Full Length Research Paper

An exploration of emotional intelligence between levels of management

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The purpose of this paper is to examine the emotional intelligence (EI) as conceptualized in Goleman's competency model, in different levels of management. To conduct this study, different level managers in Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) organization completed a questionnaire on emotional intelligence. The researchers used descriptive and inferential statistics to describe data and analyze the differences between managers in three levels. Results revealed significant differences between components of emotional intelligences in levels of management. One the EI component, social skills, out of five improved significantly, and some of the specific dimensions, self-awareness and self-regard, showed this significant improvement, while others such as empathy and self-motivation did not have a clear change. This research provides implications for practice in development and sustenance of emotionally intelligent managers. Revealing the impact of EI in managerial levels could be a guide for organizations to improve emotional intelligence. The findings will further assist organizations in human resource initiatives such as managerial development and selection.

Key words: Emotional intelligence (EI), managerial levels, Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB).

INTRODUCTION

Researchers have suggested that organizations benefit from having emotionally intelligent managers. Emotional intelligence (EI) is described as "the capacity for recognizing our own feelings and that of others, for motivating ourselves, and for managing emotions well within ourselves and in our relationships" (Goleman, 1998). EI is proved to be a necessity for successful work performance at individual level (Abraham, 2004; Higgs, 2004; Kunnanatt, 2004; Lopes et al., 2003; Sy et al., 2006; Tischler et al., 2002) and organizational groups (Day and Carroll, 2004; Druskat and Wolff, 2001; Kelly and Barsade, 2001; Koman and Wolff, 2008; Welch, 2003). EI has also widely drawn the attention of leadership scholars who consider it as a prerequisite for leadership

effectiveness (Barbuto and Burbach, 2006; Barling et al., 2000; Gardner and Stough, 2002; George, 2000; Kerr et al., 2006; Palmer et al., 2001; Rosete and Ciarrochi, 2005; Sosik and Megerian, 1999).

EI has thus become increasingly popular in recent decade due to the belief that the notions of intellectual intelligence have been overstated and that there is a need to probe the broader spectrum of the psychological mechanisms that allow individuals to flourish in their personal lives and in their jobs. The appeal of EI is also grounded in the view that EQ, unlike IQ, is likely to be more equally distributed across groups and that its competencies can be learned, with some researchers contrasting the supposed malleability of EI with the relative fixity of IQ (Mathews et al., 2003).

Psychological survey increasingly suggests the importance of EI in predicting success in life (Bar-On, 1997a). Management and organizational research on the other hand increasingly affirms that people with high levels of EI reach more career success (Dulewicz and Higgs, 1998; Weisinger, 1998), feel less job insecurity

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(Jordan et al., 2002), lead more effectively (Higgs and Rowland, 2002; Prati et al., 2003), are more effective in team leadership/team performance (Rice, 1999), are more adaptable to stressful events (Nikolaou and Tsaousis, 2002) and exhibit better coping strategies (Bar-On et al., 2000).

This specific study contains a unique look at levels of management in relation to EI and compares the EI of managers at three (3) levels of management. It stands to reason that emotionally intelligent people may be inherently more drawn to upper levels. The research that follows begins to investigate some of these questions (some kind of introduction). This author's professional experience generated curiosity and led to the hypothesis that the score of EI components are different in levels of management. Specifically, it was hypothesized that (I think making hypothesis is of initial steps in research, so this part is just introducing the hypothesis and not concluding) EI levels rise when managerial levels elevate. In reviewing the groundwork that leads to the research and discussion regarding EI in managers, it is important to first look at the construct of EI itself. This section is not properly articulated. It seems the author is already drawing conclusions before the empirical research and at the same time trying to state the research hypothesis. (Your opinion is respected but i think the paragraph is trying to introduce the research and process of making hypothesis. By the way if u find it irrelevant it will be removed or replaced).

