
RIDING THE WAVES OF EMOTIONAL CULTURE

Vaibhav P. Birwatkar, PhD, Universitatea Pedagogica de Stat "Ion Creanga", Chisinau. Moldavia

ABSTRACT:

Cultural values create a commonality among its employees in how they interpret and subsequently respond to emotional issues. Improving management understanding of employee emotions may enhance both productivity and quality of life in the workplace. Management of culturally diverse environments requires both the ability to meet intellectual challenges and emotional strategies to empathize with and motivate employees. Learning organization embraces the organization like its body and increases its current abilities and capabilities to encounter future events. Here, the process of learning expands throughout the organization and through it all personnel can acquire necessary knowledge and experience, perform their working duties in the best possible way and the organization can meet its predetermined objectives. Organizations may promote positive emotions and behaviors that lead to success, and minimize negative ones that waste company resources. Current literature lacks research data to quantify exactly how much of emotional intelligence is affected by culture. This paper suggests it is one, the only factor that influences the emotional process.

KEY WORDS: Learning organization, organizational learning, emotional intelligence, organizational culture, organizational commitment.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Organizational Culture

The culture of an organization is often cited anecdotally and in both management and psychology journals as an important driver of individual, team, and company success (Barney, 1986). Although culture has been proven to be a powerful force in organizations, as it can shape people's thoughts, behaviours and emotions within their workplace (Pizer and Hartel, 2005), scholarly discourse has largely ignored the role of emotions in organizational culture (Beyer and Nino, 2001). Recently it has been argued that the power of culture is largely due to the emotional needs of individuals (Pizer and Hartel, 2005), and how these needs are fulfilled by leaders (Downey, Papageorgiou and Stough, 2006), groups (Jordan, Ashkanasy, Hartel and Hooper, 2002) and by association, organizations as a whole. Emotions are processes that result from the social context in which they are elicited and that, in turn, influence how people feel and act in this social context (De Dreu, West, Fischer and MacCurtain, 2002). Indeed, culture provides a social medium within which members can identify and form emotional bonds with each other (Beyer and Nino, 2001); which can satisfy their need for belonging (De Dreu, et al, 2002), commitment to organizations (Schein, 2004), trust in leaders (Gardner, Fisher and Hunt, 2009), and job satisfaction (Shiu and Yu, 2010).



Given this recent focus on the emotional needs of employees, it is important to identify whether how groups express, understand, use, manage and control emotions and the trust engendered by the leader of teams was predictive of organizational outcomes.

There are two distinct, yet not necessarily competing traditions of researching organizational context: namely, organizational climate and organizational culture (Denison, 1996). The study of culture and climate are theoretically based on both symbolic interactionism and social constructionism, which posit that patterns of interaction evolve over time to form systems of normative control (Denison, 1996). Culture has been defined as a "dynamic phenomenon that surrounds us at all times, being constantly enacted and created by our interactions" (Schein, 2004). In this regard, the ongoing dynamic relationships between individuals, lead to the creation of an underlying schema embodying the sum total of underlying shared beliefs, values and norms which provide meaning in a given social system (Pizer and Hartel, 2005). This cultural schema is shaped by and in turn shapes its members (Ancona, Kochan, Scully, Van Maanen and Westney, 1999). Cultural norms manifest in a given culture can be thought of as shared expectations of group members mandating how one ought to behave (Levine and Moreland, 1990). These norms have been shown to have powerful social information processing effects on organization members (O'Reilly III and Caldwell, 1985).



Denison (1996) has argued that the differences between these two research traditions are due to interpretational differences of the same phenomena, and is likely to be a case of research into different levels (individual / group) and abstractions (conscious / unconscious) of the same phenomena. Research into climate is most appropriate at the group level (Anderson and West, 1999), as it is important to identify perceptions as being shared before conclusion about climate can be drawn.

2. EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

In his 1995 bestselling book, *Emotional Intelligence* (Bantam Books), Daniel Goleman describes emotionally intelligent people as those who perceive emotions, use them in thought, understand their meaning, and manage them better than others. Emotionally intelligent people solve emotional problems with less thought, have highly developed verbal skills, and tend to be more open and agreeable than others (Cicetti, 2013). For Goleman, Mayer, and Salovey, emotional intelligence is a personal characteristic much like initiative, self-confidence, and a drive for results (Mittal and Sindhu, 2012).

There are other schools of thought regarding emotional intelligence. Reuven Bar-On from the University of Texas Medical Branch views emotional intelligence as more of a personality dimension like extroversion, agreeableness, and emotional stability.



