SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE AMONG WORKERS IN AN ORGANIZATION

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ABSTRACT
SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE AMONG WORKERS IN AN ORGANIZATION

Ahmad Taufeq bin Sabarudin

This study explores the issues regarding the topic of social intelligence among workers in Human resource management and development division of Universiti Malaysia Sarawak. An open-ended survey questionnaire was utilized as the major source for data collection to elicit in-depth information from the informants involved in the research. Documentary analysis technique was also conducted in order to supplement the findings. Due to time constraints, there were limited numbers of informants involved whereby only seven informants answered the written survey questionnaire. Findings of the study indicated that the informants were those employees with high social intelligence and include similarity in terms of language spoken, tenure and age. The characteristics of employees with high social intelligence includes the ability to provide clear messages during communication, highly motivated at work, ability to accept criticisms and feedback effectively and ability to be open-minded in different working situations. The benefits of social intelligence towards employees are comprises of the establishments of good rapport among the employees, improvements of employees quality and productivity, improvement of employees efficiencies in handling jobs or tasks and employees capability to gain respect at the workplace. The benefits of social intelligence towards organizations include increased overall organizational commitment, improve organizational effectiveness to reach main goals, improve overall working qualities, and generates friendly and healthy working environment. The factors that helps to improve social intelligence among workers includes interpersonal communication skills courses, empowerment of employees, significance of charismatic leaders in guiding the subordinates, and campaigns to promote the culture of social intelligence.
ABSTRAK

KEPINTARAN SOSIAL DALAM KALANGAN PEKERJA DI SESEBUAH ORGANISASI

Ahmad Taufeq bin Sabarudin

Kajian ini dilaksanakan bertujuan untuk menerokai isu-isu yang berkaitan dengan aspek kepintaran sosial dalam kalangan pekerja di Bahagian Pengurusan dan Pembangunan Sumber Manusia, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak. Borang soal selidik bertulis menggunakan soalan terbuka telah diaplikasikan sebagai metodologi utama untuk mengumpul data sejajar bagi mendapatkan informasi secara menyeluruh daripada informan yang terlibat. Analisa dokumentari juga telah digunakan untuk meningkatkan kualiti dan produktiviti daripada hasil kajian ini. Memandangkan factor masa yang singkat untuk menjalankan kajian, jumlah informan yang terlibat adalah tujuh orang dan menepati keperluan kajian berbentuk kualitatif yang dilakukan secara mendalam dan deskriptif. Hasil dapatan kajian ini menunjukkan faktor-faktor demografi yang mempengaruhi tahap kepintaran sosial pekerja yang terdiri daripada faktor umur, bahasa pertuturan dan tempoh bekerja di sesebuah organisasi. Ciri-ciri pekerja yang mempunyai tahap kepintaran sosial yang baik terdiri daripada keupayaan berkomunikasi secara berkesan, bermotivasi tinggi di waktu kerja, bersikap terbuka dalam pelbagai situasi pekerjaan serta mampu menangani kritikan dan pandangan individu lain secara berkesan. Manfaat kepintaran sosial kepada pekerja terdiri daripada peningkatan kualiti dan produktiviti pekerja, peningkatan keberkesanan pekerja dalam melaksanakan tugas, meningkatkan persefahaman antara pekerja serta pekerja tersebut lebih dihormati orang rakan-rakan sekerja. Manfaat kepintaran sosial terhadap organisasi terdiri daripada peningkatan komitmen terhadap organisasi, peningkatan keberkesanan organisasi dalam mencapai matlamat, peningkatan kualiti keseluruhan di dalam organisasi serta mewujudkan suasana tempat kerja yang mesra dan sihat. Faktor-faktor yang membantu meningkatkan tahap kepintaran sosial dalam kalangan pekerja terdiri daripada kewujudan kursors-kursors berkenaan dengan kemahiran komunikasi interpersonal, kewujudan pemimpin berkarisma dalam membimbing pekerja, kempen-kempen mempromosi budaya kepintaran sosial dan peningkatan pendedahan kerja terhadap para pekerja.
1.0 Introduction

