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EXPLORING STOICISM IN LEADERSHIP: A Comparison with Emotional Intelligence in Undergraduate Leadership Students

Abstract

This study was the first to examine two related constructs within the context of leadership. Stoicism is an ancient philosophy offering practical advice for a virtuous and eudaemonic life. As a method to examine one's emotional experiences (Sellars, 2006), leaders such as Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius and Teddy Roosevelt (Aurelius, ca. 160 A.D., 2002) practiced Stoicism, yet mentions of it within the field of leadership research have been scant. Leadership academics contrast desirable emotional intelligence behaviors with Stoicism (Grewal & Salovey, 2005; Mayer et al., 2008). Regardless, these two constructs are both concerned with effectively managing emotions, practicing self-awareness, high levels of motivation, and sensitivity to the expression of emotion in others (Goleman, 2005; Pigliucci, 2017; Salzgeber, 2019).

Undergraduate students in a leadership minor (_N_ = 445) at a public university completed the Emotional and Social Competency Inventory - University and the Liverpool Stoicism Scale. Analysis included a description of assessment results, an examination or the relationship between variables and differences in participant's scores based on race, gender, and age. Stoicism and emotional self-awareness showed a moderate, statistically significant negative correlation (_r_ = - 0.391, _p_ = .05). A low, statistically significant negative relationship was reported between stoicism and the relationship management competency of teamwork (p = .003, r = -.018), and a low statistically significant positive relationship between self-management competencies, adaptability (p = .043, r = .189) and emotional self-control (p = .039, r = .192). Student's Stoicism scores were significantly correlated with gender (_t_(113) = 2.479; _p_ = .015, _d_ = .564).

The research findings provided baseline statistics for continued exploration of Stoicism within the context of leadership. Future research that better aligns with the original doctrines of the philosophy is recommended, particularly in the interest of leadership development.

Introduction

In 2020, the world was faced with a global pandemic, thrusting the global community into continual uncertainty where human life and economic productivity were at risk (United Nations, 2020). These unprecedented times forced leaders to quickly make decisions and determine action routes with the least devastation (Guterres, 2020). As the world continues to modernize, leaders must find ways to act quickly and with a purpose (World Economic Forum, 2020). Change is inevitable, be it the nature of the workforce, technology, economic shocks, social trends, or world politics (Lana, 2021). It is the responsibility of leaders to help teams navigate it (Kotter, 2012). Increasing global populations, shifts in the global climate, and high demand for natural resources will only continue to enforce the need for leaders who can make ethical, balanced decisions quickly (United Nations, 2020; World Economic Forum, 2020).

Leading through effective strategies is not enough to be successful – leaders will also need to practice emotional intelligence proficiency (Fiedeldey-Van & Freedman, 2007; Rhee & Honeycutt Sigler, 2020). Emotional intelligence is critical for success in disruptive environments (Rhee & Honeycutt Sigler, 2020). In response to this need, leadership education uses emotional intelligence (EI) to teach social responsibility, self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skill (Bar-On, 1997; Goleman, 2015; Mayer & Salovey, 1997). Introduced in 2015 (Stedman & Andenoro), the field of emotionally engaged thinking (EET) recognized the unique balance between critical decision making and practicing emotional awareness. Leaders are educated and familiarized with the significance of EI, yet when faced with demonstrating their knowledge, they have mentioned feeling a lack of confidence (Kaoun, 2019).

Beyond academic leadership education is an industry of leadership professionals, authors, and consultants who strive to deliver guidance and solutions to the challenges leaders face today. In a review of recent press coverage on how to be a better leader, the philosophy of stoicism has been referenced in publications such as the *New York Times*, LinkedIn, *Entrepreneur, Wired*, and *Forbes* (Anderson, 2012; Bowles, 2019; Fraenkel, 2019; Gambhir, 2019; Manthorpe, 2017; Tank, 2019). For example: in April 2020, Arianna Huffington's corporate wellness company, Thrive Global, advised business executives to practice Stoicism to manage the emotional stress and leadership challenges associated with COVID-19 (Lipworth, 2020). *Forbes* (Anderson, 2012) referred to stoicism as the "philosophy for leadership" (para. 22), recognizing its potential contribution to globalization and surviving tough times like a "modern financial crisis" (para. 1). Gambhir (2019) helped LinkedIn readers build resilience, showing how stoicism can make them better leaders. Aytekin (2019) shared with *Entrepreneur* readers how stoicism can be valuable for 1) setting priorities, 2) curbing stress, 3) practicing time management, and 4) managing fear. Historically, Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius and United States President Teddy Roosevelt practiced stoicism (Aurelius, 1915; Aurelius, ca. 160 A.D./2002). Roosevelt carried a text by Marcus Aurelius throughout expeditions in South America (Aurelius, 1915).

Centered around humility, awareness and control of emotions, the stoic mindset is tailor-made for leadership (Gambhir, 2019). It creates mental toughness and provides tools to stay calm, get through crises, and transform unexpected obstacles into opportunities. As a philosophy, it is also "refreshingly straightforward and fuss-free" (Gambhir, 2019, para. 2).

Stoicism offered a practical guide to living a virtuous life in a time when other philosophies contemplated the purpose and meaning of life (Long, 2002). Stoics were concerned with how to act and the role of emotions in making decisions about those actions. In describing the three main areas in which a person must be trained in stoicism, Epictetus (ca. 108 A.D./1995, as cited in Holiday, n.d.) proclaimed:

The first has to do with desires and aversions - that a person may never miss the mark in desire nor fall into what repels them. The second has to do with impulses to act and not to act - and more broadly, with duty - that a person may act deliberately for good reasons and not carelessly. The third has to do

with freedom from deception and composure and the whole area of judgment, the assent our mind gives to its perceptions. Of these areas, the chief and most urgent is the first which has to do with the passions, for strong emotions arise only when we fail in our desires and aversions. (3.2.1-3)

Through this viewpoint, parallels exist between stoicism as it appears in the press and media and EI in leadership education and research. Shared characteristics include managing emotions, strong self-awareness, high levels of motivation, and being sensitive to the expression of emotion in others (Goleman, 2005). However, mentions of stoicism within the field of leadership research have been scant. stoicism has been referenced in contrast to EI or to define a population who believe logic is superior to feelings (Grewal & Salovey, 2005; Mayer et al., 2008). This approach is supported by stoic dictionary definitions: “the fact of not complaining or showing what you are feeling when you are suffering” (Oxford University Press, n.d.) and “the endurance of pain or hardship without the display of feelings and without complaint” (Lexico, n.d.).

