



DRIVERS OF CHANGE MANAGEMENT IN PUBLIC SECTOR TRANSFORMATION; EFFECT OF MANAGERS' EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

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Accepted: June 16, 2020

ABSTRACT

Organizational change requires drivers of change. To be a driver of change, emotional intelligence is imperative. This article presented emotional intelligence as a leading driver of managing change in an organization. It delved into the effect of emotional intelligence capabilities of the supervisors in devolved governments / units (counties) in Kenya on the staff perception on county commitment to change. Specifically, the article highlighted the different perspectives of emotional intelligence and its five components of self-awareness, self-regulation, self-motivation, empathy, and social skill. In furtherance, the article examined how emotional intelligence contributes to change management focusing on building a team to effect change, and overcoming resistance to change. The study focused on staff in devolved governance units in Kenya-the counties; in particular, 406 employees of Kakamega Kwale and Meru counties. The empirical results support the hypothesis that employees who view their managers/supervisors as being emotionally intelligent tend to believe that the senior administration of the county is committed and is in a position to drive the required change. Empathy and awareness dimensions are the most significant predictors of positive opinion on change management in the counties. The effects of both these dimensions are non-linear. The study also noted that staff who have lower opinion of county leadership being committed to change are more influenced by leaders' empathy and awareness. County employees holding supervisory/managerial positions such as senior administrators are perceived in turn as possessing emotional intelligence. They are often the drivers of change.

Keywords: Change, Emotional Intelligence (EI).

CITATION: Tumaini, V., Gichinga, L., Datche, E., & Omido, K. (2020). Drivers of change management in public sector transformation; Effect of managers' emotional intelligence. *The Strategic Journal of Business & Change Management*, 7(2), 569 – 578.

INTRODUCTION

Myers, Hulks and Wiggins (2012) argue that to understand changes in an organization adequately, the focus should be on planned, psychological, emotional and emergent dimensions. Supported by Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee (2013), they assert that change management relies on competencies of emotional intelligence. Indeed changes in an organization may spark confusion, helplessness, anxiety, fear, frustration, and sometimes become emotionally intense if not properly managed (DuBrin, 2011). Quite often, resistance of change by employees arises when they feel left out of the change process. Therefore, emotional intelligence competency, which can also be learnt, is a key tenet to change acceptance (DuBrin, 2011). This is because emotional self-awareness, adaptability, empathy and influence affect the extent to which change is perceived in an organization (Goleman, Boyatzis & McKee, 2013).

Often, change is perceived to be intimidating, and a temporary phase disrupting a well-charted course of life (Kanter, 2003). While such disruption may or may not necessarily lead to progressive change, all progress results from change, while not all change is progress (Myers, Hulks & Wiggins, 2012). In an organizational context, change is nevertheless necessary.

In the management of change in an organization, Harsh (2012) proposes the most likely helpful traits for change managers. Some of these traits include, Specific management competencies as opposed to soft skills, for instance, constitute Harsh's preferred aspect of the management of change. Myers, Hulks and Wiggins (2012) as well consider change management a core responsibility for executives, managers and employees, while Campbell (2014) consider great strategy a competitive advantage for managing changes in an organization. Besides, a

change agent needs to be aware of an organizational environment that brings change.

According to Dievernich, Tokarski and Gong (2016); Harsh (2012), there are complex and numerous environmental factors causing change in an organization. The factors are either static or dynamic. Harsh (2012) offers an analogue of a person's success, which depends on traits and skills, physiological factors, and the ability to cope with the environment, financial resources, physical resources and skills (Dievernich, Tokarski & Gong, 2016). The factors of change in an organization are either internal or external. Harsh (2012) argues that internal factors are controllable, can be altered, and include factors such as physical facilities, personnel, and functional means. External factors on the other hand are beyond control of an organization. Harsh (2012) outlines five categories of external forces of change in an organization. The factors include economic environment, task environment, government and political environment, technological environment and socio-cultural environment.

