affected by the Cultural Revolution. They received a “normal” education, and they have had the chance to study abroad, to learn about Western education and culture. Thus, consistent with the literature, our study finds evidence that the Chinese leadership style is changing from
Conclusion 4:

The emotional intelligence of the employee sample and the managers positively correlated to age and work experience.

There is no correlation between both managers’ and employees’ emotional intelligence to gender and education level. However, the result is not very surprising, since the relationship between emotional intelligence and gender is inconsistent in current studies, although Day and Carroll (2004) found that gender and education level are related to emotional intelligence. Some scholars suggest that males have higher emotional intelligence level than females (Fatt, 2002; Shi and Wang, 2007), whereas others suggest the opposite (Higgs, 2003), while other studies have found no gender differences (Bar-On, 1997; Dulewicz and Higgs, 1999).

There is no correlation between managers’ transformational leadership style to any demographic characteristics. However, both managers’ transactional and laissez-faire leadership are negatively related to age, implying that young managers are more likely to employ transactional and laissez-faire leadership. It can be explained that these managers are inexperienced in the use of people-oriented transformational leadership styles, and/or have taken on the less nuanced Western-oriented concepts of contingent reward and punishment. Showing concern and caring about the need of others may not be in their leadership style repertoire, although they may develop this as they mature.

However, Downey et al. (2006) examined the relationship between leadership, emotional intelligence and intuition in senior female managers. The results indicated that female managers displaying transformational leadership behaviours were more likely to display higher levels of emotional intelligence and intuition than female managers displaying less transformational leadership behaviours. Given that the study between gender, emotional intelligence and leadership style is inconsistent, thus, there is still much to be explored in the further study.

6. Contributions

Although these findings are based on samples drawn from China, certain generalisations appear warranted. There is no evidence that the validity of emotional intelligence and leadership styles model and definitions, as presented in this study should vary across cultures. There is universality in the transformational leadership paradigm, explaining that ‘the paradigm is sufficiently broad to provide a basis for measurement and understanding that is as universal as the concept of leadership itself. Here, universal does not imply constancy of means, variances, and correlations across all situations, but rather explanatory constructs good for all situations’ Bass (1997). Bass believed that differences in cultural beliefs, values and norms moderate leader-follower relations. Moreover, House et al. (1999) put in a huge effort to examine the interrelationship between societal culture, organisational culture and practices, and organisational leadership in 62 cultures and indicated there are two fundamental cross-cultural issues. Etic phenomena are common to all cultures, or at least to all cultures studied to date; emic phenomena are culture-specific that occur in only a subset of cultures (House et al., 1999). Despite the fact that the Chinese culture is significantly
different to Western cultures, the results of this study do not diminish the generalizability, since the variables dealt with are of the “etic” type, according to the Bass (1997) paradigm.

6.1 Managerial implications

In 2002, China surpassed the US as the largest Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) recipient in the world. The results of the study provide valuable information for foreign investors to better deal with Chinese corporations and to function more efficiently in this attractive market. They also provide useful information for Chinese organisations to understand their own strengths and weaknesses in the areas of emotional intelligence and leadership style.

Many scholars have suggested that emotional intelligence could be learned, taught and improved through continuous reinforcement in adulthood (Bar-On, 1997; Goleman, 1996; 1998a). Similarly, transformational leadership is teachable; it can be enhanced through training and feedback (Bass, 1995; Barling et al., 1996; Kelloway et al., 2000; Mind Garden, 2002; Pounder, 2003). The correlation between emotional intelligence in managers and subordinates and transformational leadership implies that it is possible to select managers with high emotional intelligence for transformational leadership training as a main part of management development programs, given the apparent effectiveness of transformational leadership style seen in previous research.