In the 30 years emotional intelligence has been taught in leadership education, references to stoic behaviors that repress emotions have been made without an official research-based inquiry into the ancient philosophy that has guided leaders since 300 B.C.E. (Furnham, 1992; Furnham et al., 2003). The absence of academic research on the presence and value of stoicism in leaders and the rejection of stoicism as a desirable trait despite conflicting popular viewpoints requires investigation.

Literature Review

Stoicism. Stoicism was born of the Hellenistic period when philosophies were developed to explain the world in its totality (Aurelius, ca. 160 A.D./2002). It is “not merely a series of philosophical claims about the nature of the world or what is right or wrong; it is above all an attitude or way of life” (Sellars, 2006, p. 2). Stoicism is a guide for the social interactions of daily life and is available to the average person on the street (Devine, 1970; Sellars, 2012). Originating in 300 B.C.E. on the steps of the Stoa in ancient Greece, stoicism offers a comprehensive outlook on the world in the pursuit of long-lasting happiness and serenity. At its core, stoicism is concerned about focusing only on those things in one’s control, letting go of those that are not.

The stoics believe all beings are part of a larger, divine plan and everything is ultimately an expression of that plan (Long, 2002). The world is organized and directed by a pervading force which stoics named *logos* which manifests itself within individuals as the faculty of reason and is synonymous with nature (Aurelius, ca. 160/2002). The stoics encourage participation in the logos as an opportunity to build a community of persons who cooperate and respect one another “as rational participants in the scheme of things” (Long, 2002, p.16). Negative circumstances are not unwarranted but offer opportunities to realize our participation in the logos (Long, 2002).

Epictetus stressed that humans are in control of their own actions including opinions, desires, and aversions (Epictetus, ca. 108 A.D./1995). Continually monitoring what is and is not up to us, is the key to happiness (Sellars, 2012). Distractions about what happens to man in the afterlife and concerns with death are discouraged (Sellars, 2012). Attention should be spent on monitoring one’s actions, character development, and virtue. The stoics believe human beings are born of nature alongside all other living creatures and have an innate capacity for goodness; all external goods and circumstances not born of nature are perceived to be meaningless (Long, 2002, Sandbach, 1994).

The four stoic virtues include wisdom, courage, justice, and temperance. (Salzgeber, 2019; Sandbach, 1994). The virtues are sufficient for happiness and that external goods and circumstances are irrelevant. Wisdom is the result of experience in the pursuit of knowledge and understanding what is good for oneself and what is not good (Sandbach, 1994). Courage is in both the physical and moral sense of the word and means to stand up for what is right – to be brave, honest, and practice confidence (Salzgeber, 2019). Justice is to treat each other fairly and do the right thing, both in a sense not to take from one another, but also to do

good (Sandbach, 1994). Lastly is the virtue of temperance, meaning to have moderation in all things, including emotions. Originally the Greeks used the word *sophrosyne*, which no English equivalent exists; however, it roughly translates to being controlled by reason (Sandbach, 1994).

A practical guide to carry out the philosophy in pursuit of a happy life was captured by Epictetus in the stoic disciplines: 1) discipline of desire, 2) discipline of action, and 3) discipline of assent (Seddon, 2006). All persons are in control of their thoughts and therefore capable of practicing these exercises. The disciplines address the perceptions of impressions created by any of the six senses (Aurelius, ca. 160/2002; Seddon, 2006). An impression is the effect an occurrence has on the human brain—they are an immediate result of an experience. Based on an individual's perception of the impression, there is a choice to either accept or reject it. The response indicates if the experience was good or bad and is dependent upon perception and morality. These two decision points are key in acting in accordance with the stoic way: first interpretation of the experience and an evaluation to take a supportive or corrective action (Seddon, 2006).

The *discipline of desire* monitors that which is desired by an individual to guide one's actions. Passions, when well exercised, have wisdom; they guide thinking, values, and survival. But they often and easily go awry. Epictetus refers to desires as passion and things capable of causing "sorrow, lamentation and envy" rendering us "envious and jealous, and thus incapable of listening to reason" (Seddon, 2006, p. 15). If man allows his desires to attach to that which is out of his control, he is no longer living in accordance with nature and wasting time in pursuit of those things. As Aristotle saw, the problem is not with emotionality, but with the *appropriateness* of emotion (Goleman, 2006).

Any negative emotions experienced by being denied one's desires which they have no control over are useless to individuals who are striving for excellence, happiness, and a good life. The solution is not to forego desires, but to practice awareness of what is required to achieve the desires, specifically those that are not in one's control. To have a desire out of one's control is to place fate and emotional state at the hands of others.

As interconnected beings who play an active role in nature, the *discipline of action* calls attention to what we do to successfully fulfill those roles. This action is the participation in the *logos* while striving for excellence, and living virtuously (Aurelius, ca. 160/2002; Seddon, 2006). One can only control their own actions, so it is key to focus on those actions themselves. Motivation to engage in life is inspired by a social influence. Men are naturally social human beings; they love one another and endure one another (Sandbach, 1989; Seddon, 2006). In addition to the jointly held roles as social beings living in accordance with nature, man is meant to live with moral character and concern for others. "Our nature is fundamentally unselfish" (Aurelius, ca. 160/2002, p. 28). In the instance where man is wronged by another, the emotional response may be negative, but one is not meant to dwell on the experience. Man is empowered to move past the instance and continue concentrating on his own behaviors and moral character.

