

Applied Leadership and Management in the Workplace

Module Assignment Submission

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Introduction

Emotional intelligence and mindfulness are widely recognised as important concepts in both academic research and professional practice, particularly because of the influence they can have on behaviour, communication and performance in the workplace. Emotional intelligence is generally understood as the ability to identify, understand and manage emotions in oneself and others, while mindfulness is linked to present moment awareness and closer attention to thoughts, feelings and actions. Both concepts are therefore relevant to the ways in which people respond to pressure, build relationships and deal with challenges at work.

This assignment will critically evaluate theories of emotional intelligence and consider their relevance to workforce development and business performance. It will then use theories of emotional intelligence and mindfulness to review the effect of emotions on my own workplace performance. In doing so, the assignment will show the importance of emotional awareness and regulation in supporting both organisational success and individual professional development.

1. Critically evaluate theories of emotional intelligence and their relevance to workforce development and business performance

Emotional intelligence has become an important concept in discussions of workplace behaviour, employee development and organisational success. However, it remains contested because there is no single agreed definition. This matters because a theory is only useful if it explains a concept clearly and can be applied in a convincing way. Two of the most influential approaches are the ability model developed by Salovey and Mayer and the mixed model associated with Goleman. Although both suggest that emotions shape behaviour and performance, they differ in what emotional intelligence actually is and why it matters. As a result, both theories have strengths, but both also attract criticism.

Salovey and Mayer (1990) define emotional intelligence as the ability to monitor emotions in oneself and others, distinguish between them and use that information to guide thinking and action. Their later work developed this into a model based on perceiving emotion, using emotion, understanding emotion and managing emotion (Mayer et al, 2004). A major strength of this approach is that it gives emotional intelligence clearer boundaries. Rather than presenting it as a vague set of desirable qualities, it treats it as a form of mental ability. Ashkanasy and Daus (2005) support this narrower approach because it gives the concept greater conceptual clarity and makes it easier to distinguish personality and social style. This

is important because a theory becomes weaker when it tries to explain too much at once. If emotional intelligence includes too many traits, it becomes difficult to measure and difficult to separate from existing psychological concepts, which weakens its credibility in both academic and organisational settings.

One of the most useful aspects of Salovey and Mayer's model is its emphasis on self awareness. If individuals cannot recognise their own emotions, they are unlikely to regulate them effectively. This has clear relevance to workforce development because employees who are aware of stress, frustration or anxiety may be better able to manage their reactions before these emotions affect judgement, communication or behaviour. Workforce development can be understood as the process of improving the skills, knowledge and capabilities of workers so they can perform effectively and adapt to changing organisational demands. In that sense, emotional intelligence is relevant because development is not limited to technical competence. It also involves reflection, adaptability, communication and the ability to work effectively with others. Cherniss and Goleman (2001) argue that emotional intelligence has practical value in areas such as communication, collaboration and professional effectiveness. This helps explain why emotional intelligence is often linked to training and development. If employees are able to recognise emotional triggers and understand how emotions affect their actions, they may be better equipped to improve decision making, manage workplace relationships and respond more effectively to pressure and feedback.

Despite these strengths, the ability model also has limitations. Its clarity can also make it seem too narrow in organisational settings. While it explains how people process emotional information, it says less about wider workplace behaviours such as leadership, motivation and influence. This creates a problem because a theory may be academically strong while still having limited practical reach. Landy (2005) questioned the strong claims often made about emotional intelligence and argued that enthusiasm for the concept has at times moved ahead of the evidence. Locke (2005) also criticised the field for conceptual confusion, particularly when emotional intelligence is stretched to include too many positive attributes. These criticisms are important because they show that a theory is not automatically valuable to business simply because it sounds persuasive. It must also explain workplace outcomes in a clear and defensible way. Therefore, although Salovey and Mayer provide a more rigorous definition, their model may appear less useful to organisations seeking a framework that can be easily translated into leadership development, staff training or performance improvement.

In contrast, Goleman's model presents emotional intelligence in broader terms. He links it to self awareness, self regulation, motivation, empathy and social skill, and argues that these qualities are central to effectiveness at work (Goleman, 1995 & 1998). This model became especially influential because it connected emotional intelligence directly to leadership and workplace performance. Its appeal lies in its accessibility. Organisations are often more interested in whether emotional intelligence helps explain behaviour and effectiveness than in whether it meets a strict psychological definition. For this reason, Goleman's framework has been widely adopted in discussions of workforce development. This wider appeal helps explain why emotional intelligence became so prominent in management literature, as it offered employers a language for discussing interpersonal competence, leadership potential and professional maturity.

