Emotional Intelligence and Job Performance: A Qualitative Meta-analysis

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These days, Emotional Intelligence (EI) is becoming increasingly well-known in organizations and is closely linked to job performance. The purpose of this qualitative meta-analysis is to determine the relationship between EI and job performance as well as the impact of EI on job performance. A total of 14 empirical studies are reviewed in this study. The overall results demonstrated that EI has a positive relationship with job performance. Besides that, most of the studies show great impact of EI on job performance. Several recommendations for further investigations are also proposed in this study.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Job performance, Meta-analysis.

1. INTRODUCTION

Emotional Intelligence (EI) is an important factor for an organization's performance and development and plays an essential part in the performance of competitive organizations today (Jorfi, Jorfi & Moghadam (2010). Hughes and Terrell (2012) also stated that it is imperative to explore and develop our EI as it decides how efficiently we express our emotions within the cultural contexts of our workplace (Hughes & Terrell, 2012). In fact, there are numerous definitions for EI, but the most broadly recognized scientific definition of EI is “the ability to monitor one's own and others' emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use the information to guide one's thinking and actions” (Salovey & Mayer, 1990, p. 189). This definition ascertains emotional information processing as an essential pioneer of emotional regulation. On the other hand, Bar-On (1997), another leading researcher, defined EI as “an array of non-cognitive capabilities, competencies, and skills that influence one’s ability to succeed in coping with environmental demands and pressures” (p. 16). From this definition, it is noticed that Bar-On (1997) ignored cognitive abilities that might devote to emotion management and highlighted the adaptation to

Generally, an organization setting involves interpersonal interaction. A majority of interpersonal interactions are linked to job performance, for instance serving clients, coordinating and collaborating with colleagues as well as getting instructions and reporting to supervisors. Employees with high EI are those who can exploit the antecedent and response-focused emotional regulation efficiently, and thus leading their interactions with others in a more effective way. Ashkanasy and Hooper (1999) also claimed that showing positive emotion is connected with a high possibility of achievement at work. This is consistent with the judgments of Goleman (1998) and Abraham (1999), where EI is related to the job performance, for example, optimistic insurance salesmen would have better performance than pessimistic salesmen. A meta-analysis done by Van Rooy and Viswesvaran (2004) also found that EI is a main factor in overall job performance.

To date, numerous earlier studies have been conducted by relating EI to the job performance in different countries. Therefore, this study is aimed to determine the relationship between EI and job performance as well as the effects of EI on job performance.

2. EI AND JOB PERFORMANCE
EI originates from the social intelligence of Thorndike (2020) and multiple intelligence of Gardner (1983). Then, many models of EI appeared after Salovey and Mayer (1990) suggested the model of EI and Goleman (1995) published a book on EI. A leading research by Salovey and Mayer (1990) was utilized to develop a theory of EI which comprised of four domains, namely perceiving emotions, facilitating thoughts, understanding emotions, and managing emotions. Furthermore, there were four dimensions of EI suggested by Davies et al. (1998), which are (a) appraisal and expression of emotion in one's self; (b) appraisal and recognition of emotion in others; (c) regulation of emotion in one's self; (d) use of emotion to facilitate performance.

Each of the four dimensions might relate to job performance. Firstly, appraisal and expression of emotion in one's self, which relates to the ability of an individual to know his/her profound emotions and to be able to express emotions clearly. Precise appraisal and expression of one’s emotions is necessary for people to communicate with others about their needs, to improve useful interpersonal relationships, and consequently to accomplish their goals via high-level job performance (George, 2000). Secondly, appraisal and recognition of emotion in others relates to the ability of an individual to identify and know the emotions of the people around them. This allows people to comprehend other's emotions and to give response accordingly by demonstrating suitable behaviors and attitudes. Then, they would be accepted by others, receiving their confidence and obtaining their cooperation. This is important for good performance in organizational settings. Thirdly, regulation of emotion in one's self relates to the ability in controlling emotions in order to reduce unanticipated emotional influences in the workplace environment. Finally, use of emotion to facilitate performance relates to the ability of a person to utilize emotions by directing them towards productive activities and individual performance. Individuals with high capability in this dimension are constantly vigorous in directing their emotions towards good outcomes (Law et al., 2008).

