EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND ORGANIZATIONAL POLITICS-AN OVERVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Organizations are emotional hotbeds because they produce situations likely to be meaningful to employees. Organizations involve complex relationships that are interdependent, often competitive, and compulsory. Employees often interact with a range of people not necessarily of their choice. Organizations are often characterized by hierarchical relationships, and stark differences are a primary cause of emotional response. Emotions are responses to specific events that have meaning to the individual, either positive or negative. They are generally more focused, of shorter time duration, and more intense than moods or feelings, and emotional responses involve several psychological subsystems, including the physiological, cognitive, motivational, and experiential systems. Organizations typically involve pressure surrounding deadlines and productivity, and high personal stakes—often an individual's self-identity is wrapped up with his or her perceptions of organizational achievement.

Organizational Politics are the efforts of social actors (individual or corporate) to strengthen or defend their power positions and to exercise influence over goals, policies, rules, everyday routines, and events that are internal or external to organizations. It is to use underhand means and indulge in other manipulative behavior like backstabbing, stolen ideas, and scapegoating to achieve one’s own goal. It is said that one of the abilities of effective managers is political savvy. They accept the inevitability of organizational politics and adjust their attitude and actions so as not to be victimized by unethical politics in the workplace. Political savvy is observed in people with a high emotional intelligence. The present paper is an attempt to study the same.

KEYWORDS: Emotional Hotbeds, Psychological Subsystems, Non-Rational Influence

INTRODUCTION

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional Intelligence is a person’s self-awareness, self-confidence, self-control, commitment and integrity and a person’s ability to communicate, influence, initiate change and accept change. (Goleman, 1998). Emotional intelligence can be considered a mental ability that involves the ability to reason validly with emotional information, and the action of emotions to enhance thought. The term encompasses the following five characteristics and abilities:

- **Self-Awareness:** Knowing emotions, recognizing feelings as they occur, and discriminating between them.
- **Mood Management:** Handling feelings so they're relevant to the current situation and to react appropriately.
- **Self-Motivation:** "gathering up" feelings and directing towards a goal, despite self-doubt, inertia, and impulsiveness.
- **Empathy:** Recognizing feelings in others and tuning into their verbal and nonverbal cues.
- **Managing Relationships:** Handling interpersonal interaction, conflict resolution, and negotiations.

The four branch model of emotional intelligence describes four areas of capacities or skills that collectively
describe many of areas of emotional intelligence (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). More specifically, this model defines emotional intelligence as involving the abilities to:

- Accurately perceive emotions in oneself and others
- Use emotions to facilitate thinking
- Understand emotional meanings, and
- Manage emotions

Emotions are responses to specific events that have meaning to the individual, either positive or negative. They are generally more focused, of shorter time duration, and more intense than moods or feelings, and emotional responses involve several psychological subsystems, including the physiological, cognitive, motivational, and experiential systems Barsade, et al (2003); Salovey & Mayer, (1990). Organizations are emotional hotbeds because they produce situations likely to be meaningful to employees. Organizations involve complex relationships that are interdependent, often competitive, and compulsory. Employees often interact with a range of people not necessarily of their choice. Organizations are often characterized by hierarchical relationships, and stark differences are a primary cause of emotional response Tiedens (2001). Organizations typically involve pressure surrounding deadlines and productivity, and high personal stakes—often an individual's self-identity is wrapped up with his or her perceptions of organizational achievement.

**Organizational Politics**

Organizational Politics are the efforts of social actors (individual or corporate) to strengthen or defend their power positions and to exercise influence over goals, policies, rules, everyday routines, and events that are internal or external to organizations. When most people are asked their view of politics in the workplace, they think immediately of those who use underhand means, and indulge in other manipulative behavior like backstabbing, stolen ideas, and scapegoating to achieve one’s own goal.

