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Introduction

Emotional intelligence has become an important area of discussion within organisational behaviour, leadership and workplace psychology because of its potential influence on employee performance, communication and professional relationships. As modern organisations become increasingly dependent upon teamwork, customer interaction and leadership effectiveness, emotional and interpersonal skills are often viewed as equally important as technical knowledge and cognitive ability. Emotional intelligence theories developed by Salovey and Mayer and later expanded by Goleman have contributed significantly towards understanding how emotional awareness, self regulation and empathy may affect workplace behaviour and organisational success. Alongside emotional intelligence, mindfulness has also gained increasing attention within workplace wellbeing literature due to its association with stress management, emotional regulation and reflective self awareness.

This essay will critically evaluate major theories of emotional intelligence and examine their relevance to workforce development and business performance. The discussion will explore both the strengths and criticisms of emotional intelligence theories, particularly focusing on the models developed by Salovey and Mayer and Goleman. The essay will then apply theories of emotional intelligence and mindfulness to review the effect of emotions on my own workplace performance within the beauty industry as an eyelash business owner. Through critical reflection, the discussion will consider how emotions influence communication, customer relationships, stress management and professional behaviour within a customer focused working environment.

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

Emotional intelligence has become an increasingly influential concept within organisational leadership, workforce development and business performance literature over the past three decades. The concept emerged from earlier discussions surrounding social intelligence, initially proposed by Edward Thorndike, who argued that individuals possess the ability to understand and manage people effectively within social environments. Later developments by Howard Gardner expanded this perspective through the theory of multiple intelligences, which challenged traditional assumptions that intelligence could be measured solely through cognitive ability and intelligence quotient testing. Building upon these earlier foundations, Peter Salovey and John D. Mayer formally introduced emotional intelligence as a psychological construct

involving the ability to perceive, understand, regulate and utilise emotions effectively within both personal and professional contexts. Their work significantly influenced later emotional intelligence theories and contributed to growing academic and organisational interest in the role of emotions within workplace behaviour and leadership performance.

The increasing relevance of emotional intelligence within modern organisations reflects wider societal and organisational changes, including workforce diversity, globalisation, technological advancement and the growing emotional demands associated with leadership and customer focused roles. Contemporary organisations increasingly operate within highly competitive and emotionally demanding environments where employees are expected not only to possess technical competence but also strong interpersonal and emotional management skills. Consequently, emotional intelligence has become associated with important organisational outcomes including employee engagement, leadership effectiveness, conflict management, teamwork and organisational culture. Research by Wong and Law further supported the relationship between emotional intelligence and workplace effectiveness, suggesting that emotionally intelligent leaders are often more capable of influencing employee performance and workplace attitudes through stronger communication and relationship management. Similarly, George argued that emotional intelligence contributes significantly towards leadership effectiveness because emotionally aware leaders are often better equipped to manage employee motivation, workplace morale and organisational change.

According to Goleman, organisations increasingly recognise that technical expertise alone is insufficient for sustaining long term organisational success, particularly within leadership and management positions where interpersonal interaction and emotional regulation are essential. Goleman argued that emotionally intelligent individuals are more capable of managing workplace relationships, responding effectively to pressure and motivating both themselves and others during periods of organisational change. This perspective contributed significantly to the growing popularity of emotional intelligence within management and leadership development programmes throughout the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. As organisations became more dependent upon teamwork, collaboration and customer engagement, emotional intelligence was increasingly viewed as a critical factor influencing workforce development and overall business performance.

Despite its widespread popularity, emotional intelligence remains a contested and debated concept within academic literature. One major criticism concerns the lack of conceptual consistency across emotional intelligence theories, with different theorists presenting conflicting definitions and measurement approaches. For example, Salovey and Mayer conceptualised emotional intelligence as a cognitive ability, whereas Goleman expanded the construct to include behavioural competencies such as leadership, communication and

motivation. Similarly, Bar On proposed a trait based model focusing upon emotional wellbeing, adaptability and stress management. The existence of multiple competing models has led some scholars to question whether emotional intelligence represents a distinct psychological construct or merely repackages existing personality traits and interpersonal skills within a more commercially attractive framework. Locke strongly criticised emotional intelligence theory, arguing that many models lack scientific precision and fail to clearly distinguish emotional intelligence from personality dimensions already established within psychology. Similarly, Landy argued that emotional intelligence frameworks often suffer from inconsistent measurement methods and conceptual ambiguity, thereby weakening their reliability as a psychological concept. These criticisms suggest that while emotional intelligence may possess practical organisational value, its theoretical foundations remain fragmented and academically disputed.