Economic environment consists of economic policies, conditions, and systems. Dievernich, Tokarski & Gong (2016) argue that conditions such as income and assets distribution, the development stage of the economy, nature of the economy, level of income and economic resources are key determinants of business strategies. Managing economic change therefore aims at improving the economic life of the society and individuals (Harsh, 2012). In view of Dievernich, Tokarski & Gong (2016), the progress made translates into output and income, policies, attitude to work, conditions of production, and institutions. Technological environment has been a reality, influencing organizational change at a tremendous speed (Szydłowska, 2018). Technological change happens when there is a match between a need of society and the technological capacity. Similarly, Szydłowska (2018) argues that technological factors

may pose challenges to an organization, especially where the firm shows incapability of coping with the technological changes. Moreover, Harsh (2012) notes that varying technological environment may require product modifications for an organization to remain competitive or to survive. Introduction of improved technological input into economic transformation process is central to achieving organizational change and growth (Szydłowska, 2018). Hence, technological transfer helps an organization achieve competitive advantage over others, improve an existing product, create new products, and satisfy a need.

Political and government environment interacts with economic policy and system. Factors such as political stability affects business activities (Chmiel, Fraccaroli & Sverke, 2017). Organizations perform better under political stability. Governments formulate and execute policies implemented through legislation. The legislations, statements, rules and plans, announcements, guidelines and government directives entails the politico-legal environment of an organization (Chmiel, Fraccaroli & Sverke, 2017). Alvesson and Sveningsson (2015) purports that stronger regulations by governments, especially to protect consumer interests and ecological balance force organizations to adopt practices encouraged by the government. Government policy changes in industry, trade, fiscal and entry have an impact on businesses (Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2015). Policy changes and developments create both opportunities and threats to organizations. Harsh (2012) acknowledged that policy changes that brightens the prospect of some organizations may pose a threat to others. Government policies determine the direction and pattern of organizational activities. Besides, Alvesson and Sveningsson (2015) contends that political and government change implies changes in ideologies, which may lead to changes in place of work, structure and product mix.

Socio-cultural environment as well influence organizational change. A people's beliefs, values, buying, and consumption habits, customs and traditions, language, level of education, taste and preferences affect business (Harsh, 2012). In view of Fallik (2013), social change seek to transform existing elements to satisfy the needs of the society. Changes in social institutions, culture, fine arts and philosophy are key determinants and accelerators of change to suit modern requirements (Fallik, 2013). Lastly, under external environment, is task environment. The immediate external forces such as business associates, competitors, regulating agencies, customers, labour organizations, shareholders and suppliers directly influence the management of an organization (Kotter, 2012). The forces according to Harsh (2012) influence organizational change in varying proportions. Business competitors instill creativity and innovation; regulating agencies set product standards; customer offer an organization with product options that best suit their needs, while the labour force set standards for better services and working conditions.

Factors that exist within an organization may have a significant influence on change. Harsh (2012) purports that insufficiency of executives, intra and interpersonal relationships, organizational and personnel adjustments and standards, and procedures of work play a crucial role of influencing organizational change internally. Kotter (2012) argues that procedures of work have undergone several transformations to include use of new technology, machines and equipment. Changes in procedures and methods of work also influence organizational expectations in terms of work standards (Cawsey, Deszca & Ingols, 2015). The expectations determines the competitive ability of an organization, which in turn influence readjustments both on organizational structure and on the work force. Intra and interpersonal relationship as well play a vital role in organizational change. Changes in design and the structure of an organization results into a clear-cut

distribution of roles, responsibilities and chain of command (Cawsey, Deszca & Ingols, 2015). Organizational internal conflict for instance, may lead to creation of conflict management programs and departments or units to accommodate different personalities, and to establish harmony in interpersonal relationship.

To champion managing positive change, acceptable to all the stakeholders in an organization, change managers should establish a balance of strengths across the domains of emotional intelligence competencies. Goleman (2006) deduces that emotional and social intelligence in leadership consists of twelve specific, evidence-based competencies. On the outset however, these competencies are founded on emotional self-awareness, which reinforces capacity building for readiness, focus and self-management for organizational change.

Emotional intelligence constitutes fundamental skills that enable individuals accept and confidently respond to changes in an organization. A person's trait influence how he or she interacts with fellow workers, and the level of change acceptance. Emotional intelligence (EI) is the ability of an individual to regulate personal as well as others people's emotions and feelings, which helps them differentiate and manage individual reasoning and actions (Asrar-ul-Haq et al., 2017). It is the capacity of an individual to observe and express feelings and emotions, and dealing with them in an effective way that increases chances of enhancing personal development (Corcoran & Tormey, 2013). Emotional intelligence is the basis for personal qualities such as realistic self-confidence, personal integrity, knowledge of personal strengths and weaknesses, resilience in times of change or adversity, self-motivation, perseverance, and the knack for getting along well with others. Indeed, EI is at the heart of the skills portfolio of an effective change leader.

