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Emotional intelligence research within human resource development scholarship

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this study is to review and synthesize pertinent emotional intelligence (EI) research within the human resource development (HRD) scholarship.

Design/methodology/approach – An integrative review of literature was conducted and multiple electronic databases were searched to find the relevant resources. Using the content analysis technique, the literature was reviewed and thematically organized.

Findings – Seven major themes emerged through the process of content analysis on the body of the reviewed literature. The themes which described the presence of EI-related research within the field of HRD, included: Conceptual connections between EI and HRD; various aspects of EI training and development; the strengths and weaknesses of different EI measurement tools; EI profiles of individuals across various careers; the influence of context in the interpretation of EI; the role of EI in productive interpersonal interactions; and, finally, the impact of EI in leadership development and performance.

Research limitations/implications – The search for this review was limited to peer-reviewed published EI-related articles which contained the keywords “human resource development” or “HRD”. While the field of HRD encompasses a wide variety of areas, this study has the limitation of excluding other relevant articles that did not contain the key terms.

Originality/value – The originality of this study lies in its focus on EI and developing human resources. It argues that EI is a legitimate organization development intervention that can be effectively utilized to improve performance at individual, group, process and organizational levels.

Keywords Emotional intelligence, EI, Human resource development, HRD, Integrative literature review

Paper type Literature review

Introduction

Today’s organizations are facing a surge of interest in emotional intelligence (EI), and EI training is growing to be a multimillion-dollar industry (Kunannatt, 2004; Weinberger, 2002). The construct of EI has changed the definition of success in the workplace and expanded it beyond the intellectual abilities like intelligence quotient. As Goleman (1998, p. 3) noted:

We’re being judged by a new yardstick: not just how smart we are, or by our training and expertise, but also by how well we handle ourselves and each other. This yard-stick is increasingly applied in choosing who will be hired and who will not, who will be let go and who retained, who passed over and who promoted.

EI is significantly related to a host of positive organizational outcomes such as conflict resolution (Godse and Thingujam, 2010; Jordan and Troth, 2002), job satisfaction (Chiva and Alegre, 2008; Kafetsios and Zampetakis, 2008), organizational citizenship



behavior (Carmeli and Josman, 2006), organizational learning (Chiva and Alegre, 2008) and organizational commitment (Humphreys *et al.*, 2003). It represents a set of learned abilities “previously *hidden* or *immeasurable* in organizational life, but responsible for behaviors considered to help people to be successful and effective at work” (Thory, 2013b, p. 222).

The role of EI in improving workplace performance and developing the individuals within organizations has made it an attractive construct for human resource development (HRD) scholars and practitioners. While the field of HRD has been defined in various ways, for the purpose of this article, HRD is defined as:

a human sciences field of study focusing on the process of developing through learning and optimally utilizing human expertise for the purpose of improving performance at individual, team, process, and organizational levels in government, public, for profit, and nonprofit organizations (Nafukho and Muya, 2014, p. 623).

HRD recognizes that, organizations depend on people for the production of goods and services, and people as the most valuable assets in organizations, have capabilities to learn, grow, develop and improve their performance (Nafukho and Muya, 2014). The discipline of HRD is greatly concerned with creating workplaces which foster employee motivation, engagement and productivity (Brooks and Nafukho, 2006). Such workplaces need emotionally intelligent individuals “who are able to identify, manage, and focus their emotions effectively, and successfully to cope with the demands of daily life” (Nafukho and Muya, 2014, p. 625); hence, there is a need to invest in people through EI interventions.

The significance of EI has resulted in the development of a body of literature focusing on EI within the field of HRD. The purpose of this study is to review and synthesize these studies to describe the presence of EI research within the HRD scholarship and propose an agenda for future research and practice.

Research within the field of HRD

The purpose of this study was beyond providing a descriptive inventory of the EI studies that appeared within the HRD scholarship. In reviewing the literature, the authors sought to integrate the findings and create thematic categories that reflected the presence of EI-related research in HRD. Examining research within a specific field with the purpose of integrating several independent studies into a coherent whole is not an innovative approach in the literature, as it has been incorporated in previous studies. For instance, Plakhotnik and Rocco (2011) reviewed the articles published in the *Academy of Human Resource Development (AHRD)* proceedings from 1994 to 2009 to determine how authors defined organizational culture, what research purposes led their studies, what implications for practice were suggested and how the research evolved in the 16-year span. In a similar study, Githens *et al.* (2008) explored the presence of technology-related research in HRD and reviewed articles related to technology in the *AHRD* conference proceedings, in addition to the articles published in the four journals affiliated with the *AHRD*. The authors sought to identify what the research addressed and analyzed how the research was addressed. To our knowledge, no study has analyzed the content of EI research within the HRD field; hence, there is a need for this study.

