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Emotional intelligence and perceived employee creativity: A study on the managers of the leading superstores in Mymensingh district, Bangladesh

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Abstract

The focus of this research was to determine the impact of managers' emotional intelligence on their subordinates' creativity. The study was based on primary data acquired from the management of the biggest superstores in Bangladesh's Mymensingh District using a standardized questionnaire. Managers' emotional intelligence and subordinates' creativity were measured using standard and verified instruments developed by previous researchers. The study's findings confirmed that among the six dimensions of emotional intelligence: a) understanding one's emotions; b) emotional self-control against criticism; c) emotional self-encouragement; d) emotional self-control; e) empathy; f) understanding of other people's emotions, the influence of emotional self-control against criticism and emotional self-encouragement on subordinates' creativity is not significant, while the influence of all other dimensions is significant. The research advises business leaders to control their emotions intelligently in order to help their employees be more creative.

Keywords: emotion, self-control, creativity; superstores, Mymensingh, Bangladesh

Introduction

Emotions play a central role in persons' interpersonal relationships because they have a strong influence on thoughts and behaviors. Salovey and Mayer (1990) [23] were the first to define the term emotional intelligence as "a form 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 action" A similar definition was given by Bar-On (1997) [20] as "an array of emotional, personal, and social abilities and skills that influence an individual's ability to cope effectively with environmental demands and pressures". Again, Goleman (1998b) defined EI as "the capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, and for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships". Cooper and Sawaf (1998) [21], defines it as "the ability to sense, understand, and effectively apply the power and acumen of emotions as a source of human energy, information, connection, and influence". According to Weisinger (1998) [24], EI is "the intelligent use of emotions". From the above definitions, Emotional intelligence (EI) can be termed as the capability of an individual manage emotions to play a positive role on interpersonal effectiveness. Creativity may be defined as the production of novel and useful ideas or solutions (Amabile, 1988; Oldham & Cummings, 1996; Zhou & George, 2001, 2003) [1, 11, 25, 26]. Creativity is a vital resource for corporate performance and is frequently the beginning point for innovation (Zhou & George, 2001; Rego, *et al.* 2007) [25, 12]. Environmental possibilities and problems necessitate novel solutions that are more inventive than those proposed by rivals. To summarize, firms must fully utilize their people' creative potential and innovation in order to survive and/or accomplish transformation and competitiveness (Woodman, Sawyer & Griffin, 1993; McAdam & Keogh, 2004; Rego, *et al.* 2007) [16, 8, 12].

Literature review

Previous studies have looked into the influence of certain leadership characteristics in encouraging, supporting, preventing, or suppressing employee creativity (e.g., Oldham & Cummings, 1996; Tierney, Farmer & Graen, 1999; Shin & Zhou, 2003; Zhou, 2003) [11, 14, 13, 25]. Transformational leadership, attentive supervision, developmental feedback, supportive supervision, and controlled supervision are some of these (Rego, *et al.* 2007) [12]. However, just a little research and hypothesis have been established to determine the causes of these actions (Zhou and George, 2003; Rego, *et al.* 2007) [26, 12].

The leader's emotional intelligence, according to Zhou and George, is one of the origins (EI). They claim that modern businesses are caught in a bind between control and innovation. Employees must be influenced and controlled by organizations and their leaders to work in prescribed ways in order to achieve particular goals (Zhou and George, 2003; Rego, *et al.* 2007) ^[26, 12]. This contradiction is beneficial when standards and restrictions enable employees to come up with new and better methods of doing things. Otherwise, countless attempts at innovation die in their infancy as a result of personnel succumbing to the emotions of their bosses (Zhou & George, 2003) ^[26]. When it comes to managing these emotions and directing staff to take advantage of them, a leader's EI may be critical. Leaders may encourage their workers' creativity by interacting with them and creating an environment that encourages it. In both circumstances, EI can help them take action.

