THE IMPACT OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE ON CAREER ASPIRATION AND EMPLOYABILITY

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Introduction

The concept of EI was first developed and presented by the psychologist Mayer (Mayer et al. 1990), who defined EI as an individual's ability to monitor his/her own and others' emotions, discriminate between the positive and negative effects of emotions and use emotional information to guide his/her thoughts and actions.

Emotional intelligence is a type of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use the information to guide one's thinking and actions (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). High emotional intelligence can contribute to a student in the learning process (Goleman, 1996; Elias, Ubriaco, Reese et al., 1992, Svetlana,2007)

Emotional intelligence

Emotional intelligence (EI) can be described as being about a set of non-cognitive abilities that influence the individual's capacity to be successful in life. Although it is clear that EI works synergistically with IQ to enhance overall performance, it is argued that EI can be measured and it can be learned and it is this ability that differentiates exceptional from mediocre ability and achievement. The concept of emotional intelligence (EI) has been popularized by the authors Daniel Goleman (1995) and Susie Orbach (1999). However, the origins of the term go back beyond the work of these well known contemporary writers. Prior to the work of Goleman and Orbach, several models of emotional intelligence were being developed and refined, most notably the ability model (Mayer and Kilpatrick 1994).

Salovey and Mayer's research on the subject concluded that emotional intelligence is an actual intelligence, in so much as it can be measured through an ability test (Salovey and Mayer 1997). This test, known as the MSCEIT (Mayer, Salovey, Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test) was based on the ability model of EI that comprises perceiving and identifying emotions; assimilating and using emotions; understanding emotions and managing emotions. These issues

have been the subject of recent neurobiological research (for example, Damasio 1995) and continue to be of interest to psychologists (Bar-On and Parker 2000), psychotherapists (Freshwater and Robertson 2002) and social scientists alike.

Scholars tend to view emotional intelligence as a factor which has a potential to contribute to more positive attitudes, behaviors and outcomes. At the same time, as Schutte et al. (2002) note, "evidence exists that emotional intelligence can be conceptualized as either ability (Ciarrochi et al., 2000; Mayer et al., 1999) or a personality trait (Schutte and Malouff, 1999; Schutte et al., 1998)". The most comprehensive discussion about this issue is provided by a recent study of Mayer et al. (2000). As indicated, however, this issue has not yet resolved. In this study, I rather view emotional intelligence as a competency that is expected to augment positive attitudes toward work, and drive positive behaviors and better outcomes.

The concept of emotional Intelligence goes back to early studies in the 1920s (for a review, see Bar-On and Parker, 2000). In the early 1980s, scholars began to systematically conceptualize the idea of emotional intelligence. Notably, Gardner's (1983) conceptualization of intrapersonal intelligence and interpersonal intelligence and Steiner (1984) work on emotional literacy were the building blocks of what Salovey and Mayer (1989-1990) first termed as emotional intelligence. Based on Bar-On's previous work, Bar-On et al. (2000, p. 1108) view emotional intelligence as a noncognitive intelligence which is defined 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". This study focuses on the conceptualization suggested by Salovey and Mayer (1989-1990) and formulated in 1997 (Mayer and Salovey, 1997).

Salovey and Mayer (1989-1990, p. 189) defined emotional intelligence 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". Later on, they refined and defined emotional intelligence as "the ability to perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thoughts, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth" (Mayer and Salovey, 1997, p. 5). A key construct in their definition that we need to explain is "emotions". According to Van Maanen and Kunda (1989, p. 53), emotions are

"ineffable feelings of the self-referential sort", and are comprehensively defined as "self-referential feelings an actor (employee) experiences or, at least, claims to experience in regard to the performances he or she brings off in the social world". States of feeling refer to basic emotions (e.g. joy, love, anger) and social emotions (e.g.shame, guilt, jealousy, envy), as well as to related constructs as affect, sentiments and moods (Ashforth and Humphrey, 1995).

