Emotional intelligence- A Pathway to Performance: A descriptive study among Business Administration Graduates in Kerala.

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Abstract: Employability is the buzz term today rather than educational ability. The concept of "market ready" search is ruling the world of placements where companies are in the search of candidates equipped with employability skills. Studies have revealed in many occasions that emotional intelligence is a core competency outcome of a matured education. Hence the research gap for this paper was identified as the concommitment relationship between the level of EQ and employable competency among Business Administration students. The present study aims at assessing the performance of the Business Administration student in light of the relationship between Emotional Intelligence and the performance of the candidate. A sample of 209 candidates from the Mahatma Gandhi University, Kerala, was selected for the study by random sampling. The results showed a significant relationship (p=0.000) between Performance and Emotional Intelligence. Further analysis showed a significant negative relationship between MAT Score and Emotional Intelligence (p=.000) and a significant positive relationship (p=.020) between Skill Set and Emotional Intelligence. The statistical analysis was done using SPSS software version 16.0. The study aims at adding knowledge to the field of management education on the selection and training process of candidates who aspire to be better managers of the future.

1.INTRODUCTION

The major challenge faced by most of the organizations today is the shortage of people having emotional maturity to adapt to the continually evolving business environment. Emotional intelligence (EI) has been a developing topic for psychological, educational, and management researchers, consultants and corporates in recent years. Traditionally the performance of a student was judged on basis of their test scores. The grades received by candidates in their respective tests and examination were taken as a base to evaluate their performance. Organizations also placed a lot of importance on these scores. While selecting a candidate into a particular course certain minimum benchmarks are set with regard to their marks. But this criterion does not necessarily assure an organization that on selecting a candidate with high academic scores, performance at the job is guaranteed. While academic grades do give us an idea of the general intellect level, it does not give us any information about the candidate's aptitude or skills for the job.

According to Baruch (1996) [1] "the aims of MBA programs are to prepare their graduates for managerial roles, help them gain a better understanding of the industrial and business world

and its needs, enrich their skills and provide them with competences relevant to their careers." Student performance and achievement has by and large been evaluated and assessed as per scores secured in relevant tests and examinations. This has been the practice observed by all for decades. But the current scenario in both corporate and the academic environments have elicited a change in this definition.

Realizing the growing importance of Emotional Intelligence and its impact on the performance of individual's performance, this present study has undertaken to capture the relationship between the performance and emotional intelligence of management graduate students.

2.CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK
2.1EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

For centuries, emphasis has been placed on academic learning, qualifications and how intelligent a person was, ie: their IQ. But research is now confirming what many people have suspected all along: it is EQ, not IQ that determines how well an individual will perform. According to Lonsdale (2005)[2] the advances in neuroscience and brain imaging techniques have enabled scientist to confirm what we all suspected – that when we are confronted

by situations that are life threatening or that we "perceive" are so, reason and logic fly out the window and what emerges is a primitive, ready – to – fight Neanderthal in modern day attire. The section of the brain responsible for this instant bypass is the amygdala, hence the new term "the amygdala hijack". [3] The young people of the world are the most important resources in the economy. Emotional intelligence has been described as a component of one's self that is amenable to change and development. Thus, by evaluating one's level of emotional intelligence, an individual can identify areas in which improvement may be necessary.

Extensive research (Ornstein, 1997[3]; Epstein, 1998[4]; and Nelson and Low, 2003[5]) has indicated that the focus of current education is on rational and cognitive processes and that little emphasis has been placed on the important contributions of the emotional mind. Many current problems facing educators such as underachievement, lack of motivation, violence, alcohol and drug addiction are indications of the need to include an emphasis on the education of the 'right mind', the emotional or experiential mind. [6] According to Mayer & Salovey (1997) "People high in emotional intelligence are expected to progress more quickly through the abilities designated and to master more of them." [7]

A study conducted by neuropsychologists Martin Seligman at the University of Pennsylvania in 1984 found an optimistic outlook is a better predictor of academic success that IQ, SAT scores or grades. Optimists handle frustration better and tend to be resilient in the face of opposition. They meet the challenges of work with a persevering attitude. Luckily, the study indicated that optimism can be learned, even by people who are by nature pessimistic. According to Litpak (2005) [8] EI seems to be an excellent framework to use in working with college students to help them be more successful in finding a job and in being successful on the job.

According to Goleman, "Emotional 'intelligence' determines our potential for learning the practical skills that are based on its five elements [or competencies]: self-awareness, motivation, self-regulation, empathy, and adeptness in relationships,"

There has been an impressive and growing research panel that suggests that the abilities of emotional intelligence are important for success in many areas of life. Emotional intelligence is more useful for effective performance at work. As the pace of change is increasing and the world of work makes ever greater demands on a person's cognitive, emotional, and physical resources, this particular set of abilities called Emotional Intelligence will become increasingly important.

