

The Impact of Emotional Intelligence on Team Performance Among Academic Staffs, A Study in Private Higher Education Institutes in Malaysia

Ho Yoon Yin, Ibiwani Alisa Hussain*, Farahida Abdul Jaafar

Faculty of Business Management, Asia Pacific University of Technology and Innovation, Bukit Jalil, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Email address:

ibiwani@apu.edu.my (I. A. Hussain)

*Corresponding author

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Abstract: The purpose of conducting this research study is to explore the team performance among academic staffs in private higher education institutes in Malaysia and its association with the independent variable of emotional intelligence which comprises of four dimensions: self-emotion appraisal (SEA), others-emotion appraisal (OEA), use of emotions (UOE) and regulation of emotions (ROE). The data for this research study is collected through self-administrated questionnaire whereby it is distributed via convenient sampling method. The hypotheses were tested to determine the dissimilar variable on team performance and the relationships of every variable. Findings revealed that there were significant relationships of all the variables with team performance except use of emotions (UOE).

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Team Performance, Academic Staffs

1. Introduction

In the current business environment which are relatively competitive, organisations face various challenges. Therefore, employees play important roles as they are the behind-the-scenes people that strive and work hard for the organisation. Most organisations believe that putting employees to work in teams is an effective approach because it will not only solve employee motivation issues but also accomplishing organisation productivity goals which may overcome some of the challenges (Neuman, Wagner & Christiansen, 1999). Nowadays, eighty percent of companies which have more than hundred employees use a team-based approach (Kratzer, Leenders & Van Engelen, 2004). When employees are put into teams, they are expected to produce results, but the performance will be hindered if the team members are not working well together. Hence, understanding what components employees should have particularly employees who work in teams is the key point to enhance team performance.

1.1. Characteristic of Academic Staffs

Employees are the important asset to organisation. In addressing this, organisation must ensure that the evaluation of their performance being managed professionally (citation). Therefore, this study focuses on academic staffs in private higher education institutes in Malaysia who works in teams as they are the ones may enhance team performance and increase organisation's productivity (citation). According to the National Education Statistic for Higher Education Sector 2013 from the Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia (hereafter, MOHE), the total academic staffs' population in Malaysia in year 2013 was approximately 56,992 where the public higher education institutes (IPTA) consist of 32,516 while the private higher education institutes (IPTS) consist of 24,476. In this research, it focuses on the academic staffs of one private higher education institute and it comprises of four different academic schools namely School of Computing and Technology, School of Engineering, School of Management and lastly, School of Accounting, Finance and Quantitative Studies.

1.2. Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence is critical to high team performance and it reflects the understanding and regulation of one's emotions as well as other's emotions (Baruch and Lin, 2012). A person with high emotional intelligence knows how to stay motivated under stress, motivate others and manage complex interpersonal relationships (Naseer et al., 2011). If there are employees with high emotional intelligence in a team, it ensures the success of knowledge sharing as they have mutual understanding among the team members which encourage distributing their knowledge to each other (Baruch and Lin, 2012). According to Jordan, Peter, Lawrence and Sandra (2009), emotional intelligence is a multi-dimensional concept that links emotion and cognition together in order to improve human interactions, and improve workplace behaviour specifically team behaviour and team performance. It was also found that if the team is able to recognize emotions of teammates, team performance is positively and significantly influenced (Naseer et al., 2011).

The research of Baruch and Lin (2012) was conducted to establish a model based on competition theory to explain the formation of team performance in virtual teams. The study found that, team performance is indirectly affected by team politics and social capital via the mediation of cooperation, emotional intelligence and team competence. Several past studies have pointed out the relationship between emotional intelligence and team performance because emotional intelligence itself represents the capability to use emotions to facilitate performance. Emotional intelligence can predict team performance at both initial and later stages which could help in problem solving and contributes to team performance. Additionally, high emotional intelligence tends to help cultivate positive social exchanges, social support or advice among the team members. Hence, employees that have high emotional intelligence will have the tendency to regulate their own emotions as well as manage other's emotions to raise more positive relationships and consequently, contributes to better team performance (Baruch and Lin, 2012). The finding of this study stated that emotional intelligence and team competence only affects team performance rather than knowledge sharing. Furthermore, emotional intelligence and team competence both reflect the types of team capability that can improve performance. However, they are both affected by three social capital factors which are trust, social interaction and shared vision by making them unique and powerful in boosting team performance (Baruch and Lin, 2012).