EI theories and definitions

EI has been one of the fast developing constructs in the academia. The very first paper on EI was published in 1990 and since then, the academic world has encountered progressive advancements on its models and measurement tools as a result of 25 years of rigorous research. Five years prior to the publication of Goleman's (1995) bestseller book entitled *Emotional Intelligence*, EI was introduced to the academic world by Salovey and Mayer (1990, p. 5). They defined EI as:

[...] the abilities to accurately perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thoughts, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth.

Based on Salovey and Mayer's conceptualization, EI represents a type of problem-solving ability involving emotions (Côté, 2014). Bar-On (1997, p. 14) took a broader perspective and described EI as:

[...] a cross-section of interrelated emotional and social competencies, skills and facilitators that determine how effectively we understand and express ourselves, understand others and relate with them, and cope with daily demands.

Three leading theoretical models have guided the lines of research on emotional intelligence. They include: Mayer and Salovey's (1997) Ability model, Bar-On's Emotional-Social Intelligence model (1997) and Goleman's (1998) Emotional Competencies model.

Leading theoretical models of EI

Salovey and Mayer's ability model

Mayer and Salovey (1997) integrated the two psychological concepts of emotion and intelligence into a new concept identified as "emotional intelligence". Based on their model, EI comprised four abilities, including the ability to:

- (1) perceive emotions;
- (2) use emotions to facilitate thought;
- (3) understand emotions; and
- (4) manage emotions.

They argued that EI was a kind of intelligence that developed over time, was moderately correlated with cognitive intelligence and enabled individuals to reason about emotions. In addition, they emphasized that as a type of intelligence, EI needed to be measured through performance-based tests rather than self-report instruments (Mayer and Salovey, 1997). The Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT) was developed based on this notion as a test of EI with an objective scoring system in which each question had only one correct answer (Mayer *et al.*, 1999).

Bar-On's emotional-social intelligence model

Bar-On's conceptualization of EI was more expanded in comparison to Mayer and Salovey's model. The model emerged as a result of an extensive review of personality characteristics determining life success beyond cognitive intelligence and contained five domains, including:

- (1) intrapersonal skills;
- (2) interpersonal skills;
- (3) adaptability;
- (4) stress management; and
- (5) general mood.

To assess EI, Bar-On (1997) developed the Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i), which was a self-report test covering dimensions within social, emotional, cognitive and personality domains.

Goleman's competency model of EI

EI owes its popularity to Goleman's (1995, 1998) publications. In his first book, *Emotional Intelligence*, Goleman (1995) discussed the influence of EI in people's lives. Later, in the book *Working with Emotional Intelligence*, he presented EI as a performance model used to determine people's success in the workplace (Goleman, 1998). Goleman's Competency model of EI consisted of four domains, including:

- (1) self-awareness;
- (2) social awareness;
- (3) self-management; and
- (4) relationship management (Berrocal and Pacheco, 2006).

According to Goleman (1998), these skills could be learned and developed and resulted in outstanding performance at work. Boyatzis *et al.* (2000) developed the Emotional Competence Inventory (ECI), which was a self-report test to measure EI based on Goleman's model.

Trait EI (mixed models) versus ability EI

According to Petrides and Furnham (2001), EI models could be categorized as either ability or trait. They defined trait EI as personality-related, self-perceived abilities measured through self-report tests, and ability EI as cognitive-emotional abilities measured through performance-based tests. Trait EI is conceptualized within the framework of personality, yet the ability EI belongs to the psychometric intelligence domain. Petrides and Furnham (2001) believed that EI was a trait rather than a cognitive ability due to the significant problem of measuring EI as a cognitive ability. They argued that most aspects of EI are not amenable to objective scoring methods, as individuals had the most accurate source of information required to make a judgment on their level of emotional ability (Petrides *et al.*, 2007).

Based on Petrides and Furnham's conceptual distinction, Mayer and Salovey's model represents the ability EI and both Bar-On's Social-Emotional Intelligence and Goleman's EI Competency models are categorized as trait EI or mixed models. Despite the discrepancies between trait and ability EI, they have several commonalities and are perceived as being more complementary rather than mutually exclusive. According to the results of a review, most of the existing EI models included awareness, recognition and regulation of emotions for inter- and intra-personal purposes (Petrides and Furnham, 2001).

Central questions and method

This study used an integrative review of literature (Torraco, 2005) to describe the presence of EI-related scholarly research within the HRD literature. Three main questions guided the study:

- Q1. What EI studies are published in the HRD scholarly literature?
- Q2. What topics are addressed and what findings are obtained?
- Q3. What are the implications for future research and practice?