Self awareness again appears central within this model. Goleman (1998) presents it as the foundation of emotional competence because it allows individuals to recognise their emotional triggers, strengths and limitations. This has obvious workplace relevance because employees who understand their emotions may be more able to reflect on their behaviour, respond constructively to feedback and manage professional relationships more effectively. It may also support business performance by improving teamwork, leadership and communication. Boyatzis et al, (2000) similarly argue that emotional competencies can be grouped into areas linked to personal and social effectiveness, which helps explain why emotionally intelligent behaviour is often associated with management and leadership success. Singh (2006) also suggests that emotional intelligence matters in professional contexts because it can influence communication, adaptability and working relationships. These arguments help explain why broader models have been attractive to organisations. They appear to offer a more direct route from theory to practice by linking emotional intelligence to behaviours that employers can identify, encourage and assess.

The relevance of emotional intelligence to business performance also becomes clearer when performance is understood in broader terms than profit alone. Business performance can include service quality, client satisfaction, staff retention, teamwork, reputation and the consistency of decision making. Emotional intelligence may be relevant to these areas because poor emotional regulation can damage communication, increase conflict and reduce trust, while stronger self awareness and empathy may improve collaboration and professional relationships. In a care setting such as supported living, for example, the ability to stay calm under pressure, communicate clearly and respond professionally to staff and service users may directly affect service quality, teamwork and the consistency of care. This suggests that the relevance of emotional intelligence to business performance is plausible. However, plausibility is not the same as proof, which is why critical evaluation is needed. Emotional intelligence may contribute to better outcomes, but it cannot be treated as the sole reason for organisational success.

However, Goleman's model attracts stronger criticism than the ability model. The main reason is that it is so broad that it becomes difficult to separate emotional intelligence from personality, behaviour and leadership style. Mayer et al, (2004) argue that mixed models often combine too many attributes under one label, which weakens conceptual precision. This matters because a theory cannot be strong if its boundaries are unclear. Landy (2005) also argues that some claims made about emotional intelligence in organisations are overstated. This suggests that Goleman's model may be more useful as a management framework than as a precise theory. In other words, it may help organisations think about employee development, but that does not necessarily make it a strong scientific explanation of performance. This is a significant weakness because if emotional intelligence cannot be clearly defined, then claims about measuring it, teaching it or using it to predict success become more difficult to justify.

The wider debate around emotional intelligence also suggests that the field lacks complete agreement about what should count as emotional intelligence in the first place. Bar On (2006) presents emotional intelligence as a broader model of emotional and social functioning, which supports the argument that emotional intelligence has relevance beyond narrow mental ability. However, the existence of multiple competing models also weakens the field because it suggests that emotional intelligence may be interpreted in different and sometimes incompatible ways. This matters for workforce development because organisations often want to develop qualities they can clearly identify and assess. If there is no

agreement on what emotional intelligence actually includes, it becomes harder to design training, evaluate outcomes or claim that development programmes are improving emotional intelligence rather than broader behavioural competence.

When the two theories are compared, Salovey and Mayer appear stronger in terms of conceptual clarity, while Goleman appears stronger in terms of workplace application. Salovey and Mayer provide a more focused and academically defensible definition, which makes their theory easier to support critically. Goleman provides a broader and more accessible model, which makes his framework easier to apply in leadership and professional development. However, this wider application comes at the cost of precision. The broader Goleman's definition becomes, the harder it is to identify exactly what emotional intelligence includes and excludes. This is why critical evaluation matters. Without criticism, emotional intelligence risks becoming a fashionable term rather than a clearly defined concept.

The difference between these two theories is especially important in workplace settings because organisations often want models that are both measurable and practical. A theory such as Salovey and Mayer's may be stronger academically because it defines emotional intelligence more narrowly, but this also makes it less obviously connected to everyday management language. By contrast, Goleman's model is more attractive to employers because it links emotional intelligence to visible behaviours such as communication, leadership and teamwork. However, this creates a risk that organisations may use emotional intelligence too loosely, treating it as a catch all explanation for good performance without sufficient evidence or clear measurement. This suggests that neither model is fully satisfactory on its own. One offers stronger conceptual precision, while the other offers greater workplace appeal. The central issue is therefore not simply which model is better, but which model is more useful for a particular purpose. For academic explanation, narrower definitions may be stronger. For organisational development, broader models may appear more practical, even if they are theoretically weaker.

