

Respect as a Mediator Between Emotional Intelligence and Job Performance

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Abstract

People with high levels of emotional intelligence are more driven to complete tasks, have a favourable impact on their team, and play an important part in determining performance. Low emotional intelligence, leads to inefficiency, tension, and conflict. As a result, the capacity to recognise and assess emotion can be useful for interpersonal and workplace behaviour. Meanwhile, studies on organisational respect identified respect as a relational phenomena with an individualistic perspective. Furthermore, mutual recognition respect is an essential form of respect in the workplace; it fosters sentiments such as appreciation for people endowed with a specific level of quality or the display of reverence for established institutional authorities. It is about what is owed or earned, as well as the psychological evolution of the connection, such as how leaders acquire followers' respect by treating people fairly and morally. However, previous research did not address the significance of mutuality. Mutuality refers to the concept of two or more interdependent parties having common interests while acknowledging that they have other possibly conflicting interests. Thus, in an organisation, mutuality norms presuppose that both leaders and followers acknowledge the ongoing significance of maintaining the relationship in order to accomplish common objectives. This article investigates the influence of mutual recognition respect on the relationship between emotional intelligence and job performance, with a specific focus on the Malaysian public sector as the research context.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Performance, Mutual Respect, Emotion, Workplace

Introduction

Common challenges encountered by employees include stress, interpersonal dynamics in the workplace, deteriorating job performance, diminished self-confidence, and breakdowns in communication (Hassan et al., 2019). The management of public services has emerged as a significant concern for numerous nations. Despite the continuous efforts of numerous administrations to enhance the quality of public services, public opinion remains unconvinced (Thi & Pham, 2023). Only individuals in bad economic conditions are content to be employed in Italy's public sector due to the salary disparity compared to private sector employees (Buccioli & Burro, 2022). The public sector in Ireland faces challenges in enhancing

performance and facilitating career advancement (Roche & O’Riordan, 2020). In Africa, corruption undermines the regulatory plans and implementation of government agencies (Uket, 2022). The traditional public service system in Thailand has been criticism for its limitations and lack of efficacy (Supromin & Choonhakhlai, 2017).

Furthermore, the performance and leadership of the Malaysian public sector have received significant scrutiny and interest (Ramadass et al., 2017). Barisan Nasional, the ruling party in Malaysia, was expelled and replaced by Pakatan Harapan in the 2018 general election (Nadzri, 2018). Under the administration of Pakatan Harapan, a significant event took place when the 7th Prime Minister abruptly resigned on 24 February 2020. He was subsequently replaced by the 8th Prime Minister on 1 March 2020 (Lee, 2020; Robinson et al., 2020). The 8th Prime Minister's tenure was short-lived, since he was succeeded by the 9th Prime Minister on 21 August 2021, appointed by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong of Malaysia (Chin, 2022). Following the 15th general election in 2022, Malaysia's 10th Prime Minister was chosen on 24 November 2022 by the appointment of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong of Malaysia. This decision was made because no political party had a clear majority. The transition of power within the ruling party results in alterations to policies and governance, consequently influencing the delivery of public services in Malaysia (Nadzri, 2018). Public service managers face significant pressure to identify effective strategies for delivering services and adapting to the frequent policy changes implemented by elected authorities (Fernandez et al., 2010). Malaysia experienced a political crisis during the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak in late 2019 (Shah et al., 2020). The implementation of abrupt lockdown measures has resulted in a shift in work practices for individuals in both the public and commercial sectors (Azlan et al., 2020). This includes the requirement to hold meetings and monitoring activities digitally, to a certain extent. Public services are undergoing adaptation and modification to align with the current paradigm of work (Khair et al., 2021).

