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EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE: DOES IT FIT INTO RECRUITMENT PROCESS IN THE AIRLINES INDUSTRY?

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Existing literature show that there are various psychological factors that are important in the effective functioning of industrial/organizational set-up. Among the most important ones are the personality traits and cognitive abilities. But it is not possible to include all the important psychological variables in recruitment since that will be extremely time consuming and tiring on the part of the respondents. So, the challenge is to decide which personality traits and cognitive abilities are the best predictors of job performance. In this article I recommend a battery of psychological measures that include ability measure of ability model of emotional intelligence for recruitment in the airline industry to select the right candidates for increasing effective functioning of the personnel and the airline industry as a whole.

Key Words: Personality traits; cognitive ability; emotional intelligence; recruitment; airlines industry

Introduction

Some of the major issues in the airlines industry could include employee health (physical and mental), organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), job satisfaction, and productivity. These issues could be influenced by many factors including customer relations, fatigue (cabin crew and pilot), interpersonal skills, security (physical and psychological), personality traits, general mental ability (GMA), and emotional intelligence. This article briefly reviews the importance of personality, cognitive ability, and emotional intelligence in the workplace to examine whether the three variables are crucial in the airlines industry recruitment.

Personality

Today the most commonly employed personality inventory in psychological research is probably NEO Five-factor Inventory (Costa & McCrae, 1992), which is intended to measure five factors of personality, that is, openness to experience (O), conscientiousness (C), extraversion (E), agreeableness (A), and neuroticism (N). Many psychologists have utilized this inventory in various organizational researches that make us comfortable to draw some important conclusion about the validity of major personality dimensions in the workplace such as airlines industry. All the five dimensions of the Big Five model of personality could be related to better job performance depending on the type of job performance (cf., Tett & Burnett, 2003). For example, agreeableness might be related to job performance if the nature of the job requires helping customers and reliance on others for task completion as in the case of flight steward and airhostess. Emotional stability might be important where the job requires handling aggressive coworker/passenger and dealing with the atmosphere of uncertainty such as in the case of the plane being hijacked. Extraversion would facilitate a

job with energetic teamwork (e.g., the work of front office employees). A job with high quality task completion would require higher conscientiousness.

Cognitive ability

It is aged-old belief that intelligence is very important in every aspects of life. The concept of intelligence became very popular probably after the publication of Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale in the USA. Psychologists started measuring intelligence in terms of intelligence quotient (IQ) with the help of the formula, $CA/MA*100 = IQ$, where CA stands for chronological age and MA stands for mental age. Although there are many conceptualizations and measurement techniques of intelligence the most frequently utilized scales are the series of tests developed by David Weschler (e.g., Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale) in which he conceptualized intelligence as "the global or aggregate ability to think rationally, act purposefully, and deal effectively with the environment" (Wechsler, 1958, p...). In the organizational set-up the researchers also commonly employ Wonderlic Personnel Test and Raven's Progressive Matrices for the measurement of intelligence. In psychological literature the word intelligence is also frequently indicated by other names, that is, cognitive ability or general mental ability (GMA). Several psychologists have carried out carefully framed scientific researches to examine the importance of intelligence in occupational success (see, Hunter & Schmidt, 1996 for an extensive review). It is often concluded that intelligence is positively related to better job performance.

Emotional Intelligence at the Workplace

There are now multiple perspectives on emotional intelligence (Thingujam, 2002; 2004) but ability model of emotional intelligence will be utilized in

this article because other models are considered as repackages of the existing personality traits (McCrae, 2000; Thingujam, 2002; 2004). Ability model of emotional intelligence as defined by Mayer and Salovey (1997) comprised of four abilities, that is, perception of emotions (e.g., identifying emotions from facial expressions), understanding emotions (e.g., understanding the transition of emotion from one component to another, say, from anger to sadness in due course of time), using emotions to facilitate thinking process, and regulation of emotions. Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso (2002) developed a test to measure this ability model of emotional intelligence, called Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT). The test is an ability test and the most appropriate response to each emotional situation-related question is determined through consensus. The individual scores are expressed in terms of emotional intelligence quotient (EIQ). Emotional intelligence's relation to leadership, affective job outcomes, employee health, occupational stress, organizational citizenship behavior, and job performance is discussed below. Finally, empirical findings about emotional intelligence's relation with cognitive ability and personality are briefly presented.

Emotional intelligence and leadership. Mayer and Salovey (1997) believe that individuals with high emotional intelligence might be more successful while “communicating in interesting ways and at designing projects that involve infusing products with feelings and aesthetics” (p. 18). Those leaders who employ transformational behaviours generally motivate the employees to perform than is usually expected (Yamrino et al., 1993), discourage narrow self-interest and rationality (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1995). These processes are considered to be predominantly dependent upon the evocation, framing and mobilization of emotions (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1995). Gardner and Stough (2002) maintain that successful leaders who have the capacity to manage both negative and positive emotions within themselves and within others can have the capacity to “articulate a vision for the future, talk optimistically, provide encouragement and meaning, stimulate in others new ways of doing things, encourage the expression of new ideas and intervene in problems before they become serious. Emotional management may underlie the ability of the leader to be inspirationally motivating and intellectually stimulating” (p. 76). Finally, Gardner and Stough (2002) hypothesize that leaders who possess high emotional intelligence, that is, higher ability to identify and understand emotion (self plus others), manage both negative and positive emotions

(self plus others), control emotions, use emotions in several problem solving, and express feelings to others, can be considered as integral to the leader, being satisfied and effective. Recent research has shown that higher emotional intelligence measured by MSCEIT is correlated with higher leadership effectiveness among the senior executives. Self-reported emotional intelligence (ability model) was found to be positively associated with job satisfaction and performance among the food service employees (Sy, Tram, & O'Hara, 2006).

