

Understanding Emotional Intelligence and its Relation to Job Performance

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ABSTRACT

This current literature review intends to study the relationship between emotional intelligence and employee performance. Empirical data used in various researches forms the basis of this study. Two primary variables, emotional intelligence and work performance are the focus of this study. Review of literature and various research papers indicate that there is a positive correlation between emotional intelligence of an employee and work performance and productivity. Success of an organization depends upon how highly positive the correlation is between the two variables. The paper is conceptual and as such a more analytical research and analysis is required to demonstrate a link between emotional intelligence and workplace performance.

Keywords: *Emotional Intelligence, workplace performance*

INTRODUCTION

The rules of work are changing. Globalization and liberalization added with the changing market scenario has forced the industry to adopt different strategies and redefine structures and systems to survive and be successful. We are no longer judged by our intelligence and skill alone. It has become more important for us to understand ourselves and others. Success now lies in how well we handle ourselves and others. Strategies require the involvement of people which invariably affects the people. Thus implementation of any strategy by any organization will require a considerable amount of rethinking on the human aspects and issues. It would not be wrong to say that human issues are actually the essence of business- profitability, competitiveness and survival –all depend on these

human issues. Thus it would not be out of place to say that managing human emotions effectively leads to a more successful person- in both, on a personal front as well as in office.

It cannot be denied that technical skills and intellectual ability of an employee plays an important role in the performance of an employee. Scholars and intelligence researchers have recognized and emphasized that the EI construct is more than just cognitive and the technical skills required for EI cannot be measured by the traditional intelligence quotient tests (Reiff, Hatzes, Bramel&Gibbon,2001)¹. IQ tests although a predictor of academic success, cannot account for high performing, productive and successful individuals. Studies across industries reveal that economic returns were much higher where strategies and management interventions such as high involvement, high commitment and high performance has been introduced and implemented. It can be argued that IQ cannot explain the individual differences in performance and productivity traits, the same can be attributed to EI. The association between human resource management practice and EI is an eemerging concept. “Emotional intelligence is arelatively recent concept, but it has important implications for selecting employees and managing their performance” (Ashkanasy&Daus, 2002)². There has been a growing interest in EI and its influence on work performance and productivity. With the publication of the immensely popular book “Emotional Intelligence” by Daniel Goleman(1995)³, there has been a surge of interest in emotional intelligence. The very fact that the concept of emotional intelligence is based on extensive research, both scientific and theoretical, makes the topic so interesting. However, research in an organizational setup is still very limited.

There is not much evidence by way of empirical data to conclusively establish any relationship between EI and its link between employee and organizational performance. There is a growing need for evidence–based approach to issues pertaining to EI and performance. Lindebaum(2009)⁴ in his article titled “Rhetoric or Remedy? A Critique on Developing Emotional Intelligence,” challenged the concept that organizations can develop and further enhance EI of individuals. He also emphasized that any attempt to enhance the individual’s EI and performance must take into account the existing and related intrapersonal, intraorganizational, and interindustry obstacles.

DEFINING EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Emotional Intelligence is a phrase which focuses attention on human behavior. Although it might sound simple enough it incorporates the complexity of human behavior. The concept was explored in Howard Gardner's book 'Multiple Intelligences: The Theory in Practice', in 1993⁵. Gardner was of the view that people generally possess seven categories of intelligence and of which interpersonal and intrapersonal can be labeled as emotional intelligence. Gardner's research led to the exploration of the concept of emotional intelligence. Although Gardner's ground breaking research focused attention on this capability of people, the term 'emotional intelligence was first coined by Peter Salovey, a Yale psychologist and his colleague John D. Mayer in 1990⁶. They were the first to define emotional intelligence which today is universally accepted by researchers. For Salovey and Mayer, defining emotional intelligence as an intelligence required fulfillment of certain criteria: it had to be formally defined, a means for measuring it had to be developed, proper documentation was required to identify it and differentiate it from other forms of intelligence, and its applicability, practicality and predictability in the real world had to be established. Salovey and Mayer(1990), includes both interpersonal and intrapersonal skills when defining emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence (EI) is historically defined as the ability to carry out accurate reasoning focused on emotions and the ability to use emotions and emotional knowledge to enhance thought (Mayer & Salovey, 1997)⁷. Thus, EI is the ability to infuse intelligence with emotion to enhance thought. Salovey and Mayer's model of emotional intelligence focuses on the abilities in the following domains, (a) knowing one's emotions, (b) managing emotions, (c) motivating oneself, (d) recognizing emotions in others, and (e) managing relationships. Each of these areas is viewed as developing from early childhood. As skills grow in one area (e.g., perceiving emotions), it leads to the improvement of skills in other areas. (such as understanding and regulating emotions). Simply stated, according to Salovey and Mayer, emotional intelligence is the ability to monitor one's own feelings and emotions and understanding the emotions and feelings of others and discriminating among them so as to use the information to guide one's thought and action.