It is crucial to recognize that the public's demand for enhanced government public service delivery rises in response to environmental changes, such as a shift in the ruling party and the global COVID-19 epidemic. Thus, it is imperative for public officials to guarantee their ability to operate effectively inside their respective organizations. Furthermore, individuals' perception of how they are treated by their colleagues in the workplace serves as a crucial indicator of the level of respect they receive. Respect serves as a crucial indicator that individuals employ to evaluate the caliber of their interactions with both their supervisors and peers (Smith & DeNunzio, 2020). The importance of respect in relation to behaviors that serve a group and support collective identity and involvement has been clearly established (Boeckmann and Tyler, 2002; Spears et al., 2006). Respect within organizations can yield advantages at both the collective and individual levels. It is worth mentioning that this research is starting to indicate that the processes by which specific forms of respect are generated can vary, and they can also predict a variety of outcomes on their own (Huo et al., 2010). Consequently, there is a demand for research that investigates the impact of respect in organizational contexts (Clarke 2011; Rabbas, 2015; Timmons and Johnson, 2015; Chen et al., 2017). This article investigates the relationship between a leader's emotional intelligence and the job performance of their subordinates. It also explores the mediating elements of mutual recognition respect in the leader-subordinate relationship.

Underpinning Theory

Social Exchange Theory

The theory of social exchange provides the foundational framework for this investigation. Prominent social psychologists, including George Homans, Peter Blau, John Thibaut, Harold Kelley, Emerson, and Linda Molms, solidified social exchange theory as one of its principal theoretical perspectives. The reward, cost, and resources between dyads in small groups comprise the psychological concept of the exchange approach proposed by Thibaut and Kelley; Homans' conceptualization holds that the exchange between men is anticipated to yield reciprocal benefits that are proportional to the costs incurred (Emerson, 1976). Homans (1961) defines social exchange as the interaction between two parties in which they exchange tangible or ethereal benefits or drawbacks. A reward is unrestricted and mutually acceptable between the involved parties; conversely, the cost consists of the forfeiture of opportunities or punishment (Cook et al., 2013). The foundation of Homans' theoretical framework for sociological concepts including solidarity, leadership, and justice is dyadic exchange. Nevertheless, Homans' theory has faced criticism for its oversimplification, as it primarily employs psychological principles to explain sociological phenomena while neglecting the importance of institutional forces and social processes (Cook et al., 2013).

Conversely, Blau regarded social trade as a crucial mechanism in social existence that underpins the interactions between collectives and individuals. The emphasis lies on the mutual exchange of external advantages, and the relational structures arise from social interaction. Put simply, social exchange refers to a person's act of doing a favor for someone else with the intention of receiving something in return at a later time (Blau, 1964). According to Blau (1964), social and economic exchange is defined as a set of acts that are mutually dependent and beneficial, comprising transactions or exchanges. The behavioral aspect becomes evident only in the latter stages, as it is accomplished by interaction with the other party and requires the ability to adjust methods in order to obtain desired outcomes (Settoon et al., 1996). Emerson (1976) extended the concept of Homans and Blau by asserting that social exchange is not a theory, but rather a framework that assumes the continued existence of resources in exchange for a valued return.

Social exchange theory is associated with social status, power, and behavior that is influenced by the interdependence between two parties in providing valuable products and services (Cook et al., 2013). The notion of power was derived from Emerson (1976), who perceives power as a relational concept that relies on interdependence. The relational understanding of power is connected to social exchange theory since it is considered overtly relational and stems from the resource relationships between individuals. Molm's perspective on power dynamics within a relational interaction posits that power is a mechanism of exchange that occurs via repeated instances of reciprocal giving. Power is not exclusively linked to incentives but also to penalties (Skvoretz, 1998). The key aspect of social exchange interactions is the reliance on incentives, which acts as a driving force for both the effectiveness of rewards and penalties (Molm, 1990). The presence of emotions in social interactions is linked to the concept of fairness in the trade of goods or services between individuals (Cook et al., 2013). As to the findings of Lawler and Thye (2007), emotions are observed when two or more individuals exchange valued outcomes, such as gifts, prizes, or payoffs. Emotions originate internally within an individual and are influenced by external factors, such as the actions of others, the outcome of interactions, or the social environment. It is hypothesized that emotions experienced as a result of the interaction between individuals will impact the results of subsequent interactions and relationships. Feeling emotionally

stable will increase the desire to interact and cultivate a more robust relationship over time (Lawler & Thye, 2007).

