Chapter 9
Exploring Emotional Intelligence at Work:
A Review of Current Evidence

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ABSTRACT

Emotional intelligence is defined as the ability to perceive, understand, regulate, and use emotions. Organizational settings are now considered important arenas for the manifestation of human emotions. In order to establish long-term success, today's organizations continually emphasize the search for emotionally intelligent employees. This chapter provides a detailed overview of the current literature on emotional intelligence with respect to work-related attitudes, behaviors, and outcomes. In particular, it provides empirical evidence for the associations of emotional intelligence with job satisfaction, work performance, organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behavior, effective leadership, and well-being. This chapter also provides practical implications and suggestions for future research by addressing plausible moderators and mediators, which are related to emotional intelligence.

INTRODUCTION

Research on the role that emotions play in the work setting has rapidly gained attention over the past decades. Workplaces are now considered important arenas for the manifestation of human emotions. Emotions are thought to be primal motivating forces and are considered as the "processes which arouse, sustain, and direct activity" (Leeper, 1948, p. 17). The impetus for studying emotions comes from a variety of disciplines; therefore, arguments have emerged from management discussions concerning a new version of intelligence regarding the emotions related to the performance of organizations and their members (Güleryüz, Güney, Miski Aydın, & Asan, 2008).

Accordingly, scholars began to approach emotional intelligence (EI) as a factor that has a potential to generate more affirmative attitudes, behaviors, and outcomes (Carmeli, 2003; Wong & Law, 2002). In general, EI refers to a set of abilities related with emotions and emotional information (Cote, 2014). Cherniss (2000) points out that "it is more useful and interesting to consider how important emotional intelligence is for effective performance at work" (p.435). For instance, some employees might perform more effectively just because they possess higher levels of EI (Cote & Miners, 2006). That is, emotionally intelligent individuals are good at monitoring their emotional expressions (self-aware), others' feedback on these expressions, and regulating their emotions (Prati, Douglas, Ferris, Ammeter, & Buckley, 2003). Thus, they can regulate their actions according to the social rules. These abilities guide their behaviors in social settings and help them to fit into groups.

Mayer and Salovey (1997) also argue that emotionally intelligent individuals are good at recognizing, understanding, and managing their own and others' emotions, which in turn contributes to better workplace relationships. Similarly, according to Goleman (1995, 1998), EI contributes to both life and work success. In particular, emotional competence is pivotal to a stellar performance in all jobs. Even though the empirical research on EI is not yet fully complete, it seems to show promise and presages that the study of emotions in work settings has the potential to contribute to our understanding of attitudes and behaviors in organizations. Thus, this chapter aims to provide a detailed overview of the current literature on EI, specifically as it pertains to the critical work-related attitudes, behaviors, and outcomes thought to be useful proxies for the effects of this concept in the workplace.

Throughout this chapter, several issues are addressed. First, a general introduction to the conceptual definition of EI is given. Second, the emergent interest in EI is discussed. In the preceding sections, the empirical research focusing on the organizational consequences and work attitudes of EI are systematically reviewed. A comprehensive search is conducted to gain understanding of the existing literature between EI and work attitudes and outcomes. EBSCOhost, Psych ARTICLES, Scopus, and ProQuest electronic databases were consulted for the literature search using the keywords *emotional intelligence, job satisfaction, work performance, organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behavior, effective leadership,* and *well-being*. Finally, practical implications and suggestions for future research through addressing plausible moderators and mediators in relation to EI are proposed.

BACKGROUND

The Theoretical Context of Emotional Intelligence

Scholars use several terms interchangeably to define the construct including the most widely used term 'emotional intelligence' (Goleman, 1995; Salovey & Mayer, 1990), 'emotional literacy' (Cooper & Sawaf, 1997), 'emotional competence' (Humphrey, Curran, Morris, Farrell & Woods, 2007) and 'emotional quotient' (Cooper, 1997).

EI's roots can be traced back to the early psychology studies of Thorndike (1920, p. 228) who identified the concept of social intelligence as the capacity "to act wisely in human relations" (see Bar-On & Parker, 2000 for a review). Subsequent to Thorndike (1920), Gardner (1993) defined social intelligence as one of the seven intelligence domains in his multiple intelligence theory. However, Salovey and Mayer (1990) were among the earliest to label the name of emotional intelligence to represent the ability of individuals to deal with their emotions. In their early definition, the authors define EI as "the subset of

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