

Managers rated as highly emotionally intelligent are more ineffective and unpopular, research shows

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Managers who are rated as highly emotionally intelligent are more unpopular and ineffective than those who are less so, new research

shows.

The common belief that increased emotional intelligence is always a good trait for [managers](#) is wrong because beyond a certain point it can lead to them failing to take tough decisions, the study says.

Professor Nikos Bozionelos, of the EMLyon Business School, France, and Dr. Sumona Mukhuty, Manchester Metropolitan University, asked staff in the NHS to assess their managers' emotional intelligence—defined as their level of empathy and their awareness of their own and others' emotions.

The 309 managers were also assessed on the amount of effort they put into the job, the staff's overall satisfaction with their manager, and how well they implemented change within the NHS system.

Professor Bozionelos told the British Academy of Management's annual conference in Birmingham today [Wednesday 4 September 2019] that beyond a certain point managers rated as having high emotional intelligence were also scored as lower for most of the outcomes.

Those managers rated in the top 15 percent for emotional intelligence were evaluated lower than those who performed in the top 65 percent to 85 percent in the amount of effort they put into the job, and how satisfied their subordinates were with them.

The NHS was undergoing fundamental reorganization at the time of the study, and managers rated as most emotionally intelligent were scored as less effective at implementing this change, but highly for their continuing involvement in the process.

"Increases in emotional intelligence beyond a moderately high level are detrimental rather than beneficial in terms of leader's effectiveness,"

said Professor Bozionelos.

"Managers who were rated beyond a particular threshold are considered less effective, and their staff are less satisfied with them.

"Too much emotional intelligence is associated with too much empathy, which in turn may make a manager hesitant to apply measures that he or she feels will impose excessive burden or discomfort to subordinates."

The research contradicted the general assumption that the more emotional intelligence in a manager the better, he said, which had led to "an upsurge in investment in emotional intelligence training programs for leaders."

"Beyond a particular level, emotional intelligence may not add anything to many aspects of manager's performance, and in fact may become detrimental. Simply considering that the more emotional [intelligence](#) the manager has the better it is may be an erroneous way of thinking."

The researchers took into account a host of factors, such as leaders' age and biological sex, in order to study the effects of [emotional intelligence](#) in isolation.

Provided by British Academy of Management

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