Daniel Goleman has been credited with popularising of Emotional Intelligence. Unlike Mayer et al(2000)⁸, who based their definition largely from intelligence research, both Goleman (1998)⁹ and Bar-On (1997)¹⁰ defined emotional intelligence on the basis of personality and competence. Goleman(1995)¹¹ presupposes that individuals have inherent emotional intelligence. This determines their potential for learning emotional competencies. These competencies are not innate talents but are abilities that can be learned. To be successful, these competencies need to be worked upon and to be developed. Goleman's model outlines EI as having four domains: (a) self-awareness, (b) self-management, (c) social awareness, (d) relationship management. Based on his model motivation can be said to form a subset of EI.

According to Bar-On (1997), EI is defined as an “array of non-cognitive capabilities, competencies and skills that influence one's ability to succeed in coping with environmental demands and pressures.” He included emotional abilities along with personality, motivation and affective dispositions in his definition of EI. He later developed a model that measured abilities and potentials of performance rather than performance itself. His model consists of multifactorial combination of emotional, personal and social abilities

David Ryback(1998)¹², defined emotional intelligence on the basis of four components, namely,(a) sharpening instincts,, (b) controlling negative emotions, (c) discovering talents, and (d) management. His study is based on research on adults who want to enhance their emotional intelligence.

Although various authors have proposed that EI is a type of intelligence in the traditional sense, contemporary research and theory lacks any clear conceptual model of intelligence within which to place the construct. Eysenck (2000)¹³ opines that Goleman's description of EI contains unsubstantiated assumptions about intelligence in general, and that it even runs contrary to what researchers have come to expect when studying types of intelligence. Locke (2005)¹⁴ claims that the concept of EI in itself is a misinterpretation of the intelligence construct. Some researchers have defined EI as ability to reason about emotion; others have

equated the concept with a list of traits such as achievement motivation, flexibility, happiness, and self-regard.

However, there is at present no universal accepted definition of emotional intelligence. Yet it cannot be denied that emotional intelligence is potentially incremental and can be developed and enhanced through proper training and experience. As noted by Cherniss, Extein, Goleman and Weissberg(2006)¹⁵, Emotional Intelligence is still quite nascent and as such, several versions of its construct “ is a sign of vitality in the field and not its weakness”.

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND WORKPLACE PERFORMANCE

The primary objective of any organization is to increase productivity and enhance profitability. The question has always plagued an investigator as to what intrinsic aspects of human contribution spells out profit for an organization. Is it the head or the heart? Researchers have only recently started looking into the emotional aspect of the employees and its importance towards achieving organizational goals. The desire of organizations to improve employee efficiency has made emotional intelligence as a subject of research more relevant. The focus on the emotional aspects of an employee is gaining more and more attention and the fact that the emotions are both integral and inseparable part of any business organization, the employee and his emotional experiences become all the more important.

Research has claimed that IQ alone cannot enhance job performance of an employee. Studies have shown that emotional intelligence as a predictor of job performance has an important role to play. Snarey and Vaillant (1985)¹⁶ in their research which studied the contribution and behaviour of 450 boys came to the conclusion that factors such as ability to handle stress, control emotions and frustration and ability to work in a team determined their success. IQ played little role in organizational or their personal success.

Thus, the organization can be considered to be a social system where the employees as members of the social system need to interact with one another and with outside members. These external members are the customers, suppliers and third party agencies with which the organization conducts its business. Interactions with all of them requires emotional maturity, emotional sensitivity and

competency. Employees with a higher level of emotional intelligence can evaluate and recognise emotions of not only self but also in others. They manage their emotions accordingly and adapt to the prevailing situation. Employees with a higher level of emotional competencies are considered to be more capable leaders. They are able to motivate their subordinates, perform better in a team and generally keep the morale high of the employees. They individually and as a team leader achieve higher performance in the organization.