Kreitner (1995) defined organizational politics as intentional acts to influence to enhance or protect the self-interest of individuals or groups. Managers are endlessly challenged to achieve a workable balance between employee’s self-interest and organizational interest. Researchers have documented the political tactics of filtering and distorting information flowing up to the boss. The self-surveying practice put the reporting employees in the best possible light. Experts say America’s global competitiveness is threatened by unmanaged organizational politics. Field research evidence in the area of organizational politics is slowly accumulating three particulars. A follow-up research report on the sample of Southern California electronics industry managers provided the following insights:

- Sixty percent of managers reported organizational politics was a frequent occurrence.
- The larger the organization the greater perceived political activity.
- Ambiguous roles and goals increased political activity.
- Marketing staff members of corporate boards of directors were rated as the most political, while production, accounting and finance personnel were viewed as the least political.
- Reorganizations and Personnel changes promoted the most political activities.
- To compete for the scarce resources and increase chance of promotion and their share in organizational resources, people try to increase their power and influence.
Greenberg (1999) said that managers often control the punishing others or have coercive power. Subordinates may do what their superior desires because they fear the superior will punish them if they do not. Punishments may include pay-cuts, demotions, suspensions, without pay, formal reprimands, undesirable work assignments and the like. Thus to escape the above, undesirable work assignments and the like subordinate use some kind of politics. Gandz and Murray found that the most likely areas of political activity were in interdepartmental coordination, promotions and transfers and delegation of authority.

A survey by Allen and his associates revealed similar findings. They also found that organization was perceived as more political at the higher levels and less political at the lower managerial and non-managerial levels of the organization. Political tactics include:

- Controlling access to information.
- Cultivating a favourable impression.
- Developing a base of support.
- Blaming and attacking others.
- Aligning oneself with more powerful others.

When making decisions about the hiring and promotions of others people are likely to take in to account not only the effects of these decisions on the organization, but also their impact on their own careers. The conditions leading to political activities are likely to differ as the function of the stage of the organization’s life. When an organization is newly begun, it may have no politics, however, as organization mature and become more complex, they tend to grow and training to departmentalize, creating conditions in which the vested interest of different groups are likely to conflict. Political means may be used to gain an advantage in such a situation. Hann and Freeman found it is particularly interesting to note that when organization begins to decline, subunits may be quite insecure and the need for political action may be great as people and group compete for the power to control the organization. A period of decline reflects a time of great uncertainty and thus a period in which political activity is likely to intense.

Nahavandi and Malekzadeh (1999) contended that as uncertainty in the organization increases, the usefulness of rational approaches decreases. Information becomes scare, objectives change often and goals often conflicts, making careful analysis and prediction difficult. Under these conditions, political activity increases. The emotion neutral dimension also plays a role on the use of politics. Prerffer(1999) argues that politics are necessary if organization is to function effectively. The concept of two faces of politics i.e. negative and positive handle the two sides of the phenomena in our common experience. Some organization reflects a mostly negative face of politics.

Organizational politics tend to be associated with the decision making, resource allocation and conflicts resolution processes in the organizations. These are key decision points; these are areas where actors of organization win and lose; these are where the goods are distributed and the goals are decided. A research report from Koffev Dirk( 2002), found that office politics can reduce organizational productivity, create a lack of trust, increase internal conflict, and lead to greater resistance to change. People who don't get recognized for their performance feel demotivated and have a lower morale.

Negative organizational politics hampers creativity, productivity, fairness, motivation, teamwork, and a host other critical issues that almost everybody knows but is not allowed to speak about in the official hierarchy. Consequently, business politics is driven underground where people are left to fend for themselves. Without constant vigilance
organizational politics can get out of hand and prevent the organization from achieving its goals. For this reason organization must try to manage organizational politics to promote positive effects and prevent destructive effects. To understand how organization can manage politics, we need to look at the managers use of their emotional intelligence to become political savvy.(George,1996).

**REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Politics is a means of recognizing and, ultimately, reconciling competing interests within the organization. Competing interests can be reconciled by any number of means. For example, resorting to "rule by the manager" might be seen as an example of totalitarian rule. On the other hand, politics may be a means of creating a non coercive, or a democratic work environment.

As mentioned, organizations need mechanisms whereby they reconcile conflicting interests. Hence, organizations, like governments, tend to "rule" by some sort of "system". This "system" is employed to create and maintain "order" among the organization's members. Systems of rule within organizations range from autocratic to democratic at the extremes. Between these extremes we find bureaucratic and technocratic systems. Whatever the system, each represents a political orientation with respect to how power is applied and distributed throughout the organization. Each type of organizational "rule" simply draws on different principles of legitimacy. According to Aristotle, politics stems from a diversity of interests. To fully understand the politics of the organization, it is necessary to explore the processes by which people engage in politics. Consistent with Aristotle's conceptualization, it is a given that, within the organization, all employees bring their own interests, wants, desires, and needs to the workplace. Organizational decision-making and problem-solving, while seemingly a rational process, is also a political process. Organizational actors seek to satisfy not only organizational interests, but also their own wants and needs; driven by self-interest.

Members of a corporation are at one and the same time cooperators in a common enterprise and rivals for the material and intangible rewards of successful competition with each other. (Farrell and Peterson, 1982).

Political behavior has been defined as

- The Non-rational influence on decision making

Regardless of the degree to which employees may be committed to the organization's objectives, there can be little doubt that, at least occasionally, personal interests will be incongruent with those of the organization. Organizational politics arises when people think differently and want to act differently. The tension created by this diversity can be resolved by political means. In an autocratic organization, resolution comes through the directive: "We'll do it our way!". The democratic organization seeks to resolve this diversity of interests by asking: "How shall we do it?" By whatever means an organization resolves this diversity, alternative approaches generally hinge on the power relations between the actors involved.

According to Farrell and Peterson (1982), the successful practice of organizational politics is perceived to lead to a higher level of power, and once a higher level of power is attained, there is more opportunity to engage in political behaviour. As Harry Truman said “Politics is the art of getting things done” and Churchill said, “When you mix people and power, you get politics.” Hierarchies are full of power. Organization politics is how power and interests play out in the organization. One thing is certain, they will play out. One thing does appear to be clear: the political element of the management process is non-rational. Organizations cannot pretend to engage in rational decision-making processes so long as political influences play a role -- and they always will.
For purposes of understanding organizational political behavior, Farrell and Peterson (1982) proposed a three-dimensional typology. The dimensions are:

- Where the political activity takes place -- inside or outside the organization,
- The direction of the attempted influence -- vertically or laterally in the organization, and
- The legitimacy of the political action.

The ability to mindfully recognize one’s emotions and how they are expressed; the ability to perceive how one’s emotions affect others; and the ability to manage these emotions in an efficacious manner. The definition offered by Salovey and Mayer (1990) evokes these very abilities when they suggest that Emotional Intelligence involves attending and identifying to one’s emotions and discerning how these are associated with both thought and action. Goleman’s (2002) model engenders this definition in the “self awareness” and “self management” components that he further suggests are the bases for developing abilities to manage others within an organizational context. Mayer, Salovey and Caruso (2004) identify EI as a type of intelligence; however, they reference the emotional component as “the meaning of emotions, emotional patterns and sequences, and the appraisals of relationships they reflect”. Even the Army War College (Wong, et al., 2003) has recognized the importance of self-awareness, specifically defined as “the ability to assess abilities, determine strengths in the environment, and learn how to sustain strengths and correct weaknesses,” as essential for military leaders, although this is not referenced specifically as a component of Emotional Intelligence.

