

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE – NOT JUST A PASSING FAD

INTRODUCTION

Since the publication of Daniel Goleman's book, *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*, in 1995, there has been a surge of interest in the field of emotional intelligence (Cherniss, 2000). Although several tests have been developed, testing for emotional intelligence is a highly controversial topic with issues of definition, validity and reliability hotly debated (Weinberger, 2003). This is not surprising, as the term "emotional intelligence" was only coined in 1990, but what is astounding is that, although we have been testing intelligence for over a hundred years, it also remains a contentious subject on those same issues (Drummond, 2004).

Whereas testing for intelligence and emotional intelligence share many of the same issues of controversy, they differ in their level of credibility and acceptance. There are many psychometric tests for intelligence standardised on a large number of populations; whereas the current tests for emotional intelligence are relatively new and need to undergo extensive validity studies and standardisation on various populations before gaining broad acceptance (Cherniss, 2000). To this extent, intelligence testing has gained more credibility than emotional intelligence testing, which is still trying to lose its "fad" label (Hoffman, 2002). Despite the ongoing controversy, psychometric intelligence tests in various applications have a long history of providing valuable information about clients (Emmerling & Goleman, 2003), and the aim of this essay is to

demonstrate that research and debate is leading to useful psychometric emotional intelligence tests with practical applications that will prove that testing for emotional intelligence is not just a passing fad.

DEFINITIONS

There are many different models of intelligence, too many to outline in this essay, however, most intelligence tests are designed to assess the “ability to think abstractly or use verbal, numerical, or abstract symbols. Subjects ... must substitute symbols for actions and manipulate ideas that represent not only current happenings but also events remote in time and space” (Drummond, 2004, p. 124). A further dimension of intelligence is that of “adapting to the environment and adjusting to problems and changing conditions” (Drummond, 2004, p. 124). In the 1980s, Gardiner expanded the concept of intelligence to one of multiple intelligences: verbal/linguistic, logical/mathematical, visual/spatial, bodily/kinaesthetic, musical/rhythmic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and environmental. Acknowledging that there are other dimensions of intelligence, many tests now specify that they test “cognitive abilities” rather than the broader label of intelligence (Drummond, 2004).

There are currently three main models of emotional intelligence (Bar-On, 2005). The first is the Salovey-Mayer model, whose definition of emotional intelligence is “the ability to perceive, understand, manage and use emotions to facilitate thinking, measured by an ability-based measure” (Bar-On, 2005, p. 2). The second is the Goleman model, whose definition of emotional intelligence is “a wide array of competencies and skills that

drive managerial performance, measured by multi-rater assessment” (Bar-On, 2005, p. 2). Finally the Bar-On model, whose definition of emotional intelligence is “a cross-section of interrelated emotional and social competencies, skills and facilitators that impact on intelligent behaviour, measured by self-report” (Bar-On, 2005, p. 2). The shared theme of these models is “to understand and measure the abilities and traits related to recognising and regulating emotions in ourselves and others” (Emmerling & Goleman, 2003, p. 12). Considering the many definitions, it is important when testing to check the test manual to understand the test developer’s definition of intelligence (Drummond, 2004) and this caution would also apply to tests for emotional intelligence (Weinberger, 2003).

Even though there is continued controversy and no unanimously agreed construct, model and definition, intelligence testing has evolved over the last hundred years to the point where there are psychometric intelligence tests for all age groups from infants to the elderly (Drummond, 2004). Some of the main purposes of intelligence tests are: for the selection of appropriate teaching methods and materials; development of realistic expectations for clients; guidance for educational and vocational decisions; placement and classification decisions related to cognitive abilities; and descriptive and predictive purposes (Drummond, 2004). Binet’s intelligence test was designed to classify students into groups based on their test scores, whereas intelligence tests have since evolved in sophistication to use psychometric profile analysis to not only gain a deeper understanding of the person’s cognitive strengths and weaknesses

but also use subtests that can differentiate between a child with a learning disability and one with attention deficit disorder (Benson, 2003).

