

**ARE LEADERS AND MANAGERS WITH HIGH
EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE SUPERIOR PERFORMERS?**

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Abstract

Leaders and managers with high emotional intelligence are often argued to be high job performers. Evidence from the literature is used here to examine the veracity of this claim. Emotional intelligence was found to be a necessary but not sufficient precondition for improving individual leader and managers' job performance and ultimately organisational productivity. EI is best most appropriately conceived of in terms of the abilities concerning the recognition and regulation of emotion in the self and others. Organisational culture needs to support the application of EI competencies and reward managers and leaders who exhibit socio-economic competencies for this proposition to be supported.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, leader, manager, workplace, individual, performance

INTRODUCTION

A dispositional proclivity to cope with and successfully manage emotions that has been described as 'emotional intelligence' (Goleman, 1995, 1999; Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2000; Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Mayer and Salovey (1997: 5) defined 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 emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth." Of the many definitions of EI, Boyatzis's and Sala's (2004: 149) is useful when considering managers and leaders performance in the workplace; "an emotional intelligence competency is an ability to recognize, understand, and use emotional information about oneself or others that leads to or causes effective or superior performance." Based on many definitions, EI can be categorised into two broad groups, namely the:

- *Ability Model* conceptualised individual EI as being developed over time. Ashkenazy and Dais (2005, p. 462) point to the Ability Model capacity for incremental and predictive validity when used in the context of organisational behaviour. The 'four-branch abilities model' perception of emotion (in self and others); assimilation of emotion to facilitate thought; understanding of emotion; and managing and regulating emotion in self and others) developed by Mayer and Salvoes (1997) is a valuable contributor towards successful careers and personal life (Humphrey, Pollack, & Hawver, 2008). Later, Joseph and Newman (2010) proposed a progressive cascading pattern for the ability based EI facets that should be embedded into this type of model. Emotional perceptions in this system are argued to be casually preceded by emotional understanding that is preceded by conscious regulation of emotions and subsequent job performance.
- *Mixed Model* integrates competency based models (Goleman, 1995) and non-cognitive models (Bar-On, 1997a). Whilst emotions facilitate coordinated responsiveness to situations, intelligence necessitates an understanding of information, providing a clear link between EI to both intelligence and emotions.

Ashkanasy and Daus (2005), and later Walter, Cole and Humphrey (2011), refined and categorised the research and measures of EI research into three streams:

- *First stream* is an ability based model of a set of interrelated emotional abilities. Individual capacity to solve abstract emotional problems are measured based on the four-branch abilities model of EI.
- *Second stream* is also based on the four-branch model. Self-report or peer-report of complex social behaviours is also based on Mayer and Salovey's (1997) representation of EI.
- *Third stream* is a mixed model of emotional and different dispositional competencies, including everything except cognitive ability. This model incorporates self-report as the primary means of assessment.

The debate **and controversy** over EI has transcended the intellectual criticisms made by opposing academic and commercial camps. EI has been a relatively easy sale to the general public and to the business world but a much tougher sale to academia. A fascinating tension is noticeable between EI scholars and commercially orientated researchers and consultants. Scholars are typically more conservative in the claims about the benefit of EI. For example, Mayer's (1999: 50) approach typifies the cautious approach taken by scholars, "the popular literature's implication - that highly emotionally intelligent people possess an unqualified advantage in life - appears overly enthusiastic at present and unsubstantiated by reasonable scientific standards."

Ashkanasy and Daus (2003: 69) were more forthright, stating that "Let us first begin by making one point 'crystal clear' - we do not endorse a Goleman (1995) or Bar-On (1997b) type of approach to studying emotional intelligence ... we also feel that to an extent, they have done much more harm than good regarding establishing emotional intelligence as a legitimate, empirical construct. Others, like Antonakis (2003: 359) are more strident about the empirical evident on the relevance of EI to leaders "is nonexistent or very weak at best or contradictory at worst." Those antagonistic to the idea of EI, such as Locke (2005) have gone so far as to proclaim that EI is an invalid concept because it is not a form of intelligence, a position artfully rebuked by Ashkanasy and Daus (2005).

In contrast, those supporting the 'commercial' approach tend to make expansive claims, typified by Goleman, on the applied value of EI. Much of Goleman's assertions on EI in the workplace remain speculative and still require empirical assessment to provide evidence and clarification of the relation of EI to organisation functioning (Goyal & Akhilesh, 2007). However, as

Landy (2005) observed, there is strong and continuing support for the EI idea, with concomitant instruments and interventions, in the lay business community. Lopes et al's (2005) research suggested that assisting employees to develop emotional skills may yield organizational benefits.

The following examines the veracity of claims made about contribution of EI to managers and leaders performance in the workplace.

ARE EMOTIONAL COMPETENCIES MORE IMPORTANT THAN COGNITIVE AND TECHNICAL SKILLS IN THE WORKPLACE?

Goleman (1998: 5) contentiously asserted in the Harvard Business Review that "IQ takes second position to EI in determining outstanding job performance." This suggested that managers with well developed EI are more effective performers, particularly for discretionary performance. Boyatzis, Goleman and Rhee (2000) later argued that a particular type of human competencies, called "emotional competencies" (i.e., self-awareness, self-discipline, persistence and empathy) is of greater consequence to job performance than intelligence and training. Some have argued that "emotional competencies" are not the same construct as EI (Ashkanasy & Daus, 2005).