Search process

To find all the relevant studies, multiple electronic databases were searched, including the Business Source Complete, PsycINFO, Education Source, Education Full Text, Human Resource Abstracts, Education Information Resources Center, Vocational and Career Collection, Professional Development Collection, Academic Search Complete, SocINDEX, Business Abstracts, British Education and Central and Eastern European Academic Source. These databases were searched using the keywords “emotion” and “human resource development” or “HRD”. The term “emotion” was used instead of “emotional intelligence” to capture all EI-related studies, including those in which terms such as “emotional competence” were used instead of emotional intelligence. “HRD” or “human resource development” keywords were included in the search term with the assumption that scholars whose studies had a direct contribution to the field of HRD mentioned either term in the titles or contents of their articles.

Inclusion criteria

The initial search resulted in 130 entries, which were saved, assigned identification numbers and reviewed. For inclusion in this study, an article had to be:

- published in a peer-reviewed journal;
- written in English; and
- focused on EI within the context of HRD.

Only 27 (21 per cent) of the articles found in the initial search, met the inclusion criteria.

Thematic categorization

The reference information and identification codes for each of the articles were put in an Excel spreadsheet book. The spreadsheet included columns representing author’s name, publication year, journal title, study type (conceptual vs empirical), research method (qualitative, quantitative, mixed), study purpose, study findings, EI model used, implications for research and practice and recommendations for further research. To synthesize the addressed topics and obtained findings, the authors thematically categorized the articles. Seven major categories emerged through a process of content analysis describing the presence of EI-related research in HRD scholarship. The themes included:

- (1) *Conceptual connections between EI and HRD*: Discussions on the links between EI and the theory and practice of HRD.
- (2) *EI training and development*: The impact of EI training interventions on the development of EI; the factors that facilitate the development of EI through training; transfer of training; and the content of training.

- (3) *EI across different careers*: EI competencies of professionals across different careers.
- (4) *EI Measurement*: Descriptions, analyses, discussions and criticisms related to measuring EI.
- (5) *EI and interpersonal relationships*: The role of EI in the relationship between individuals in terms of mentoring, conflict resolution and communication in the workplace.
- (6) *The role of context in the interpretation of EI*: The influence of context, whether organizational or societal in the way EI is understood, developed and enacted.
- (7) *EI and leadership*: The role of EI in building leadership capacity and its links to leadership performance.

Results

The EI-related articles in HRD

The 27 articles which met the inclusion criteria, were published between the years 2002 and 2013 across seven peer-reviewed journals (Table I). The publishing journals included *Economics, Management and Financial Markets* (one article, 4 per cent), *Advances in Developing Human Resources* (nine articles, 33 per cent), *Human Resource Development Review* (six articles, 22 per cent), *Human Resource Development Quarterly* (three articles, 11 per cent), *Human Resource Development International* (two articles, 7 per cent), *Journal of European Industrial Training* (five articles, 18 per cent) and the *European Journal of Training and Development* (one article, 4 per cent). The four publications affiliated with the *Academy of Human Resource Development*, including *Advances in Developing Human Resources, Human Resource Development Review, Human Resource Development Quarterly* and *Human Resource Development International*, were all among the publishing journals. *Advances in Developing Human Resources* was the most consistent publisher of EI-related research, containing 33 per cent of the total articles. Fifty-five per cent of the articles were conceptual, and 44 per cent were empirical. The majority of the empirical studies were quantitative in terms of design (9 out of 12, 75 per cent), but two articles with qualitative (17 per cent) and one with mixed-methods (8 per cent) designs were included.

Topics addressed and findings obtained in the EI-related research within HRD

The seven key themes, which emerged through the content analysis over the reviewed articles, described the presence of EI-related research within the HRD. Each theme is discussed in detail in the following sections.

Conceptual connections between EI and HRD. The development of human capital is crucial for economic survival and the intelligent use of emotions “creates an environment that enables the opportunity for social capital to develop, thus enhancing organizational performance” (Brooks and Nafukho, 2006, p. 125). Also, EI could enhance workplace productivity, thus it is applicable to HRD as a field dedicated to unleashing human expertise to improve performance (Nafukho 2009; Weinberger, 2002).