Subordinate attitudes and behaviors are also examined using social exchange theory (Settoon et al., 1996). The researchers analyzed the social interactions and transactions that occur between employees and their organizations, as well as between individuals and their immediate superiors. The findings indicate that a higher frequency of interactions characterized by mutual trust, loyalty, interpersonal influence, and mutual respect between supervisors and subordinates leads to improved performance and behavior of the subordinates. When employees see that they receive the necessary support, they will be motivated to meet work performance standards (Wang et al., 2022). A recent study conducted by Chen and Sriphon in 2022 discovered that the behaviors of leaders, namely in terms of their competence, ethics, and positive interactions, had a favorable influence on the connection between authentic leadership, trust, and social exchange relationships.

The concept of social exchange theory centers around the necessity of mutual reciprocity among individuals during their interactions (Cropanzano et al., 2017). According to Anggraeni (2018), in order to thrive in a competitive business environment, organizations must enhance their efficacy and efficiency by fostering the formation of employment relationships. This entails individuals being obligated to reciprocate in the future by providing equal support in return. This phenomenon is sometimes referred to as the norm of reciprocity, which entails a sense of obligation for one party to reciprocate an equivalent favor bestowed upon them by another party (Blau, 1964). The concept of reciprocity norm plays a role in shaping reciprocal expectations, shared interests, and influencing behaviors (Sacconi, 2007).

Social exchange theory highlights the importance of interdependence and the exchange of valuable products and services in shaping social behavior. The concept of power further emphasizes the relational nature of social exchange theory. By recognizing that power is inherently tied to resource relationships between individuals, social exchange theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how social status and behavior are influenced within interpersonal interactions. For instances, reciprocity norms are not only important in individual employment relationships but also in the broader business environment. They can foster trust and cooperation among organizations, leading to mutually beneficial partnerships and collaborations. By understanding and embracing the concept of reciprocity, organizations can create a positive and supportive network that promotes growth and success for all parties involved.

Emotional Intelligence

Emotion refers to the process of being moved, where individuals engage in actions and reactions during emotional situations (Bradley, 2000). This demonstrates the pervasive presence of emotion across the entirety of human existence. Emotion is connected to mood, which often has a lower intensity and a longer duration compared to feelings (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). According to George (2000), moods and emotions play a central role in cognitive processes and behaviour. Moods and emotions can be differentiated based on their level of intensity. According to Massey (2002), the connection between emotion and cognition is established through four fundamental limitations. First, emotions manifest prior to intellect in the course of human evolution. Second, the development of mental devices takes place subsequent to the establishment of the physiological ability for rational thought. Third, in the realm of real-time awareness, emotional cognition takes place prior to rational

cognition. Finally, the exchange of emotions between the brain and the feedback loop is characterised by emotional traffic. Another researcher defines emotion as a response that occurs when an individual assesses a major circumstance, characterised by behavioural expression and encompassing various dimensions of fear, rage, happiness, and sadness (Gross, 1999). Emotions are not experienced independently, but rather they originate from physiological sensations when an individual interacts with others; cognitive self-awareness recognises and categorises these emotions. When our bodies experience physiological arousal, we are aware of and consciously control how we express our emotions (Whiteman et al., 2009). Emotions in the workplace or organisational management have been recognised as significant factors influencing employee emotions, feelings, and sentiments (Pugh & Groth, 2019). Vulpe & Damoiu (2011) emphasise that employees who experience pleasant emotions are more inclined to establish ambitious goals within the company.

Meanwhile, emotional intelligence relates to the understanding and controlling of emotions. According to Bar-On (2006), emotional intelligence is the expansion of social intelligence. The concept of emotional intelligence evolved from Thorndike (1920) research on social intelligence, where it is defined as the thought and action directly concerned with things and persons. Gardner (1983) contributes to the evolution of emotional intelligence by introducing the “multiple intelligence” consisting of environmental, musical, linguistic, mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetics, and personal intelligence. Personal intelligence relates to an emotion-centred situation and is divided into intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligence classes. Intrapersonal intelligence means the ability to perceive other people's feelings and use the knowledge to influence actions, and the awareness of one's feelings is interpersonal intelligence (Gardner, 1983). Interpersonal intelligence constitutes the aspect of emotional intelligence in the form of self-awareness, empathy, and handling relationship (Sharma, 2008).

