Impact of Emotional Intelligence on Training Effectiveness and Performance

Beenish Malik
PhD scholar,
Institute of Management Sciences,
University of Baluchistan, Quetta

Jahanvash Karim, PhD
Institute of Management Sciences,
University of Baluchistan, Quetta.

Zainab Bibi, PhD
Institute of Management Sciences,
University of Baluchistan, Quetta.

Jan Mohammad, PhD
Institute of Management Sciences,
University of Baluchistan, Quetta.

Abstract
Emotional intelligence (EI) is an important factor in predicting the human behavior at work. This research paper is intended to find out the link between self-reported Emotional intelligence (EI), learning from training and supervisors’ rated performance with task and contextual job factors of a sample of 204 full-time employees. Hypothesized relationships were tested using Sequential Equation Model (SEM). Result shows that Emotional intelligence EI has strong relationship with learning outcomes, perceived ease and work performance. In addition, results also indicate that perceived usefulness and perceived ease affect the learning process that ultimately leads towards the job performance.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence, performance, learning, perceived usefulness, training

I. Introduction
In this era of rapid technological changes and intense competition, the optimum use of human resource has become a matter of vital importance to the contemporary organizations (Punia & Kant, 2013). Employees’ skills need to be continuously improved to keep pace with today’s changing environment. Organizations have recognized that training offers a way of developing skills, enhancing productivity to achieve business results.

Training is a planned activity undertaken by an organization in order to facilitate its workers by enhancing the level of their competencies through skill development (Gritz, 1993). Training bridges the gap between job requirement and employee present specifications (Punia & Saurabh, 2013). Training is beneficial in several ways. Training activities help employees in their career development (Tharenou, 1997); enhance
employees’ productivity (Ng & Siu, 2004); help organizations accomplish competitive advantage (Barney, 1995); and ultimately help organizations achieve business objectives (Dobson & Toh, 1998). These results can be achieved, however, only when training is effective.

Training effectiveness is defined as the degree to which the training accomplishes the pre-defined objectives or the expected results (Punia & Kant, 2013). Many factors affect the effectiveness of training both on part of the trainees and trainers. These factors include: training design (Partlow, 1996; Tihanyi et al., 2000; Boudreau, Boswell, & Judge, 2001) emotions (Elder, 1997); and emotional Intelligence (Mayor & Salovey, 1997).

Emotional skills are associated with success in many areas of life, including teaching, learning, and relationships (Ashkanasy & Dasborough, 2003; Scott, 2004). Research indicates that emotional intelligence is a stronger predictor of on-job performance (Goleman, 1998); academic success (Berenson, Boyles & Weaver, 2008). EI has recently got extended popularity as a personality characteristic in connection with learning and performance. In short, emotional intelligence is strongly associated with performance and training outcomes due to certain psychological states of trainees including motivation, self-efficacy and perceived control (Saks & Haccoun, 2007).

Keeping this in perspective, the objective of this study is to assess the direct impact of level of trainees’ EI on learning outcomes and work performance. Moreover, the study intends to examine the indirect relationship of EI through perceived ease of using tools and usefulness with learning outcomes and hence employees’ job performance. Although studies have been conducted on the relationship of these variables but no study, to the best my knowledge, has been conducted examining thoroughly the relationships of all these variables with EI as predictor of learning outcomes, perceived ease of use and usefulness of trainings focusing in a single study.

II. Conceptual background and hypotheses:

Training has received a lot of attention and many researchers are working to explore different dimensions that are associated with the different models of training and development. A famous model developed by Baldwin and Ford (1988) describes how the training transfer process takes place. In this model, they linked the learning with the different transfer conditions like characteristics of trainees, work environment and training design. They segregated input factors that transform into training outcomes.