EI and training and development. The evidence on the significance of EI in predicting workplace performance raised an important question: Could EI be developed through training? Some HRD scholars attempted to provide answer to this question. Clarke (2006a, p. 423) reviewed the ability and mixed model (trait EI) conceptualizations of EI

Table I.
Thematic
categorization of the
articles

		Articles					
Themes	No.	*Journal	Volume (issue), year	Author(s)	Title	Type	Method
Conceptual connections between EI and HRD	1	HRDR	1(2), 2002	Weinberger, L.	Emotional intelligence: its connection to HRD theory and practice	Conceptual	
	2	JEIT	30(2), 2006	Brooks, K. & Nafukho, F.	Human resource development, social capital, emotional intelligence any link to productivity?	Conceptual	
	3	AHRD	11(6), 2009	Nafukho, F.	Emotional intelligence and performance: need for additional empirical evidence	Conceptual	
EI and training and development	4	HRDI	9(4), 2006	Clarke, N.	Developing emotional intelligence through workplace learning: findings from a case study in healthcare	Empirical	Qualitative
	5	JEIT	27(2,3,4), 2003	Moriarty, P. & Buckley, F.	Increasing team emotional intelligence through process	Empirical	Quantitative
	6	AHRD	11(6), 2009	Muyia, H. & Kacirek, K.	An empirical study of a leadership development training program and its impact on emotional intelligence quotient (EQ) scores	Empirical	Quantitative
	7	HRDR	5(4), 2006	Clarke, N.	Emotional intelligence training: a case of caveat emptor	Conceptual	

(continued)

Themes	No. *Journal	Volume (issue), year	Author(s)	Articles Title	Type	Method
	8	HRDQ 21(2), 2010	Clarke, N.	Developing emotional intelligence abilities through team-based learning	Empirical	Quantitative
	9	EMFM 7(3), 2012	Kunmanatt, J.	Emotional intelligence-neurobiological insights for HRD/training professionals	Conceptual	
	10	JEIT 34(3), 2010	Beigi, M. & Shirmoh-ammadi, M.	Training employees of a public Iranian bank on emotional intelligence competencies	Empirical	Quantitative
	11	HRDI 16(1), 2013	Thory, K.	Teaching managers to regulate their emotions better: insights from emotional intelligence training and work-based application	Empirical	Qualitative
	12	HRDR 6(4), 2007	OpenGart, R.	Integrative literature review: emotional intelligence in the K-12 curriculum and its relationship to American workplace needs	Conceptual	

(continued)

Table I.

Themes	Articles				
	No. *Journal	Volume (issue), year	Author(s)	Title	Type Method
EI across careers	13 HRDQ	21(2), 2010	Leimbach & Maringka	Invited paper: developing emotional intelligence abilities through team-based learning	Conceptual
	14 JEIT	31(4), 2007	Yildirim, O.	Discriminating emotional intelligence-based competencies of IT employees and salespeople	Empirical Quantitative
	15 JEIT	31(3), 2007	Dimitriadis, Z.	Managing emotionally intelligent service workers personal and positional effects in the Greek context	Empirical Quantitative
EI measurement	16 HRDQ	17(1), 2006	McEnrue, P. & Groves, K.	Choosing among tests of emotional intelligence: what is the evidence?	Conceptual
	17 AHRD	11(6), 2009	Lincoln, Y.	Rethinking emotional intelligence: an alternative proposal	Conceptual

(continued)

Articles						
Themes	No. *	Journal	Volume (issue), year	Author(s)	Title	Type Method
	18	AHRD	11(6), 2009	Muyia, H.	Approaches to and instruments for measuring emotional intelligence: a review of selected literature	Conceptual
EI and interpersonal relationships	19	AHRD	11(6), 2009	Graham, C.	Communications technology, emotional intelligence, and impact on performance: a conceptual exploration of connections	Conceptual
	20	AHRD	4(1), 2002	Jordan, P. & Troth, A.	Emotional intelligence and conflict resolution: implications for human resource development	Empirical
	21	EJTD	36(7), 2012	Doloriert, C. & Sambrook, S.	Power and emotion in doctoral supervision: implications for HRD	Empirical
The role of context in the interpretation of EI	22	HRDR	12(2), 2012	Thory, K.	A gendered analysis of emotional intelligence in the workplace: issues and concerns for human resource development	Conceptual
	23	HRDR	4(1), 2005	OpenGart, R.	Emotional intelligence and emotion work: examining constructs from an interdisciplinary framework	Conceptual

(continued)

Table I.

