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Introduction

The concept of emotional intelligence (EI) has become an important construct when investigating behavioural performance in the organizational context. Emotional intelligence involves individuals' ability to perceive, understand, control their emotions and emotions of other people. In the modern organizational context, where collaboration between members of different generations occurs, there are both advantages and difficulties related to the cooperation of employees who differ in terms of age. Generation gap could affect communication patterns, views and approaches to the work. Therefore, it is important to have knowledge about emotional intelligence to manage heterogeneous teams efficiently. The purpose of this research is to critically discuss the importance of emotional intelligence at work and assess the effects of generation gap on EI usage.

1. Evaluation of Emotional Intelligence in the Workplace

Emotional intelligence (EI) is viewed as a significant competence in modern workplaces. EI involves an individual's understanding and management of one's own emotions and the identification of other people's emotions, together with how to respond to them (Goleman, 1998). As organisational structures change into more diverse and collaborative ones, individuals will have to collaborate with others, deal with stress, and communicate effectively. Therefore, emotional intelligence proves highly effective in developing positive interpersonal interactions, leadership qualities, and sound decisions. Nonetheless, while it may be seen as indispensable in today's society, it is necessary to analytically assess EI from different perspectives.

The first prominent approach to emotional intelligence is the Goleman's model, which contains five key elements: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills (Goleman, 1998). Self-awareness entails the knowledge of one's emotions and their influence on one's behaviour. Self-awareness promotes a reflective attitude in the process of interaction with colleagues because the recognition of one's emotions leads to the careful analysis of possible reactions. For instance, if a person knows about their frustration, they will take time to think about their reaction before responding to a colleague, thus preventing conflict situations.

On the other hand, self-regulation based on self-awareness implies the ability to control emotions. Self-regulation is especially important during stressors such as tight deadlines and conflict situations at work. Those who can regulate emotions are usually calm and professional. Adaptability and change-management skills are two major elements of emotional intelligence emphasized by Sallie-Dosunmu (2017). The modern business world requires constant change, and only adaptable individuals can cope with challenges successfully. However, one of the weaknesses associated with Goleman's model is the assumption that people are always able to regulate their emotions under any conditions. For example, stress or excessive workload may impair an individual's ability to regulate emotions, thus leading to the ineffective application of emotional intelligence.

Another framework that should be considered when examining theories of emotional intelligence is the Mayer and Salovey ability model that considers emotional intelligence as a set of abilities (Mayer, Salovey and Caruso, 2004). According to this theory, there are four basic competencies that should be developed to become a good manager: the ability to perceive emotions, use emotions to facilitate cognition, understand emotions, and regulate emotions. One of the major strengths of this theoretical framework is that it is assumed that emotional intelligence can be trained; in particular, it is possible to train people to distinguish facial expressions and vocal inflections. Sallie-Dosunmu (2017) mentions that the

development of emotional intelligence implies learning how to empathize and comprehend people.

Nevertheless, there are a few weaknesses related to the Mayer-Salovey model. First, it puts more accent on individual ability than the influence of organisational environment. Many aspects that can affect the emotional state of workers are disregarded. Ashkanasy and Daus (2005) claim that workplace behaviours can depend on multiple factors; therefore, the presence of highly developed emotional intelligence may prove useless under certain circumstances.

According to Bar-On Model, it enables a clear understanding of emotional intelligence because of the inclusion of social and emotional competencies, namely, stress tolerance, social skills, and flexibility (Bar-On, 2006). One of the strengths of the model in a professional environment is the importance of solving the problems that arise. In this case, employees who have good stress tolerance are more productive when facing various challenges. According to Sallie-Dosunmu (2017), building relations and communicating are two key factors contributing to the success of employees in the workplace. It should be mentioned that the model has faced criticism due to its wide coverage, where some personality traits like optimism have been included.

Based on the comparative analysis of models of emotional intelligence, it becomes evident that all three approaches differ significantly. Goleman proposes an approach, which can be easily implemented in the training of leaders and managers. The second model emphasizes the role of skills, which can be easily measured and developed. Finally, the third model focuses on behavioural traits in the workplace. However, none of the approaches presents a holistic view of emotional intelligence. Therefore, integration of models is necessary to achieve results.

Emotional intelligence is critical for fostering relationships at the work place. People with high emotional intelligence have better skills in relating to other people and hence reduce misunderstanding and improve their ability to collaborate (Cherniss, 2010). According to Sallie-Dosunmu (2017), good communication and empathy increase the ability of employees to collaborate effectively. An effective supervisor will listen to his subordinates and empathize with them which will create trust among them and this in turn increases the level of satisfaction and efficiency of employees. On the other hand, failure to possess emotional intelligence will result into conflicts, poor communication and low motivation.

Additionally, there is a significant correlation between emotional intelligence and leadership effectiveness. Leaders with high emotional intelligence become better leaders because they have influence on other people, resolve disputes and motivate their followers. Effective leadership is not just a matter of having power and technical skill but also establishing trust and strong personal relationships (Craemer, 2020). Leaders who take time to understand

and establish relationships with other people become successful in building commitment from their employees. Employees respect leaders who show empathy and understanding. Emotional intelligence becomes even more significant in the higher echelons of organisations.