However, some researchers strongly defend emotional intelligence against these criticisms. Ashkanasy and Daus argued that emotional intelligence remains highly relevant within organisational behaviour because workplace interactions are heavily influenced by emotions, interpersonal communication and social relationships. Similarly, Cherniss suggested that emotional intelligence contributes positively towards leadership development, teamwork and organisational learning despite ongoing debates surrounding its measurement and conceptual boundaries.

Nevertheless, supporters of emotional intelligence argue that the concept remains highly relevant within modern organisational environments because workplace performance increasingly depends upon emotional and interpersonal competence rather than purely technical ability. Within workforce development, emotional intelligence may contribute positively towards leadership capability, employee communication, conflict management and collaborative working relationships. Employees with higher levels of emotional awareness and self regulation may be better equipped to manage workplace stress, adapt to organisational change and maintain productive professional relationships. Supporting this perspective, Lopes et al. found that emotional intelligence was positively associated with workplace attitudes, interpersonal effectiveness and job performance. Likewise, Miao et al. identified a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and positive work attitudes including organisational commitment and job satisfaction.

Furthermore, emotionally intelligent leaders may contribute towards more inclusive and psychologically supportive organisational cultures which encourage employee engagement and long term commitment. From a business performance perspective, emotional intelligence has also been associated with improved customer satisfaction, enhanced teamwork, stronger leadership effectiveness and reduced workplace conflict. However, the extent to which emotional intelligence alone determines organisational success remains debatable because

wider organisational structures, leadership strategies and external economic conditions also significantly influence performance outcomes. Some researchers argue that organisations may overestimate the effectiveness of emotional intelligence training programmes because workplace behaviour is often shaped more significantly by organisational culture, management systems and external pressures than by individual emotional competencies alone.

However, emotional intelligence may still provide important benefits within workplace environments even if it cannot completely determine organisational success on its own. In many industries, employees are required to manage emotions constantly while communicating professionally with colleagues, customers and managers. This is particularly important within customer focused roles where employee behaviour and communication may directly influence customer satisfaction and business reputation. Employees who struggle to regulate emotions may find it more difficult to manage workplace pressure, conflict and stressful situations effectively. In contrast, individuals with stronger emotional awareness and interpersonal skills may be better equipped to maintain positive workplace relationships and respond calmly during challenging situations. This suggests that emotional intelligence may contribute towards stronger teamwork, improved communication and more effective leadership within organisations. However, emotional intelligence alone cannot overcome poor management, excessive workload or negative organisational culture, meaning its effectiveness often depends upon wider workplace conditions as well as individual capability.

One of the earliest and most academically influential approaches to emotional intelligence was developed by Salovey and Mayer, whose ability model conceptualised emotional intelligence as a genuine form of intelligence involving the processing and management of emotional information. Unlike broader competency based approaches, the ability model positioned emotional intelligence within the framework of cognitive psychology and argued that emotional reasoning could be understood as a measurable mental capability. Salovey and Mayer proposed that emotionally intelligent individuals possess the ability to perceive emotions accurately, use emotions to facilitate thinking, understand emotional meanings and regulate emotions effectively in both themselves and others. This four branch structure established the foundation for much of the subsequent academic research surrounding emotional intelligence and remains one of the most theoretically rigorous approaches within the field.

A significant strength of the ability model lies in its attempt to distinguish emotional intelligence from personality traits by framing emotional management as a measurable cognitive process rather than simply a behavioural tendency. Consequently, the model has been widely applied within leadership development, conflict management and communication training programmes designed to improve workforce capability and organisational effectiveness. Furthermore, Schutte et al. contributed towards the growing credibility of emotional intelligence research

through the development of emotional intelligence measurement tools intended to assess emotional perception, emotional regulation and interpersonal awareness. Although measurement concerns remain, these assessment tools increased organisational interest in applying emotional intelligence within recruitment, leadership training and workforce development programmes.

