

# EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE - DRIVERS OF EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this paper is to present how different elements, like: leadership, emotional intelligence and organizational culture influence the performance of people and organizations, and, also, to answer the question “Can these factors be defined as drivers of employee performance?”. The main objective is to bring more clarity to the process of measure employee performance through a better understanding of emotional intelligence and organizational culture, along with the added value of these two concepts. A brief review of literature studies presenting results on this theme is carried out within the paper, in order to demonstrate the utility of the future research directions in the field. The paper reveals specific elements that should be part of the performance measurement at organizational level, in order to improve the actual approach.

**Keywords:** emotional intelligence, leadership, organizational culture, employee performance

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Currently, more and more studies have concluded that for an organization to be considered a successful one, aspects like turnover and profit are no longer enough, so researchers also added factors related to employee culture and their ability to be competent and appropriate to the way an institution is organized. Other important aspects refer to how employees are connected to themselves, to the social environment and not only, how they can make organizational or social alliances. The purpose of this study is to analyze from the literature perspective how emotional intelligence and organizational culture can be considered drivers of employee performance, following the hypothesis that the members of organizations that are proven to be emotionally intelligent and that are working in a positive organizational climate perform better in the workplace.

## **2. EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE**

The earliest studies in EI can be recalled those of Piaget (1954/1981), quoted in Jordan (2002), who tried to corroborate, at a theoretical level, affection and intelligence, followed by Izard (1985) and Lazarus (1982) who brought into question the connection between emotion and knowledge.

Mayer and Salovey (1997) believe that emotionally intelligent people understand, recognize and use emotions both in their inner life and in the relationships with others. They go further and, in 1990, mention EI being a mental process that connects independent variables such as thinking and feeling and makes them follow common directions.

Currently, discussions about the impact that EI has on both personal and professional life are present and common. Goleman (1995), one of the most visible and prolific authors related to EI, deals with the idea that it has an influence on a person's entire life well-being. On the other hand, Cooper & Sawaf (1996), Goleman

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(1998 a, 1998 b), Weisinger (1998), Lopes et al. (2006) studied the contribution that EI has for profit-oriented companies. Another major influence that offers a clearly superior performance at the workplace is leadership, Goleman mentioning here the important role this ability has in obtaining good managerial results, more specific the leader that owns good level of EI. He also proposes the concept of emotional competence as the learned ability based on emotional intelligence to achieve performance in the workplace, having its main roots in social awareness and relationship management. In depth, the construction and validation of this concept was based on the study of self-awareness, self-management of internal states, internal impulses and resources, social awareness and relationship management (inducing desired responses to those we interact with), already mentioned.

The sociologist Max Weber describes emotional intelligence as a strong taming of the soul, while psychologists see it as the ability of people to manage their own emotions and relationships with others. (U.S. News and World Report, 2002). Just as a preamble to EI, Weber (mentioned in Breuilly, 2011) talks about the three types of power: one that come from tradition, the other coming from rational legal authority and the last and most recent one is charisma, which refers to the behavioral characteristics of the leader.

In Boyatzis et. al (1999) opinion, EI is a materialization of human talent that incorporates more personality traits, directed in and out of the person, used to better manage one's own emotions and those of others. Subsequently, applied to organization's managers and leaders, it is correlated with efficiency and effectiveness ending up being considered a competence. Based on this initial study, Boyatzis and Goleman (1999) developed research instruments that have been applied on persons, leaders, in different parts of the world. Next, we will review some emotional intelligence dimensions introduced by different authors as driving personal and work life, taking into consideration the effect on the person's behavior. The main dimensions of EI referenced by Brown (2014) are under the range of self-awareness, social awareness, self-management and relationship management. Another dimension is the one related to group emotional intelligence (Downey, 2011; Druskat & Wolff, 2001; Jordan et al, 2002; Prati et.al; 2003).

According to Edmondson (1999), among the leading elements that contribute to the strengthening of emotionally intelligent groups is trust. This is an interesting research aspect, because the team is now a microstructure in organizational development, which in many cases reflects the organization on a smaller scale. Is the team's role an important element in strengthening the organizational culture? Or is the team important only to increase performance and strengthen the role of the leader? Trust is based on the same values and can increase the spreading of the organizational culture, facilitates consultation and collaboration at the group level and encourages performance. Prati et al. (2003) argue that feedback and its presence in organizations represents an example of emotional intelligence implementation in institutions.

