

Emotional Intelligence as an Important Asset for HR in Organizations: Attitudes and Working Variables

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Chara Papoutsi ^(✉), Athanasios Drigas
National Centre for Scientific Research “Demokritos”, Greece
papoutsi.xara@yahoo.com

Charalabos Skianis
University of the Aegean, Samos, Greece

Abstract—The contribution of emotional intelligence in a working environment has been studied in a good extent in the literature. The findings from empirical studies signify the importance of emotional intelligence in ensuring the good functioning of an organization. This paper aims at investigating the effect of emotional intelligence on workplaces by gathering the findings that show the positive correlations between EI, attitudes and working variables. More specifically, it presents the link between emotional intelligence and six variables, very significant for a better and more effective working environment. Furthermore, it can be a kind of help for managers and researchers to better realize the relationship between EI and the other factors, its effectiveness so to incorporate training programs in courses and in companies based on EI and empathy.

Keywords—Human resources, emotional intelligence, organizations, performance, satisfaction, commitment, conflict management, leadership, employees.

1 Introduction

Human resources play an important role in the creation and the development of a business. With the help of human resources, an attempt is made to create better working relationships to have a better and more efficient working environment [1]. Human Resource Development (HRD) and Human Resource Management (HRM) are the most commonly used terms within organizations and are focused on several significant and major areas which can lead to success [2,3].

Emotional Intelligence (EI) has attracted considerable interest from academics, scientists and human resource professionals around the world as a significant factor for HR [4]. Emotional intelligence (EI) which is also called emotional quotient (EQ) is the ability to understand, recognize and manage your own emotions, the emotions of others, and that of groups [5]. EI therefore involves two aspects of intelligence:

- Understanding yourself, your goals, intentions, responses, behavior

- Understanding others and their feelings, thoughts, desires, behaviors. Emotions are involved in everything we do: every action, decision and judgement [6].

From an organizational point of view, EI can contribute to many areas that make up an organization such as satisfaction, turnover intentions, productivity, commitment, teamwork, leadership effectiveness, conflict management styles, etc. Emotional Intelligence has emerged as a measurable skill that managers can conveniently use in informing successful recruitment, retention and motivation skills within an organization [7]. It is recognized that while traditional intelligence (IQ) can help a person find a job, it is the emotional quotient (EQ) that will allow the person to keep the job and go well in his or her career [8]. Research has shown that employees who fail in their occupations fail because of problematic intrapersonal and interpersonal abilities or because they cannot acclimatize to a team and not because of their technical skills [9].

This paper outlines the importance of EI in an organization by reviewing studies that have been made that link EI with six variables. The variables are: 1) Job Satisfaction, Job Performance, Turnover Intentions, 2) Stress, Anxiety, Happiness, 3) Self-Efficacy, 4) Organizational Commitment, Organizational Performance, 5) Conflict Management Styles/Strategies and 6) Counterproductive Work Behavior, Ethical Behavior. We point out how EI is associated with work criteria to better understand the role of EI in a working environment and we provide a framework for corporate effectiveness. The discussion section will be a road map for future research on EI in HR.

2 The Concept of Emotional Intelligence

The idea of emotional intelligence is attributed to Mayer and Salovey (1990), who created the concept of emotional intelligence. Thorndike, a professor at Columbia University, was the first to use the term “social intelligence” to describe the emotional intelligence skills (1920). The term social intelligence revealed the ability of those who possessed these skills to develop good social relationships with others. In fact, emotional intelligence can be considered as a subset of social intelligence [10]. As it is a wider term than emotional intelligence, it is difficult to separate from general mental capacity [11]. Several decades after Thorndike, an educational psychologist, Howard Gardner (1983), argued that social intelligence consists of interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence. Interpersonal intelligence is the ability of the individual to perceive the attitudes, the feelings and the motives of others and to work with them effectively. In contrast, intrapersonal intelligence refers to self-knowledge, self-control, and self-management. Although he did not use the term emotional intelligence, his ideas laid the foundation for many later models of emotional intelligence. The different names given to the concept of emotional intelligence were the reason why the researchers could not agree on a definition that would include them all [11].