Career aspiration

Within **social cognitive career theory (SCCT)** , career aspirations can be viewed as distal goal mechanisms, which are the mechanisms by which people organize their career-related behavior and sustain this behavior in the absence of immediate reinforcement. Furthermore, SCCT postulates important reciprocal relations among self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and goal mechanisms (Lent et al., 1994). Within the career literature, career aspirations have been defined in a number of ways.

However, O'Brien (1996) articulated a need to study career aspirations from the perspective of career advancement behavior and attitudes beyond simply asking participants their commitment to a specific career choice and coding this choice according to its traditionality or prestige. Much of this argument is based on how women's career choice has been investigated in the literature, with the majority of the research studies concentrating on whether women choose to pursue male-dominated professions (nontraditional) versus female-dominated professions (traditional). O'Brien reconceptualized career aspirations to include the degree to which women aspire to leadership positions and further education within their careers. Although within SCCT, career aspirations can be viewed as distal goal mechanisms that are identified remotely in time from actual career entry, (Lent et al., 1994) these goal mechanisms may be a strong motivating factor in the career and educational behavior of adolescents and young adults, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The reconceptualization of career aspirations from this perspective may be of particular interest in studying rural Appalachian youth, especially because poverty for this group has often been linked with lack of educational and career advancement ambitions and opportunities (Thorne et al., 2007). Furthermore, the decline in previously lucrative manufacturing and mining jobs may result in students wanting to change their career plans from manufacturing and mining jobs to

professional career opportunities. However, because of their background, learning experiences, and possibly low levels of social support, these students may lack information or confidence in their abilities to advance in professional careers and thus may end up abandoning higher career aspirations for more immediate low wage job opportunities. According to SCCT, self-efficacy beliefs and outcome expectations could be major factors that influence these decisions. Therefore, it is important to investigate these relationships and determine the degree to which career aspirations (conceptualized as career and educational advancement) are influenced by SCCT factors. Understanding the sociocognitive factors that influence these career aspirations may assist vocational psychologists in designing interventions that facilitate rural Appalachian students in thinking more broadly about future career opportunities.

Employability

Dearing (1997) linked employability to the acquisition of skills for life. He recommended that higher education focus on key skills which were the 'key to the future success of graduates whatever they intend to do in later life' (p133). Skills identified included: communication skills, numeracy, information technology, learning how to learn/personal development planning, problem solving and team working.

While acknowledging Dearing's recommendation, Hillage & Pollard (1998) suggested that employability should also be considered in terms of knowledge and attitudes. "In simple terms, employability is about being capable of getting and keeping fulfilling work. More comprehensively employability is the capability to move self-sufficiently within the labour market to realise potential through sustainable employment."' (p2).

Bowden et al (2000) emphasised that employability should not just be concerned with preparing graduates to be successful in the labour market but also about preparing them to contribute to society as a citizen. They defined employability as a set of graduate attributes; 'the qualities, skills and understandings a university community agrees its students would desirably develop during their time at the institution and, consequently, shape the contribution they are able to make to their profession and as a citizen' (par 1).

Knight and Yorke (2003) not only proposed a definition for employability but also a framework for embedding it into the curriculum. Their definition is widely quoted and still used today: "A

set of achievements - skills, understandings and personal attributes - that make individuals more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy." (p5).

While there are variations in the classification of employability, there is a broad understanding of what qualities, characteristics, skills and knowledge constitute employability both in general, and specifically for graduates.

Employers expect graduates to have technical and discipline competences from their degrees but require graduates also to demonstrate a range of broader skills and attributes that include team-working, communication, leadership, critical thinking, problem solving and managerial abilities.

• It is arguable that specific definitions are less important than an agreed focus on approaches to promote such transferable skills and fostering attributes that will enable graduates to find appropriate employment, progress in their work and thus facilitate the success of their organizations and contribute to society and the economy.