Overall, both theories are relevant to workforce development and business performance because they highlight the importance of self awareness, emotional regulation and interpersonal understanding. These qualities matter because workplace success does not depend on technical skill alone. Employees must also manage pressure, communicate effectively and work productively with others. However, the theories should not be accepted uncritically. Salovey and Mayer provide a stronger theoretical foundation, but their model may not explain the full complexity of organisational behaviour. Goleman provides greater practical relevance, but his theory is weakened by conceptual breadth. Emotional intelligence is therefore best understood as a useful but contested concept whose value lies in helping explain why emotional self awareness may support both employee development and workplace effectiveness.

2. Use theories of emotional intelligence and mindfulness to review the effect of emotions on your own workplace performance

When reviewing the effect of emotions on my own workplace performance, it becomes clear that my role in supported living depended on more than technical competence alone. As a support worker and later a senior support worker, my responsibilities included managing the rota, overseeing aspects of

payroll and administering or supervising medication. These duties required accuracy, accountability and calm decision making, but they also involved managing staff relationships, responding to disagreement and maintaining professionalism under pressure. This means that emotions had a direct impact on my workplace performance because stress, anxiety and self doubt could affect how confidently I communicated, how effectively I led others and how well I managed responsibility. Emotional intelligence is therefore especially relevant in this context because effective performance in care work depends not only on completing tasks, but also on recognising, regulating and responding appropriately to emotions in both myself and other people (Goleman, 1998).

Gibbs reflective cycle provides a useful starting point because it offers a structure for moving beyond description into analysis and action. Gibbs (1988) argues that reflection should include description, feelings, evaluation, analysis, conclusion and an action plan. This model is helpful because it allows workplace experience to be examined critically rather than simply recalled. In my own practice, one recurring issue was the stress I felt when staff disagreed with instructions or challenged my decisions. In a senior role, this was significant because I was expected to coordinate duties and maintain standards, yet I often felt anxious about saying the wrong thing or creating conflict. At the level of feeling, this produced stress and self doubt. At the level of evaluation, it negatively affected my confidence and sometimes caused me to overthink situations rather than responding decisively. This matters because in supported living, hesitation can affect leadership, communication and the smooth running of care tasks.

Covey's work is particularly useful in analysing this reaction because he links self awareness to intentional self management. Covey (2004) argues that self awareness allows individuals to step back from immediate reactions and examine their own habits, motives and behavioural patterns. This is relevant because I recognise that I often became anxious when instructions were questioned, especially if I was already under pressure from rota issues or medication responsibilities. Rather than viewing disagreement as a normal part of leadership, I sometimes interpreted it too personally. This affected my workplace performance because it made me overthink interactions and avoid confrontation when a more direct and confident response may have been needed. Covey is useful here because he shows that the issue is not only what others say or do, but how I interpret and respond to it. In this sense, self awareness matters because it helps identify that my emotional reaction was shaped not only by the disagreement itself, but also by my fear of getting it wrong and my uncertainty in a leadership role.

The Five Whys develops this reflection further by helping to identify the deeper cause of that emotional response. Rather than simply stating that staff disagreement made me stressed, repeated questioning reveals a deeper pattern. I felt stressed when staff challenged instructions because I worried they did not respect my authority. Why did that matter so much? Because I wanted to be seen as capable in a senior role. Why did I feel so anxious about that? Because I feared saying the wrong thing or being judged negatively. Why did that affect me so strongly? Because I associated disagreement with personal failure rather than with normal workplace communication. Why did I do that? Because I lacked confidence in my leadership and became overly focused on being accepted by others. Used in this way, the Five Whys suggests that the issue was not only staff disagreement, but also a deeper pattern of anxiety, overthinking and avoidance (Serrat, 2017). This matters for workplace performance because if I respond from insecurity rather than professional judgement, I am more likely to avoid necessary conversations, delay decisions and weaken my authority as a senior worker.

At the same time, the Five Whys has limitations and should not be used uncritically. Card (2017) argues that root cause tools can become too simplistic when they are applied mechanically. That criticism is important because my reactions were not caused by one factor alone. They were shaped by pressure, responsibility, leadership expectations and the emotional demands of working in a care environment. This means the Five Whys is useful as a reflective aid, but not as a complete explanation. Workplace emotions are often influenced by several factors at once, particularly in care roles where responsibility, safeguarding and staff relationships overlap.