A decade after Gardner's multiple intelligence theory, the concept of emotional intelligence was shaped. Daniel Goleman was the one who made this notion known to the scientific world but also to the public. He disclosed the EI concept in his book named “Emotional Intelligence” [12]. He extended the concept to include general social

competence. Goleman suggested that EI is indispensable for the success of one's life. He defined emotional intelligence as "a vast set of competencies and skills that enable the individual to recognize, understand and use emotional information in such a way as to lead to effective or even excellent performance". John Mayer, a professor at New Hampshire University, and Peter Salovey, a professor at Yale University, have defined emotional intelligence "as the ability to monitor one's own and other's emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use the information to guide one's thinking and actions" [13].

3 Empirical Studies: Reported Positive Results for Applying Emotional Intelligence in the Workplace in Many Fields

Studies and researchers have shown that emotional intelligence influences organizations and companies in many areas which are very important for the future performance of the workplace. It is an important criterion for achieving success. The empirical studies in the literature review were conducted in a variety of industries and organizational settings, are quantitative and the variables that we examined are shown in Figure 1. The variables that are examined below are important components in the corporate world and the focus on them leads to a positive working environment with great achievements and innovations.

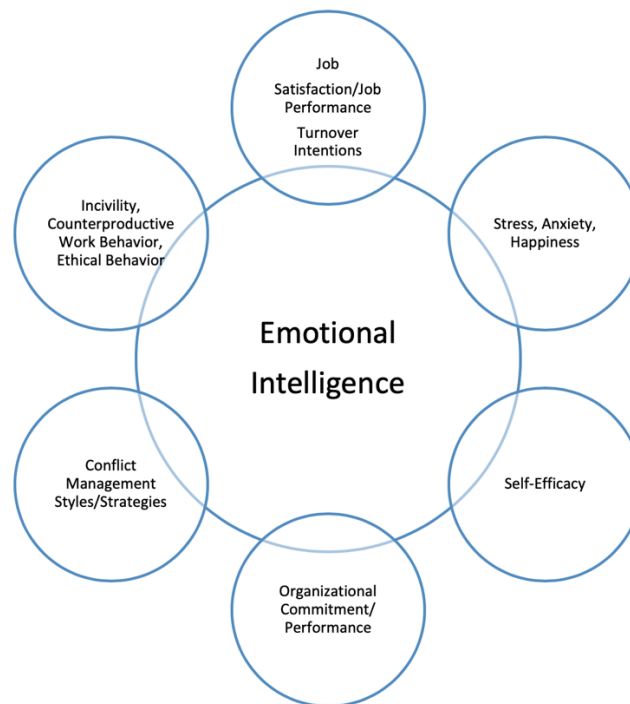


Fig. 1.

3.1 The impact of Emotional Intelligence on Job Performance, Job Satisfaction and Turnover Intentions

Job Performance (JP) mainly refers to the extent a person performs his job well. It plays an important role for the development, the effectiveness and the success of an organization [14]. Campbell (1970) describes the performance of the work as a single-level variable. It includes actions and behaviors of an employee that contribute to the goals that an organization has set [15].

Job Satisfaction (JS) of employees is another important variable which concerns a lot of the directors of many workplaces because it can play a significant role to the performance and the success of an organizational setting [16]. According to Spector (1997) "job satisfaction is simply how people feel about different aspects of their jobs. It is extended to what people like or dislike about their jobs" [17].

Every organization faces turnover intentions of employees. Some of them leave the organization voluntarily while many organizations fire some of their employees [18]. According to Staw (1980), turnover intentions have both positive and negative effects on the organization [19]. Factors such as organizational and environmental ones, the nature of a job, characteristics of the employees and the managers, can influence job performance, job satisfaction and turnover intentions.

People with high EI can recognize their and others' emotions and can manage them in stressful situations. Employees with high self-awareness have positive attitude about work situations [20]. They can handle more effectively difficult situations in the workplaces, have higher levels of self-confidence and have better interactions with the other employees. Consequently, their cooperation is better and that increases their job performance, satisfaction and turnover intentions. Employees with higher EI are more satisfied with their job so they perform better than those who are less satisfied [21].

