EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE AS A CRITERIA FOR STAFF SELECTION

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Abstract
The strengthening competition in today's business environment has made it imperative for contemporary organisations to employ and retain workers with the requisite knowledge, skills and attitude for the achievement of corporate objectives. One of the increasing more popular qualities HR managers look out for before employment is emotional competencies. However, little evidence in literature currently exists on the popularity of emotional competence as selection criteria by HR managers in Nigeria. A questionnaire was designed and copies distributed to 150 HR managers to elicit information on their perception on the influence of emotional competencies on employment decisions. Out of these, 103 were found to be useful. Cronbach’s Alpha was used to test for consistency of research instrument and Spearman’s Rank Correlation coefficient was used to analyse data. All five domains of emotional competency: Self awareness, self regulation, self motivation, social awareness and social skills were found to influence employment decisions of HR managers in Nigeria. However, prospective employees are recommended to acquire these skills through training and capacity building to improve their chances of being employed.

1.0 Introduction
In today’s business environment, organisations are constantly evolving new ways of selecting the best hand available at the cheapest cost. To do this, Human Resources (HR) managers are saddled with the responsibility of attracting and retaining people with the right knowledge, skills and attitudes that will optimise organisational performance and achieve the objectives of organisations (Armstrong, 2006). To achieve this, several techniques are being used to select the best hands available. Some of such techniques include psychometric tests, psychological tests, selection interview techniques etc (Cole, 2002). These selection methods can be design to test dexterity, speed, intelligence and emotional competence amongst others.

This paper takes an empirical look at emotional competence as a criteria for staff selection from the perspective of HR managers. In section 2.0, the statement of problem was discussed. Section 3.0 described the methodology while section 4.0 contains the literature review. Section 5.0 analysed the result of the empirical analysis while section 6.0 contains study limitations. 7.0 discussed conclusion and recommendations.

2.0 Statement of Problem
Emotional competence has gained tremendous ground as criteria for staff selection in the developed world (Goleman, 1998). This perhaps is due to its importance to workplace performance as discussed later. There appears however, to be a vacuum in literature on the perception of HR managers in Nigeria on the use of emotional competence as a yardstick for staff selection. Also, the popularity of emotional competence among HR managers in Nigeria is also significantly absent in literature, although looking at the selection landscape suggests as increase in its popularity over the years. This study aims at filling this research gap and
answer the hitherto obscure question on the perception of HR managers on how each domain of emotional competence actually transform into perceived on-the-job competence and therefore employment decision.

3.0 Methodology
This is a cross sectional exploratory research into the effects of five dimensions of personal and social competence on the decision to employ by HR managers. A total of 150 copies of a questionnaire were distributed to HR managers in the Lagos area to elicit information on what they perceive to be the effect of each of the five dimensions on competency and their decision to employ candidates possessing such qualities. The questionnaire was designed using the 5-point Likert scale with polar anchoring ranging from 1: strongly disagree to 5: strongly agree. The questionnaire was divided into 8 sections: section 1: demographics, section 2: Self awareness dimension, section 3: self-regulation dimension; section 4: self-motivation and section 5: social awareness. Section 7 elicited information on social skills while section 8 provided information on employment decision. Questionnaires were distributed between 2nd to 31st July 2012. Cronbach alpha was used to test for consistency of instruments while spearman’s rank correlation coefficient was used to analyse data employing SPSS14.0 to strengthen accuracy of results.

The following hypotheses were tested in the analyses
H1: Self awareness significantly affects decision to employ by HR managers
H2: Self regulation significantly affects decision to employ by HR managers
H3: Self motivation significantly affects decision to employ by HR managers
H4: Social awareness significantly affects decision to employ by HR managers
H5: Social skills significantly affect decision to employ by HR managers

4.0 Literature Review
4.1 What is Emotional Intelligence?
Peter Salovey and John D. Mayer (1990) defined emotional intelligence as, "the subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions". Goleman (1998) defined EI as 'the capacity to recognise our own feeling and the feeling of others, for motivating ourselves and for managing emotions well in ourselves and our relationships'. Thus Emotional intelligence describes the ability, capacity, skill, or self-perceived ability to identify, assess, and manage the emotions of one's self, of others, and of groups. People who possess a high degree of emotional intelligence know themselves very well and are also able to sense the emotions of others. They are affable, resilient, and optimistic