Finally, the *discipline of assent* comes from the Greek verb meaning to approve, agree, or go along. An assent is a commitment to examine the impression or event, and ask, "is this what it really is" and "what does it have to do with me". In Epictetus' *Discourses* (ca. 105 A.D./1995), he states "Just as Socrates used to say that we are not to lead an unexamined life, so neither are we to accept an unexamined impression, but to say, 'Stop, let me see what you are, and where you come from'" (3.12.14-15). This moment of evaluation frees us from deception. With respect to the first two disciplines, the first being our inability to see things as they are and the second by taking an inappropriate action, adding the third discipline prevents us from making rash judgements. By properly evaluating experiences with moral perspective, those things that which we can control, we can act upon through the discipline of action, while those that we cannot, we assent to by realizing they have no ability to harm us and are what they are (Aurelius, ca. 160/2002).

Emotional Intelligence. Several groups dominate emotional intelligence literature in the context of leadership including Bar-On (1997), John Mayer and Peter Salovey (1997), and Daniel Goleman (2000). Salovey and Mayer (1990) were the first to formally introduce EI to academia with "Emotional Intelligence," and presented their first definition and conceptual diagram. It was this piece that Daniel Goleman came across in his work as a journalist for the New York Times, and in 1995, launched his widely popular book Emotional Intelligence (Goleman, 2005).

Within the same decade Bar-On (1997) introduced Emotional-Social Intelligence which was a broad interpretation that mixed cognitive ability with personality, health, and well-being. He designed the EQ-I which was the first commercially available assessment (Fernández-Berrocal & Extremera, 2006). Based in a clinical context versus occupational, Bar-On was influenced by Darwin's theory of emotional expression and adaptation as crucial for survival (Bar-On, 2011).

Even still, Robert Thorndike was the first to acknowledge people may have the ability to practice awareness of their own and other's emotions and categorized it as an additional form of intelligence called "social intelligence" (Thorndike, 1920). Defined as the ability to get along well with others, it also included understanding one's own personal states of mind, and behaviors. In 1960, Chronbach concluded "social intelligence remains undefined and unmeasured" (as cited in Salovey & Mayer, 1990, p. 4). The exploration suggested a valuable form of intelligence that, if properly articulated would offer a significant contribution to the field of psychology (Salovey & Mayer, 1990).

Further understanding of multiple intelligences was done by Wechsler (1940). After adding subscales to his cognitive intelligence test, Wechsler reported an influence of non-intellectual factors on behavior, coincidentally supporting the role of other forms of intelligence and calling an investigation to better understand these roles (Bar-On, 2006). Gardner introduced the concept of multiple intelligences with his book *The Shattered Mind* (1975), in an examination that revealed different parts of the brain are responsible for different cognitive functions. Gardner's exploration of cognitive faculties led to defining them as multiple intelligences, and in *Frames of Mind* shared different intelligences that met an ever-evolving criteria (Gardner, 2011).

Goleman's emotional intelligence theory included social and personal competencies that expanded upon the specific set of individual abilities outlined by Salovey and Mayer (Moon, 2009). His examination of personal characteristics responsible for leadership success guided those who wished to increase their emotional intelligence in the leadership context. The comprehensive competency perspective is best noted in Goleman's (2005) definition of emotional intelligence:

> being able to motivate oneself and persist in the face of frustration; to control impulses and delay gratifications; to regulate one's moods and keep distress from swamping the ability to think; to emphasize and to hope. (p. 34)

This includes skills and competencies responsible for individual success beyond cognitive intelligence or rather intelligence quotient (IQ). In *Emotional Intelligence,* Goleman (1995) insisted that evaluating intellectual ability is short sided when understanding potential growth and development in individuals. Professional success requires not only academic ability and social skill, but also emotional skill (Goleman, 2005). The higher a person rises within an organization, the more important these skills become (Dulewicz & Higgs, 2003). The skills are transferrable across school, home, and work environments (Goleman, 2005). In his work, Goleman surmised 20% of success is due to intellectual intelligence, leaving 80% to everything else including social skills (O'Neil, 1996).

Goleman's framework included five components: a) self-awareness, b) self-regulation, c) motivation, d) empathy, and e) social skill. Starting with self-awareness, or as Socrates put it, to "know thyself" (p. 46, as cited in Goleman, 2005), one must have an awareness of their own internal states. This includes the ability to know one's values, moods, strengths, and weaknesses (Goleman, 2015). A

self-aware individual has a clear understanding of the values and goals that guide their actions and future decisions. This awareness requires an open and honest perspective of the self and how triggers and responses affect job performance and other people. Self-aware individuals are confident and humble, have a sense of humor, can receive constructive feedback, and unafraid to ask for help.

The second component, self-regulation, becomes increasingly important as individuals rise within an organization (Goleman, 2015). Self-regulation is a leadership skill useful in controlling or redirecting emotional impulses and moods. It allows leaders to step back, analyze contributing factors, and use the experience as a teaching tool. An expression of fewer negative emotions creates an environment of trust and fairness. Self-regulation is a competitive advantage for fast paced environments – when change is afoot, emotionally intelligent individuals are more likely to positively respond and even lead the way.

Goleman (2015) identified a strong drive to achieve in leaders with high levels of EI and introduced motivation as a third component. The pursuit is unrelated to monetary gain or social status and stems from a desire to learn for the sake of learning, to seek creative challenges, and experience pride in a job well done. Highly motivated individuals set goals, and prevent feeling overcome with frustration should they experience any setbacks through resilience, commitment, and optimism. Empathy is the ability to recognize emotional experiences within others and communicate understanding to let the person be seen. It is valuable for retaining talent because when employees feel recognized and respected, it creates a connection between them and the organization.