On the other hand, a few researchers (e.g., George & Brief, 1996) have posited that job performance is affected by employees' capability to use emotions to facilitate performance, which is one of the four dimensions of EI. Both positive emotions (such as enthusiasm and excitement) and negative emotions (such as anxiety) could be used by the employees to augment their performance in the workplace (Sy, Tram & O’Hara, 2006).

### 3. METHODOLOGY

This study intends to determine the relationship between EI and job performance as well as the influence of EI on job performance. To fulfill these objectives, the researchers conducted a qualitative meta-analysis to synthesize the theories, methods, instruments, and the findings of both qualitative and quantitative analysis for the studies of EI and job performance. This was performed by utilizing the literature search process of Blumberg, Cooper & Schindler (2011), which involves four processes: (i) build information pool; (ii) use filter to decrease pool size; (iii) make a rough assessment of sources to further decrease pool size; (iv) analyze literature in pool; and (v) refine filters or stop search. Various databases including Google Scholar, Web of Science, ProQuest and IEEE Xplore Digital Library were employed to obtain journal papers, conference proceedings and dissertations. However, only 14 empirical studies (in Table 1) were reviewed in this paper as they were considered the most relevant to the following inclusion criteria: (a) content relevancy - the studies on relationship between EI and job performance as well as the studies on the impact of EI on job performance; (b) Year of publication – 2000 to present; (c) Language – English Language; (d) types of publication – empirical journal papers.

### Table 1. A Summary of Empirical Studies reviewed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Instrument</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Findings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carmeli (2003)</td>
<td>To examine the extent to which a critical component of managerial skills – EI - augments positive work attitudes and the contextual task performance of senior managers employed in a public sector setting.</td>
<td>202 senior managers from Israel</td>
<td>Questionnaire</td>
<td>Quantitative - Live</td>
<td>EI enhance positive work attitudes, altruistic behavior &amp; work outcomes, and moderate the effect of work-family conflict on career commitment but not the effect on job satisfaction.</td>
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<td>Nel &amp; de Villiers (2004)</td>
<td>To determine whether there is a relationship between EI and job performance in a call centre environment.</td>
<td>135 call centre agents who worked in a client services and administrative environment in a medical insurance company of Western Cape, South Africa</td>
<td>EI - Emotional Competency Inventory - Job performance rating</td>
<td>Quantitative - Live</td>
<td>There was a statistically significant and positive correlation between EI and job performance.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Langner (2006)</td>
<td>To understand the relationship between the emotional competence of the general managers and the performance of the outlet under their control.</td>
<td>A group of managers operating in the pub restaurant sector of the leisure industry in the United Kingdom</td>
<td>EI - Eys-Emotional Job performance - a collection of critical performance data</td>
<td>Quantitative - Live</td>
<td>Evidence was found of correlation in key areas of profit performance relating to the EI pattern of the general manager.</td>
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<td>Lopes et al. (2006)</td>
<td>To test the theoretical associations between EI &amp; multiple indicators of work performance (including salary, merit increase &amp; company rank,</td>
<td>44 analysts &amp; clinical/administrative employees from the finance staff of the Eastern region of a Fortune 400 insurance</td>
<td>EI - Mayer-Salovey-Caruso EI Test (MSECIT V2.0) - Company indicators of work performance</td>
<td>Quantitative - Live</td>
<td>EI was related to 3 peer-rated indicators of interpersonal facilitation (interpersonal sensitivity, sociability &amp; contribution to a positive work environment)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Authors</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>Findings</td>
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<td>Tran &amp; O'Hara (2006)</td>
<td>To examine the relationships among employees' EI, their manager's EI, employees' job satisfaction &amp; performance.</td>
<td>187 food service workers &amp; their managers from 9 different locations of the same restaurant franchise in the United States</td>
<td>EI - 16 item self-report measure of EI (Law et al., 2004; Wong &amp; Law, 2002)</td>
<td>Quantitative</td>
<td>The employees' with high EI had higher job performance, suggesting that employees with high EI are more adept at using their emotions to facilitate job performance.</td>
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4 FINDINGS

Studies on the relationship between the EI and job performance

Based on the meta-analysis in Table 1, we noticed that there are 10 studies that explored the relationship between EI and job performance (e.g., Nel & de Villiers, 2004; Sy, Tram & O’Hara, 2006; Afolabi, Awosoe & Omole, 2010). The researchers concluded that employees with high EI have better job performance as they are more adept at identifying and regulating their emotions. These findings were corroborated with the findings of earlier studies such as studies by Ashkanasy and Hooper (1999), Goleman (1998) and Abraham (1999).