According to Browne and Cudeck (1993) competence and meta-competence work as predictors of effectiveness and these concepts have been proven by the other researchers (e.g. Barney, 1995; Kirkpatrick, 1976) as performance measurement and effectiveness to individual competency level and job demands. Skills measurement and characteristics of personnel support in predicting the performance is difficult task (Fraser, 2000). The measurement of effectiveness is multidimensional and is aligned with performance elements but its subjective part of evaluation relates with the measure of tangible results and achievements that can accrue through proper utilization of training (Werner, 1994).
The term emotional intelligence was used for the first time in an academic article by John Mayer and Peter Salovey (1990). Mayer & Salovey (1997) defined emotional intelligence as “the ability to perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional meanings, and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote both better emotion and thought” (p. 22). Emotional intelligence (EI) has gained much attention in the last few decades and fascinated the academia and researchers (e.g., Cooper & Sawaf, 1996; Davies, Stankov & Roberts, 1998; Goleman, 1995, 1998; Mayer, 1999), but there is still a long debate over the importance, reliability and validity of tools that measure the EI (Slaski & Cartwright, 2002; Wong & Law, 2002). The enthusiasm generated around EI to date appears to far exceed the empirical support for its use in organizational settings. The formal definition of emotional intelligence is the ability of a person to identify, express and regulate positive and negative emotions in self as well as in others (Matthews, Zeidner, & Roberts, 2002).

Perceived usefulness refers to “the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would enhance his or her job performance” (Davis, 1989, p.320). Perceived ease of use is defined as “the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would be free of effort” (Davis, 1989, p.320). This research study assumes the perceived behavioral control as perceived ease or difficulty of applying the learned skills during training at work place. Ajzen (1991) proposed that behavioral control is a dominant construct which has two components: controllability and self-efficacy. According to him “Self efficacy is perception of ease or difficulty of performing a particular behavior” (Ajzen, 1991, p.860).

The proposed model for the study is derived from the study of different concepts including training, development and workers performance. Different frameworks of training’s impact on performance mostly show the direct relationship between them. Mayer and Caruso (1999) proposed that emotional intelligence is not a birth characteristic but can be settled through training. Elder (1997) suggests that emotions play a substantial role in the ability to learn materials and tasks and thus can expedite learning. Moreover, the way learner uses emotions also influences his/her capacity to learn. In this regard, the most valuable research work undertaken from famous study of Kirkpatrick (1976, 1996). Learning in a training setting refers to acquiring new skills and knowledge and modifying existing ones (Bramley, 1996; Carnevale & Schulz, 1990; Hamblin, 1974). Emotional intelligence is positively correlated with learning ability of a person. For this research study, a widely studied model of EI proposed by Mayer & Salovey (1997) is suggested. This model covers four common EI abilities: (1) Identifying emotions; (2) Using emotions; (3) Understanding emotions, and (4) Managing emotions. Emotionally intelligent people use the power of emotions to improve thinking processes that ultimately enhance learning ability (Mayor & Salovey, 1997). The first hypothesis of the study is:

H1: Emotional intelligence is positively related to the level of trainees’ learning.

This research study investigates that whether emotional intelligence enhances the learning impact Spector (2005) and whether trainees learning relate with, perceived usefulness and ease of tools used in training and how these can enhance the performance of trainees in terms post training outcomes.
For the perceived ease of use the famous technology acceptance model (TAM) is commonly used. This model is based on the theory of reasoned action (TRA) (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) and is considered as initial version of the theory of planned behavior (TPB). Though, TAM was initially developed to measure the technology acceptance, but was also applied in the field of management education (Arbaugh, 2000, 2005). The TAM proposes that if an individual perceives a specific tool as easy to use (Ajzen, 1991) his perception about usefulness of that tool increases. This proposes a positive relationship between perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness. By applying this assumption in the study, it can be assumed that if an individual perceives that the uses of new tools are easy, then the perceived significance of those tools also increases. Therefore, the following hypothesis is developed:

H2: Perceived ease of use is positively related to perceived usefulness.

Venkatesh and Morris (2000) has explored that perceived ease of use is associated with the perception of usefulness of training that enhances learning process. Davis (1989) pointed out that perceived ease of use was directly associated with its usage and usefulness. Therefore, to see that trainees’ perception of usefulness has a link with learning of individuals post training outcomes, the following hypothesis is developed:

H3: Perceived usefulness of training is positively related to learning.

Prior research on job performance has produced a variety of construct related to job performance (Borman & Brush, 1993; Campbell, 1990; Hemphill, 1959; Katzell, Barrett, Vann, & Hogan, 1968; Luthans & Lockwood, 1984; Morse &Wagner, 1978; Prien, 1963; Wofford, 1970). Job performance is very necessary element for organization success. The study desires conceptualization of job performance that comprises of task and contextual performance and the link of emotional intelligence in increasing the performance of individuals for which the following hypothesis is proposed.

