Enhancing Job Performance Through Emotional Intelligence: A Study of Salespersons'

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Abstract

The present study purposes to explore the role of emotional intelligence in boosting the job performance of salespersons' working in Haryana and NCR region of India. Four hundred and twenty-four salespersons from different organizations participated in the study. This study implemented survey-based research while using a standardized questionnaire to collect data. Structured equation modelling was applied to test the hypothesis. The findings reveal that the emotional intelligence of salespersons has a positive significant impact on the job performance of respondents. The current study gains significance as the findings can assist organizations and managers in enhancing the job performance of their employees.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence, job performance, salespersons

INTRODUCTION

In this dynamic, cut-throat competitive, technologically advanced, and rapidly changing business environment, it is very challenging for an organization to become a market leader and survive in the market for the long run. In this scenario, it becomes imperative for a business organization to earn an optimum level of revenue. But revenue generation is mainly depending on sales, marketing, advertising, etc. Hence, the role of the sales and marketing department becomes significant for business organizations.

The selling profession occupies a key position all over the world. The statistics released by The World Federation of Direct Selling Association have stated that about 129.9 million people are employed in sales-oriented activities globally which is a considerable increase (9.7%) from 2018 to 2019 (WFDSA, 2019). While the number of people employed as salespersons in Indian organizations has increased from 5.1 million to 5.7 million from 2016-17 to 2018-19 respectively, which is almost a 12 percent surge as compared to the previous year 2018 (Bhushan, 2019). This is noteworthy growth that reflects the increasing significance of the sales force for business organizations.

Despite tremendous technological advancement in the milieu of sales and marketing like social media, digital marketing, e-commerce, etc. organizations are still highly relying on their salesforce. Actually, sales are all about prolific interaction with clients (Manna and Smith, 2004). The multitude of interactions with a probable client can sometimes emotionally drain and affects the performance of salespersons. Above all salespersons have to face very humiliating situations such as people shutting their doors, hanging cell phones very rudely and talking to them very harshly, etc. In such a disrespectful situation, it becomes very difficult to them to keep quiet and handle the situation wisely so that they can perform their task effectively. Indeed, emotions play an indispensable role in our life. Basically, life has no meaning without emotions like happiness, sadness, anger, fear, surprise, etc. and all these emotions have reign to make changes in human psychology. The supremacy of emotions in human life shows that they must be managed intelligently. Albeit the decent life of human beings is determined by emotions coupled with intelligence. Salespersons with high emotional intelligence skills can blend emotions and positive feelings to resolve problems and thereby can overcome gloomy thoughts and hence raising job performance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of emotional intelligence has its genesis in different areas of research though it has its deep roots in the study of psychology.Emotional intelligence (EI) has been understood as an individual's ability to understand own as well as others' emotions and feelings.Many studies have been done globally to understand emotional intelligence in diverse areas.Khosravi et al. (2020)found that the emotional intelligence of managers overcomes the negative consequences of conflict in the workplace on construction workers working on large projects.Besides this, considering two dimensions of emotional intelligence i.e. regulation and utilization of difficult emotions possessed by the school's headteacher resulted in success not only influencing others' performance but also changing the organization's culture(Cliffe, 2019).Analytical researches in the area of sales suggests that emotional intelligence skill may also be an imperativeaspect of successful salesperson. As noted in the work of Deeter-Schmelz and Sojka (2003),the various emotional intelligence skills like empathy, perceiving others' emotions, self-awareness, self-regulation, and self-motivation were found significant to develop a good relationship with customers and thereby salesperson is needed to be trained to enhance their performance. Emotional intelligence is not just self-control; rather it is more of active use of emotional knowledge to achieve desired results and also help in relation building. Heffernan et al. (2008) rightly quoted that relationship marketing is about establishing, maintaining, and growing relationships with customers and also with other partners in order to retain and improve an organisation's customer base and profitability and also found that managers' possessing high emotional ability contributes more to the profitability of banks. Empirically it is also established that EI affects the academic performance and students who were found to be able in handling their emotions were keen to look at themselves in good conscience, regardless of their strengths, they took the criticism in a positive manner, and also understand how to improve their performance (Sanjeev Kumar,2012).