Models of emotional intelligence analysis in the workplace include SUEIT (Palmer & Stough, 2001), cited in Downey (2011) which measures five dimensions of emotional intelligence in the workplace, as well as the overall assessment of emotional intelligence: emotional recognition and expression, understanding external emotions, direct cognitive emotions, emotional management and emotional control. Other models for measuring emotional intelligence have been developed by Bar-On (1997), Cooper & Sawaf (1996), Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey (2000), all concluding on the connection between EI and performance. Bar-On (1997) defined EI as a set of non-cognitive abilities, skills and competencies that influence the way individuals cope with demands and pressures and the model he proposed followed those dimensions: intrapersonal (meaning emotional self-awareness, assertiveness, independence of awareness, self-regard and self-actualization), interpersonal (empathy, social responsibility, interpersonal relationship), adaptability and flexibility on the environment, stress management and general mood. Goleman developed and implemented a model for measuring emotional intelligence that contains 25 skills, divided into 5 classes: self-awareness (emotional awareness, realistic self-assessment, self-confidence), self-management (self-control, confidence, adaptability, innovative spirit, conscientiousness), motivation (determination for action, initiative, optimism, commitment), empathy (understanding shown for others, developing others, service orientation, capitalizing on diversity, political awareness), social skills (influence, communication, conflict management, catalyzing change, visionary leadership, building bonds, collaboration and team cooperation).

### 3. EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND LEADERSHIP

Schein (1983, 1990) introduced leadership into the discussion in early 80's and claims that the most important thing a leader has to accomplish is to create and maintain an organizational culture for the benefit of the organization. How this can be done? by appealing to formal statements and commitments regarding the organization's philosophy, credentials, materials used for recruitment, selection and networking, by designing and arranging workspaces, by learning and coaching processes influenced by the leader, system rewards, promotion and recognition of status, stories, histories, myths about key characters and events in the organization, which are the elements that the leader considers to be important, what measurement and control system he uses, reaction to incidents and crisis management. Other important components are: the organizational structure, the internal system, the procedures that are used.

Leadership seems to have a real influence on both the organizational culture and the performance of employees and, indirectly, on organization's performance (Ciobanu & Androniceanu, 2018; Nunes et al., 2018). This opinion is also shared by Bycio et al (1995) quoted in Brown (2014), who studied the links between the type of transactional leader as an engine of change, business performance and emotional intelligence. Is an emotionally intelligent leader more successful in terms of his or her role and organizations' goals? Another important theory embraced by Brown (2014) is the one according to which the leader's behavior is more important in influencing the subordinates' performance than his personality characteristics.

According to Mackenzie et al. (2001), there are two ways in which transformational leaders differ from transactional management. The first refers to the process of leaders trying to engage and influence their followers, customers and subordinates. Secondly, transformational leaders recognize that the attempt to motivate and influence the openness to performance of their followers can only be achieved by focusing on their intrinsic values, aspirations, and goals. The same direction is approached by Prati et. al (2003). They validate the link between leadership and emotional intelligence, as a true leader motivates people, encourages the team, increases cohesion and trust, making people more efficient and effective, while Goleman sustains the link between management style, emotional intelligence and organizational performance (more specific responding to some questions: when a certain management style is optimal, what objectives we need to pursue, which is the estimated impact on the environment or which are most used EI skills?). Langhorn (2004) also makes an interesting correlation between the role of a high emotional intelligence manager, the performance obtained and transformed into client satisfaction, team effectiveness and performance indicators achieved. George J. (2000) discusses elements such as emotion management, as being an expression and dimension of a leader's emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence gains a great influence on managerial performance and leadership through a few key words and phrases: common goals and objectives, work appreciation, enthusiasm, confidence, optimism, cooperation, organizational identity aimed at flexibility and openness in decision making and change.