Construct of emotional intelligence (EI)

Hypotheses on intelligence begin as early as 1920. Mandell and Pherwani (2003) stated that real intelligence is made up of emotional and social elements, in addition to an intellectual element. In academia and in measurement efforts, however, the construct of intelligence has historically remained closely attached to cognitive descriptors. When Mayer and Salovey (1993) put forth their innovative theory of EI, they specifically chose the term emotional intelligence in order to link the construct to historical literature.

They proposed that in contrast to mere attitudes and sentiments, EI is actually made up of distinct skills, and further suggested that individuals less adept at interpersonal relations may experience a lack of ability that could be improved. Their later definition describes EI as "the ability to perceive accurately, appraise, and express emotion, the ability to access and or generate feelings when they facilitate thought, the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge, and the ability to reflectively regulate emotions in ways that promote emotional and intellectual growth" (Mayer and Salovey, 1997).

Recently, though there is general agreement that EI encapsulates personal qualities commonly held as positive tools toward effective interactions and in conducting daily life events, discussion continues around its actual definition and measurement. Two models of EI have emerged. The ability model describes EI as "abilities that involves perceiving and reasoning abstractly with information that emerges from feelings", and the mixed model defines EI as "the ability with social behaviors, traits and competencies" (Mandell and Pherwani, 2003). The ability model is largely upheld by Mayer and Salovey (1993, 1997). This study utilizes the mixed model, which was espoused by Goleman (1995, 1998) and Bar-On (1997). Apart from the slight differences that appeared in the models, EI remains a fashionable topic of research and debate.

Alternative theories of emotional intelligence (EI)

The increasing interest in emotions and the growing awareness of its role in organizations and in personal life has great impart due to the proliferation of research over the past decade on emotions generally and EI specifically. The three theories that have generated the most interest in terms of research and applications are the theories of Bar-On (1988, 2000), Salovey and Mayer (1997), and Goleman (1998a).

The first of the three core theories to emerge was that of Bar-On (1988). In his doctoral dissertation, he coined the term "emotional quotient" (EQ), as an analogue to intelligence quotient (IQ). Bar-On (1997b) defined his model in terms of five main social and emotional abilities including intrapersonal skills, interpersonal skills, adaptability, stress management and mood which together influence a person's ability to cope effectively with environmental demands. His model thus framed EI in the context of personality theory and is best viewed as a general model of psychological well-being and adaptation (Goleman, 2001).

Salovey and Mayer (1997) on the other hand framed EI within a model of intelligence.

Their motivation to develop a theory of EI stemmed from a realization that traditional measures of intelligence failed to measure individual differences in the ability to perceive, process and effectively manage emotions. Accordingly, they evolved a model that has a cognitive focus, outlining the specific mental aptitudes for recognizing and marshaling emotions (Goleman, 2001). As depicted in Figure 1, their model is developmental, comprising four tiers of abilities with the complexity of emotional skill increasing from basic emotional perception to more complex processes integrating emotion and cognition.

Goleman (1998b) on the other hand presented an EI-based theory of performance, which is competency based, comprising of a discrete set of abilities that integrate affective and cognitive skills. What differentiates Goleman's (1998b) model from those of Bar-On (1988)
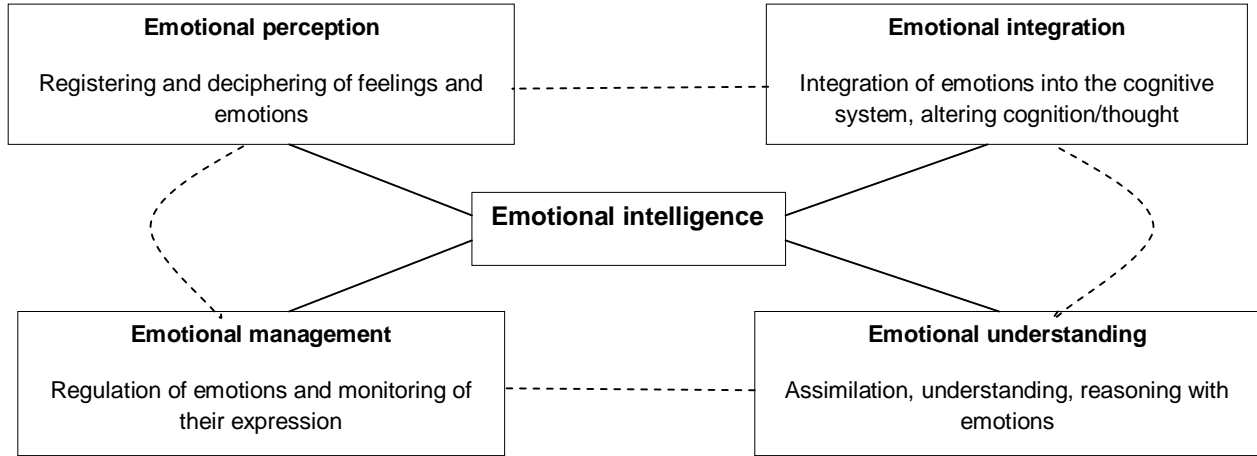
Figure 1. The four-branch model of emotional intelligence. Source: Adapted from Bar-On and Parker (2000).

