



EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Sameer Kumar Kolli

Research Scholar, KL Business School,
Koneru Lakshmaiah Education Foundation,
VADESWARAM, Andhra Pradesh.

Dr. Akondi Srikanth

Associate Professor, KL Business School,
Koneru Lakshmaiah Education Foundation,
VADESWARAM, Andhra Pradesh

Abstract

In order to attract and retain the best talent anywhere in the world, an organization must have the engaged workforce. Engaged employees are those who work to promote the organization by performing above and beyond of what they are expected to do, even when the conditions in which they work becomes unfavorable. Since human asset plays a vital role in achieving success, researchers are seeking for appropriate managerial ways to rise up the level of employees' engagement. Today's organizations demands high emotionally intelligent managers who could effectively understand their own emotions and those of others. According to Rosete and Ciarrochi (2005), managers who rate higher in EI are in a better position to develop effective and long lasting relationships with other groups. So, emotional intelligence is one of the key determinants of success in leading people in business. In this study we hypothesized that the more emotional intelligent the manager was, the more likely the employees would be to demonstrate the behavior that define employee engagement. The finding of this research is discussed for building talent retention which is an outcome of employee engagement.

Key words: behaviour, commitment, emotional, intelligence; job satisfaction, knowledge

Introduction

Emotional Intelligence

The construct of Emotional Intelligence (EI) is one of the most frequently researched topics in organizational study as it is a significant aspect in interpreting and analyzing human behavior at work. The concept of emotional intelligence evolved from the theory of social intelligence, which involves the ability to understand and interact with others. The term emotional intelligence was first used by Salovey & Mayer (1990). According to Salovey & Mayer emotional intelligence is defined as "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". This term was later popularized by Daniel Goleman's book. "Why it matters more than IQ". To achieve the objectives of the organization, a manager needs to understand their employees' feelings and emotions and build strong and close relationships with them. Cherniss (2003) noted that a leader who has a high level of emotional intelligence will have a greater effect on an organization than a leader with a low level of emotional intelligence.

Emotional intelligence (EI) has gained the significant consideration from industry experts and intellectuals equally during last recent years. This personality related factor has been largely



argued by educationist in the domain of behaviour and management sciences (Pradhan and Nath, 2012; Shapiro, 1997; Weisinger, 1998). EI has emerged as an influential personal trait from both academic and business research perspective (Brackett et al., 2011; O'Boyle et al., 2011; Schlaerth et al., 2013). Emotional intelligence is described as introspecting self and others' expression of emotional state while realising the differences among these two and considering these differences to regulate their own behaviours and cognitions (Salovey and Mayer, 1990). Emotions and feelings are the inherent aspect of organisation but limited research is conducted on the emotions at workplace (Bande et al., 2015).

Even with the emerging importance of EI, fewer studies are available that examine EI as an antecedent of both individual related outcomes (Maini et al., 2012; Meisler, 2013) and organisation related outcomes (Jordan and Troth, 2011; Law et al., 2008). Furthermore, earlier scholars paid attention to measure the association of EI and job related outcomes directly; neglecting the underlying pathways (mediators) through which EI effect behaviour (Law et al., 2004; Day and Carroll, 2004; Mikolajczak et al., 2007). Studies cited that there is considerable influence of Emotional intelligence on various individual level job related attitudes and behaviours including satisfaction with job, job performance, intentions to leave, organisational commitment, organisational citizenship behaviour (Jung and Yoon, 2012; Meisler and Vigoda-Gadot, 2014; Naderi Anari, 2012).

In the similar vein, less scholarly work is found on positive contribution of EI, job satisfaction and organisational commitment in producing knowledge sharing behaviour of individuals (Oshagbemi, 2000; Arabshahi et al., 2013) and is decisive in the context of call centre employees particularly. Since call centres' employees are more exposed to interaction with customers consequently their job demands high level of EI and expression of positive behaviours such as KSB. In the knowledge intensive era, knowledge management is evolved as an integral and dominant factor to attain competitive advantage. Organisational learning is an integral factor of service innovativeness to enhance organisational success (Tajeddini et al., 2017) and knowledge sharing will foster organisational learning. Thus, the current study fills this research gap by examining relation between EI-KSB with mediating variables (job satisfaction, organisational commitment) in the context of call Centre employees located at Lahore in Pakistan. By doing so, it responds to the call of Tamta and Rao (2017) which commends that future studies should discuss Job satisfaction (JS) and organisational commitment (OC) as mediators between emotional intelligence and knowledge sharing behaviour.

Review of literature

Emotional intelligence (EI)

Salovey and Mayer (1990) study is the pioneer in the area of EI in which EI has been explained as one's capacity of understanding emotional state of affairs and articulating these emotions functionally to raise cognitive as well as poignant growth. In accordance with, Petrides and Furnham (2000) and Van Rooy et al. (2005) two idiosyncratic models appears to operationalise the construct of EI in the previous literature namely, ability model of emotional intelligence (Mayer, 1997) and mixed model of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995, 2001).