METHODOLOGY

QUESTIONNAIRE AND MEASUREMENT DEVELOPMENT

To measure the emotional intelligence of respondents, a survey was conducted through a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into three parts. The very first part of questionnaire focused on collecting data on emotional intelligence, followed by job performance and its dimensions in the second part. The last part of questionnaire collected demographic information of the respondents. The present study holds two variables one independent variable that is emotional intelligence and job performance is dependent variable. In order to measure the emotional intelligence of respondents,The assessing emotions scale by Stough et al., 2009 also known as the Schutte Emotional Intelligence has been used. For measuring the performance of salespersons, a self-report performance scale developed by Behrman and Perreault (1982) has been used. Self-evaluation of performance have been supported by many previous authors, particularly for sales jobs because much of the efforts put in by salespersons are not directly observed by the manager (DeNisi and Murphy, 2017; Ramos-Villagrasa, 2019; Behrman and Perreault, 1982). The constructs used in the study were latent variables therefore related measurement dimensions were taken to measure them. A five-point Likert type scale anchored by 1(strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) was adopted for all the dimensions of emotional intelligence; perception of emotions, managing own emotions, utilization of emotions, and managing others' emotions. In order to measure job performance of respondents, five-point Likert scale where 5 (Always), 1(Never) were used for all dimensions, Sales objectives, Sales Presentation, Technical Knowledge, Providing Information, and Controlling Expenses

SAMPLING PROCEDURE

It is difficult to ascertain the proper sample size in structural equation modelling (Khurana et al. 2020). However, various researchers suggested sample size of hundred and two hundred, or five or ten observations per estimated parameter as thumb rules (Boomsma, 1985; Bentler& Chou, 1987;Bollen, 1989).By reason of the inadequacy of an exact number of people doing sales jobs in Haryana and NCR; the formula given by Cochran (1997) for a large population is used to define sample size. Although the 384 respondents are considered appropriate but increased sample size can minimize the possibility of biases within the dataset. For the present study initially, 500 questionnaires were given to respondents across various parts of Haryana and the NCR region, out of which 452 filled questionnaires were received by the researcher. The received questionnaires were checked for missing data, outliers, and duplicate entries. After checking finally 424 questionnaires were selected for further analysis.

RESEARCH GAP

The literature highlighted that several empirical studies thrown light on the positive impact of emotional intelligence on the performance of individuals working in different professions. The mentioned reviews reflect that the relationship between emotional intelligence and job performance has gained significant attention empirically but there is a dearth of studies in the area of salespersons performance, especially in India. Therefore, the presentstudy focused to examine how emotional intelligence being an independent variable affects the salespersons' job performance (dependent variable). In order to address the above-mentioned gap following hypotheses have been formulated:

Hypothesis: **Emotional intelligence has a positive influence on the job performance of salespersons.**

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

At the primary stage of data analysis, the collected data were classified and tabulated in order to make them more presentable and easily understandable. Required analysis was undertaken with the aid of two statistical software packages including Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26 and Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS) version 23. The data was analysed by using structural equation modelling which is an advanced method that can handle relationship between multiple variables simultaneously. SEM involves validation of two models, measurement and structural model. At first measurement model was validated using confirmatory factor analysis, thereafter SEM validates the structural model.

RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY OF THE CONSTRUCT

Reliability and validity assessment were done to check the accuracy of the measuring instrument. Confirmatory factor analysis and Cronbach's alpha has been employed in order to measure the reliability and validity of the measuring instrument. Cronbach's alpha is the most commonly used method for measuring the internal consistency of the questionnaire (Hair et al., 1998). The higher the Cronbach's alpha value, the better the measuring instrument as it indicates greater internal consistency.

To assess the validity of the scale, item loadings, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE) were considered. As a rule, AVE value should be at least 0.5 or higher and 0.7 is the threshold limit for CR which is required for validating the measurement model. The CFA results showed that factor loadings of four items under construct emotional intelligence were less than the threshold limit of 0.5, therefore were not take for further analysis. Hence, a total of 29 items were taken for analysis of emotional intelligence.