1.3. Dimensions of Emotional Intelligence

According to Law, Wong and Song (2004), emotional intelligence consists of four abilities known as the Appraisal and Expression of Emotions (self and others), Use of Emotions and Regulation of Emotions (Naseer et al., 2011).

1.3.1. Appraisal and Expression of Emotions

The first two factors of emotional intelligence are the self-

emotion and others-emotion appraisal and expression of emotions. These two factors are the capacity to appropriately regulate and express one's own feelings, be thoughtful as well as evaluate and express the feelings of others. Every individual varies in their ability to precisely distinguish, assess and communicate their own particular feelings along with the feelings experienced by others. Therefore, some individuals are mindful of their feelings they encounter and they can express their emotions and feelings while some individuals are unconscious of their own feelings and hence, facing difficulties in expressing their emotions and feelings (Zhou & George, 2003; Naseer et al., 2011).

Based on the research of Sy, Tram and O'Hara (2006), it pointed out that there is a positive correlation between job performance and team members that have high level of emotional intelligence. This is due to their great capabilities at assessing and managing their own feelings which brings a higher level of confidence in themselves and have control over them which lead them to make sensible activities and subsequently result in high level of performance and less supervisory interference needed. Conversely, team members that have low level of emotional intelligence are less capable at assessing and managing their feelings. Hence, they need to get assistance from their supervisors in assisting them to better manage and control their feelings which results to cooperation, coordination, inventiveness and versatility (Naseer et al., 2011).

1.3.2. Use of Emotions

Another factor of emotional intelligence is the use of emotions. It is the ability of an individual to use emotion to support cognitive processes. Since emotions and cognitions are very much interrelated, emotional intelligence provides individuals with the capability to develop their emotions and support effective cognitive information processing. For instance, emotions can be utilized in highlighting important matters like choosing among competing and comparative options, involve in certain kinds of information processing and expand the flexibility of information processing. This way, every individual will be different not just the awareness, appraisal and expression of emotions but also their ability to use their emotions together with their cognitive processes to develop effective functioning. In order for individuals that have high level of emotional intelligence to adapt to the changing environments, emotions play as an important and valuable role in processing stimuli and information effectively. On the other hand, individuals that have low level of emotional intelligence are not only unable to use their emotions effectively to assist cognitive processes but also may find it difficult to synchronise between how they feel and what are they doing (Zhou & George, 2003; Naseer et al., 2011).

1.3.3. Regulation of Emotions

The last factor of emotional intelligence is the regulations of emotions of the people. It is regarding to the fact that individuals are not only trying to understand the emotions of others but also making the effort to manage these emotions.

Some individuals tend to be more effective during the emotional intelligence process for both themselves and others as compared to other people. For instance, if there is any breach in quality occurred, a negative emotional reaction like anger may raise up when the manager tries to find out the reason that caused the problem. However, instead of constantly blaming others and seek for revenge, managers have to manage their anger so that the problem can be solved effectively. Besides, it is also essential for managers or leaders to manage the emotions of others. Though emotional reactions give a valuable knowledge of where interest should be focused on, unmanaged emotions can affect the effectiveness of information processing. As a result, managers will not only use emotions but also manage them effectively with the help of emotional intelligence so that any interference towards information processing can be avoided (Zhou & George, 2003; Naseer *et al.*, 2011).

1.4. Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Team Performance

Since emotional intelligence is essential to high performance, an individual who can stay motivated under stress while motivate others and manage complex interpersonal relationships between themselves and others to create teams that are known as specialist towards a product or service are expected to get better outcomes (Naseer *et al.*, 2011). According to Jordan and Lawrence (2009), emotional intelligence is a multi-dimensional model that combines emotion and cognitive to develop human interactions such as workplace behaviour specifically team behaviour and team performance. It is proven in recent research of Stough, Saklofske and Parker (2009) whereby if a team is capable to be aware of the emotions of their teammates, there will be a positive and significant effect on team performance (Naseer *et al.*, 2011).

There are numerous research studies that have been conducted and claimed that there is a positive impact of emotional intelligence on job performance. However, the studies only examine the level of emotional intelligence at individual level performance and not at team level performance. Hence, there will be absence of perceived potential benefits of utilizing emotional intelligence in the workplace (Naseer *et al.*, 2011).

A linkage between emotional intelligence and performance on a purely cognitive task at group level has been discovered in the research studies of Quoidbach and Hansenne (2009) and Jordan and Troth (2004) although this linkage was not shown at individual level. Besides, the research study of Sy, Tram and O'Hara (2006) pointed out that employees that have high level of emotional intelligence are more capable to control their own emotions and manage the emotions of others to encourage positive interactions which would lead to higher performance through organisational citizenship behaviour. Likewise, the research study of Weiss and Cropanzano (1996) discovered that managers with high level of emotional intelligence show signs of enthusiastic work attitudes and unselfish behaviours which consequently lead

to higher satisfaction of employees and higher job performance. The role of leadership has been revolved in majority of teams. Therefore, it is expected that teams with high level of emotional intelligence will perform well (Jordan *et al.*, 2002).