Vratskikh et al. (2016) conducted a survey using a sample of 354 employees from the University of Jordan who completed self-report questionnaires. Findings showed that EI is positively correlated with JP and JS. Furthermore, the study also revealed that when an employee is satisfied with his/her job, that contributes to the positive relationship between Emotional Intelligence and job performance [22].

The Shooshtarian et al. (2013) investigation reveals a positive relationship among EI, JP and JS. Also, there was not any relationship between labor's emotional intelligence and their commitment. The sample was from employees in Fars Province industries in Iran. Two hundred eighty-nine questionnaires were gathered for analysis. The results underline the basic role of emotional intelligence and its effects on work situations [16].

Sy et al. (2006) examined the relationships among employees' emotional intelligence, their manager's emotional intelligence, employees' job satisfaction and job performance for 187 food service employees from nine different locations of the same restaurant branches. The researchers found that the employees' emotional intelligence was positively correlated to job satisfaction and performance. Moreover, manager's emotional intelligence had a more positive correlation with job satisfaction for employees with low emotional intelligence than for those with high emotional intelligence [23]. Similar empirical studies have been conducted that support the same posi-

tive correlations between emotional intelligence and the other two variables namely job performance and job satisfaction [9; 24, 25].

Trivellas et al. (2013) pointed out a strong negative association between self-emotional appraisal (SEA) and use of emotion (UOE), two dimensions of EI, and intentions to quit and positive impacts on employees' job satisfaction. The study took place in five private general hospitals in Larisa, Greece. Structured questionnaires were distributed to nurses and 145 valid questionnaires were returned [26]. Saeed et al. (2014) also found strong relationships among turnover intention with job satisfaction, job performance, leader member exchange, emotional intelligence and organizational commitment in a sample of 200 employees [27]. Mohammad et al. (2014) revealed that the higher the employees' perception of their leader's EI, the lower their turnover intention [28]. Leaders with high EI can recognize their employees' emotions, have self and social awareness and show empathy. As a result, they influence their workforce in positive ways by amplifying their performance, their satisfaction and decreasing their turnover intentions.

3.2 The impact of emotional intelligence on managing stress, anxiety and happiness

Employees and leaders experience high levels of stress in their workplaces due to many factors such as working hours, deadlines, high goals under pressure, interpersonal conflicts, etc. Furthermore, people are worried about the continuing changes in business data and that causes anxiety about their future in an organization.

Stress and anxiety can affect the performance and the happiness of the employees and therefore an organization's performance and productivity will be affected negatively too. An inverse relation between job stress and employee happiness exists [29]. In social science literature, happiness is usually taken in a sense of subjective enjoyment of an individual's life in its entirety [30]. People with high EI have self-control and self-management under stressful situations and that strengthens them, and feelings of self-esteem and satisfaction can increase happiness [31].

Sunil & Rooprai (2009) examined the effect of emotional intelligence on managing stress and anxiety. One hundred twenty (86 males and 34 females) MBA students from different management institutes in NCR-Delhi participated in the study. They ranged from 21 to 26 years of age. The results showed that there is a significant relationship between low and high levels of EI with stress and anxiety. People with high EI can deal better with stress and anxiety at the workplace [32]. The studies conducted by Oginska (2005) and Matthews et al. (2006) also revealed similar results [33, 34].

Naseem (2018) examined the answers of 350 employees of the telecommunication industry in Pakistan through a self-reported questionnaire to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence, job stress, happiness and life satisfaction. The results showed that stress plays an important role in happiness, but there are others factors that affect happiness and life satisfaction as well. In addition, employees with higher emotional intelligence will perceive less stress and higher level of happiness and life satisfaction. It was also found that married males were more efficient in con-

trolling stress with emotional intelligence than females [35]. Results are inconsistent with the studies by Suh et al. (1996) and Ismail et al. (2010) [36, 37].

