

Famous Theories Surrounding Emotional Intelligence: A Historical Review

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Abstract: Aim of this study is to review the popular and widely cited literature, history, theories, concepts and definitions of the emotional intelligence. For providing a complete insight to the academicians and researchers about the emotional intelligence term, literature is reviewed systematically from the date term is evolved, till now. After thoroughly going through the literature based on emotional intelligence, authors have concluded that a consensus can be observed among the psychologists and researchers on the emotional intelligence model presented by Mayer, Salovey and Cruso. As far as, the measurement strategy of emotional intelligence is concerned, self-reporting technique is widely opted in the past researches that show its authenticity. Prospective researchers by looking at the plus and negative points of emotional intelligence and agreeability of the emotional intelligence models can decide that which theory, definition and measure they should follow and how they can improve the existing concepts. Moreover, readers could get the brief yet all inclusive, information on the construct of emotional intelligence in one piece of writing.

Key words: Emotional intelligence, emotional intelligence models, measures of emotional intelligence, evolution of emotional intelligence, corporate

INTRODUCTION

In today's corporate world, organizations are spending their precious resources for equipping their employees and especially leaders with the skills, knowledge and talent through different training and development programs that ultimately benefit the organizations (Kilburg, 2000). Among these training and development programs, emotional intelligence is one of the prominent skills that is specially featured in leadership development training sessions (Quick and Macik-Frey, 2004). Importance of emotional intelligence can be realized by the recent literary work in which different authors have proved the influence of emotional intelligence on numerous workplace outcomes like job satisfaction, job performance, leadership effectiveness (Hopkins and Bilimoria, 2008; Dulewicz *et al.*, 2005; Wong and Law, 2002). So, interest of the scientific and corporate community is rapidly increasing in the emotional intelligence because it is considered that traditional intelligence can not resolve the issues involving human emotions (Van Der Zee and Wabeke, 2004).

Despite this ever increasing popularity, there is an ongoing debate among the researchers and academicians about the conceptualization, predictability, assessability and applicability of emotional intelligence (Prentice, 2008). This construct is bombard by numerous theories and definitions. Scholarly work on emotional intelligence formally starts by the Goleman in his book 'Emotional

Intelligence' and discussion on it continues till the date. So, here emerges a need of study that could sum up all the major theories and scholarly writings surrounding around the emotional intelligence in different periods of time. So that, it would be easy for the readers and prospective researchers to conceptualize the emotional intelligence and follow one school of thoughts. Moreover, practitioners can also take the guidance from such study for understanding the true sense behind emotional intelligence term and different measurement tools through which emotional intelligence can be assessed among employees and leaders.

STUDY DESIGN

This study is a historical review in which previous literature on the emotional intelligence starting from the evolution of emotional intelligence out of traditional intelligence; different models presented by researchers and psychologists on emotional intelligence; recent work on emotional intelligence construct and different strategies to measure emotional intelligence will be reviewed and discussed in depth. Literature on emotional intelligence is retrieved from journals, books, previous dissertations and miscellaneous online sources. At the end concluding remarks will be passed by the authors about the scholarly work reviewed and guidelines will be given for prospective researchers to continue the research on this construct.

DISCUSSION

Although, the concept of emotional intelligence is relatively new, introduced and got popularity in the last decade but numerous past studies have paved the way towards the development of this concept. So, this study will briefly discuss the origination of emotional intelligence concept, different models and theories presented by the scholars with the purpose to define emotional intelligence; different measuring techniques of the construct by the scholars and recent developments on emotional intelligence.

EVOLUTION OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

As the term emotional intelligence shows that it is a form of intelligence. So, origin of this term can be dated back around in 20th century. Thorndike (1920) defined 3 classes of intelligence and named them, as abstract, mechanical and social intelligence. Mechanical intelligence refers the ability of an individual to understand different mechanisms and abstract intelligence refers to the ability of an individual to understand symbols and ideas (Thorndike, 1920). While social intelligence refers to the ability of an individual to manage human beings, so they can act rationally in human relations (Thorndike, 1920; Newsome *et al.*, 2000). Social intelligence is considered a nearby concept to emotional intelligence (Prentice, 2008). The next development towards the emotional intelligence concept was made by Gardner (1987, 1993) when he further subdivided social intelligence into two categories and named them interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence. Interpersonal intelligence refers to the ability of an individual to deal with feelings, temperaments, moods and intentions of others while intrapersonal intelligence is concerned with the ability of an individual to manage feelings of self (Gardner, 1993). Looking at the conceptualization of emotional intelligence, it can be stated that it is the combination of intrapersonal and interpersonal emotional intelligence.

After the informal introduction of emotional intelligence in previous studies, term of emotional intelligence was first time coined by Leuner (1966) in German magazine in which he discusses the emotions of women who were being separated from their mothers. Later on, Payne (1986) used this term in his studies on the schools.

