

Resilience and Emotional Intelligence: A Focus on Leadership at Project Management in Construction Sector of Bangladesh

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Abstract

Leadership in project management plays a key role for the success of the project by leading the project in the right direction even in stressful situation. To be specific, resilience and emotional intelligence arguably are the most important aspects of a leader. These attributes are essential in making a resolute leader at any circumstances and it allows project leader to perceive things from another point of view. In culmination of these characteristics, project leader raise his/ her status and it facilitates smooth progress of the project. Public construction sector of Bangladesh is booming with lots of development projects as the nation is heading towards upper level of middle income country. To get the desired benefit from these projects, leadership in project management is paramount. Without a true project leader, project will not reach its destiny and the country will not realise its dream. Considering this backdrop, this article will showcase the path to improve young project leaders' leadership status in the scale of resilience and emotional intelligence.

Keywords: Project Management, Leadership in Project Management, Resilience, Emotional Intelligence, Public Construction Sector and Economic Growth

Introduction and the Context

Bangladesh is about to take off in the scale of economic growth and lies in the juncture of development transition. The country has lifted its status to lower middle income country from low income recently and achieving 6 + GDP (gross domestic product) growth over the last

few years on a constant basis. This momentum of advancement contributes in producing number of project based development with increased complexity. Growth of Bangladesh is linked with construction sector, as it facilitates infrastructure which acts as blood line of a country. Table 1 confirms the scenario, as it highlights the contributions of construction sector in the gross domestic product (GDP) of Bangladesh as well as construction sector's growth rate in the recent years and the trend is upward. Due to this improvement, leadership in project management especially in construction sector needs special attention than ever before, to lead the project to the desired direction.

Table 1: Contribution of Construction Sector in the GDP of Bangladesh (base: 2005-06)

(Million TK.)

Sector	2012-13		2013-14		2014-15		2015-16(p)	
	Value Added	Growth rate						
Construction	483,046	8.04	522,087	8.08	566,983	8.60	617,291	8.87

Legend: 'p' denotes provisional

Source: BBS, 2016; p. 14

However, there is very little research on leadership, especially two aspects of it: resilience and emotional intelligence. Whilst project is not risk free with lots of bottleneck, resilience enables project leader to bounce back after any setback with more determination. This facilitates smooth operation of project even when things go wrong. On the other hand, emotional intelligence enables project leader to have 'your point of view'-seeing as well as feeling things from other's point of

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view. As project is performed by people, not by tools or machineries, knowing people's attitude and/or perception towards project is very much important for achieving goals of a project.

Construction industry is dynamic as well as unpredictable in nature, as it involves influential stakeholders like political leaders to daily labor as construction workers. To engage all the stakeholders and get the most out of the project team, leadership in project management is a key to success. For this reason, leadership in project management, especially resilience and emotional intelligence of a project leader is a timely concept and very critical in a developing country like Bangladesh.

Objective and Methodology

This article aims to figure out the ways to excel leadership in project management in the construction sector of Bangladesh in the scale of resilience and emotional intelligence. In achieving so, at first the status of leadership of a few emerging project leaders in terms of resilience and emotional intelligence scale will be ascertained.

The methodology used in this article is basically case study, facilitated by questionnaire survey of selected project leaders. Case study considers a particular group of people or situation over a period of time; here young project leaders' leadership status is taken into consideration, who works at different level of their organisation. This case study approach will allow the researcher to assess leadership profile of project leaders in terms of resilience and emotional intelligence scale in a better way. Furthermore, in questionnaire survey, the researcher purposely chose public sector construction project; as majority of the construction projects in terms of mega projects are performed in this sector in Bangladesh.

Personal observations of both researchers and the participants are exercised to a great extent in this article. The researcher himself has decade long professional experience in this field. At the same time, the participants have also substantial years of practical experience in the construction sector of Bangladesh. Their personal observations paved a great deal for the success of the research.

Besides, a review of selected literatures is done, to figure out dynamics of leadership. Alongside these, project management practices in public sector construction

projects of Bangladesh are discussed in literature review. It will provide basic concept of the issue to the reader.

Literature Review

This part is basically divided into two sections. In the first section, some pertinent issues like project leadership and its traits, resilience as well as emotional intelligence are reviewed from prominent literature. Project management practice in public construction sector of Bangladesh is discussed in the second section.