Goleman (1995) vigorously argued that IQ and technical skill are perennial "threshold capabilities" required for entry to management positions. Goleman (Goleman, 1995, 1998) and Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee (2002) have argued enthusiastically that emotional skills are twice as important as cognitive and technical skills in the workplace. Technical expertise is closely related to cognitive ability but not considered to be a critical aspect of managers' capabilities repertoire. As Goleman (1999: 21) noted, "outstanding supervisors in technical fields are not technical but rather relate to handling people." Goleman (1999: 38) further asserted that "the higher the level of the job, the less important technical skills and cognitive abilities were, and the more important competence in EI became." This result is consistent with the Hay Group (1999) finding that Fortune 500 companies believed an overemphasis on managers' technical ability had resulted in the careers of high potential managers and leaders becoming 'derailed.'

Organisational researchers investigating emotions have neglected to include job performance as part of "behaviours or actions that are relevant to the goals of the organization in question" (McCoy, Campbell, & Cudeck, 1994: 493). Arvey and Murphy (1998) suggested that job performance is more

than merely 'execution of tasks' and that application of higher levels of EI would facilitate better performance and outcomes. EI is potentially relevant to specifically to leadership and management in general. Goleman (1999: 21) later observed "As more companies put a premium on people who can lead, the ability to influence is one of the competencies at a premium." Goleman (1999) also argued that the higher the level of management, the more vital all aspects of EI become. Managers with well developed EI are likely to be more effective in jobs requiring extensive and intense interpersonal interactions. However, the importance of EI needs to be kept in perspective, as (Goleman, 1998: 21) conceded, "Emotional intelligence skills are synergistic with cognitive ones: top performers have both"

EI has emerged as an important construct in relation to job performance (Lopes et al., 2005). The emotion-performance link has been explored in general by Bar-On, Handley and Fund (2005) and specifically in relation to managers by Caruso and Salovey (2004). Studies using a variety of methods have also shown a positive relationship between some forms of emotions and managers' job performance (Cropanzano, James, & Konovsky, 1993; P. Hosie & Sevastos, 2009; Staw & Barsade, 1993; Wright & Cropanzano, 2000; Wright & Staw, 1999a, 1999b). Broad claims that EI is a better predictor of job performance than General Mental Ability are yet to be substantiated (Ashkanasy, 2004).

A meta-analysis by Van Rooy and Viswesvarav (2004) empirically provided support for EI predicting performance in the workplace. Although Cherniss (2010) acknowledges that recent research suggested that EI is positively associated with performance, context does makes a difference. In terms of criterion related and incremental validity, the percentage of variance in performance explained by EI was 5%, much lower than the claims of some EI proponents (Van Rooy & Viswesvaran, 2004). However, the 'Ability Model' of EI does indicate discriminant validity with the Big-Five (C. S. Daus & Ashkanasy, 2005).

A lack of discriminant validity is also evident between some EI and the Big-Five personality model personality dimensions (Barrick, Mount, & Judge, 2001). Such research questions whether EI accounts for the unique variance in predicting managers' job performance. A mega meta-analysis built on previous meta-analysis by O'Boyle et al (2010: 806) subsequently concluded "that all three streams

of EI correlated with job performance.” Further, “Streams 2 and 3 incrementally predicted job performance over and above cognitive intelligence and the FFM.”

ARE LEADERS AND MANAGERS WITH HIGH EI SUPERIOR PERFORMERS

Leaders of organisations increasingly understand how valuable EI is to an enterprise. By its very nature, leadership is an ‘emotion-laden process’ (J. M. George, 2000, p. 1046). Emotions are logically connected to the leadership process, especially the followership aspects of identifying and empathising with others feelings (Walter et al., 2011). Managers with poorly developed EI are likely to have difficulty in building good relationships with peers, subordinates, superiors and clients (Goleman, 1998). The question is why do leaders with cognitive competencies and experience not always respond appropriately to the demands of the competitive environment?

One explanation for this observation is that leaders also require high levels of EI. The focus is purportedly moving away from traditional management styles to authentic leadership involving high levels of EI competencies through the i) ability to influence the employees, ii) an adeptness in self awareness, iii) the ability to understand and manage others emotions and use these competencies effectively to encourage, unite, motivate and challenge managers and employees towards a unified purpose (Goleman, 1999).

Emotions have a critical role in thought, decision-making and individual success. As with managers, Goleman (1999: 102) asserts that “leader’s task was to get work done through other people, and social skill makes that possible.” EI has been promoted as the *sine qua non* of leadership by Goleman and others (e.g., Boyatzis & McKee, 2005; J. M. George, 2000; Prati, Douglas, Ferris, Ammeter, & Buckley, 2003). Goleman (1999: 3) has gone so far as to assert that a “most effective leaders are alike in one crucial way: they all have a high degree of what has come to be known as EI.”

George (2000) proposed an intuitive link between EI and leadership which was extended to incorporate a connection with the emotional management of transformational leadership which has been associated with EI (Coetzee & Schaap, 2004; C. S. Daus & Harris, 2003). Empirical evidence is emerging to substantiate a link between leadership ability and the ability model of EI (C. S. Daus & Harris, 2003). Trait EI promoted utilization of adaptive coping techniques to manage stress. High trait

EI individuals are better able to 'down-regulate' negative emotions and maintain positive ones (Mikolajczak, Menil, & Luminet, 2007).

Components of transformational leadership include creating and communicating a vision, inspiring motivation and commitment in the employees, and examining and managing emotions in self and others. This has been observed through self-report on EI measures administered by Barling, Slater and Kelloway (2000) with similar analyses conducted by Gardner and Stough (2002) and later by Palmer Walls, Burgess and Stough (2001). Though the transformational/transactional leadership model provides some understanding of the link between leadership and EI, it still lacks the objective criteria related to leadership performance. Harms and Crede (2007) reported a validity estimate between EI and leadership behaviours of 0.59. However, they caution that when data is collected from more than one source the validity inevitably decreases.