The final component of emotional intelligence is social skill—a culmination of the first three skills and the second skill concerned with the ability to manage relationships with others (Goleman, 2015). Social skill is the ability to build personal networks and manage relationships by finding common ground with a wide variety of people. It is not a matter of simply being friendly but having a purpose and ability to move people in a desired direction.

In 2002, Goleman et al., explored the role of emotional intelligence within leadership and agreed that the emotional state of a leader can "send strong signals across the organization" (p. 1). They believed emotions have an impact on company performance – specifically negative emotions are disruptive while positive emotions enhance creativity. Leaders can influence the work environment because of their level of involvement. Those who wish to be successful should manage their emotional responses and can do so by picturing themselves in an ideal state as someone they want to be rather than simply who they should become (Goleman et al., 2002).

To measure leader's emotional intelligence, Goleman, et al. (2002) developed a quadrant for personal and social competencies. The first two include awareness and actions related to the self in self-awareness and self-management, while the remainder focus on relationships with others through social awareness and relationship management. Before interacting with others in an intentional and effective manner, it is crucial for individuals to be in touch with their behaviors, preferences, and style. Individuals can also practice social awareness to read the emotional climate of situations. Having the ability to receive this information, a person can respond to the individual or organizational needs using empathy or listening skills to calm fears, join in celebration, or assuage anger (Goleman et al., 2002; Korn Ferry, 2017). Practicing relationship management is the ability to manage interactions effectively using emotional awareness for oneself and others. This component includes developing others, conflict management, teamwork, and inspirational leadership (Goleman et al., 2002; Korn Ferry, 2017).

Stoicism and Emotional Intelligence Within Leadership Literature. No leadership studies have formally assessed stoic behaviors, yet researchers have referenced the philosophy in emotional intelligence literature. Starting with emotional intelligence experts, Goleman (2005) hinted at several stoic behaviors:

> In *The Nicomachean Ethics,* Aristotle's philosophical inquiry into virtue, character, and the good life, his challenge is to manage our emotional life with intelligence. Our passions, when well exercised, have wisdom; they guide our thinking, our values, our survival. But they can easily go awry and do so all too often. As Aristotle saw, the problem is not with emotionality, but with the *appropriateness* of emotion and its expression. The question is, how can we bring intelligence to our emotions? (p. xviii)

Goleman (2005) and Mayer et al. (2008) mentioned the significance of emotional control which is a basic core belief of the stoic doctrine, but otherwise direct references to the philosophy made within the field of leadership have been scant and negative. Salovey et al. (2002) cited stoic philosophers to illustrate emotions as "too individualistic and self-absorbed to be a reliable guide for insight and wisdom" (p. 62). Mayer et al. (2008) claimed stoicism was developed to put rationality above all else because people in ancient Greece could not agree about feelings. Again, in presenting the science of emotional intelligence, Grewal and Salovey (2005) bolstered the value of emotional intelligence by juxtaposing it against stoicism and the stoic belief that emotion is "too far heated and unpredictable to be of much use to rational thought" (p. 330). Linzey and Pierce (2015) spoke of the need for leaders to practice self-control over one's mental and emotional states and the ability to do so "is not being a stoic" (p. 25) or the ability to grin and bear it (Linzey & Pierce, 2015). In *Doing Leadership Differently*, Sinclair (2005) described heroic Australian business leaders as exhibiting toughness and emotional stoicism. Other characteristics included sexual and physical prowess, physical toughness, and a deeply rooted stereotype of being a stoic frontier settler (Sinclair, 2005).

In contrast, Koestenbaum (2002) presented stoicism as a positive influence on leadership drawing from stoic philosophers' wisdom about courage and vision. Leaders must be courageous to take necessary risks, which the stoics advised can only come from becoming secure in oneself. stoicism is a path to non-attachment, an essential skill for leaders who want to address complex, high-level problems with higher-level innovative solutions (Koestenbaum, 2002).

Theoretical Framework

A comparison between stoicism as defined by original stoic teachers including Zeno, Chrysippus, Seneca, Epictetus, and Aurelius and the emotional intelligence model put forth by Boyatzis and Goleman (2007) illustrated a potential connection between the two fields. The first EI competency of self-awareness includes awareness of one's emotions, strengths, and weaknesses and the impact they have on others (Goleman, 2015). From a stoic perspective, Marcus Aurelius' (2002) *Meditations*, originally titled *To Himself*, was a self-reflective tool. He examined his mind and noted the importance of looking inward: "Don't let the true nature or value of anything elude you" (Aurelius, ca. 160 A.D./2002, p. 69). He believed a retreat within oneself was more rewarding than those of the mountains (Aurelius, ca. 160 A.D./2002). The stoics believe to achieve an intimate personal understanding one must tend to their mind and commit to a relationship with the self (Epictetus, ca. 108 A.D./1995). The care given to oneself mirrors the consideration given to others - in Epictetus' *Discourses* (1916) he asks, "If god had committed some orphan to your charge, would you have been thus careless of him?" (p. 92). Seneca (ca. 63 A.D./1969) acknowledged the continual journey in a letter to Lucilius confessing still "a lot of things about me requiring to be built up or fined down or eliminated" (VI).

Self-management includes achievement orientation, adaptability, emotional self-control, and a positive outlook – the skills to stay motivated and on track (Boyatzis & Goleman, 2007). This includes anticipating obstacles, adapting plans to major changes, and maintaining a positive outlook (Goleman, 2001). Achievement orientation includes viewing threats as opportunities and remaining hopeful in face of setbacks (O'Neil, 1996). A school program used traffic light symbols helping children respond to negative emotions by taking a moment to

stop, consider responses, decide on the best option and then act (O'Neil, 1996). Goleman shared this process as an example of a good lesson in impulse control and "making the distinction between having the feeling and what you do" (O'Neil, 1996, p. 11). Regardless of intelligence, without being able to control distressing emotions one cannot maintain effective relationships and will not get very far (Hughes, 2004).