Table 1. Components of emotional intelligence.

EI competency cluster	EI competency	Description	Associated abilities
Personal competence	Self-awareness	The ability to detect/trace/label an emotion as it occurs	Openness to candid feedback Accurate Self-assessment
	Self-regulation	The ability to keep emotions under check and manage disturbing emotions effectively	Self-control Adaptability Innovative
	Self-motivation	The ability to remain hopeful and optimistic despite setbacks and failure	Achievement orientation Commitment Initiative/enthusiasm
Social competence	empathy	The ability to understand the emotional make-up of other people and getting the true feel of their thought processes	Influence Persuasive Motivation of others Political astuteness
	Social skills	Proficiency in managing relationships and building rapport and networks	Leadership Communication Cooperative/teamwork Conflict management

and Salovey and Mayer (1997) is his attempt to ground his theory specifically in the context of competencies relevant for work performance. The early framework proposed by Goleman (1998b) identified five dimensions of emotional intelligence, including self-awareness, self-regard, self-motivation, empathy and social skills (Table 1). These have been classified into two broad categories, namely personal competence (dealing with one's own self) and social competence (dealing with the self of others) (Goleman, 1995). Figure 2 shows this classification, which, with minor variations, is increasingly grounded in the literature.

Given the relevance of Goleman's (1998b) model to organizational life, and accumulating evidence suggesting the importance of EI competencies for effective performance at work, we have adopted Goleman's

(1998b) model to develop a self-report measure that was used to gauge EI in the context of a sample of Iranian organization and to draw or highlight relevant work-related implications.

Empirical studies of emotional intelligence (EI) at work

The data documenting the importance of EI competencies for different levels of managers in organizations is accumulating. For example, McClelland (1998) reviewed date from more than thirty different organizations, showing that a wide range of EI competencies relating to self-motivation, social awareness and social skills, distinguished top performers from average ones.
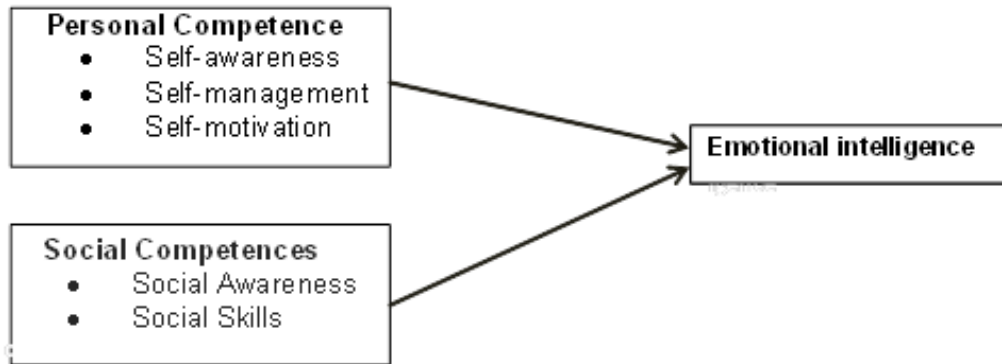
Figure 2. The building blocks of emotional intelligence.