Emotional intelligence is critical for leader's effectiveness as it guides them to communicate clearly and lead others in a way that creates productive interaction at work (Cavazotte, Moreno, & Hickmann, 2012). When leaders develop emotional competencies and skills, it enhances emotional intelligence attitudes, behaviour and practices resulting in leadership success and satisfaction. A leader who has good emotional intelligence would have improved job performance (Mehmood, Qasim, & Azam, 2013), such as organizational change management.

Emotional intelligence comprises of four basic components namely emotional self-awareness, self-management, relationship managements, and social awareness (Asrar-ul-Haq et al., 2017). Emotional intelligence has also been conceptualized into internal, personal, compatibility, and general mood components. The internal components comprise of emotional self-awareness, self-respect, self-actualization, assertiveness and independence. Personal elements include social responsibility, managing interpersonal relationships and empathy. Other components include reality, problem solving skills, impulse control, self-prediction, tolerance and happiness (Nwokah & Ahiauzu, 2010).

Emotional Self-awareness is related to a deep understanding of one's emotions, strengths and limitations as well as one's values and motives (Malik & Shahid, 2016). Leaders who have strong self-awareness are realistic, not overly self-critical or naively hopeful. Instead, they are honest with themselves about themselves, as well as honest about themselves with others, even to the point of being able to laugh at their own weaknesses (Nwokah & Ahiauzu, 2010). A self-aware individual will typically find time to reflect quietly, often off by themselves. This allows them to think things over rather than react impulsively.

Competencies associated with self-management dimension of EI include self-control, adaptability, initiative, transparency, achievement and optimism (Nwokah & Ahiauzu, 2010). Leaders who can exercise emotional self-control typically attempt to manage their troubling emotions and impulses. Transparency (integrity) competence describes true openness to others about one's feelings, beliefs and actions while adaptability competence enables one to juggle multiple demands energetically without losing focus (Nwokah & Ahiauzu, 2010). Leaders with achievement competence are constantly driven by desire to seek performance improvements for themselves and those they lead, while those that exhibit optimism can roll with the punches, seeing an opportunity rather than a threat in a setback (Nwokah & Ahiauzu, 2010).

The social awareness component encompasses empathy, organizational awareness, and service orientation as its associated competencies (Nwokah & Ahiauzu, 2010). Empathy enables a leader to adapt to a wide range of emotional signals, letting them sense the felt, but unspoken, emotions in a person or group. Such leaders exercise patience to listen attentively and grasp the other person's perspective on issues. With the competencies of organizational awareness, a leader can be politically astute, able to detect crucial social networks and understand key power relationships. Leaders who possess high service orientation competence usually foster an emotional climate that keeps the relationship between them and their customers or clients on the right track.

The last emotional intelligence domain, relationship management has six associated competencies, namely: inspiration, influence, developing others, change catalyst, conflict management, and teamwork and collaboration (Nwokah & Ahiauzu, 2010). Inspirational leaders create resonance and move people with a compelling vision or shared mission.

Indicators of a leader's powers of influence range from finding just the right appeal for a given listener to knowing how to build support from key people and a network of support for an initiative.

In the same way, leaders who are good at cultivating people's abilities show a genuine interest in those they are helping along, understanding their goals, strengths and weaknesses. Leaders who possess the change catalyst competence are usually able to lead in the recognition of need for the change, challenge the status quo, and champion the new order. Such leaders can be strong advocates for the change even in the face of opposition, and they can provide practical ways to overcome barriers to change (Nwokah & Ahiauzu, 2010).

In Kenya, the devolved system of governance was introduced in 2010 when the new constitutional dispensation was ushered in. The primary purpose was driven by the need for service delivery to marginalized areas of the country, by county managers who are the change leaders in charge of the 47 counties.

Better service delivery, many-a-times, calls for new ways of doing business which more often requires significant shift in mode of operation and way of thinking ultimately requiring emotional intelligence indulgence. This paper delves into the effect of emotional intelligence capabilities of the supervisors in devolved governments/units (counties) in Kenya on the staff perception on county commitment to change.