2.2 PERFORMANCE:

Defining student performance in the 21st Century, includes not only academic achievement, but also brings under its umbrella a wide array of skills required to be successful at the work place. Traditionally the performance of a student was judged on basis of their test scores. The grades received by candidates in their respective tests and examination were taken as a base to evaluate their performance. Organizations also placed a lot of importance on these scores. While selecting a candidate into a particular course certain minimum benchmarks are set with regard to their marks. But this criterion does not necessarily assure and organization that on selecting a candidate with high academic scores, performance at the job is guaranteed. While academic grades do give us an idea of the general intellect level, it does not give us any information about the candidates' aptitude or skills for the job. Companies while hiring prospective candidates based on these academic grades fail to evaluate whether the student has the required skills to perform effectively on the job. Determinants of students' performance have been the subject of ongoing debate among academics and Organizations.

Performance can be defined from two aspects – the academic side and the corporate arena. From the academic side; while measuring performance, the present educational system gives more importance to technical (hard) skills and less non-technical (soft) skills. From the employability aspect performance is defined as a combination of both technical and non-technical skills. The subjectivity of performance evaluation has lessened in recent years, but it has not been totally eliminated. This subjectivity can be attributed to the fact that different people valued different aspects of learning (and what is learnt) more highly than the others. While grades and scores continue to hold importance in the assessment of an individuals' performance, a more holistic measurement of performance goes to include skills and attitude also.

In the current study, performance is taken as a sum total of MAT Score and Skill Set (employability skills) which is made up of three components, namely:

- **Basic Skills**: Include Communication, Managing Information, Using Numbers and Thinking and Problem Solving.
- **Team Management Skills:** Include skills required to harmoniously work with others.
- **Attitudinal Skills:** Demonstrating positive attitude and behaviors, adaptability, continuous learning and working safely.

Ozga (1998)[9] argues that knowledge is being commoditized and reduced to information, subject to constant change. Regimes of teaching, learning and assessment are constellating around skills and competencies rather than knowledge and understanding. This emphasis on core skills suggests a preoccupation with knowing how', rather than simply `knowing that'. Cameron (2000)[10] sees this as a move towards curriculum development that begins by specifying outcomes, skills or competencies a student should be able to demonstrate at the end of the course' and away from the more traditional curriculum development that starts with identifying a body of knowledge to be learned.

3. RESEARCH GAP
3.1 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES
The focus of this research is to:
1. Assess the relationship between graduates' Performance (P) and Emotional Intelligence.
2. Assess the relationship between graduates' Performance (P) and components of Emotional Intelligence
3. Assess the relationship between graduates' components of Skill Set (P_2) and Emotional Intelligence

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN
In this section the framework adopted in collecting and analyzing data is outlined.

3.2.1 Data Collection Method:
Primary Method: Primary data was collected using the following questionnaires:

Emotional Intelligence: Data was collected using the Emotional and Social Competency Inventory – University Edition, Self-Assessment Questionnaire (ESCI-U) which is developed by the Hay Group.

The ESCI-U measures 12 competencies organized into four clusters: Self Awareness; Self-management; Social Awareness; and Relationship Management. These competencies have been found to be important for effectiveness in many occupations.

Skill Set: Data was collected using a questionnaire developed by the researcher. Skills are divided into three components: Basic Skills, Team Work Skills and Attitudinal Skills. The instrument contains a total of 25 questions to measure the three skills. The questionnaire has a Cronbach Alpha score of 0.62

Secondary Data: The secondary data was collected from literature reviewed.

3.2.2 Sampling Design:
Sample: The sample consists of candidates from the Business Administration stream from Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam, Kerala.

Population :1500 business administration graduates.

Sample Frame: List of Business Administration colleges as stated by Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam, Kerala in 2010-2011.

Sample Determination

N = 25 x 60 = 1500
e = 0.03
z = 1.96 (at confidence level of 95%)
p = 0.03
q = 1 – 0.03 = 0.97
N = 1500
n = (z^2 * p * q *N)/ {e^2 (N-1) + z^2 *p*q}
= 167.616/1.46
= 115

Sample Size: 225 questionnaires were given and only 209 were rendered useful. Thus the sample size is 209.

3.2.3 STATISTICAL TOOLS USED IN HYPOTHESES TESTING
- Regression Test
- t-Test
- SPSS software, version 16.0 was used for the statistical calculations.

