

The Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Adults' Work Performance in Korean Organizations

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Though a decade has passed since the concept of emotional intelligence was popularized, there is still lack of study on the effect of emotional intelligence on work performance. Most research on emotional intelligence are based on mixed models which include diverse personality traits that cannot be considered as components of intelligence. Also, Most of the studies applying the ability model of emotional intelligence are correlational research which assess EI and work performance at the same point of time. However, in this type of research, it is difficult to investigate whether emotional intelligence is the determinant or is the consequence of high performance. Thus, in this study, the current work performance of 72 members, who had their EI assessed eight years ago, were evaluated to explore the influence of EI on adults' work performance. This type of research is hardly found in the EI literature. The Adult Emotional Quotient Test (AEQT) was used to measure EI, and participants' job positions were used as the indicator of their work performance. The results of a discriminant analysis revealed that the employees' job positions can be predicted by their emotional intelligence, especially the emotional regulation score. This study contributes to the existing literature by providing empirical evidence that emotional intelligence can predict performance in the workplace. Also, the results imply that developing emotional abilities as well as cognitive abilities should be considered in training and development programs.

Key words : emotion, emotional intelligence, work performance, culture, training and development

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I. Introduction

To identify a construct that can predict performance in the workplace has long been a goal of scholars and the practitioners in the field of psychology, education, and human resources. Researchers found that IQ can explain only about 15% to 25% of individual differences in job performance or career success (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994; Schmidt & Hunter, 1998). Also, other personality traits, such as conscientiousness, can predict performance to some extent (Barrick & Mount, 1991), but still a large amount of variability associated with individual differences in job performance is not explained (Lopes, Côté, & Salovey, 2006).

Though EI, in its current form, was introduced to the field of psychology by Salovey and Mayer (1990), it has become the focus of interest since Goleman (1995) popularized the concept with his best-selling book, *Emotional Intelligence*. In this book, he made some extraordinary claims, such as that EI can predict performance at a level exceeding that of intelligence in various tasks. These assertions immediately evoked excitement among practitioners as well as researchers, who have waited for such a powerful construct, and the concept was applied to develop a number of education and training programs without sufficient examination (Cherniss &

Goleman, 2001; Cooper & Sawaf, 1997; Weisinger, 1998).

However, it was discovered that Goleman's (1995, 1998) propositions were based on anecdotes and supposition rather than empirical research, and some scholars began to question the validity of the concept. They contended that the concept of EI involves diverse personality traits which already have a long history of research (Landen, 2002; Matthews, Zeidner, & Roberts, 2002; Zeidner, Matthews, & Roberts, 2001).

As the originators of EI, Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso (2000) made a distinction between their model of EI and that of other scholars. They proposed that their *ability model* of EI should be distinguished from other *mixed models* (e.g., Bar-On, 1997; Goleman, 1998) because it conceptualizes EI as a set of mental abilities that pertain to the processing of emotion-relevant information. Other scholars also asserted that the ability model should be used for future research of EI because it meets traditional standards for an intelligence and does not overlap with other personality traits (e.g., Clarke, 2006; Weinberger, 2002).

Mayer and Salovey's (1997) model of EI consists of four branches: emotional perception and expression, emotional utilization for facilitation of thought, emotional understanding, and emotional management. They argued that these branches are arranged from more

psychologically basic processes to more integrated processes; the lowest level branch concerns the more simple abilities of perceiving and expressing emotion, while the highest level branch concerns the more complex ability of conscious, reflective, regulation of emotion.

Though research on EI using the ability model has a short history due to measurement issues, some studies have found positive relationship between EI and organizational behavior. For instance, Janovics and Christiansen (2001) found that the job performance of employed students correlated significantly with their score on the emotional perception and emotional understanding branch. This finding was based on questionnaires returned by supervisors of 176 students in a mail survey. Also, higher EI predicted better supervisor ratings for jobs that have the most contact with customers. The correlation remained significant after controlling for the effects of cognitive intelligence. The result of this study reveals that the characteristic of the job can make difference when examining the effect of EI.