A further issue that affected my workplace performance involved cultural differences between Nigerian workers, which sometimes led to misunderstandings in communication. These situations were emotionally difficult because I often felt anxious about saying the wrong thing or causing offence. As a result, I could become overly cautious and avoid direct conversations even when clarity was needed. From a reflective perspective, this affected my performance because overthinking reduced my confidence and made leadership more difficult. In a senior role, effective communication is essential for rota coordination, delegation and the safe management of medication. If communication is hesitant or unclear, this can affect teamwork and create confusion within the setting.

In emotional intelligence terms, this experience highlights the importance of self awareness, self regulation and social awareness (Goleman, 1998). Self awareness is important because I needed to recognise when anxiety was beginning to affect my behaviour. If I failed to notice this, I was more likely to become hesitant, avoid confrontation and lose confidence in my own decisions. Self regulation was equally important because awareness alone was not enough. I also needed to manage my response in a way that allowed me to remain calm, professional and clear, even when instructions were being challenged or when communication felt uncomfortable. Social awareness was relevant because my role required sensitivity to different communication styles, attitudes and expectations. However, this also needed to be balanced carefully. Social awareness can support empathy and respect, but if it turns into excessive caution or emotional discomfort, it may reduce effective leadership. These elements of emotional intelligence directly affected my workplace performance because they shaped how well I managed pressure, communicated with staff and maintained confidence in a senior role.

Hay's work is particularly useful when reflecting on how I interpreted these interactions. Hay (1993) suggests that people often respond not to the full reality of another person's behaviour, but to a restricted sample of it filtered through their own beliefs and assumptions. This is relevant because I may sometimes have interpreted challenge, disagreement or a difference in communication style as a sign that I was failing, even when that may not have been the case. This helps explain why I sometimes felt more anxious than the situation itself required. In this sense, emotional intelligence involves not only recognising emotions, but also questioning the assumptions attached to them. If I misread communication in this way, I may become defensive, hesitant or overly self critical, which can weaken leadership and reduce the quality of staff communication.

Salovey and Mayer's ability model is also useful in understanding my workplace experience because it emphasises perceiving, understanding and managing emotions (Mayer et al, 2004). In care work, these emotional abilities are important because tasks such as medication management, rota planning and staff coordination require calm judgement rather than reactive thinking. Their model helps explain that emotional intelligence is not only about appearing caring or empathetic. It also involves accurately identifying one's emotional state and preventing that state from interfering with decision making. I agree with this aspect of the model because my own experience shows that if stress or anxiety is not recognised early, it can affect concentration, confidence and communication. However, the model can also be criticised for being narrower than the reality of care work. It explains emotional processing well, but it says less about the messy interpersonal realities of leadership, authority and workplace culture.

Mindfulness strengthens this reflection because it offers a practical method of noticing emotions without reacting to them immediately. Kabat Zinn (2004) describes mindfulness as paying attention on purpose in the present moment and without judgement. Williams and Penman (2011) similarly present mindfulness as awareness of thoughts, feelings and bodily sensations as they arise. This is highly relevant to my work because I often became anxious quickly and then overthought what to say or do. In practice, this could reduce confidence and make me avoid difficult conversations. Mindfulness is useful because it introduces a pause between feeling and reacting. In my case, that pause could have helped me notice tension earlier, steady my thoughts and respond more clearly rather than emotionally.

Mindfulness is also relevant to workplace performance because it has been linked to attention,

resilience and emotional balance under pressure. Jha and Stanley (2010) also suggest that mindfulness training may have protective effects on working memory capacity, which is relevant because my role required concentration, organisation and accuracy. Siegel (2007) similarly argues that mindfulness training supports greater awareness and integration of mental processes, which is important because emotional control depends partly on noticing internal reactions before they shape outward behaviour. I agree that mindfulness would likely have been useful in my role because much of my difficulty came not from the existence of pressure itself, but from reacting too quickly to it. However, it is also important to be critical. Mindfulness should not be treated as a complete solution to workplace pressure. It may support awareness and self regulation, but it does not remove conflict, disagreement or the structural demands of care work.

Mindfulness is especially useful in addressing the tendency to operate on automatic pilot. Killingsworth and Gilbert (2010) found that mind wandering is common, which suggests that attention often shifts away from the present task. In my own role, this could happen when I became caught up in worrying about whether I had handled a situation correctly or whether I had upset someone. Mindfulness may have helped me notice this pattern earlier and bring my attention back to what needed to be done in the moment. This matters because self regulation is not only about controlling emotions after they appear, but also about recognising them early enough to prevent them from dominating behaviour and judgement.