Others view emotional intelligence as a specific set of abilities that includes the capacity to understand, reason with, and use emotions in thinking and action (Mittal and Sindhu, 2012). It is this latter school of thought, emotional intelligence as a set of abilities, which opens the door for HR and talent management professionals, because abilities can be enhanced with coaching and training.

There are four branches of emotional intelligence when seen as a set of abilities:

1. **Recognizing emotions:** This means a person is aware of what he or she is feeling while also being aware of others' feelings. In the workplace, this means that emotionally intelligent leaders understand that feelings affect their employees' work and productivity. Emotions can be difficult to assess, however, because people exhibit their feelings differently, or sometimes not at all.
2. **Facilitating emotions:** Emotionally intelligent leaders know how to make others feel good about themselves, and how to be engaged and productive in the workplace. Emotionally intelligent leaders must be aware of their own emotions while being empathetic to those around them.
3. **Understanding emotions:** Those with a highly developed emotional intelligence go a step beyond merely recognizing their own and others' emotions; they understand them. Truly



understanding emotions requires insight into the chain of emotions that occur as events unfold. For example, anger may result from disappointment, embarrassment, and feelings of sadness—a chain of emotions culminating in anger.

4. **Managing emotions:** Emotionally intelligent leaders are able to deliberately manage their and others' emotions to inspire and create passion in people.

Specifically, employee emotional intelligence has been linked with health, teamwork, productivity and profit (Cherniss and Goleman, 2001; Goleman, 1995, 1998, 2004). Emotional intelligence has been reported to moderate the relationship between stress and mental health in university students (Ciarrochi et al., 2002). Emotional health is a common factor across all cultural contexts. Consider the emotions of stress and anger, which, when left unchecked, may lead in the extreme example to suicide. Toxic emotions such as these can create obstacles in managing across cultures effectively. Leaders need to recognize the influence of employee emotions in determining team design (teamwork), or work outcomes (productivity and profit). Achievement drive (McClelland, 1961) means optimistically striving to continually improve performance. Consider how the negative emotions of fear and anger affect productivity. Managers may be better able to recognize and regulate these emotions in their employees by recognizing how these emotions are influenced by culture.



Being emotionally intelligent allows a focus on profit; that is, focusing on problems that are the greatest cost to the organization.

2.1. Emotional Process Model

Druskat and Wolfe, (2001) developed an emotional process model, which suggests that both an individual's response to an event and the subsequent response selection are impacted by prevailing cultural influences. This model, as shown in Figure 1, borrows from the theoretical representation of emotion in an anthropological framework.

Anthropologists have long proposed that cultures have conventions and norms that influence the management of emotions (Ekman, 1980; Lutz, 1988).

These cultural norms create commonality and predictability among individuals in their interpretation and response to emotional stimuli.