METHODOLOGY

The sample consisted of 406 employees (53% Male and 47% female), across three county governments, namely Kakamega (29%), Kwale (28%) and Meru (43%). In terms of highest level of education attained, slightly more than half (51%) of the sample comprised staff with Bachelor degree followed by those with up to Master degree (28%). Majority of the staff (65%)

had 1-5 years' working experience in the county governments, suggesting that majority of the staff had been recruited at the advent of devolved governance system in Kenya after the 2013 general elections. Cumulatively, 24% of the respondents in the survey sample had 6 years and above work experience. The questionnaire was designed with four sections. The first section collected information on demographic characteristics of the respondents. The remaining sections collected information on leadership competencies, organizational culture and employees perception on counties administration change management orientation and commitment using five point likert scales.

Emotional intelligence was measured using a 14 item scale. The 14-item emotional intelligence measurement scale had composite reliability of Cronbach alpha = 0.917, exceeding the recommended minimum alpha coefficient of 0.7 (Zikmund et al. 2010). The items assessed perceived ability of leaders to regulate their personal and others' emotions and feelings so as to differentiate and manage their reasoning and actions (Asrar-ul-Haq et al., 2017). The organizational culture (OC) measurement scale comprised nine (9) items that assessed, on a 5-point Likert scale, the set of values, assumptions, beliefs and behaviours held by employees as defined by (Carlström & Ekman, 2012), in the three county governments surveyed. The three clusters of culture assessed in this study are clan, adhocracy and hierarchy, assessed on the dimensions of organizational leadership, management of employees and criteria for success for each cluster of OC.

Under change management, the survey participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1 point) to strongly agree (5 points), with statements that described actions and processes

undertaken by their respective county leadership to achieve desired outcomes. In total, were 14 items that made the final change management scale, which reflected the application of tools, processes, skills and principles operationalized into actions of communicating the need for change, mobilizing others to support the change and evaluating change implementation.

The questionnaires were distributed to staff working in the counties and ample time was given before the research assistants went back to the respective offices to collect them. The employees given the questionnaires were randomly chosen from the list of staff provided by the respective human resource departments of the counties.

RESULTS

Correlation analysis

In line with the research hypothesis that higher supervisor EI opinion would be related to higher positive opinion of change management in the counties, Table 1 showed a moderate positive, significant association between opinion of employee, on positive change and supervisor total emotional intelligence($r= 0.4997$, $p<0.05$). Each of the EI dimensions were also significantly positively correlated with positive change management opinion, with the highest correlation being with empathy($r= 0.4837$, $p<0.05$). In order to check for these relationships while controlling for organizational culture, partial correlations were computed. Table 1, column labelled (b) shows the results of partial correlations. An examination of the partial correlations showed that there is a drastic reduction in the correlations meaning that organizational culture has an effect on the strength of relationship between opinion of the employees, on change management and the EI of their supervisors.

Table 1: Leader EI and change perception in the counties: General Correlations (a), Partial Correlations Controlling for Organisational Culture (b)

Variables	(a) Pearsons Correlation	(b) Partial correlations (control = organizational culture)
Total leader emotional intelligence	0.4997	0.3085
Awareness	0.3923	0.3231
Regulation	0.4086	0.2448
Motivation	0.4485	0.2100
Empathy	0.4837	0.2737
Social skills	0.4035	0.2584

Hierarchical Quantile Logistic Regression

A hierarchical quantile logistic regression was estimated to determine extent to which perceived emotional intelligence of the supervisors predicted county staff opinion on change management in the county. The quantile regression approach was chosen because the anticipated effect might not be linear and might be changing at different levels of change management opinion.

Table 2 showed that in Model 1, county staff demographic characteristics and organizational culture significantly accounted for 33% of the variation in change management opinion. In this model 1, organization culture is identified as the main predictor of county staff opinion on change management in the county. Model 2 in table 1 shows the effect of adding the five components of

emotional intelligence of leaders. The five components lead to an increase in the amount of variation explained by 8%. Alongside with organizational culture, two of the components of emotional intelligence are significant in explaining the change management opinion. In particular, awareness and empathy of supervisors are positively significant in explaining the change management opinion of employees in the county. Furthermore, the quantile regression approach also shows that the effect of empathy of supervisors does not contribute equally in a linear form; staff who have the opinion that the county administration is not receptive to change management rely more on the empathy of the supervisors to believe more in the change management strategies of the counties, and similar trend was seen for awareness (Figure 2 and Figure 3).

