

Relationship Between Emotional Intelligence and Job Performance among Academic Leaders at Research Universities in Malaysia

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Abstract: Higher Learning Institutions (HLI) are playing an increasingly important role towards development of Malaysia by providing a range of services which includes providing a new generation of skilled leaders who are highly competent in order to cope with the changes and competitive situations in educational environments, such as universities. As such to demonstrate the utility of the Emotional Intelligence (EI) in higher education, this concept study focuses on the influence of EI on job performance among academic leaders in research universities in Malaysia. The researchers argue that EI is a significant predictor of job performance. Its focus was on academic leaders' EI in improving their job performance in educational institutions and research universities in Malaysia. At the end, some operating performance tasks by academic leaders in higher education institutions are presented.

Key words: Emotional intelligence, job performance, academic leaders, education institutions, Malaysia

INTRODUCTION

The higher learning institutions often provide the educational environment that is concentrated on the leaders to be at high level on their functions. Simultaneously, higher education institutions provide essential elements for developing performance of academic leaders. Various variables have effects on performance. Many researchers have studied the effects of factors such as conflict, leadership, culture and value, communication, education, strategy, total quality management, ability, race, learning and competencies. These elements should be placed within the human resource development perspective because they could affect job performance, namely; emotional intelligence.

Emotional intelligence is a principal factor in both people's life and in the success of an organization. Studies of EI, its effectiveness and overall impact on improving performance are important to advance the understanding in the field of human resource development and its role in advancing the strategic capability of organizations. In this context, several studies provide evidence linking EI to job performance in the hope that those might help to further clarify the relationship between EI and performance (Cote and Miners, 2006; Wong and Law, 2002). Previous research,

indicated that EI contributes as much as 20-30% of success in the work place and leaders with high level of EI lead more effectively are efficient job performers (Wall, 2008), feel satisfied with their job (Carmeli and Freund, 2009) and committed both to their career and to their employing organization (Carmeli, 2003).

Dong and Howard (2006), mentioned that emotionally intelligent leaders tended to be more satisfied with their organization. In other words, the higher rank of the person as a star performer, the more EI capabilities show as the reason for his effectiveness. Thus, it is believed that those who know their own emotions and are good at reading other's emotion may be more effective in doing jobs and can develop own job performance. Carmeli (2003) and Schutte *et al.* (1998), also found a positive relationship between EI and performance. As such, previous studies which focused on the importance of EI confirmed that the concept has an impact on performance achievement (Murphy and Janeke, 2009; Hayward *et al.*, 2008; Nel and de Villiers, 2004). In short, EI is strongly linked to work-attitude especially job performance. In this study, the researchers attempt to describe and discuss about important issue related to EI. The researchers, also examine the validity of EI in predicting job performance among academic leaders in the higher education, as one of the most important educational environment. This study is organized by starting a review of the nature and development of EI in academic areas.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The nature and development of emotional intelligence:

The construct of EI is still in its early stages with multiple conceptualizations and definitions and little consensus (Zeidner *et al.*, 2004). The concept of EI has roots that reach deep into the study of psychology in the past century (Goleman, 1998a, b). The notion of EI originally appeared in academic area by Salovey and Mayer (1990), as the subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions. Rosete and Ciarrochi (2005) claimed that the concept of EI can be classified into 2 broad categories: Ability models and mixed model.

According to Mandell and Pherwani (2003)'s ability model, EI is defined as a set of abilities that involves perceiving and reasoning abstractly with information that emerges from feelings. This model is also supported by Mayer and Salovey (1997), which stated that EI as the ability to perceive emotions to access and generate emotions, so as to assist thought to understand emotions and emotional knowledge and to reflectively regulate emotion to promote emotional and intellectual growth. To Mayer and Salovey (1997), applications of EI in the work place may include career development, management development and team effectiveness.

In contrast, mixed models of EI incorporate both non-cognitive models (Bar-On, 2004) and competency-based models (Goleman, 1995). According to Rosete and Ciarrochi (2005), mixed models tend to overlap or mix with traditional models of personality and tend to utilize self-reports as their primary mode of assessment. The mixed model approach to EI is wide spread in its appeal to industry, training, education and leadership development. These approaches conceptualize EI as a wide variety of personality traits, individual capabilities and personal characteristics (Day and Carroll, 2004). These models highlight personality traits, characteristics, competencies, skills and other attributes not associated with Mayer and Salovey (1997) model of EI. To sum up, the mixed-model deals with the ability as it relates to social behaviours, traits and characteristics whereas ability models are deal with a true type of mental ability and true intelligence.