This chapter covers the background of the study, statement of the problem, research objectives and definitions of important terms.
2.0 Background of the study

Research on social intelligence started only a few years after Spearman (1904) introduced academic intelligence (Thorndike, 1920). Thus, social intelligence was one of the first candidates for a new intelligence construct to complement traditional human ability concepts. In a series of several researchers, Landy (2005, 2006) was the last to outline the history of social intelligence, while Walker and Foley (1973), Orlik (1978), Matthews, Zeidner, and Roberts (2002), and Weis and Süß (2005; see also Weis et al., 2006) have all reviewed the literature in terms of theoretical and empirical accounts. In recognition of its long although disputed history, Landy (2006) referred to research on SI as a long, frustrating, and fruitless search, presently ending up in its “replacement with the more modern term emotional intelligence” (p. 81).

In 1920, social intelligence was intended to extend traditional intelligence concepts. However, under the label of social intelligence, research was not as programmatic as, and was much more diverse than, academic intelligence research. Social skills were assessed as social intelligence by the use of self-report inventories (Marlowe, 1986; Riggio, 1986). Social behavior was judged by trained observers and should also operationalize social intelligence (Ford & Tisak, 1983; Frederiksen, Carlson, & Ward, 1984).

On the other hand, social intelligence is also characterized as the ability to accomplish interpersonal tasks or the ability to understand and relate to people (Fatt, 2002). Nowadays, employers are looking for quality skills in interpersonal intelligence, critical thinking, and problem-solving, not only the ability to complete job duties (UN ange passé, 2008:34). Consequently in the absence of effective communication, organizational goals will succumb to individualistic and personal goals (Magnus, 2009:3).
3.0 Statement of the problem

Wagner (1987) supports further research in the area of social intelligence when he states that, "Our understanding of intelligence will continue to be limited, at best, until the breadth of the domains in which we study intelligence becomes a closer approximation of the breadth of domains in which intelligence is manifested" (p. 1247). As a result, this study will explore further into the context of social intelligence in order to elevate our understanding regarding social intelligence.

Previous research on social intelligence by Berg and Sternberg (1985), Weis and Süß (2005), Walker and Foley (1973), Orlik (1978), Matthews, Zeidner, and Roberts (2002), Guilford’s (1967) Structure of Intellect Model, Six Factor Test (O’Sullivan & Guilford, 1966) and the Four Factor Test (O’Sullivan & Guilford, 1976) of Social Intelligence have all focuses on quantitative study of social intelligence. Therefore, this study will explore the context of social intelligence through a qualitative study with the aim of identifying potential significance of social intelligence towards mankind in different angles.

Most of the previous research on social intelligence by Sternberg et al (1981), Berg and Sternberg (1985), Fry (1984), Yussen and Kane (1985), Ford and Miura (1983) have focuses on teachers, college and university students, children and people of diverse background. However, there are lack of research done specifically regarding the significance of social intelligence towards employees and organization. Therefore, this study aims to explore further regarding the effects of social intelligence towards employees and organization.

With respect to social intelligence, Walker and Foley (1973) reviewed the literature of social intelligence and found that the construct had not been clearly defined and that there was considerable uncertainty as to how it might be studied. Thus, the study aims to advance the research on social intelligence in terms of its significance towards employees and organization as a whole that is in line with the main goal of human resource development which is to bring out the best from employees and organization as a whole.
4.0 Objectives of the study

- To uncover the demographic background of employees who have high social intelligence
- To find out the characteristics of employees who have high social intelligence
- To find out how social intelligence benefits employees
- To find out how social intelligence benefit organizations
- To find out the factors that help improve social intelligence among workers at organizations
5.0 Definition of terms

5.1 Social intelligence

Conceptual definition

Social intelligence is a person’s capabilities in understanding and responding appropriately to the moods, motivations and desires of other people via social perception which is the capability to master socio-emotional clues and social inference which is the ability to infer underlying motives and traits (Conte, 1999).