The mixed model of emotional intelligence acknowledges that EI is related to individual's motives, personal characteristic, and emotions that determine to a large extent that how he or



she will meet the workplace while the ability model of emotional intelligence connects EI with emotion management process whereby individual gather, monitor, control and drive emotions to endorse emotional and intellectual development (Day and Carroll, 2004). The ability model of EI has been widely cited by academic scholars of behaviour research primarily due to three explanations namely.

1. this has laid strong theoretical lens
2. this model has used valid measurement design relative to other methodological design
3. this encompasses pragmatism paradigm to reduce demerits of other paradigms (Zeidner et al., 2002).

Additionally, mixed model of EI has been subject to in consensus due to its generic approach (Ashkanasy and Daus, 2005; Daus and Ashkanasy, 2005). Based on above rationale, this study employs ability model of EI to test proposed research model. However, criticism of mixed model does not infer the superiority of one to another because other scholars have viewed that these both ability and mixed looms of emotional intelligence are significantly applicable in variety of scholarly research (Van Rooy and Viswesvaran, 2004; Van Rooy et al., 2005).

Knowledge sharing behaviour (KSB)

Knowledge sharing (KS) is emerged as phenomenon to collective mode of knowledge dissemination (van den Hooff and de Ridder, 2004). According to Cummings (2004), KS paves the way to receive internal and external knowledge via reciprocal relation. This supports collective effort endeavored for particular goal (Boland and Tenkasi, 1995). KS implies to disseminate accurate data, opinions/ideas, abilities, skills with organisational members. KS activities are inevitable to transfer individual knowledge to company knowledge because knowledge unless shared remains one's own intellect (Van Beveren, 2002). KS is an additive course that enforces to shift knowledge to other people which resultant in a renewed form of knowledge (Usoro, Sharratt, Tsui, and Shekhar, 2007). Knowledge has been studies in varied contexts and understandings. Knowledge embrace set of parameters and cognitions which are exploited by higher management during decision-making process to attain desired outcomes. Firms should inculcate change driven attitude to support innovative capabilities for boosting their performance (Tajeddini, 2016) and Knowledge sharing may drive innovative skills of employees. Knowledge if distributed with concerned parties at right moment increases company's opportunities to get performance excellence (O'Dell and Jackson Grayson, 1999) and sustain competitive advantage. According to Khwanrutai Boonlert 2017, knowledge creation and management promotes organisational performance and facilitate learning process. KS is the combination of consistent relationship, mutual support and functional communication between people and organisation.

Emotional intelligence and knowledge sharing behaviour

The construct of EI has engrossed the attention of many psychologists and practitioners as well. Previously, it is found that people with greater level of EI are positively related to individual and organisational factors namely decision-making, leadership abilities, motivation, personality, organisational environment, application of technology in organisational communication, level of knowledge, and organisational culture that encourage



sharing of knowledge (Lin, 2007; Olapegba et al., 2013; Tohidinia and Mosakhani, 2010; Han and Anantatmula, 2007). Despite the attention of scholars on phenomenon of knowledge sharing, there exist fewer studies that give deep understanding into relationship of emotions and feelings in persuading KSB in organisation (van den Hooff et al., 2012; Arabshahi et al., 2013; Arakelian et al., n.d.; Goh and Lim, 2014; Tuan, 2016; Obermayer-Kovács et al., 2015). For instance, van den Hooff et al. (2012) augments that pride and empathy which are sub scales of EI are positively linked with readiness and willingness towards knowledge sharing. Likewise, Arakelian et al. (n.d.) proclaims that social awareness, relationship management and self-awareness, are positively related to KS. Furthermore, Arabshahi et al. (2013) demonstrate that interpersonal skills, coping with pressure and creativity (components of emotional intelligence) have a significant positive relation with teachers' KSB. These studies stimulate other researches such as study by Goh and Lim (2014) which measures the impact of EI (grounded on the ability model) on KS and narrates that people possessing greater levels of emotional intelligence are more likely to participate in knowledge gathering and disseminating projects. In similar vein, Tuan (2016) and Obermayer-Kovács et al. (2015) also suggest that EI and KS are positively and significantly related with each other.

EI is significantly proved as predictor of many job attitudes and behaviours, for instances; job satisfaction (JS), organisational commitment (OC) and organisational citizen behaviours (OCB) (Jung and Yoon, 2012; Naderi Anari, 2012); consequently, these attitudes determine KSB with others (Teh and Sun, 2012). Additionally, according to Matthews et al. (2004) there is positive relation between knowledge sharing and emotions management. Similarly, Dogan and Vecchio (2001) has elucidated that relationship between EI and KS passes through four stages imbedded into a circular flow; examples of these stages include individual recognition, strategy formation, reactive analysis and feedback. Organisational culture determines managers' decision-making styles such as participative and consultative decision-making styles (Naz et al., 2015). These communication and suggestion among people postulate knowledge sharing. Tacit knowledge which is one kind of knowledge has been studied with EI (Othman and Abdullah, 2010). EI basically constitutes individual capacity to comprehend the strength and perceive emotions and guiding these emotions to nurture relations (Karkoulian et al., 2010). This infers that higher decision-making authorities should primarily attempt to realise their own emotions and feelings. Afterwards, they need to appreciate others' emotions, and understanding of both parties' emotions will enforce the creation of KSB (Mubeen et al., 2016; Ahmad-Mughal et al., 2017; Nisar et al., 2014, 2017; Butt et al., 2017; Shahzadi et al., 2017).