With respect to training and development, organizations could allocate resources to enhance the level of emotional intelligence and transformational leader style. Training programs in emotional intelligence and transformational leadership should be widely promoted and encouraged in organisations including: lectures, seminar, group discussions, role-plays and workshops. Further, in order to develop the emotional intelligence skills throughout the organisations, there is a need to reduce the sources of emotional dissonance including encouraging social support and open communication between subordinates and managers. Organisations should provide opportunities for socialisation through the formation of informal networks for the expression of genuine emotion. Team structure may affect who should receive transformational leadership training (Dionne et al., 2004; Pawar and Eastman (1997). Moreover, timing of a transformational leadership training program should be developed early in the team’s life cycle as a crucial factor (Salas et al., 1992). It usually takes about six months to a year to improve emotional intelligence and transformational leadership (Bass, 1995; Goleman, 1996).

The transformational leadership style seems to be the most effective leadership style. Nonetheless, different types of organisational circumstances, situational factors and employees might need different types of leadership styles. Den Hartog et al. (1997) in reporting the research of Bass (1985) and Bryman (1992), claimed that transformational and transactional are separate dimensions. Leaders can hold and use both transformational and transactional leadership in different circumstances to difference employees. Study have shown that transactional contingent reward style has positively predicted unit performance (Bass et al., 2003), followers’ commitment, satisfaction and performance (Avolio et al., 1988; Bycio et al., 1995; Chen et al., 2005; Podsakoff et al., 1990) and organisational citizenship behaviour (Goodwin et al., 2001). More specifically, Steane et al., (2003) found that for Chinese leaders, extra effort, effectiveness and satisfaction are all predicted by both transformational and transactional contingent reward. There may be some situations where a transactional leadership style serves a purpose, when tasks require high levels of uniformity.
in some cases, even a laissez-faire style might be suitable, when “several subordinate, task, and organization characteristics that could reduce the importance of leadership. A less active role of leaders could also lead to “empowerment” of followers” (Den Hartog et al., 1997). It may also be the case that laissez-faire leadership may be more suitable among highly motivated groups of professionals and equals.

Altering the employees’ need levels on the Maslow’s five level hierarchy may be an effective way of implementing the appropriate leadership style to suit different subordinates’ needs successfully. For instance, if they are looking for the physiological and safety needs, transactional contingent reward leadership might suffice. However, after their two basic requirements are fulfilled and more transcendent needs come into play, transformational leadership might be more effective. Meanwhile, managers may need to also be aware of their followers’ cultural values and adjust their leadership behaviours accordingly. This implies that rather than treating all individuals in their groups similarly, leaders should deal with each employee individually and flexibly.

There are many structural factors which can affect high organisational receptivity to transformational leadership:

- Organisational emphasis on adaptation orientation;
- Dominant boundary-spanning function;
- Adhocracy or simple organisational structure; and
- Clan mode of governance.

It is proposed by Pawar and Eastman (1997) that simple structure and adhocracy will be more receptive to transformational than to other forms of leadership.

6.2 Limitations and further research

This study had several limitations. The construct and measures of emotional intelligence have been the subjects of some debate (Davies et al., 1998). Thus far, none of the scales used to measure emotional intelligence have been completely accepted. The one used in this study is a self-reported measure to assess a person’s self-perception. Salovey et al. (2000) suggested that the self-report method for emotional intelligence essentially asks an individual whether or not they are emotionally intelligent; it does not require individuals to demonstrate their emotional competencies. These researchers believe that a more valid measure of core emotional intelligence requires a test that relies on tasks and exercises rather than on self-reporting. Hence, it might suffer from some weaknesses. Paulhus et al. (1998) study on general mental ability discovered that the correlation between self-reports of ability and actual ability are quite low. It is believed that ability-based assessment is more accurate than self-reporting. However, in some circumstances, ability-based measures have limitations. Limited resources, including time, budget and working environment etc. is one of the critical constraints to consider.