The stoics are equally as concerned with emotional self-control and maintain that not all emotions are bad. Zeno, the founder of stoicism, said happiness is a free-flowing life, and Marcus Aurelius admired those who were free of passion and full of love (Aurelius, ca. 160 A.D./ 2002). Stoics used impressions to manage their emotions and took a moment of pause to analyze their emotional response. Epictetus (ca. 108 A.D./1995) objectifies emotion and describes the act to "hold up a bit and let me see who you are and where you are from – let me put you to the test" (p. 121).

Additionally, the stoic disciplines provide a means to practice effective self-management. Adoption of the disciplines empowers individuals to remain focused by contemplating on that which is and is not in their control and direct energy and resources on those things that are in one's control to live the happiest life. Epictetus believed that hardships and misfortunes are an opportunity to learn about personal capabilities and practice resilience; he felt that only a fool would hesitate at taking chances and engaging in life. His students knew if they wanted something good, they would only get it from themselves (Epictetus, ca. 108 A.D./1995).

Recognizing the value of being alive, Seneca implored followers to make the most of today. He taught that man has plenty of time to achieve his goals if they don't waste the time they're given. Mentions of motivation also appear in Marcus Aurelius' (ca. 160 A.D./2002) morning reflection when he condemned his desire to stay in bed and reminded himself it is a gift to rise and do what he was born to do in the same way all other creatures of nature meet their demands.

The social awareness competency includes empathy, meaning to be considerate of other's feelings, especially when making decisions (Boyatzis & Goleman, 2007; Goleman, 2015). For the stoics, this is voiced in taking other's perspectives and treating them as equals. Seneca (ca. 63 A.D./1969) said, "Treat your inferiors as you would be treated by your betters" and "remember that he whom you call your slave sprang from the same stock, is smiled upon by the same skies and on equal terms with yourself breathes, lives, and dies" (XLVII). Epictetus encouraged followers to consider how a thief or adulterer has lost sight of what is valuable and therefore has become detached from the moral choice and to not judge him by his actions but consider what caused him to act in that way (Epictetus, ca. 108 A.D./1995).

Regarding relationship management and the positive impact leaders have on others, the stoics believed that humans are social beings by nature and accepted that while man could survive alone, he was much happier and successful by staying connected to others. It is unnatural for the stoics to feel anger at someone and to work against them (Aurelius, ca. 160 A.D./2002). Seneca (ca. 63 A.D./1969) supported self-reflection in others and expressed those who look within and identify opportunities for improvement should be congratulated. This desire to connect with others by recognizing their strengths and encouraging development was mirrored in Boyatzis and Goleman's (2007) coaching and mentoring competency.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this quantitative study was to explore the relationship between emotional intelligence and stoicism and was guided by the following objectives:

1. Describe the stoic behaviors of undergraduate students enrolled in a leadership course,
2. Describe the emotional intelligence competencies of undergraduate students enrolled in a leadership course,
3. Identify the relationship between stoicism and emotional intelligence in undergraduate students enrolled in a leadership course, and
4. Identify differences in stoicism and emotional intelligence, based on participant demographics of age, gender, and race.

Methods

Procedures. The study used a survey research design to explore the relationship between emotional intelligence and stoicism. Those constructs were measured using pre-existing assessment tools: Liverpool stoicism Scale (Wagstaff & Rowledge, 1994) and the Emotional and Social Competency Inventory assessment (Boyatzis & Goleman, 2007). The cross-sectional survey design collected a snapshot of data, establishing a foundation for the two fields of study within the context of leadership.

The online survey was distributed via the course professor. Students had a 10-day response window and completed the survey at their leisure. Courses were delivered online, therefore access to the internet was expected. The Journal of Leadership Education reported no differences between early and late responders from 75.4% of published articles from 1990-1999 (Lindner et al., 2001).

Participants. The study population was undergraduate students admitted to the leadership minor (*N*=445) representing 11 academic colleges. The sample was determined using single-stage, purposive sampling. The study sample (*n=115)* consisted of students enrolled in two leadership courses. The course learning objectives centered on leadership development were attractive sample sets for assessing the two variables within future leaders.

Participants were majority female (77%, *n* = 89) and White (55%, *n* = 63). Age was consolidated into three groups to create a normative data set. Ages 17 and 18 were grouped with participants 19 years of age (26%, *n* = 30) and participants 20 years of age (42%, *n* = 48) remained untouched. The remaining participants aged 21, 22+ were grouped together (32%, *n* = 37). Race was also consolidated into three groups (White = 55%, Hispanic/Latino(a) = 24%, and Other = 21%). Respondents fell into two gender groups, Male (23%, *n* = 26) and Female (77%, *n* = 89).

Students represented an interdisciplinary group - ranging from first to fourth-year university students from multiple majors. Due to the purposive sample, the results were not generalizable. A power analysis was not conducted prior to the sampling process. Survey respondents were self-selected. No mandated requirement for participation in the study was given, however, an extra credit opportunity (not exceeding 1% of overall points for the semester) was communicated to encourage participation.

Instrumentation. Given a quantitative survey design existed for independently measuring stoicism, this was the chosen method for both assessments (Gaitniece-Putāne, 2005; McAteer & Gillanders, 2018; Page et al., 2019; Pathak et al., 2007; Quintner et al., 2019; Shattuck, et al., 2020; Wagstaff & Rowledge, 1994).

The 20-item Liverpool Stoicism Scale (Table 1) was the first of two assessments developed to measure stoicism (Wagstaff & Rowledge, 1995) and has been cited in seven other studies ranging from suicide, repression, cancer, and well-being (Calderon et al., 2017; Furnham, 2003; Murray et al., 2008; Witte et al., 2012). Neither assessment reflects the basic doctrines of the philosophy. The decision to use the assessment was intended as a starting point for a continued exploration of stoicism's connection with leadership concepts. The LSS used a five-point

Likert-type scale with responses ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree.* The LSS assesses stoic disposition based on a) lack of emotional involvement; b) a dislike of free emotional expression; and c) the ability to endure emotion. Half of the items were reversed to account for the effects of response bias. Participants' final scores range from 20-100. Examples of behavior statements from the assessment include 'I tend to cry at sad films', 'I do not let problems interfere in my life', and 'I don't really like people knowing what I'm feeling'.