Project Leadership

Project leadership is formulating vision and improving team's performance through trust and motivation (PMI, 2013). Similarly, leadership is stated as "shifting of own vision to higher sights, the raising of man's performance to higher standards, the building of man's personality beyond its normal limitations" (Hogan & Kaiser, 2005, p.41). Christenson and Walker (2004), Parry and Bryman (cited in Clegg, 2006) also emphasize the role of vision and goal setting in their literatures. They argue that with vision and goal, the organisation can set their strategic targets in next five or ten years of time to lift everyone's performance. Besides, PMBOK (2013) promotes project leadership is the ability to get things done through others. It also mentions that project leadership is building trust among team members, mentor them and influence them to perform better. Team will be energised more to channel their effort to achieve collective-project goal under effective project leadership. On the other hand, effective project leader thinks outside the box and looks for opportunities to get things done in different ways (Packendorff, Crevani, & Lindgren, 2014). It is natural to running out of ideas, project leader then comes up with new idea that was not tried before. As a whole, project leadership aims to bring out the best possible performance from project team, to ensure long term sustainability of the organisation. Trust, motivation, integrity of project leader and his/ her team members, are paramount to make it reality.

Leadership Traits

Project leadership is a continuous process to excel and as a leader, one needs to work on leadership traits.

Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, and May (2004) suggest that openness to learn new things; integrity and self-confidence are some important aspects to be successful. Positive relationship between leader and team will be strengthened then and it will encourage constructive

dialogue that generates new ideas to do things differently. Similarly, Dulewicz and Higgs (2005) categorised a group of fifteen dimensions of leadership competencies into three major leadership competence type (Table 2): emotional, managerial and intellectual.

Table 2: Dimensions of Leadership Competencies

Leadership competence type	Dimensions of competencies
Emotional	1. Motivation 2. Conscientiousness 3. Sensitivity 4. Influence 5. Self-awareness 6. Emotional resilience 7. Intuitiveness
Managerial competencies	8. Managing resources 9. Engaging communication 10. Developing 11. Empowering 12. Achieving
Intellectual competencies	13. Strategic perspective 14. Vision and imagination 15. Critical analysis and judgment

(Adapted from Dulewicz & Higgs, p. 112; cited in Müller & Turner 2005)

Table 2 illustrates that a project leader needs to inspire his/ her team members, handle them with care, have trust on team's ability and provide them authority to work freely with a clear goal in mind to achieve. In addition, motivation works as a magical tool in favor of the project. Motivation comes from actively listening, acknowledging team members effort openly and guiding them (Khan, Sang, & Iqbal, 2015). He/ she should also make sure any disapproval does not hurt personal relationship, as then members' cohesion might be jeopardised.

However, other schools of thought focuses on leader's adaptability trait. For instance, Lloyd-Walker and Walker (2011) argue that project leader has to adapt according to the situation, to meet ever changing demands of 21st century. Because of uncertainty and ever-changing ways of judging project's success, project leader needs to be proactive. For example, project success is not same for every stakeholder. While sponsor wants to finish the project within time and budget, end user wants the final product to be user friendly.

More importantly, project leader needs to be aware of political environment of the organisation too (Shamir & Eilam 2005). For instance, there might be favoritism for team members, who hail from the same locality of project manager. Leader needs to be aware of his/her surroundings and behave rationally for the organisational betterment.

Resilience

Resilience is more than just bounce back; it is the chance to showcase what one is capable of when things go adversely. Resilience is the skill and capacity to be robust under conditions of enormous stress and change (Coutu, 2002). Public servant might be knocking down, but he/she must not be knocked out. Resilience is not just maintaining work-life balance, but to uphold difficult relationships in the occupation (Bond & Shapiro, 2014). For instance, difficult senior official and unethical organisational politics in government profession might be existed as other organisation. As a resilient leader, one should stand tall in the face of these odds and needs to show his/her true character at the time of adversity.

Emotional Intelligence

Project leadership revolves through handling people’s emotion according to his/her perception. As project gets done by people, not by machine, one needs to be emotionally intelligent. The chief components of emotional intelligence are: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and social skills (Goleman, 2004). Fig. 1 outlines that to be a better leader one needs to have control

over these skills. It is basically know one-self and then know others to work collaboratively. By placing oneself in his/ her subordinates’ shoes, he/ she will realise his/ her condition better in the workplace and that will allow him/ her to influence his/her colleagues easily. Emotionally intelligent leaders have contributed immensely in organisational performance (Diggins cited in Turner & Lloyd-Walker, 2008). Emotional aspect will articulate public servant’s leadership style to a great extent.

