Emotional Intelligence and Performance in Social Economy Organisations: The Portuguese Experience

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Abstract: The present article aims to analyse *emotional intelligence* as an influence in the various dimensions of the organizational life, namely in the professional context it is possible to observe a diverse set of emotional situations, that seem to influence the work performance of the collaborators and organisations. An exploratory study with a qualitative approach was developed in the sector of social economy organisations (Private Social Solidarity Institutions at Viana do Castelo District, Portugal) that aimed to investigate the impact of the emotional intelligence of employees on the performance of social economy organisations. The interviews were conducted with the technical directors of the Residential Structures for the Elderly, whose sample was defined by convenience. The results showed the existence of a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and job performance, both from a technical and relational point of view, and suggest the existence of influence on the performance of the organisations themselves.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence (EI), job performance, human resources, social economy organisations.

1. Introduction

Over the past decades, there has been a growing recognition of the importance of human capital for the effectiveness and performance of organisations. At the same time, some of the traditional models of organisational behaviour and human resource management (HRM) have been questioned, particularly as regards the role of emotions in organisations, in which a transition from a model of denial of emotions, to a model of emotion management that considers their potential to represent a competitive advantage for organisations.

Several studies (Zaid *et al*., 2016; Greenidge *et al*., 2014) point to a correlation between emotional intelligence (IE) and performance and suggest an important positive influence on other areas of organisational functioning, such as job satisfaction, leadership, productivity, and behaviours of organisational citizenship and interpersonal relationships, emphasizing the need to optimize the contribution employees can make to the organisation's performance.

It seems evident that there is a positive influence of the IE of employees on the behaviour and results of the organisation. It is intended, therefore, and from a previous literature review, to develop an exploratory study in private social solidarity institutions in the district of Viana do Castelo (Portugal) that develop the social response of Residential Structure for Elderly (RSE) to investigate the impact of EI on individual and organisational performance and to obtain some clues that may help the definition of HRM processes. From the bibliographical research carried out, there are few research papers based on the study of the relationship between EI and organisational performance in the social sector.

2. Literature Review

The concept of EI is recent in the context of the scientific literature and has significant variability in terms of conceptual definition. Research into the concept developed significantly from the 20ths, associated with another broader concept, called social intelligence, whose definition and investigation seem to have influenced the way EI came to be contextualized later (Bar-On, 2006; Torres, 2014).

The existence of multiple definitions of social intelligence (Thorndike, 1920; Doll, 1935; Wechsler, 1939; Gardner, 1983, in Bar-On, 2006) created a mixed confusion and controversy regarding the concept and, at the same time, the opportunity to define new approaches. Salovey and Mayer (1997) suggest that the concepts of EI and social intelligence are related and may represent interrelated components of the same construction, as it identifies EI as an integral part of social intelligence (Bar-On, 2006).

It is a review of the definition of EI that combines the idea that emotion makes smarter thinking, and that smarter thinking about emotions is based on a model of EI that designates a form of social intelligence situated between cognition and emotion (Mayer, Salovey & Caruso, 2000) and represents the ability to reconcile emotions and reason (Cunha et al., 2007).

The development of the concept of EI has been boosted by Goleman (1995) who defines EI as the "ability to recognize our feelings and those of others, to motivate ourselves and to manage well, emotions in us and our relationships" (Goleman, 2006, p. 323) in a five-dimensional model: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. A few years later, the model proposed by Goleman (2006) underwent a new revision and was reduced to four main domains: self-awareness, self-mastery, social awareness, and relationship management, each of which provides a set of core competencies for high EI, which is also called the emotional competence network (Goleman, Boyatzis & Mckee, 2002).

A new contribution to the development of the concept of emotional and social intelligence comes with Bar-On (2006), considering it a multifactorial matrix of interrelated emotional and social skills, abilities, and facilitators that influence the ability to recognize, understand and manage emotions, relate to others, and adapt to change and solve personal and interpersonal problems and effectively cope with daily demands, challenges, and pressures.