Operational definition

The operational definition of social intelligence in this study is defined as similar to the conceptual definition from Conte (1999).

5.2 Employee

Conceptual definition

In the Cambridge Dictionary Online, employee is referring to individuals who are paid to work for someone else.

Operational definition

In this study, it is referring to the employees working Human Resource Management and Development Division, Unimas.

5.3 Organization

Conceptual definition

In the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, organization is referring to groups such as a club or business that was formed for a particular purpose.

Operational definition

In this study, the organization under study is referring to the Human Resource Management and Development Division, Unimas.
5.4 Interpersonal skill

Conceptual definition
Interpersonal skills includes the ability to think and behave ethically, to listen effectively, to be flexible in new/different situations, to negotiate with individuals from different background and value systems, to be empathetic, to handle oneself in situations of time pressure, to handle oneself in situation of change and to handle oneself in situations of conflict (Birkett, 1993).

Operational definition
The operational definition of interpersonal skills in this study is defined as similar to the conceptual definition.

5.5 Emotional intelligence

Conceptual definition
Emotional intelligence is the ability to effectively manage one self’s emotion (McEnrue, P.M & Groves, S.K & Shen, W, 2009).

Operational definition
The operational definition of emotional intelligence in this study is defined as similar to the conceptual definition.

5.6 Communication skills

Conceptual definition
According to Dokmen(1994), communication skills is the ability to generate, transfer and interpret knowledge.

According to Karadag and Caliskan(2009), communication skills an essential competencies in information transfer and (Gursimsek, Vural, Demirsoz, 2008) stated that communication skills is the ability to make something in common, sharing it and involvement in social relations.

Operational definition
The operational definition of communication skills in this study is defined as similar to the conceptual definition.
5.7 Intelligence

Conceptual definition
In the encyclopedia, the word "intelligence" was defined as the capabilities of the human intellect via their potential and consecutive dynamics meanings (Dorsch "Psychologisches Wörterbuch" Häcker & Stapf, 1994).

Operational definition
The operational definition of intelligence in this study is defined as similar to the conceptual definition.

6.0 Conclusions
This chapter explains the background of the study, statement of the problem and objectives of the study. In addition, it also described the important terms that are used in this research.
2.0 Introduction

There are plenty of previous studies about social intelligence in different fields and setup. This chapter covered the previous research regarding social intelligence in various field and several related theories such as social learning theory and social identity theory.
2.1 Review of related theories and model

2.1.1 Social learning theory

Albert Bandura (1977) was the founder of social learning theory in which he recommended that a person understand behaviors such as leadership and aggression by modeling in their environments.

Bandura (1977) also stated that learning would be exceedingly laborious, not to mention hazardous, if people had to rely solely on the effects of their own action to inform them what to do. Nevertheless, most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling: from observing others, one forms an idea on how new behaviors are performed, and on later occasions this coded information serves as guide for action (p. 22).

Social learning theory also explains that people influence their environment, which in turn influences the way they are behaving (p. 260).

Also, Charbonneau, Barling & Kelloway (2000) stated that leadership development through social learning framework in which they have found out in their research that adolescent have the tendency to mirror the behavior displayed by their fathers and display these characteristics with their peers.

In addition, Zacharatos, Barling & Kelloway (2000) explains that if attributes of transformational leadership exist in youth, this may have a major effect on later leadership in adulthood. In their study, the researchers stated that children who perceived their parents to be transformational tended to display these behaviors. These same adolescents’ were more likely thought of as transformational by their peers and coaches.