A new dynamic is evident in contemporary organisations: "Being articulate, being able to sell ideas, and engage the minds and hearts of employees are the new bottom line issues for managers" (Hatcher, 2005: 62). How managers promote engagement varies widely within and between organisations. This positive disposition of managers needs to be transmitted into a feeling of hope amongst employees (Simmons, Nelson, & Quick, 2003). Goleman (1998) has specifically linked the ability to influence others to a person's EI. Work by Hosie, Sevastos and Cooper (2006) found that influencing was strongly associated with dispositional positive emotions.

The iGeneration (iGen) has started arriving in the workplace, both in person and virtually, and with them come some new issues for those who wish to lead them. Although the actual components of leadership may have changed from one generation to the next, this group of technophiles agrees that successful leaders require both cognitive and emotional competencies (Herkenhoff, 2006). The cold tentacles of technology do not appear to have diminished the role of EI for the iGens, but rather have made it even more visible as an important part of the formula for successful leadership. Perhaps EI, not IQ, will be the key differentiator in those who successfully manage and lead the iGens.

Overall, Walter et al. (2011: 50,52) concluded that from a review of the extant literature there is "broad support for the role of EI as a determinant of behaviours associated with transformation leadership." Further, they concluded that consistent relationships are being found between EI and

“leadership, emergence, behaviour and effectiveness.” Corrected correlations of 0.24 to 0.30 were reported between job performance and the three streams of EI (ability-based models, self-report or peer-report measures based on the four branch model of EI; and ‘mixed models’) of emotional competencies). There is support in the literature for the assertion that EI leads to measurable business outcomes (Spencer, McClelland, & Keiner, 1997). However, the empirical evidence for the extent of the influence of EI on leadership and managerial behaviours remains mixed and contested.

DEVELOPING EMOTIONAL COMPETENCIES

Developing managers’ and leaders emotional competencies requires a broad and sophisticated array of development tools. Traditional training needs to be blended with a variety of ongoing planned developments such as career assignments and individual coaching. A period of months involving ongoing coaching, encouragement, peer support, modelling and on-the-job practice is necessary (HayGroup, 1999). Such initiatives have important resource implications for organisations and therefore demand careful consideration. Emotional learning often involves ways of thinking and acting that are more central to a person’s identity.

Managers who aspire to be stellar performers should be encouraged to master their own emotions, as well as those around them. Management training should focus on developing a set of EI skills, including: control of one’s impulses, self-motivation, empathy and social competence in interpersonal relationships (Goleman, 1998). Additionally, training that involves the development of emotional competence may be more effective than training based on traditional cognitive based initiatives. Promotable managers are those most likely to benefit from training and development in EI. This can be achieved by enhancing self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and social skills (Goleman, 1998; HayGroup, 1999; Mayer & Salovey, 1993, 1997; Salovey & Mayer, 1990)

As a minimum, high performing managers and new recruits would be expected to have the following EI competencies: self-awareness, impulse control, persistence, zeal and motivation, empathy and social deftness (Goleman, 1998). As Rozell, Pettijohn and Parker (2002: 287) observed, a “potential manager’s understanding of management techniques dealing with interpersonal interaction and intrapersonal emotions may have a fundamental place in the overall success of that individual in the workplace”. In consequence, a modicum of EI may well qualify as a core

competency for aspiring managers. Evidence from research indicates that managerial interpersonal skills varied with EI competencies amongst professionals (Morland, 2001). Several researchers have correlated a transformational style of management with creating a strong and productive work environment.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Herkenhoff (2006) argued that multinational workforces require managers and leaders with culturally-tuned awareness for better understanding of managers and leaders and their motivations. Through increased understanding of the variations of cultural values and the resulting emotional responses, managers may have increased success in regulating and predicting negative emotions in the workplace. Reframing EI in terms of culture may better support cross-cultural management effectiveness. Managers and leaders may be able to extend their EI using cultural perspectives. Culturally tuning EI may allow managers and leaders to better understand the diversity of emotional responses to the same management initiative across cultures (Herkenhoff, 2006).

Concerns about the operational definitions of EI remain an important issue. EI should be clearly distinguished from related constructs such as more personality traits. Walter, Cole and Humphrey (Walter et al., 2011: 52) have identified three broad areas needed to develop the EI-leadership, viz a viz “(a) greater methodological rigour, (b) examination of more complete theoretical models, and exploration of innovative research areas.” When measuring EI is important that the construct it is not contaminated by other constructs.

Caution needs to be made when generalising these findings in view of the small sample sizes prevalent in studies into EI. The results might have important connotations for selecting, developing and managing the performance of leaders. Additional research is required to evaluate the relationship of EI with future performance. One suggestion is to conduct longitudinal studies that involve measuring EI before newly hired managers or executives start a job (Rosete & Ciarrochi, 2005). Most EI studies are correlational but causal studies would advance our knowledge of the role of EI in the workplace. In particular, an opportunity exists for studies of EI and leadership that simultaneously for controlling known covariates, such as cognitive ability, personality, functional skills and specific

cultural dimensions (Antonakis, 2003; Walter et al., 2011). More effective measures to determine EI organisational the contribution to outcomes are required.