There is enough empirical evidence to show that emotional intelligence is positively linked to employee performance and organizational success. The Consortium for Research on Emotional Intelligence in Organizations (CREIO), is an online resource for exploring various topics on the subject and it includes a lot of empirical research that has been conducted on emotional research.

Taking a cue, from all the research that is available here, a table depicting the link between emotional intelligence and workplace performance has been shown in a summarized form. The cases are based on empirical research provided by Cherniss (1999)¹⁷, in his article titled, “The Business Case for Emotional Research”, wherein the importance of emotional intelligence towards improved performance has been aptly demonstrated by organizations.

Table 1. Practical significance showing the link between EI and Business Performance

| ORGANIZATION/JOB TYPE | AUTHOR, YEAR | EI ACTION | PRACTICAL SIGNIFICANCE |
|---------------------------------|---|--|---|
| The U.S. Air Force | Cherniss, 1999 Bar-On, Handley, & Fund, 2005 | EQ-i used to select new recruits | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •• Most successful recruiters scored significantly higher in EI competencies of assertiveness, empathy, happiness, and emotional self awareness. •• Increased ability to predict successful recruiters by nearly threefold •• A saving of \$3 million annually •• EI recommended to be used in recruitment and selection |
| A multinational consulting firm | Cherniss, 1999 | Partners in the firm assessed on EI competencies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •• Partners who scored above the median on 9 or more of the 20 competencies delivered \$1.2 million more profit from their accounts than did other partners—a 139% incremental gain. |

| ORGANIZATION/JOB TYPE | AUTHOR, YEAR | EI ACTION | PRACTICAL SIGNIFICANCE |
|---|--|-------------------------------------|--|
| 300 top-level executives from 15 global companies | Cherniss, 1999 Spencer, McClelland, & Kelner, 1997 | Executives completed EI instruments | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •• Six emotional competencies distinguished stars from the average. |
| 200 companies and organizations worldwide | Cherniss, 1999 Goleman, 1995 | EI research | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •• One third of the difference in performance was found to be due to technical skill and cognitive ability, whereas two thirds were found to be due to emotional competence. |
| L'Oreal | Cherniss, 1999 Spencer & Spencer, 1993 Spencer, McClelland, & Kelner, 1997 | EI and performance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •• Sales agents selected on the basis of certain emotional competencies significantly outsold salespeople selected using the company's old selection procedure. •• Salespeople selected on the basis of emotional competence sold \$91,370 more than other salespeople did, for a net revenue increase of \$2,558,360. •• Salespeople selected on the basis of emotional competence also had 63% less turnover during the 1st year than those selected in the typical way. |
| A national insurance company | Cherniss, 1999, who cites Hay/McBer Research and Innovation Group, 1997 | EI research on sales revenue | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •• Sales agents weak in some emotional competencies such as selfconfidence, initiative, and empathy sold policies with an average premium of \$54,000. •• Agents very strong in at least five of eight EI competencies sold policies worth \$114,000. |
| Large beverage firm | Cherniss, 1999 McClelland, 1999 | EI and performance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •• Executives selected based on emotional competence were far more likely to perform in the top third based on salary bonuses for performance of the divisions they led: 87% were in the top third. •• Division leaders with EI competencies outperformed their targets by 15% to 20%. •• Leaders without EI competencies underperformed by almost 20%. |

