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LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT THROUGH AN OUTDOOR LEADERSHIP PROGRAM FOCUSING ON EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

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The purpose of this study was to identify how an outdoor leadership program experience impacts students' development of emotional intelligence and transformational leadership. Other critical information regarding development of emotional intelligence and leadership, such as the relationships between level of outdoor experience and development of emotional intelligence, and kinds of experiences that contribute to development of emotional intelligence were also investigated.

Students who participated in the National Standard Programs (typically 21-35 days) sanctioned by Wilderness Education Association were asked to complete a set of questionnaires before and after the program. The questionnaires include the BarOn Emotional Quotient Inventory: Short (EQi:S) (Bar-On, 2002), the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ 5X short) (Bass & Avolio, 2000), the Outdoor Leader Experience Use History (OLEUH) (Galloway, 2003), the New Social Desirability Scale (NSDS) (Strahan & Gerbasi, 1972), the Emotional Intelligence Experience Questionnaire which consists of open-ended questions, and the Importance Scale regarding five components of emotional intelligence. The instructor's evaluations of student leadership were also collected as additional information. The data collection was conducted from nine courses between March 2005 and January 2006, and 72 sets were used as the treatment group data. In order to compare the effect of the program, students in three classroom based undergraduate courses at a Indiana University were asked to fill out the EQi:S, MLQ and NSDS. Thirty-eight sets were used as the comparison group data.

Multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) was performed to examine the effect of the program participation, and it revealed that the post-test score of emotional intelligence was significantly higher than the pre-test score in the treatment group ($F = 5.45, p = .021$). No significant change was found in transformational leadership. Regarding the components of emotional intelligence, multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) showed that Intrapersonal skills ($F = 6.54, p = .013$) and Stress Management skills ($F = 8.51, p = .005$) of emotional intelligence were significantly increased after the program. Additionally, a group of students who have lower level of outdoor experience showed significant increase on the Adaptability of emotional intelligence after the program ($F = 5.18, p = .026$). Answers from the open-ended questions revealed that kinds of experiences supported specific components of emotional intelligence, but frequently answered experiences include debrief and feedback, leadership role, challenging experiences, entire expedition experience, and evaluations and assessments.

The results of this study suggested the positive influence of participation in an outdoor leadership program on development of emotional intelligence, but not on transformational leadership. Since the data showed that students who had a higher level of outdoor experience had a significantly higher level of transformational leadership, it can be inferred that development of transformational leadership might require more experiences than participation in a program. Students who received a certification from the programs showed significantly higher levels of

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emotional intelligence and transformational leadership, suggesting the importance of both concepts in outdoor leadership. Further studies are needed to examine using diverse populations (age, experience levels etc.) for theoretical and practical implications.

References

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