Thus, common method biases may have occurred in this study (Podsakoff et al., 2003). It is impossible to completely eliminate all forms of common method biases in a particular study (Podsakoff et al., 2003). However, this study tried to minimize and eliminate this bias by the following methods. To reduce this social desirability bias, the emotional intelligence measure employed a forced choice instrument for Chinese respondents (Wong et al., 2004). Then, in order to eliminate the method biases, for the questionnaire design, some reversed questions were set. In addition, some measures were obtained from different sources. For
instance, managers’ leadership style measure was tested using both a self and a rater-evaluation method, i.e., that of their subordinates to provide objectivity, so there was no common method bias in this instance. Moreover, a careful choice of assessment instrument and the elimination of item ambiguity can help to control common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003; Van de Vijver and Tanzer, 2004). Thus, applicable and valid instruments were chosen carefully in this study.

The findings are based on samples drawn from one city in mainland China, albeit it was such a significant one as Shanghai. While the conclusions are clear, further study along the same lines is warranted to fill the gap in this area by using more cross-cultural samples to examine the construct of emotional intelligence and leadership style. This will give researchers a chance to compare the factor structure of emotional intelligence as well as leadership style and its effects in different contexts. The Chinese case, with its traditional values and dynamic flux from international influences is particularly revealing about the relationship between environmental effects and personal characteristics, such as emotional intelligence and behaviour, such as types of leadership. For instance it would be interesting to explore why younger managers in China, exposed to Western influences, favour transactional leadership. Is it the Western influences or immaturity in developing a more transformational style?

Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou are modern cities, especially Shanghai, which is at the vanguard of modern Chinese business. However, China is very large, and further studies should also be conducted in other Chinese regions, particularly China’s special economic zones, including Shenzhen, Zhuhai, Shantou, Xiamen and Fujian. In addition, China still has a large portion of its population in smaller cities that may not have many opportunities to experience internationalisation. Further studies should also focus on these cities. Such extensions should provide a more in-depth picture of how emotional intelligence and leadership styles are changing with respect to different levels of exposure to foreign values and practices.

Ling and Fang (2003) suggested many researchers have paid attention to the generalisability of implicit leadership theory especially the role of culture in leadership. Hofstede (1980) pointed out that many of the differences in leadership style (i.e., employee motivation, organisational structure) and so forth could be explained through the mental programming that takes place within different cultures.

Ling and Fang (2003) formulate a character, performance and maintenance (CPM) model of Chinese leadership behaviours, which demonstrates how the Chinese perspective of leadership traits differs significantly from that of the American perspective in terms of structure and content. In addition, as previously discussed, different leadership styles might be present in firms under different ownership structures. Thus, further research should be conducted in order to add to this understanding.

Tsui et al. (2004) concluded that “many Chinese leaders have experimented with different approaches to management, leading to the emergence of different leadership styles. The sources of the heterogeneity in leadership styles in contemporary China are many, including deep-rooted cultural values, the Communist ideology, the planned economy of the past, the economic reform of the present, and imported modern management practices by foreign firms and managers”. All of these environmental factors affect leadership behaviours in China and no one stereotypical leadership style is considered the best. Tsui and colleagues
(2004) suggest that a key characteristic of the Chinese economy to date is the coexistence of many different types of firms, with the key distinction being the ownership structure, including the traditional state-owned enterprises (SOEs), the foreign-invested enterprises (FIEs) and the domestic privately owned enterprises (POEs). The results of their study indicate that a variety of leadership styles (advanced leadership, authoritative leadership, progressing leadership style, invisible leadership) is present in the dynamic and heterogeneous organisational environment in contemporary China. While the results of our present study suggest dynamism in leadership styles in the POEs in contemporary China, the leadership styles in different types of firms should be further explored. Chinese companies and leaders are changing as fast as the economy is growing China (Tsui et al., 2004). Thus, longitudinal studies on emotional intelligence and leadership style to monitor these changes would be very enlightening.

The cross-cultural comparison of emotional intelligence with respect to its dimensions/components as well as the components of transformational and transactional leadership is very limited so far in the changing Chinese business environment. This topic deserves further exploration in the future, and the present study has opened the field.
References