Emotional intelligence and affective job outcomes.

Wong and Law (2002) have hypothesized that affective outcomes such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intention should be related to emotional intelligence. These hypotheses seem to make some sense as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intention could also be linked to healthy or unhealthy social interaction at the workplace and there is some evidence that managing emotions as assessed by an ability measure of emotional intelligence is related to perceived quality of social interaction (Lopes, Brackett, Nezlek, Schutz, Sellin, & Salovey, 2004).

Emotional intelligence and employee health. There is sufficient literature to show a link between health problems and negative emotions like anger (e.g., Bishop, & Qua, 1998) and depression (Venable, Carlson, & Wilson, 2001). S. Sharma, Ghosh, and M. Sharma (2004) provided evidence for peptic ulcer being linked with anger and anxiety. In another study, among 300 participants with 100 each from patients of essential hypertension (EHT), coronary heart disease (CHD), and healthy people (control group) in the age group of 45-55, Sehgal (2000) reported that Anger Expression Scale was significantly associated with EHT and CHD. The author also reported that in her study anger was a cause of chronic diseases far more than anxiety. A person's ability to manage these emotions can be collectively termed as emotion management ability, which is now-a-days considered as a component of emotional intelligence. Although stress has been sufficiently researched in the workplace psychologists have largely ignored research on anger, anxiety, and depression at various workplaces. So, it suggests that any new emotional intelligence research employing self-report inventory of emotional intelligence (especially emotion management) will be linked to employee health problems. Whether other components of EI (understanding, perception, and using emotion), which are fairly correlated with emotion management, is linked to health problem is an interesting research avenue. Besides,

understanding the link between employee health problems and emotional intelligence as assessed by an ability measure, Mayer Salovey Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT) is totally a new avenue for research as MSCEIT is a new tool in the history of psychological testing. The main difference between self-report measures of negative components of emotions (that is, anger, anxiety, depression) and emotion management ability assessed by MSCEIT is that in the former perception of the frequency of the experience of emotion is measured whereas in the latter knowledge about the most appropriate response to solve an emotional problem is assessed. The most appropriate response is decided through consensus.

Emotional intelligence and occupational stress. People with higher emotional intelligence can have higher capacity to decide whether s/he should indulge in distraction behaviours, and the functional value for a particular type of distraction behaviors (Salovey, Bedell, Detweiler, & Mayer, 1999). Salovey et al. further stated that EI could influence people to build quality social ties and to make them understand the emotional gains of using the social network they have built at the time of stressful situations. Salovey et al. also believe that individuals with high EI are more likely to indulge in the emotional disclosure process by means of personal writing, such as diaries, journals, sharing feelings of thoughts with friends and family members as such individuals have sufficient knowledge of emotions to engage in such techniques effectively. These researchers further suggest that emotional disclosure can be motivated by emotional knowledge because emotional intelligent people know this is an effective technique. So, the link between EI and coping can be explained through distraction behaviors, social support, and emotional disclosure, which are linked to coping.

Emotional intelligence and organizational citizenship behavior (pro-social behavior at workplace). Day and Caroll (2004) hypothesized that people with high emotional intelligence could be expected to engage in citizenship behaviours in a group situation. Because Mayer et al. (2000) proposed that emotionally intelligent employees may have smoother interaction with their co-workers, and may be better able to understand how the co-workers are feeling and take the suitable action (also mentioned earlier). Mayer et al. also suggested that emotionally intelligent employees should be expert in identifying and responding suitably to the emotions of co-workers, superiors, and customers.

Emotional intelligence and job performance: Certain customer service requires some kind of transactions. In such transactions service provider's ability to understand the transition of one component of emotion to another, perceive the emotions expressed on the faces of the customer, regulate own and customer's negative emotions, and use customer's positive emotions for persuasion may be related to better customer service. Emotional intelligence can contribute to service provider's understanding customer dissatisfaction during high transaction period. In such a situation, emotional intelligence might also contribute to customer service provider's capacity to use emotions to facilitate cognitive processes in identification of the customer's problem. Besides customer service, there could be many other types of job performance in which social interaction is very much required and in social interaction people need to regulate emotion favorably to remain happy. Happy-worker-productive hypothesis suggests that workers are productive when they are happy (cf. Cropanzano & Wright, 2001). So, higher ability to identify, understand, use, and manage emotions might be related to better job performance.

Emotional Intelligence's Relationship with General Mental Ability (IQ) and Personality. Emotional intelligence as assessed by MSCEIT is moderately significantly correlated with indices of cognitive abilities, that is, verbal SAT (Bracket & Mayer, 2003), 16 PF reasoning (O'Connor, Jr. & Little, 2003). Besides, verbal IQ, performance IQ, and full scale IQ are significantly correlated with total MSCEIT score among the senior executives from a large Australian Public Service organization (Rosete & Ciarrochi, 2005). Aspects of personality as assessed by NEO Five Factor Inventory are not strongly associated with emotional intelligence although some of them correlate either minimally or moderately (see, Thingujam, 2004). Figure suggests that personality, general mental ability and emotional intelligence could together positively influence job performance.

Conclusion. On the basis of the literature reviewed it can be argued that emotional intelligence is an important psychological factor in the workplace including airlines industry although it will be an interesting attempt to sample from employees of airlines industry in future emotional intelligence research. So, it is suggested that a measure of ability model of emotional intelligence be included in the recruitment process of the airlines industry along with the measures of general mental ability and Big Five attributes of personality.

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