3.3 The impact of emotional intelligence on self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is an individual's perception on his or her innate ability to achieve goals. Albert Bandura (1982) defines it as a personal judgement of "how well one can execute courses of action required to deal with prospective situations" [38]. People who have high self-efficacy will make enough efforts which, if executed well, will lead to successful results, while those with low self-efficacy are likely to stop early and fail.

Tabatabaei et al. (2013) made a descriptive study about the effect of EI on self-efficacy with demographic variables in 120 staff employees of Bahman Motor Company in Tehran. The results indicated that there was a positive relationship between EI and SE [39]. In her studies about emotional contagion, Barsade (2000) understood that positive emotions within groups lead to better cooperation and interactions between the manpower of an organization, enterprise, etc., decreased conflict, and improved efficiency [40]. Yazici et al (2011) investigated the role of emotional intelligence and self-efficacy as predictors of academic achievement and showed that age, sex, and self-efficacy are significant predictors of student's academic achievements [41].

3.4 The impact of emotional intelligence on organizational commitment and organizational performance

Organizational Commitment (OC) is an individual's psychological affective connection to an organization. Armstrong and Taylor, (2014), refer to organizational commitment as attachment and loyalty [3]. Organizational commitment predicts work variables such as turnover intention, organizational citizenship behavior, and job performance [42]. Moreover, there are some other factors like role anxiety, empowerment, job insecurity and employability, and distribution of leadership that have been shown to be linked to the sense of organizational commitment of a worker [42]. Salancik (1977) described organizational commitment as a state of being, in which the worker is bound by his actions and through these actions to the beliefs that sustain them [43]. According to Abraham (2000), emotionally intelligent employees are more able to control and manage strong emotional states and reactions happening at work and therefore, their organizational commitment appears stronger than those who have deficiencies in the emotional sector [44].

Organizational performance is related to how well an organization achieves its vision, mission, and aims [45]. According to Tran (1998), creativity, brainstorming, adaptability, and preparedness of an organization are factors that are affected by an emotional environment and consequently, influence the organizational learning and the whole performance either individually or in groups [46]. High ranking executives must take very seriously the performance of their organizations in order to decide what changes they must make for better efficiency.

On the other hand, organizational learning is the process of developing, maintaining and transferring knowledge within an organization which is improved with the passage of time. Through the learning process, there is an opportunity for an organization to grow better, to achieve more goals and to have more benefits to be competitive [47]. The findings of a study elaborated that the dimensions of emotional intelligence such as self-awareness, self-regulation, self-motivation and social awareness are positively and significantly associated with organizational learning [48].

Muriuki & Gachunga (2013) examined the relationship between EI and OC at Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) in a sample of 96 respondents. The results indicated that there is a positive correlation between these two variables. Moreover, the study suggests that employers should hire people who have emotional intelligence competencies as it affects their organizational commitment [49]. Masrek et al. (2015) signified the importance of EI in OC through a study among information technology professionals working in the Malaysian Administration Modernisation and Management Planning Unit (MAMPU) [50]. In addition, through a study of 193 police officers in Australia, Brunetto et al. (2012) showed meaningful relation between EI, job satisfaction and well-being which in turn positively affects engagement and organizational commitment [51]. Similar findings which connect EI and OC are presented by Naderi Anari (2012); and Gholami et al. (2013) [52, 53].

Mubeen et al. (2016) conducted a survey among employees of Pharmaceutical companies in Gujranwala. Findings indicated that there is a significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence, and organizational performance. In addition, knowledge management is also associated with organizational performance. Results revealed that organizational learning has a mediating role between emotional intelligence and performance as well as knowledge management and organizational performance [54]. There are other studies, too, that indicated a significant and optimistic impact of emotional intelligence on organizational performance and the moderate role that organizational learning plays [55, 56].

3.5 The impact of emotional intelligence on conflict management strategies and styles

Conflicts are inevitable in everyday life. Wherever there are people, there are conflicts of greater or lesser extent and intensity too. It is a phenomenon which has appeared in a big percentage of workplaces because individuals working there have different personalities. The impact of a conflict can be positive or negative [57] and can decrease productivity and satisfaction [58] or it can work constructively for the organization [57, 59]. Conflict management is the ability to identify and deal with conflicts in a sensible, fair and efficient way using strategies and styles [60]. Jordan and Troth (2004) argued that “the ability to be aware of and manage emotions is also thought to facilitate functional than dysfunctional, conflict resolution and consequently contribute to better team performance” [61].

