



## EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE – ITS ROLE IN JOB PERFORMANCE AND SUCCESS IN THE WORKPLACE –A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

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### **Abstract**

Traditionally, the workplace has been viewed as a highly logical, rational and orderly environment with cognitive intelligence being the most important predictor of performance. However, in recent years, Emotional Intelligence (EI) is frequently claimed to be an essential prerequisite to success at the workplace. This article tries to examine the importance of EI on Job performance and work place success. The article is useful for corporate leaders, managers and HR practitioners in recruitment, selection and training in their efforts to improve employee effectiveness. Further research on this subject may throw light on ways to improve Organisational Citizenship Behaviour(OCB).

**Keywords:** *Emotional Intelligence, Job Performance, Organizational Citizenship Behaviour*

### **Introduction**

Emotional intelligence (EI) is frequently claimed to be an essential ingredient in what it takes to become a productive and contented organizational citizen. Good corporate citizenship is what is being sought in new recruits. Companies are now scouting for people who are compassionate, reliable on the job, productive team workers, and care both about their coworkers and their job (i.e., emotionally intelligent individuals). It is apparent that EI has become an integral part of the discussion surrounding effective organizational recruiting and placement, functioning, leadership, and training. As the information age continues to evolve, the wider economic system is constantly

being transformed. Modern organizations are experiencing a variety of rapid changes and transitions, including proliferation of new technological developments; increased privatization; worldwide information exchange; restructuring and downsizing; outsourcing; and an increasingly diversified workforce (e.g., Burke and Cooper 2006). This article tries to examine the importance of EI on Job performance and work place success.

### **Emotional intelligence and the roots**

As a consequence of these global trends, organizations are experimenting with a variety of innovative processes at work, including more flexible organizational structures, greater



emphasis on creativity, and new leadership styles. In this evolving business world, people need both cognitive and technical skills, along with a broad arsenal of emotional and social skills, to succeed at work. Socio-emotional competencies demanded in the modern workforce include, for example, passion for working effectively toward achieving group goals, communication and negotiation, and effective leadership skills. In fact, because most adults in today's world spend more of their waking hours at work than any other place—with the number of hours spent at work steadily on the rise—the workplace is one of the best settings for examining the role of EI in real-life settings, as well as for reaching adults and fostering their social and emotional competencies (Cherniss 2000a, b).

The roots of EI in organizational settings may be traced to classic management theory and practice (Gowing 2001). Indeed many of the strategies used in early assessment centers evaluated non-cognitive abilities akin to EI (e.g., social awareness). These abilities were found to be predictive of successful performance in managerial positions in many corporations. Over three decades of psychological assessment research has further vindicated the importance of taking social and emotional competencies into consideration when attempting to predict occupational effectiveness (e.g. Boyatzis 1982; Howard and Bray 1988). Increasingly these issues are being framed in terms of EI (e.g., Cherniss 2000a; Jordan et al. 2007). Could EI be the key that unlocks the gate

to productivity and job satisfaction for all? Not all are convinced. There is an increasingly vocal group of critics of EI emerging within organizational psychology (see Murphy 2006a). Murphy (2006b) concludes that the emerging science of EI provides grounds for optimism, but much basic and translational research is needed to realize the potential of EI in the workplace.

### **Review of literature**

Current research in the cognitive and affective sciences suggests that rationality is well served by emotions and that emotions are, in fact, necessary for sound judgment and decision making (Damasio 1994). Affect may further have an important role as processing increases in complexity, with specific moods affecting cognition in different ways. Thus more and more psychologists have realized that emotions are a central element of organizational life. It is of note that the spiralling research on EI over the past decade or so has, perhaps inadvertently, catalyzed the resurgent interest in emotions in organizations and its emergence as a flourishing area of research (Ashkanasy and Tse 2000).

Work and emotions are most plausibly construed as being reciprocally determined. On the one hand, an individual's profession is among the primary determinants of emotional life and a sphere of existence that really matters. Work, with its importance for a person's well-being, self-esteem, income, and social status, is a major source of both positive and negative emotions. Success or failure at work may influence



the individual's affective development and health through the mediation of emotions. On the other hand, emotions are among the primary determinants of behavior and achievement at work, impacting upon individual productivity, well-being, and social climate (i.e., emotions work). Thus emotions may influence work-related cognitive and motivational processes, which in turn affect task and social behavior, and performance outcomes and Emotional Competencies at Work. Typically EI is seen as a fluid (potential) ability from which emotional experiences and learning situations build crystallized ability describing learned competencies (Matthews, Zeidner, et al. 2002).

In practical settings, such as the workplace, actual competencies or skills, including assertiveness, service orientation, and initiative, may be more important than potential ability. Thus it is important to evaluate the actual emotional competencies demonstrated by employees that translate EI into "on the job" capabilities. For example, in order to be able to actually empathize with another's plight, one needs to have learned the specific empathic skills that translate into caring and compassionate pastoral counselling, effective psychotherapy, or bedside nursing. (Cherniss and Goleman ,2001).

EI works through specific competencies to impact on work behaviors and success. Within this general framework a large array of competencies have been claimed to be critical for success in occupational settings (e.g., see Boyatzis et al. 2000; Cooper and Sawaf1997; Weisinger 1998). For example, Goleman (1998) lists 25 different competencies necessary for effective performance in various occupational contexts. Thus confidentiality is touted as important for loan officers and priests, while trust and empathy appear vital for psychotherapists, social workers, and marriage counselors. It is of note that of the 180 competence models identified by Goleman (1998), over two thirds of the abilities deemed essential for effective performance were identified as emotional competencies.