The Chronbach's alpha for this study using the LSS was .713. Wagstaff and Rowledge (1995) suggested the LSS has external validity, due to the significant correlation between the lack of emotional response to traumatic stories and levels of stoicism as hypothesized. The Spearman-Brown split-half reliability for the LSS was reported to be .90 (Wagstaff & Rowledge, 1995). The test-retest reliability was r = .82, and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.86 for two separate LSS assessments in a single study (Murray et al., 2008). Murray et al. (2003) supported internal reliability but for a non-significant factor loading on item 3 ("I do not let my problems interfere with my everyday life").

The construct of emotional intelligence was assessed using the Emotional and Social Competence Inventory-University (ESCI-U). Originally developed as the Emotional Competence Inventory (ECI), it measured 22 core emotional competencies (Boyatzis & Goleman, 1998; Korn Ferry, 2017). Now 12 items, it addressed emotional self-awareness, achievement orientation, adaptability, emotional self-control, positive outlook, empathy, organizational awareness, conflict management, coach and mentor, influence, inspirational leadership, and teamwork (Korn Ferry, 2017). The competencies were grouped into four clusters: self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, and relationship management (Korn Ferry, 2017).

The ESCI-U was based on the ESCI and uniquely designed with two additional competencies relevant to performance within a higher education: systems thinking and pattern recognition (Korn Ferry, 2017). The instrument included 70 phrases (Table 2.) illustrating people's behaviors. Examples of statements from the assessment include 'I adapt overall strategy, goals, or projects to cope with unexpected events' and 'I believe the future will be better than the past' (Boyatzis & Goleman, 2007). Respondents scored themselves on a five-point, Likert-type scale ranging from "never" to "consistently" (Korn Ferry, 2017; Moon, 2009). The researcher opted not to collect 360-degree data and focused on the individual's own self-assessment, which is useful for developmental discussion (Korn Ferry, 2017). Chronbach's alpha for the ESCI instrument was .892 aligned with previous studies reporting 0.75 (Gómez et al., 2018) and .85 to .90 (Korn Ferry, 2017, p. 22).

Data Analysis. Only participants who completed both surveys were included in the data analysis (n =115). No analysis of early and late responders was completed due to the low variability in the population which led to a homogeneous sample. Data was analyzed using Microsoft Excel version 16.41 and SPSS Statistics version 24. The data were examined for the distribution of missingness (Schafer & Graham, 2002). The decision to employ single imputation was made because data were missing at random, only 1.2%, and single imputation is less likely to significantly alter variance in the results (Schafer & Graham, 2002). Reverse coding was applied to LSS items worded to control for acquiescence (10 items).

Descriptive statistics were selected to analyze participants' scores on the LSS and ESCI-U. The Pearson Product-Moment correlation was used to determine the relationship between the interval-based reported scores from the two self-assessments and their competencies. The strength of relationship between variables was described using Davis' convention (1971). A significance level of p = .05 was established a priori. The LSS and ESCI-U scores were analyzed for differences in participants reported age, gender, and race. An Independent Sample t-test was utilized for gender, and an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used for race and age.

Findings

Objective 1: Describe stoic behaviors of undergraduate students enrolled in a leadership course. Participant's stoicism scores (*M* = 52.37, *SD* = 9.51) ranged from 34 to 75 on a scale of 20-100 on the 12-item LSS. Frequency of respondents regarding their stoicism scores are shown in (Figure 1.1).

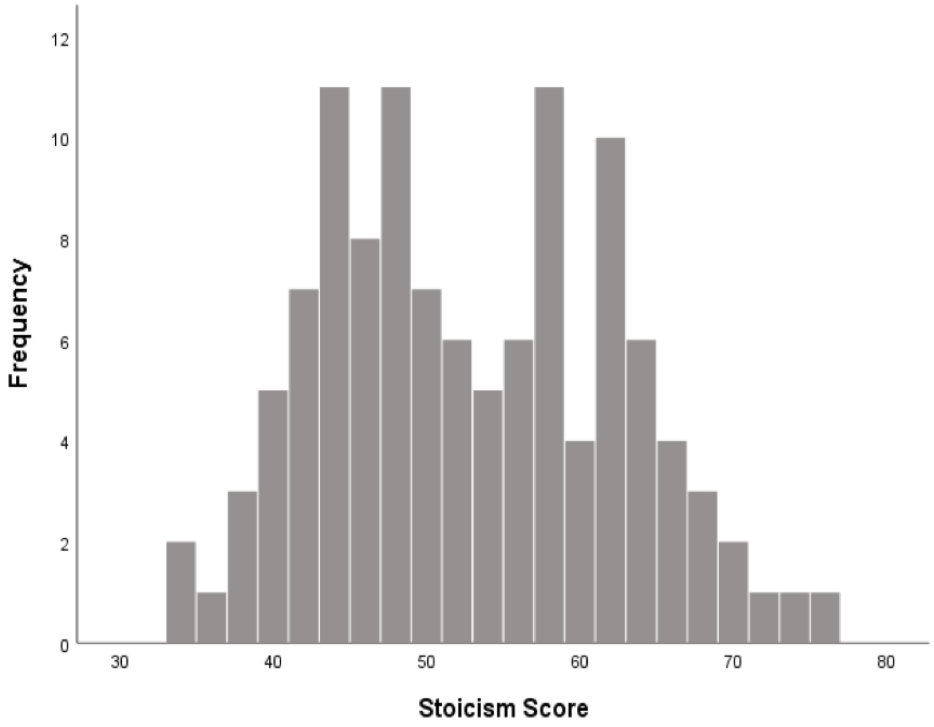

Figure 1-1. Frequency distribution of participants' stoicism scores (*n* = 115)