Lopes et al. (2004) demonstrated the relationship between EI and work outcomes with 44 analysts and clerical employees. Those who had higher EI received greater merit increases, held higher company rank, and received better peer and supervisor ratings of

interpersonal facilitation, stress tolerance, and leadership potential. The higher-level abilities of understanding and managing emotion were most strongly related to the more objective criteria (salary and company rank), and the lower-level abilities of perceiving and using emotion were most strongly predictive of the more subjective, peer and supervisor-rated variables. Most of these relationships remained significant after controlling for cognitive ability and the Big Five personality traits.

Also, in Day and Carroll's (2004) study, the EI of 246 undergraduate students from a Canadian university were assessed along with their performance in a cognitive decision-making task that was representative of a typical managerial task. The results indicated that the emotional perception branch has significant relationship with individual performance.

As seen in previous research, accumulating evidence indicates that EI, measured as mental abilities, has significant relationship with individual performance of various tasks. However, the limitation of these studies is that EI and performance are assessed at the same point of time. Thus, it cannot be confirmed whether EI is the determinant or consequence of high performance, because there is the possibility that high performance has resulted in a higher EI score.

Another limitation of the studies is that it

is unclear whether the four branches of EI index some common overarching ability or whether each branch exerts a separate influence on performance (Matthews, Roberts, & Zeidner, 2004); in each study, different branches of EI are claimed to have significant relationship with performance in various tasks.

Moreover, there are other studies which show inconsistent results. For example, in Lyons and Schneider's (2005) research, the emotional perception branch and the facilitating cognition branch were found to be negatively related to the males' performance in a speech task after controlling for general mental ability (GMA). In contrast, the emotional perception branch had a positive relation to the females' speech performance. Also, Weinberger (2003) could not find any significant relationship between the branches of EI and perceived leadership effectiveness.

These shortcomings of previous research imply that there is need for a study which provides empirical evidence for the predictive power of EI. This study attempts to investigate whether EI can predict employees' positions in an organization, which can be seen as an indicator of performance. The ability model of EI is applied in this research, so personality traits were not included in the concept of the construct.

In addition, the assessment of EI was conducted eight years before the data on the

employees' job positions were collected from the companies. Therefore, unlike other correlational studies, the EI scores that are used for this study can be seen as a determinant rather than a consequence of work performance. This is one of the first attempts in EI research, in which there is an interval between when EI is assessed and when performance is evaluated.

II. Research Method

Participants

The sample of this research consists of 72 employees from three subsidiaries of a Korean conglomerate located in Seoul. Two organizations are insurance companies and one organization is an electronic company. As part of a different research project, the newcomers of these companies had their emotional intelligence measured in 1997. From those employees, data on the position of 190 employees could be collected with cooperation from the HRD Center of the conglomerate in June, 2005.

The data included information on the gender, age, education level, current job position, and the year that the employee left the company (in cases which apply). From the data, 132 employees were found to remain in

the company.

This research used quota sampling, which is the nonprobability equivalent of stratified sampling. In quota sampling, the researcher identifies the strata in the population like stratified sampling. However, convenience sampling is used instead of random sampling to select the required number of subjects from each stratum. The participants of this study are 24 employees randomly selected from each job position (Section Head/Deputy Manager/Clerk), but they are also members of three specific organizations which participated in a different research project.

All of the 72 participants in the study were males, which can be explained by the fact that the majority of managers were males in the companies from which the sample was collected. Most participants' age were between 34 and 36 when data on their job positions within the company were collected ($n=66$). 37 participants were from the two insurance companies, and 35 participants were employees of the electronic company. 65 participants had a bachelor's degree, six participants had a master's degree, and one participant was a high school graduate.

Measures

Emotional Intelligence

To measure the employees' EI, the Adult

Emotional Quotient Test (AEQT) developed and validated by Moon (1997) was used in this study. The AEQT is based on Salovey and Mayer's (1990) model of EI and consists of five branches: emotional appraisal (8 items), emotional expression (7 items), empathy (7 items), emotional utilization (8 items), and emotional regulation (15 items). Though empathy is a part of the emotional appraisal and expression branch in the original model (Salovey & Mayer, 1990), empathy is included as a separate branch in the AEQT because it is considered as a traditionally essential part of Koreans' emotions (Moon, 1997).