Later on, emotional intelligence formally introduced in the psychology literature in 20th century. Salovey and

Mayer (1990) presented the definition of emotional intelligence for the 1st time in history. After their study, another famous psychologist named as Daniel Goleman popularized the term among the psychologists circles through well conceptualizing it that will be discussed in later study.

FAMOUS MODELS OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Now coming towards the conceptualization of emotional intelligence, there are numerous definitions of emotional intelligence given by the psychologists. But out of these heap of definitions, three concepts got a lot of popularity. The one school of thought considers emotional intelligence as cognitive ability, second school of thought treats emotional intelligence as a trait that makes it part of personality while the third school of thought advocates a mixed model. So, here each model of emotional intelligence will be briefly discussed in this study.

Ability model of emotional intelligence: D.R. Caruso, P. Salovey and J.D. Mayer are the master minds behind the ability model of emotional intelligence. They declared emotional intelligence purely as a branch of intelligence that consists of specific abilities. They categorically defined intelligence and emotions in their study and then presented a combined definition of emotional intelligence in following words: "Emotional intelligence is the subset of social intelligence that involves ability to monitor one's own and other's feelings and emotions to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions" (Salovey and Mayer, 1990).

In the same study, Salovey and Mayer (1990) presented a conceptual framework involving all different components of the emotional intelligence as defined earlier (Fig. 1).

Later on, disagreements arose on the nature of intelligence among the psychologists, i.e., whether

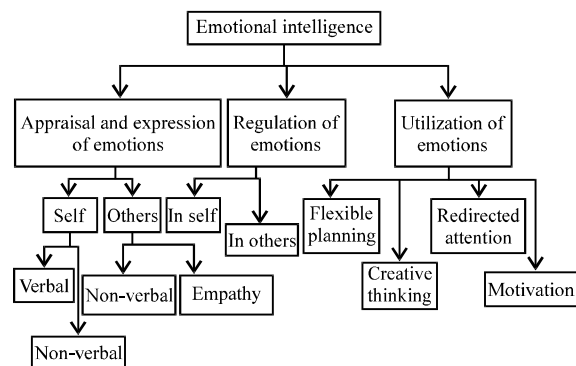


Fig. 1: Conceptualization of emotional intelligence (Salovey and Mayer, 1990)

emotional intelligence is a part of personality or an ability. For defending their definition, they presented an ability model of emotional intelligence. They defined it as: “The ability model of emotional intelligence centers on a person’s skill in recognizing emotional information and carrying out abstract reasoning using this emotional information” (Mayer and Salovey, 1997). They place emotional intelligence fully in sphere of intelligence in which cognition and emotions interact in adaptive way (Caruso *et al.*, 2002). For further proving their claim, they distinguished personality traits and ability measure of emotional intelligence through multi factor intelligence scale and declared personality independent from emotional intelligence (Mayer *et al.*, 1999; Caruso *et al.*, 2002).

Goleman’s Model of emotional intelligence: Seeking the guidance from the research of Salovey and Mayer (1990), Daniel Goleman wrote a famous book titled ‘Emotional Intelligence’. Taking a different approach, he defined emotional intelligence as cognitive abilities, as well as personality trait. He described emotional intelligence in following words: Emotional intelligence is a general quality possessed by every normal person and a quantitative spectrum of individual differences in which people can be ranked on a type of emotional scale (Goleman, 1995, 1998). Goleman (1998) described a framework of emotional intelligence in his book named ‘Working with Emotional Intelligence’. Moreover, he emphasized on another concept named as ‘Emotional Competence’. He explained the concept through the example as emotional intelligence might develops the learning capabilities of an individual while emotional competency can transform that capability into task mastering abilities, so emotional intelligence underlies the emotional competence (Goleman, 1998).

So, Goleman (1998), explained the four components of emotional intelligence, considering the perspective of emotional competency that are self-awareness, self management, social-awareness and relationship management. In later studies, Goleman stay firm on his competency based approach and explained it in following words (Fig. 2): “Emotional intelligence focuses on the domain of work performance based on social and emotional competencies which represent the degree to which an individual has mastered specific skills and abilities which build on emotional intelligence and allow them greater effectiveness in the workplace” (Goleman, 2001).