Objective 2: Describe the emotional intelligence competencies of undergraduate students enrolled in a leadership course. Participant's scores on the ESCI-U were *M* = 263.62 (*SD* = 26.82), with minimum and maximum scores 194 and 345 respectively. The total possible range for the instrument is 70 – 350. Of the 12 emotional competencies, students self-reported highest in teamwork as part of relationship management (*M* = 20.20; *SD* = 2.90), achievement orientation as part of self-management (*M* = 19.63, *SD* = 2.74), and empathy as part of social awareness (*M* = 19.76; *SD* = 2.96). The lowest scores fell under relationship management including influence (*M* = 18.37; *SD* = 2.60) and conflict management (*M* = 18.53; *SD* = 2.91). The third lowest scoring competency was emotional self-control (*M* = 18.57; *SD* = 3.07).

Objective 3: Identify the relationship between measures of stoicism and emotional intelligence in undergraduate students enrolled in a leadership course. No statistically significant relationship existed between the measure of stoicism and overall Emotional Intelligence scores (*p* = .332, *r* = -.091). Of the twelve competencies, a negative and moderate relationship between stoicism and the competency of self-awareness (*r* = - 0.391) was reported. Results found a low, statistically significant negative relationship between stoicism and the relationship management competency teamwork (*p* = .003, *r* = -.272), and low statistically significant positive relationship between self-management competencies, adaptability (*p* = .043, *r* = .189) and emotional self-control (*p* = .039, *r* = .192) No other statistically significant relationship between stoicism and ESCI-U competencies were identified.

Table 3.
Pearson Product-Moment Correlation statistically significant results on stoicism and ESCI-U Competencies (*n* = 115)

	n	*M*	*SD*	Min	Max	*r*	*p*
Self-Awareness: Emotional Self-Awareness	115	18.63	2.981	9	25	-.391	.000
Self-Management: Adaptability	115	18.73	2.873	12	25	.189	.043
Self-Management: Emotional Self-Control	115	18.57	3.067	10	25	.192	.039
Relationship Management: Teamwork	115	20.20	2.903	10	25	-.272	.003

Objective 4: Identify differences in stoicism and emotional intelligence based on participant demographics of age, gender, and race. No statistically significant difference between participant's age and stoicism scores ($F(2, 112) = 1.724$, $p = .183$, $\eta^2 = .030$), or Emotional Intelligence scores ($F(2, 112) = .077$, $p = .926$., $\eta^2 = .001$) was reported. The analysis for differences gender in stoic behavior scores were statistically significant ($t(113) = 2.479$; $p = .015$ $d = .564$). Men ($M = 56.35$, $SD = 8.754$) on average score higher than women ($M = 51.20$, $SD = 9.475$). Levene's test ($p > .05$) for equality of variance was not significant ($p = .741$). Differences for gender in Emotional Intelligence were statistically insignificant ($t(113) = -.739$; $p = .462$, $d = .157$). Women ($M = 264.62$, $SD = 25.911$) did score higher than men ($M = 260.19$, $SD = 30.029$). No statistically significant difference was found between participant's race with regard to stoicism ($F(2, 112) = .542$, $p = .583$, $\eta^2 = .010$) or Emotional Intelligence ($F(2, 112) = .289$, $p = .749$, $\eta 2 = .005$).

Conclusions & Discussion

The construct of stoicism and Emotional Intelligence (EI) have not been examined within the context of leadership. The data fills a gap in the literature providing stoicism scores for United States undergraduates, a population yet to be examined. It has been studied in the social and health contexts but has not been examined within the context of leadership. Findings are limited due to the stoic assessment's inadequate representation of the philosophy; however, they provide a data point in connecting stoicism with EI.

The first objective was a description of participants' stoic scores. Lower scores on the LSS indicate lower levels of stoic behavior. While the assignment does not provide a classification of score ranges, it is inferred this study population self-reported a low to moderate level of stoic behaviors. Figure 1.1 illustrates the frequency distribution with higher numbers reported above and below the mean. Stoicism scores aligned with the first stoic British study (Wagstaff & Rowledge, 1995) while the Australian, Spanish, and Latvian studies were higher (Calderón et al., 2017; Gaitniece-Putāne, 2005; Murray et al., 2008). Differences in scores based on cultural influence and demographics are reviewed in Objective Four.

Objective two called for a description of participants' emotional intelligence scores on the ESCI-U ($M = 263.62$, $SD = 26.82$). Participant's highest scoring competencies fell within three different domains. This suggests a diverse level of emotional intelligence; however, teamwork and achievement orientation are goal-oriented competencies, leaving empathy the only emotionally dense competency with high marks. It is noteworthy the high EI scores stem from domains related to others rather than the self. The low scoring competencies align with a similar study at the University of Florida where undergrads scored lowest on competencies of emotional self-control and emotional self-awareness (Ste. Claire, 2019).

The third objective examined the relationship between stoicism and Emotional Intelligence. The statistically significant negative relationship between stoic behaviors and self-awareness ($r = -.391$) suggest as a person's ability to recognize and understand their emotions and the impact on performance increases, the ability to endure emotion, and a dislike of emotional expression decreases. The juxtaposition of intimacy with one's emotions is not difficult to conceive given the understanding of stoicism from the assessment tool used. Through this lens, stoicism appears to associate with emotional repression and lack of awareness and subsequent proper management. Similarly, stoic behaviors had a low, statistically significant negative relationship with teamwork ($r = -.272$). Teamwork requires working cooperatively with others and enjoying shared responsibilities and the practice of emotional awareness (Gomez et al., 2018; McCallin, & Bamford, 2007), a group of behaviors in contrast with those measured by the LSS. Based on the language used in the LSS, participants may be internalizing the concept of stoicism as emotional repression and the absence of emotion. It is not about controlling emotion, which would require an awareness, but rather no

acknowledgement of the presence of emotion to begin with. Participant responses could be influenced by social desirability bias.