The conceptual definitions of EI presented by Salovey and Mayer (1997), Goleman (2006), and Bar-On (2006), although distinct, present complementarity in several aspects (Fernández-Berrocal & Extremera, 2006). Thus, the literature brings us to the existence of three conceptual models of EI (see table 1): (i) the emotional skill model of Salovey and Mayer (1997), (ii) the emotional skills model of Goleman (2006,) and (iii) the Bar-On's emotional-social intelligence model (2006).

Table 1: EI theoretical models

Models	Author	Model Designation	Description
Skills Model	Salovey-Mayer (1997)	Emotional Ability Model	It defines EI as the ability to perceive, understand, manage, express, and use emotions to facilitate thinking, measured through a range of basic skills.
Mixed models	Goleman (2006)	Emotional Skills Model	It looks at EI as a set of key competencies and skills that drive overall performance as measured by multiple comparator evaluations.
	Bar-On (2006)	Emotional-social intelligence model	Describes the interrelationship of emotional and social skills, abilities, and facilitators that influence intelligent behaviour and determine how we effectively understand and express ourselves, understand others, relate to them, and deal with daily demands, as measured by self-perception/report.

From the perspective of Cunha *et al.* (2007) mixed models, especially Goleman's (2006) are more popular in business, while Salovey and Mayer's (1997) aptitudes tend to be more receptive in academic and scientific circles. For Mauthner (2006) the great point of divergence between the two approaches focuses not only on the definition of the concept but also on the techniques for measuring what emotional intelligence is for each of them.

However, the most relevant will be to consider the complementarity of the models, weighing their strengths and limitations (Cunha *et al*., 2007) since, despite the existence of different types of EI models, there are theoretical similarities between them arising from the common attempt to understand and measure emotion management factors (Mayer *et al*., 2000).

3. Work performance versus EI

Job performance plays an important role in the growth and development of an organisation, as individual employee performance contributes largely to the overall effectiveness and organisational success (Korkaew and Suthinee, 2012). Sonnentag and Frese (2002) refers to a construct behavioural approach based on individual, interpersonal and situational aspects that is part of the actions taken by the individual to contribute to the achievement of the organisationally relevant goals. According to Borman and Motowidlo (1997), work performance has two meta-dimensions: *task performance* and *context performance*. The *task performance*

dimension refers to the technical contribution to the achievement of the result inherent to the position or function held, which varies according to the tasks to be performed by the individual within a position or function. The *context performance dimension* refers to the extra-role activities and behaviours that contribute to organisational outcomes. In this perspective, work performance is perceived as a multi-causal phenomenon influenced by a set of variables and dimensions of a psychological, social, organisational, and situational nature (Bennett & Stamper, 2001; Dalal, 2005, in Devonish & Greenidge, 2010).

To contribute to a better understanding of this concept, we present a synthesis of the six performance models presented by Bendassolli (2012), based on the literature review (see table 2).

Table 2; Work performance models

Performance model	Conceptual approach
Campbell, 1990	Behavioral performance
Borman and Motowidlo, 1993	Multidimensional performance, based on task performance and contextual performance dimensions
Murphy, 1989	Dynamics and multidimensional performance
Frese and Zaptf, 1994	Active performance
Pulakos, Arad, Donovan and Plamondon, 2000	Adaptive performance
Beal, Weiss, Barros and MaCermid, 2005	Episodic performance

The first model (Campbell, 1990) defines performance as a behaviour or action that is relevant to the organisation's objectives and can be measured in terms of contribution levels to those objectives, based on three aspects: dimensions, determinants, and predictors. The second model (Borman and Motowidlo, 1993) performance is defined as a multidimensional concept, in which task performance (associated with formal role) and contextual (emerging) performance are distinguished and the contributions generated by each one is analysed in the dimensions. The third model (Murphy 1989) emphasizes the dynamic and multidimensional nature of the concept of performance and reinforces the need not to limit performance to the task domain. The fourth model (Frese & Zaptf, 1994) called active performance, is based on a process of action regulated by a sequential and interconnected chain, regulated by an active and initiative individual. The fifth model (Plamondon et al., 2000) is called adaptive performance and completes Campbell's model (1990) by inserting components that could cope with individuals' adaptation strategies to the new conditions and demands of the job. The sixth model (Beal et al., 2005) is called episodic performance and is dedicated to the investigation of the relationship between affective states and performance, at the intraindividual level.