The importance of EI in the workplace requires further investigation at the professional culture level. It is important to note that the job profile being considered is important when making assertions about EI. A manager's frequency of using EI competencies would be expected to be higher than that of someone doing physical labour or someone involved in sales or in customer service. For example, individual contributors such as earth scientists may have lower EI scores but perhaps EI is not a critical competency for career success. Whereas professions involving high levels of team involvement or customer interaction may have higher scores than scientists, and recognize EI as an important concept to career success. Since we know EI can be improved, we need to determine how important EI is to managers' performance and then determine whether it makes sense to invest resources into improving it.

There remains considerable potential for research to specify the link between leaders' cognition and emotion. In particular, medical science methodologies are beginning to how the multiple sections of the brain can explain the interconnection between rationale and emotional behaviours (Walter et al., 2011). Early indications are that neuroscience, when combined with research in psychology and sociology, has the potential to explain important aspects of leadership (Waldman, Balthazard, & Peterson, 2011). 'Hard' scientific methodologies have the potential to reconsider and develop new theories, and test constructs.

For example, Waldman, Balthazard and Peterson (2010) examined 'coherence', the tracking of coordination activity between specific parts of the brain. Different coherence levels may be identified in areas of the brain, such as the right hemisphere, that is responsible for behaviour, to increased emotional balance. They consider that neuroscience may help identify linkages between inspirational leadership and emotion. Perhaps a biological basis to leaders' identification and effectiveness will eventually emerge? (Walter et al., 2011). Initial findings suggest that there is an association between EI and coping, perhaps warranting further investigation in this area (Saklofske, Austin, Galloway, & Davidson, 2007).

It is important however to draw attention to the fact that lack of enough conclusive research cannot detract from the contribution of EI towards positive business outcomes. EI leadership recognises rewards and reinforces a positive work orientated climate. The evidence is accumulating to suggest that the importance of EI in conflict management, resolution of tense situations, management of difficult subordinates, effective negotiation and ability to establish bonds and nurture relationships in building a successful interdependent work environments.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Despite an extensive amount of publications, the study of EI is still in its infancy; in particular research in the role of EI in workplace continues to evolve. The concept of EI has gone beyond theorising and is now accepted as a valuable component for successful performance in the context of work. There is a continuing and increasing interest in the concept of EI amongst academics and practitioners. At the same time there are important questions about the validity of this construct, including its measurement.

A number of the elements such as empathy towards employees, genuine concern, self-management and suitable leadership style are important to reduce crippling obstacles to ensure effective organisational performance. Managers and leaders need the ability to persuade and influence emotions in work context because strong emotions have an encouraging or a harmful impact on performance. 'Emotional dissonance' exerts a strain on all employees, thus harming their performance (Spector, 2005).

There appears to be general consensus in the literature to indicate that EI encompasses managerial and leadership competencies that are key components of effective relationships and interactions in daily work activities demanding high levels of self-motivation, communication, confidence, commitment and initiative. Emotionally intelligent individuals are more adept at compartmentalising their emotions (Thompson, Nadler, & Kim, 1999), as a result averting some of the potentially negative impacts of information processing and gathering. In addition, such individuals possess the skill of moderating the emotions of their colleagues in their workplace. During negotiations such people stand a better chance of achieving their goals through the effective management of emotions in self and other. Nelis, Quoidbach, Mikolajczak and Hansenne (2009)

suggested that EI can be improved and therefore may lead to improved performance outcomes in the workplace. Individuals high on EI are able to maintain their calmness, are not impulsive and do not lose control in stressful situations, which can be very important to successfully perform front line jobs (Barry & Fulmer, 2004, p. 245).

EI enables managers and leaders to assess and moderate the impact of external and internal contingencies whilst making decisions within the organisational framework and bureaucracy. Overreacting to situations can impact effective decision making and performance. Possessing EI allows individuals to relate emotionally and intellectually to other people at work, encouraging positive self expression and communication. Perhaps EI is best conceived of in terms of the abilities concerning the recognition and regulation of emotion in the self and others (Ashkanasy & Daus, 2005).

Although empirical research is limited and equivocal on EI, reports so far generally support the value of EI competencies in determining the success of leaders and managers in achieving organisational objective. High levels of EI competencies in transformational leaders provide greater ability to create awareness of the organisation's mission and vision, and influence managers and leaders to increase levels of performance. It is also important to note that emotional skill is not enough; the organisation culture should also support the application of the competencies and reward managers and leaders who exhibit socio-economic competencies.

One of the positive outcomes to the EI debate has been the acknowledgement of the contribution of emotions to facilitate effective of manager and leader performance in workplace. EI has been identified with social and emotional characteristics linked to successful performance in the workplace. As researchers emphasize the growing importance of intellectual capital, creating improved working relationships on an individual level and at the team level will be key to gain competitive advantage. Corporations therefore could benefit by boosting the collective EI of managers and leaders.

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ARE LEADERS AND MANAGERS WITH HIGH EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE SUPERIOR PERFORMERS?

Abstract

Leaders and managers with high emotional intelligence are often argued to be exceptional job performers. Evidence from the literature is used to examine the veracity of this claim. Emotional intelligence was found to be a necessary but not sufficient precondition for improving individual leader and managers' job performance and ultimately organisational productivity. Emotional intelligence is most appropriately conceived of in terms of the abilities concerning the recognition and regulation of emotion in self and others. Hypotheses derived from literature are proposed that may go some way to resolving the controversy surrounding the predicted link between emotional intelligence and managers and leaders performance. For this proposition to be supported organisational culture needs to support the application of emotional intelligence competencies and reward managers and leaders who exhibit such capabilities.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, leader, manager, workplace, individual, performance

INTRODUCTION

This paper examined the considerable evidence from the literature to determine whether high emotional intelligence (EI) has a positive impact on the job performance of leaders and managers. An extensive scholarly and lay literature suggests that developing EI competence amongst managers and leaders may lead to outstanding job performance. Based on a definition and discussion of EI, two major arguments were considered: whether EI is more important than cognitive and technical skills in the workplace, and do leaders and managers with high EI perform better than those with low EI?