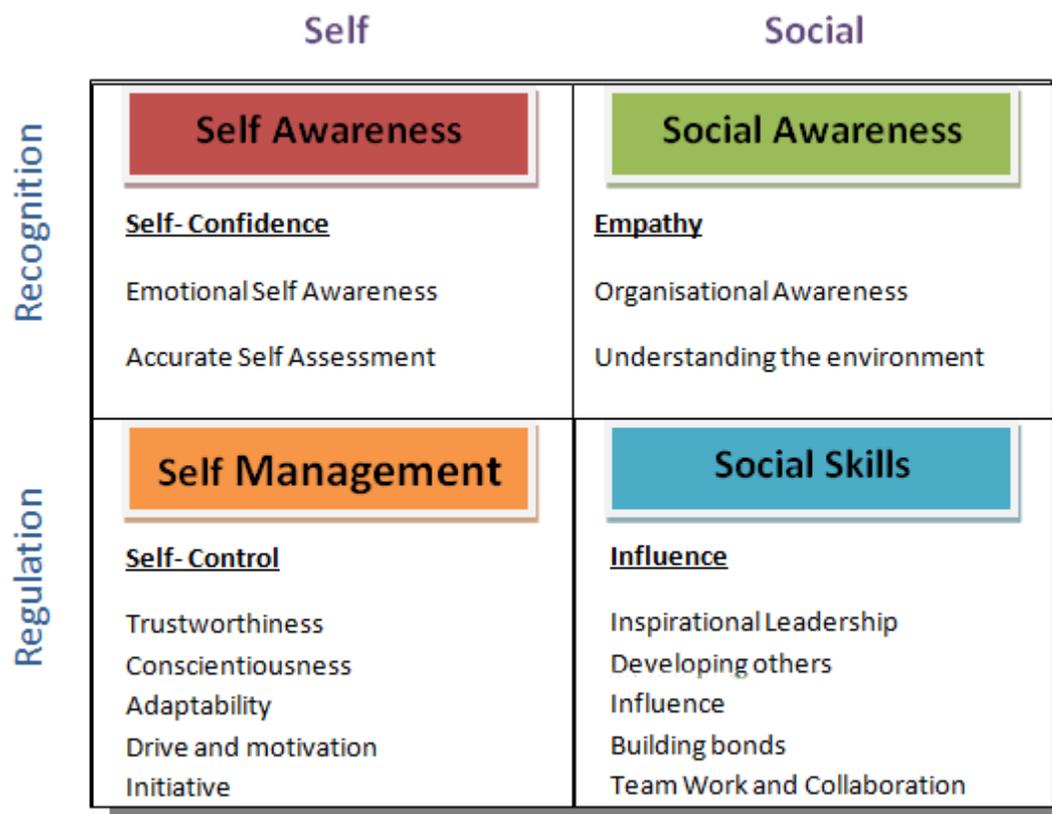


Fig. 1: Emotional Intelligence Model

Source: Goleman, 2004

Project Management Practices in Bangladesh

Public sector construction project in Bangladesh can be summed up into five phases: initiation, planning, execution, monitoring & controlling, and closure.

Project is initiated through concerned ministry and gets approved by planning commission. For approval, DPP (Detail Project Proforma) in its prescribed form with feasibility study (if necessary) needs to be submitted

to planning commission (Ministry of Planning, 2014). There are categories for approving project in terms of its cost and type, for instance - bridge project earns revenue through toll collection and hospital project improves health scenario of the locality.

During planning, tender is usually called after detail estimation, drawing and design. Presently, Electronic Government Procurement (e-GP) is used extensively for this purpose (CPTU, 2014). In addition, project teams with consultants are recruited at this stage.

Whilst Public Works Department (PWD) executes building projects, Roads & Highways constructs roads and bridges mostly. Besides, Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) basically builds buildings as well as roads and culverts at *upazilla* level.

Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Division (IMED) of planning commission is mainly responsible for monitoring and controlling of the project along with concerned ministry and project executing department. Consultants from development partner, for example, World Bank, Asian Development Bank (ADB) performs the role of project monitoring as well.

Finally, project executing agency hand over the completed project to the requiring body. Before handover, the entire project completion certificate needs to be issued.

However, all the above-mentioned phases of project are not problems free. These problems can be summarised as follows (Bryde, 2008; Youkaer, 1992; Kartam, Al-Daihani, & Al-Bahar, 2000):

- Lengthy and cumbersome procedure of fund release mechanism.

- Less or no project management software and/or tools are used at any stage of project.
- Undue political interference during processing as well as execution of project.
- Donor agencies own guidelines sometimes hinder the progress of project.
- Land acquisition is too much critical and lengthy process.
- Bureaucratic influence delays the approval procedure of project.