H4: Emotional intelligence of trainees is positively related to the work performance.

Research in the field of trainings has explored a positive association between learning and post training outcomes, (Colquitt, LePine, & Noe, 2000; Noe and Schmitt, 1986; Velada & Caetano, 2007). Similarly, a study by Velada and Caetano (2007) has established a positive relationship between perceived learning, training transfer and improved performance. Noe and Schmitt (1986) have proved in their research that learning has positive relation with job performance. Another study by Colquitt et al. (2000) indicates that job performance and transfer of knowledge are positively correlated with skill acquired during training. Thus the following research hypothesis is developed:

H5: The level of trainees learning after the training is positively related to performance.

Perceived ease is the degree of belief of a person that applying that tool would be effortless (Davis, 1989). As compared to normal person, an emotionally intelligent counterpart can better understand the ease of use of tools introduced during the training.
Therefore it is hypothesized that emotional intelligence has positive relationship with ease of use (Mayor & Salovey, 1993).

H6: Emotional intelligence is positively related with perceived ease

III. Methodology

For the data collection a survey through questionnaire was employed. The questionnaire used was the adapted version of different existing research in order to ensure the content validity of instrument. For further validity of the items in questionnaire, six questionnaires were circulated as a pretest. Two PhD scholars, three PhD teachers from academia and two members from administrative staff were asked to review all the items for ambiguity, readability and structure and syntax perspective. As a result, some modifications were made. The final version of questionnaire was circulated for data collection.

Two versions of questionnaire were circulated for the research study. The first one comprised of two sections i.e. demographics section, and section dealing with EI, learning, perceive ease and perceived usefulness. The second one covered all aspects of performance. The first questionnaire was self-rated while the second was others rated. The later was rated by the supervisors and colleagues.

IV. Measures

A. Job Performance

A detailed scale of job performance was adopted from Tett et al (2000). Supervisor and bosses were asked to rate the performance of their employees. The scale comprised of 39 items measuring the task and contextual behaviors of employees. The task behavior included Productivity, Project Management, Professionalism and Flexibility while the contextual behaviors included Positive Thinking, Initiative, Normative Support, Loyalty and Extra Effort.

Sample items included maximizing productivity and achieving work-related goals, accepting responsibility for one’s own actions and decisions, and directions to co-workers. For the study the composite score for performance was used (average of all 39 items). Coefficient alphas for the task and contextual behavior were .94 and .93 respectively. Cronbach alpha for overall performance scales was .96. All items were
measured on 5-point Likert scale, ranging from one (strongly disagree) to five (strongly agree).

B. Learning impact of training provisions

Five items were adopted from the ‘course experience questionnaire’ (Wilson et al., 1997) to measure the learning impact of the training provision. These five items covered the extent through which learner can improve, Problem skills, Planning skills, Analytical skills, Idea generation and communication skills. The same 5-point Likert scale for the measurement was used. The Coefficients alpha for the learning impact of training provision was .94.

C. Emotional intelligence

The construct Emotional intelligence was measured through the scale developed by Wong & Law (2002). This scale consists of 16 items. In organizational research, WLEIS is considered to be the shortest measure of Emotional Intelligence. The WLEIS measures four broad dimensions of Emotional Intelligence: Appraisals of Self-Emotion, Other’s Emotion, Use of emotion, and Emotion Regulations. Again, 5-point Likert scale was used and the coefficients alpha for the construct was 90.

D. Perceived usefulness

The construct, Perceived usefulness was adopted from the study of Davis (1989). Perceived usefulness is related to the idea that how the trainees perceive the use of skills introduced during trainings. All items related to perceived usefulness were measured on 5-point Likert scale and the coefficients alpha for the construct was 83.

E. Perceived ease

Three indicators of Perceived ease were adopted from the scale developed by Davis (1989). The construct measured the impact of perception of trainees in terms of ease in connection with performance tool. The same scale was used and the coefficients alpha for the construct was .65.