A dispositional proclivity to cope with and successfully manage emotions has been described as 'emotional intelligence' (Goleman 1995, Mayer and Salovey 1997, Salovey and Mayer 1990, Mayer et al. 2000, Goleman 1999). Of the many definitions of EI, Boyatzis's and Sala's (2004: 149) is useful when considering managers and leaders performance in the workplace; "an emotional intelligence competency is an ability to recognize, understand, and use emotional information about oneself or others that leads to or causes effective or superior performance."

MODELS OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Based on the research, EI can be categorised into two broad constructs (Joseph and Newman 2010):

- *Ability Models* conceptualise individual EI as being developed over time. Ashkenazy and Dais (2005) point to Ability Models' capacity for incremental and predictive validity when used in the context of organisational behaviour. The 'Four Branch Abilities Model' perception of emotion (in self and others); assimilation of emotion to facilitate thought; understanding of emotion; and managing and regulating emotion in self and others was developed by Mayer and Salovey (1997). Later, Joseph and Newman (2010) proposed a progressive cascading pattern for the ability based EI facets suitable for embedding in Ability Models. Emotional perceptions in this system are argued to be casually preceded by emotional understanding that is preceded by conscious regulation of emotions and subsequent job performance.
- *Mixed Models* integrate competency based models (Goleman 1995) and non-cognitive models (Bar-On 1997a). Whilst emotions facilitate coordinated responsiveness to situations, intelligence necessitates an understanding of information, providing a close link between EI to both intelligence and emotions. Detractors, such as Murphy (2006), considered the Mixed Models of EI is a confused composite construct of ability, personality and affect.

Ashkanasy and Daus (2005), and later Walter, Cole and Humphrey (2011), refined and categorised the research and measures of EI research into three streams, the:

- *First stream* is an Ability-based Model of a set of interrelated emotional abilities. Individual capacity to solve abstract emotional problems are measured based on the Four Branch Abilities Model of EI.
- *Second stream* is also based on the Four Branch Abilities Model. Self-report or peer-report of complex social behaviours is also based on Mayer and Salovey's (1997) representation of EI.
- *Third stream* denotes Mixed Models of emotional and different dispositional competencies, including everything except cognitive ability. This model incorporates self-report as the primary means of assessment.

Despite ongoing debate, EI has been a relatively easy sale to the general public and to the business world but a much tougher one to academia. A fascinating tension is noticeable between EI scholars

and commercially orientated researchers and consultants. Scholars are typically more conservative about claims of the benefits of EI (Mayer 1999: 50).

Effective leadership requires not only cognitive ability and intellectual clarity but also requires emotional sensitivity. Therefore, successful leaders need to be both emotionally intelligent and intelligently emotional. According to Bennis (2001), EI accounts for 80-90% of the success of organisational leaders, a seemingly unsubstantiated and exaggerated assertion. Grewal and Davidson (2008) note that EI has the potential to deepen our understanding of interpersonal and communication skills. From a cultural perspective managers and leaders face an increasing globalized workplace and environment requiring the application of EI.

Ashkanasy and Daus (2003: 69) were more forthright, stating that “we do not endorse a Goleman (1995) or Bar-On (1997b) type of approach to studying emotional intelligence ... we also feel that to an extent, they have done much more harm than good regarding establishing emotional intelligence as a legitimate, empirical construct.” Those antagonistic to the idea of EI, such as Locke (2005) have gone so far as to proclaim that EI is an invalid concept because it is not a form of intelligence, a position artfully rebuked by Ashkanasy and Daus (2005). Others, like Antonakis (2003: 359) are more strident about the empirical evidence on the relevance of EI to leaders, claiming it “is nonexistent or very weak at best or contradictory at worst.”

In contrast, those supporting the ‘commercial’ approach on the applied value of EI tend to make expansive and faddish claims (Murphy and Sideman 2006), typified by Goleman, on the applied value of EI. Assertions by Goleman and like-minded commentators about the impact of EI in the workplace remain speculative and still require empirical assessment to provide evidence and clarification of the relation of EI to organisation functioning (Goyal and Akhilesh 2007). However, as Landy (2005) observed, despite the academic detractors, there is strong and continuing support for the EI idea, with concomitant instruments and interventions, in the lay business community. Lopes et al’s (2005) research suggested that assisting employees to develop emotional skills may yield organisational benefits.

The following examines the veracity of claims made about contribution of EI to managers and leaders performance in the workplace.

ARE EMOTIONAL COMPETENCIES MORE IMPORTANT THAN COGNITIVE AND TECHNICAL SKILLS IN THE WORKPLACE?

Goleman (1998: 5) contentiously asserted in the Harvard Business Review that “IQ takes second position to EI in determining outstanding job performance.” This suggested that managers with well developed EI are more effective performers, particularly for discretionary performance. Boyatzis, Goleman and Rhee (2000) later argued that a particular type of human competencies, called “emotional competencies” (i.e., self-awareness, self-discipline, persistence and empathy) is of greater consequence to job performance than intelligence and training. Some have argued convincingly that “emotional competencies” are *not* the same construct as EI (Ashkanasy and Daus 2005).