Locke (2005) has interpreted these definitions as problematic owing to the copiousness of the construct, but does suggest that the general emphasis on introspection is useful since it allows for individuals to monitor emotions, feelings, and actions and attribute causation to these internal states as they relate to external events. He suggests that emotions are “automatic productions of the subconscious mind” whose function is to promote action. This observation is supported in part by LeDoux (1998, 2002) whose investigations of fear responses suggests emotions can be described as automatic, primarily controlled by the relatively primitive amygdale in a complex neural circuit that is much more efficient than that which accesses high level thought processes controlled by the frontal cortex. However, Locke’s (2005) suggestion that reason and emotion are incompatible is at present not supported by the majority of extant research. In fact, LeDoux (1998, 2002) argues that while human animals may be at an evolutionary crossroads where emotions are registered at more primitive and efficient portions of the brain, cortical connections with the amygdala are far greater in primates in general and humans in particular. This suggests the ability to monitor and ultimately alter emotional responses, although requiring “rewiring” at the synaptic level. Lopes, Cote, and Salovey (2005) support this contention, at least in part: their extensive review of literature suggests that Emotional Intelligence abilities can be developed through training.

This perhaps addresses the heart of the Emotional Intelligence construct, since it is the ability to consciously develop EI competencies that speaks to the needs of applied researchers and practitioners. The case for EI and higher levels of success has been supported in conclusions emanating from qualitative and quantitative research conducted in a variety of settings by researchers from throughout the world. For example, Goleman (1998) and Goleman, Boyatis, and McKee (2002) review a plethora of examples whereby individuals displaying higher levels of Emotional Intelligence competencies achieve higher levels of success in work contexts. In their meta-analysis of 69 studies of Emotional Intelligence Van Rooy and Viswesvaran (2004) concluded “EI should indeed be considered a valuable predictor of performance” Emmerling and Goleman (2003) reference additional research suggesting that EI (or something like it) can explain the variance in performance not attributed to either cognitive intelligence (IQ) or specific job skills. Most recently Mount (2005) has investigated Emotional Competencies such as achievement motivation and impact and influence and found these to be
positively and significantly associated with superior performance in international business dealings. His competency model revealed that of the variance between superior and average performances, 19% could be attributed to cognitive intelligence (IQ), 38% to specific skills and expertise, and 44% to Emotional Intelligence (EQ). While Mount (2005) focused on individual performance, Elfenbein (2005) discovered that higher average levels of Emotional Intelligence in team members predicted higher levels of performance by the team.

Organizational behavior researchers have begun to approach the topic of emotions in the workplace from several vantage points (Ashkanasy & Daus, 2002). There has been increasing attention paid to employees' feelings and expressions of anger and the possible link between emotional intelligence & organizational politics and violence (Allcorn, 1994; Glomb, 2002; Tavris, 1982). There is growing popular and academic interest in emotional intelligence (EQ) and its predicted relationship to leadership ability and interpersonal effectiveness and political savvy. (Goleman, 1998; Jordan; Ashkanasy, & Haertel, 2002; Mayer, Caruso73T-Salovey, 2000; Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Sosik & Megerian, 1999).

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE & ORGANIZATIONAL POLITICS

Emotions originate from exposure to specific situations. The nature and the intensity of the emotion are usually related to cognitive activity in the form of the perception of the situation. That thought process or perception results in the experience and or the expression of a related feeling. Emotions are human beings 'warning systems that alert them to what is really going on around them. They are also like an internal gyroscope and help keep us on the right track by making sure that we are led by more than cognition. Emotions are our responses to the world around us, and they are created by the combination of our thoughts, feelings; and actions. What is most important is for each of us to learn that we create our own emotions. Our responses are governed by our thoughts-by what we tell ourselves. As we clarify our understanding of our own beliefs and patterns, we learn that we are actually choosing our own lives. We take responsibility for our thoughts, feelings, and actions; we become accountable.

Emotion is an 'umbrella term' which includes the situation, the interpretation/perception of the situation and there response or feeling related to the perception of the situation.