However, despite its theoretical rigour, the ability model has also faced substantial criticism. Critics argue that emotional behaviour is highly subjective and context dependent, making it difficult to objectively measure emotional intelligence across different individuals and cultural environments. Landy suggests that emotional intelligence assessments frequently struggle to separate emotional reasoning from broader personality characteristics and social behaviours, thereby weakening the construct's scientific reliability. Furthermore, some scholars argue that the model oversimplifies emotional processes by assuming that emotional responses can be categorised into universally appropriate or inappropriate reactions. This limitation is particularly relevant within multicultural workplaces where emotional expression and interpretation may vary considerably across social and cultural contexts. Therefore, while the ability model provides valuable theoretical insight into emotional processing and interpersonal effectiveness, its practical application within organisational settings may remain limited by measurement difficulties and inconsistent research findings.

Another limitation of the ability model is that emotional responses may differ significantly depending upon individual personality, workplace environment and cultural background. What may be considered emotionally appropriate behaviour within one organisation or culture may be interpreted differently within another. This creates difficulties when attempting to apply emotional intelligence theories universally across different workplaces. Additionally, some critics argue that emotional intelligence training programmes may produce only short term behavioural improvements unless organisations also create supportive workplace cultures that encourage communication, wellbeing and employee development. Therefore, while the ability model remains highly influential within emotional intelligence research, its practical effectiveness within organisations may vary considerably depending upon workplace context and organisational support.

While Salovey and Mayer conceptualised emotional intelligence as a cognitive ability, Goleman expanded the concept into a broader competency based framework strongly linked to workplace performance and leadership effectiveness. Goleman argued that emotional intelligence consists of five key components including self awareness, self regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills. Unlike the ability model, which focuses primarily upon emotional processing, Goleman's framework emphasises behavioural competencies that contribute towards successful interpersonal interaction and organisational leadership.

Consequently, Goleman's model became highly influential within management training, leadership development and organisational consultancy because it translated emotional intelligence into practical workplace behaviours.

A major strength of Goleman's model is its strong relevance to workforce development and business performance. The framework suggests that emotionally intelligent leaders are more capable of motivating employees, managing workplace conflict and creating productive organisational cultures. Within increasingly diverse and emotionally demanding workplaces, competencies such as empathy and self regulation may contribute positively towards employee engagement, communication and collaboration. Furthermore, Goleman argued that emotional intelligence may predict workplace success more effectively than traditional intelligence measures because leadership roles increasingly depend upon interpersonal effectiveness rather than purely technical expertise. This argument has contributed significantly to the adoption of emotional intelligence training programmes across leadership and human resource development practices. Additionally, Joseph and Newman suggested that emotional intelligence may influence workplace performance indirectly through stronger communication, improved stress management and enhanced interpersonal relationships. Their meta analysis indicated that emotional intelligence may contribute more effectively within roles requiring high levels of emotional labour and social interaction.

However, despite its organisational popularity, Goleman's model has faced substantial academic criticism. Unlike Salovey and Mayer's ability based approach, Goleman's framework combines emotional abilities with personality traits, motivational characteristics and social behaviours, thereby weakening conceptual clarity. Critics such as Locke argue that the model lacks scientific precision because many of its components overlap significantly with established personality dimensions including conscientiousness, extroversion and emotional stability. Similarly, some researchers suggest that Goleman's model became commercially successful partly because of its accessibility and managerial appeal rather than strong research evidence. Consequently, critics argue that the framework may oversimplify complex psychological processes by presenting emotional intelligence as a universal solution to organisational problems.

Nevertheless, despite these criticisms, Goleman's model remains highly influential within organisational practice because it provides managers with a practical framework for understanding leadership behaviour and interpersonal effectiveness. From a workforce development perspective, the model supports coaching, mentoring, communication training and leadership development initiatives aimed at improving employee performance and organisational relationships. Similarly, emotionally intelligent leadership has been associated with stronger organisational culture, reduced workplace conflict and improved customer satisfaction. However, the effectiveness of emotional intelligence within business environments

may ultimately depend upon wider organisational structures, leadership strategies and workplace culture rather than emotional competencies alone.