THEORIES AND MODELS OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

As noted earlier, researchers in EI classified their approach as either an ability model or mixed model. Salovey and Mayer (1990) have developed the ability model which assumes that EI develops overtime can be

correlated with measures of IQ and can be measured by using a test based on performance. Proponents of the ability model define EI as the ability to perceive and express emotion accurately and adaptively, the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge and the ability to use feeling to facilitate thought and the ability to regulate emotions in oneself and in others (Salovey and Pizarro, 2003). Cobb and Mayer (2000) opt for the ability model of EI that implies perception and the ability to rationalize in an abstract realm from awareness of one's feelings. However, this particular model lays no claim to any special ability of EI and its value of prediction. Cobb and Mayer (2000) referring to this model state that EI is predictive of life's success or that it leads to good behaviour. In addition, this particular model lays no claim to any special ability of EI and its value of prediction. It is the belief of Cobb and Mayer (2000) that the ability model emphasizes the existence of EI. If EI exists and qualifies as a traditional or standard intelligence (like general IQ), people who are labelled bleeding hearts or hopeless romantics might be engaged in sophisticated information processing. Also, EI is conceptualized such that it is given legitimacy in the school and organizational context where emotions are a reflection of relationships.

A second view of EI refers to the mixed model which is developed and focused on non-cognitive intelligence. Bar-On and Parker (2000) argue that EI abilities have some skills in the affective domain, along with skills in whatever cognitive elements are at play in each ability. They start with emotional abilities and mix them with personality, motivation and affective dispositions, such as need for achievements, assertiveness, self-esteem, impulse control, happiness and emotional awareness and empathy. In other words in the mixed models, EI is a blend of skills, such as emotional realization, characteristics like perseverance and commitment and desirable behaviour (Bar-On, 2004; Cooper and Sawaf, 1997; Goleman, 1995; Schutte *et al.*, 1998). In the mixed model, intelligence quotient and cognition are not emphasized (Cobb and Mayer, 2000) but Goleman (1998a, b) insisted that EI has twice the power of IQ and could be a predictor of future achievements and success in life (Goleman 1995, 1998a, b).

The concept of job performance: The word performance is utilized expansively in all fields of administration (Armstrong, 2009). The precise interpretation of the word performance is important and must never be misinterpreted in the framework of its appeal. The use of the term performance invokes the notions of accomplishment, attainment and the execution of a task. Indeed, performance must be based on a set of objectives that are linked to the mission of the institution and its vision for future (Al-Turki and Duffuaa, 2003).

Campbell *et al.* (1993) argued that performance is what the organization hires one to do and do well. In this regards, performance is defined as the ability of individuals to accomplish their respective work goals, meet their expectations, achieve benchmarks or attain their organizational goals (Campbell *et al.*, 1990). However, performance is not only a matter of what people achieves but also how they attain (Armstrong, 2009). In contrast, a number of studies believed that performance is not defined by the action itself but it is defined by judgmental and evaluative processes (Ilgen and Schneider, 1991; Motowidlo *et al.*, 1997). In fact, it is not only actions that determine one's performance but also is referred to as external factors such as resources, political and social factors.

Furthermore, job performance is a multidimensional concept which describes how one completes a task, focusing on efficiency, skills used, initiative and utilized resources. As there is no single factor of job performance Campbell *et al.* (1990), identified 2 major types of job performance components. The 1st aspect of performance is made up of components specific to a particular job. Fundamentally, these are the components that reflect technical competence or job behaviours that are not required for other jobs. The 2nd kind of performance factor, includes components that are defined and measured in the same way for every job. On one hand, performance is what people do rather than the results of what they do, even as effectiveness reflects the results of performance, the hoped for outcomes or behaviour that in turn leads to desired outcomes (Hempel, 2001). On the other hand, performance has documented or equated with effectiveness and efficiency (Neely *et al.*, 1995). As such, performance means the transformation of inputs into outputs in order to achieve certain behaviour. Consequently, performance informs about the relationship between negligible and effective cost economy. Hence, performance is a relative concept defined with the famous three E (economy, effectiveness and efficiency) of a convinced activity or program. For that reason, if someone desires to identify performance, he must first pay careful attention to three key facets: Setting goals, decide how to assess achievement and present regular appraisal of progress assessment (Cascio, 1995).

Moreover, Hogan and Holland (2003) found that job performance is a multidimensional construct that consist of task performance, contextual performance (Motowidlo *et al.*, 1997), adaptive performance and counterproductive behaviour (Sackett, 2002). In this study, 2 dimensions of job performance are used, namely; task and contextual performance as suggested by Motowidlo and van Scotter (1994). Task performance

refers to an individual's proficiency of activities that formally recognized as part of workers' jobs (Harrison *et al.*, 2006). It involves all behaviours which are relevant directly or indirectly to main job functions as well. Likewise, it directly contributes to the organizations' technical core, the production of goods or provision of services (Borman and Motowidlo, 1993). Additionally, task performance is best construed as a behavioural construct because it involves psychological process that is related to selection, training, motivation and facilitating situational processes. In human resource development studies, task performance has been measured using a range of criterion measures including supervisory ratings, promo ability ratings and turnover rate. Although, these indicators might be presumed to reflect performance at various degrees Motowidlo stated task performance should be distinguished into quality of work done, quantity of work performed and interpersonal effectiveness.

