EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE: IS THERE AN IMPACT ON WORKPLACE JUDGMENT?

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Emotional Intelligence: Is there an Impact on Workplace Judgment?

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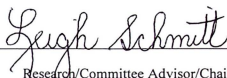Master of Arts in Industrial/Organizational Psychology

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To the College of Graduate Studies:

We are submitting a thesis written by Logan B. Steen entitled "Emotional Intelligence: Is there an Impact on Workplace Judgment?" We have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content. We recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Industrial/Organizational Psychology.
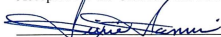
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ABSTRACT

LOGAN B. STEEN. Emotional Intelligence: Is there an Impact on Workplace Judgment? (Under the direction of DR. LEIGH SCHMITT).

Emotional intelligence (EI) has been widely adopted by both the general public and business community since the construct was reintroduced by a psychologist named Daniel Goleman in 1995. Because of the soaring popularity that has recently evolved, emotional intelligence continues to receive an abundance of criticism by psychologists and organizational practitioners alike. Despite its skeptics, the construct remains to be implemented by organizations for selection and training purposes, and has made a substantial impact on the workplace. One area of common ground between most critics and supporters of emotional intelligence is that more research needs to be conducted to support the validity of the construct, especially on the relationship with job performance. A situational judgment test (SJT) on workplace judgment was selected as a measure of job performance, and critical incidents within the assessment involved knowledge-based and temperament-based behavioral challenges. Participants consisted of 149 workplace professionals and students, and high levels of emotional intelligence demonstrated no significant linear correlations between job performance, income, work experience, education level, GPA, age, and gender. However, high levels of workplace judgment demonstrated positive linear relationships between income, work experience, and education level.

Keywords: emotional intelligence, situational judgment tests, job performance, practical intelligence

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CHAPTER I

Emotional Intelligence

Since 1990, research has gradually accelerated to better understand how emotional awareness impacts everyday life. Even outside of scientific publications, there has been a commercial and/or mainstream interest in the implications of self-awareness through emotions. Salovey and Mayer (1990) introduced the framework for a new construct that is referred to as *emotional intelligence* (EI). Similar ideas had been previously presented such as *social intelligence* by E.L. Thorndike (1920) which served as a platform in the development of emotional intelligence. After the initial introduction, there have been three widely viewed approaches developed to define emotional intelligence measurements which include Salovey and Mayer (1990), Goleman (1995), and Bar-On (2000). All three approaches to the construct have similarities; however, each remains uniquely different by definition.

In Salovey and Mayer's (1990) journal entitled, "Emotional Intelligence," they defined the term as, "the subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions." In a later definition, Salovey and Mayer (1997) stated that emotional intelligence also includes the "ability to perceive, appraise, and express emotion; to access and/or generate feelings when they facilitate thought; to understand emotion and emotional knowledge; and regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth." By this definition there are four primary distinctions that exist within emotional intelligence that are presented in the Mayor

Salovey Four Branch Model of Emotional Intelligence (Fig 1) (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). As individuals identify with this model, it has been presented through previous studies that emotional intelligence should improve with one's experiences, life span, and through training (Mayor, Salovey, & Caruso, 2004).
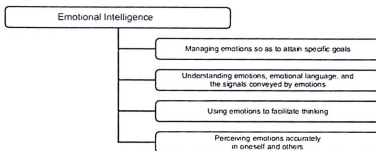

Figure 1. The four branches of emotional intelligence (Mayer & Salovey, 1997).

It was not until 1995 that the concept really picked up traction when Daniel Goleman's book "Emotional Intelligence: Why it can Matter more than IQ" was published and became a *New York Times* best seller for a year and a half with more than 5 million copies printed world-wide. Goleman was a science journalist for the New York Times where his reporting efforts resided on the brain and behavioral sciences (Goleman, 2012). Goleman defines emotional intelligence as "managing feelings so that they are expressed appropriately and effectively, enabling people to work together smoothly toward their common goals." According to Goleman, there are four major skills that are associated with factor structure of emotional intelligence: (1) Self-Awareness, (2) Self-Management, (3) Social Awareness, and (4) Relationship Management (Goleman, 1995). In addition, Goleman claims that emotional intelligence is twice as important as IQ (Goleman, 1998). Through his work, Goleman was able to broadly expose his concept of emotional intelligence to the public and recreated traction to Salovey and Mayer's (1990)

previous work. This accomplishment opened many doors to apply emotional intelligence through both academic and professional fields, but there still remains much disagreement to how it should be interpreted and applied.