		Articles			
Themes	No. *Journal	Volume (issue), year	Author(s)	Title	Type Method
EI and leadership	24	AHRD 10(5), 2008	Fambrough, M. & Hart, R.	Emotions in leadership development: a critique of emotional intelligence	Conceptual
	25	AHRD 11(6), 2009	Weinberger, L.	Emotional intelligence, leadership style, and perceived leadership effectiveness	Empirical Quantitative
	26	AHRD 11(6), 2009	Ayiro, P.	An analysis of emotional intelligence and the performance of principals in selected schools in Kenya	Empirical
	27	HRDR 11(2), 2012	Shuck, B. & Herd, A.	Employee engagement and leadership: exploring the convergence of two frameworks and implications for leadership development in HRD	Conceptual

Notes: *Journals EMFM = Economics, Management, and Financial Markets; AHRD = Advances in Developing Human Resources; HRDR = Human Resource Development Review; HRDQ = Human Resource Development Quarterly; HRDI = Human Resource Development International; JEIT = Journal of European Industrial Training; EJTD = European Journal of Training and Development

that underpinned most training programs. Taking a critical approach toward trait EI, he argued that “developing EI based on mixed and/or personality models offer little more than repackaging of previous soft-skills training” and urged the HRD scholars and practitioners to focus on the ability model for EI training. Later, [Clarke \(2010\)](#) designed an EI training intervention based on the ability model and evaluated the change in the participants’ EI after the completion of the program. The intervention by itself did not result in any significant change. Similar results were obtained in other studies which aimed to explore the impact of EI training on the development of EI in the participants. [Beigi and Shirmohammadi \(2010\)](#) designed and delivered a training intervention based on Goleman’s model for the employees of a financial institution and found almost no improvements. Similarly, [Muyia and Kacirek \(2009\)](#), who examined the effects of a three-day EI training program based on the Bar-On’s model, observed no significant change.

EI development could be facilitated by some factors. [Clarke \(2006b\)](#) discovered that day-to-day interactions had a significant role in the development of EI among individuals and concluded that maximizing opportunities for interaction in the workplace might be an effective strategy for EI development. [Moriarty and Buckley \(2003\)](#) noticed that team skills training interventions could result in the development of EI among university students. [Clarke \(2010\)](#) observed that intensive participation in a team-based learning activities followed by an EI training course could lead to significant improvements in EI. However, [Leimbach and Maringka \(2010\)](#) argued that it would be difficult to draw the conclusion that team participation activity could enhance EI development based on [Clarke’s \(2010\)](#) study due to some methodological deficiencies associated with the study. Finally, [Kunnanatt \(2012\)](#) argued that increasing the awareness of participants on the inner operations and interactions between rational (neocortex) and emotional (amygdala) minds in EI training interventions could facilitate EI development.

[Opengart \(2007\)](#) addressed the content of EI training and reviewed the most well-known social and emotional learning (SEL) programs in the American K-12 curriculum. Comparing the content of these programs with the EI skills that were associated with success in the American workplace, Opengart discovered that there was a partial match between the two. Some EI domains (self-awareness, recognition of emotions, social awareness, social skills and empathy) were seen as part of the content and curriculum in SEL programs; however, other dimensions (self-management, stress management and mood regulation) did not appear as frequently. [Opengart \(2007\)](#) recommended a broader range of skills and competencies to be included in these programs to develop a more emotionally intelligent workforce for the future.

Training transfer was investigated in [Thory’s \(2013a\)](#) study which focused on the applications of the learned emotional regulation strategies by managers and the events associated with their daily use in the workplace. According to the results, managers who participated in the EI training intervention used a variety of emotion-regulation strategies at work, sometimes combining and adapting them. These strategies were repeatedly used during situations of interpersonal conflict (e.g. decision-making conflict), interpersonal interactions (e.g. communicating bad news), organizational change (e.g. down-sizing) and to relieve boredom and cope with work load ([Thory, 2013a](#)).

EI across different careers. Certain job responsibilities might lead to the development of EI skills in the individuals over time. Therefore, people who perform in a job for a while could be different with others in terms of their EI competencies. For instance, according to [Yildirim \(2007\)](#), sales and IT employees were significantly different from each other in terms of self-awareness, social awareness and relationship management. Also, positional (managerial level, tenure with organization) and personal (occupational choice, education, experience) factors exerted a statistically significant effect on EI levels of the individuals ([Dimitriadis, 2007](#)).

EI measurement. Tests are frequently used in EI studies for the purpose of data collection. The tests of EI typically differ in terms of their conceptual frameworks and approaches to measurement. Choosing among these tests is an important task for HRD researchers and practitioners. [Muyia \(2009\)](#) reviewed the models of EI (ability, mixed) and the well-known instruments including MSCEIT, ECI and EQ-i. She provided the dimensions that were measured in each test, the psychometric characteristics and some evidence from their use in previous studies. [McEnrue and Groves \(2006\)](#) conducted a comprehensive validity review on MSCEIT, EQ-i, ECI and Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire tests and reported MSCEIT to be superior in terms of content, construct, discriminant and convergent validity, yet inferior in face validity.

