

Emotional Intelligence Theory Revisited

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Abstract Emotional Intelligence is an interesting contemporary theory in human psychology. In which, the emotional intelligence is known as the ability to understand, perceive, manage and regulate emotions in self and others. However, there are many theories underpinning the actual definition and characteristics of the emotional intelligence. In fact, there are two different approaches on emotional intelligence, which the ability and trait model. The ability model, proposed by Mayer and Salovey focused more on the cognitive-emotional abilities. While the trait model, introduced by Bar-On and Goleman refer to the emotion and self-perception competencies. Nevertheless, the emotional intelligence has been seen as an important attribute in individuals. Researchers found many benefits from the use of emotional intelligence in wide variety of setting such as in personal, education and work environment. In order to reap the real benefit of EI, a good understanding on the concept is required. Therefore, this paper is going to address all the theories that are related to EI to provide clearer foresight on the concept of emotional intelligence.

Keywords: Emotional competencies, emotional intelligence

1. Introduction

Emotion is an important aspect in human being. The competency in managing emotions is a requisite in our daily life. The ability to understand and manage our own emotions is essential, and equally important, is the ability to understand and manage others emotions as well. Good use of emotional competencies would help us to succeed in life, be it in the personal or work-related aspects. Every day we are exposed to variety of situations that might trigger our emotions. There are times that we will feel angry, sad or even disappointed with the people around us. These emotions should be managed effectively to avoid emotional outburst or excessive stress. Thus, the ability to understand and manage emotions is undeniable important in order for us to overcome these emotional ups and downs, and to keep our sanity intact. To further understand this indispensable idea of emotional competencies, this article will discuss on the definition and theoretical aspects of emotional intelligence (EI).

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Definition of EI

Emotional competencies or better known as emotional intelligence is a popular idea in psychological studies that has captured the attention of layman, researchers, management, and commercial entities. In fact, EI has been seen as an indispensable capability in daily life (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). EI is said to provide the intangible personal characteristics that are essential for the psychological and emotional development of each individual (Shipper et al., 2003). EI has been defined in many ways, but the most acceptable definition is “the ability to perceive and express emotion, assimilate emotion in thought, understand and reason with emotion, and regulate emotion in the self and others” (Mayer et al., 2000: 396). While the most recent definition of EI is “the ability to carry out accurate reasoning about emotions and the ability to use emotions and emotional knowledge to enhance thought” (Mayer et al., 2008b:511). EI is a complicated idea as it involves the capabilities of understanding and communicating with others (Assanova & McGuire, 2009). As a result, there have been many

differing definitions on EI which is based on each researcher's line of work. Although there are various different definitions on EI, it can be summarized that the key aspects of it is that EI involves the emotional abilities in human being (Yusof, Kadir, & Mahfar, 2014). In summary, the emotional competency is the essence of the EI theory despite the various debates on its definitions.

2.2 Theoretical Background

The theory of emotional intelligence has started in 1920 when Edward Thorndike mentioned about the probability of other types of intelligence in the *Harper's Magazine* (Matthews, Zeidner, & Roberts, 2002). However, during that time, the model of social intelligence proposed by Thorndike did not receive much attention and not many studies have been done on the topic until much later years (Landy, 2005).

The first time the term '*emotional intelligence*' being used was in 1961 by Van Ghent's in one of his literature critics. However, not much information on EI could be gathered from his articles. Later, in 1983, Howard Gardner introduced the "multiple intelligences" theory. In his theory, Gardner proposed seven intelligences, among them are interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence (Gardner, 1983). Then, in his book titled "Multiple Intelligence", he stated that interpersonal intelligences is the capability to recognize the differences between individuals, especially the differences in the emotions, characteristics, motivations, and life purposes of each individual (Gardner, 1993). Many arguments on his theory have been made during that time.

Two decades later, Wayne Leon Payne used the phrase of EI as a part of the title of his doctoral dissertation in 1985 (Barrett & Salovey, 2002). It is believed that Payne was the first researcher to use the EI term in the academic field (Serrat, 2009). Then in 1990, two academic journals have been written by Peter Salovey and John Mayer which clearly provides the definition of EI (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). In their research, they establish that there are individuals who have a good understanding of their own emotion, understanding the others and could handle problems regarding emotions better than the others (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2004). Since then, Mayer and Salovey have written multiple academic articles regarding EI and managed to develop two tests that could measure the EI of individuals.