According to Salovey and Mayers (1990), EI is made up of four distinct types of abilities:
First, Perceiving emotions – the ability to detect and decipher emotions in faces, pictures, voices, and cultural artefacts—including the ability to identify one's own emotions. Perceiving emotions represents a basic aspect of emotional intelligence, as it makes all other processing of emotional information possible.

Second, using emotions – the ability to harness emotions to facilitate various cognitive activities, such as thinking and problem solving. The emotionally intelligent person can capitalise fully upon his or her changing moods in order to best fit the task at hand.
Third, understanding emotions – the ability to comprehend emotion language and to appreciate complicated relationships among emotions. For example, understanding emotions encompasses the ability to be sensitive to slight variations between emotions, and the ability to recognise and describe how emotions evolve over time.

Fourth, managing emotions – the ability to regulate emotions in both ourselves and in others. Therefore, the emotionally intelligent person can harness emotions, even negative ones, and manage them to achieve intended goals.

Thus possession of EI gives you the ability to: Identify and understand your emotions and that of others and effectively control your own emotions and respond with appropriate emotions and actions to various circumstances. Also, it helps workers effectively relate with others with honest expression of emotions while at the same time being courteous, respectful and considerate. It also helps staff work effectively even while under pressure and harness the emotion of others to achieve individual and collective goals. It also helps effectively resolve conflicts and build synergy in teams (Cole, 2003)

The History of EI can be traced to Darwin's work on the importance of emotional expression for survival and, second, adaptation (Smith, 2002). In the 1930s Edward Thorndike described the concept of "social intelligence" as the ability to get along with other people. In 1940s, David Wechsler suggests that affective components of intelligence may be essential to success in life. In the 1950s, Humanistic psychologists such as Abraham Maslow describe how people can build emotional strength. In 1975, Howard Gardner published The Shattered Mind, which introduces the concept of multiple intelligences while in 1985, Wayne Payne introduces the term emotional intelligence in his doctoral dissertation entitled “A study of emotion: developing emotional intelligence; self-integration; relating to fear, pain and desire (theory, structure of reality, problem-solving, contraction/expansion, tuning in/coming out/letting go).” In an article published in 1987, Keith Beasley uses the term “emotional quotient.” It has been suggested that this is the first published use of the term, although Reuven Bar-On claim to have used the term in an unpublished version of his graduate thesis. In 1990, Psychologists Peter Salovey and John Mayer publish their landmark article, "Emotional Intelligence," in the journal Imagination, Cognition, and Personality, while in, 1995 the concept of emotional intelligence is popularised after the publication of psychologist and New York Times science writer Daniel Goleman’s book Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ (Smith, 2002).

4.2 Importance of EI

A longitudinal study carried out on Harvard graduates discovered that test score on entrance test did not predict career success. In a study of hundreds of executives of some fortune 500 organisations, Hay Mc Bar discovered that two-thirds of the competencies deemed essential to success are emotional competencies (Dattner, 2010).

According to Daniel Goleman (1998), research has proven that emotional competencies were the differentiators between star performers and typical performers. Also, it has also been proven that Intelligence Quotient (IQ) account for only 25% achievement at work or in life. All these imply that academic qualifications and cognitive skills and competencies are not the major determinants of success. Skills and competencies learnt in schools are required for the performance of job related task. However, star performances take more than possession of cognitive skills.

The reasons are not farfetched. For example, a manager may possess a high IQ, qualifications from some of the best universities in the World. This does not guarantee star performance on – the – job. Cognitive skills must be mixed with non-cognitive skills such as self confidence,
self control, relationship management, conflict resolution etc. According to Goldman (1998), if your emotional abilities aren’t in hand, if you don’t have self-awareness, if you are not able to manage your distressing emotions, if you can’t have empathy and have effective relationships, then no matter how smart you are, you are not going to get very far. This perhaps explains why EI is growing in popularity. Many organisations today consider EI in human resource planning, job profiling, recruitment interviewing and selection, learning and development, and client relations and customer service, among others (Armstrong, 2006).