### 4. EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

Pratt (1998) describes organizational culture as a "way of life" for the members of the organization, considering the influence of culture as self-evident, involving assumptions, beliefs and core values. That is why, culture tends to be fairly stable over time. The way an organization works can involve internal and external factors such as risk management, customer satisfaction assessment and culture with large impact on organizational performance and people satisfaction. Downey (2011) mentions Pizer & Hartel's (2005) study on how organizational culture influences employees' thoughts, behaviors, and emotions, or how emotions shape organizational culture, recalling Beyer & Nino's (2002) study. Norms, behaviors, identity, integration, membership are aspects that link the culture to emotions. Cameron and Quinn model (2006) presents control and flexibility as organizational culture paradigms that help measuring the concept.

According to the members of the Globe project, who developed a questionnaire to identify the meaning of culture in an organization, resulted that it represents values, motivations, beliefs, shared identities, as well as interpretations given to significant events resulting from the common experience of community members passed down from generation to generation. Other researchers (House et al., 2004) identified nine cultural

dimensions that converge towards an organizational culture reflecting those mentioned above: performance orientation, assertiveness, future orientation, people orientation, institutional collectivism, group cohesion, gender equality, distance from power, uncertainty avoidance. Cameron and Freeman (1991) define organizational culture as what is valued in a company, the style of leadership, the language of success that gives uniqueness, while Deal and Kennedy (1982) see it as the way things happen in a company.

Jacobs et al. (2013) makes reference to three measurements that are affected by organizational culture, regardless the type of the organization: equity and efficiency in strategy implementation, intern and external collaboration and relationship, and, to wrap things up, set up monetary and social targets. Prajoho and Mc Dermott (2011) argues the importance that managers have in identifying and matching a certain type of organizational performance to a certain type of culture, starting from strategic objectives analyze.

## 5. EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND PERFORMANCE

Joseph & Newman (2015) talk about the importance of EI for industry and all economic sectors, mentioning that 75% of Fortune 500 companies have adopted EI for product and service development, using mixed emotional intelligence and the positive connection between this one, work performance and objective results. Mixed emotional intelligence is also discussed by Mayer et al (2008) from four perspectives: motivation, impulse control and flexibility, assertiveness and self-related qualities. Altındağa E., Köseadağlı Y. (2015) quoting Thorndike (1920) mentions social intelligence as a skill that helps us in our daily lives. Such a skill, transformed into professional life, conduct to innovative companies that attract high-performing employees and transformational managers. As we can see, there are many practical studies about the EI impact on performance, with a positive connotation in particular, both in public and private organizations, as it can be seen below (Androniceanu & Ciobanu, 2015; Nica et al. 2020; Sabie et al., 2020). Daya & Carrollb (2003) talk about various expected outcomes regarding emotional intelligence, including performance at work (e.g., Abraham, 1999; Cote & Miners, 2006) and turnover (eg, Goleman, 1998). Cote & Miners' study is based on the MSCEIT Mayer-Salovey Caruso (2002) test and reflects this positive trend on the two variables. Lam and Kriby (2002) present the multifactorial emotional intelligence scale (MEIS), which studies the relationship between EI and individual performance. However, there are other studies that do not see a relevant and persistence correlation between EI and performance at the workplace (Locke, 2005; Petrides & Furnham, 2001, 2003).

Shahhosseini et al (2013) believe that emotional intelligence skills are absolutely necessary for an optimal organization climate. He conducted a study, in which he investigated the relationship between EI and leadership style, using Schutte's scales for emotional intelligence, and Bass and Avolve's scale for leadership style. The results showed a clearly positive correlation between emotional intelligence, job performance and transformational leadership. Langhorn (2004) evaluated the defining elements for achieving managerial performance: emotional self-awareness, social responsibility, interpersonal relationships and optimism and Druskat & Wolff (2001) discuss three aspects, without which the effectiveness of a group cannot be achieved: trust among members, group identity and the feeling of achieving its effectiveness, all under the spectrum of shared norms and common vocabulary.

## 6. IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

In FIGURE 1 we present some of the implications born as a results of emotional intelligence presence in organizations, throughout their life cycle, used for activity and functioning fundamentals, both formal and informal, involvement and leadership, achieving goals, including those related to performance.