V. Unit of Analysis and Sampling

In total, 235 questionnaires were distributed among respondents and only 204 filled questionnaires were received, representing the response rate as 86.8%. 49% of the respondents were female and 51% were male. The average age of respondent’s was 36.7 years with Standard Deviation (SD) as 8.37 years. SPSS 16.0 versions was used for statistical analysis. Data was analyzed for the measurement of Cronbach alpha coefficients in order to test the reliability and evaluate the internal consistency of the scale. 23.5% trainees were required to attend the trainings and 76.5% were opted to attend the trainings. 58.3% of respondents were those who attended more than five trainings.

Pearson correlation was used to analyze the extent of relationship among the factors of interest such as, learning impact of training provisions, perceived usefulness, perceived ease, emotional intelligence and performance. Table 1 displays the correlation and mean value amongst the variables. The mean value for the perceived usefulness is (m=4.23) that is higher than perceived ease (m=4.09). The mean for the task performance (m=4.11) is higher than the contextual performance (m=4.09). The overall performance mean value is 4.10. The results demonstrates that perceived usefulness is significantly
correlated with perceived ease (r = .67, P < .01). Similarly, task performance and contextual performance have significant relationship with perceived ease (r = .58, p < .01), (r=.52, p.01).

Table 1: Descriptive and Correlations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>EI</th>
<th>LN</th>
<th>PE</th>
<th>PU</th>
<th>TP</th>
<th>CP</th>
<th>OP</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EI</td>
<td>3.87</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td>.90</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>LN</td>
<td>4.37</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td>.63**</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>PE</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>.51**</td>
<td>.67**</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>PU</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td>.60**</td>
<td>.69**</td>
<td>.67**</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>TP</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td>.62**</td>
<td>.61**</td>
<td>.52**</td>
<td>.61**</td>
<td>.94</td>
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<tr>
<td>CP</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>.68</td>
<td>.70**</td>
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<td>.58**</td>
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<td>OP</td>
<td>4.10</td>
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Values in the diagonal are alpha coefficients; **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). EI=Emotional Intelligence, LN=Learning, PE=Perceived ease, PU=Perceived use, TP=Task Performance, CP=Contextual Performance, OP=Overall Performance

For the hypothesized model, Structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to check the maximum likelihood with AMOS 16 (Arbuckle, 2006). For the SEM analysis, Blunch (2009) suggested fit indices that describe the fit of the data in proposed model. As a general rule, goodness of fit is measured through chi-square statistic that measures the difference between observed and fitted data. However, due to the sensitivity of this measure to Type II error and sample size only good sample size (>200) can approximate a good fit which is also indicated by other fit indices like comparative fit index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), goodness-of-fit index (GFI) and root mean squared error of approximation (RMSEA ) that could employ to measure the model fit (Browne & Cudeck, 1993).

Figure 2: Standardized Path Estimates

As shown in the above figure, Emotional intelligence was significantly related to learning (β=.33, p<.05). Thus providing evidence to support Hypothesis 1. In hypothesis 2
perceived ease was positively associated with usefulness ($\beta=.96, p<.05$) that supports our hypothesis 2. Similarly, for the hypothesis 3, significant hypothesized relationship exists between perceived usefulness and learning ($\beta=.70, p<.05$). The direct relationship between emotional intelligence and performance is significant at ($\beta=.26, p<.05$) supporting hypothesis 4. Learning was significantly related to performance at ($\beta=.63, p<.05$) thus providing evidence for the support of Hypothesis 5. Emotional intelligence was significantly related to perceived ease at ($\beta=.73, p<.05$) thus providing for the support of Hypothesis 6.

The Fit indices accepted data model fit: $\chi^2/df=309.66/164$, TLI=.91, CFI=.92, RMSEA=.06. Moreover, the result indicated that emotionally intelligent people have strong ability to learn effectively and the perceived usefulness of the learned material play important role in leaning ability of individuals. Similarly, perceived ease and perceived usefulness have direct relationship and learning raise the performance level of individuals.

VI. Discussion

The results of this study clearly depict a significant and positive relationship between EI and employee performance. Our findings are very much in line with the prior researches on the relationship of these variables. (E.g. Eisenberg, Fabes, Guthrie & Reiser, 2000; Tett, 2000; Petrides & Furnham, 2001) found that individuals with high EI perform better than their counterparts. These findings prove that EI is a vital factor affecting employee performance at workplace.