After Goleman's first book on emotional intelligence was published (1995), Reuven Bar-On created the multi-dimensional assessment which is referred to as the Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i) and consists of 133 self-report items (Bar-on, 1997). According to Bar-On, emotional intelligence is multi-factorial and consists of the determinants of effective functioning. The Bar-On emotional intelligence model is based on Intrapersonal, Interpersonal, Stress Management, Adaptability, and General Mood. Bar-On defines emotional intelligence as "an array of non-cognitive capabilities, competencies, and skills that influence one's ability to succeed in coping with environmental demands and pressures."

CHAPTER II

Criticisms of Emotional Intelligence

Although emotional intelligence generates a lot of buzz in the commercial and scientific realm, it has not fallen short of finding its biggest critics. Researchers constantly argue over the relevance, definition, and measurability that is associated with this construct. Because of these criticisms, emotional intelligence has become a rather controversial subject in the field of psychology. A large contributor to the divisive views evolve from the exaggerated claims (arguably) that emotional intelligence is the key to areas such as leadership, job performance, and other major areas organizational studies (Spector, 2005). This is where critics such as Landy (2005) deliver a strong rebuttal over such claims. He presents numerous arguments against emotional intelligence, because "entrepreneurs have taken a product to market before it was ready." Landy's argument is based on the credibility of science; he states that there is simply not enough psychometric evidence and validity in emotional intelligence research. Most of the skepticism is aimed towards Goleman (1995) due to his reluctance to share his findings with the scientific community, since his research contributions are stored in a proprietary database by his colleagues, Hay & Associates. Goleman is visualized as the head of the commercial side of emotional intelligence which liberally shares his findings to the mainstream public without supportive scientific evidence. This gives a lot of exposure to emotional intelligence, but has only created avenues for this construct to be misapplied. There is increasing enthusiasm towards new instruments and approaches in the business community, which to Landy, is highly commendable. However, there must be shared scientific measurements to reinforce the positive attributes that emotional intelligence

brings to individuals and organizations. The academic side is pioneered by Salovey & Mayor (1990) which errs on the conservative approach of not implementing research claims too quickly. Landy, however, remains diplomatic concerning the need to explore the relevance of emotional intelligence in future research. His recommendations for further emotional intelligence exploration include additional data with carefully selected dependent variables, so that more consistent research can eventually be evaluated for validity.

Locke (2005) argues that emotional intelligence is an invalid concept because it is not intelligence, and basically defined too many ways. He is anything but supportive of the emotional intelligence construct because he rejects the view that individuals can reason with their emotions. Locke's argument against Salovey and Mayor's (1990) definition is that (1) a certain kind of intelligence is not needed to have the ability to monitor one's emotion, (2) a competency is developed over time to discriminate against and recognize emotion, and (3) intelligence is not bound to one's implementation of knowledge in daily activities.

Conte (2005) presents arguments to the ability for emotional intelligence to be measured. His primary concern surrounds the internal consistency reliabilities and psychometric properties of the emotional intelligence assessments. This includes the Emotional Competence Inventory (Boyatiz, Goleman, & Rhee, 2000; Goleman, 1995; Sala, 2002), Emotional Quotient Inventory (Bar-On, 2000), and the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test V.2 (Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 2000). After analyzing the common emotional intelligence assessments and definitions, Conte claims

each one adheres to a different structure which makes the argument difficult and/or weak for determining any significance.