The results of the relationship with self-awareness suggest stoicism is not a favorable characteristic for understanding one's emotions in a way that can advance performance. From the review of stoicism texts, it is evident this is not a comprehensive finding. On the contrary, stoicism has been found quite useful in managing emotions in pursuit of performance. This study utilizes one specific perspective on EI due to a singular instrument, and criticism of Goleman's emotional intelligence theory have touched on its limited perspective (Emre, 2021). Differences in the overall process of emotional management between Goleman's EI model and stoicism can undermine the negative correlation finding. Perhaps stoicism's negative correlation is a demonstration of that difference. Not necessarily an indicator that one is better or worse at handling emotion, but different.

Looking at the statistically significant positive relationship found between stoic behaviors and emotional self-control (r = .189) and adaptability (r = .192), it is important to note those two EI competencies measure regulation as opposed to other domains which are concerned with recognition. They are also focused on the self instead of others. This understanding supports an alignment with stoic behaviors as described by the LSS. Emotional self-control and adaptability do not indicate a person's awareness of how they feel or why they feel the way they do but are instead the ability to control or regulate the emotions they may be feeling. Adaptability and self-control are positive attributes of leaders allowing them to endure anxiety ridden states and have the flexibility to respond to new ideas and take on risks (Goleman, 2001). With this understanding, stoic behaviors as measured by the LSS can be a positive asset to effective leadership.

Lastly, no statistically significant difference existed between participant's age and stoicism or EI scores. This is in contrast with other stoic studies which have concluded levels of stoicism increase with age (Calderón et al., 2017; Murray et al., 2008; Gaitniece-Putāne, 2006). While the influence of age was not statistically significant, the lower stoicism scores reported in the first objective could be attributed to the sample's truncated age range (17-23). Studies using the LSS and reporting on significant differences in age had both a higher average age of participants (M = 53, Calderón et al., 2017; M = 52, Murray et al., 2008) and a larger age range (20-35, Gaitniece-Putāne, 2006).

A statistically significant difference in stoic behaviors was found between genders. Men (M = 56.35, SD = 8.754) scored higher than women (M = 51.20, SD = 9.475). These findings reflect other studies using the LSS including the Spanish, Australian, and British studies where men also scored higher than women (Calderón et al., 2017; Murray et al., 2008; Wagstaff & Rowledge, 1995). In contrast, a Latvian study reported higher stoic scores for females as compared to their male counterparts (Gaitniece-Putāne, 2006). Those scores were the highest reported from the LSS. Researchers cited cultural differences with women expected to be equal wage earners and assume full responsibility for home environments. With the independence of Latvia from Soviet rule, media recognized men have as powerful emotional experiences as women and were now free to express those feelings. This is different from the level of emotional control women are expected to have given high societal expectations (Gaitniece-Putāne, 2006).

Differences for gender in Emotional Intelligence were insignificant. Women (M = 264.62, SD = 25.911) did score higher than men (M = 260.19, SD = 30.029), which support the findings from Korn Ferry's review of data collected from 2011-2015 of 55,000 professionals (2017). Given that the sample population age range was 17-23 there could be a lack of emotional maturity that would allow study participants to effectively self-assess. Without the 360-degree component of the ESCI-U the study is limited to the self-assessment results of a population potentially still in emotional maturation.

No statistically significant differences existed between participant's race regarding stoicism or Emotional Intelligence. Other LSS studies interested in cultural or ethnic influence used language such as

race (Shattuck et al., 2020), country of origin (Pathak et al., 2017), and references to cultural influence (Gaitniece-Putāne, 2006). Those studies proposed cultural influence on stoic behaviors based on the participant's environment (Gaitniece-Putāne, 2006), social norms based on ethnic groups (Shattuck et al., 2020) and investigations into sociodemographic predictors (Pathak et al., 2017). Understanding cultural influence on stoic dispositions is worthy and valid effort. Clarification on the form of data collected could be useful for future studies given race may not fully capture the intent of the question.

Piaget (1960) reminds us that "At no level, at no state, even in the adult, can we find behavior or a state that is purely cognitive without emotion". It is evident leaders will continue to be faced with rapidly changing competitive landscapes and expectations to respond and navigate those pressures while maintaining composure. Further exploration into constructs which can help leaders succeed fulfills an unspoken oath taken by leadership educators who are challenged with looking for new practices and fresh research to guide curriculum to best prepare students for roles in leadership (Andenoro et al., 2013). Emotional intelligence has long provided a structure for understanding emotions in leadership while stoicism has been offered in contrast to those desirable behaviors. That contrast and misunderstanding of the philosophy inspired this study which pointedly compared the two constructs within the context of leadership for the first time. By introducing basic stoicism doctrine and presenting findings from an assessment which measures stoic behaviors, a discussion has begun about what it means to be stoic in leadership.

Stoicism offers a historically relevant body of work rich with relevant leadership concepts. The responsibility falls on leadership academics to explore stoicism which has opposing interpretations between popular literature and academic research (Anderson, 2012; Bowles, 2019; Gambhir, 2019; Grewal & Salovey, 2005; Manthorpe, 2017; Mayer et al., 2008; Tank, 2019). An investigation into stoicism based on its philosophical background could provide original or complimentary content for educators teaching leadership concepts. Moreover, acknowledging the limitations of current stoicism instruments, the development of an instrument that better aligns with the philosophy's doctrines would be useful. With the comprehensive understanding of stoicism, studying cultural influence and social desirability factors would be insightful. Leadership scholars could also benefit from exploring topics such as leaders perceived and self-claimed stoic behaviors and the impact on followers. Once named as such, are these stoic behaviors favored or disliked? In what context? Do any preferences exist for stoic influences on behaviors within professional contexts? Given stoicism's lack of empirical research within a leadership context, any exploration of this historically relevant leadership principal is valuable.

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