Despite all the studies and contributions made by Mayer and Salovey, it was Goleman whom had publicized the theory of EI through his publication entitled '*emotional intelligence*', which was published in 1995. Not much later, he published another book on the same topic "Emotional Intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ" (Goleman, 1996). The publication became a best seller and since then, the term EI has been extensively used. In his book, Goleman asserts that in the present changing environment, the EI of an individual is the most significant factor in individual's achievements and it has the ability to bring significant success in life. This idea has attracted many people in the business world. Then, Goleman wrote his third book on EI in 1998, titled "Working with Emotional Intelligence". This book suggested that EI of an individual influence the accomplishment of an organization; and it has the capability to create a better and profitable working environment. EI has then been seen as an essential factors in the workforces and considered as a critical aspect of human resources as countries change from a machine based industrial to a service based industry (Assanova & McGuire, 2009).

2.2.1 EI Model

There have been many models of EI proposed by various researchers over the years. However, only three of the most significant and widely accepted models are discussed here. According to Mayer, Salovey and Caruso (2000) in their book chapter titled: '*Models of Emotional Intelligence*', the theoretical models that are recognized by the scientific researchers are: (a) *Ability model of EI* (Mayer and Salovey, 1997), (b) *Bar-On's emotional-social intelligence model* (Bar-On, 1997), and (c) *Emotional competencies model* (Goleman, 1995).

These three EI models can be further classified into two categories; (a) ability-models that associates both emotions and intelligence as talents, and (b) mixed-models concept which includes mental capabilities, dispositions, and characteristics (Mayer et al., 2004). These ability and mixed model theories of EI has been the centre of focus in EI's literatures and reviews. For the purpose of this study, these three models will serve as the theoretical framework and the detail reviews of each model will be discussed as follow.

2.2.1.1 The Ability-Based Model of Emotional Intelligence (Mayer & Salovey, 1997)

The EI ability model was first introduced by Salovey and Mayer (1990). They theorized that EI consists of the ability to appraise and express, regulate and utilize emotion. From this conceptualization, Mayer and Salovey (1997) extended that there are four constructs which characterize all the abilities that could add to an individual's EI. These building blocks are in a chain of command, where every level integrate with one another and constructed the competence of the earlier competence. The building blocks stated by Mayer and Salovey (1997) are as listed below:

1. The initial branch is the *perception and appraisal of own and others' emotion*. It is the capacity to observe, assess, and convey their emotion precisely. For instance, the capability to recognize emotions by looking at individual's expression and notice the pitch of their voice. These capabilities might leads to the competencies to recognize and notice even the slightest changes in a person facial expression.
2. The second branch represents the capability to *assimilate emotions*. It is the capacity to precipitate emotions accordingly. It refer to the skills to differentiate between the various emotions felt by an individual and recognize the emotions that manipulate an individual's function of the mind.
3. The third branch represents the capabilities to *understand and reason the emotions*. It is the capacity to comprehend feelings and the information that is originating from the feelings. It refer to the capability to recognize multifaceted emotions, for instance, individuals would be able to recognize few types of emotions and are capable in identifying the changes in emotions while it occurs in an individual.
4. The last branch is the capabilities to *manage and regulate one's emotion*. It is the capacity to control feelings in order to develop one's emotion and intellect. It refers to the skills to associate or disassociate from a certain emotion in regards to the circumstances.

Compared to the previous theoretical approach by these two researchers in 1990, their 1997 proposal is the most accepted proposal (Geher, 2004). In their new model, they consider EI specifically as a mental ability. Mayer and Salovey's ability model is said to be the most mentioned and be acquainted with by many other scientific researchers compared to any other models (Matthews et al., 2002). As what Matthews *et al.*(2002) had described, the main reasons for this enormous attention to their theory is based on the fact that; (a) The theoretical foundation of the model is concrete and vindicated, (b) The proposed measurement inventory used to measure EI is original, and (c) The experimental researches' statistics gathered from the fundamental and applied settings are efficiently organized and are adequately proven to support the theory.

In addition to that, the ability theory proposed by Mayer and Salovey is regarded as a valid concept by many of the reviewers of the EI theory as it is believed to contribute significantly to a person personality even from diverse backgrounds (Geher, 2004; Joseph & Newman, 2010; Matthews et al., 2002).