To understand Emotional Intelligence, Take a Look at the Simple Statements Given Below

- The new manager is too sensitive; he takes everything too personally.
- Management is way out of touch with employees' emotions. . She is jealous of her colleagues.
- The boss is always in a hostile mood.
- The manager does not understand the feelings of others.
- The production manager is always nagging others.
- The supervisor blerts things out without thinking of others.

These statements refer to various blends of emotions as reflected through personality characteristics. These are fundamental to moods, nature, lifestyle and to the whole personality. For example, interpersonal intelligence is the ability to understand other people: what motivates them, how they work. Successful salespersons, politicians, bureaucrats, professionals and religious leader are all likely to have high levels of emotional intelligence. On the other hand, persons with low EQ are judged to be misfits in a social set-up. Emotional intelligence is a type of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor own and others’ emotions, to discriminate between these emotions, and use information effectively to guide your thinking and actions.
Emotional Competence

Emotional competence is a learned capability that results in outstanding performance at work. Emotional intelligence is what determines one’s potential to learn practical skills. According to Singh (2003), the emotional competency dimension of emotional intelligence constitutes the capacity to respond to emotional stimuli elicited by various situations and to have high self esteem and optimism among others. One’s emotional competence shows how much of this potential is translated into on-the-job capabilities. For instance, being good at managing organizational politics is an emotional competence. Similarly, trustworthiness is a competence based on self-regulation, or handling impulses and emotions well. Both political savvy and trustworthiness are competencies which can make people outstanding in their work. However, just being high in emotional intelligence does not necessarily guarantee that a person will have learned the emotional competencies which matter at work; it only means that he or she has excellent potential to learn these. For example, a person might be highly empathic, yet may not have learned the skills based on empathy that translate themselves into superior customer service, or the ability to coach or monitor staff, or the ability to bring together a diverse work team. Emotional competencies are clustered into groups, each based on a common underlying emotional intelligence ability. These underlying emotional intelligence abilities are vital if people are to successfully learn the competencies necessary to succeed at the workplace. If people are deficient in social skills, for instance, they will be inept at persuading or inspiring others or leading teams or catalysing change. If their selfawareness is low, they will be oblivious to their own weaknesses.

Emotional Intelligence is what gives a person a competitive edge. Even in certain renowned business establishments, where everyone is trained to be smart, the most valued and productive managers are those who have strong traits of emotional intelligence. The lack of emotional intelligence explains why people who, despite having a high IQ, have been such utter failures and disastrous in their professional lives because of the Organizational Politics. An analysis of the traits of persons high on IQ but low on EQ yields the stereotype of a person who is critical, condescending, inhibited, and uncomfortable in political atmosphere of the organization. In contrast, persons high on emotional intelligence are poised, outgoing, committed to other people and worthy causes, sympathetic and caring, with a rich and fulfilling emotional life; they are comfortable with themselves, others and they inhabit social universe so can handle Organizational Politics smartly.

A research report from Koffev Dirk (2002), found that office politics can reduce Organizational productivity, create a lack of trust, increase internal conflict, and lead to greater resistance to change. People who don't get recognized for their performance feel demotivated and have a lower morale. Negative organizational politics hampers creativity, productivity, fairness, motivation, teamwork, and a host other critical issues that almost everybody knows but is not allowed to speak about in the official hierarchy. Consequently, business politics is driven underground where people are left to fend for themselves. Without constant vigilance organizational politics can get out of hand and prevent the organization from achieving its goals. For this reason organization must try to manage organizational politics to promote positive effects and prevent destructive effects.

To understand how organization can manage politics, we need to look at the managers use of their emotional intelligence to become political savvy. (George, 1996). It is said that one of the abilities of effective managers is political savvy. They accept the inevitability of organizational politics which hampers creativity, productivity, fairness, motivation, teamwork, and a host other critical issues, hence adjust their attitude and actions so as not to be victimized by unethical politics in the workplace. By assessing behavior in a political framework, they can predict the actions of others and use this information to formulate political strategies that will gain advantages for them and their work units.
Political savvy is observed in people with a high emotional intelligence. Thus, those who are more self-aware, have greater self-control, are high on empathy, and have good communication and social skills. They are known to be more politically astute and better able to handle office politics than those who are not. They are more aware of the political terrain than their less astute colleagues, who, being less wary, could be victims of political landmines. They learn the system, and work round it when they may be able to determine the requirements of each situation and each person one faces, and to select just the right approach.

