

## **LINKS BETWEEN EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND BEHAVIOR IN ORGANIZATIONS: FINDINGS FROM EMPIRICAL STUDIES**

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Studies on the relationship between intelligence and behavior have traditionally focused on the analytical or academic aspect of intelligence, but there are other aspects of this construct that should be considered. In recent years, theorists such as Gardner (1999) and Sternberg (2002) have suggested more encompassing approaches to conceptualizing intelligence as adaptive mechanisms for helping individuals to interact with their environments. Interest among behavioral scientists on emotions as a domain of intelligence has grown in recent years.

Emotional intelligence (EQ) refers to one's ability to be aware of one's own feelings, be aware of others' feelings, to differentiate among them, and to use the information to guide one's thinking and behavior (Salovy & Mayer, 1990). This construct is proposed to be critical to individual's success in many social situations. The current research on the value of EQ as an explanatory construct for organizational behavior, however, is mixed.

In his role as a consultant in organizations, Goleman (1998) reported that EQ is twice as important as technical skills and IQ for success on jobs at all levels. Other findings suggested that emotional intelligence played an increasingly important role at the highest levels of a company. Goleman has suggested that the difference between star performers and average ones in senior leadership positions is more attributable to EQ factors than cognitive abilities. On the negative side, Davis, Stankov, and Roberts (1998) concluded from their three studies that "little remains of emotional intelligence that is unique and psychometrically sound" (p. 1013). On whole, rigorous studies on EQ are lacking and many claims are based on anecdotal case histories, questionable models, and, in many cases, just plain rhetoric.

The objective of this special issue of the *International Journal of Organizational Analysis* was to provide a forum for discussion of the theoretical and practical importance of emotional intelligence as an explanation of behavior in organizations.

Many manuscripts were submitted to this special issue. The decision on which manuscripts to include finally came down to a decision to select studies which gathered empirical data to assess the explanatory importance of EQ for organizational behavior. The four articles selected conduct empirical studies of EQ using self-report measures and measures completed by outside observers. The key thing, however, is that these articles test their hypotheses empirically. The first article is by Rahim et al. and deals with the relationship between EQ and conflict management strategies using a cross-cultural samples. The article by Nikolaou and Tsaousis deals with the relationships of EQ to job stress and organizational commitment among mental health professionals. The next two articles by Feyerherm and Rice and Rapisarda deal with the issue of whether EQ affects the working interactions of teams and the performance of teams in field and laboratory settings.

Rahim et al.'s study is a comprehensive undertaking involving an examination of EQ in cross-cultural samples. This study investigates the relationship between EQ and conflict management strategies in seven different countries (United States, Greece, China, Bangladesh, Hong Kong and Macau, Portugal, and South Africa). This study used exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses to (a) test and improve the convergent and discriminant validities of a new EQ measurement instrument and (b) to assess the relationship between EQ and conflict management strategies. The study shows common factor structures for the EQ instrument across the countries and common patterns of relationships between EQ and conflict management strategies across the sampled countries. These findings provide preliminary evidence of construct validity of the EQ measurement instrument. The results of this study are discussed in terms of the practical implications that may be derived from them. One way that the authors propose is that managers learn how to use EQ to influence the problem-solving strategies of their subordinates. This, in turn, will affect both the way conflict is managed and job performance in organizations.

Nikolaou and Tsaousis investigate the relationship between EQ and occupational stress in a field setting in Greece. Their sample consisted of mental health professionals. They found that EQ was associated with individual's assessment of organizational stress over more situational measures of stressors. A particularly interesting finding of this study was the effect of job type on the relationship between EQ and occupational stress. Different jobs were shown to require different "profiles" of EQ facets. The authors note that it may be important to use EQ training to link specific critical EQ facets to different jobs to improve employee performance.

Feyerherm and Rice investigate the relationship between EQ and the performance of 26 customer service teams in a large, national company. This study uses both team ratings of their performance and rankings of performance by organizational managers. Their findings are interesting. Emotional intelligence was linked to perceptions of customer service in this study. However, emotional intelligence is not related to measures of productivity performance in this study. An interesting finding is that the EQ of team leaders may be negatively related to such performance measures. Their discussion of this finding provides insight into the

complexity of understanding the relationship between EQ and organizational behavior.

Rapisarda's article also deals with the relationship between team EQ and team performance. Her study uses members of 18 teams enrolled in an Executive MBA course sequence at a large, Midwestern university. Members of these teams answered surveys assessing EQ and team cohesiveness and performance. In addition, faculty members rated each team on these measures of team cohesiveness and performance. It was found that, for the self-report measures, nine facets of EQ correlated with team performance and cohesiveness. However, for the faculty ratings of team cohesiveness and performance, only one facet, empathy, was related. The author discusses this finding and points out the potential importance of creating situations where empathy may be developed through training. This development of empathy among team members is seen as crucial in successful team development and team performance in organizations.

There is one major criticism of the studies in this special issue. Three studies suffer from the bane of much organizational research—the data are gathered using self-report measures. However, the studies do attempt to address this in various ways. Rahim et al. uses observer-report measures to assess EQ and a cross-validation strategy to show that the patterns of results are consistent across widely differing cultures. All offer suggestions for improving the research done on EQ using these methods and other techniques to avoid the problem of self-report measures. Incorporation of the authors' suggestions in future research should greatly improve understanding of the relationship between EQ and organizational behavior.

The four studies presented here use an eclectic mix of methodologies and statistical techniques. The common theme, however, is that all show relationships between EQ and behavior and attitudes in organizations. These studies show that EQ relates to a variety of organizational measures. The articles also offer practical advice to the management of an organization for the use of these findings. More importantly, each study recognizes its own shortcomings and offers suggestions to improve empirical research on EQ.

Therefore, while more research is clearly needed, the four articles in this special issue help to establish both the theoretical and practical importance of EQ for organizations. The future looks bright for EQ.

#### References

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