Contextual performance includes not only behaviours, such as helping co-workers or being a reliable member of the organization but also making suggestions about how to improve work procedures. Contextual activities include volunteering to carry out task activities that formally are not part of the job and helping and cooperating with others in the organization to get tasks accomplished (Borman and Motowidlo, 1993). As such, contextual performance relates to the will do factors, such as the willingness or motivation to complete the job (Wang *et al.*, 2011). Therefore, contextual performance measures included more global items that could be used to examine various positions in an organization. In this context activities, such as helping and cooperating with others, following organizational rules and procedures even when personally inconvenient, endorsing, sustaining and protecting organizational objectives, persisting with extra enthusiasm when necessary to complete own tasks successfully and volunteering to carry out task activities that are not formally part of the job (Motowidlo *et al.*, 1997). Both sight (task and contextual performance) are important contributors to performance effectiveness. As such, task and contextual performance of leaders be assessed when making overall performance and effectiveness judgments of their skills.

Performance of academic leaders: Leader's performance is a continuous process which forms a critical part of human resource administration. Leaders play a massive role for all assets of organizations so the importance of leader's performance promoted to the fore (Hempel, 2001). Researchers have pointed out 3 basic functions of academic leaders:

- Personnel management
- Departmental planning and development
- Building the department's reputation (Hempel, 2001)

So, it is essential that academic leaders have a clear concept of their role within the governance structure of the institution. This will help them have sufficient decision-making power to carry out their responsibilities, return after their term of office to their original position as an accepted member of the faculty and make their position more attractive and effective (Hayward *et al.*, 2008).

Earlier studies have found that leader's performance has a significant positive effect on organization because leaders are under constant pressure to improve the performance of organizations and without them there is no organization (Hayward *et al.*, 2008). A variety of variables such as skills, leadership competencies, environment, resources and regulatory mandates may affect directly or indirectly the academic leaders' performance. Researchers believe that performance in HLI, especially at the academic department level; reflect a set of goals that include specific goals of the department and the more diffused goals of the university. Whereas teaching, research and community service are the core of a university's mission (Shao *et al.*, 2007), an academic leader is usually operated to provide education, conduct research and offer community service (Al-Turki and Duffuaa, 2003). In this concern, teaching, research and services are essential criteria for faculty performance evaluation (Shao *et al.*, 2007; Szeto and Wright, 2003).

Consequently, the notion of leaders' performance in academic settings today particularly research universities cover areas, such as teaching and learning, administration, creating path-breaking scholarship, creating an academic research culture in the faculty, publication, providing opportunities for members to observe and join in aspects of the research practice and participating of research with graduate education for those who become faculty at all institutions.

Emotional intelligence and job performance: Much of the literature on EI in organizations assumes that it directly results in performance (Abraham, 2004). Brotheridge (2006) found that human resources with high EI were more likely to perceive displaying emotions as part of their job and to use deep acting. Joseph and Newman (2010) meta-analysis found that EI was a better predictor of performance for jobs that required emotional labour than for jobs overall. In contrast, Goleman (1998a) argued that EI is not a strong enough predictor of but that it is an effective indicator of one's potential to learn the

competencies needed for achieving success. Besides, evidence showed that emotion perceptions cover a weak relationship with performance (Van Rooy and Viswesvaran, 2004).

Rieck (2008) examined the relationships among follower EI, leader EI, process behaviours, process satisfaction and team performance using a sample of 81 two-person teams. Where the result showed that there was a significant relationship between EI and team performance. However, another study showed that there was a significant but weak relationship between EI and organization performance.

CONCLUSION

This study, provides an analytical review on how EI to enhance job performance. Achievement of leaders in relation to EI skills plays a vital and important role in increasing efficiency and job performance and this is very important for academic leaders. Researchers based on the literature, continue to claim that if academic leaders want to be able to improve job performance, they should have considered the followings:

- EI is necessary in an organization and is very effective on job performance
- EI is both technical and perceptual and therefore combinational and whoever wishes to develop in an organization must have EI
- People who develop their EI are successful in their job because EI and success are related to each other
- Leaders need a high level of EI, more than ordinary personnel because they are people who have an important role in building subordinate morale

Thus, performance can be the road to competitive advantage by ensuring the retention of quality human resources in higher learning education. It can be, summarized that academic leaders must have high EI level to improve job performance in the workplace.

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