Higher levels of EI mean that individuals (employees or leaders) can recognize, manage and regulate their own emotions and the emotions of others [13], given the opportunity for cooperative and favorable conflict resolutions. The competencies of

EI are distinct to them and they are more capable of finding new and creative solutions that satisfy the needs of both parties [62]. Empathy, an important aspect of EI, helps people understand the feelings and thoughts of others from their own perspective, helps them have an active role in their concerns and helps them be more skillful in anticipating how other people will behave and act [63]. In contrast, individuals with lower levels of EI and empathic skills are more likely to engage in greater use of forcefulness and avoidance, which may signal destructive management [5].

Jordan and Troth's (2002) empirical research found that individuals with high levels of EI are more effective in resolving conflict than individuals with low levels of EI [62]. Shih and Susanto (2010), in a total of 300 government employees from two local districts and one province in Indonesia, found that EI could be an antecedent for conflict management and has a positive impact on job performance [64]. Schlaerth et al. (2013) examined studies published worldwide from 1990–2010. A total of 20 studies yielding 280 effect sizes and involving 5,175 participants was gathered and results showed that EI is positively associated with constructive conflict management, and this relationship was stronger for subordinates than leaders [65].

Ayoko et al. (2008) in a survey on 528 employees in 97 organizational teams revealed that teams with less emotional intelligence climates were associated with increased conflicts of duties and relationships and increased conflict intensity. In addition, the group's emotional intelligence climate, has reduced the relationship between work collision and disastrous conflict responses [66]. Some studies, the results of which agree with the previous investigations, are the ones of Afzalur Rahim et al. (2002) and Zhang et al. (2015) [67, 68].

3.6 The impact of emotional intelligence on incivility and counterproductive work behavior

Anderson and Pearson (1999) defined incivility as “low intensity deviant behavior with ambiguous intent to harm the target, in violation of workplace norms for mutual respect. Uncivil behaviors are regarded as characteristically rude and discourteous, displaying a lack of regard for others” [69]. Workplace incivility includes behaviors such as being rude, discourteous, impolite, or violating workplace norms of behavior [70]. Individuals who show uncivil work behavior or individuals who have witnessed incivility report job stress, lower job satisfaction, job performance and commitment, lose their creativity and that may even lead to turnover intentions [71].

A counterproductive work behavior, or CWB, is any employee behavior that undermines the goals and interests of a business or harms other employees [72]. Counterproductive work behaviors may include tardiness, theft, fraud, sexual harassment, workplace bullying, absenteeism, substance abuse, workplace aggression, sabotage, lying and denying cooperating [73, 74]. These phenomena can have negative impacts to the organization by negatively affecting the employees, their productivity, their interactions and their effectiveness [72].

Results of studies suggest that EI may act as a mediator between incivility and CWB. For instance, Bibi et al. (2013), in a study of 160 university teachers in public and private sectors of Pakistan, found that there was a negative relationship between

EI and CWB and that EI appeared to be an important moderator among EI, workplace incivility and CWB [75]. Research conducted by Jung et Yoon (2012) in 319 employees of a five-star hotel in Korea showed that EI affects the other two variables and the organizational citizen behaviors [76]. Similarly, a questionnaire distributed to 625 frontline employees working at service counters in 25 ministries in Malaysia by Raman et al. (2016) showed that EI has positive correlations with sensitivity and emotional work (superficial action) and negative relationships with CWB. High levels of EI among the employees is translated in low incidence of CWB [77].

Instead, positive impact of EI on ethical behavior in business has been observed. Fu (2014) demonstrated that impact in a survey he conducted among 507 employees working for three state-owned Chinese firms [78].