EI & career aspiration

The effort to deal in a systematic fashion with the specific issue of career choice has led to the development of distinct research paradigms (Kuhn, 1962) and attitudes within career counseling that, historically, have discounted clients' emotional experiences in favor of "rational models" of career choice. Although many theorists have argued that personal counseling and career counseling are intimately enmeshed, the common perception that career choice is, or should be, a predominately rational process still remains among many practitioners and the general public. Although standard techniques, such as interest and value assessment, information seeking, and self-exploration techniques, may suffice to help some clients, we posit that a deeper exploration of the emotions associated with career choice will provide many clients with a more useful and meaningful intervention. Clients often struggle with issues such as dependency, locus of control, identity formation, and chronic indecision that may be linked to maladaptive emotional schemas unlikely to be identified using standard career assessment techniques. Introducing a framework of EI into the counseling relationship can be useful as it can help identify clients who may have difficulty perceiving and working with emotions. At a general level, the counselor's role can be viewed as helping clients to understand the interrelatedness of their personal and career issues. In

relation to emotions and career choice, the role can be framed as helping clients better understand how their emotional reactions influence their career choices and how understanding and working with their emotional reactions can facilitate various aspects of the career decision process that can lead them to better career decisions.

Having a framework for screening clients on EI-related constructs helps counselors identify clients who may need a more focused intervention to increase specific aspects of EI. For those higher in EI, such interventions may be unnecessary, whereas those lower in EI may benefit from techniques that encourage them to evoke and work with specific emotions related to the career choice process, as well as more deeply explore the meaning of their emotional reactions.

Techniques such as keeping a "feeling journal," examining the rationality of the appraisals they make in relation to their emotional reactions, identifying their patterns for dealing with negative emotions such as anxiety, as well as providing clients with tools for more systematically reflecting on their current and past emotional experiences may all be helpful in raising the emotional self-awareness that we feel is key to effective career decision making. Techniques that serve to focus the client on the physiological manifestations of various emotions (e.g., racing heart) may also help clients to recognize and label their emotional experiences.

Incorporating others' perspectives (e.g., through the use of 360-degreefeedback techniques) may also help those with limited emotional self-awareness to gain insight into their emotional lives.

Because research on the correlation between client psychological distress and presentation for career counseling has been virtually nonexistent, most career counselors do not typically assess affect-related variables beyond job/life satisfaction.

A recent study (Multon, Heppner, Gysbers, Zook, & Ellis-Kalton, 2001) found that 60% of adult clients (mean age = 33 years) presenting for career counseling were labeled "psychologically distressed." This finding highlights the need for counselors to be trained not only in career assessment skills but also in the diagnosis of psychological distress and psychopathology, as well as EI. Although assessment of EI and related constructs such as alexithymia may be a part of such an assessment, they by no means cover the full range of appropriate psychological assessments that could be used to gain a greater understanding of issues that may facilitate or inhibit effective career decision making. Research from the stress and coping literature has also consistently shown that positive affect promotes effective coping behaviors and reduces defensiveness, both of which we assume facilitate effective career decision making. We assume

that helping clients better understand their emotional reactions to the career choice process, as well as providing them with tools and techniques for increasing their emotional self-awareness, will also facilitate the process of career choice.

The current study sought to document the effectiveness of an EI training program, specifically created by Di Fabio (2010) and inspired by the Mayer and Salovey (1997) model. Consistent with the Mayer and Salovey model (1997) and prior research (Brown et al., 2003; Di Fabio & Blustein, 2010; Di Fabio & Palazzeschi, 2008, 2009b; Emmerling & Cherniss, 2003), we hypothesized that the program participants would demonstrate an increase in EI and a decrease in indecisiveness and career decisional problems. We assessed EI through both the Italian version (D'Amico & Curci, in press) of a performance measure of EI, developed by Mayer et al. (2002), and a self-report measure of EI based on the model of Salovey and Mayer (1990). The inclusion of a self-report measure of EI provided information on whether students perceived changes in their own EI. By assessing indecisiveness and career decision difficulties, the importance of EI training and its potential relevance to a contextually and developmentally relevant career development task could also be assessed.