3.1 Multidimensionality of work performance

The analysis of the literature related to the conceptualization of work performance allowed us to identify a diversity of conceptual proposals, given the diversity of variables involved in it.

To Devonish and Greenidge (2010), the concept of performance encompasses both positive and negative behaviours and unfolds in three dimensions: (i) task performance; (ii) counterproductive behaviours; and (iii) citizenship or contextual performance. The *performance dimension* in (i) the task is characterized as the effectiveness of the employees' contribution to the activities that constitute the technical core of the organisation (Borman & Motowidlo, 1997). *Counterproductive Behaviour* (ii) is deviant, voluntary, and intentional behaviours that can be reactive or planned and significantly violate organisational norms and as such directly or indirectly constitute harm to the organisation and/or its members (Devonish & Greenidge, 2010; Bennett & Robinson, 2000). *Contextual performance* (iii) refers to flexible, voluntary, and positive work behaviours that go beyond task-specific behaviours and support the social and psychological environment in which task performance takes place (Organ, 1997). These behaviours encourage the effective performance of the organisation (Williams & Anderson, 1991). This dimension of performance differs from the notion of task performance in three respects: a) it is less likely to be considered prescribed or formally described in job analysis; b) is seen as less likely to lead to formal rewards; and c) refers to pro-active, interpersonal, and cooperative (Van Dyne *et al*. 1995) proactive, interpersonal, and cooperative behaviours (Organ, 1997).

3.2 EI and performance organisational context

Bukari and Ali (2009) show that emotionally intelligent individuals, using more effective emotional regulation mechanisms, tend to be better corporate citizens and more ethical than individuals with low emotional quotient and are less likely to engage in counterproductive behaviours (Greenidge *et al*., 2014; Mayer *et al.* 2000).

EI can be considered as a predictor of professional performance (Cobêro, Primi & Muniz, 2006) and have an impact on the attitudes and behaviours of employees, specifically the reduction of deviant behaviours and individual performance is positively related to organisational citizenship behaviours (Turnipseed & Vandewaa, 2012).

There is significant evidence in the literature regarding the existence of a positive correlation between emotional intelligence skills and behavioural and organisational outcomes (Zaid *et al*., 2016) between EI and retention (Codier *et al*., 2009, *in* Zaid *et al*., 2016) as well as between EI and job satisfaction (Min and Lee, 2008, *in* Zaid *et al*., 2016). Several studies have shown evidence that EI is significantly and positively related to individual work performance and has a direct relationship with contextual performance and counterproductive behaviours (Greenidge *et al*., 2014).

It seems that people with higher levels of EI present higher levels of performance and professional success (Salovey & Mayer, 1997; Goleman, 2006). Bar-On (2006) also recognizes that EI, in addition to being of particular importance to the individual's level, greatly optimizes its performance. Goleman (2006) considers that emotional intelligence plays a crucial role in improving work performance as well as personal success.

Carmeli and Josman (2006) consider that attempts to empirically investigate the role of emotional intelligence in individual workplace success have been limited and are in the formative stage and need further evaluation.

4. Issues and objectives

There are several studies in the American and European contexts regarding EI (Ang Choi Hwai & Amin, 2016; Kenneth *et al.* 2008; Mishra & Das Mohapatra, 2010; Zakieh *et al*., 2013; Carmeli & Josman, 2006) but they are, still, few studies in the social sector. To contribute to EI research, this study was developed in the context of the sector of social economy organisations, with the following starting question: What is the impact of EI on individual and organisational performance, in the sector of social economy organisations, from the perspective of Private Social Solidarity Institutions (hereafter PSSI) technical directors with the residential structure for the elderly? For this purpose, two hypotheses were defined: Hypothesis 1: There is a positive relationship between the employees' emotional intelligence and individual performance; Hypothesis 2: There is a positive relationship between employees' emotional intelligence and organisational performance.