Goleman (1995) also vigorously argued that IQ and technical skill are perennial “threshold capabilities” required for entry to management positions. Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee (2002) continued to argue enthusiastically that emotional skills are twice as important as cognitive and technical skills in the workplace. Technical expertise is closely related to cognitive ability but not considered to be a critical aspect of managers’ capabilities repertoire. As Goleman (1999: 21) noted, “outstanding supervisors in technical fields are not technical but rather relate to handling people.” Goleman (1999: 38) further asserted that “the higher the level of the job, the less important technical skills and cognitive abilities were, and the more important competence in EI became.” This result is consistent and supported by the Hay Group (1999) finding that Fortune 500 companies believed an overemphasis on managers’ technical ability had resulted in the careers of high potential managers and leaders becoming ‘derailed.’

Organisational researchers investigating emotions have neglected to include job performance as part of organisational goal-related performance (McCoy et al. 1994: 493). Arvey and Murphy (1998) suggested that job performance is more than merely the ‘execution of tasks’ and that the application of higher levels of EI would facilitate better performance and outcomes. Goleman (1999: 21) observed; “As more companies put a premium on people who can lead, the ability to influence is one of the competencies at a premium.” Further, Goleman (1999) argued that the higher the level of management, the more vital all aspects of EI become. Managers with well-developed EI are likely to be more effective in jobs requiring extensive and intense interpersonal interactions. However, the

importance of EI needs to be kept in perspective, as Goleman (1998: 21) conceded, “Emotional intelligence skills are synergistic with cognitive ones: top performers have both.”

Overall, EI has emerged as an important construct in relation to job performance (Lopes et al. 2005). The emotion–performance link was examined by Bar-On, Handley and Fund (2005) and specifically in relation to managers by Caruso and Salovey (2004). Studies using a variety of methods have also shown a positive relationship between some forms of emotions and managers’ job performance (Cropanzano et al. 1993, Staw and Barsade 1993, Wright and Staw 1999b, Wright and Staw 1999a, Wright and Cropanzano 2000, Hosie et al. 2012). But broad claims that EI is a superior predictor of job performance than General Mental Ability remain to be substantiated (Ashkanasy 2004).

A meta-analysis by Van Rooy and Viswesvarav (2004) provided empirical support for EI predicting performance in the workplace. Although Cherniss (2010) acknowledges that recent research suggested that EI is positively associated with performance, context does make a difference. In terms of criterion related and incremental validity, the percentage of variance in performance explained by EI was 5%, much lower than the claims of some EI proponents (Van Rooy and Viswesvaran 2004). However, the Ability Model of EI indicates discriminant validity with the Five Factor Model (FFM) personality variables (Daus and Ashkanasy 2005, Joseph and Newman 2010)

A lack of discriminant validity is evident between some Mixed Models and EI and the Big-Five personality model personality dimensions and cognitive ability (Barrick et al. 2001, Joseph and Newman 2010). Such research questions whether EI accounts for the unique variance in predicting managers’ job performance. A mega meta-analysis built on previous meta-analysis by O’Boyle et al (2010: 806) subsequently concluded “that all three streams of EI correlated with job performance.” Further, “Streams 2 and 3 incrementally predicted job performance over and above cognitive intelligence and the FFM.” Another meta-analysis from Joseph and Newman (2010) indicated that Mixed Models measures of EI explained substantial incremental validity over cognitive ability and personality. But an inconsistent relationship was found between cognitive ability and personality and the Ability Model of EI. In all, support for Mixed Models of EI was found to be empirically stronger but theoretically weaker than an Ability Models of job performance.

ARE MANAGERS AND LEADERS WITH HIGH EI SUPERIOR PERFORMERS?

Leaders of organisations increasingly understand how valuable EI is to an enterprise. By its very nature, leadership is an ‘emotion-laden’ process (George 2000b). Emotions are logically connected to the leadership process, especially the followership aspects of identifying and empathising with others feelings (Walter et al. 2011). Managers with poorly developed EI are likely to have difficulty in building good relationships with peers, subordinates, superiors and clients (Goleman 1998). The question is why do leaders with cognitive competencies and experience not always respond appropriately to the demands of the competitive environment?

One explanation for this observation is that leaders also require high levels of EI. The focus is purportedly moving away from traditional management styles to authentic leadership involving high levels of EI competencies through i) the ability to influence the employees, ii) an adeptness in self awareness, iii) the ability to understand and manage others emotions and use these competencies effectively to encourage, unite, motivate and challenge managers and employees towards a unified purpose (Goleman 1999).

Emotions have a critical role in thought, decision-making and individual success. As with managers, Goleman (1999: 102) asserts that a “leader’s task was to get work done through other people, and social skill makes that possible.” EI has been promoted as the *sine qua non* of leadership by Goleman and others (e.g., Boyatzis and McKee 2005, George 2000a, Prati et al. 2003). Goleman (1999: 3) has gone so far as to assert that a “most effective leaders are alike in one crucial way: they all have a high degree of what has come to be known as EI.”

George (2000a) proposed an intuitive link between EI and leadership which extended to incorporate a connection with the emotional management of transformational leadership (Coetzee and Schaap 2004, Daus and Harris 2003). Empirical evidence is emerging to substantiate a link between leadership Ability Models of EI (Daus and Harris 2003). High trait EI individuals are better able to ‘down-regulate’ negative emotions and maintain positive ones (Mikolajczak et al. 2007).