2.2.1.2 The Emotional-Social Intelligence Mixed Model (Bar-On, 1997)

The EI model proposed by Bar-On is a mixed model of EI. Compared to the earlier mentioned Mayer and Salovey's model (1997), Bar-On's (1997) EI model is much broader and more extensive which integrates both the emotions and social capability. For instance, Bar-On define EI as

“a cross-section of interrelated emotional and social competencies, skills and facilitators that determine how effectively we understand and express ourselves, understand others and relate with them, and cope with daily demands”

(Bar-On, 2006: 14)

Bar-On's (1997) model concludes the interconnection between the emotions and a person characteristic. He believed that these two is connected with each other. In his model, Bar-On suggested that the emotional and social intelligence consists of five factors. These Bar-On's (1997) factors are separated into fifteen sub-factors and as listed below:

1. The capability of detecting and recognizing own emotions is called the *Intrapersonal skills*. It consists of five sub-factors which is *Self-Regards, Emotional Self-Awareness, Assertiveness, Independence* and *Self-Actualization*;
2. The capability realizing and understanding of others' emotions and sentiments is called *Interpersonal skills*. It consists of three sub-factors which is *Empathy, Social Responsibility* and *Interpersonal Relationship*;

3. The capability to cope with emotional disturbances and manage feelings is called *Stress Management*. It consists of two sub-factors which is *Stress Tolerance* and *Impulse Control*;
4. The capability to adapt with changes in emotions in accordance to different conditions and circumstances is called *Adaptability*. It consists of three sub-factors which is *Reality Testing*, *Flexibility* and *Problem-Solving*;
5. The capability of having and showing positive emotions, besides being able to look at the bright side in difficult situations is called *General Mood*. It consists of two sub-factors which is *Optimism* and *Happiness*.

2.2.1.3 The Emotional Competencies Mixed Model (Goleman, 1995)

Inspired by Salovey and Mayer work in 1990, Daniel Goleman explore deeper on the EI theory. Although in the beginning Goleman agrees with Mayer and Salovey model, he then suggested his own model of EI that consists of four EI constructs in 1998. Goleman (1998) outlines of the four main EI constructs is shown as below:

1. *Self-awareness* is the capability to identify own emotions; understand its effects and use their own judgment in making choices.
2. *Self-management* is the capability to control own emotions and urges, besides being able to adjust to change in conditions.
3. *Social awareness* is the capability to detect, comprehend and respond to others emotions, besides the ability to connect socially.
4. *Relationship management* is the capability to motivate, persuade and develop others, besides the ability to handle conflict.

In addition to that, Goleman (2001) postulates that EI is an ability that can be taught and which, in return would yield success in the working environment. He believed that with high EI, individuals could achieve greater success in their career.

Although these three models have diverse argument on the basis of what EI really is, they do overlap with one another in some areas. It could be seen that the primary differences between these three theories are; (a) Mayer and Salovey's idea emphasizes solely on the interaction between emotional qualities and cognitive abilities, while (b) Goleman's and Bar-On's theories comprise of motivation, emotion and cognition that includes some human characteristics such as faith, positivism and selflessness.

Not only there are some differences in the theories among these three models, the measurement instruments that were used to measure EI differ too. In which, Mayer and Salovey ability model used the *Mayer, Salovey, Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test* (MSCEIT) as the measurement inventory. MSCEIT tests the subject by asking them to recognize a person facial expression and try to relate it to the person emotions in a given picture (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2002). The subject is tested whether he could understand a person's feelings simply by observing their facial looks. Besides that, the test assesses subject's evaluation on how different actions could results in different outcomes when there is involvement of other people. Also, the subject is required to evaluate the importance of emotional management in controlling our behaviour in various circumstances. Although MSCEIT is a well-known EI inventory, there are many criticisms on the MSCEIT's capacity to really measures an individuals' EI due to few factors such as the validity and reliability of the questions in the inventory (Conte, 2005; Geher, 2004; Matthews et al., 2002). As for the Bar-On's mixed-model of EI, the Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-*i*) was used as the measurement inventory. The EQ-*i* is identical to the Goleman's *Emotional Competencies Inventory* as both inventories are measuring the outcomes of EI instead of measuring the EI itself. For instance, it measures the subject's ability to have a good interaction with others and how well he collaborates with others. However, similar to the MSCEIT, the EQ-*i* received many critics on its ability to accurately measures a person's EI too (Geher, 2004). Aside from these two inventory, Boyatzis, Goleman and Rhee developed the *Emotional Competence Inventory* (ECI), a multi-rater feedback tool that assesses the emotional capabilities and social behaviour (Boyatzis & Sala, 2004). Unlike the MSCEIT and EQ-*i*, the ECI uses 360-degree measurement methods, which consist of self-report test, peer ratings, and supervisor ratings (Boyatzis & Sala, 2004). Researches on the ECI factors shows that it is correlated to the 'Big Five' personality dimensions of *meticulousness*, *emotional steadiness*, *extraversion*, and *frankness* (Matthews et al., 2002). Besides that, it has few similar characteristics with the other theories in the field of psychology such as in motivation and leadership (Matthews et al., 2002).