A useful taxonomy, is based on the crosspartitioning of two major facets of EI, namely emotional competencies (emotion identification vs. emotion regulation) and target (selfvs. others). This cross-partitioning of these two facets forms a four-category specification of the universe of discourse for EI in organizational settings (Goleman 2001).



Two –Dimensional conceptualization of **Emotional intelligence**

|                            | Self   | Others   |
|----------------------------|--|--|
| Identification of emotions | Self-awareness<br>Identification and differentiation of emotions | Sympathy<br>Empathy                                  |
| Regulation of emotions     | Self- regulation<br>Coping with stressful encounters             | Regulation of others emotions<br>Conflict resolution |

Source: Zeidner, Moshe; Matthews, Gerald; Roberts, Richard D.. What We Know about Emotional Intelligence : How It Affects Learning, Work, Relationships, and Our Mental Health. Cambridge, MA, USA: MIT Press, 2009. p 259.

**Practical Utility of EI at Work:**

Much of the interest surrounding EI in organizational settings is based on the working assumption that EI can play a major role in making the workplace a more productive, profitable, and enjoyable place. The combination and integration on the part of the individual of explicit cognitive knowledge and tacit emotional knowledge may help us see what pure logic overlooks and thereby help us steer the best, safest course to success. Thus EI has been claimed to be related to a wide array of organizational results, ranging from process to outcome measures. In this section we examine the claims and supporting evidence for the claimed practical value of EI with respect to occupational outcomes typically valued in research and practice. As Antonakis(2004) soberly comments, “we have had enough propositions and armchair speculation regarding the utility of EI. Now we want to see data” (p. 179).

**Job Performance:**

It is well established that general ability predicts anywhere from about 10 to 30 percent of the criterion variance in job performance, leaving about 90 to 70 percent of the variance in success unaccounted for (Jensen 1998). The unexplained percentage of success appears to be, in large part, the consequence of complex (perhaps even chaotic) interactions among hundreds of variables playing out over time. Nevertheless, this well replicated finding has led researchers and practitioners alike to predict various parameters of occupational success via noncognitive variables, of which the concept of EI appears a prime candidate. The concept of EI has even greater appeal since it is also claimed to be useful when evaluating ongoing functioning and the well-being of employees at critical stages of their careers (i.e., selection, placement, training, and promotion). In addition, as alluded to previously, EI appears valid for



gauging the impact and intervention effectiveness of organizational change and restructuring (see also Bar-On 1997).

As one group of writers has argued "If the driving force of intelligence in twentieth century business has been IQ, then . . . in the dawning twenty-first century it will be EQ" (Cooper and Sawaf 1997, p. xxvii). As noted above, a number of rather fantastic claims have appeared in the popular literature and the media about the significant role of EI in the workplace. Thus EI has been claimed to validly predict a variety of successful behaviors at work, at a level exceeding that of intelligence. In the Times article that helped popularize EI, Gibbs (1995) wrote, "In the corporate world . . . IQ gets you hired but EQ gets you promoted" (p. 59). In no small measure this argument rests on claims that EI assists people in "teamwork, in cooperation, and in helping others learn how to work together more effectively" (Goleman 1998, p. 163). Inside conventional wisdom, because each of these factors is thought to impinge on an organization's success, EI is given great status.

Various facets and components of EI have been claimed to contribute to success and productivity in the workplace. Thus EI is claimed to predict occupational success because it influences one's ability to succeed in coping with environmental demands and pressures (Bar-On 1997). Workers endowed with high EI are also claimed to be particularly adept at designing projects that involve infusing products with

feelings and aesthetics (Mayer and Salovey 1997). More emotionally intelligent individuals are said to succeed at communicating in interesting and assertive ways, thus making others feel better in the occupational environment (Goleman 1998).

Furthermore it has been claimed that EI is useful for group development, since a large part of effective and smooth team work is knowing each other's strengths and weaknesses and leveraging strengths whenever possible (Bar-On 1997). It is important to underscore that the assessment of EI for occupational purposes is only cost-effective to the extent that it provides additional information to that provided by measurement of established ability and personality constructs. Thus EI measures must demonstrate not just criterion and predictive validity, but also incremental validity, with respect to existing tests. Establishing predictive validity is made more difficult by the lack of convergence between different types of EI test.

Sometimes EI is indeed correlated with performance, typically measured with supervisor ratings, but several studies have failed to find any association. Even when the correlation between EI and performance is significant, it is typically small in magnitude, and the majority of studies fail to control for the overlap of EI, personality, and general intelligence. Studies are also weakened by methodological problems such as over-reliance on subjective ratings, small samples, poor documentation of samples

and jobs, and lack of a clear rationale for predicting effects of EI. Perhaps in consequence, the field is over-reliant on unpublished studies that have not been subjected to the rigors of peer review (see Van Rooy and Viswesvaran 2004).

Figure: 1



Emotional intelligence and organizational variables and outcomes.

Source: Zeidner, Moshe; Matthews, Gerald; Roberts, Richard D. What We Know about Emotional Intelligence : How It Affects Learning, Work, Relationships, and Our Mental Health. Cambridge, MA, USA: MIT Press, 2009. p 273.

### Conclusion:

Emotional Intelligent is currently evaluated as being an important and potentially valuable personal resource for organizational settings, purportedly related to tasks where there is a clear emotional skill required for successful performance (e.g., customer relations). Accordingly EI is shown to modestly predict an array of organizational outcomes, ranging from job performance to job satisfaction, organizational citizenship, and leadership. The recent popularization of EI as a salient psychological construct has lead to an upsurge of interest and has spawned a sizable literature on both emotions and emotional competencies at the workplace.

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