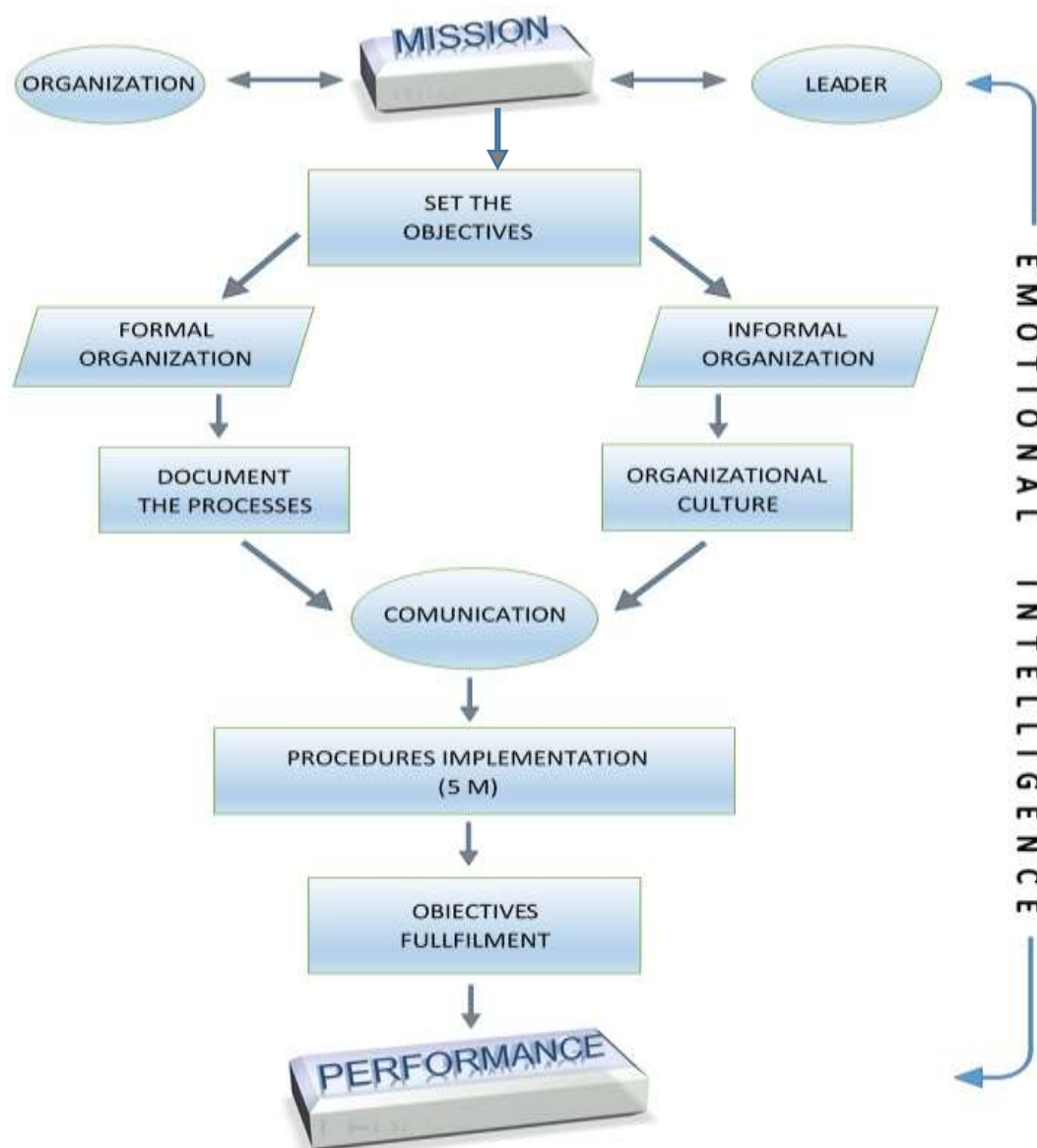


Figure 1. Emotional Intelligence in Organization's Life  
Source: the authors

In the end, starting from the researches consulted in the literature, we can conclude that emotional intelligence, along with the leadership style and organizational culture are key elements and drivers of employee performance in an organization.

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