2. Methodology

The objective of the study is to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and team performance among the academic staffs in private higher education institutes in Malaysia. Primary data was collected through self-administered survey questionnaire to 120 respondents, which observed a 100 responses. The academic staffs were be the targeted group of respondents and the results obtained will be received as individual answers and not as a summarised result.

The independent variable in this study was emotional intelligence and the dependent variable was team performance. For emotional intelligence, 16 items were used to measure the four dimensions of emotional intelligence (Self-Emotion Appraisal, Others-Emotion Appraisal, Use of Emotions and Regulation of Emotions) and 10 items were used to measure team performance. The measures used for both emotional intelligence and team performance were entered in the survey questionnaire. Measurements for all the items were inspected using 5 points Likert-scale.

Below were the items used in the questionnaire to measure emotional intelligence.

- I have a good sense of why I have certain feelings most of the time.
- I have good understanding of my own emotions.
- I really understand what I feel.
- I always know whether or not I am happy.
- I always know my team members' emotions from their behaviour.
- I am a good observer of other's emotions.
- I am sensitive to the feelings and emotions of others.
- I have good understanding of the emotions of people around me.
- I always set goals for myself and then try my best to achieve them.
- I always tell myself I am a competent person.
- I am motivated to do a task without needing pressure from others.
- I would always encourage myself to try my best.
- I am able to control my temper and handle difficulties wisely.
- I am quite capable of controlling my own emotions.
- I can always calm down quickly when I am angry.
- I have good control of my own emotions.

Below were the items used to measure team performance.

- Team objectives are made by keeping in mind the individual differences of team members.
- The team members have openness and trust.
- The team members have clear roles and responsibilities.
- There is a thorough operational planning with the

involvement of team.

- There is an adequate communication among team members.
- The members of this team are skilled.
- In this team, each member has good individual performances.
- New ideas are welcomed from team members.
- There is enjoyable work environment in this team.
- Team members cooperate with each other.

The data collected were analysed using SPSS version 22.0 whereby descriptive analysis, normality test, reliability test and correlation test performed.

3. Findings

The respondents were divided into four different faculties namely, School of Computing and Technology, School of Engineering, School of Management and School of Accounting, Finance and Quantitative Studies. With a total of 100 respondents, they were divided equally among the four faculties whereby each faculty consists of 25 respondents. The equal amount of respondents for each faculty ensures that there is consistent number of members in a team.

On the demographic layout of the respondents, out of 100 respondents, 52% were male academic staffs and 48% were female academic staffs. On age group, majority of them are in the age group of 32 to 41 years old which consist of 50% of the respondents. On the highest level of education that the academic staffs have, statistic showed that most of the respondents were university graduates with master's degree, i.e., 75%. On length of employment, majority of the respondents which consist of 26% of them has been working for the University for one to three years.

Table 1.0 illustrates the result from descriptive analysis on the mean of both the emotional intelligence and team performance items. Reliability test was conducted on the data to measure the internal consistency of scale with the samples.

Findings from reliability test showed that Cronbach's Alpha for team performance item was 0.894 which indicated that the internal consistency of scale of the items with the samples is good. As for emotional intelligence, Cronbach's Alpha was at 0.776 for both SEA and UOE, 0.714 for OEA and 0.800 for ROE which also indicated an acceptable and good internal consistency reliability of scale with the sample (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013). Overall, the reliability for all the variables was satisfactory.

Correlations analysis is a method used to describe the strength and direction of the linear relationship between two variables. Since two variables used were continuous variables, Pearson Correlations was found to be appropriate (Pallant, 2011). In this study, The Pearson Moment Correlation test were used to measure the linear correlation between a dependent variable (Team Performance) and every independent variables (Emotional Intelligence: Self-Emotion Appraisal, Others-Emotion Appraisal, Use of Emotions and Regulation of Emotions) whereby the 'r' value has to be in between -1 and 1. When $r=1$, there will be a strong positive relationship, when $r=0$, there will be no significant relationship and when $r=-1$, there will be a negative relationship between the variables. The results of the test were illustrated on Table 2.0 below. All the dimensions of emotional intelligence showed positive relationships with team performance. The strongest relationship is between team performance and UOE (0.585), followed by team performance and ROE (0.484) and team performance and SEA (0.392). The relationship between team performance and OEA has the weakest relationship (0.171). In other words, it can also be said that UOE explained 58.5% on the level of team performance in Asia Pacific University (APU), ROE explained 48.4% on the level of team performance in APU, SEA explained 39.2% on the level of team performance in APU while OEA explained 17.1% on the level of team performance in APU.

