The mediation role of leadership styles in integrated project collaboration: An emotional intelligence perspective

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Abstract

Research on integrated project delivery (IPD) has considered collaboration satisfaction as an important factor for improving project outcomes. Yet, the potential mechanism influencing it remains unexplored in construction project management, especially in the aspects of human skills. The purpose of this paper is to examine whether leadership styles mediate the link between the emotional intelligence (EI) of authorized leader and four collaboration satisfaction outcomes perceived by other participants in an integrated team: performance contribution satisfaction (PCS), efficiency satisfaction (ES), relationship satisfaction (RS), and interests satisfaction (IS). Data was collected from 365 samples including project leaders and scholars who possess experience of IPD in China. The results show that transformational and active-transactional leadership fully mediate the relationships of EI with PCS, ES, and IS, and were partial mediators between EI and RS. In addition, the partial mediation role of passive-transactional leadership in the relationships of EI with RS and IS were identified, but its mediating effects between PCS and ES were not found. Similarly, owing to the non-significant effects of laissez-faire leadership on dimensions of collaboration satisfaction, this leadership style does not play mediating role in the relationships of EI with four dimensions of collaboration satisfaction. This paper makes contribution to the mediating mechanism research of revised full range leadership model by proposing collaboration satisfaction criteria and EI model in IPD project.

Keywords: Integrated project delivery; Emotional intelligence; Leadership styles; Collaboration satisfaction

1. Introduction

Over the last decades, there are strong arguments for incorporating all project parties into one team to perform a project and applying relational contracting appropriately (Kumaraswamy et al., 2005; Rahman and Kumaraswamy, 2011; Bygballe et al., 2016). Therefore, a new project delivery method known as integrated project delivery (IPD) emerged and the benefit of integrated process has been identified through professional institutes and living project samples (Lenferink et al., 2013; El Asmar et al., 2013; Sun et al., 2015). Bond by the three IPD principles of early involvement of all parties, shared risk and rewards, and multiparty agreement (Kent and Becerik-Gerber, 2010), collaboration among heterogeneous project parties has become the critical success factor for operating integrated projects (Phua and Rowlinson, 2004; Xue et al., 2010). Keeping favorable collaboration helps not only achieve short-term business objectives such as the three success criteria of cost, time, and quality (Iyer and Jha, 2005; Chiocchio et al., 2011; Kärnä et al., 2013; Brito et al., 2014), but also foster harmonious working relationships and important affective states crucial to long-term steady development (Eriksson, 2010; Chiocchio et al., 2011; Meng, 2012).

As a matter of fact, it is challengeable for contracting parties which are organized in different structures and interest demands to attain a high level of collaboration in IPD. The architects’ reluctance to change decisions made by owners, for example, may lead to reduced satisfaction or even a collapse of collaboration. Thus, some scholars considered that project participants’
collaboration satisfaction could provide a holistic perspective to measure complex project success (Kärnä et al., 2013). Heimbürger and Dietrich (2012) and Li et al. (2013) have contributed to the measures of participant satisfaction by establishing multi-factor hierarchical fuzzy evaluation model and theoretical framework respectively. However, there is still a lack of comprehensive collaboration satisfaction criteria for IPD and the exploration of potential influencing mechanisms at social and psychological level.

In the competitive construction environment, numerous organizations insist that their “greatest asset is our people” (Butler and Chinowsky, 2006) and choosing right participants to team is paramount (O’Connor, 2009). Leaders in IPD, referred to authorized representatives of each participant in this paper, are the controversial conclusions (Tyssen et al., 2014). In addition, a primary nine-factor structure in varying contexts draws on previous research the most dominant theoretical approach to leadership (Peus et al., 2010; Gumusluoglu and Ilsev, 2009). However, previous research started to realize that operations management is not the panacea, and emotional intelligence is a key set of managerial skills contributing to project success (Love et al., 2011, Rezvani et al., 2016). EI theories were broadly divided into two distinct formulations: an ability model and a mixed model (Côté et al., 2010; Bratton et al., 2011). The ability model, labeled by the work of Mayer and Salovey (2007), has the key characteristics of comprehending and managing one’s own and others’ emotions which facilitates the formation of advantageous thoughts and behaviors (Mayer et al., 2008; Bratton et al., 2011) and can be improved in accordance with the development of age and experience of people (Shih and Susanto, 2010; Obradovic et al., 2013). Different from the ability model, Goleman (1996) advocated the mixed model of EI in broader sense, combining personality aspects with social behaviors and competencies. Subsequently, Bar-On (1997), whose research was associated with the work of Goleman (1998), concluded that “EI is an incorporation of non-cognitive capabilities, competencies, and skills that influence individual’s ability to succeed in coping with environmental demands and pressures”. Specifically, he stated that the application of individual personality could contribute to EI improvement, and thus impact the project performance (Bar-On, 2004).

Individual EI differences of leaders in IPD require to consider the personality traits due to their stable cognition shaping in long working experience before. Accordingly, we chose Goleman’s framework as the foundation of EI model for IPD leaders. Then, the framework was modified specifically to focus on the most relevant concepts of IPD leaders’ EI. In the framework, 12 first-order components were grouped into four high-ordered quadrants as the Fig. 1 shows: with self-awareness, leaders identify their own emotional states and their effects on themselves and others; Based on self-awareness, self-management means regulation of their own emotions to prevent negative thoughts and behaviors; as for social competences, social awareness helps leaders read people and situation while team management deals with development of strong relationships with others and improvement of their leadership abilities.

2.2. Styles of leading in construction

Leadership, the process of influencing subordinates to facilitate relevant organizational goals attainment, is important in every walk of life (Kasapoğlu, 2013), and the exploration of leadership in the project settings has attracted much attention due to its specific characteristics (Turner and Müller, 2005; Tyssen et al., 2014). Owing to the project-inherent characteristics such as peripheral dynamics and time-limited undertaking, project members are often less committed (Keegan and Den Hartog,
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