Components of transformational leadership include creating and communicating a vision, inspiring motivation and commitment in the employees, and examining and managing emotions in self and others. These components been observed through self-report on EI measures administered by

Barling, Slater and Kelloway (2000) with similar findings by Gardner and Stough (2002) and later by Palmer Walls, Burgess and Stough (2001). Transformational leadership models provide some understanding of the link between leadership and EI, it still lacks the objective criteria related to leadership performance. Harms and Crede (2007) reported a validity estimate between EI and leadership behaviours of 0.59. However, they caution the validity inevitably decreases when data is collected from more than one source.

A new dynamic is evident in contemporary organisations: “Being articulate, being able to sell ideas, and engage the minds and hearts of employees are the new bottom line issues for managers” (Hatcher 2005: 62). This positive disposition of managerial engagement needs to be transmitted into a feeling of hope amongst employees (Simmons et al. 2003). Goleman (1998) has specifically linked EI with the ability of managers to influence others. Work by Hosie, Sevastos and Willemyns (2012) also found that managerial, influencing was strongly associated with dispositional positive emotions.

The iGeneration (iGen) has started arriving in the workplace, both in person and virtually, and with them come some new issues for those who wish to lead them. Although the actual components of leadership may have changed from one generation to the next, this group of technophiles agrees that successful leaders require both cognitive and emotional competencies (Herkenhoff 2006). The cold tentacles of technology do not appear to have diminished the role of EI for the iGens, but rather have made it even more visible as an important part of the formula for successful leadership. Perhaps EI, not IQ, will be the key differentiator in those who successfully manage and lead the iGens.

Overall, Walter et al. (2011: 50,52) concluded that from a review of the extant literature there is “broad support for EI’s role as an antecedent of transformational leadership behavior (see also Harms and Credé 2007) although this association is most likely more complex than previously believed.” Further, they concluded that consistent relationships are being found between EI and “leadership, emergence, behaviour and effectiveness.” Corrected correlations of 0.24 to 0.30 have been reported between job performance and the three streams of EI (Ability Models, self-report or peer-report measures based on the Four Branch Ability Model, and Mixed Models) (Joseph and Newman 2010). There is support for the assertion that EI leads to measurable business outcomes (Spencer et al. 1997).

Goleman (1998, p. 4) boldly asserted that “for star performers in all jobs, in every field emotional competence is twice as important as purely cognitive abilities.” An extensive integrated meta-analysis of Mixed Models by Joseph and Newman (2010) showed substantial incremental validity over cognitive ability and personality traits. Ability Models only indicated a modicum of validity over cognitive ability and personality traits. In all, many Goleman and supporters statements were not substantiated by the available empirical research.

Answers to the following hypotheses, derived from literature, may go some way to resolving the controversy surrounding EI in this domain:

Hypothesis 1: EI competencies vary with managers and leaders interpersonal skills.

Hypothesis 2: Manager and leaders with high EI exhibit exceptional job performance.

Hypothesis 3: When rated by superiors, EI will be differentially related to self-report on: 3a) Ability Models, and 2b) Mixed Models

DEVELOPING EMOTIONAL COMPETENCIES

Nelis, Quoidbach, Mikolajczak and Hansenne (2009) suggested that EI can be improved and therefore may lead to improved performance outcomes in the workplace. Developing managers’ and leaders’ emotional competencies requires a broad and sophisticated array of development tools. A period of months involving ongoing coaching, encouragement, peer support, modelling and on-the-job practice is necessary to develop such competencies (HayGroup 1999). Such initiatives have important resource implications for organisations and therefore demand careful consideration.

Management training should focus on developing a set of EI skills, including: control of one’s impulses, self-motivation, empathy and social competence in interpersonal relationships (Goleman 1998). Promotable managers are those most likely to benefit from training and development in EI. This can be achieved by enhancing self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and social skills (Goleman 1998, Mayer and Salovey 1993, Salovey and Mayer 1990, HayGroup 1999, Mayer and Salovey 1997).

As Rozell, Pettijohn and Parker (2002: 287) observed, a “potential manager’s understanding of management techniques dealing with interpersonal interaction and intrapersonal emotions may have a

fundamental place in the overall success of that individual in the workplace". In consequence, a modicum of EI may well qualify as a core competency for aspiring managers.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Through increased understanding of the variations of cultural values and the resulting emotional responses, managers may have increased success in regulating and predicting negative emotions in the workplace. Reframing EI in terms of culture may better support cross-cultural management effectiveness. Managers and leaders may be able to extend their EI using cultural perspectives. Culturally tuning EI may allow managers and leaders to better understand the diversity of emotional responses to the same management initiative across cultures (Herkenhoff 2006).

There is a paucity of research in the area of 'culturally tuned EI' (Herkenhoff 2006) at all levels of analysis (national, organisational, professional). There is a lack of empirical data in this area as a critical limitation in the robust examination of EI in relation to managers and leaders. Herkenhoff (2006) has argued that multinational workforces require managers and leaders with culturally-tuned awareness for better understanding of the motivations of managers and leaders.

Effective leadership requires not only cognitive ability and intellectual clarity but also requires emotional sensitivity. Therefore, successful leaders need to be both emotionally intelligent and intelligently emotional. According to Bennis (2001), EI accounts for 80-90% of the success of organisational leaders, a seemingly unsubstantiated and exaggerated assertion. EI does have the potential to deepen our understanding of interpersonal and communication skills, an essential aspects of managers and leaders (Grewal and Davidson 2008).

However, emotionally intelligent individuals have been shown to be more adept at compartmentalising their emotions (Thompson et al. 1999), as a result averting some of the potentially negative impacts of information processing and gathering. In addition, such individuals possess the skill of moderating the emotions of their colleagues in their workplace. Emotional dissonance' exerts a strain on all employees, thus harming their performance (Spector 2005).