CHAPTER III

Emotional Intelligence and Job Performance

With the conclusions published by Goleman (1995) that emotional intelligence is a stronger predictor of job performance than IQ, the scientific community has been pressed to investigate that these findings are supported. Regardless, organizations have been using emotional intelligence methods for functions such as selection and training (Fineman, 2004) with the intent to improve performance, and the programs implemented have produced limited findings on the effectiveness (Matthews, Zeidner, & Roberts, 2002). Although emotional intelligence and job performance studies have become increasingly popular, there are still mixed results on how powerful the significant relationship is between the two which has sparked criticism (Landy, 2005; Locke, 2005; Conte, 2005). Recent meta-analysis studies are beginning to reveal positive correlation between emotional intelligence and job performance (O'Boyle et al, 2011; Zhang & Wang, 2011); however, there is still a call for more research to strengthen the relationship with analysis on various professions, gender, and race (Joseph & Newman, 2010).

CHAPTER IV

Situational Judgment Tests

Situational Judgment Tests measure a respondent's ability to apply their competencies when analyzing hypothetical work-based situations which is usually administered through a paper-and-pencil format. They are similar to selection methods such as assessment centers and interviews, where various constructs can be assessed and participants have the ability to select different actions to take within an assortment of scenarios (McDaniel et al, 2001). Situational judgment tests provide insight to the way test takers would conduct themselves when faced with the event while on the job. Furthermore, the example scenarios assist to predict and capture the judgments that will or will not meet job performance requirements. The use of subject matter experts is a key component of test development since their expertise is relied heavily upon to offer clear depictions of on-the-job situations. Through job analysis, a selected group of subject matter experts assist in the development of critical incidents which are generated from competencies related to the job. For example, a test taker might be given a scenario around customer service and how they would handle a situation with a disgruntled customer (McDaniel & Nguyen, 2001). There are variations in the methods that situational judgment tests are administered which are referred to as "low fidelity" and "high fidelity" assessments. Low fidelity is based on the paper-and-pencil format and high fidelity is a video based format. In a study comparing the two formats, Motowidlo, Dunnette, and Carter (1990) concluded that low fidelity simulations have demonstrated to be a good predictor to effectively measure job performance without the need to implement high fidelity alternatives. This finding has inspired additional research

considering the cost and time savings associated with low-fidelity assessments. In addition, situational judgment tests have demonstrated the ability to be an effective measurement of job performance. In a meta-analysis conducted by McDaniel et al (2001), the results produced sound levels criterion related validity ($p = 0.34$).

CHAPTER V

Method

Hypotheses

Regardless of the perspective on emotional intelligence, the purpose of the study is to measure participants' emotional intelligence and their ability to make effective workplace judgments to contribute additional findings to existing research on the construct. In preparation for this research, there was not a published study discovered that includes a measurement of emotional intelligence with the use of a situational judgment test to measure job performance (Business Source Premier, PsycARTICLES, & PsycINFO). Although emotional intelligence has multiple definitions, questionable psychometric testing properties, and research findings still remain rather weak, the following hypotheses have been generated based on the significant progress of recent literature findings.

Hypothesis 1: *Individuals with higher emotional intelligence scores will make more effective workplace judgments as a measure of job performance.*

Hypothesis 2: *Individuals with more workplace and life experiences (age) will demonstrate higher emotional intelligence scores.*

Hypothesis 3: *Individuals with higher education level, GPA, and income will demonstrate higher emotional intelligence scores as a measure of success.*

Hypothesis 4: *There will not be a significant difference between gender and emotional intelligence scores.*

Measures

The *Schutte Self Report Emotional Intelligence Test* (SSEIT) was administered to measure emotional intelligence scores among participants (Schutte, 1998). It is a 33 item self- reported measure based on Salovey and Mayer's (1990) theoretical model of emotional intelligence. The test was constructed on three aspects of emotional intelligence which are (1) appraisal and expression of emotion, (2) regulation of emotion, and (3) utilization of emotion. The survey items are answered on a 5 point Likert scale (1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= neither agree nor disagree, 4= agree, 5= strongly agree) with the option to choose no answer.

Sample item:

I find it hard to understand the non-verbal messages in other people.