Today, the rules of the workplace are rapidly changing; a new yardstick is being used to judge the people. This is not merely in terms of how smart a person is or what is his or her academic qualification or expertise, but also by how well one is able to handle himself and others. These new rules predict who is most likely to become a successful performer and who is most likely to fail. As high emotional intelligence develops in a person adaptability, creative responses to setbacks and obstacles, personal management, listening and verbal communication, confidence, motivation to work toward goals, a sense of wanting to develop one’s career group and interpersonal effectiveness, cooperativeness and teamwork, skills in solving disagreements, effectiveness in the organization, leadership potential, social skills and various other competencies which make managers political savvy. Today whatever the job, understanding how to cultivate political savvy is essential for a successful career. Moreover, high EI motivates a person for pursuing noble goals, to be committed to action and not to get absorbed in Organizational Politics. Self regulation, well handling of impulses and emotions, again let managers overcome organizational politics. Thus emotional intelligence abilities are vital if people are to successfully overcome organizational politics and in turn to succeed at workplace.

Also to manage Organizational Politics, if people are deficient in social skills, they will be inept at persuading or inspiring others or leading teams or catalyzing change, also if their self awareness is low, they will be oblivious to their own weaknesses and may lack self confidence and will become victim to Organizational Politics.

The relationship between emotions and rational intelligence is a complex one. Through conscious effort, emotional responses can be regulated and used appropriately; it is when such awareness is lacking that emotional reactions override rational thought. Even the Army War College (Wong et al., 2003) has recognized the importance of self-awareness, specifically defined as “the ability to assess abilities, determine strengths in the environment, and learn how to sustain strengths and correct weaknesses,” as essential for leaders, Managers etc. Extensive review of literature suggests that Emotional Intelligence abilities can be developed through training.

CONCLUSIONS

Although all this attention suggests that emotions are an important aspect of organizational life, but it has been found that people's emotions remain, in large part, undiscussable at work. The central ideology surrounding emotions in organizations is that they are irrational, idiosyncratic disturbances that are best, controlled and kept under cover (Stearns & Stearns, 1986). Organizational "behavior theorists have emphasized the degree to which, in addressing the mind-body duality in organizations, the "mind," or cognitive portion, has dominated (Fineman, 1993) (TMumby & Putnam, 1992). However, researchers have also found that, far from being irrational, emotional feelings and expressions tend to follow predictable patterns, and their antecedents and consequences, though widely varied, are not infinite (Frijda, 1988). The purpose of this experiential exercise is to emphasize that emotions are a central, rather than hidden, part of work life. By observing how emotions are felt and expressed and becoming aware of their own and others' emotional tendencies, people/employees can increase the chances that their emotions are expressed in ways that enhance individual and organizational effectiveness. Emotional Intelligence has proven a better predictor of future success than traditional methods.
like the GPA, IQ, and standardized test scores. Hence, the great interest in Emotional Intelligence on the part of corporations, universities, and schools nationwide. The idea of Emotional Intelligence has inspired research and curriculum development throughout these facilities. Researchers have concluded that people who manage their own feelings well and deal effectively with others are more likely to live content lives, even in highly political environment of organizations, emotionally intelligent people are more apt to retain information and do so more effectively than dissatisfied people. Self regulation, well handling of impulses and emotions, again let managers overcome organizational politics. Thus emotional intelligence abilities are vital if people are to successfully overcome organizational politics and in turn to succeed at workplace. Today emotional intelligence indeed be considered as valuable predictor to overcome organizational politics.

REFERENCES