Bar-On’s Model of emotional intelligence: Bar-On Model of emotional intelligence is also popular among the

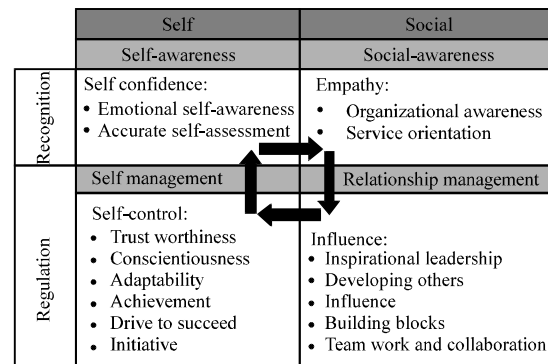


Fig. 2: Emotional intelligence framework by Goleman (2001)

psychologists and researchers. His model is known as mixed model because he considered emotional intelligence as combination of personality traits and cognitive abilities. He introduced the term of emotional quotient in his dissertation (Bar-On, 1996). Bar-On (1997) defined emotional intelligence as: “An array of non-cognitive capabilities, competencies and skills that influence one’s ability to succeed in coping with environmental demands and pressures”. Bar-On (2000) divided emotional intelligence in five categories that are optimization, self actualization, independence, social responsibility and happiness. He emphasized on the self-reporting or 360° evaluation technique for emotional intelligence. Along with appreciation, Bar-On Model of emotional intelligence attracted many criticisms. According to critiques, Bar-On included many non-emotional intelligence qualities in his model, so that the framework is not a proper representation of emotional intelligence (Vigoda-Gadot and Meisler, 2010).

Measures of emotional intelligence: Researchers have suggested different types of measures for evaluating emotional intelligence. Famous tools for measuring emotional intelligence are ability, objective or performance based assessment and the other is self-reporting measure. Both methods are having their strengths and weaknesses. Proponents of performance based measure of emotional intelligence believe that as emotional intelligence is a branch of intelligence, so it can be assessed only by performance and objective or ability based evaluation method (MacCann *et al.*, 2004; Mayer *et al.*, 1999; Roberts *et al.*, 2001). Different tests were suggested by the experts following this method of emotional intelligence’s assessment. Famous objective and performance bases scales are Multifactor Emotional Intelligence Scale (MEIS) and Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT).

The second famous measurement strategy, i.e., self-reporting measure brought a lot of criticism with it. Like self-reported emotional intelligence shows closer correlation with personality traits, social desirability issues of the respondent, etc. (Paulhus, 2002; Mayer and Salovey, 1997; Zeidner *et al.*, 2002).

Supporters of self-reporting technique came forward to address the issues raised by critiques. McFarland *et al.* (2003) addressed the social desirability flaw and stated that scale must be designed on the standards that can not be forged. Prentice (2008) stated in his study that even in case of self-reported emotional intelligence, inconsistencies exist in correlation between emotional intelligence and personality (Davies *et al.*, 1998; Gignac, 2005). One of the proponents of self-reporting emotional intelligence measure, Wong and Law (2002) after stating the deficiencies in the previously established scale, presented his Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS) that proved valid and reliable instrument for emotional intelligence and used in many famous studies afterwards valid (Vigoda-Gadot and Meisler, 2010; Christie *et al.*, 2007; Law *et al.*, 2008; Lask and Shepherd, 2013; Zacher *et al.*, 2013; Wang and Kong, 2014). Few other researchers, also concluded in their study that despite all the criticism on self-reporting measure of emotional intelligence, it has proven more valid strategy and used more frequently in studies (Austin *et al.*, 2005). The basic reason behind these valid results is that numerous aspects of emotional intelligence, especially intrapersonal aspects, feelings and emotions can only be reported by the respondent himself (Petrides *et al.*, 2004).

Another less popular tool for measuring emotional intelligence is 360° feedback that was suggested by Goleman (1998) through his emotional competency inventory.

CONCLUSION

From the study of past literature on the emotional intelligence, three main theories have been discovered that are still frequently cited by the researchers and academicians (Allen *et al.*, 2014; Di Fabio and Saklofske, 2014; Billings *et al.*, 2014). These theories are discussed briefly in this study. Through, google citation and review of famous studies on emotional intelligence, it is discovered that emotional intelligence model presented by Mayer, Caruso and Salovey is the most agreed model among the psychologists and researchers. The possible reasons of its popularity may be that their model is considered as pioneering model in field of emotional intelligence; they well defined the emotional intelligence

through the framework that is still followed by the psychologists; they distinguished emotional intelligence from personality by declaring the emotional intelligence as ability rather than trait.

As far as, the measuring strategy of emotional intelligence is considered, self-reporting technique is more popular as compare to the performance based scale (Meisler and Vigoda-Gadot, 2014; Ordun and Acar, 2014; Wong and Law, 2002). Possible reasons behind wide acceptability of self-reported emotional intelligence technique are that in previous studies in which emotional intelligence is measured through self-reporting have shown higher validity and reliability; numerous skills, feelings and emotions, especially intrapersonal can be reported directly by the respondents.

SUGGESTIONS

So, authors of the study suggest to the prospective researchers to follow Mayer and Salovey ability model of emotional intelligence and work to improve this model by looking at the critiques comments. Moreover, self-reporting measure is considered more authentic for measuring emotional intelligence, therefore it is suggested to develop the reliable and valid self-reporting scale of emotional intelligence scale that can not be faked easily and that does not show overlapping with personality constructs.

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