The whole notion of using tests to measure EI was challenged by [Lincoln \(2009, p. 789\)](#). Criticizing the EI tests for being “less context sensitive, less organizational grounded, than they might be”, Lincoln suggested the naturalistic inquiry method as the alternative to measuring EI and encouraged stakeholders within organizations to develop their own definitions of EI based on their organizational culture. Lincoln also warned against the unfortunate and harmful consequences of using EI tests in organizations, as they might make the employees vulnerable.

EI and interpersonal relationships. EI has the potential to influence personal interactions in the workplace. According to [Jordan and Troth \(2002\)](#), individuals with higher levels of EI are more likely to engage in collaborative styles when attempting to resolve conflicts rather than using forcefulness or avoidance. In the context of higher education, EI could play a significant role in the mentoring relationships. [Doloriert et al. \(2012, p. 732\)](#) examined the doctoral student–faculty advisor interactions and found that more than often “a low level of emotion management is observed by the students as they are unaware of displaying or even experiencing their emotions”. This lack of EI could negatively affect the way students and advisors interact and manage their evolving relationships, hence decrease their performance ([Doloriert et al., 2012](#)). Finally, [Graham \(2009\)](#) discussed the EI potential to facilitate the communications of leaders and followers who work from distance, as it could assist the leaders to persuade their followers and influence their behaviors in the virtual workplaces ([Graham, 2009](#)).

The role of context in the interpretation of EI. The context in which EI is enacted has an important role in perceiving, performing and developing emotionally intelligent behaviors. Context is a crucial element that brings meaning to EI, as it would be very difficult to interpret why someone chooses to express a particular emotion without contextual clues ([Opengart, 2005](#)). Opengart demonstrated the integration of EI and emotion work, or the contextual and social factors that address the organizationally appropriate expressions of emotions. She argued that emotionally intelligent behaviors require an individual to be aware of what emotions are expected, acceptable and unacceptable in a given environment (emotion work). In a broader sense, EI is

constructed within the norms of the society. [Thory \(2013b\)](#) focused on the role of gender in the societies and the phenomenon of male dominance which caused only men with higher levels of EI to be evaluated as more emotionally and socially competent. As [Thory \(2013b, p. 229\)](#) noted, “in the context of gendered behavior, for men emotion is associated with ability but for women it is still framed within stereotypes of vulnerability, loss of power and control”.

EI and leadership. Leadership is a top priority for organizations and one of “the most researched and debated topics in the organizational sciences” ([George, 2000, p. 1,028](#)). [Goleman’s \(1995, 1998, 2001\)](#) writings on EI highlighted the role of emotions in leaders’ effectiveness and challenged the traditional thinking that emotions had no place in leadership excellence. The business writings in this area exploded since Goleman’s publications; however, the claims on the role of EI in leadership far exceed the scholarly support ([Weinberger, 2009](#)). Two contradictory perspectives are observable within the academic literature. While some scholars argue that EI is meaningfully related to the most effective styles of leadership ([Ashkanasy and Tse, 2000; George, 2000](#)), there are others who argue that the reported associations between EI and leadership are exaggerated ([Antonakis, 2003](#)). Both perspectives were demonstrated in articles within this review. [Fambrough and Hart \(2008, p. 754\)](#) provided a critique of EI in leadership development and argued that the claims made on the effectiveness of EI interventions for leadership development were unrealistic. As they noted:

We must acknowledge that there is no quick-fix elixir that will create the emotionally attuned leader. Goleman himself admitted that developing even one EI component takes considerable time, personal commitment, coaching, feedback, and practice.

[Fambrough and Hart \(2008\)](#) discussed how EI could be used by leaders as a tool for manipulation and criticized the administration of universal EI instruments that did not account for the cultural diversity among the test-takers. They further mentioned several methodological issues with most of the studies that reported significant links between leaders’ EI and performance. They argued that more than often, the reported connections were based on followers’ perceptions of a leader’s performance rather than objective criteria and the variance attributed to EI was contaminated by social intelligence and personality traits. [Weinberger’s \(2009\)](#) empirical study supported [Fambrough and Hart’s \(2008\)](#) argument regarding the disconnection between EI and leadership. Weinberger explored the relationships between EI, leadership style (transformational, transactional, laissez-faire) and leadership effectiveness using Mayer and Salovey’s EI model and discovered no significant links.

Taking a contradictory perspective, [Shuck and Herd \(2012\)](#) supported the role of EI in leadership and explained how EI was needed for leaders to connect with the employees and increase their engagement in the workplace. The positive role of EI in leaders’ performance was empirically supported in [Ayiro’s \(2009\)](#) study in which a significant association was reported between school principals’ performance and certain EI abilities. However, the study suffered from some of the common methodological issues highlighted by [Fambrough and Hart \(2008\)](#); hence, the results were skeptical.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to review and synthesize the EI-related studies in the HRD scholarship. The results of this review revealed seven major themes that emerged

from a content analysis on the body of EI-related research within the HRD scholarship. In this section, we summarize the findings, discuss their implications for HRD research and practice and address the limitations of the study.