3.3 ABBREVIATIONS USED
For convenience purposes the following abbreviations are used:

Performance (combination of MAT score and Skill Set) : P
MAT Score : P_1
Skill Set : P_2
P_2 Components:
Basic Managerial Skills : BMS
Team Management Skills : TMS
Attitude Skills : AS
Emotional Intelligence : EI
EI Components:
Self-Awareness : SA
Self-Management : SM
Social-Awareness : SoA
Relationship Management : RM

4. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION
The following are the hypotheses tested in the present study.

Objective 1: Assess the relationship between graduates' Performance (P) and Emotional Intelligence.

H_{01}: There is a significant relationship between P and EI.

H$_{02}$: There is a significant relationship between P$_1$ and EI.

H$_{03}$: There is a significant relationship between P$_2$ and EI.

Table 1:

	EI			
	t-Value	Sig	R	R^2
P	4.283	0.000	0.285	0.081
P$_1$	-4.555	0.000	0.287	0.083
P$_2$	2.343	0.02	0.298	0.089

Regression analysis revealed that while 8.1% (R^2=0.081) of the variation in P can be attributed to EI, 8.3% (R^2=0.0831) and 8.9% (R^2=0.089) variation in P$_1$ and P$_2$ respectively can be attributed to EI. The analysis also revealed a significant relationship between P, P$_1$, P$_2$ and EI.

Objective 2: Assess the relationship between graduates' Performance (P) and components of EI.

H$_{04}$: There is a significant relationship between P and EI Components: SA, SM, SoA, RM.

H$_{05}$: There is a significant relationship between P$_1$ and EI Components: SA, SM, SoA, RM.

H$_{06}$: There is a significant relationship between P$_2$ and EI Components: SA, SM, SoA, RM.

Table2:

	P		P$_1$		P$_2$	
	t-Value	Sig	t-Value	Sig	t-Value	Sig
SA	-.738	.461	-1.809	.072	-.460	.646
SM	7.165	.000	.092	.927	6.902	.000
SoM	-.078	.938	-2.835	.005	.378	.706
RM	-2.043	.042	-1.113	.267	-1.791	.075

From Table 2 the following can be interpreted:
There is a significant relationship between P and EI components Self-Management and Relationship Management.
There is a significant relationship between P$_1$ and EI component of Social Awareness.
There is a significant relationship between P$_2$ and EI component of Self-Management.

Objective 3: Assess the relationship between graduates' components of Skill Set (P$_2$) and Emotional Intelligence

H$_{07}$: There is a significant relationship between P$_2$ Components (BMS, TMS, AS) and EI

Table 3:

	EI			
	t-value	Sig	R	R^2
BMS	4.019	0.000	0.405	0.164
TMS	1.982	0.049	0.267	0.071
AS	0.095	0.924	0.13	0.017

Regression analysis revealed that EI accounts for 16.4% (R^2=0.164) of the variation in BMS, 7.1% (R^2=0.071) of the variation in TMS and 1.7% (R^2=0.017) of the variation in AS.
The analysis also reveals that there is a significant relationship between BMS, AS and EI
On finding a significant relationship between BMS, AS and EI , further analysis was done to establish a relationship between P$_2$ Components (BMS, TMS, AS) and EI components and the results are as follows:

H$_{08}$: There is a significant relationship between P$_2$ Components (BMS, TMS, AS) and EI components

Table 4:

	BMS		TMS		AS	
	t-Value	Sig	t-Value	Sig	t-Value	Sig
SA	2.055	0.04	-2.7	0.01	-1.2	1.22
SM	7.722	0.00	4.25	0.00	4.995	0.00
SoA	0.842	0.4	-0.7	0.51	0.21	0.83
RM	-2.1	0.04	1.59	0.11	-2.02	0.05

Regression analysis revealed that 30.2% (R^2=0.302) of the variation in BMS, 17.6% (R^2=0.176) of the variation in TMS and 14.7% (R^2=0.147) of the variation in AS can be attributed to EI components.
From Table 4 the following can be interpreted:
There is a significant relationship between BMS and EI components of Self Awareness, Self-Management and Relationship Management .
There is a significant relationship between TMS and EI components of Self Awareness and Self-Management
There is a significant relationship between AS and EI components of Self-Management and Relationship Management

5. FINDINGS

The notion of employability challenges traditional concepts of Higher Education and raises the question of what the point of Higher Education is; subject knowledge and understanding, or learning how to learn. [11] Forrester (1999, p. 110) constructs employability as `being available for every kind of change, for the whims of fate, in this case the employers'.[12]

Students seek a Business Administration degree for many reasons but they all have one thing in common - the expectation of good employment after post-graduation. But many a times this fails and hence the main aim of this study was to assess the impact of Emotional Intelligence on the performance of the graduate in terms of employability. The study concluded that Emotional Intelligence is a predictor of overall student performance (P) *(See Table1)*, Basic Managerial Skills and Team Management Skills *(See Table 3)*.