Table 1. Result of descriptive analysis.

Items to measure Emotional Intelligence	N	Min	Max	Mean
Self-Emotion Appraisal (SEA)				
I have a good sense of why I have certain feelings most of the time.	100	1	5	3.85
I have good understanding of my own emotions.	100	1	5	4.13
I really understand what I feel.	100	1	5	4.19
I always know whether or not I am happy.	100	1	5	4.29
Others-Emotion Appraisal (OEA)				
I always know my team members' emotions from their behaviour.	100	1	5	3.48
I am a good observer of other's emotions.	100	1	5	3.77
I am sensitive to the feelings and emotions of others.	100	1	5	3.94
I have good understanding of the emotions of people around me.	100	1	5	3.86
Use of Emotions (UOE)				
I always set goals for myself and then try my best to achieve them.	100	1	5	3.87
I always tell myself I am a competent person.	100	1	5	4.14
I am motivated to do a task without needing pressure from others.	100	1	5	4.06
I would always encourage myself to try my best.	100	1	5	4.16
Regulation of Emotions (ROE)				
I am able to control my temper and handle difficulties wisely.	100	1	5	3.74
I am quite capable of controlling my own emotions.	100	1	5	3.88
I can always calm down quickly when I am angry.	100	1	5	3.78
I have good control of my own emotions.	100	1	5	3.91

Items to measure Team Performance				
	N	Min	Max	Mean
Team objectives are made by keeping in mind the individual differences of team members.	100	1	5	3.71
The team members have openness and trust.	100	1	5	3.81
The team members have clear roles and responsibilities.	100	1	5	3.96
There is a thorough operational planning with the involvement of team.	100	1	5	3.65
There is an adequate communication among team members.	100	1	5	3.77
The members of this team are skilled.	100	1	5	3.68
In this team, each member has good individual performances.	100	1	5	3.64
New ideas are welcomed from team members.	100	1	5	3.89
There is enjoyable work environment in this team.	100	1	5	3.83
Team members cooperate with each other.	100	1	5	3.79

Table 2. Result of Pearson Correlation Analysis.

Pearson Correlation between team performance and the dimensions of emotional intelligence		
		Team Performance
Team Performance	Pearson Correlation	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	
	N	100
Self-Emotion Appraisal (SEA)	Pearson Correlation	.392**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	100
Others-Emotion Appraisal (OEA)	Pearson Correlation	.171
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.088
	N	100
Use of Emotions (UOE)	Pearson Correlation	.585**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	100
Regulation of Emotions (ROE)	Pearson Correlation	.484**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	100

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

4. Discussion

The results from the study indicated that UOE is the strongest predictor towards team performance in the University as compared to ROE, SEA and OEA. The findings can be related to the characteristics of the respondents in this research study. Since majority of the respondents are male, it can be concluded that male has better control of use of emotions. This is because generally males have better emotional intelligence control as compared to females. When males have better emotional intelligence control, they tend to perform well in group and they are better predictor for achievement as they tend to set goals for themselves, be competent and motivated without needing pressure from others. Consequently, they will contribute to their team and increase the team performance. Besides, majority of the respondents are considered young whereby they fall in the age group of 32 to 41 years old and they are also considered as new employees in the University as they had only one to three years length of employment. This can be said that they will have higher use of emotions because they tend to be enthusiastic and actively participate in the team to prove their ability and capabilities in completing or succeeding certain group tasks as they have lesser commitments as compared to the senior employees. When there is high participation of team members in a team, it will directly boost the performance of the team. Furthermore, majority of the respondents have a

Masters as their highest level of education. This means that there is opportunity for them to improve on their qualification and contribute to the team performance because the higher the qualification of team members, there will be better decision makings being made in the team and thus, increases the performance of the team. This research study was conducted only in one particular private higher education institute in Malaysia. However, if the same research study was conducted in different environment with different set of respondents, the findings gained would be different.

5. Conclusion

In a nutshell, this research did not represent the team performance of all the higher education institutes in Malaysia. This is due to the limitation that it only served as benchmark findings for private higher education. However, if the same research study was conducted in different environment with different set of respondents, the findings gained would be different.

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