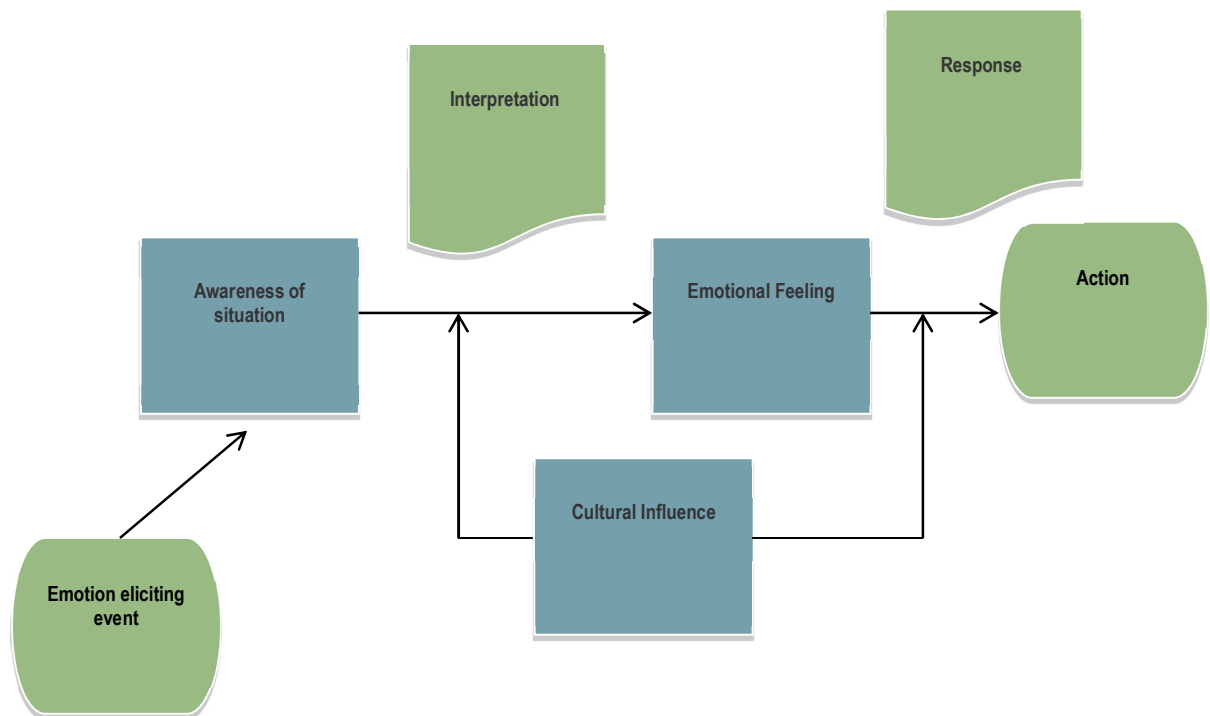


Figure 1 - Cultural Influences in the Emotional Process Model

As shown in Figure 1, the first step in the emotional process model is the awareness of an emotion eliciting event. Culture may then filter the interpretation such that an arousal or emotional feeling enters into the conscious awareness. Culture also influences the selection of an action or behavior as a response to the event. This model posits a connection between emotions and behaviors. It also provides an understanding of



how both interpretation and expression of emotions are influenced by culture. This relationship is explored within the contemporary workplace where managers are faced with trying to understand, and often to anticipate, the emotional responses of their employees.

2.2. Emotionally Intelligent Leaders

Emotional intelligence leaders are classified as the ones who are aware and have an understanding of their own and others emotion, and are capable of using that understanding to effectively motivate, inspire, challenge, and connect with others.

Scholars tend to believe that such leaders are more highly correlated with employee satisfaction and performance effectiveness than the traditional managers (Morehouse, 2007).

Leaders with high levels of emotional intelligence possess characteristics such as ability to communicate effectively, empathize with others, which in turn, enable them to develop cohesive and supportive relationships. Likewise, they are capable of generating innovative thoughts and ideas when the environment they work with provides such support (Prati et al., 2003). In this respect, it would be expected that such leaders are capable of transmitting their influences to create a healthy culture in the organization.



From the leadership literature, there are several ways that emotional intelligence appears to contribute to positive management behavior. Leaders with above average levels of emotional intelligence normally have above average ability in handling stress. Such ability is essential for generating and maintaining enthusiasm, confidence, and cooperation in the workplace (Stone et al., 2007). In many cases, leaders lead not through rational and logical decision making but via emotion and thinking. Under such circumstances, emotional intelligence skills play a central role for effective management (Mayer and Caruso, 2002). In other words, leaders who can identify emotions accurately and clearly may often be better able to anticipate uncertainty, cope with stressful situation, and soundly implement change in an organization.

3. EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE LEADERS AND ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

Leader plays an important role on the development of a culture when an organization has just formed. At that time, leaders are "definers" and "givers" of culture as they construct and instil the principles, values, and attitudes that they consider as essential and important for the organization (Jaskyte, 2004). Bass and Avolio (1993) have argued that an organizational culture can be characterized with transformational qualities, as leadership and culture are so well-connected.



Transformational leaders have a high responsibility on forming the organizational culture as the values that transformational leader adopted will easily be adopted by the employees (Aydogdu and Asikgil, 2011).

Transformational leaders are usually portrayed as individuals who motivate their followers to take on objectives and beliefs that are in line with the leader's mission and to encourage their followers to give a higher priority for group and the larger organization than their own interest (Xenikou and Simosi, 2006). According to Bass (1985), a transformational leader promotes a working environment or an organizational culture which is characterized by the accomplishment of high goals, self-actualisation, and personal growth. Bass and Avolio (1993) also proposed that transformational leaders move their organizations towards organizations that adopt more transformational qualities such as accomplishment, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration in their cultures. In addition to that, in the situations that that employees view their organizational culture as culture which possess adaptive, involving, incorporating, and with a comprehensible mission are usually rated their direct manager as high in transformational leadership.