Among these studies, 8 out of 10 studies utilized quantitative method. For example, Langhorn (2004) conducted a study to understand the relationship between the emotional competence of the general managers and the performance of the outlets under their control in the United Kingdom. The instrument used to examine the EI was Bar-On EQi while the instrument employed to measure job performance was a collection of critical performance data. The data was analyzed quantitatively using regression analysis. The results indicated that managerial EI is positively related to profit performance. Another study executed by Sy, Tram & O’Hara (2006) to scrutinize the relationships among employees’ EI, their manager’s EI, employees’ job satisfaction and performance in the United States. To measure EI, 16-item self-report measure of EI (Wong & Law, 2002) was used. Meanwhile, for job performance, three items were adopted from an instrument developed by Heilman Block & Lucas (1992) and Lam, Chen & Schaubroeck (2002). The researchers analyzed the data using descriptive statistics, correlations between the variables, and hierarchical regression. The results showed that employees with higher EI had higher job performance.

Studies on the impact of EI on the job performance

Furthermore, EI has a great impact on job performance as proven in these four studies: Carmeli (2003), Jorfii, Jorfi & Moghadam (2010), Shih & Susanto (2010) and Harzaee & Mirvass (2013). Similar findings were found in the study of Van Rooy and Viswesvaran (2004). Nevertheless, there was one study implemented by Rafiee, Kazemi & Alimiri (2013) revealed that EI did not influence job performance.

From these studies, four out of five utilized quantitative method. For instance, Shih and Susanto (2010) performed a study to investigate the relationships among EI, conflict management styles (CMSs) and job performance at selected local governments in Indonesia. They utilized a self-report measure of Wong and Law EI Scale (WLEIS; Wong & Law, 2002) to measure EI. They also employed five items from Pearce and Porter (1986) to measure employee’s job performance. Multiple hierarchical regressions were used for data analysis. The results demonstrated that the integrating style partially mediated the relationship between EI and job performance. EI within public organizations had an effect on job performance comparable to that of EI within private organizations. Meanwhile, Jorfii, Jorfi and Moghadam (2010) carried out a study to inspect the EI of the managers and employees and its link to their performance level on the job in Iran. The instruments utilized were Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i), a 360-degree feedback instrument based on Bar-On’s model of EI competencies (to determine EI) while performance appraisal is in the form of 360-degree appraisal (to examine job performance). The researchers carried out data analysis using descriptive statistics, t-test and correlation. The findings revealed that EI had a positive impact on the performance level of the managers and employees in educational administrations of Iran.

5. FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

The discussion of the topics associated with EI and job performance had been investigated in different parts and different cultures of the world, especially in Western countries. Nevertheless, there is a paucity of these studies in developing countries like Malaysia. To illustrate this, only two out of 14 studies in this paper were carried out in Malaysia. Therefore, it is recommended for such studies to be conducted in different countries, sectors, organizations and so forth in future studies. On the other hand, to further investigate the relationship between EI and job performance, it is proposed that EI could be related to multiple variables of job performance in the organizations. The mediating variables for EI and job performance could be scrutinized as well.

Previous studies indicated that EI holds a great influence on job performance. Hence, it is imperative to carry out more training courses on EI for all staff which would contribute to their job performance. Furthermore, it is suggested to conduct research concerning intrinsic and extrinsic factors that have impact on the employees’
behaviors and their EI. On the other hand, few studies have been executed to determine how EI affects job performance of the manager-employee in organizations. Thus, future research must also consider this area. Moreover, the researchers can investigate other factors that affect the job performance of the managers and employees including gender, age, work experience, and so on. Future studies may be benefited by investigating a wider range of employees on different organizational levels. Prospective research should focus on discovering differences of EI and job performance among for-profit, government and non-profit organizations.

6.0 CONCLUSION

This study reports a qualitative meta-analysis with 14 empirical studies on EI and job performance. It can be concluded that EI is linked to job performance in the organization. Besides that, EI has a great impact on job performance as well. The meta-analysis of this study could serve as a useful source of references for further research. A few recommendations have been suggested for future investigations.

REFERENCES