After running confirmatory factor analysis some of the items whose loadings were less than the acceptable limit is 0.50 were not taken for further analysis. Table 1 shows the composite reliability of all the dimensions of measurement model are higher than the minimum required limit of 0.7. The average variance extracted ranged from 0.503 to 0.559 (refer table 1). These values are as per the minimum requirement of Hair et al. (2010). All the constructs were found to meet the requirements hence showed evidence of convergent validity.

Table 1: Confirmatory factor analysis

Construct	Items	Construct loadings	CR	AVE	MSV	Alpha Value	P value
POE	EI4	0.726	0.910	0.559	0.095	0.909	***
	EI6	0.740					***
	EI7	0.869					***
	EI8	0.702					***
	EI11	0.763					***
	EI14	0.707					***
	EI20	0.742					***
	EI31	0.718					***
MOE	EI1	0.689	0.888	0.532	0.0710	0.887	***
	EI2	0.806					***
	EI9	0.708					***
	EI15	0.738					***

	EI19	0.716					***
	EI24	0.726					***
	EI27	0.717					***
UOE	EI21	0.699	0.881	0.552	0.203	0.873	***
	EI22	0.801					***
	EI23	0.696					***
	EI25	0.733					***
	EI30	0.770					***
	EI33	0.754					***
MOtE	EI3	0.693	0.908	0.553	0.203	0.910	***
	EI10	0.700					***
	EI13	0.702					***
	EI16	0.735					***
	EI17	0.803					***
	EI18	0.838					***
	EI28	0.697					***
	EI29	0.766					***
SO	JP7	0.674	0.877	0.506	0.360	0.878	***
	JP6	0.716					***
	JP5	0.654					***
	JP4	0.693					***
	JP3	0.744					***
	JP2	0.794					***
	JP1	0.694					***
SP	JP13	0.694	0.860	0.506	0.425	0.863	***
	JP12	0.720					***
	JP11	0.632					***
	JP10	0.71					***
	JP9	0.781					***
	JP8	0.724					***
TKn	JP18	0.719	0.838	0.509	0.391	0.850	***
	JP17	0.687					***
	JP16	0.681					***
	JP15	0.779					***
	JP14	0.695					***
PI	JP23	0.726	0.845	0.522	0.425	0.848	***
	JP22	0.758					***
	JP21	0.639					***
	JP20	0.785					***
	JP19	0.698					***
CEx	JP29	0.607	0.858	0.503	0.378	0.859	***
	JP28	0.708					***
	JP27	0.648					***
	JP26	0.695					***
	JP25	0.790					***

	JP24	0.738					***

Source: Primary survey

Note: EI-Emotional Intelligence, POE- Perception of emotions, MOE- Managing own emotions, UOE- Utilization of emotions, MOtE- Managing others' emotion, JP- Job Performance, SO- Sales Objectives, SP- Sales Presentation, TKn-Technical Knowledge, PI- Providing Information, CEx- Controlling Expenses, CR- Composite reliability, AVE-Average variance extracted, MSV- Maximum shared variance.

The model fit indices such as the CMIN/DF, comparative fit index (CFI), goodness of fit index (GFI), normed fit index (NFI), incremental fit index (IFI), tucker lewis index (TLI), and root mean square of error (RMSEA) were taken to observe the model fit. Table 2 present the summary of model fit indices of measurement models. The respective CMIN/DF, CFI, GFI, NFI, IFI, and TLI values of emotional intelligence and job performance measurement models are within the threshold limit. The RMSEA value exhibited by emotional intelligence modelcame up as 0.060 whereas, the RMSEA for job performance is 0.52 which ought to be less than the recommended value of 0.08. The results indicated that all the values are within the required limit suggested by Hair et al. (2010), the calculated value of GFI also met the requirement of value above 0.8 as suggested by Baumgartner and Homburg (1995), and Doll et al. (1994) (cited in Shih-I, 2011) thus representing an acceptable model fit. Hence, we can conclude that the measurement models used in the studyare statistically fit.