Given the widespread interest surrounding the importance of emotional intelligence in the workplace and leadership in particular, the relationship between emotional intelligence and transformational leadership, along with their effect on organizational culture was examined. As both the emotional intelligence and transformational leadership are emotion-laden constructs (George, 2000), there are many leadership literature that supported the positive relationship between emotional intelligence and transformational leadership (Barling et al. 2000; Gardner, and Stough, 2002; Barbuto and Burbach, 2006).

As transformational leaders need to encourage and motivate the followers in heading to a shared organizational goal, their emotional skills are extremely important.

Transformational leaders need to have the ability to monitor their own emotions, cope with the demands of the environmental and problematic situations and deal with daily stress effectively before they could help their subordinates to grow and develop. Transformational leaders also need to have good interpersonal emotional skills so as to communicate and interact with the followers to further attend to the needs and concerns of the followers and provide socio-emotional support.

The social awareness of the transformational leaders is also important in order to be able to read the followers and the groups accurately and to inspire them to achieve the goals of the organizations and to provide accurate guidance to let them think creatively about the situation.



Transformational leaders with a high emotional intelligence will surely encourage and motivate their followers to achieve a high emotional intelligence as dominant leadership style in an organization will influence the employee behaviour and the way the organizational culture develops (McMurray, 2003, Martins and Coetzee, 2006).

As leaders have a major impact on an organizational cultures, transformation leaders with emotional intelligence will promote a working environment or organizational culture which characterized by the accomplishment of high goals, self-actualization, personal growth and organization development on emotional intelligence.

Transformational leaders have a high responsibility on creating an emotional intelligent organizational culture as the values accepted by a leader will be easily accepted by the followers. Summed up, organizational culture which is formed by a transformational leader with emotional intelligence will surely bring the organization to the next level by using the competencies and skills they acquire in order to encourage and motivate the followers to achieve the visions, objectives and goals of the organizations.



4. EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

Organizational culture is a social phenomenon which is structured consequently by the interaction between individual and an organization and cannot be present without individuals and characteristics such as subjectivity, irrationality and emotionality which could be used to explain it (Tolmats and Reino, 2006). At such, the importance of emotional intelligence brought forward to enable the organization to shape the organizational culture and the activities of all level in the organization (Langhorn, 2004). Though the studies on the topic of emotional intelligence in the work-related setting are inadequate, it is agreed that emotional intelligence has a crucial importance in occupational settings (Matthews, Zeidner, and Roberts, 2004).

One such study was conducted by Tolmats and Reino to find the interconnections of emotional intelligence competences and types of organizational culture which taken from The Competing Values Framework which conceptualized by Quinn and Rohrbaugh (1983) in two business sectors in Estonia (Tolmats and Reino, 2006). The results of the investigation show that participants with a higher emotional intelligence level gave higher estimates to organizational culture than participants with lower emotional intelligence.



According to the results of the study, emotional intelligence is usually positively related to Human Relations, Open System and Rational Goal types of organizational culture, thus forming the hypothesis that by increasing employees' emotional intelligence it is possible to develop the organizational culture of the company (Tolmats and Reino, 2006). In The Human Relations type of organizational culture, leadership and morale are in the focus whereas Open System type of organizational culture promotes innovation, growth, dynamics, imagination, and willingness to transform and the Rational Goal type of organizational culture concentrates on achieving productivity, efficiency, and high performance (Parker and Bradley, 2000; Dastmalchian, Lee and Ng, 2000).

Another study conducted by Danaeefard, Salehi, Hasiri and Noruzi (2012) to which aimed to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence, organizational culture and organizational learning in the service providing organizations of Kermanshah, results obtained indicated that emotional intelligence has a direct impacts on organizational culture.

This study shows a direct relation between of the relationship between the factors of emotional intelligence and organizational culture where the relationship between self-stimulation and organizational culture show the strongest value. At such the creation of emotional intelligence could pave the way for the development of organizational culture in the organization (Danaeefard, Salehi, Hasiri, and Noruzi, 2012).



5. CONCLUSION

This paper is a conceptual exploration that utilizes literature survey and descriptive-analysis approach to review and interpret the relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership and their effect on organizational culture. Given the positive relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership and their effect on organizational culture, this will eventually boost the organization capability to change and thus improve the prospects for the organization to remain competitive. Current leaders should evaluate their personal leadership behaviors to find out if transformational leadership components and emotional intelligence are being adopted.

Transformational leader who has a high emotional intelligence would create an organizational culture with high emotional intelligence and transformational qualities by making it firm until a point where each and every one of the organization share the common norms and values, thus enhancing the achievement, endurance and competing power of the organization.



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