To measure job performance, a situational judgment test on workplace judgment was administered. Created by Smith and McDaniel (1998), the *Work Judgment Profile* survey includes 31 items that measure how participants handle various dilemmas on-the-job based on "practical intelligence." The participants were provided a list of possible actions for each item, and instructed to answer each item twice by the numeric entry of a "1" for the best action and a "5" for the worst action to take. Smith and McDaniel's survey is unique, in that situational judgment tests historically measure a specific job or class of jobs and their critical incidents apply broadly to most jobs. The rationale behind the construction of this test is that there are temperament-based and knowledge-based behavioral tendencies that exist within most professions; therefore, these tendencies are predictors of job performance. Temperament-based behavioral tendencies are presumed

to be generated through aspects of the Big Five personality traits such as agreeableness or conscientiousness. Knowledge-based behavioral tendencies come into play over one's lifetime of workplace experiences and leveraging skills or competencies to navigate through certain conflicting situations. There are four categories of workplace situations that comprise the situational judgment test; 1) problems with the work itself, 2) problems with supervisors, 3) problems with co-workers, and 4) problems with those one is responsible to supervise.

This particular situational judgment test was specifically selected because of its general ability to measure a broad sample of professionals with diverse backgrounds, and allows for another type of job performance indicator outside of 360 feedback, goal plans, specific tasks, or supervisor performance review ratings. In this research scenario, all participants approached the assessment on an even playing field regardless of their background, which excluded any potential issues with rater bias or lack of skills or competencies to perform a specific job. By at least holding a job or multiple jobs within their lifetime, the assumption is that participants can either relate to or have been exposed to most of these workplace situations.

Sample item:

You want to get off work next Friday so you can get an early start on a vacation.

    A. *Ask your boss for the day off*
    B. *Call in sick*
    C. *Don't show up*
    D. *Call in Friday morning and say you can't come to work because of a death in the family*
    E. *Tell your boss on Thursday afternoon that you will not be in on Friday.*

Data Collection

Data was collected from 149 participants that consisted of workplace professionals and university students. There were only two requirements to complete the survey in which participants must have held a job (past or present) and be over 18 years old. Workplace professionals were solicited to participate in research through professional networks such as LinkedIn. This population consisted of wide range of occupations, job experiences, tenure, and geographical locations which created a diverse group within the sample. Students were solicited to participate through undergraduate and graduate psychology classes at Austin Peay State University. All participants were provided a link to anonymously visit an online survey that consisted of 64 items followed by a series of biographical data questions that included income, age, gender, education, experience, and GPA. The estimated time to complete the survey was 20-25minutes.

Sample

The sample consisted of diverse group of participants ($N = 149$). For gender, the distribution was 45% male and 55% female. The age range was from 18 to 71 with the majority 30 years or older (73%) with the highest population between 30 and 35 (39%). Work experience ranged from 1 to 46 years with the majority having 10 or less (51%). Education levels were between high school diploma/GED to graduate level, with a majority holding a bachelor degree (51%). GPA ranged from 2.35 to 4.0 with a majority having a 3.0 or higher (84%). There were five income brackets that ranged from less than $25,000 to over 100,000, with the highest frequency being over $100,000 (23%) and the majority earning $50,000 or higher (63%).

CHAPTER VI

Results

The scoring of the situational judgment test was empirical, where the majority of the participants determined within each survey item the best and worst answers out of the five response choices. Based on the sample size of this study ($N = 149$), this scoring method is recommended by Smith and McDaniel (1998) versus the typical keying method that involves a panel of subject matter experts providing opinions. This is an empirical scoring key derived from a previous sample that Smith and McDaniel used within the same study. Based on the participant responses, five dichotomous variables were derived from each of the five response choices within a critical incident. The variables were correlated with the criterion, and response choices with correlations with criterion option between .15 and .20 received a weight of 1, above .20 received a weight of 2, and negative responses followed the same rule except with weights of -1 and -2. All other correlations below .15 received no score.

The key findings did not support any of the proposed hypotheses in this study except for hypothesis four which predicted that gender did not have an impact on emotional intelligence scores. Upon the examination of results, a bootstrap correlation showed emotional intelligence and workplace judgment is statistically independent on a linear model (.151) (Fig 1). Emotional intelligence also did not correlate with workplace (-0.19) and life experiences (-.018), higher education level (-1.44), GPA (.059), and income (-1.74) on a linear model. There was only one positive relationship which was a nonlinear between emotional intelligence (x) and workplace judgment (y) based on a quadratic and cubic transformation (Fig. 2). However, the relationship produced significance with mid-level scores of emotional intelligence and the ability to make effective workplace judgments, but not high-level scores. Positive relationships were found in the bootstrap correlations between workplace judgment and income (.320), work

experience (.265), and education level (.355). Life experience and workplace judgment demonstrated a significant negative relationship (-.286). The one supported hypothesis was no difference between emotional intelligence scores and gender in a bootstrap correlation (.079).