Concerns about the operational definitions of EI remain an important issue. EI should be clearly distinguished from related constructs such as more personality traits. Walter, Cole and Humphrey (2011: 52) have identified three broad areas needed to develop the EI-leadership, viz a viz "(a) greater

methodological rigour, (b) examination of more complete theoretical models, and (c) exploration of innovative research areas.” When measuring EI it is important that the formulation of EI is not contaminated by other constructs.

Caution needs to be made when generalising these findings; especially in view of the small sample sizes prevalent in studies into EI. The results might have important connotations for selecting, developing and managing the performance of managers and leaders. Additional research is required to evaluate the relationship of EI with future performance. One suggestion is to conduct longitudinal studies that involve measuring EI before newly hired managers or executives start a job (Rosete and Ciarrochi 2005). Most EI studies are correlational but causal studies would advance our knowledge of the role of EI in the workplace. In particular, an opportunity exists for studies of EI and leadership that simultaneously control known covariates, such as cognitive ability, personality, functional skills and specific cultural dimensions (Antonakis 2003, Walter et al. 2011). Further, Joseph and Newman (2010) suggested that gender and race differences of EI need to be explored. For acceptable rigour to be achieved, more robust measures are required to determine the contribution of EI to organisational outcomes.

The importance of EI in the workplace requires further investigation at the professional culture level. It is important to note that the job profile being considered is important when making assertions about EI. For example, individual contributors such as earth scientists may have lower EI scores but perhaps EI is not a critical competency for career success. Evidence from the research indicates that managerial interpersonal skills varied with EI competencies amongst professionals (Morland, 2001). Whereas professions requiring high levels of team involvement or customer interaction may have higher scores than scientists, and as such recognize EI as an important concept for career success. Since we know EI can be improved, we need to determine how important EI is to managers’ performance and then determine whether it makes sense to invest resources into improving it.

There remains considerable potential for research to specify the link between managers and leaders cognition and emotion. In particular, medical science methodologies are beginning to explore how the multiple sections of the brain can explain the interconnection between rationale and emotional behaviours (Walter et al. 2011). Early indications are that neuroscience, when combined

with research in psychology and sociology, has the potential to explain important aspects of leadership (Waldman et al. 2011).

For example, Waldman, Balthazard and Peterson (2010) examined 'coherence', the tracking of coordination activity between specific parts of the brain. Different coherence levels may be identified in areas of the brain, such as the coordination between the right hemisphere, responsible for behaviour, with increased emotional balance. Neuroscience may help identify linkages between inspirational leadership and emotion. Perhaps a biological basis to leaders' identification and effectiveness will eventually emerge? (Walter et al. 2011). Initial findings suggest that there is an association between EI and coping, perhaps warranting further investigation (Saklofske et al. 2007).

In summary, specific methodological issues recommended for future research include:

- 1) Increasing sample size to achieve higher statistical significance levels.
- 2) Conducting longitudinal studies to better understand the evolving nature of these constructs across generational boundaries
- 3) Analysing the data in a hierarchical lineal model allowing for the simultaneous attribution error amongst various cultural levels within the EI construct.
- 4) Developing structural equation models to identify causal relationships involving EI in a real workplace context.

Certain methodological areas are recommended for future studies; including the impact of context, especially cross-cultural settings and the organisational culture on the link between EI and job performance, the design of studies with casual rather than the use longitudinal study and implications of limited sample size. Of these, the most pressing of issue is the paucity of investigations linking EI to *actual* job performance as a criterion variable (Joseph and Newman 2010).

However, the lack of enough conclusive research cannot detract from the current contribution of EI towards positive business outcomes. EI leadership recognises, rewards and reinforces a positive work orientated climate. Evidence is accumulating to suggest that EI is importance in conflict management, resolution of tense situations, and management of difficult subordinates, effective negotiation and ability to establish bonds and nurture relationships in building successful interdependent work environments.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Despite an extensive amount of publications, the study of EI is still in its infancy; in particular research in the role of EI in the workplace continues to evolve. The concept of EI has gone beyond theorising and is now accepted as a valuable component for successful performance in the context of work. There is a continuing and increasing interest in the concept of EI amongst academics and practitioners. At the same time there are important questions about the validity of the construct validity of EI, including its measurement.

There appears to be general consensus in the literature to indicate that EI encompasses managerial and leadership competencies that are key components of effective relationships and interactions in daily work activities demanding high levels of self-motivation, communication, confidence, commitment and initiative. During negotiations people high in EI stand a better chance of achieving their goals through the effective management of emotions in self and others.

Although empirical research is limited and equivocal on EI, reports so far generally support the value of EI competencies in determining the success of managers and leaders in achieving organisational objectives. High levels of EI competencies in transformational leaders provide greater ability to create awareness of the organisation's mission and vision, and influence managers and leaders to increase levels of performance.

Answers to the two arguments made posed at the beginning this paper seem to be quite positive; EI is more important than cognitive and technical skills in the workplace; and managers and leaders with high EI can perform better than those with low EI. But recent empirical evidence on the extent of the influence of EI on managerial and leadership behaviours remains mixed and contested

One of the positive outcomes to the EI debate has been the acknowledgement of the contribution of emotions to facilitate effective of manager and leader performance in workplace. EI has been identified with social and emotional characteristics linked to successful performance and competitive advantage in the workplace. Corporations therefore could benefit by boosting the collective EI of managers and leaders.

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