Boyatzis (1982) found that among several hundred of managers from 12 different organizations, accurate self-assessment (that is, self-awareness) was the hallmark of superior performance.

Spencer and Spencer (1993) found that superior sales managers are those that exhibited competence in sensing the developmental needs of others and bolstering their abilities (that is, relationship management).

A growing body of organizational and occupational studies points more generally to the important role of emotions at work. Accumulating evidence portrays EI to be associated with greater work satisfaction, increased ability to cope with stress, a better change orientation or propensity and stronger organizational commitment (Carmeli, 2003; Vakola et al., 2004). Van Rooy and Viswesvaran (2003) found that cognitive ability accounts for approximately 25% of the variance in job performance. Their study posits EI as a valuable predictor of work performance and suggests the overall predictive validity of EI to hold fairly constant across all performance domains, including work, group and academic performance. These findings concur with those of Watkin (2000), whose research portrays EI as the single most important factor for superior performance at every level from entry-level jobs to top executive positions. Bar-On and Parker (2000) similarly describe EI competencies as critical for effective performance in most jobs, and Goleman (1998b) found out that 67% of the abilities regarded as essential for effective performance were emotional competencies.

Bennis (2001) and Chen et al. (1998) on the other hand claimed that EI accounts for 85-90% of the success of organizational leaders. Dulewicz and Higgs (1998) found that their measure of EI accounted for 36% of the variance in organizational advancement, while IQ accounted for only 27%.

Longhorn (2004) suggested that a relationship exists between the EI of the general managers in their study and their key performance results as measured by the performance appraisal rating of the manager, the profit output of the units under their control and the satisfaction of the customers.

Some studies have similarly suggested that EI levels are expected to increase with managerial and leadership experience. This is particularly true in light of a growing body of research suggesting that EI is a critical ingredient in accounting for the success of organizational managers (Chen et al., 1998; Goleman, 1998a; Bennis, 2001). For example, Van Der Zee (2004) found out that top managers scored higher than a reference group on eleven out of fifteen EI dimensions. Fatt (2002) also suggested that EI tends to acquire more importance as individuals progress in the organization. Goleman (1998b) suggested that the higher the employee's position in the organization, the more EI is an important consideration.

We believe that these preliminary findings are extremely interesting and deserving of further attention and have therefore construed our study in such a way as to address the effects of managerial level on EI in the workplace and to draw relevant work-related observations and implications.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study explores the relationship between EI scores and managerial levels, specifically, in Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting Organization. Comparisons were made between the three groups of managers on their scores of overall EI, as well as on five subscale EI competency areas.

Population

The population from which we drew our sample consisted of people in top-level, middle-level, and first-level managerial positions in seven (7) channels of Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting Organization (IRIB). A total of 150 questionnaires were sent out but 10 of these were not usable and were not included in the final calculation of data, resulting to final sample of 140 individuals. The managers were 28 top-level managers and 68 middle-level Managers and 54 first-line managers. The participants were male (68%) and female (32%), 51% had bachelor degrees and 38% had Masters Level of education while 8% had doctoral degree (Table 2).

Table 2. Demographic characteristic of the sample.

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	102	68
Female	48	32
Total	150	100
Age		
Under 25	15	10
25-35 years	25	16.6
35-45 years	49	32.6
45-55 years	40	26.6
Above 55	21	14
Total	150	100
Education		
B. A.	77	51.3
M. A.	58	38.6
P. h. d.	13	8.6
Other	2	1.3
Total	150	100
Management position		
Top-level	28	18.6
Middle-level	68	45.3
First-level	54	36
Total	150	100