This study sought to investigate the perceptions of the technical directors of the private solidarity institutions, namely how they perceive the relationship between the EI and the performance of the organisations in which they operate. Thus, in order to provide an answer to the starting question, the following objectives were set: objective 1: to identify and characterize the participants' perception regarding the existence of relationship between EI and performance, both individually and organisationally; objective 2: to identify participants' perceptions of how they conceive emotional intelligence; objective 3: identify and characterise the selection criteria adopted by organisations in the scope of recruitment and selection procedures and infer if there is evidence of concern with EI components; objective 4: identify and characterise the evaluation criteria adopted by organisations in the framework of employee performance evaluation processes and infer if there is evidence of concern with EI components; objective 5: identify and characterize the practices adopted by organisations in the context of managing the emotional intelligence of employees; objective 6: identify the valuation attributed by organisations to the employees' EI; objective 7: collect suggestions to implement in the future by organisations in the management of emotional intelligence of employees.

The sample consists of the set of Private Social Solidarity Institutions of the district of Viana do Castelo that, cumulatively, develop the social responsibility of residential structure for the elderly (RSE) and have the status of private social solidarity institutions (PSSI). The Social Charter of the Ministry of Solidarity and Social Security (http://www.cartasocial.pt) was used to identify 14 PSSI that develop the social responsibility of RSE, according to table 3.

Table 3: Private social solidarity institutions at Viana do Castelo with the social response from RSE

PSSI	Legal regime	Geographic locality
Lar de Santa Teresa	Associação de solidariedade social	União das freguesias de Viana do Castelo (Santa Maria Maior e Monserrate) e Meadela
Posto de Assistência Social de Alvarães	Associação de solidariedade social	Alvarães
Centro Social Paroquial de Vila Nova de Anha	Centro social e paroquial	Anha
Centro Social e Cultural de Carreço	Associação de solidariedade social	Carreço
Centro Social e Paroquial de São Sebastião de Chafé	Centro social e paroquial	Chafé
Casa Sacerdotal da Diocese de Viana do Castelo	Instituto de organização religiosa	Darque
Centro Paroquial de Promoção Social e Cultural de Darque	Centro social e paroquial	Darque
Centro Paroquial e Social de Lanheses	Centro social e paroquial	Lanheses
Centro Paroquial e Social de Barroselas	Centro social e paroquial	União das freguesias de Barroselas e Carvoeiro
Centro Social e Cultural da Paróquia de Cardielos	Centro social e paroquial	União das freguesias de Cardielos e Serreleis
Centro Social Paroquial Deão	Centro social e paroquial	União das freguesias de Geraz do Lima (Santa Maria, Santa Leocádia e Moreira) e Deão
Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Viana do Castelo	Santa casa da misericórdia	União das freguesias de Viana do Castelo (Santa Maria Maior e Monserrate) e Meadela
Congregação Nossa Senhora da Caridade	Associação de solidariedade social	União das freguesias de Viana do Castelo (Santa Maria Maior e Monserrate) e Meadela
Centro Social e Paroquial de Vila Fanca	Centro social e paroquial	Vila Franca

Data collection was performed using semi-structured interviews, composed of a set of previously formulated key questions that sought to meet specific objectives. Of the 14 organisations in the sample, interviews were conducted in 8 organisations, corresponding to the total of organisations that responded favourably to the research. From the 8 organisations that collaborated with the study, 10 interviews were obtained. The fact that there are more interviews than participating organisations is related to the fact that some participating organisations have more than one technical director of RSE.

The participants were the technical directors who are characterized in terms of gender, age group, qualifications, function in the organisation, seniority in the organisation, and legal status of the organisation to which they belong: ten individuals, of which nine are female and one male. There is a high prevalence of female members, which is closely related to the area of training required by technical directors in the social and human sciences, where there are traditionally more women attending such training. Most participants in the study are 40 years old or younger, and it is noted that only 20% of respondents are older than 40 years, thus finding that the participants in this study are mostly young.