Major Observations and Findings

15 mid-level officers, working in the construction sector of Bangladesh government, provided their personal observation over leadership in terms of resilience and emotional intelligence through questionnaire survey. Table 3 highlights their organisation and years of experience in the public construction sector.

Table 3: Participants' Department along with Years of Professional Experience

Participant No.	Organisation	Years of Experience		
		1-5 years	6-10 years	11-15 years
Position Level: Executive Engineer				
Participant 1	Public Works Department			13
Participant 9	Public Works Department		10	
Participant 10	Public Works Department		9	
Participant 12	Public Works Department			15
Participant 15	Public Works Department		8	
Position Level: Sub Divisional Engineer				
Participant 2	Roads & Highways Department	5		
Participant 3	Roads & Highways Department		8	
Participant 4	Roads & Highways Department	3		
Participant 8	Roads & Highways Department	4		
Position Level: Senior Assistant Engineer				
Participant 5	Local Government & Engineering Department		10	
Participant 6	Local Government & Engineering Department		9	
Participant 7	Local Government & Engineering Department		8	
Participant 11	Local Government & Engineering Department	5		
Participant 13	Local Government & Engineering Department	4		
Participant 14	Local Government & Engineering Department	3		

Source: Author's fieldwork

Resilience Assessment Test

A questionnaire as shown in Table 4 was provided to the participants to test their resilience in project management leadership in their workplace.

Table 4: Questionnaire on Resilience Assessment Test

	<i>Strongly disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Slightly disagree</i>	<i>Neither agree or disagree</i>	<i>Slightly agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly agree</i>
1. I can change my mood at job place when I need to.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. I know my personal strengths and I can take advantage of that in my job place.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. The work that I do supports my personal values and beliefs.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. Generally I appreciate what I have in my work environment.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. Nothing at work ever really disturbs me for long.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. I can get well with negative people at workplace.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. I can maintain work life balance successfully.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. I can deal with personal stress of handling work load.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. I often ask for feedback so that I can improve my work performance.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. I believe in giving help to my colleagues, as well as asking for it.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. I have a good level of physical fitness.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. I am careful about eating balanced diet.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. I have friends at workplace that I can rely to support me when I need it.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
14. I have a strong and reliable network of supportive colleagues at workplace.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

Modified from Winwood, Colon, & McEwen (2013)

Description:

84 – 74= Very High; 73 – 63= High; 62 – 52= Average; 51 – 41= Below; 40 and below= Below Average

Table 5 illuminates individual score of each participant on resilience test, whilst Table 6 summarises their score with comments.

Table 5: Individual Score on Resilience Assessment Test

Participant	Total Individual Score (out of 84)
Participant 1	77
Participant 2	54
Participant 3	56
Participant 4	58
Participant 5	54
Participant 6	58
Participant 7	60
Participant 8	54
Participant 9	56
Participant 10	60
Participant 11	65
Participant 12	66
Participant 13	45
Participant 14	48
Participant 15	38

Source: Author's fieldwork

Table 6: Summary Score of Participants in Resilience Scale

Resilience Status	Total Number of Respondents	Percentage	Remarks
Very High	1	6.67	Nothing to worry
High	2	13.33	Quite impressive
Average	9	60	Action is Necessary
Below Average	2	13.33	Needs attention
Below Average	1	6.67	Needs attention

Source: Author's fieldwork

Analysing Table 6 it can be safely said that, most of the participants (80%) needed to work on their resilience, as they scored in the average or below average region. On the other hand, rest 20% performed relatively well in their resilience test.

Emotional Intelligence Test

The questionnaire shown in Table 7 was provided to the participants to test their emotional intelligence in project management leadership in their workplace.

Table 7: Questionnaire on Emotional Intelligence Test

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Self-awareness							
I can sense, I am losing my temper.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
I can realise when I am stressed.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
I can figure out what is disturbing me.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Self-management							
I can adapt myself in bad situation quickly.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
I can hide my emotions from others.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
I can go along with difficult superiors.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Empathy							
I can always see a situation from other's point of view.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
I can tell whether my colleagues are happy or not.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
I can sense other's problem in workplace.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Social Skills							
I am good in listening.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
I have an extended network beyond my workplace.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
I love a variety of colleagues in my job.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

Modified from Goleman (2004)

Description:

16 – 18= Very High, 13 – 15= High, 10-12= Average, 9 and below= Below Average

Table 8 illuminates individual score of each participant on emotional intelligence test, whilst Table 9 summarises their score with comments.