According to Bandura (1977), consequences of a behavior can be learned and it will be shaping behaviors. Additionally, (Davis & Luthans, 1980), a person’s action produces environmental conditions that influence their behaviors other people’s behaviors in a reciprocal fashion. As a result, a socially intelligent employee will be able to influence the workplace environment in a positive manner.
2.1.2 Social identity theory

Hogg et al. (1985) define Social identity theory as a group membership and behavioral theory. Hogg and Terry (2000) also state that the social identity theory was developed in order to understand the process of understandings among individuals and other people in the social environment.

Additionally, Hogg and Terry (2000) mentioned that group memberships and interactions among different groups or from similar group help to determine a portion of an individual’s identity. Social identity is known to be an ongoing process of interaction among group members and between different groups (Jenkins, 2004).

Turner and Onorato (1999) explains that the concept of self-categorizations perceived individuals to be varied in terms of their opportunity to be part of any group which are depending on factors such as group accessibility and their readiness to join any group. Ashforth and Mael (1989) state that under the influence of social identity, individual have the tendency to portray certain motives and behaviors which contradicts with their true identities.

Turner and Onorato (1999) mentioned that an individual are prepared to change or make adjustment on their personal behaviors and at the same time striving for chemistry within the social group that they are involved in. According to Hogg and Terry (2000), an individual’s involvement within a group will foster assimilation of values and emotional attributes of group membership for the individual itself.

According to Hogg and McGarty (1990), researchers have understood that the power of social identity varies and it possesses more strength in comparison to the individual identity. According to Hogg and Grieve (1999), the purpose for individuals to be involved with a group are comprises of several reasons which are stability, meaning, involvement and for a sense of pride.
2.1.3 Cross-cultural social intelligence theory

Cross-cultural social intelligence is known to be the extended view of social intelligence as it focuses more on the concept of emotional intelligence (Bar-On, 2000). Also, it has been defined as the capability to understand other people's feelings, thoughts and behavior including themselves during interpersonal interactions besides able to respond appropriately towards their understanding of others (Marlowe, 1986, p. 52).

According to Cantor and Kilhstrom (1987), a socially intelligent individual are easily capable to adapt in different social situations in terms of their behaviors. Also, the concept of cross-cultural social intelligence includes the understanding about the significance of culture towards social intelligence.

There are two dimensions derived from social intelligence in order to evaluate the effectiveness of cross-cultural social intelligence which are empathy and non-ethnocentrism (e.g. Brown and Anthony, 1990; Keating, 1978; Lee et al., 2000; Thorndike and Stein, 1937).

Di Stefano and Mavnevski (2000) stated that ethnocentrism is an essential block towards intercultural communications. Also, Ellingsworth (1988) explains that an ethnocentric individual is not adapting their communication style towards intercultural communication, utilizes culture-based stereotypes against other culture and are not practicing openness towards information and customs other cultures.

Marlowe (1986) mentioned that other element of cross-cultural social intelligence which is empathy are measuring how well an individual were able to communicate with others while regulating his or her behavior following other people's behavior. An empathetic individual shows that they are able to understand other people's feeling via their behavior or words and will act accordingly towards their understanding of others.
2.2 Review of previous studies

2.2.1 The context of social intelligence

In the encyclopedia, the word “intelligence” was defined as the capabilities of the human intellect via their potential and consecutive dynamics meanings (Dorsch “Psychologisches Wörterbuch” Häcker & Stapf, 1994). Additionally, intelligence has been understood as a generic term which is valid for the attainments of heterogeneous tasks, problems and situations (Carroll, 1993).

As for social intelligence, it is comprises of emotional intelligence, interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence, and practical intelligence (Mayer et al., 2000). Cantor and Kilhstrom (1987) stated that social intelligence is applied in social life of individuals in order to solve problem while Little (1989) mentioned that social intelligence is specifically relating to individual’s capabilities in managing their life tasks, issues or personal projects which are either impose on themselves by others or which they are selecting for themselves.