The emotional intelligence theory has gained lots of attention from the research community since its introduction in 1990 by Peter Salovey and John Mayer. Emotional intelligence is a more detailed and oriented alternative task community to social intelligence (Mayer et al., 1999). Emotional intelligence is made up of two words, emotional and intelligence. In general, emotion is related to a mental state or feeling that react to the surrounding, and intelligence refers to acquiring and applying knowledge and skills. Mayer et al. (2000) argue that emotional intelligence must meet three strict criteria to be considered accurate. First, that intelligence requires not only behavioural means but mental ability. Second, intelligence should represent a similar but distinct ability concerning the mental ability defined by established intelligence. Finally, intelligence develops with age and experience.

The earlier definition of emotional intelligence by Salovey & Mayer (1990) is the four branches of emotional intelligence, which is the “ability to monitor one's own and other's feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions.” The definition was then refined to be the ability to accurately perceive, appraise, and express emotion; the ability to access and/or generate feelings when facilitating thoughts; the ability to understand emotions and emotional knowledge; and the ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). The emotional intelligence perspective by Mayer and Salovey is also known as the ability-based model of emotional intelligence (Maamari & Majdalani, 2017).

The theory was further popularised by Goleman (1998), who defined emotional competence as a learned capability based on emotional intelligence with the outcome of

outstanding performance. He incorporated five essential skills (self-awareness, self-control, motivation, empathy, and relationship management). Self-awareness, self-control, and motivation relate to personal competence, and empathy and relationship management relate to social competence (Maamari & Majdalani, 2017). The general understanding of Goleman's emotional intelligence is the capability to identify and control emotions, which is more a function of emotion than cognitive intelligence (Newsome et al., 2000). However, these claims provided no empirical proof (Newsome et al., 2000). Another emotional intelligence model by Bar-On (2006) is known as the Bar-On model. Bar-On (2006) defines emotional intelligence as a set of non-cognitive skills, competence and abilities that affect one's ability to meet environmental pressures and demands. Bar-On model is an emotional-social intelligence model covering five broad competencies: intrapersonal skills, interpersonal skills, stress management, adaptability, and general mood. Both Goleman and Bar-On models are known as the mixed model because they combine mental ability, personality, and character skills (Maamari & Majdalani, 2017). Both Goleman and Bar-on emphasise 'non-cognitive' factors that differ from the concept of emotional intelligence by Mayer & Salovey (Newsome et al., 2000). Mayer & Salovey (1997) argue that some common emotional intelligence meanings may be misleading because they opted out of the construct's cognitive aspects.

The further elucidation of emotional intelligence was formulated by Konstantinos V. Petrides, denoting it as the characteristic attribute of emotional intelligence. Trait emotional intelligence examines the consistent patterns of behaviour in many situations, such as empathy, affirmation, and optimism. It differs from ability emotional intelligence, which involves skills like recognising, expressing, and classifying emotions (Petrides & Furnham, 2000). The ability-based model of emotional intelligence demonstrates the integration of emotion and cognition in adaptive behaviour. Multiple studies have validated the construct value of the ability model (Brackett & Mayer, 2003; Jordan & Troth, 2011). Therefore, this study specifically examines the capacity of the ability model of emotional intelligence. Brackett & Mayer (2003); Jordan & Troth (2011) have shown that the ability-based model of emotional intelligence demonstrates how emotions contribute to adaptive behaviour. Multiple studies have validated the validity of the ability model in proving the value of this construct. Thus, the ability-based model of emotional intelligence not only highlights the importance of integrating emotions and cognition in adaptive behavior but also emphasizes the significant role emotions play in contributing to such behavior. The numerous studies validating the construct value of the ability model further solidify its capacity to accurately measure and understand emotional intelligence.

Job Performance

Performance can be classified into two categories: organisational performance and job performance (Otley, 1999). Organisational performance refers to the level of efficiency with which an organisation executes its operations throughout a specific timeframe. This performance is influenced by various elements, including the performance of employees, the surrounding environment, the organisational culture, and the style of leadership. Job performance refers to the actions and contributions of employees that directly impact the outcomes of the organization. The individual employee's performance directly impacts the overall success of the organization (Ramawickrama et al., 2017). Therefore, job performance is a subset of organisational performance and an active determinant in achieving an organisation's target, objectives, and goals. The view on job performance becomes more extensive to include the aspect of behaviours. Presently, job performance includes the degree

of employees' behaviours that effectively meet organisations' objectives (Campbell et al., 1990).