Table 2: Model fit indices

Statistical Fit Indices	Calculated value (EI)	Calculated value (JP)	Expected Value	
CMIN/DF	2.564	2.478	< 3	
CFI	0.925	0.911	> 0.9	
GFI	0.846	0.85	> 0.9	Hair et al., 2010; Baumgartner and Homburg 1996; Doll et al., 1994)
NFI	0.854	0.84	> 0.9	
IFI	0.902	0.921	> 0.9	
TLI	0.901	0.899	> 0.9	
RMSEA	0.06	0.052	< 0.08	

Source: Primary survey

The hypothesis is tested to study whether the job performance as a dependent variable is related to emotional intelligence. This relation of emotional intelligence with job performance exhibits an acceptable model fit. To examine the structural model, it is necessary to study the significance level or p value of the path coefficient. As shown in table 3, the structural equation modelling results supported the hypothesis framed in the study. The construct emotional intelligence was found to have significant and positive effect on the job performance of salespersons with (β=0.712, CR=6.744, p<0.05. Table 3 also reported the value of squared multiple correlation R^2 (0.507) which is 51 percent. Thus, the path coefficient value and squared multiple correlation concludes that emotional intelligence impacted the job performance of salespersons. It can be inferred from the results that salespersons with high emotional intelligence are performing better at their job. Hence the hypothesis framed indicating the positive influence of emotional intelligence on job performance is accepted.
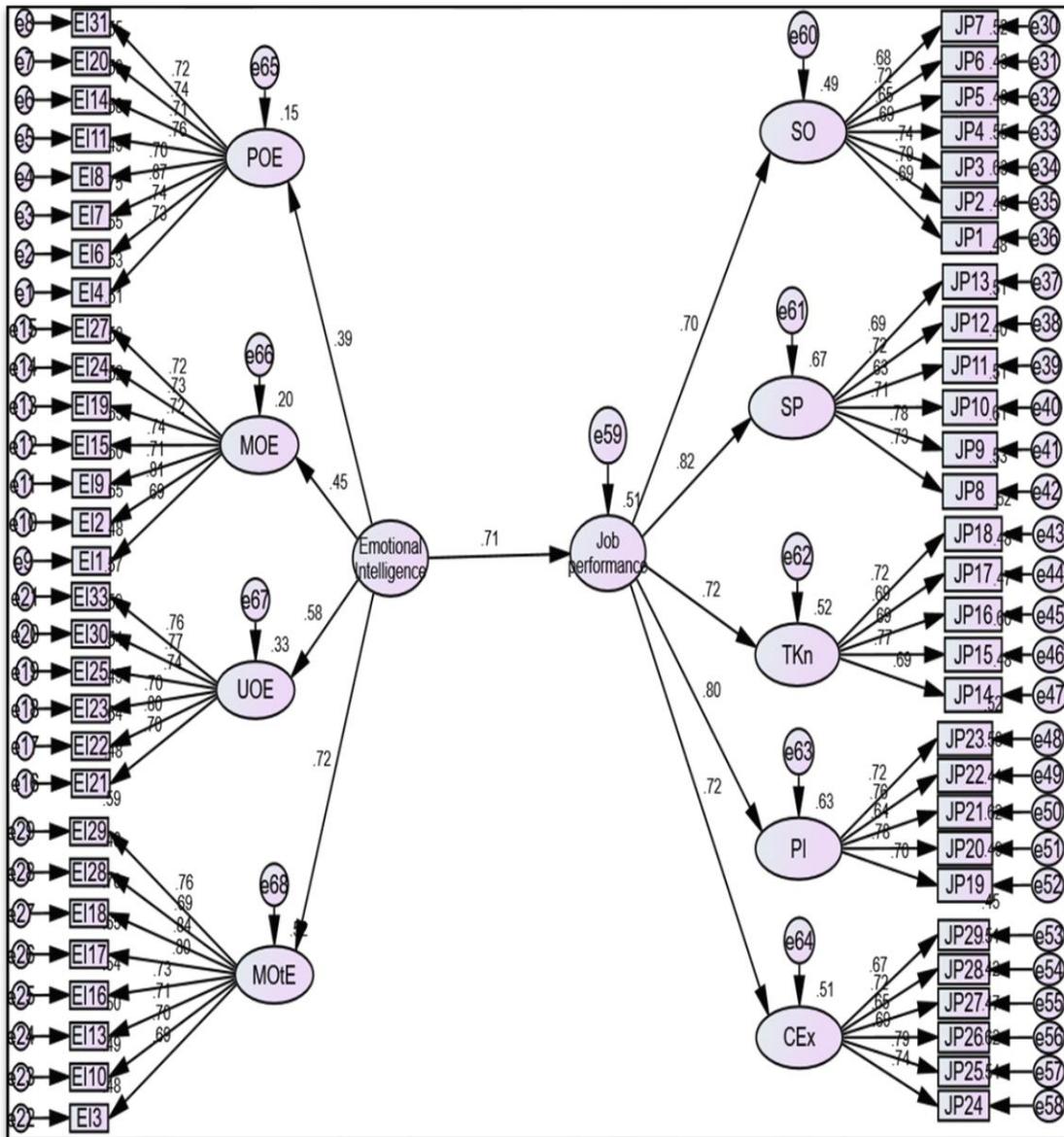
Table 3: Results of SEM analysis showing emotional intelligence impacts on job performance