| ORGANIZATION/ JOB TYPE | AUTHOR, YEAR | EI ACTION | PRACTICAL SIGNIFICANCE |
|---|--|---|---|
| Center for Creative Leadership | Cherniss, 1999 | Research on EI and Leadership | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •• Established that the primary causes of derailment in executives involve deficits in emotional competence. •• Three primary causes of derailment: difficulty in handling change, not being able to work well in a team, and poor interpersonal relations |
| Manufacturing plant | Cherniss, 1999 Pesuric&Byham, 1996 | EI training for supervisors on how to listen better and help employees resolve problems on their own | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •• Lost-time accidents were reduced by 50%, formal grievances were reduced from an average of 15 per year to 3 per year, and the plant exceeded productivity goals by \$250,000. |
| Manufacturing plant | Cherniss, 1999 Porras& Anderson, 1981 | EI training for supervisor s on listening better and helping employees resolve problems on their own | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •• Production increased 17%. There was no such increase in production for a group of matched supervisors who were not trained |
| 12 different organizations Retail chain | Cherniss, 1999 Boyatzis, 1982 EI accurate self assessment •• EI was associated with superior performance among several hundred managers. Retail chain Cherniss, 1999 Lusch&Serpkeu ci, 1990 | Ability to handle stress as construct of EI | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •• The most successful store managers were those best able to handle stress. Success was based on net profits, sales per square foot, sales per employee, and per dollar inventory investment. |

| ORGANIZATION/ JOB TYPE | AUTHOR, YEAR | E I ACTION | PRACTICAL SIGNIFICANCE |
|---------------------------|--|--|---|
| MetLife | Cherniss, 1999 Seligman, 1990 | Performance based on optimism | •• New salesmen who scored high on a test of “learned optimism” sold 37% more life insurance in their first 2 years than pessimists. |
| 130 executives | Walter V. Clarke, 1996 Cherniss, 1999 | Research on EI | •• How well people handled their own emotions determined how much people around them preferred to deal with them. |
| EgonZehnder International | Cherniss, 1999 | Research included 515 executives in Latin America, Germany, and Japan, results were almost identical in all three cultures | •• Executives who were primarily strong in emotional intelligence were more likely to succeed than those who were strongest in either relevant previous experience or IQ. •• The executive was high in emotional intelligence in 74% of the successes and only in 24% of the failures. |
| American Express | Cherniss, 1999 | Financial advisers completed EI training compared to those who did not take EI training | •• One year after training, the advisors of trained managers grew their businesses by 18.1% compared to 16.2% for those whose managers were untrained. |

Source: Adapted from *The Business Case for Emotional Intelligence*, by C. Cherniss, 1999, Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology, Rutgers University. Retrieved from http://www.eiconsortium.org/pdf/business_case_for_ei.pdf
Note: EI = emotional intelligence.

Although the empirical data submitted here is not the last word on the subject, it emphasizes the importance and necessity of further research in this direction so as to establish a link between emotional intelligence and Job performance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A collage of articles presented here examines the link between emotional intelligence and job performance. The studies here present a synopsis of various approaches and empirical measures undertaken in various industries and educational institutions to establish the relationship between emotional intelligence and employee performance.

AbiEalias and Jijo George (2012)¹⁸ have studied the relationship between job satisfaction and emotional intelligence. In modern work environment emotional intelligence influences success both in personal as well as organizational life. The primary aim of their study was to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction. They also tried to analyze how designation, years of experience in an organization and their marital status affected the emotional intelligence and job satisfaction of an employee.

Self administered questionnaires were administered and data was collected from 208 respondents. The study revealed that there was a very high positive relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Job Satisfaction. It also showed that designation of the employee had no role to play in enhancing job satisfaction and emotional intelligence. However, experience and marital status did have significant impact on the two variables.

Prof Dr.UgurYozgat, Prof.Dr. Serra Yurtkoru, and ElifBilginoglu (2013)¹⁹ conducted a study among 424 public sector employees to examine the relationship between job stress and job performance. Emotional intelligence was taken up as a moderating variable. The study was a replication of a previous study conducted in the Taiwanese Finance industry on job stress and job performance. The results were similar in both the cases. Job stress and job performance showed a negative relationship, whereas emotional intelligence had a positive impact on job performance.

MafuzahMohamad and JuraifaJais (2015)²⁰ in their paper stated that since educational systems around the world were experiencing rapid changes and reforms, this has had an impact on the teachers' job performance. Despite these changes, discussion on how to predict teachers' performance is complex and remains difficult to evaluate. The study makes an effort to analyse the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and job performance. 212 teachers in 6 secondary schools in Kedah were the respondents. Questionnaire Survey was conducted for collecting data on the subject. The results pointed towards a significant correlation between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction.