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

Working within the beauty industry as an eyelash business owner has highlighted the significant influence emotions can have upon workplace performance, customer relationships and professional decision making. Unlike many organisational environments, the beauty sector requires continuous interpersonal interaction where emotional awareness, communication and relationship management directly influence customer satisfaction and business reputation. Managing client expectations, responding professionally to complaints and maintaining a calm and welcoming atmosphere during busy periods requires high levels of emotional regulation and self awareness. From an emotional intelligence perspective, these workplace demands demonstrate the importance of empathy, self regulation and interpersonal communication within customer focused industries. Furthermore, the pressures associated with self employment, including financial responsibility, client retention and workload management, may intensify emotional stress and affect workplace performance if emotions are not managed effectively. Consequently, theories of emotional intelligence and mindfulness provide valuable frameworks for critically evaluating how emotions have influenced my own workplace behaviour, communication and professional effectiveness within the beauty industry.

Mindfulness has become increasingly influential within workplace psychology and organisational wellbeing literature because of its association with emotional regulation, stress reduction and reflective self awareness. According to Kabat Zinn, mindfulness refers to maintaining conscious awareness of the present moment without judgement. This approach formed the foundation of Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction, which was originally developed to support stress management and psychological wellbeing. Within workplace environments, mindfulness has been associated with improved concentration, reduced emotional reactivity and greater resilience during stressful situations. Brown and Ryan argued that mindfulness may improve psychological wellbeing by encouraging individuals to remain focused upon present experiences rather than becoming overwhelmed by stress or negative thinking. These benefits are particularly relevant within customer focused industries such as the beauty sector, where emotional control and interpersonal communication directly influence client relationships and professional reputation. As an eyelash business owner, maintaining calmness, patience and

attentiveness during client interactions is essential because emotional reactions may significantly affect customer satisfaction and repeat business.

A major strength of mindfulness theory is its emphasis upon self awareness and emotional regulation, which closely aligns with emotional intelligence frameworks. Salovey and Mayer's ability model suggests that emotionally intelligent individuals should be capable of accurately perceiving, understanding and managing emotions within both personal and social situations. Similarly, mindfulness encourages individuals to become more aware of emotional responses before reacting impulsively. Within my own workplace experience, mindfulness techniques such as controlled breathing and reflective pause strategies have occasionally helped reduce emotional stress during periods of high client demand and scheduling pressure. For example, when managing multiple appointments within limited timeframes, emotional frustration and anxiety sometimes affected my communication with clients. During particularly busy periods, I found myself becoming impatient when clients arrived late or requested last minute changes to appointments. This occasionally affected my tone of voice and made communication less professional than it should have been. Reflecting on these situations made me realise how easily emotional stress can influence workplace behaviour and customer relationships if emotions are not managed carefully. Therefore, mindfulness may help improve emotional intelligence by increasing awareness of emotional reactions before they affect workplace behaviour. This relationship between mindfulness and emotional regulation was also supported by Hülshager et al., who found that mindfulness practices may reduce emotional exhaustion and improve workplace wellbeing.

In addition, emotional intelligence has also influenced the way I manage professional boundaries and customer expectations within my business. Working closely with clients for extended periods means that conversations often become personal, requiring careful emotional awareness and communication skills. At times, clients may arrive feeling stressed, upset or frustrated, and this can influence the overall atmosphere of appointments. In these situations, remaining calm and approachable is important because negative emotional reactions may affect both the client experience and the professional relationship. I have learned that demonstrating empathy and active listening can help clients feel more comfortable and respected, which may contribute positively towards customer satisfaction and loyalty. However, constantly managing the emotions of others can also become emotionally demanding, particularly during busy periods where maintaining professionalism requires continuous emotional control. This reflects the concept of emotional labour, where employees are expected to regulate emotions in order to meet workplace expectations and maintain positive customer interactions.