The AEQT is a self-report based test, in which a statement is given in each item and the respondents use a 3-point Likert response scale (Very True of Me/True of Me/Not True of Me). Cronbach's alpha coefficient for each branch is presented in Moon's (1997) study as follows: $\alpha = .75$ for emotional perception, $\alpha = .77$ for emotional expression, $\alpha = .80$ for empathy, $\alpha = .76$ for emotional utilization, and $\alpha = .85$ for emotional regulation.

Performance

As mentioned earlier, the employees' current job position was used as the indicator of performance. Three levels of job position are involved in this study. If a clerk shows relatively higher performance, it generally takes about six or seven years to be promoted to a

section chief in the participants' organization. Otherwise, the employee may be a deputy manager or remain as a clerk.

Data Analysis

To investigate the effect of EI on performance, discriminant analysis was conducted in the study. Discriminant analysis is a multivariate technique which is used to identify which combination of independent variables from a larger set can best account for group differences. A key difference between discriminant analysis and multiple regression is that the former is used to predict nonmetric or categorical dependent variables that generally have three or more levels, while the latter is used to predict a metric or continuous dependent variable (Bates, 2005). In this study, the independent variables are

the employees' EI branch scores, and the dependent variable is their job positions (categorical variable with three levels) within the company, which were followed up eight years later.

III. Results of the Study

The means and the standard deviations of the participants' EI branch scores by the job position are presented in Table 1. Because the distribution of the emotional regulation score was found to be negatively skewed, it was transformed to the square root of the reflect score to produce normality for further analyses.

The correlations among the EI branch scores are presented in Table 2. The employees' emotional regulation score

Table 1. Means and standard deviations of the EI branch scores by position

	Clerk (n=24)		Deputy Manager (n=24)		Section Head (n=24)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
EA	9.33	1.52	9.92	1.93	10.17	2.39
EE	7.96	1.46	7.08	1.69	6.46	4.33
EM	8.33	1.90	8.42	1.25	9.29	1.85
EU	12.17	2.78	12.96	1.76	13.33	2.53
ER	20.79	3.09	22.21	3.04	23.21	3.79

Note. EA=emotional appraisal, EE=emotional expression, EM=empathy, EU=emotional utilization, ER=emotional regulation.

Table 2. Bivariate correlations among job position and EI branch scores

	JP	EA	EE	EM	EU	ER
JP	-					
EA	.17	-				
EE	-.22	.09	-			
EM	.23	.17	.13	-		
EU	.20	.34**	.22	.09	-	
ER	.33**	.34**	.15	.34**	.29*	-

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

JP=job position, EA=emotional appraisal, EE=emotional expression, EM=empathy, EU=emotional utilization, ER=emotional regulation.

significantly correlated with their job position, emotional appraisal and empathy scores ($p < .01$), and also significantly correlated with their emotional utilization score ($p < .05$). In addition, the emotional utilization score was significantly correlated with the emotional appraisal score ($p < .01$).

This study used standard discriminant analysis, in which all predictors enter the equations at once and each predictor is assigned only the unique association it has with groups (Tabachnik & Fidell, 2007). The results of the analysis are presented in Table 4. Plots of group centroids, univariate F test or regression are generally used to aid the interpretation of the results of discriminant analysis.

The centroids of the three job position groups on the two discriminant functions are presented in Table 3 and Figure 1. Also, the

significance tests of both discriminant functions revealed that $\chi^2 = 18.78$ (sig.=0.04) for the

Table 3. Group Centroids on Discriminant Functions

	Function 1	Function 2
Clerk	.66	.09
Deputy Manager	.00	-.19
Section Head	-.66	.09

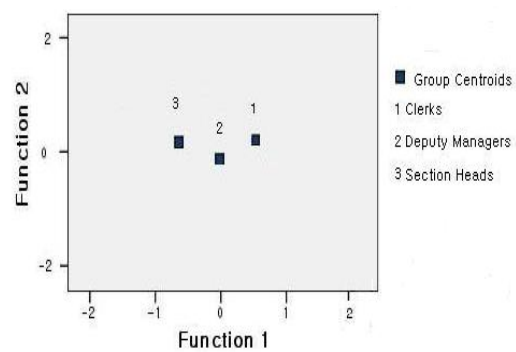


Figure 1. Group Centroids on the Discriminant Functions

combination of both discrimination functions, while $\chi^2=1.20$ (sig.=0.88) for only the second function. Finally, 94.30% of between-group variability was accounted for by the first discriminant function, and 5.70% for the second. Therefore, it can be inferred that the first function, rather than the second function, discriminates the position groups.