According to Zeidner, Matthews and Roberts (2004), emotional intelligence seems to have a bigger impact on employees' work performance than cognitive intelligence. While IQ and technical skills are important for an employee to qualify for employment, the two are not sufficient for ensuring success. It is through emotional skills such as communication, empathy, and cooperation that individuals improve their performance and careers (Goleman and Cherniss, 2001). This is especially applicable in management positions since supervision of other workers forms part of one of the key duties in such positions. However, this view faces criticism from some researchers since cognitive intelligence is necessary for solving problems and performing assigned tasks in most technical professions.

Furthermore, emotional intelligence plays a crucial role in decision-making. Since emotionally regulated workers find it difficult to act impulsively, they usually think deeply about various options and consider different points of view before making decisions. As Sallie-Dosunmu (2017) asserts, emotional regulation helps individuals stay calm even in the most demanding circumstances. It means that managers who stay calm amidst crises are capable of making rational decisions. However, it is true that too much focus on emotional skills in fast-paced environments could hinder timely decision-making.

Emotional intelligence is crucial in managing conflict situations. Work-related conflicts are caused by cultural diversities, personal experiences, and different working styles. According to Woffindin (2024) self-regulation refers to individual's ability to control his/her emotions. Self-regulation will ensure that an individual is emotionally stable during conflicts, hence avoiding actions that may worsen the conflicts. This involves restraining oneself from doing anything spontaneous, being patient, and coping with change. One should be capable of solving a problem without having his/her emotions affect the conversation. People who have good emotional intelligence will always ensure that they listen attentively and reach an amicable agreement instead of reacting angrily. On the contrary, people with no such skills easily create conflict when performing their work tasks.

While there are many benefits of emotional intelligence, a few drawbacks hinder its implementation. The main challenge is how to measure emotional intelligence. Unlike IQ, emotional intelligence cannot be quantified easily due to its context-dependent nature (Zeidner et al., 2004). Different approaches are used in calculating emotional intelligence, and this might lead to contradictory outcomes. Consequently, it becomes challenging for organisations to use emotional intelligence in selecting candidates for employment or assessing individual performances.

Also, the application of emotional intelligence comes with risks related to abuse of power. People with high levels of emotional intelligence have the capability of using their skills to control others and gain selfish advantages at the expense of working towards achieving organisational goals (Kilduff, Chiaburu and Menges, 2010). In this case, emotional intelligence skills would be used to gain an upper hand in the workplace. This shows that the skills are not always used for positive impacts.

The level of significance of emotional intelligence may differ depending on the profession. Emotional intelligence is vital in professions that involve working with people and interacting with clients. According to Sallie-Dosunmu (2017), communication, adaptability, and relational skills are vital in such occupations. However, in technical jobs, cognitive abilities are more important compared to emotional intelligence skills.

2. Intergenerational Differences and Emotional Intelligence in the Professional Environment

Modern enterprises feature workers from various generations, mainly comprising Generation X, Millennials (Generation Y), and Generation Z. Generations have their unique set of values, approaches to communication, and attitudes towards work. These factors might affect interpersonal relations and the development of emotional intelligence in professional environments. Thus, it is necessary for managers to take into account generational diversity and encourage its positive aspects to promote efficient collaboration (Parry and Urwin, 2011).

Generation X is commonly referred to as people born between 1965 and 1980. It has been shown empirically that members of Generation X are independent and autonomous (Lyons and Kuron, 2014). Job security and the balance between the working life and family life is very important to this generation. Individuals of Generation X are characterized by regulating their emotions from within and not expressing them externally. Regulation of emotions helps maintain attention and focus amid stressful situations; however, it could limit their ability to communicate effectively as team members.

Generation Y or the millennials, referred to people born between 1981 and 1996. People from this generation are characterized by strong orientations towards communicating and working together. This generation values feedback, self-improvement, and meaningful work (Twenge, 2010). They usually find it easier to speak about their emotions and pass information on emotional intelligence, which is essential for proper collaboration and building healthy interpersonal relations. People who are capable of addressing matters straightforwardly might be contributing towards an atmosphere that encourages emotional growth. The openness shown by this generation requires constant motivation and may be linked to their emotions.

Generation Z individuals, who were born after 1997, form the latest generation of workers. The members of this generation have high technical skills and value flexibility, diversity, and inclusiveness (Schroth, 2019). Generation Z people are more aware of mental well-being issues than any other generation, and therefore, they could be emotionally more sensitive than previous generations. For instance, a Generation Z worker might handle stressful situations better or seek help for them, and thus they would create a positive working atmosphere. Nevertheless, lack of job experience can affect their emotional responses. In fact, generation gap positively and negatively affects emotional intelligence at the same time. The diversity of viewpoints brings together experience and emotional regulation of one side and openness and flexibility of another. As a result, it leads to innovation and improvement in decision-making (Cennamo and Gardner, 2008).