Table 1

Bootstrap Correlations between Emotional Intelligence and Emotional Intelligence Indicators

	Emotional Intelligence Indicators							
	Emotional Intelligence	Workplace Judgment	Income	Workplace Experience	Life Experience	Education	GPA	Gender
Emotional Intelligence	1	0.151	-0.174	-0.019	0.018	-0.114	-0.059	0.079
Workplace Judgment	0.151	1	0.320**	0.265*	-0.286	0.355**	0.158	-0.143

Note. Unless otherwise noted, bootstrap results are based on 1000 bootstrap samples
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 Level (2-tailed)
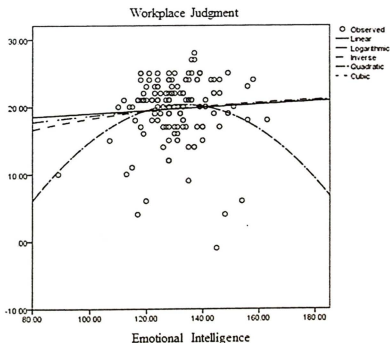* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 Level (2-tailed)

Figure 2. Emotional intelligence (x) and workplace judgment (y) based on a quadratic

and cubic transformation

CHAPTER VII

Discussion

As emotional intelligence remains a popular and important topic to investigate, the intention of this study was to produce more research on its relationship to job performance with a unique perspective. Although three of the four proposed hypotheses on emotional intelligence were not supported, the study has produced significant findings that will hopefully lead to additional studies on job performance.

As previously mentioned, studies on emotional intelligence and job performance have a tendency to produce mixed outcomes. This particular study focused on a general sample of workplace professionals with numerous backgrounds and experiences where perhaps measuring emotional intelligence and job performance might be more suited for the same profession (e.g. sales, finance, and customer service). The intention was that high scores of emotional intelligence would produce a positive relationship to job performance regardless of the profession or population, but that was not an indication of the results. Future studies might introduce this same method with a situational judgment test as well as supervisor ratings, task monitoring, or 360 feedback for comparative analysis on job performance attributes with higher samples. It would be encouraged to move away from self-reported measures and administer the MSCEIT that offers the most academic support with Mayor and Salovey's ability model to see if the significance of emotional intelligence changes or improves. For situational judgment test measures, future studies might focus on specific job related assessments versus measures of general workplace knowledge. Although demonstrating a strong positive relationship to

dependent variables with workplace judgment, a larger sample size would produce more stable results and allow for different scoring methods with the situational judgment test. Perhaps there could be scoring comparisons between a subject matter expert panel and the empirical key to assess potential limitations in the study methods.

Even with introducing a different job performance measurement through a situational judgment test, it was still surprising to see that emotional intelligence did not correlate with workplace judgment or to any other dependent variables that have demonstrated positive relationships in other studies. As previously mentioned, there was only one positive relationship which was a nonlinear between emotional intelligence (x) and workplace judgment (y) based on a quadratic and cubic transformation (Fig. 2). However, the relationship produced significance with mid-level scores of emotional intelligence and the ability to make effective workplace judgments, but not high-level scores. This finding tends to appear problematic for emotional intelligence and raises an interesting question. Why are mid-level scorers of emotional intelligence positively correlating to workplace judgment and not high-level scorers? One thought is that participants with higher levels of emotional intelligence might approach certain workplace judgment scenarios more aggressively or passively than others which may not lead to the proper best or worst answer.

Because higher scores in workplace judgment increased with work experience and demonstrated positive significance with success factors such as education level and income in comparison to emotional intelligence, replications of this study may begin to create additional difficulties for strong supporters of emotional intelligence. The results of this study clearly indicate that the ability to appraise, express, regulate, and utilize

emotion might be an interesting trait, but it does not demonstrate a significant relationship to being a high performer and successful in the workplace.

CHAPTER VII

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