Regarding the distribution of respondents by literacy qualifications, it is found that 60% have a degree at the level of the graduation course, 30% have a master's degree and none have a PhD. No participants with lower qualifications than the undergraduate level was identified, which is related to the requirement of minimum qualification to perform the technical direction function. All participants perform the function of technical direction, which is related to the request made for the interview. From the set of participants, it was found that 60% remain in their organisation for more than one year and less than five years, which may be related to the age of the study participants, as 40% of participants is in early career and has recently completed studies. From the total, it was possible to collect data from organisations with different legal regimes, with 50% being *social solidarity associations*, 37% from *social and parish centers* and 13% being the *holy house of mercy*. Thus, diversity was obtained in the context of PSSI.

5. Discussion of results

Although this is an exploratory study and, therefore, limited in terms of the representativeness of the results, we found that the results obtained point to the existence of a relationship between EI and the performance of both employees and the organisation itself.

The analysis of the different perspectives presented by the interviewees leads us to a concept of EI that is, globally, understood as the internal capacity to make good management of their own emotions. It implies a personal capacity to listen, to put oneself in the other's place, empathize, understand, adapt, and maintain a balance between the personal and professional spheres, aspects mentioned by the participants. Such competences can be found in the definitions presented by several authors such as Salovey & Mayer, 1997; Goleman, 2006 and Bar-On 2006.

The results indicate that, in general, EI has the potential to influence individual performance in terms of accomplishing the tasks inherent to the function, as well as in interpersonal relationships, which is in line with the studies developed by Zaid *et al*. (2016), who establish a positive correlation between emotional intelligence skills and behavioural and organisational results and provide support for the working hypothesis formulated in the context of the present work.

The perception of EI presented by most respondents reinforces the importance of self-awareness of emotions, their self-regulation capacity and empathy, dimensions that are highlighted in Goleman's model (2006). Similarly, respondents highlight the relevance of adaptive, negotiating, and flexibility skills, which refers to the Bar-On model (2006) and the importance of social skills. Being the context of the IPSS was described by the interviewees as potentially generating moments that challenge the management of emotions, either because it is a context whose services are based on interpersonal relationships and care, or because it is a context where losses are constant, the dimension social media described by Bar-On (2006) finds support in this sector of activity.

Respondents perceive the relationship between emotional intelligence and job performance. From their perspective, EI has an impact on work performance at two levels. It has an impact on individual job performance, both at the task level and on the relationship with other employees and users, and on the performance of the organisation itself, as the performance of the organisation results largely from the performance of its employees. This perception is related to the multidimensional performance perspective presented by Borman and Motowidlo (1997).

The technical directors consider that emotions constitute an inseparable component of the person and have an impact on interpersonal relationships and professional performance, based on the skills of each employee and the situations that determine their expression in the workplace. Respondents highlight the importance of both personal competences at the EI level and the importance of environmental factors at the level of the results that corroborate the work performance models developed by Campbell (1990), Borman and Schmit (1997), and Pulakos *et al*. (2000) that reinforce the dynamic, multi-causal, and multidimensional nature of work performance.

For the interviewees, the EI seems to reveal a greater influence on the level of interpersonal relationships, either with other employees or with users, and the conflict management capacity is highlighted by its influence on professional performance. Within an eminently relational area of activity, such as PSSI, this capability is even more relevant given the high number of relational interactions. The higher the emotional maturity, the better will be the ability to develop strategies to deal with adversities and, therefore, the well-regulated emotional intelligence has greater benefit for the organisation, as contribute to the quality of service. These results are in line with the perspective presented by Salovey and Mayer (1990; 1997) who argue that people who have developed EI-related skills are better able to engage in adaptive behaviours and thus have the advantage of adapting to problem-solving.

No organisation has revealed evidence using employee candidate emotional intelligence rating scales within their recruitment and selection processes. It should be noted, however, that there is concern on the part of technical directors and organisations to evaluate some aspects that may relate to emotional intelligence, such as the ability to deal with one's loss, the ability to teamwork and interpersonal relationships, integrity, simplicity,

the ability to understand the target group, flexibility, and adaptation, the ability to regulate emotions between personal and professional contexts and the ability to communicate.