The findings lend support to our hypotheses and suggest that the intervention contributes to the hypothesized effects, with students participating in the training demonstrating increases in both ability-based and self-reported EI. The gains in ability-based intelligence are consistent with the Mayer and Salovey (1997) model and previous findings (Mayer et al., 2002). More specifically, the students who participated in the training showed a significant increase in all of the EI abilities that were targeted in the intervention and evaluated by the MSCEIT. Moreover, these data contributefurther evidence that EI can be increased through specific training (Bar-On, 1997; Cobb & Mayer, 2000; Mayer et al., 2002; Salovey & Sluyter, 1997). In particular, it seems that brief training (of only 10 hr for this program) can improve ability-based EI.

Moreover, the training also demonstrated increases in self-reported EI, particularly with regard to the appraisal and expression of emotions dimension in the EIS Total Score. Although the assessment of EI programs should not rely on self-report measures, which are often limited by accurate self awareness (Mayer et al., 2008), our findings suggest that students are aware of some gains in their own EI following training. EI training can thus provide an immediate, perceived benefit in enhancing understanding of others' emotions and one's capacity to accurately express emotions. It is noteworthy that the training program was followed by gains in

the regulation of emotions and use of emotions in problem solving as assessed by ability measures but not by self-report measures. It is not clear whether participants overestimated their abilities in these domains prior to the intervention or whether they did not accurately perceive the gains they had achieved.

EI & employability

Yorke & Knight (2002) list emotional intelligence as one aspect of employability under their personal qualities section but it could be suggested that it in fact subsumes many of the other personal qualities listed and some of the process skills listed too. As such it deserves a much higher profile. Research has shown that people with high levels of emotional intelligence motivate themselves and others to achieve more. They also enjoy more career success, build stronger personal relationships and enjoy better health than those with low levels of emotional intelligence (Cooper, 1997). Jaeger (2003, p.634) demonstrated that emotional intelligence can be improved through teaching and learning in a higher educational setting and is positively correlated with academic achievement. She suggests that:

"Enhancing emotional intelligence is a desirable outcome for students, employees and employers."

Tucker, Sojka, Barone and McCarthy (2000, p.336) state that:

"As educators, we want our students to graduate with a solid foundation in the knowledge and skills they will need to be productive managers and effective leaders. By implementing emotional intelligence theory and exercises, faculty will help students become well - rounded graduates."

Research indicated that individuals' employability is driven by their values and identity, and their ability to adapt to changing circumstances (McArdle et al. 2007; Tomlinson 2007). Considering that both career anchors and emotional intelligence are regarded as important career meta-competencies that drive people's career decisions and experiences of career satisfaction (Coetzee 2008), it is hypothesised that these two variables may be significantly related to employability satisfaction.

EI is concerned with the ability to perceive, understand and manage emotion, both in ourselves and others. I've written elsewhere about why it's important that we ensure our students are

aware of EI. We also need to give them opportunities to develop EI so that they achieve their aspirations for the future, particularly in relation to work. Empirical research demonstrates that higher levels of EI are related to better workplace performance, engagement, decision making, stress resilience, conflict management, team working and leadership. Providing students with EI training can result in more positive outcomes in a job recruitment situation. Interestingly, a recent study has found that students with higher levels of EI go on to earn better salaries ten to twelve years after graduation.

Discussion and Conclusion

The major goal of this study was to look at the extent to that a important element of social control skills emotional intelligence is associated in building the career aspiration and employability. Given the argument that emotional intelligence and employ-ability skills is instructed and learnt (Ashkanasy & Daus, 2005;Pool & Sewell, 2007; coastal diving bird, 2003; philosopher, 2005), which this analysis supports the important role of feeling within the demonstration of employability skills and behaviors, career aspiration that increase the emotional intelligence and employability of adolescents World Health Organization are getting ready to enter the globe of labor by serving to them to develop self-empowering career attitudes, skills and behaviors.

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