Table 2: Quantile regression analysis output with staff opinion on county change management as the dependent variable

VARIABLES	(1) Model 1	(2) Model 2
org_culture2_rs	0.810*** (0.0415)	0.653*** (0.0400)
1.section1gender	0.325 (1.390)	1.266 (1.154)
2.section1county	1.446 (1.769)	4.199*** (1.526)
3.section1county	2.608 (1.998)	2.163 (1.658)
2.edu	-2.582	0.429

	(1.939)	(1.606)
3.edu	-1.124	-0.279
	(2.106)	(1.764)
2.section1workduration	2.718	-0.311
	(2.243)	(1.848)
3.section1workduration	1.652	-1.638
	(2.734)	(2.244)
4.section1workduration	3.153	1.061
	(3.066)	(2.502)
emo_awareness_rs		0.156***
		(0.0524)
emo_regulation_rs		0.0720
		(0.0534)
emo_motivation_rs		0.0230
		(0.0589)
emo_empathy_rs		0.127***
		(0.0447)
emo_social_rs		0.0457
		(0.0596)
Constant	16.21***	-4.199
	(3.899)	(3.729)
Pseudo R ²	33%	41%
Observations	404	404

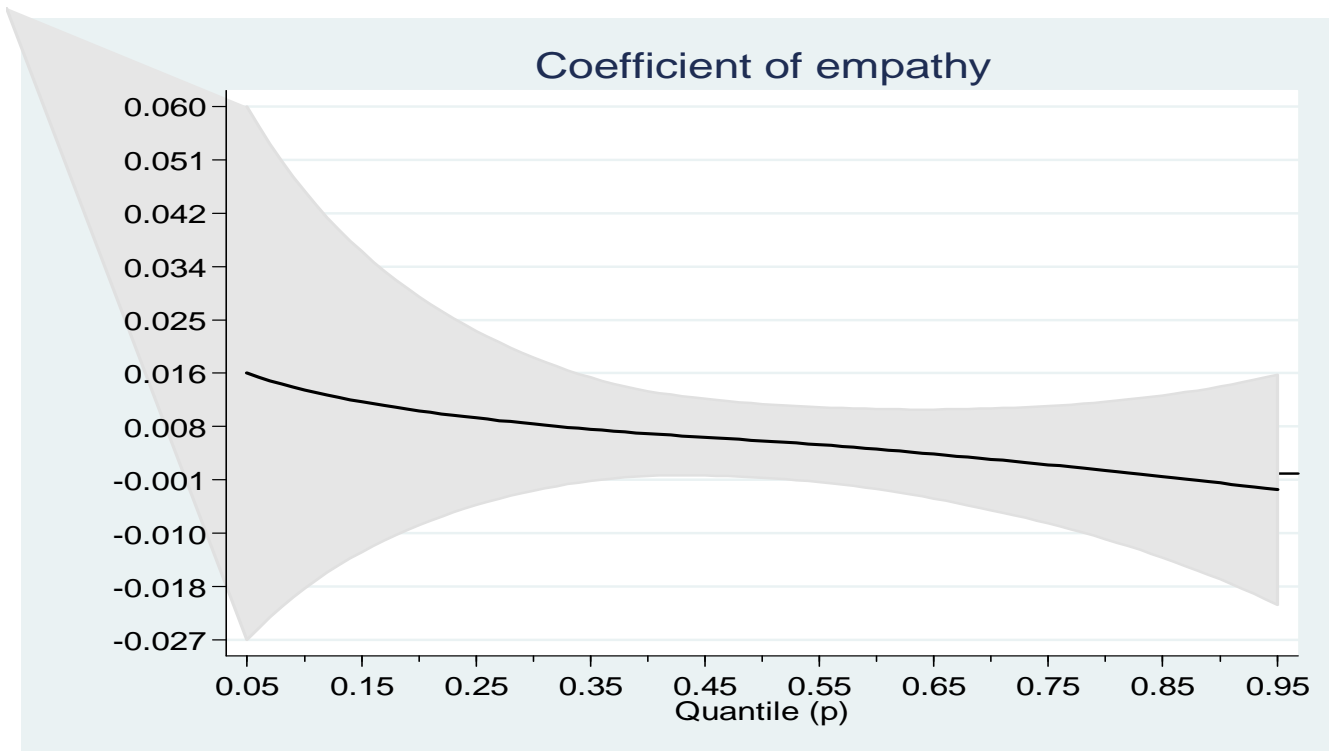


Figure 1: Coefficient of Empathy

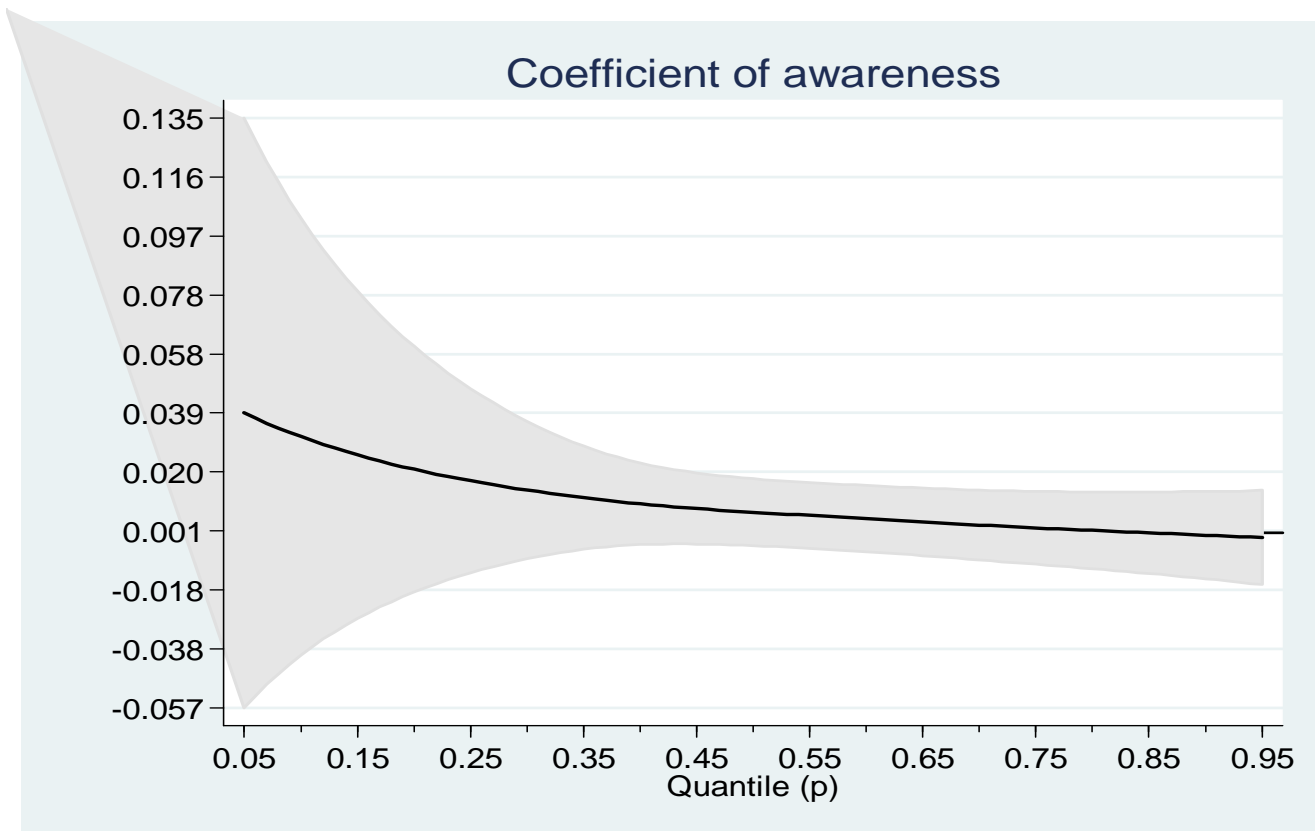


Figure 2: Coefficient of Awareness

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this current paper was to identify the effect of emotional intelligence capabilities of the supervisors in devolved governments units (counties) in Kenya on the perception of change and acceptance of change in the county. The results generally supported the hypothesis that employees would see that the county governments are receptive to change and better new ways of work if they are managed by supervisors who they consider to have high emotional intelligence. In particular, two dimensions of perceived emotional intelligence, empathy and self-awareness of the supervisor were found to be significant in explaining positive change management in the counties.

This study demonstrated the returns of having county employees holding supervisory/managerial positions

with more emotional intelligence. This has practical implications in county staffing more so when the county governments are continuously restructuring and trying to position themselves as vessels that bring development in marginal areas as well as good partners for working with both local and international investors. County staff who consider their line managers as being emotionally intelligent are more inclined to believe that the county administration is well positioned and is committed to drive change. Against this background, enhancing the emotional intelligence skills of county staff holding managerial positions is critical in encouraging all the county staff to embrace the new changes being.

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