Table 8: Individual Score on Emotional Intelligence Test

Participants	Self-awareness	Self-management	Empathy	Social Skills
Participant 1	13	16	16	10
Participant 2	15	17	13	11
Participant 3	17	18	14	12
Participant 4	14	13	10	9
Participant 5	13	14	17	8
Participant 6	15	15	14	8
Participant 7	16	13	12	10
Participant 8	17	16	15	11
Participant 9	18	17	14	12
Participant 10	13	18	17	9
Participant 11	14	10	18	7
Participant 12	16	9	10	13
Participant 13	14	12	15	16
Participant 14	16	16	14	14
Participant 15	17	17	12	15

Source: Author's fieldwork

Table 9: Summary Score of Participants in Emotional Intelligence Scale

Emotional Intelligence Status	Self-awareness		Self-management		Empathy		Social Skills	
Very High	7	46.67%	4	26.67%	6	40%	1	6.67%
High	8	53.33%	8	40%	7	46.67%	3	20%
Average	-	-	2	20%	2	13.33%	6	40%
Below Average	-	-	1	13.33%	-		5	33.33%
Remarks	Nothing to Worry		Needs Attention		Nothing to Worry		Action is Necessary	

Source: Author's fieldwork

Analysing Table 9 it can be safely said that most of the participants (around 75%) needed to work on their social skill arena in emotional intelligence test as they scored in the average or below average region. However, most of the participants showed good control over other three sections of emotional intelligence scale of leadership; for instance - self-awareness, self-management, and empathy.

Recommendations

Examining participants' observations regarding their leadership status on resilience and emotional intelligence

(social skill) aspects, following recommendations are made. These are done to uplift participants' leadership status from average to amazing.

Actions for Developing Resilience

- Meditation at morning and night. This will boost their inner strength.
- Take 10 minutes break in every two hours of work. It will act as an energiser of their daily work-load.
- Maintain body fitness by having healthy food. Physical fitness will transmit positive feeling to

strengthen inner part of the body.

- Start exercising for one hour in week days. This will enable physical fitness.
- Splash of cold water to face, during stressful situation. This will rejuvenate during harsh situation in job.
- Build informal relationship with difficult boss through social gathering. This will allow the project leader to come close to their boss so that they can solve issues in a friendly manner.
- Have positive attitude in the face of adversity. It will allow personnel to come back after any set back of the project.
- Leave the office work at office, before coming to home. This will allow participants to have family time.
- Keep the doors open to learn new things. It will provide alternate options to do one task.
- Start to say 'NO' in response to illegal order from higher authority. This will relieve the participants from undue pressure in office work.
- Have personal space and personal time every day. This will provide breathing space in daily affairs.

Actions for Developing Emotional Intelligence (Social Skill)

- Find the pattern of mistakes that is repeatedly taking place and start to work on that, for example- feeling uncomfortable staying with unknown people. This will act as starting point to improve social skills.
- Be extrovert by expressing thoughts in interesting way. It will allow the project leaders to present themselves in a better way.
- Engage with people by giving constructive feedback. People get encouraged through useful response.
- Be empathetic by putting himself/ herself in others shoes. It is wise to see other's perspective to get a better judgment of the situation.
- Build relationships with honesty and trust. Team members like to work under a leader who is trustworthy.
- Be active on social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Blog, Google+, YouTube). This will enhance network arena of the project leader.

- Take a good look at team members' feelings and behaviour. It is good to know other's opinion of a specific matter.
- Express intimate emotion to close people only. This will allow personal space in working environment.
- Create and build new relationship by knowing interesting facts about that people. Enhancing network pays great dividend in solving issues/risks of a project.

Conclusion and Clues on Further Research

There is risk in any project and project undertaken by public construction industry of Bangladesh is no different. To solve the risks/issues, project leaders need to be resilient as well as emotionally intelligent. Through resilience, they will overcome any difficulties and uplift the spirit of their team members. They will feel confident and act as a one team under their resilient leaders' guidance. On the other hand, emotional intelligence will make the project leader aware of other stakeholders' point of view. This will enable him/ her to approach the project in different way if needed. It is needed as because sometimes, project leaders run out of ideas. In combination of resilience and emotional intelligence, emerging project leaders will be able to lead their projects to the desired path overtaking any obstacles. This will boost our construction sector as well as will pay great divided to the economic growth of Bangladesh.

This article is arguably the beginning in the area of leadership in project management in the context of construction industry of Bangladesh. As project management covers in many areas other than construction industry and so is leadership, there is plenty of opportunity to do more research on other sectors as well.

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