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Workgroup emotional intelligence Scale development and relationship to team process effectiveness and goal focus

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Abstract

Over the last decade, ambitious claims have been made in the management literature about the contribution of emotional intelligence to success and performance. Writers in this genre have predicted that individuals with high emotional intelligence perform better in all aspects of management. This paper outlines the development of a new emotional intelligence measure, the Workgroup Emotional Intelligence Profile, Version 3 (WEIP-3), which was designed specifically to profile the emotional intelligence of individuals in work teams. We applied the scale in a study of the link between emotional intelligence and two measures of team performance: team process effectiveness and team goal focus. The results suggest that the average level of emotional intelligence of team members, as measured by the WEIP-3, is reflected in the initial performance of teams. In our study, low emotional intelligence teams initially performed at a lower level than the high emotional intelligence teams. Over time, however, teams with low average emotional intelligence raised their performance to match that of teams with high emotional intelligence. © 2002 Elsevier Science Inc. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Emotional intelligence was initially proposed by Mayer, DiPaolo, and Salovey (1990) and Salovey and Mayer (1990) as set of social skills and abilities akin to, but distinct from intellectual intelligence. Since then, interest in emotional intelligence has increased dramatically, with several popular books being written on the topic, most notably that by

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Goleman (1995). More recent books have focused on the contribution of emotional intelligence to management in organizational settings (Cooper & Sawaf, 1996; Goleman, 1998a, 1998b; Weisinger, 1998). Largely, as a result, of this popularization, there are an increasing number of management consultants promoting emotional intelligence interventions in organizations. An unfortunate consequence of this profusion, however, has been a propensity for the authors and consultants involved to make exaggerated claims about the contribution of emotional intelligence to performance and success. Few of these claims have been based on empirical research (see Ciarrochi, Chan, & Caputi, 2000). Rather, the claims have been drawn from anecdotal evidence relating to exceptional individuals. Clearly, a more scientific approach is needed here if the emotional intelligence construct is to achieve credibility. The study we conducted used teams who applied problem based learning methods to study managerial communication. These teams were measured in relation to their individual emotional intelligence and the group's goal focus and process in completing assigned tasks. One purpose of the research outlined in this paper, therefore, was to provide a preliminary empirical test of the validity of the claims that emotional intelligence predicts work performance.

In his 1995 book, Goleman made strong claims about the contribution of emotional intelligence to individual success, and specifically to success in the workplace. He identified intellectual intelligence as contributing 20% towards life success and intimated that the remaining 80% of life success may be attributable to emotional intelligence. While drawing away from this dramatic claim in later work (Cherniss & Goleman, 1998), the stage had been set for some equally inflated and unsubstantiated claims as to the impact of emotional intelligence. Generally, these are based on individual profiles and general observations made linking individual behavior and success to emotional intelligence (e.g., Cooper & Sawaf, 1996; Goleman, 1995). Our observation in respect of these claims is that none of the people cited in these anecdotes actually appear to have had their level of emotional intelligence tested. Further, there seem to be no systematic measures of success, other than the fact that these individuals seem to have good interpersonal and intrapersonal skills or that they have demonstrated significant motivation.

Mayer and Salovey (1997) agree that general intelligence accounts for approximately 10–20% of life success, defined as academic achievement and occupational status. Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso (2000) confirm this assertion by outlining research findings that IQ correlates with various indicators of life success at about the $r=.45$ level. At the same time, they also note that a single personality factor generally only explains a small proportion of life success. While the claims about the link between intellectual intelligence and performance have been researched using empirical studies, research into the link between emotional intelligence and performance has been lacking to date. This may be the result, until recently, of a lack of adequate measures of emotional intelligence. With the advent of a number of measures of emotional intelligence (Bar-On, 1996; Cooper & Sawaf, 1996; Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 1999), the time is right to advance our knowledge with respect to the link between emotional intelligence and performance. The specific aims of our research, therefore, were (1) to establish a measure of emotional intelligence appropriate for use in the workplace and (2) to test the proposition that emotional intelligence predicts process effectiveness and goal focus in work teams.

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