According to Motowildo & Kell (2013), a critical idea in the concept of job performance is that performance is a function of behaviour. It is an aggregate property of numerous discrete behaviours occurring over time. The second important idea is that performance behaviour refers to the organisation's expected value. In other words, performance is determined based on the aggregate behaviours of employees are likely to contribute or detract from organisational goals. Individual employee job performance is the most important resource in an organisation (Ramawickrama et al., 2017; Sonnentag et al., 2008; Sonnentag & Frese, 2003). Based on the literature search of 146 meta-analyses compiled by Sonnentag & Frese (2003), 54% of the analyses found that individual performance is an essential core of organisational psychology, and individual performance is mainly considered as a dependent variable.

Thus, the concept of job performance emphasizes that performance is not solely dependent on a single behavior, but rather on the cumulative effect of various behaviors exhibited by employees over a period of time. Additionally, it highlights the significance of aligning these behaviors with the organization's objectives and expected outcomes. By understanding this relationship between behavior and performance, organizations can effectively evaluate and enhance employee contributions towards achieving organizational goals. Therefore, this study is aligned with the previous studies focusing on individual job performance as one of the dependent variables.

Mutual Recognition Respect

The definition of the term "respect" presented by Cranor and Darwall aligns with the prevailing notion that respect is a "attitude". This attitude is characterized by a firm inclination to react to oneself or others, which is triggered by a prior recognition and assessment of particular qualities. Robin Dillon (2007) suggests that respect, as an attitude, is an intricate phenomena that arises from the combination of beliefs, perceptions, judgments, emotions, sentiments, and methods of experiencing things. From this perspective, the concept of respect includes various aspects such as cognitive, emotional, motivational, and evaluative dimensions (Dillon 2007). These dimensions cannot be fully realized without demonstrating consideration and sensitivity towards both the recipient of respect and the qualities that make them deserving of a respectful reaction.

Even researchers who reject the notion that respect should be seen as an attitude nonetheless hold similar ideas to those supported by Darwall. Raz (2001) posits that respect is primarily manifested through deeds, serving as a pragmatic approach to how individuals are treated. Additionally, he argues that respect is an obligatory principle that should be upheld throughout society (Raz, 2001). Similarly to Darwall, Raz argues that the obligation of respect involves providing appropriate significance to the interests of others. This suggests that each individual possesses a legitimate entitlement to establish their position as a moral agent, rather than a specific entitlement to any particular advantage. Elsewhere in literature, research on respect in the organisational context recognised respect as a relational phenomenon in an individualistic orientation (Clarke & Mahadi, 2017a; Enzo et al., 2019; Magri, 2019; Stievano et al., 2016). Clarke & Mahadi (2017a) argue that previous studies did not address the importance of mutuality, suggested by recognition respect. Mutuality is a concept that includes mutual knowledge, shared knowledge, mutual belief, mutual manifestness, and shared understanding (Perner & Garnham, 1988). According to Guest &

Peccei (2001), mutuality involves the idea of shared interests of two or more interdependent parties while recognising that they have other potentially different interests.

So, mutuality in an organization goes beyond mere agreement and involves a shared belief in the importance of maintaining the relationship between leaders and subordinates to achieve common goals. It acknowledges that while parties may have different interests, they recognize the value of working together towards shared objectives. This understanding fosters a sense of obligation towards each other, ensuring a mutually beneficial and sustainable working relationship.