There is also some research support for using mindfulness in this way. Farb et al, (2007) found that mindfulness practice was associated with a greater ability to attend to the present moment, while Holzel et al. (2011) linked mindfulness practice to areas associated with emotional regulation, learning and perspective taking. These findings are useful because they suggest that mindfulness has practical value beyond general wellbeing language. At the same time, it is important to remain critical. Mindfulness may support more reflective and controlled responses, but it does not remove staff disagreement, communication differences or leadership pressure. Its value is therefore best understood as supportive rather than complete.

Overall, the effect of emotions on my workplace performance was significant because stress, anxiety and overthinking could reduce confidence, make communication more hesitant and weaken leadership. Gibbs' reflective cycle was useful because it gave structure to understanding these experiences and helped move reflection beyond simple description. Covey's work strengthened this by highlighting the role of self awareness and personal responsibility, while the Five Whys exposed deeper patterns behind my reactions, particularly fear of criticism and lack of confidence in leadership. Hay's work was valuable in showing how assumptions can shape the way workplace behaviour is interpreted. Emotional intelligence theory helped explain why self awareness, self regulation and social awareness were central to my effectiveness as a support worker and senior support worker, while mindfulness offered a practical strategy for becoming less reactive and more present. Taken together, these approaches suggest that improving my workplace performance depends not only on technical ability, but also on developing stronger emotional boundaries, greater confidence and more consistent emotional regulation.

As part of my self reflection, I completed an emotional intelligence questionnaire which highlighted both strengths and areas for development. My scores were highest in self awareness at 41 out of 50 and empathy at 45 out of 50, which suggests that I am highly aware of my own emotions and sensitive to the feelings of other people. Lower scores were recorded for managing emotions at 33 out of 50, motivating myself at 32 out of 50 and social skills at 34 out of 50. This is useful because it reflects some of the difficulties identified in my workplace experience, particularly overthinking, anxiety about saying the wrong thing and hesitation in challenging situations. It is possible that ADHD may influence some of these patterns, especially in relation to hyperawareness, emotional regulation and motivation, although

the questionnaire alone cannot confirm this. Overall, the results suggest that while emotional awareness and empathy are personal strengths, more development is needed in self regulation, confidence and communication in order to improve my workplace performance.

Conclusion

In conclusion, emotional intelligence is a useful but contested concept in relation to workforce development and business performance. The comparison between Salovey and Mayer's ability model and Goleman's mixed model shows that emotional intelligence can be understood in different ways, with each theory offering both strengths and limitations. Salovey and Mayer provide greater clarity, while Goleman offers a broader model that is easier to apply to workplace behaviour and employee development.

The reflective review has shown that emotions can have a significant effect on my own workplace performance. In a supported living role, stress, anxiety and emotional pressure can affect confidence, communication and leadership.

Overall, this assignment has shown that workplace performance is influenced not only by technical ability but also by how emotions are recognised, understood and managed. Emotional intelligence and mindfulness are therefore valuable in supporting self awareness, self regulation and more effective professional practice. Going forward, my own development will depend on strengthening emotional boundaries, responding less reactively and managing pressure more intentionally.

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APPENDICES

Total and interpret your results

- Record** your 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 scores for the questionnaire statements in the grid below.
The grid organises the statements into emotional competency lists.

Self awareness		Managing emotions		Motivating oneself		Empathy		Social Skill	
1	5	2	4	3	2	4	5	5	3
6	5	7	1	8	3	9	3	10	2
11	4	12	3	13	3	14	5	15	5
16	4	17	2	18	5	19	5	20	3
21	4	22	1	23	3	24	5	25	3
26	3	27	3	28	2	29	5	30	5
31	3	32	4	33	4	34	3	35	5
36	5	37	5	38	4	39	5	40	1
41	4	42	5	43	3	44	4	45	3
46	4	47	5	48	3	49	5	50	4

- Calculate** a total for each of the 5 emotional competencies.

Total = (SA)	41	Total = (ME)	33	Total = (MO)	32	Total = (E)	45	Total = (SS)	34
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- Interpret** your totals for each area of competency using the following guide.

35-50	This area is a strength for you.
18-34	Giving attention to where you feel you are weakest will pay dividends.
10-17	Make this area a development priority .

- Record** your result for each of the emotional competencies: strength, needs attention or development priority.

	Strength	Needs attention	Development priority
Self awareness			
Managing emotions			
Motivating oneself			
Empathy			
Social Skill			

- Consider** your results and identify one or two actions you can take immediately to strengthen your **emotional intelligence**. Put them into your **Well-being@work plan**.