Superstore businesses are the emerging business fields in the small and medium scale enterprises in Bangladesh. The prospects and success of a store at a major portion, depends on the successful management and on the employees' creativity. The proposed study is targeted to explore the capability of the managers to manage emotions of the employees and how a manager's emotional intelligence influences the employees' creativity in organizations. This work will also illustrate the perceptions of the managers regarding emotional intelligence. So these types of work will increase awareness of managers regarding emotional intelligence and also help employees to be creative at work and enrich the overall management scenario of organizations. Previous studies have found a substantial link between EI and a variety of behavioral and environmental outcomes. EI can assist people in gaining an advantage over others (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2002; 2004) ^[9, 10]. It also aids in the management of interpersonal interactions since they are better able to understand the body language of others (Rego, *et al.* 2007) ^[12]. People with a high EI may also better control and manage their own emotions. Such individuals are more effective in interpersonal aspects of their lives and occupations (Rego, *et al.* 2007) ^[12], and may fill a variety of responsibilities. EI has been described as a collection of cognitive talents by certain studies (Rego *et al.* 2007) ^[12]. (ability model), and Others explain it by combining abilities with a wide variety of personality characteristics (mixed models). They both have advantages and disadvantages (Caruso, Mayer & Salovey, 2001) ^[3]. The most widely accepted mixed model was suggested by Goleman (Rego, *et al.* 2007) ^[12]. 1995, 1998a ^[22, 4], to name a few examples. Among the 25 constructs divided into five categories are self-awareness (emotional awareness, accurate self-assessment, self-confidence), self-regulation (self-control, trustworthiness, conscientiousness, adaptability, innovation), motivation (achievement drive, commitment, initiative, optimism), empathy (understanding others, developing others, service orientation, leveraging diversity, political awareness), and social skills (influence, communication, conflict management, leadership, change catalyst, bond building, collaboration, team capabilities). Mayer *et al.*, (2002) ^[9] formulated and tested emotional intelligence (also known as MSCEIT) in terms of an overall EI score, strategic and experiential EI as two area scores, each with two branch scores. According to Caruso, Mayer, and Salovey (2001) ^[3], at least four fundamental components of EI should be present: (a) emotional appraisal and

expression; (b) emotional use to enhance cognitive processes and decision making; (c) emotional knowledge; and (d) emotional regulation (George, 2000) ^[5]. As a result, there is a wealth of literature demonstrating the links between EI and leadership styles and behavior (George, 2000; Caruso, Mayer, and Salovey, 2001; Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee, 2002; Wong & Law, 2002; Shin & Zhou, 2003; Shin & Zhou, Brown & Moshavi, 2005; Kerr *et al.*, 2006) ^[5, 3, 6, 15, 13, 2, 7]. However, Zhou and George (2003) ^[26] take a different approach to the significance of EI, explaining how it affects subordinates' creativity and innovation conceptually. They claim that EI may play a critical role in fostering a productive relationship between leaders and workers in which individuals feel free and dedicated to channeling their creativity toward improved performance. Rego, *et al.* (2007) ^[12] performed a research among managers of various firms in European Union nations based on the aforesaid rationale and discovered a positive and substantial effect of leaders' EI on subordinates' creativity. This study aims to gather a deeper grasp of how the above reasoning holds up in practice in undeveloped countries and/or in a specific area where the leaders are less professional and the subordinates are less participatory and creative.

In the context of Bangladesh, a few studies have been undertaken. Some investigated the association between emotional intelligence and work performance (Rahman *et al.* 2012; Rahman *et al.* 2013) ^[18, 17], while others assessed respondents' perceptions and validated emotional intelligence measuring scales based on the respondents' empirical experience (Rahman *et al.* 2012; Uzzaman and Karim, 2017) ^[18, 19]. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, no research has been undertaken in Bangladesh on managers' emotional intelligence and its influence on their subordinates' creativity. As a result, this study will fill a gap in the literature.

Objectives of the Study

The major focus of this research is to demonstrate the impact of a manager's emotional intelligence on the creativity of their subordinates in Bangladesh's Mymensingh District. The following are the precise goals:

- 1) To show the perceptions of the managers regarding Emotional Intelligence;
- 2) To show the level of employee creativity.

Methodology

Data collection technique and questionnaire design:

The fundamental data for this study was gathered using structured questionnaires from the management of the biggest superstores in Bangladesh's Mymensingh District. The questions were answered on a five-point Likert scale, with 1 indicating strong agreement and 5 indicating strong disagreement. The questionnaire was delivered to the respondents by hand and, where necessary, via mail.

Measures:

1) Managers' Emotional Intelligence

Rego & Fernandes used a previously established and validated tool to assess managers' emotional intelligence (2005). It consists of 23 elements divided into six Emotional Intelligence dimensions: (1) emotional awareness; (2) self-control in the face of criticism; (3) self-encouragement; (4) emotional self-control; (5) empathy; (6) empathy for others'

emotions (see appendix).