4 Discussion

The importance of feelings and emotional processes are often underestimated in a workplace believing that only intelligence and competency matters. Empirical review pointed out the positive relationship of emotional intelligence with the other criteria related to the working environment that can lead to success and excellence of the workforce and the organization as well. It can be concluded that emotional intelligence is an essential part in a workplace and it can bring out positive results in 1) Job Satisfaction, Job Performance, Turnover Intentions, 2) Stress, Anxiety, Happiness, 3) Self-Efficacy, 4) Organizational Commitment, Organizational Performance, 5) Conflict Management Styles/Strategies and 6) Counterproductive Work Behavior, Ethical Behavior.

Emotional Intelligence is a connection between feelings and the thinking process, i.e., ‘feeling about thinking’ and ‘thinking about feeling’. Paul Donald MacLean (1990), a U.S. neuroscientist and emotional intelligence pioneer, devised the theory of the ‘triune brain’ to explain the evolution of the human brain and to try to reconcile rational human behavior with its most primitive and violent side [79]. According to this theory, our brain consists of a primate neocortex or thinking brain, a midbrain or emotional brain and a reptilian brain stem. Recent developments in brain science reveal the fact that the emotional and the thinking brain are inextricably linked to one another in making decisions and taking actions even though they have been detected in different areas of the brain [79, 80].

Emotional intelligence, as the research findings indicate, is the start of the organization’s journey towards strong corporate governance [81]. Innovative corporate culture approaches should be created, and training programs should be developed for the detection and the cultivation of emotional skills. EI should be incorporated in leaders’ and employees’ education and training since surveys have shown that it positively affects many working parameters. ICTS may also be a helpful tool for designing applications or software with a primary aim to enhance the components of EI in a corporate environment. In addition, studies should be conducted in larger samples in number and in different types of industries, organizations and businesses and in different countries to have an overall picture of the emotional intelligence in the working

world. Then, generalizations of the findings would be more possible, would be assessed and interventions would be formulated and implemented.

5 References

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6 Authors

Chara Papoutsi is a Ph.D. Candidate in Information and Communication Systems Engineering at the University of the Aegean in Samos, Greece. She holds a Masters' degree in Applied Pedagogy at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. She is a teacher in a primary school. She has publications on empathy and emotional intelligence, and she is also with NCSR DEMOKRITOS, Institute of Informatics and Telecommunications, Net Media Lab, Athens, Greece.

Athanasios Drigas is a Research Director at IIT-N.C.S.R. Demokritos. He is the Coordinator of Telecoms Lab and founder of Net Media Lab since 1996. From 1990 to 1999 he was the Operational manager of the Greek Academic network. He has been the Coordinator of Several International Projects, in the fields of ICTs, and eservices (e-learning, e-psychology, e-government, e-inclusion, e-culture, etc.). He has published more than 270 articles, 7 books, 25 educational CD-ROMs and several patents. He has been a member of several International committees for the design and coordination of Network and ICT activities and of international conferences and journals. Also, he has accepted several distinctions for his work (articles, projects, patents).

Charalabos Skianis is a Professor and a Vice Rector at the University of the Aegean (Department of Information and Communication Systems) in Samos, Greece. He holds a Ph.D. degree in Computer Science, University of Bradford, United Kingdom and a BSc in Physics, Department of Physics, University of Patras, Greece. His current research activities take upon Novel Internet Architectures and Services, Cloud Computing & Networking, Energy & Context aware Next Generation Networks and Services, management aspects of mobile and wireless networks, ubiquitous and pervasive computing and End-to-End Quality of Service provisioning in heterogeneous networks environment. He has been actively working on the area of computer and communication systems performance modeling and evaluation where he has introduced alternative methodologies for the approximate analysis of certain arbitrary queuing network models. He is also keen in traffic modeling and characterization, queuing theory and traffic control of wired and wireless telecommunication systems. His work is published in journals, conference proceedings and as book chapters and has also been presented in numerous conferences and workshops. He is at the editorial board of journals, a member of pronounced professional societies (senior member of IEEE) and an active reviewer for several scientific journals. He is an active member of several Technical Committees. He is currently project coordinator for ICT FP7 PASSIVE project.

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