Source: Primary survey

	Estimates (β)	SE	CR	P value	Squared multiple correlation	Result
JP EI	0.712	0.9	6.744	***	0.507	Supported

Notes: β- standardized beta coefficients, SE- standard error, CR- critical ratio, p< 0.05

JP: Job Performance, EI: Emotional Intelligence

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The present study is carried out to investigate the influence of emotional intelligence on job performance to salespersons. It aimed to found that if salespersons who have efficacious emotional skills perform well at their job. As outlined at the onset of this study, several researchers have focused on studying emotional intelligence and its impact on job performance in different professional fields. The results of the structural equation modelling are in sync with the previous studies, Briggs et al. (2018) in a study on salespersons identified that salespersons with emotional appraisal skills provide more consumer centric services that help them in enhancing their performance. Barone et al. (2015) also investigated and found that emotional intelligence skills played a crucial role in increasing the sales performance.

The present study contributes positively to the research on emotional intelligence by reaffirming how emotional intelligence affects job performance and gives confidence in the ability to intelligently handling emotions to predict job performance in the sales field. Findings are consistent with the affective events theory (AET) that establishes the influence of emotions and moods on job performance and satisfaction proposed by Wiess and Cropanzano (1996) and Thompson and Phua (2012). Certain exceptional positive and negative work events trigger employees' emotions, but it is their traits that prompt them to respond with greater or lesser intensity to the event (Owoseni, 2015) and thus impacting several performance factors. Similarly, number of studies have exhibited the effect of emotional intelligence on salespersons' job performance (Kidwell et al., 2012; Moon Hur, 2011). It has been reported by Aqqad et al. (2019) that

emotional intelligence is significantly and positively linked with job performance. The same results were also reviewed by Alferaih (2017), and the conclusion made reflected the association between emotional intelligence and job performance.

Indeed, the increased technological growth and sweeping competition have changed the way work is performed in the organizations. Intense competition is also putting high job pressures on the employees creating more challenges to salespersons. In the wake of these challenges, organizations are prompted to focus on how to create a dedicated, loyal and trustful workforce. Emotional intelligence is found to be essential for salespersons therefore the study recommends the insertion of emotional intelligence measurement tests at the time of selection process to confirm the intake of salespersons with high emotional intelligence skills to stimulate job performance. The study also suggests that the reward system in organization should be reflective in such a manner that employees who exhibit distinctive instances of emotional intelligence while performing their job get more rewards than others. The result confirms the recommendation that organization should consider emotional intelligence in employee motivation strategy. Employees with high emotional intelligence skills have a tendency to achieve work targets effectively. Therefore, employees need to be motivated to enhance their emotional intelligence skills. Hence, on the basis of structural equation modelling results which is also backed by previous studies the present study also concludes that emotional intelligence skills possessed by salespersons significantly affects their job performance.

Limitation

In spite of its significant contributions, the study also possesses a few limitations. The study is limited by using a quantitative approach that is the questionnaire method. However, it is suggested to the future researchers to collect data by taking qualitative approach like observation, interviews etc. so that the relationship between emotional intelligence and job performance can be viewed in a more comprehensive manner. The study is more salespersons oriented and restricted to salespersons emotional intelligence only. Therefore, in the future managers emotional intelligence and their impact on the salesperson's performance can be studied.

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