Furthermore, emotional intelligence has influenced the way I respond to criticism and business challenges. Earlier in my career, I often took negative feedback personally and would continue

thinking about difficult client interactions long after appointments had finished. This sometimes reduced my confidence and increased stress during future appointments. Over time, reflective practice and emotional awareness have helped me respond more professionally and objectively to criticism. Rather than reacting emotionally, I now try to evaluate feedback more constructively and identify ways to improve customer service and communication. This demonstrates how emotional intelligence may support professional growth and resilience within self employment. Nevertheless, emotional management remains challenging because financial pressure, workload demands and customer expectations can still create emotional strain regardless of emotional awareness strategies.

However, despite its growing popularity within organisational settings, mindfulness has also received substantial criticism. Some scholars argue that workplace mindfulness programmes may oversimplify complex organisational problems by focusing excessively upon individual emotional management rather than structural workplace pressures. Critics suggest that employers may utilise mindfulness initiatives to encourage employees to tolerate stressful working conditions instead of addressing underlying causes such as excessive workload, financial pressure and emotional labour. This criticism is particularly relevant within self employment and service industries where emotional exhaustion may result from long working hours, customer expectations and financial uncertainty rather than simply poor emotional regulation. In my own business, stress is often connected to financial concerns, maintaining consistent bookings and balancing workload demands rather than emotional awareness alone. Therefore, while mindfulness may improve emotional awareness and stress management, it may not fully resolve the wider organisational and economic pressures that contribute towards workplace anxiety and emotional strain.

Another influential mindfulness approach is Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy, developed by Williams et al. Unlike Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction, which focuses primarily upon stress reduction, Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy combines mindfulness practices with cognitive behavioural principles in order to improve emotional awareness and reduce negative thinking patterns. This theory is particularly useful when analysing workplace emotions because it suggests that emotional responses are influenced not only by external situations but also by individual patterns of thinking and interpretation. Within my own workplace experience, emotional stress has occasionally been intensified by overthinking customer feedback or worrying excessively about client satisfaction and business reputation. For example, after receiving criticism or dealing with an unhappy client, I would sometimes continue thinking about the situation long after the appointment had ended. This occasionally reduced my confidence during future appointments and increased anxiety during client interactions. Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy suggests that mindfulness can help individuals recognise these negative thought patterns without becoming emotionally overwhelmed by them. This

may be particularly valuable within self employment because business owners often experience ongoing emotional pressure linked to financial responsibility, customer retention and workload demands. As a result, mindfulness may contribute positively towards emotional resilience and professional confidence within emotionally demanding workplace environments.

Nevertheless, although both mindfulness and emotional intelligence theories provide valuable insight into workplace behaviour, their effectiveness may vary between individuals and workplace environments. This demonstrates that emotional awareness alone is not enough unless individuals actively manage their behaviour during stressful situations. Furthermore, emotional management within customer focused businesses may remain difficult because client expectations, financial pressures and workload intensity continue to influence emotional wellbeing regardless of mindfulness practice. Overall, emotional intelligence and mindfulness theories have helped me better understand how emotions affect my communication, stress levels and workplace performance within the beauty industry. While these theories provide useful strategies for improving emotional awareness and customer interaction, managing emotions consistently under pressure remains an ongoing challenge that requires continuous reflection and personal development. Overall, these experiences have demonstrated that emotional intelligence and mindfulness play an important role in maintaining professional communication, managing stress and improving workplace performance within the beauty industry.

Conclusion

In conclusion, emotional intelligence and mindfulness theories provide valuable insight into how emotions influence workplace behaviour, leadership and organisational performance. The theories developed by Salovey and Mayer and Goleman demonstrate that emotional awareness, self regulation and interpersonal skills can contribute positively towards workforce development, communication and business effectiveness. However, the essay has also shown that emotional intelligence remains a debated concept due to concerns surrounding measurement, conceptual clarity and the influence of wider organisational factors.

Through reflection on my own experience as an eyelash business owner, it is clear that emotions can significantly affect communication, customer relationships and workplace performance. Mindfulness approaches such as Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction and Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy have highlighted the importance of self awareness and emotional regulation when managing stress and maintaining professionalism within customer focused environments. Although emotional intelligence and mindfulness cannot completely

remove workplace pressures, they provide useful strategies for improving emotional resilience, decision making and professional relationships. Overall, both concepts remain highly relevant within modern workplaces where interpersonal interaction and emotional demands continue to shape organisational success and individual performance.

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