Mediating Role of Mutual Recognition Respect towards Emotional Intelligence with Job Performance

A leader-subordinate relationship of high quality is characterized by an exchange relationship that is characterized by trust, mutual respect, and responsibility (Colquitt et al., 2014). Researchers have lately begun to examine the concept of leader respect and its significance (Nguyen et al., 2019). Clarke (2011) identifies five key factors that contribute to the development of appraisal respect in a leadership setting: (i) admiration for the leader, (ii) the leader's attentiveness and concern for subordinates, (iii) the leader's competence in accomplishing tasks, (iv) the leader's recognition of subordinates' potential, and (v) the mutual confidence between the leader and subordinates in their abilities. When team members feel valued and are treated fairly (recognition respect), they will be motivated to improve their effort and perform well for the organisation (Clarke et al., 2019). Recognition respect is fundamental to moral values and the fit values between leader and subordinate (Benditt, 2008). Mutual recognition respect influences follower job performance based on relational identity theory (Clarke & Mahadi, 2017b; Shapiro, 2010). Hence, these arguments suggest the following proposition

P1: Mutual recognition respect mediates the relationship between emotions; intelligence and job performance

Discussion

Mutuality entails the concept of two or more interdependent parties having common interests while acknowledging that they have other possibly competing interests (Guest & Peccei, 2001). Sensitive leaders can obtain subordinates' compliance by demonstrating sympathy and concern for them. They can harness their empathic characteristics by cultivating great leader-member relationships with subordinates that are marked by mutual respect, trust, and loyalty (Haynie et al., 2019). Mutual recognition respect is an interpersonal and relational property, and it refers to the respect that accrues to individuals as a result of being treated in a morally correct, unbiased, and fair treatment (Clarke, 2011). This form of respect is rooted in each individual's need for self-determination (Deci and Ryan 1995), and contributes to the autonomy concerns brought by each party to the relationship.

High levels of mutual recognition respect are therefore likely and have been previously found, to be associated with a positive relational identity (Lopes and Calapez 2012). This should provide strong relational cues that are able to activate individual self-relational identities. This refers to the extent to which individuals define themselves in relation to dyadic relationships with specific people (Sluss and Ashforth 2007). Individuals become motivated to serve and satisfy the needs of the other party, and continue to build a high-quality relationship often in the face of challenges. Clarke et al (2019) found that mutual recognition

respect mediated the relationships between upward influence tactics and job performance and flexible working arrangements. In the context of this study, employees' emotions can be further narrowed down to how they embrace a different kind of respect for their leaders. For instance, the type of respect is how the subordinate responds and accepts instructions either out of their willingness or feeling intimidated. The literature's important idea is that behaviour in performance relates to the expected value to the organisation. In other words, performance is determined based on employees' behaviours and actions that either contribute or detract from organisational goals.

In addition, emotional intelligence has been defined as an individual's capacity to process emotional information in an accurate manner and use that information both to inform their cognition and regulate their and others' emotions (Mayer & Salovey, 1995). For instances, the leader also needs to create emotional awareness to manage subordinates and adapt and react to changes in their subordinates' emotions. Interestingly, central to the concept of mutuality is that both leaders and subordinates in the relationship are open to influence and participate in the bidirectional movement of feelings, thoughts and activity. This shared sense of relationship goes beyond just the exchange of benefits, as it encompasses a deeper understanding and appreciation for each other's perspectives and contributions. By exploring the impact of mutual recognition respect on job performance, this study seeks to shed light on the importance of fostering a strong and collaborative leader-subordinate relationship for overall organizational success.

Conclusion

Research in the field of workplace respect has revealed its significant impact on employee engagement and job satisfaction. Studies have shown that when employees feel respected, they are more likely to be motivated, productive, and committed to their work. Furthermore, a respectful work environment fosters better teamwork, communication, and collaboration among employees, leading to improved organizational performance and reduced turnover rates. Therefore, future research directions in the role of respect in the workplace could focus on understanding the specific mechanisms through which respect contributes to positive organizational outcomes. For example, exploring how respectful communication and interactions among employees foster a sense of trust and collaboration, leading to increased employee engagement and productivity. Further investigation could be conducted to examine the long-term effects of promoting respect in the workplace, such as its impact on employee retention and overall organizational culture. Interestingly, understanding how context and contingencies influence the development of different forms of respect is crucial for designing effective interventions in building respectful relationships at work. By examining the effects of respect specifically between leaders and subordinates, this article fills a gap in existing research that has primarily focused on respect within groups or individuals. This current article provides valuable insights into the dynamics of respect in hierarchical relationships, offering a more comprehensive understanding of how respect operates in different contexts.

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