In fact, highly emotional intelligent individuals have more thinking ability to handle variety of dilemmas. Such people are multitasking, capable of dealing with fluctuations, easily change decisions, adaptive towards varied situations, retort to emotional signals occasioned from inside or outside factors (Sharma, 2011). Salovey (1997) highlights that employees with high EI are more prone to inner self emotional acknowledgements and thus are likely to better identify and transfer such nodes. Additionally, Sharma (2011) postulates that EI refers to positive frame of mind, sympathy, openness, and the strength to instigate and promote others. Such abilities instill highly emotional people to increase involvement with social circle and consequently share knowledge with people around them.



Employee Retention

Employee retention refers to the ability of an organization to imbibe its employees. Retaining of employees is critical to business success because it is necessary to retain talented and high-rated performers and keep them from getting poached to competitors. Cascio (2003) describes retention as initiatives taken by management to keep employees from leaving the organization, such as rewarding employees for performing their jobs effectively; ensuring harmonious working relations between employees and managers; and maintaining a safe, healthy work environment. Since low talent retention produces a substantial drain on corporate resources, leaders need to know which practices work and what they should focus on to retain and motivate their workforce. For instance, an employee engagement strategy allows employees to be more connected and involved with the organization. Romzek (1989) analyzed that employees having higher involvement in their work and organization have better relations with their families and social environment which creates a psychological attachment with the organization. Employees who are satisfied have higher intentions of staying with an organization, which results in decreased turnover (Mobley et al.).

Findings

Descriptive Analysis

Respondents for the present study are 100 individuals working in different IT Companies of Delhi /NCR of India. From these individuals 65 respondents were male, while the rest consisted of female respondents. Of the subjects, only 23 percent were represented by the age of 25 and less years old, while 38 percent came from 25-30 years of age. On the other hand, 27.5 percent were from 35-40 years of age and 11.5 percent were above 40 years of age. About 30 percent of the respondents completed their education up to graduation followed by 49.5 percent of post graduate respondents as compared to a smaller number of respondents who pursued higher educations. . While looking into the designation it was found that 38% of respondents were managers, 54% of them were middle level managers and 8% were of other designation. While drawing the total experience profile of the respondents it was seen that 50% of them had an experience of 2 to 5 years, followed by 42% with an experience of 5-10 years and 8% with an experience of 10 to 15 years.

Implications

Theoretical implications

The present study has significant contribution in terms of both theory as well as practice. Firstly, as far as theory perspective is concerned, the research model is underpinned with ability model of Emotional intelligence (Mayer and Salovey, 1997) and affective events theory (Weiss and Cropanzano 1996). By doing so it gives practical insight on application of these two theories to acknowledge the proposed model. Secondly, this research adds to current available literature on individual's emotional intelligence and knowledge sharing behaviour. Many studies cited that relation between emotional intelligence-knowledge sharing behaviour is neglected area particularly underlying mechanism of this relation is yet to be explored. To the best of limited research and knowledge, no study has been found that discusses mediating role of OC and JS between emotional intelligence and knowledge sharing behaviour relationship. In this vein, this study has bridged the gap in the extant literature of EI and knowledge sharing behaviour.



Practical implications

The success of any sector is dependent on its employee's attitude and KSB in the knowledge intensive era. That's why, the current research will be worth noting for industrial practitioners since the under-study variables may be deployed in order to evaluate the individual's job attitudes and linking those job attitudes to individual's EI and knowledge sharing behaviours. This research model can be used as practical assessment tool to determine which job attitude encompasses as a supportive mechanism in yielding KSB. Henceforth, management must appreciate the role of human resource management programs (i.e., Training and development and appraisals) to evaluate and develop employees' job attitudes, employee well-being (Naz and Khaliq, 2011) and EI levels of call centre employees.

Conclusion

Like other studies, current research is also subject to research limitations. Actually, acknowledgement of limitations creates the venue for further research. First, this study has adopted cross-sectional design to test the relationships between variables. It would be worth noting to perform longitudinal study in future research so that model can be empirically tested in long run. Second, present model does not include moderating variable while testing the relation between EI-KSB. Future research may incorporate the moderators such as individual or situational factors to test variety of path ways between EI and knowledge sharing behaviour. Trait EI can also be used as predictor of job attitudes knowledge sharing behaviour. Third, results of this study are solely based on call centre respondents in Pakistan. Thus, replication of the same proposed model in other sector or country is recommended. In this way, generalisability of the results may increase. Despite of aforesaid limitations, it has endeavoured to add in the limited extant studies on EI and KSB. This study amplifies the contribution of job attitudes and individual emotional intelligence in determining the proclivity to share knowledge.

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