Summary of the findings

According to the existing scholarly evidence, the intelligent use of emotions can assist individuals to be more effective in their jobs. Due to the impact of EI in creating a host of positive organizational outcomes and the role of HRD to improve employee learning, engagement, motivation and productivity in organizations, it is argued that there is a connection between the construct of EI and the theory and practice of HRD (Brooks and Nafukho, 2006; Nafukho, 2009; Weinberger, 2002).

The interest of HRD scholars in determining if EI could be developed through training led to the administration of quasi-experimental studies. Based on the findings, it seems that participation in an EI training intervention *per se* does not enhance people's EI (Muyia and Kacirek, 2009; Beigi and Shirmohammadi, 2010). However, when the training is accompanied with activities such as teamwork, change is more likely to occur (Clarke, 2010; Moriarty and Buckley, 2003).

Choosing among the tests of EI is an important consideration for researchers and practitioners. Clarke (2006a) firmly recommended the ability model and McEnrue and Groves (2006, p. 30) supported this choice, stating that it provides "the broadest conceptualization of the construct without significant overlaps onto personality traits". Despite these positive attitudes, the ability model is criticized by other scholars. For instance, Brody (2004) argued that MSCEIT was more of a test of emotional knowledge rather than EI, as one might know about the right emotions in each context but fail to act in an emotionally intelligent way.

Overall, every test of EI has strengths and weaknesses, and the decision for selecting an EI measurement tool depends on the psychometric specifications, the theoretical model and the researchers' needs and purposes (McEnrue and Groves, 2006). Qualitative researchers such as Lincoln (2009) noted that EI researchers utilizing quantitative methods needed to be cautious in the administration of the EI tests and applications of the results. This is a valid observation, given the fact that EI is a fairly sensitive and complex construct which involves people's emotions and might generate harmful effects if used unprofessionally.

EI tests are criticized for failing to account for the contextual variations among the participants, while the interpretation of EI is dependent on the context in which it is enacted (Fambrough and Hart, 2008; Lincoln, 2009; Opengart, 2005; Thory 2013b). Incorporating the qualitative research method is proposed by Lincoln (2009) as an alternative to the quantitative method, as it could provide a more textured understanding of individuals' EI and prevent the issues associated with EI testing.

Training transfer is an ultimate goal for any training intervention including EI. For transfer to occur, "learned behavior must be generalized to the job context and maintained over a period of time on the job" (Baldwin and Ford, 1988, p. 63). Despite the prevalence of EI training programs and the significance of training transfer, research in this area is limited. The content of training is also an important, yet understudied area in the literature, as most of the time, researchers who design EI quasi-experimental studies fail to describe the details of the training interventions that are delivered to the participants and the process of development (Groves, McEnrue and Shen, 2008).

The validity of incorporating EI alongside the recruitment and training processes in the organizations is justified, as some skills of EI are discovered to be associated with having certain careers in organizations. For instance, the EI competencies required for sale managers are meaningfully different from those essential for IT professionals (Yildirim, 2007).

Finally, EI is perceived to be a facilitating factor in the flow of communications (Graham, 2009), development of productive mentoring relationships (Doloriert *et al.*, 2012) and achieving constructive conflict resolutions in the workplace (Jordan and Troth, 2002). Although these factors are crucial for effective leadership, the role of EI in leadership is associated with controversial evidence. Serious questions are raised on the possibility of building leadership capacity through EI (Fambrough and Hart, 2008) and the existing empirical evidence reveals both significant (Ayiro, 2009) and nonsignificant (Weinberger, 2009) relationships between EI and leadership.

Implications for future research and policy making

Several directions for future research on EI emerged from the reviewed articles. Within the area of training and development, researchers could focus on discovering mechanisms in terms of techniques, content or methods of training that facilitate EI development. For instance, Stevens and Cooper (2009) recommend reflective writing as an effective tool for learning, professional insight and positive change. It could be incorporated in EI training programs to assess its impact on EI development.

Majority of the studies on EI development are focused on the results of pre- and posttests to demonstrate the change among a single group of participants (no control group) and fail to provide the details of the training interventions. Therefore, conducting studies with both experimental and control groups that include the process, duration and the content of the training intervention could make a significant contribution in the literature on EI development. There is also a need for studies that account for individual and occupational differences in developing EI through training interventions, as these factors might be significant in the effectiveness of these programs. Additionally, there is a need for a meta-analysis study focusing on the quasi-experimental studies that have used EI interventions in organizations. Such a study would contribute to the EI development literature and provide an accurate evaluation of the reported findings to inform the current debate regarding the possibility of training people to become more emotionally intelligent.