However, the problems associated with such discrepancies exist as well. One of the significant concerns refers to methods of communication. Generation X values formal communication, while Millennials and Gen Z prefer informal channels of interaction, including digital ones. Hence, misunderstanding can easily arise in the workplace. At the same time, emotional intelligence will help people to understand various forms of communication and be able to cooperate in an appropriate manner (Goleman, 1998).

Moreover, one should take into account that people from different generations have their own attitude towards authority and feedback. Specifically, while older workers appreciate hierarchy and rigidity of communication patterns, Millennials and Generation Z require support and adaptation in the work environment from managers. In other words, it is necessary to consider possible conflicts and guidance of people from these generations. Young people expect timely feedback, while some managers do not consider these components important. Managers with emotional intelligence skills help to manage these problems.

The manager should understand the consequences of the generational differences in order to increase productivity in the working place. Indeed, every generation possesses its own unique features: experience of Generation X, flexibility and creativity of Millennials and Gen Z. Thus, creating the best possible team becomes an easy task for any manager (Parry and Urwin, 2011).

Nowadays, emotional intelligence becomes important during recruitment. The organisations prefer candidates with strong interpersonal skills and ability to adapt to different situations. Emotional intelligence enables workers to collaborate in different groups and overcome various difficulties arising at work (Goleman and Cherniss, 2001). When recruiting people, managers should avoid biases based on generational stereotypes. Not all members of a certain generation are similar to others; consequently, during the recruitment process one should focus on the abilities of people rather than their age.

Organisations could train their workers to improve emotional intelligence. There are many ways of such improvement: for example, one could introduce special training courses focused on communication, empathy, and conflict resolution. Such trainings help people learn how to understand other positions and facilitate cooperation with colleagues. Mentoring is another way to make use of the knowledge possessed by older employees and new methods and creative approaches developed by younger people (Noe et al., 2023).

Emotional intelligence helps prevent conflicts between people of different generations.

Working in an environment with multiple needs and attitudes towards work and employment, misunderstanding often happens. Those who have high levels of emotional intelligence find it easier to resolve such situations through good communication, understanding and peaceful response.

However, it is vital to realize that generational differences are not the only reason for professional problems. Several other elements such as organisational culture, leadership styles, and individual personalities can have a great impact on results. Hence, even though there are numerous advantages to generational theory, it cannot be considered the only reason behind the behaviours of workers (Costanza et al., 2012).

Generational theory is also criticized. According to Garnar and McCaffrey (2013), generational differences tend to be exaggerated and generalized. For instance, not every Millennial wants constant feedback, and not every Generation X worker likes official correspondence. Thus, managers should be careful about using their generational classification when dealing with subordinates. Emotional intelligence solves the problem by emphasizing the importance of understanding individual differences instead of making presumptions about age (Costanza et al., 2012).

Finally, generational diversity can either be an advantage or a disadvantage in the work environment. The role of emotional intelligence lies in helping employees to deal with diversity by improving their ability to communicate, decreasing the possibility of conflicts, and building strong interpersonal connections. When workers understand different perspectives and appreciate them, they are more willing to work together with people who have different backgrounds.

3. Recommendation

Based on the current discourse about emotional intelligence and generational differences, there are several approaches that could be taken in order to increase organisational efficiency.

1. Companies have to invest in training their employees as well as managers in terms of emotional intelligence development. It means that they have to highlight some basic aspects, which include self-awareness, empathy, and communication. Such an emphasis could help people understand their feelings better and handle the feelings of other people appropriately, which is expected to improve cooperation between people.
2. Managers have to use an adaptive strategy because of the difference between generations. In particular, it means that different age groups of people may have various requirements. While young people tend to receive constant feedback, older ones prefer freedom of action. At the same time, managers should remain objective and treat all employees equally despite certain differences.
3. Organisations need to encourage transparency of communication and collaboration among employees from various generations. This goal could be achieved through different activities such as group projects and meetings. People could freely express their thoughts and experiences in order to avoid misunderstanding and show respect.
4. Mentoring and coaching should be encouraged among employees. The mentoring program will provide an opportunity for exchange of experience between young professionals and older people who can transfer accumulated knowledge and get new ideas from junior employees.
5. At the selection process needs to consider not only the professionals' skills of potential employees but also their emotional intelligence. Thus, hiring a person based on generational characteristics is unacceptable.

All these suggestions could lead to a better workplace atmosphere.

Conclusion

Emotional intelligence plays a critical role in improving productivity at work. It is evident that emotional intelligence influences the effectiveness of communications, leadership, and decision-making processes. Each of the main theories related to emotional intelligence provides important information on regulating emotions; however, every theory comes with its own advantages and disadvantages. Age is one of the most significant determinants of emotional intelligence, especially in the modern work environment where Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z differ significantly from each other. Emotional intelligence helps manage such processes through empathy, adaptability, and mutual understanding. However, one cannot view emotional intelligence as a single means of addressing the issue since other factors like organisational culture and individual personality traits also play a key role. Companies that develop emotional intelligence while considering generation diversity will succeed in forming strong teams and relationships.

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