The study also found that Self-Management to be a good predictor of P and P_2 *(Table 2)*; Social Awareness was to be a good predictor of P_1; and Relationship Management to be a good predictor of P.

Based on the findings the researcher suggests that EI should be assessed at the entry level along with MAT and GDPI score. This is further explained under the following two points of view:
1. Point of view of the Management School
2. Point of view of the Industry

1. Point of view of the Management School

Based on this study it was found that as Emotional Intelligence impacts performance, and measurement of the same will give management institutions a start point with regard to employability of the proposed candidate and this in turn will aid in the selection of candidates who are trainable in the field of management, hence the quality of those graduating from college to work, will improve. As defined by Hillage and Pollard's (1998) employability is defined as an individual's ability to gain initial employment, maintain employment, move between roles within the same organisation, obtain new employment if required and (ideally) secure suitable and sufficiently fulfilling work.[13] For the students who aspire to pursue management as career will have more time and opportunity to improve on their EI, or choose an alternate field, which fits to their aptitude and EI / EQ.

2. Point of view of the Industry

Employers have constantly been raising concerns about the quality of newly recruited managers, in terms of their self-management skills and overall performance. A manager who comes through the revised curriculum (inclusive of EI at the testing and curriculum stage) will be more apt to handle / control / manage self and teams, resulting in employability post completion of the management program.

As sighted earlier management graduates have a common aim and that is to pursue a career that generates from that stream of education. Hence the above sighted relation *(See Table1,2 and 3)* between EI components and the essential people management skills (Basic Managerial skills, Team Management Skills, Attitudinal Skills and Relationship Management) directly affects the way they take on the responsibility of a manager and impact the performance of any organization. A management graduate, who scores high in the EI curriculum / training, will be a natural fit to the role of a manger and help close on the ever existing gap between academia and industry.

CONCLUSION

Defining student performance in the 21st Century, includes not only academic achievement, but also brings under its umbrella a wide array of skills required to be successful at the work place. Determinants of students' performance have been the subject of ongoing debate among academics and Organizations The industry today feels graduates are lacking in generic skills. The role of management education is not to 'teach' employability, but to make our students employable. From the employers' perspective, 'employability' seems to refer to 'work readiness', that is, possession of the skills, knowledge, attitudes and commercial understanding that will enable new graduates to make productive contributions to organizational objectives soon after commencing employment (Mason, Williams & Cranmer, 2006) [14]. A main function of a college in this context is to raise awareness of soft skills, to improve self-confidence and to introduce strategies to cope with problems, as well as to deliver vocational skills. According to this study, it can be concluded that while higher Emotional Intelligence leads to higher performance, a higher Emotional Intelligence does not support a higher MAT Score. It can also be seen that of the components of Emotional Intelligence, Self-Management seems to be the better predictor of P and P_2. Thus in the working environment where Skill Set is very important it can be concluded that a person with better Self-Management will fare better. Since emotional intelligence plays an important role in the process of development, the pedagogue should help students to develop their ability in emotion intelligence in education, which will be beneficial to individual's academic study and professional life. Boyatzis and Saatcioglu (2008)[15] found that MBA's can develop emotional and cognitive competencies crucial to effectiveness of a manager and leader, impacting performance of an individual.

The conclusions drawn from this research are summated as follows:
Management Education must to include testing / evaluating components of EI at the entrance level, as

this will improve the quality of intake and ensure that the efforts put in by students and academicians bear an industry ready management graduate, who can solve the more than a decade old (since liberalization during early 90s) issue of dearth of good managers at entry and midlevel.

This will bring a two pronged benefit to the involved parties, i.e. Academia & Industry:

Academia – An institution of quality strives to take on board the best talent, to ensure that the end product brings accolades to the college, which translates into job offers extended to their wards. With the introduction EI as a parameter during entrance evaluation and ongoing curriculum, the institution will churn out graduates who will meet the managerial expectations of the industry. As a result both the recruiters and the student will make a beeline for that institution.

Industry – Indian corporates have been facing managerial skills generated problems for a long time now. Lack of ability to manage self and teams, led to problems like – unionization/politics/ attrition (more recent)/ burnout and etc. If a recruiter is presented a candidate who has scored high on the EI quotients, its result will be shown by the performance of him / her as a manager. He / She will not only bring productivity by handling teams and self efficiently but further bring down the cost incurred by industry to re-recruit a resource due to attrition of the manager or the attrition caused by the unskilled manager, who scores low on EI.

The crucial aspects that need further research are the evaluation of EI at the pre and post levels of admission in a management course and how to blend in EI (training / education) with the academic curriculum, to ensure fitment between academia and industry).

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5/16/2013