4.3 Emotional Competence Framework
An emotional competence is a learned capacity based on emotional intelligence that results in outstanding performance at work. It is that component of EI that is relevant for star performance on – the – job. Job competence are in two levels: cognitive competencies such as technical and other skills required for the performance of tasks and non-cognitive (emotional competence) skills which often separate star performers from average one (Serrat, 2009).

There are five domains of Emotional Intelligence covering personal and social competencies (Armstrong, 2006): Personal Competencies: Self Awareness, Self Regulation and Self-motivation and Social Competencies: Social Awareness and Social Skills. They are:

Self-Awareness
(i) Emotional awareness: Recognising one’s emotions and their effects.
(ii) Accurate self-assessment: Knowing one’s strengths and limits.
(iii) Self-confidence: Sureness about one’s self-worth and capabilities.

Self-Regulation
(i) Self-control: Managing disruptive emotions and impulses.
(ii) Trustworthiness: Maintaining standards of honesty and integrity.
(iv) Adaptability: Flexibility in handling change.
(v) Innovativeness: Being comfortable with and open to novel ideas and new information.

Self-Motivation
(i) Achievement drive: Striving to improve or meet a standard of excellence.
(ii) Commitment: Aligning with the goals of the group or organisation.
(iii) Initiative: Readiness to act on opportunities.
(iv) Optimism: Persistence in pursuing goals despite obstacles and setbacks.

Social Awareness
(i) Empathy: Sensing others’ feelings and perspective, and taking an active interest in their concerns.
(ii) Service orientation: Anticipating, recognising, and meeting customers’ needs.
(iii) Developing others: Sensing what others need in order to develop, and bolstering their abilities.
(iv) Leveraging diversity: Cultivating opportunities through diverse people.
(v) Political awareness: Reading a group’s emotional currents and power relationships.

Social Skills
(i) Influence: Wielding effective tactics for persuasion.
(ii) Communication: Sending clear and convincing messages.
(iii) Leadership: Inspiring and guiding groups and people.
(iv) Change catalyst: Initiating or managing change.
(v) Conflict management: Negotiating and resolving disagreements.
(vi) Building bonds: Nurturing instrumental relationships.
(vii) Collaboration and cooperation: Working with others toward shared goals.
(viii) Team capabilities: Creating group synergy in pursuing collective goals.

In brief, the five domains relate to knowing your emotions; managing your emotions; motivating yourself; recognising and understanding other people’s emotions; and managing relationships, i.e., managing the emotions of others (Serrat, 2009). These domains are used as framework for this research. Cavallo (2012) conducted a study of three hundred and fifty eight managers at Johnson and Johnson (a multinational company producing consumer products) to determine if there are specific leadership competencies that distinguish high performers from average performers. Results showed that the highest performing managers have significantly more “emotional competence” than other managers. There was strong inter-rater agreement among Supervisors, Peers, and Subordinates that the competencies of Self-Confidence, Achievement Orientation, Initiative, Leadership, Influence and Change Catalyst differentiate superior performers. The high potential managers received higher scores in the emotional competencies by Peers and Supervisors, but not by Subordinates. Some gender difference was found, with Supervisors rating Females higher in Adaptability and Service Orientation, while Peers rated Females higher on Emotional Self-Awareness, Conscientiousness, Developing Others, Service Orientation, and Communication. Direct reports scored Males higher in Change Catalyst. In a study conducted by Slaski and Cartwright (2002), a sample of sixty managers were given training on emotional intelligence to determine the role of EI as a moderator in the stress process. The result shows that training leads to increased EI and improved health and wellbeing of managers. Abraham (1999) conducted a research into the effects of EI in the workplace. Emotional intelligence was theorised to have a positive effect on the organisational outcomes of work- group cohesion, congruence between self- and supervisor appraisals of performance, employee performance, organisational commitment, and organisational citizenship. It may also prevent emotional dissonance, ethical role conflict, and job insecurity from affecting organisational commitment. The study concludes that the most beneficial effects of emotional intelligence may occur in environments in which there is a high degree of job control. Rahim and Malik (2010) carried out an empirical study on the effect of demographic factors (Age, Education, Job tenure, Gender and Marital Status) on the level of Emotional Intelligence that leads to organisational performance among male and female employees of the banks operating with in Pakistan specifically in the areas of Peshawar and Islamabad. The findings show that the female segment of the bank employees is more emotionally intelligent than their male counterparts and the age of the male and female employees have inverse relationship with the Emotional Intelligence and as the level of education increases the Emotional Intelligence level increases as well. The more satisfied the employees are the more they will be in a better position to perform well in an organization.