The structure matrix of correlations between predictors and discriminant functions, as seen in Table 4, suggests that the best predictor for distinguishing the three groups for the first discriminant function is the emotional regulation score. Also, only the emotional regulation score was found to be significantly related to job position in univariate F test,

$F(2, 69) = 4.21, p < .05$. Through post hoc tests, it was found that the emotional regulation score of the clerks and that of the section heads is significantly different.

When the discriminant functions were applied, 15 members (62.5%) of group 1 (clerks), 13 members (54.2%) of group 2 (deputy managers), and 15 members (62.5 %) of group 3 (section heads) could be correctly classified. Overall, 59.7% of original group cases could be correctly classified.

Based on the bivariate correlations among the predictor variables, the following priority order of the EI branch scores was developed to conduct sequential regression: emotional regulation, emotional expression, emotional

Table 4. Results of the standard discriminant analysis

Predictor Variable	Correlation of Predictor Variables with Discriminant Functions		Univariate $F(2, 69)$	Pooled Within-Group Correlations among Predictors				
	1	2		ER	EM	EE	EU	EA
ER	.64	.09	4.21*	-				
EM	.43	.84	2.36	.29	-			
EE	.41	.16	1.72	.24	.19	-		
EU	-.37	-.31	1.49	.24	.05	.28	-	
EA	-.32	-.30	1.12	.30	.14	.14	.31	-
Canonical R	.48	.13						
Eigenvalue	.30	.02						

Note. * $p < .05$.

ER=emotional regulation, EM=empathy, EE=emotional expression, EU=emotional utilization, EA=emotional appraisal.

Table 5. Sequential regression of the EI branch scores on job position

Variables	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>R</i>	s^2 (incremental)	<i>F</i>	Sig.(<i>F</i>)
ER	-.33	-.334**	-.26	.33	.11**	8.52**	.005
EE	-.09	-.092*	-.32	.43	.07*	6.05*	.016
EU	.06	.057	.17	.45	.03	2.24	.140
EM	.08	.077	.16	.48	.02	2.06	.156
EA	.01	.012	.04	.48	.00	.06	.804
Intercept	1.98	1.982					

Note. ** $p < .01$. * $p < .05$.

ER=emotional regulation, EE=emotional expression, EU=emotional utilization, EM=empathy, EA=emotional appraisal.

understanding, empathy, and emotional appraisal. Using this priority order, sequential regression was employed to determine if addition of different predictor variables improved prediction of the employees' job position.

The results are presented in Table 5, which displays the unstandardized regression coefficients (*B*) and intercept, the standardized regression coefficients (β), *R* after entry of each predictor variable, the semipartial correlations (s^2), and *F* for each step. After step 5, with all predictor variables in the equation, $R = 0.48$, $R^2 = 0.23$, and adjusted $R^2 = 0.17$. It was found that the emotional regulation score along with the emotional expression score contribute to the prediction of the employees' job position. The emotional understanding, empathy, and emotional appraisal scores did not add further prediction.

IV. Discussion and Conclusions

In the results of this study, especially the employees' emotional regulation score, among the EI branch scores, could predict their job position. The emotional regulation branch is the most complex ability which requires performance of all the other branch abilities of EI. Thus, it is also described as the highest ability in the hierarchical structure of Mayer and Salovey's (1997) model. The bivariate correlations among the branch scores in this study also supported this supposition; the emotional regulation score was significantly related to scores in other branches, such as empathy, emotional appraisal, and emotional utilization.

It is important for employees to regulate their emotions to maintain relationships with external as well as internal customers within

the organization. Also, leaders should develop the ability to regulate emotions in self and others to build effective teams, make decisions, motivate others, communicate a vision, and promote change (Caruso & Salovey, 2004).

An interesting finding is that the relationship between the emotional expression and emotional regulation scores was not significant. In fact, the emotional expression score was negatively (though not significantly) related to the employees' job position in the sample of this study; the higher the level of the job position, the lower was the emotional expression score. In the results of the sequential regression, the emotional expression score also could improve the prediction of the job position when used with the emotional regulation score.