According to Gardner (1993), social intelligence is referring to the capacity to relate with people whereas social intelligence itself is part of the six kinds of human intelligence. According to Walker and Foley (1973), social intelligence can be defined as the capability to understand other people and to act wisely in social situations. Also, Ford and Tisak (1983) stated that social intelligence is an individual’s capability in achieving significance objectives in specific social situations.

In addition, social intelligence is also referring to the capability of having effective speaking skills, ability to respond appropriately towards interviewer’s questions and the ability portray suitable nonverbal behaviors (Ford & Tisak, 1983). Besides, it can be relating to a person ability in making social connection with others in general, social techniques or ease in society, knowledge of social circumstances and insight into other people’s personality traits (Vernon, 1933).
Moreover, Goleman (2007) have identified two key components of social intelligence which are social awareness and social facility. As for social awareness, it is comprises of empathy and attunement with other people besides an impressive understanding about the social world. As for the social facility, it explains about the capability of a socially intelligent individual to get along with others, being involved in effective social communications and the ability to shape the outcomes of his or her social life.

According to Fatt (2002), social intelligence can be understood as the capability to attain interpersonal tasks or capabilities to understand others besides relating to them. Additionally, social intelligence shows a person’s capabilities in understanding and responding appropriately to the moods, motivations and desires of other people via social perception which is the capability to master social-emotional clues and social inference which is the ability to infer underlying motives and traits (Conte, 1999). Social intelligence includes emotional intelligence, interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence, and practical intelligence (Mayer et al., 2000).

Based on Winograd (1975) and Anderson (1976), social intelligence are comprises of two separate categories which are declarative knowledge and procedural knowledge. As for declarative knowledge, it is comprises of abstract concepts and specific memories while procedural knowledge is consisting of the rules, skills, and strategies whereby a person manipulates and transforms declarative knowledge before translating it into action.

Previous research regarding human intelligence have also indicated that subject from diverse background, ages and level of expertise possesses a social competence factor and employ a consistent understanding about the behaviors of a socially intelligent individual (Berg & Sternberg, 1985; Fry, 1984; Sternberg, 1985b; Sternberg, Conway, Ketron, & Bernstein, 1981; Yussen & Kane, 1985). Moreover, Druskat (2006) has also mentioned about how social intelligence is relevant with a variety of circumstances including workplace success, student achievement besides general well being and health.
2.2.2 Effects of employee’s demographics background towards social intelligence

The literature on organizational demographics have provide ample evidence about the effects of organization’s demographic towards communication as employees have the tendency to communicate with those who are similar to themselves (Kanter, 1977; Pfeffer, 1981; Simmel, 1950).

According to March and Simon (1958), the frequencies of communication between employees can be improved through the efficiencies in terms of communications whereas related studies has proposed that the presence of similar language has the capacity to determine the ease of communication at workplace( Allen & Cohen, 1969; Dearborn & Simon, 1958; Tushman, 1978).

A shared language between employees shows the similarities in terms of how those employees interpret, understand and respond to information whereas employees who are not sharing the similar language are most likely to misinterpret information received from other employees hence finding it difficult to communicate with other employees at workplace (Barnlund & Harland, 1963; Rogers & Bhowmik, 1971).

Moreover, demographics characteristics of employees produce similar experiences and those similar experiences creates language compatibilities among the employees which explains why employees who share similar demographics attributes such as age, race and tenure are constantly communicating with each other in comparison to employees of different demographics background (March & Simon, 1958).

Furthermore, employees who are of similar age without considering their expertise, status or tenure in an organization have the tendency to share common non work-related experiences. According to Ryder (1965), a group of individuals of similar age shared a distinctive composition and characters such as personal interest which reflect their similarity in terms of age.

Next, other demographic characteristic of employees which is relevant to the study includes an employee’s tenure at the organization. As employee’s tenure in an organization increases, their understanding and familiarity with the workplace environment and other factors will improve hence easing the communication among employees (March & Simon, 1958).