ShavitaDhankar(2015)²¹, in her study has tried to establish emotional intelligence as an essential factor for predicting success in life and at work place.. The study made an attempt to examine the impact of emotional intelligence on employee productivity. The results clearly indicate that there is a relationship between emotional intelligence and employee performance and productivity. An employee with enhanced and positive emotional intelligence performs better in terms of his job, team building, building a trusting relationship among colleagues and the immediate environment

ZakiehShooshtarian, FatemehAmeli, MahmoodAminilari (2012)²²reiterate that in the last decade, emotional intelligence as a concept has made important strides in psychology and management. The purpose of their study was to determine the effect of employees emotional intelligence on job satisfaction, job performance and commitment in. Questionnaires were administered to a total number of three hundred and fifty participants who were selected randomly Two hundred eighty nine questionnaires were used for analysis. The instrument to measure employees emotional intelligence was the MSEIS1 (Schutte, Malouff, & Hall, 1998)²³, and the instrument to measure employees job satisfaction was Grikson2 (1983)²⁴. Questionnaire for collecting data on employee commitment was based onAlen and Mayer's questionnaire (1990)²⁵. The results showed that employees emotional intelligence was positively correlated with job satisfaction. Also a significant relationship existed between emotional intelligence and job performance. However, emotional intelligence had no role to play in determining job commitment. The results underline the importance of emotional intelligence and its effect on work performance.

Paulo N. Lopes, Daisy Grewal, Jessica Kadis, Michelle Gall and Peter Salovey (2006)²⁶ made a study on the relation between emotional intelligence, assessed with a performance measure, and positive workplace outcomes. They based their study on the responses of 44 analysts and clerical employees. Emotionally intelligent individuals received greater merit increases and held higher company rank than their counterparts. They also received better peer and/or supervisor ratings of interpersonal facilitation and stress tolerance than their counterparts. With few exceptions, these associations remained statistically significant after

controlling for other predictors, one at a time, including age, gender, education, verbal ability, the Big Five personality traits, and trait affect.

Fredrick M. Nafukho (2009)²⁷ emphasized the need for studying emotional intelligence (EI) and performance in the workplace. In his paper, the concept of EI is first defined and followed by a collage of scholarly pieces providing various perspectives on EI and performance in the workplace. A preview of the scholarly articles tries to contribute towards the understanding of the link between EI and workplace performance.

Asad Khan, MohamadNoormanMasrek, FuziahMohdNadzar (2015)²⁸ illustrated the relationship between emotional intelligence and general job satisfaction of librarians. An empirical study conducted on librarians revealed that the strongest predictor of job satisfaction was self-assessment while optimism was considered the weakest predictor.

Praveen M. Kulkarni, B. Janakiram and D.N.S. Kumar (2009)²⁹ made an attempt to find out how far the organization would be able to identify emotional intelligence of the employee's and relate it to their performance on the job. A study was conducted at a large automobile dealership at Belgaum, Karnataka, to measure the emotional intelligence level among the managers and supervisors and then compare with their performance. The findings of the study were no different and indicated that emotional intelligence did impact the level of performance among the managers and supervisors.

A. Thiruchelvi and M. V. Supriya (2009)³⁰ feel that recent trends in conducting research in the psychological aspects of employees has led to a considerable interest in emotional intelligence as one of the primary ingredient in determining job satisfaction. A study was carried out in the petroleum industry with white collared employees as respondents, to test the relationship between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction. The study clearly indicated that a positive correlation between emotional intelligence (EI) and job satisfaction existed. The study also examined role of emotional intelligence on genders and its impact on job satisfaction. It was found that emotional intelligence in both male and female employees was positively correlated with job satisfaction.

CONCLUSION

Attaining the goals of an organisation is the key to its success. Employees need to be highly motivated, creative and committed to their job. Only then can a business organisation reach to the desired level of optimum productivity and competitive profitability. The idea of the current literature review was to study the relationship between emotional intelligence and job performance. The study establishes a possible correlation between EI and workplace performance. Empirical data in the aforesaid researches highlights this correlation and considers emotional intelligence as a predictor of job performance. Organizations need to focus on emotional intelligence as a challenging variable and as a means for sustaining, developing and enhancing the performance of an employee. Studies have illustrated that individuals possessing high level of emotional intelligence perform distinctly better than others. Enhancing the emotional skills of the employees thus becomes important for any organisation for employee effectiveness and performance. This should be the focus of any business house or an organisation that strives to grow in a globally competitive environment.

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