Instruments

Data was gathered for the study using a two section tool. The first section was a short demographic survey which sought responses regarding gender, age, level of education, position title, number of years in current position, and total years of work. The second section comprised 33 items rated on a Likert-type scale requiring participants to rate the extent to which each statement is a representative of their normal emotional dispositions. This self-reporting questionnaire was shrink Emotional Intelligence question-naire, that validity of it be obtained through confirm those by guide and adviser professors, Questionnaire reliability also obtained through cronbach alpha coefficient, which was 0/85. The question-naire was intended to measure the five EI sub-competencies, namely, self-awareness (eight items), self-regard (seven items), self-motivation (seven items), empathy (six items), and social skills (five items). This is consistent with Goleman's (1998b) suggestion that a competence-based measure is more likely to yield an effective measure of EI. The intention was thus to apply a questionnaire-based measure to capture the basic competencies on a self-report basis. Few of those items were localized after a thorough research and literature review, and molded after the emotional competence inventory (Goleman et al., 2000).

Procedures

A letter was initially sent to the human resource department of chosen organizations, explaining the design and purpose of the study. A second letter was then sent to managers, which gave a brief overview of the purpose of the study, asking for their parti-cipation in the research. There was no mention of the term EI, but the research questions were framed in the context of general emotional dispositions. The researchers informed the participants that their answers would be kept confidential.

Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze data from the demo-graphic survey. In testing for significant difference between the three levels' overall and subscale EI scores, one-way analyses of variance (ANOVA) were conducted. A total of five Tukey tests were conducted, with one each for the five EI subscale scores. Raw data were entered and analyzed using the SPSS software Version 17.

Hypothesis: The same hypothesis approach was used to compare for differences in each of the five EI components. Thus, the following research hypothesis was applied in comparing the EIs components scores and the three levels of management: If the EIs' component scores for three levels of management are compared, there will be a difference.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Table 3 compiles the results of the breakdown of EI

Table 3. Level of significant and Fisher exact test of 5 EI component.

EI component	Level of significant	Fisher's exact test
Self-awareness	0.003	6.089
Self-regulation	0.000	-1.756
Social skills	0.000	-3.167
Self - motivation	0.533	0.633
Empathy	0.41	3.332

Table 4. The results of Tukey tests.

Management level	Subset for alpha in self-awareness		Subset for alpha in self-regulation		Subset for alpha in social skills		Subset for alpha in self-motivation	Subset for alpha in empathy
	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	1
Top-level		3.39	3.428		3.53		3.112	3.23
Middle-level	3.12	3.12		3.199		3.05	3.189	3.54
First-level	3.063			3.163		2.95	3.272	3.708

scores across managerial position. The relationships were only significant for the first three dimensions, namely self-awareness, self-regulation, and social skills. No significant difference was found for empathy and self - motivation.

Yet the results indicated that top-level managers consistently scored higher than middle-level managers who, in turn, scored higher than first-level managers on every dimension of EI except for empathy and self - motivation. The results of Tukey tests obviously showed these. These results are presented in Table 4.

DISCUSSION

Our findings suggest moderate levels of reported EI for the entire sample. What is reassuring in this respect, however, is that EI competencies are not fixed genetically and can be nurtured and enhanced. This may necessitate raising awareness about EI and its various components in Iran, hence giving managers the opportunity to increase their chances of work success, with parallel positive implications for the entire society.

Another interesting aspect of our study is the finding relating to the fact that EI scores increases in a significant way with managerial position, particularly the EI Sub-competencies relating to self-awareness, self-regulation and social skills. This finding lends credence to a growing body of research, positing that EI is imperative for effective management and leadership (Goleman, 1998a; Bennis, 2001; Van Der Zee, 2004; Rosete and Ciarrochi, 2005). Given that employees derive their emotional cues from managers, it is imperative for those to effectively master a higher level of personal and social competence.

In light of our findings and accumulating evidence

pointing to the added value and benefits of EI competencies, our research suggests the need to integrate EI valuation into traditional organizational functions. For example, the finding that EI is increasingly important at higher management levels may suggest that screening for EI is legitimate and needed when hiring a candidate for a managerial position. EI is also a relevant criterion when it comes to promotions and succession planning, particularly when a position involves leadership. In other words, our findings suggest that EI should be a central consideration when selecting and employing for managerial positions.