There are currently three major tests for emotional intelligence: Goleman's Emotional Competency Inventory (ECI), Bar-On's Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i), and the Mayer, Salovey, Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT) (Bar-On, 2005). The EQ-i and the ECI are examples of self report or other-report, and therefore the responses are subjective (Cherniss, 2000). However, the MSCEIT is an objective, performance-based test and is applicable for use in clinical, educational and workplace settings, and is therefore the emotional intelligence test most similar to traditional intelligence tests (Emmerling & Goleman, 2003).

VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

Many of the criticisms regarding validity and reliability apply to both the testing of intelligence and of emotional intelligence. Construct validity is one of these factors as there is a lack of consensus in the theoretical construct of both intelligence and emotional intelligence, and they cannot be directly measured but must be inferred from behaviours defined as intelligent or emotionally intelligent (Groth-Marnat, 2003). A specific criticism of tests for emotional intelligence is that they really measure aspects already covered by personality tests, but Emmerling and Goleman (2003) counter that although there is an overlap between trait-based theories of emotional intelligence and personality measures, discriminant validity has been demonstrated, and in other research "the incremental validity of emotional intelligence when IQ and personality are controlled for

has shown that emotional intelligence is indeed a unique construct that accounts for unique variance” (2003, p. 10). Or another way of saying it is that “given the relative youth of the emotional intelligence construct, scientific evidence continues to mount that suggests that the construct represents a constellation of traits and abilities that are not fully accounted for by cognitive intelligence and traditional measures of personality” (Emmerling & Goleman, 2003, p. 11). In an analysis of over 20 predictive validity studies of the EQ-i’s ability to predict performance in social, educational and workplace settings, the average predictive validity coefficient was .59, which indicates the EQ-i is able to predict aspects of performance (Bar-On, 2005).

Test scores only indicate how the test-taker has performed on the specific tasks on the test, and the validity and reliability of scores may be affected by depression; anxiety; distractibility; fatigue; illness; life circumstances; language; literacy; ethnicity; disability; the testing environment; or biases of culture, education or socioeconomic status in the test itself (Drummond, 2004). However, it is promising that tests such as the MSCEIT have been trialled and found to have acceptable reliability with split-half reliabilities above $r = .90$ (Mayer et al, 2001).

Another aspect of the controversy around intelligence testing relates to the stability of intelligence over time (Drummond, 2004). IQ should not be thought of as fixed, as scores may be very unstable in early childhood, however cognitive intelligence increases until late adolescence and then declines slightly in the 20s and 30s (Bar-On, 2005). Whereas research by

Bar-On suggests that people get more emotionally and socially intelligent as they age (2005).

Self-report or other-report tests, such as the EQ-i and the ECI360, are criticised because they do not test actual ability or potential; and self-report tests or other-report tests are fokable to give socially desirable responses (Hein, 2005). For this reason, the MSCEIT, an ability-based measure, is more useful than self-report tests in situations where test-takers may provide socially desirable answers rather than realistic ones (Hein, 2005).

In summary, Halpern argues that, "Critics of intelligence testing often fail to consider that most of the alternatives are even more prone to problems of fairness and validity than the measures that are currently used" (Benson, 2003, p. 48). When selecting a test for emotional intelligence, Mayer et al recommend narrowing your focus and selecting the test most appropriate to your hypotheses and potential interventions or outcomes (n.d., ¶1). Therefore, any test must be selected based on the client's specific needs, and test scores need to be interpreted holistically in context with observations and a thorough interview that includes the collection of biodata (Lukas, 1993).

LITERATURE / RESEARCH

There are several important studies that support the value of continued research into emotional intelligence. First of all, the Somerville study which was a 40 year longitudinal study that found that IQ had little to do with how the people did at work or in other aspects of their lives, but rather

childhood abilities in handling frustration, controlling emotions, and getting along with other people were the significant factors. Secondly, the Berkeley study of science PhDs showed that social and emotional abilities were four times more important than IQ in determining professional success and prestige (Cherniss, 2000). Putting these results in context and explaining the restriction of range problem, Cherniss explained, “If you’re a scientist you probably needed an IQ of 120 to get a doctorate and a job. But then it is more important to be able to persist in the face of difficulty and to get along with colleagues and subordinates than it is to have an extra 10 or 15 points of IQ” (2000, p. 5).