There is a need for further empirical research within the framework of training transfer to identify the factors that facilitate the transfer of EI skills in the workplace. For instance, organizational incentives (McEnrue and Groves, 2006), workplace learning mechanisms such as coaching and participation in social learning activities (Clarke, 2006b) are proposed to have a facilitating effect, but empirical evidence is required to determine their role in the transfer of EI training to the workplace.

In terms of policy for our schools, there is a need for further research to examine the effects of EI training interventions on the students' and their teachers' performance especially with regard to addressing emotionally charged issues such as the discipline practiced by teachers, school leaders and police officers. Moreover, although SEL programs are vastly invested in the American schools, the future outcomes of these programs are unclear. Longitudinal studies are needed to determine what long-lasting effects these programs have on the development of the future human resources.

The empirical evidence on the role of EI in leadership development and performance is contradictory. Thus, there is a need for further research to address the existing ambiguities and contradictions. To make a significant contribution, quantitative studies should incorporate a more solid methodology by measuring EI and leadership performance through valid and reliable tools. Also, the intervening effect of personality traits needs to be controlled for especially if mixed models of EI are used to obtain the incremental validity of EI in predicting leadership performance.

Conducting qualitative studies on EI could lead to interesting findings. Novel perspectives and a deeper understanding on the role of EI in organizations might emerge through people's stories which are never captured from numbers. A systematic review over the previous EI studies that used the qualitative research method could reveal the strengths, weaknesses and best practices for incorporating this research method for EI studies. Discovering how the meaning of EI competencies might change across different nationalities and cultures is another interesting area for qualitative inquiries. Finally, future qualitative studies could capture the role of gender in assessing the value of EI within organizations through the lived experiences of professionals.

Implications for practice

Based on the contributions of EI in workplace performance, HRD practitioners are encouraged to develop EI training interventions to promote productivity especially for those employees who work in occupations requiring higher levels of EI skills such as service jobs or managerial positions (Yildirim, 2007; Dimitriades, 2007). Implementing EI training interventions is recommended prior to initiating large-scale organization development interventions such as mergers which, trigger a lot of positive and negative emotions (McEnrue and Groves, 2006). Additionally, EI could be used in the context of conflict resolution interventions to assist their development, as these constructs are related to each other (Jordan and Troth, 2002).

When designing EI training interventions, HRD professionals are recommended to use a solid instructional design and apply the principles of adult learning to create effective programs. When developing the content, there is a need to include activities such as team-based learning that are reported to have a facilitating effect on EI development. HRD practitioners engaged in EI training interventions should be mindful of the occupational backgrounds of the individuals who come to the EI training sessions, as certain jobs and positions in organizations are associated with different EI levels and learning needs. They should also be cautious to protect individuals against facing any negative consequences in terms of career development and promotional opportunities based on the obtained results of the EI tests. Additionally, HRD professionals should be aware of what EI training can and cannot do. As Fambrough and Hart (2008, p. 754) noted, while developing EI is possible, it is not easy to occur, as it takes “ [...] considerable time, personal commitment, coaching, feedback, and practice”. Finally, HRD practitioners are encouraged to be the facilitators of the systematic change needed to transform the masculinized workplace cultures that exist in the organizations regarding women's EI skills by engaging in constant awareness raising interventions to challenge the masculine performance bias and alleviate the discrimination that exists against women (Thory, 2013b).

Limitations

In this study, the search was limited to the EI-related articles, which had the keywords of “HRD” or “human resource development” in the body and were published in peer-reviewed journals. The field of HRD encompasses a wide variety of areas and there might be relevant studies, published or unpublished, which did not contain the keywords, hence excluded from this review. Should they be included, different themes might have been generated.

Conclusion

Several applications for EI interventions in the field of HRD were discussed in this review. However, it should be noted that not all EI interventions have an immediate positive impact on individuals and organizations. Performance improvement is not a one-day event and it may take time for organizations to see the benefits of investing in EI interventions. Additionally, EI has been criticized for not having a single agreed-upon definition and theoretical model. However, the existence of multiple approaches to EI is not considered a deficiency and should not averse the researcher and practitioners. As Berrocal and Pacheco (2006, p. 10) explained:

[...] the co-existence of multiple ways to study emotional competencies and abilities demonstrate a new and incipient field, searching for a satisfactory scientific explanation to the processes of interrelationships between cognition and emotion from different points of view.

Despite the criticisms and the ambiguities associated with EI as a fairly new and complex construct, HRD scholars and professionals are encouraged to continue applying EI as creating emotionally intelligent workplaces offers a promising agenda for HRD research and practice.

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