In addition to the direct relationship between EI and Performance (Van Roy & Viswesvaran, 2004) this study also found a positive and striking association between EI and Training effectiveness (Trainees’ learning) that ultimately leads to improved job performance. This study supports the previous research findings that learners with high EI skills have a tendency to show comparatively better academic results than those with lower EI (e.g. Eisenberg et al., 2000). Emotions are significant to education and learning as they drive responsiveness which pushes learning and memory. Similarly, the emotion regulation ability helps learners to be more attentive during learning process (Nordhaug, 1989) and control their anxiety during assessment process (Lopes & Salovey, 2004).

The current study is also in conformity with Boud, Keogh, & Walker (1985) research which suggests that negative feelings may form negative approach towards learning. Moreover, it is obvious from this study that negative emotions can mislead perceptions and ultimately lead to incorrect interpretations of environment, events, and can even result into lower training outcomes. Also, the positive feelings and emotions have the potential to “greatly enhance the learning process and can keep the learner on the track and can provide a stimulus for new learning” (Boud et al., 1985, p. 11). Prior studies also indicate that EI is a significant element in the process of learning (DeTienne & Chandler, 2004; Corbett, 2005; Dimov, 2005; Rae, 2007). The ability to effectively manage emotions is vital for accomplishment of goals and targets (Goleman, 1995).

Results also indicated that employees’ performance is positively affected by Training. Scholars argue that training results in improved skills and knowledge of employees which benefit them not only to perform their present job in better way but also they are equipped for future job challenges (Aidah Nassazi, 2013). This improvement in
employees’ performance due to training activity also enhances overall organizational performance. The results of this study also revealed that there was a positive relationship between EI and perceived ease of use of new technology/tools/techniques and methods (Krueger, Reilly & Carsrud, 2000). It is a normal occurrence that usage of new tools is greatly influenced by an individual’s beliefs and perceptions (Saade’ & Bahli, 2005). The logic may be that emotionally intelligent people have more tendencies towards acceptance of new tools and techniques. Naresh Kumar (2012) in his study on B.ED teacher training argue that “An emotionally intelligent person have the desirable attitude. He is always optimistic in thinking and accepts the problems of life positively… he is more strong in the outlook and goals in comparison to pessimistic person”.

As hypothesized, a strong relationship was found between perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness. This finding is consistent with the TAM research (Venkatesh & Davis, 2002). It also suggests that perceived ease of using a tool can be a positive factor in developing the perception of usefulness of that tool. In general, the TAM theorizes (Krueger & Carsrud, 1993) that perceived usefulness (PU) influences attitudes (ATT) towards technology usage Straub (1994) and is an important determinant of individuals’ intentions to use the technology (Straub Keil. & Bernre, 1997). Some studies results also proved that students who perceived the system easier to use also perceive it be more useful (Saade’ & Bahli, 2005; Gelderman, 1998).

The results also showed a significant relationship between perceived usefulness and training effectiveness (learning) which is also aligning with the study of (Smith, 2006)? This result also support the Agarwal and Karahanna (2000), who revealed that the use of a system is greatly influenced by the perceived usefulness because of the individual’s belief that the usage will enhance his performance. In simple words there exists a relationship between perceived usefulness and learning effectiveness.

VII. Conclusion

The study examined the relationship of EI with training effectiveness, PEU affecting PU of tools and performance. The relationship between EI and all outcome variables were positively significant. Emotional intelligence emerged as an important element in the learning process. It is an array of person’s emotions, social competencies and skills that influence his ability to succeed in coping with environmental demands and pressures and directly affects his overall psychological well-being. Instructors in training sessions can utilize their own emotional intelligence in order to make trainees understand the concepts and skills and also stimulate the trainees’ learning skills. Hence, the capability to manage one’s own emotions and the emotions of others during training is an effective way of increasing the efficacy of trainings. The study results indicate that learning and performance (Khokhar& Kush, 2009) has strong positive relationship and shows that if proper learning takes place, the performance of individual will increase. Rarely any of the previous studies have explored the relationship of EI with perceived ease of using tool before which is an important addition to existing research on training and individual personality characteristics.

References