Our findings also suggest that, EI should be a major focus in training and development efforts at all organizational levels. This is particularly true if organizations realize the value of nurturing a critical mass of EI competencies for superior performance. According to researches, EI is supported as a vital element in excellent job performance profiles, in employee behavior and organizational practices and dealing with workplace conflict. Goleman's (1998) analysis of performance profiles from various positions in 121 companies around the world revealed that EI abilities rank as more than twice more crucial for excellence than technical and cognitive abilities. In their tools used to measure performance competencies, worldwide professionals deemed critical excellence skills to be 23% based on intellect and technical expertise, and 67% clearly centered on EI capacities also, a seven-year longitudinal study (Dulewicz and Higgs, 2003) revealed EI as more important than intellect and other management competencies in the advancement of managers. Results indicated that intellect accounted for 27% and management competencies for 16%, while EI explained 36% of the variances in advancement. The same study further analyzed the skills

of senior directors and managers. The director group presented significantly higher scores on overall EI and on interpersonal sensitivity and emotional resilience. The authors found no difference amongst the directors and managers at all, however, in intellect or other managerial competencies. Finally, not only is EI an increasingly indicative reason for stellar performance as rank rises in an organization, but as opposed to cognitive or technical abilities, it explains 85% of the variance between outstanding and average senior leaders (Goleman et al., 2002). EI assessment at work can help in compiling feedback on managers' baseline EI abilities and can also help in tracking progress over time. This exercise, if undertaken in a safe and supportive environment, helps to provide employees with insight into their strengths and areas of development, which can in turn become a critical component of work motivation.

LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This particular research study has a number of limitations which will restrict the generalizability of the results. We have presented in this paper the findings of a research undertaken in the Iranian context, which has attempted to measure EI competencies (self-awareness, self-regulation, self-motivation, social awareness and social skills) in a sample of 140 Iranian managers. The sample size, 140 participants in three managerial groups, was relatively small, subsequent research may benefit from using sample groups that are larger. Further research is needed with a larger national sample of managers to validate this finding. There is also a need for more cross-cultural research to explain differences in EI scores across cultures.

Previous studies have concentrated on the necessity of delving more deeply into cross-cultural issues underlying EI (Leung, 2005). The increasing interest in this concept necessitates that researchers uncover the culture-specific factors that govern EI dynamics in various organizational settings including Iran. In addition, future research in Iran and other countries in the region could benefit from addressing the relationship between the EI constructs and organizational outcomes, such as, manager and leader effectiveness and performance. So, further researches on EI should be conducted in comparing leaders within and the organizational cultures of diverse career fields. Researchers (Bardzil and Slaski, 2003; Dulewicz and Higgs, 2003) have commented on the need for more research on how the leader drives the culture of the organization and the impact of the organizational culture on their leaders. They suggest that such research would be useful to determine if organizations with very emotionally intelligent top managers indeed have an influence on the overall organizational culture, and to help define how EI is manifested in effective behaviors of top leaders, and in offering support, direction, and

promotion of future leaders. To be sure, research is warranted in the ongoing investigation of EI levels of managers across career fields.

Further considerations on the results of this research and for future studies also include the role of gender, age and education. Mandell and Pherwani (2003) discovered EI levels to be higher in women than in men. Additionally, advanced education, particularly greater exposure to theoretical speculation and research, may increase one's appreciation and eventual nurturing of the idea and competencies in the construct of EI.

Nevertheless, we believe that research along these lines is needed and promising, based on the simple premise that nurturing the various EI competencies is likely to be a possible route to increased productivity that is within the reach of most individuals and organizations. Human resource development interventions revolving around EI competency training may provide quick and powerful changes in employee behavior that can be sustained over time. EI competency training and applications may also allow organizations to tailor to the specific needs of various employee clusters based on detected strengths and weaknesses in the respective components.

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