In conclusion, although there are many measurement tools available that claims to measure the EI of an individual, its capability to accurately measures EI is still being debated by many researchers in the related fields (Conte, 2005; Dasborough & Ashakansy, 2003; Geher, 2004; Matthews et al., 2002). For instance, there are currently few theories on measuring EI with only few similarities between them. This distinctive dissimilarity between the measurements of EI has further added to the arguments.

It is important to notice that the measurement tools that are used to evaluate the changes in participant's EI from a training program is really essentials. As can be seen from the reviews, some EI measuring tools measured a person traits and not their ability, for example, the ECI includes the measurement of the subject's characteristics such as conscientiousness. In such cases, the measurement used should really measure the level of EI that had resulted from the training rather than measuring the individual's traits. As traits are somewhat unalterable, the researcher might not be able to see significant results from the training and this would definitely affects the accuracy of the results and the outcomes of the training.

3. Discussion and Conclusion

Referring to the discussion on EI theories in the previous section, it is found that although the above mentioned models exist separately, there are some resemblance and connection in its theory between these three models. In fact, the similarity and connections between aspects of the three major EI models has been proven through few data analysis (Marc A. Brackett & Mayer, 2003). Apparently, all the three models have the same ideas on some of the key factors that contributed to EI and agreed with it. For instance, all the models concluded that EI is somehow associated with the understanding and dealing of emotions either in self or in others. Overall, the three models intended to understand and determine the basics of the identification and regulation of own emotions; as well as understandings of others' emotions (Goleman, 2001).

Besides the similarity in its theories and models, it is also found that the EI measurement tools are correlated with each other and measured almost the same components too. For instance, a considerable resemblance have been detected among the '*regulation of emotion*' sub-scale in the MSCEIT and the '*interpersonal EQ*' sub-scale in the Bar-On's EQ-*i* (Marc A. Brackett & Mayer, 2003). Additionally, more similarities are being seen between the EI self-report measurement tools. For example, the correlation between the EQ-*i* and the *Schutte Self-report Emotional Intelligence Test* (SSEIT), which followed Mayer & Salovey's EI model were reported to be quite significant ($r = .43$) (Mark A. Brackett, Mayer, & Warner, 1998). These findings proved that there are some similarity between all the three models and their measurements despite their discrepancy in the idea of EI.

Looking at the three of the most significant theories and its measurement's instruments in the field of EI, it is important to understand the significance of applying these ideas in the workplace. Although some researcher argued on the EI theory (e.g. Harmon, 2000; Matthews et al., 2002; Murphy & Sideman, 2006), there are many rationales to clarify the quick and extensive dispersal of the term EI in the business industry. In fact, studies have been done to evaluate the importance of EI in various setting. For instance, it has been found that EI is the basis for many personal qualities such as self-esteem, self-motivation, self-determination, understanding own capabilities, and having good relationship with others (Cherniss & Adler, 2000). In addition to that, Cross and Travaglione (2003) stated that EI is a very important factor in creating a successful working environment. Furthermore, many other researchers support and validates the importance of EI in individual and working environment success (Cherniss & Goleman, 2001; Dulewicz & Higgs, 2010; Hein, 1996; Henry, 2011; Howells, 2007; Weinberger, 2009). Besides that, many professionals have recognized the significance and magnitude of emotional capability in their workplace success (Fernandez-Berrocal & Extremera, 2006). Therefore, EI has turn into an acceptable and appropriate theory in organization and education (Caruso & Salovey, 2004). Thus, EI should be carefully studied and understand to get the most benefit out of it.

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