In a research carried out to determine the relative contributions of emotional competence and cognitive ability to individual and team performance, team-member attitudes, and leadership perceptions, Offerman et al (2004) used a sample of undergraduate business majors who were asked to complete tasks alone and as members of a team. It was discovered that emotional
competence accounted for team performance and attitude and both leader emergence and effectiveness.

5.0 Results and Discussion of Findings
A total of 150 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to HR managers in the Lagos area out of which 103 were found to be useful representing 69% response rate. The table below shows the result of the Cronbach Alpha.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha</th>
<th>Number of Items</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self Awareness (SA)</td>
<td>0.712</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Regulation (SR)</td>
<td>0.695</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Motivation (SM)</td>
<td>0.713</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Awareness (SoA)</td>
<td>0.751</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Skills (SK)</td>
<td>0.701</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment Decision (ED)</td>
<td>0.651</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After making necessary adjustments in the items making up each construct, the Cronbach’s Alpha range from 0.65 to 0.51 indicating that the test instrument is consistent and reliable. Nunnally (1978) has indicated 0.7 to be an acceptable reliability coefficient but lower thresholds are sometimes used.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SA</th>
<th>SR</th>
<th>SM</th>
<th>SoA</th>
<th>SK</th>
<th>ED</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>.54(**)</td>
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<td>.75(**)</td>
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<td>1</td>
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**Correlation is significant at 0.01 level of significance.

From the table above, there exists a positive correlation between each of the following constructs: Self awareness, self regulation, self motivation, social awareness, and social skills on employment decision of HR managers. This implies that each of these construct are perceived by HR managers to be important to the choice to whom to employ to fill vacant positions. This conforms to the position of Goleman (1998), Salovey & Mayer (1990), Serrat (2009) and Armstrong, 2006). This also means that most HR managers consider emotional competencies as crucial to on-the-job performance. The table below show the result of hypotheses test.
Table 3: Hypotheses Test Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypotheses</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H1: Self awareness significantly affects decision to employ by HR managers</td>
<td>Accept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2: Self regulation significantly affects decision to employ by HR managers</td>
<td>Accept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3: Self motivation significantly affects decision to employ by HR managers</td>
<td>Accept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4: Social awareness significantly affects decision to employ by HR managers</td>
<td>Accept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H5: Social skills significantly affects decision to employ by HR manager</td>
<td>Accept</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.0 Limitations of the Study
In this study, no scientific method was employed in the selection of and number of samples used. This is because the study is exploratory in nature. The objective is to provoke further research into this subject. Also, further research can focus on how emotional competences actually affect on-the-job performance and the influence of gender.

7.0 Conclusion and Recommendation
Emotional Intelligence is a must have for anybody that aspire to be among the star performers in their chosen vocation. Although some researchers believe that EI is inherent, the good news is that it has been proven that the five domains of Emotional Competence can be learnt and developed. This study has proven empirically that HR managers consider emotional competencies as crucial to workplace performance and as such put these competencies into consideration in their employment decisions. Thus, every employee seeking to land good jobs and be counted among star performers must possess these qualities. Failure to be equipped with EI could lead to stalled change initiatives, inadequate innovation and creativity, ineffective leadership, decreased productivity, decline in revenue and even unemployment.

Reference