Institutions that have the Organisational Performance Assessment (OPA) implemented adopt a qualitative approach, which aims to measure not only task-related aspects but also relational and other aspects, which may incorporate some dimensions and indicators of EI.

It´s also observable the existence of a set of non-formal strategies adopted by the organisations and their technical directors that, somehow, contribute to the management of employees' emotions. The mediation is developed essentially in situations where the unregulated expression of emotions is most evident. In these situations, mediation is developed both to provide support to employees in the regulation of emotions and the adoption of behaviour more appropriate to the work context, and to prevent the occurrence of undesirable situations from the work point of view that may hurt the operation of the service and the organisations themselves.

At the level of individual strategies, were identified a set of attitudes that seem to relate essentially to the personal and professional characteristics of the technical directors, and for which there seems to be no orientation from the framing organisation. Such strategies are based on the establishment of relationships of relational proximity with the employees, which provide a facilitating environment for mediation. Organisations foster an attitude of cooperation and facilitation in managing the emotions of their employees. From the set of emotion regulation strategies proposed by Ashforth and Humphrey (1995, in Cunha, 2007), there are two that stand out in the set of participating organisations, namely the compartmentalization and normalization of emotions. Generally, organisations recognize as inevitable the existence of situations that may lead to the expression of unwanted emotions, despite their efforts to prevent their occurrence.

Organisations, much through their technical directors, strive to adjust emotionality to contexts and use relational proximity and mediation to prevent occurrences or restore normality whenever undesirable situations exist. Formally, they do not establish a set of behavioural prescriptions but seek to develop strategies to guide the behaviour of employees themselves through an institutional culture of example and understanding.

The eminently relational context in which social economy organisations are developing reinforces the need to develop HRM practices focused on the promotion and management of emotional intelligence, for which respondents provide interesting suggestions on how to develop employee empowerment sessions "emotional gymnastics" teams that can contribute to reducing individual and organisational performance problems.

6. Conclusions

It is possible to conclude that organisations recognize the importance of EI and adopt informal practices to facilitate the management of their employees' emotions, although they need support to internally train themselves and therefore empower their employees. It is therefore believed that it may be relevant to develop capacity-building programs for organisations and their technical directors in the management of EI.

The research results have important implications for the management of social economy organisations by providing evidence of an impact relationship between EI and the work performance of employees and therefore the performance of the organisations themselves. Also highlights the importance of EI as a daily tool for employees and their organisations, essential to the nature of the care services to be provided.

Results invite reflection on the potential of developing the EI competencies of the employees and the organisations themselves. In the field of HRM, this research contributes by presenting a set of practical suggestions that can be adopted in terms of development of human resources processes. Also highlights the reflection on the importance of developing future training programs for organisations in managing the emotions of their employees, through the adoption of formal practices that facilitate the development of EI.

Being the manifestation of emotions inherent to the human condition, it is important to develop strategies to ensure proper expression, avoiding the negative effects of its manifestation in inappropriate contexts, which can impact the performance of employees and the performance of organisations.

As limitations present in the study, we highlight the small size of the sample, its limitation to a geographical context, and the inherent impossibility of generalizing the results. A larger sample may reinforce confidence in the results. However, despite the limitations in terms of sample size, the results obtained allow us to conclude that there are similar data among the different interviewees, which may suggest that the sample allowed for relative saturation.

In the future, it may be relevant to adopt a mixed methodology that allows qualitative and quantitative data to be crossed. Also noteworthy is the fact that this study is based on the perceptions of the technical directors and, as such, is not exempt from deviations of perception. Although the study is carried out in the national territory, where research related to EI in the context of social economy organisations is still scarce, which is a factor of innovation, it would be relevant to develop it in a more comprehensive territory, to verify the maintenance of the results obtained. Future studies may also allow EI to be explored in other regions and with other members of organisations.

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