2) Subordinates’ Creativity

Subordinates’ Creativity was measured by the managers’ report on the creativity of their employees/subordinates through 8 items (see appendix) proposed by Rego, *et al.* (2007)^[12] who adopted these from Zhou and George (2001)^[5].

Data analysis tools

To analyze the collected data from the respondents, SPSS software and several sets of statistical analyses was used. Descriptive statistics and the multiple regression analysis was used to test the hypothesis.

Reliability and validity of data

The reliability of the data was assessed by measuring the Cronbach’s alpha and the validity of the data was ensured by conducting a pilot survey before going for the final survey of the study. Following table 1 shows the value of Cronbach’s alpha (.657), which is sufficient enough to reveal the high level of reliability of the questionnaire.

Table 1: Reliability Statistics

| Cronbach's Alpha | N of Items |
|------------------|------------|
| .657 | 27 |

Analysis of findings

Demographic information of the respondents

Following table 2 shows the demographic information of the respondents. It shows that about half of the respondents have the age group 40-50 years, have the educational background of Graduate level (hons), and the job experience

Table 2: Regression effect of managers’ emotional intelligence on subordinates’ creativity

| Hypotheses | B | t | P value | Comment |
|---|-------|--------|---------|---------------|
| Understanding own emotion->subordinates’ creativity | .089 | 3.668 | .006 | Supported |
| Emotional self-control against criticism ->subordinates’ creativity | .020 | .296 | .772 | Not-supported |
| Emotional self-encouragement ->subordinates’ creativity | -.202 | -1.410 | .182 | Not-supported |
| Emotional self-control->subordinates’ creativity | .133 | 2.979 | .025 | Supported |
| Empathy and emotional contagion ->subordinates’ creativity | .441 | 2.983 | .017 | Supported |
| Understanding other people’s emotions ->subordinates’ creativity | .347 | 3.418 | .005 | Supported |
| Dependent variable Subordinates’ creativity; R=.858. R ² =.737 | | | | |

The above table 2 shows that the t value relating to the hypotheses H2a and H3a are not significant (less than 1.96). So the study rejects the hypotheses H2a and H3a. That means there is no significant influence of emotional self-control against criticism and emotional self-encouragement on the subordinates’ creativity. On the other hand the t value relating to the hypotheses H1a, H4a, H5a and H6a are significant (greater than 1.96). So the study accepts the above hypotheses. That means the study found a significant influence of understanding own emotion, emotional self-control, Empathy and emotional contagion and Understanding other people’s emotions on subordinates’ creativity. The value of R and R square are found to be sufficient (.858 and 737) to predict the relationship between the dependent and independent variables.

Implications

The study’s conclusions have theoretical as well as practical significance. To begin with, the findings will contribute to the body of Emotional Intelligence literature. Second, this

of 6-9 years. Almost all of the respondents have the mid-level of job in hierarchical position and all of them are managers.

| Particulars | Percentage |
|---------------------------|------------|
| Age | |
| 20-30 | 10 |
| 30-40 | 30 |
| 40-50 | 45 |
| 50-60 | 15 |
| Job level | |
| Entry level | 0 |
| Mid-level | 90 |
| Top level | 10 |
| Job responsibility | |
| Managers | 90 |
| Non-managers | 10 |
| Education | |
| SSC/HSC | 10 |
| Graduate(hons) | 35 |
| Post graduate (masters) | 55 |
| Experience | |
| 1-3 | 15 |
| 3-6 | 25 |
| 6-9 | 40 |
| 9-12 | 5 |
| 12-15 | 15 |

Hypotheses testing

The study used the regression analysis to test the hypotheses whether there is any influence of managers’ emotional intelligence on the subordinates’ creativity in the organizations. Following are the result relating to the above stated dependent and independent variable:

research will aid concerned authorities of companies and organizations in similar categories in understanding the importance of Emotional Intelligence and employee creativity in the success of any organization. The researcher anticipates applicability of the study’s results in similar organizations not just in Bangladesh but also in underdeveloped nations throughout the world, according to the researcher.

Limitations and future research directions

As the first limitation, the study note the narrow and limited area of research. In further, more research should be conducted by broadening the research area that means it should include the managers of the different sectors of Bangladesh. In further research the size of the sample should be more. This study used the questionnaire for data collection, in future research the researcher may adopt mixed method for collecting data.

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