This supports Emmerling & Goleman’s argument that IQ is a useful predictor of vocations a person can enter, but once in that vocation, the predictive validity of IQ diminishes significantly. Therefore, when it comes to predicting “star performers” within a field, IQ may be a less powerful predictor than emotional intelligence. This also helps to clarify the misconception that high emotional intelligence can compensate for low IQ – IQ needs to be recognised as a “threshold competence” (Emmerling & Goleman, 2003, p. 8). The Stanford “marshmallow study” was another interesting study. This study found that four year olds who could resist the temptation of not eating one marshmallow to wait for a reward of two marshmallows, as teenagers had SAT scores that were 210 points higher than the children who were unable to wait (Cherniss, 2000). In addition to these studies, the EQ-i has been used for over ten years with predictive success in a practical application to assess thousands of people in

selecting US Air Force recruiters, saving the Air Force nearly three million dollars per year (Cherniss, 2000).

The continued debate over the multiple theories of intelligence has not prevented the development of psychometric tests for intelligence standardised for a wide range of populations (Drummond, 2004). The most widely used intelligence tests, the Wechsler Intelligence scales, were the result of more than 60 years of research, and that research followed 40 years of earlier work on intelligence assessment (Mayer et al, 2001). Emmerling & Goleman predict that, as the debate raging for the past hundred years over traditional intelligence has strengthened the knowledge base and applicability of intelligence assessment, the debate over emotional intelligence will take a similar path (2003). Mayer et al's view is that "both the pace and quality of research in the area reflect the activities of a healthy field" (2001, p. 239).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, in comparison with testing for intelligence, emotional intelligence testing has been criticised as a mere fad. However, evidence considered in this essay suggests that the field of emotional intelligence testing has already proved fruitful in producing tests with acceptable validity and reliability that also have practical application. Although there is still much to be researched on the constructs and measures, emotional intelligence testing is well on its way to gaining widespread acceptance and credibility.

REFERENCE LIST

- Bar-On, R. (2005). The Bar-On Model of Emotional-Social Intelligence (ESI). *Issues in Emotional Intelligence*. [Electronic Version]. Volume not included, pp. 1-28. Retrieved on 5/5/05 from www.eiconsortium.org.
- Benson, E. (2003). Intelligent Intelligence Testing. *Monitor*. Vol. 34 (No. 2), p.48 (5).
- Cherniss, C. (2000). Emotional Intelligence: What it is and Why it Matters. *Issues in Emotional Intelligence*. [Electronic Version]. Volume not included, pp. 1-14. Retrieved on 5/5/05 from www.eiconsortium.org.
- Drummond, R.J. (2004). *Appraisal Procedures for Counselors and Helping Professions (5th ed.)*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Merrill Prentice Hall.
- Emmerling, R.J. & Goleman, D. (2003). Emotional Intelligence: Issues and Common Misunderstandings. *Issues in Emotional Intelligence*. [Electronic Version]. Retrieved on 5/5/05 from www.eiconsortium.org.
- Goleman, D. (1995). *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*. London, UK: Bloomsbury.
- Groth-Marnat, G. (2003). *Handbook of Psychological Assessment (4th ed.)*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- Hein, S. (2005). *Emotional Intelligence Tests*. [Electronic Version]. Retrieved on 5/5/05 from <http://www.eqi.org>.
- Hoffman, E. (2002). *Psychological Testing at Work*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

- Lukas, S. (1993). *Where to start and what to ask: An Assessment Handbook*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Co.
- Mayer, J.D., Salovey, P., Caruso, D.R., & Sitarenios, G. (2001). Emotional intelligence as a standard intelligence. *Emotion*, 1, 232-242.
[Electronic Version]. Retrieved on 19 May 2005 from
<http://www.emotionaliq.org/Reply.htm>.
- Mayer, J. D., Salovey, P., Caruso, D. R. (n.d.) *EI Tests Compared*.
[Electronic Version]. Retrieved on 19 May 2005 from
http://www.emotionaliq.org/EI_Table.htm.
- Weinberger, L.A. (2003). *An Examination of the Relationship Between Emotional Intelligence, Leadership Style and Perceived Leadership Effectiveness*. St Paul, MN: Human Resource Development Research Centre.