This result seems to reflect the effect of Korean culture on emotions. Compared with people in the western culture who are open to expressions of thoughts and emotions, Koreans may hide or not express their thoughts and feelings directly to others, especially to seniors or strangers (Lee, 1977). Also, Koreans may hesitate to disagree with others, and evade making straight comments (Cha, 1983).

Thus, employees who tend to express their emotions directly or more frequently might not give a favorable impression to their managers or colleagues within Korean

organizations.

This can be attributed to the fact that Koreans tend to prioritize the group over the individual, value group identification, and endeavor to maintain social harmony. Also, the ability to perceive others' emotions and to regulate expressions of emotions are a critical standard when Koreans evaluate a person (Kim, 1987; Park, 1985).

All of these are the characteristics of a culture which emphasize collectivism. Culture has a direct effect on people's emotions, because it determines the way in which people appraise events and display emotions (Kalat & Shiota, 2007). This means that characteristics of the culture should be included as crucial factors in conducting EI research. Nevertheless, the influence of culture is not sufficiently considered in the existing literature.

This is because EI is viewed as a cross-cultural concept by many researchers. Also, Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso (2002), the originators of EI, argue that their EI tests are designed to tap onto the more universal aspects of emotional experience, so cultural or ethnic differences do not seem to seriously distort people's responses.

However, as found in this study, it seems that culture can make differences when people select an appropriate strategy for dealing with emotions. Therefore, more research including cultural factors are required to customize

models or measurements of EI to different cultures.

This study has some limitations. First, because quota sampling was used, the findings may not apply to organizations with different characteristics. Also, as suggested in this study, culture can have influence on emotions in the workplace. Therefore, the results may not be generalized to organizations in different cultures. Second, the measurement used to assess EI in this study is based on an old model of EI. Since it was developed, revisions on the EI model have been made, and new performance-based tests, which might not be affected by response biases, were developed by the originators of the concept (Mayer et al., 2002). Thus, there is the need for revision of the measurement in further research. Third, there are other factors that can have influence on promotion within an organization (e.g., cognitive abilities, personality traits, and motivation), which are not considered in this research. Therefore, studies which control for those factors are required to examine the effect of EI on performance more rigorously. Finally, more investigation of organizations under study should be conducted to confirm the validity of using job position as the indicator of performance.

Research of EI can contribute to deeper understanding of human development. Though more confirmatory research is required, the

results of this study provide preliminary substantiation for the effect of EI on performance. This implies that training and developing programs in organizations should be designed to develop emotional capacities as well as cognitive abilities to ensure that members' performance is improved.

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한국 조직 내에서의 정서지능과 성인의 업무 수행 간의 관계

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정서지능의 개념이 대중화된 지 십년이 지났으나, 수행에 대한 정서지능의 효과에 대한 연구는 아직 부족한 실정이다. 정서지능에 대한 대부분의 연구는 정서지능의 혼합 모형을 적용하고 있거나, 정서지능과 수행 간의 상관관계를 분석하고 있다. 그러나 혼합 모형에서는 정서지능이 이미 연구가 많이 이루어진 성격 특성들과 구분이 되지 않고, 상관관계를 연구들에서는 정서지능과 수행을 동시에 측정하고 있기 때문에 정서지능이 높은 수행의 원인인지 아니면 결과인지 확인할 수가 없다. 이 연구에서는 기존의 연구들이 가지고 있는 이러한 한계를 극복하기 위해 한국의 모기업 신입사원의 정서지능을 측정한 지 8년이 경과한 후에 그들의 수행 수준을 측정하였다. 정서지능은 문용린(1997)이 개발한 AEQT(Adult Emotional Quotient Test)로 측정하였고, 업무 수행 능력은 현재의 직위로 평가였다. 판별분석의 결과, 성인의 정서지능 요소 중에서도 특히 정서조절 점수가 이후에 직위를 예측할 수 있다는 것이 발견되었다. 본 연구의 의의는 성인의 수행과 정서지능 간의 관계에 대한 실증적 증거를 제시하는 데에 있다. 본 연구의 결과는 정서지능 연구에서 정서에 대한 문화의 영향을 고려해야 하는 것과 기업의 훈련 및 개발 프로그램에서 인지적 능력뿐만 아니라 정서 능력의 개발도 중요하다는 것을 시사한다.

주요어 : 정서, 정서지능, 수행, 문화, 훈련 및 개발