

Conceptualizing The Notion of Emotional Intelligence : A Lexical Analysis

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.19275/RSEPCONFERENCES193>

Abstract

Emotional intelligence (EI) is a rapidly growing subject, which first appeared in the work of Salovey and Mayer (1990). This area of interest is closely connected to the complex evolution of social and relational contexts within international companies. In Morocco today, it seems that there is a considerable revival of interest in the topic of emotional management, which requires in-depth reflection in order to make adequate decisions in the managerial world. EI is a complex phenomenon and difficult to frame in a definition. According to Salovey and Mayer (2016), it is the ability to perceive, evaluate and express emotions correctly to obtain accurate perceptions precise of one's own emotions and those of others in order to promote emotional and intellectual growth of the person. This intelligence is all the more important especially in times of major disruption and crisis such as covid-19 since it contributes strongly to the management of emotions and social relationships (Allen, 2021). According to our research, there is still no consensus on a precise and complete definition. This is why it logic to ask important question such as : How can we analyze researchers' interpretations and develop a more precise and complete definition ? The objective of this article is, on the one hand, to show mainly the interest of studying the contours of the concept of EI and, on the other hand, to proceed to a lexical analysis based on a set of definitions from a database resulting from our literature review. With the help of the "Sphinx" tool, we will try to process this database that is composed of more than 100 definitions. At the end of this work, we will be to identify the main components that allow us to frame the concept and a better interpretation of EI.

Keywords: intelligence, emotion, ability, skills, emotional intelligence

Jel Codes: D9, D91

1. Introduction

Emotional intelligence is a rapidly growing subject, which first appeared in the work of (Salovey and Mayer, 1990). This recent increase in interest is closely linked to the interest brought by companies, consulting firms, publishers, scientific journals, training programs and management schools. Anglo-Saxon countries were the forerunners in this field, followed by Francophone countries. In Morocco, there is also a considerable revival of interest in the management of emotions, which is necessary to accompany deep reflection in order to be able to make the appropriate decisions within a fickle managerial world. It is clear that with a single click on the internet we can see the extent of this theme which deals with topics such as : Emotion intelligence and management, Emotion and organization, Emotion at work, Emotion labor, etc.

The concept of emotional intelligence, in the fifties, was generally associated with motivation and job satisfaction whereas after the seventies emotional intelligence was directed towards the cognitive and emotional aspects that have an impact on organizational performance (Park et al., 1986). A new concept entitled positive emotions was introduced by Fineman (2002), which constitutes a fairly fruitful literature review. Some authors are interested in other concepts such as : love, empathy and enthusiasm as necessary and mandatory conditions for organizational success (Peters and Austin, 1985).

This concept finds its origin in the work of (Salovey and Mayer, 1990). Their proposal considers emotions as a fundamental source of information allowing a person to better manage and control their social environment. According to this model, the ability of the individual to process this information varies from person to person.

After numerous debates in psychology, education, and neurology, Daniel Goleman (1995 ; 1997) gave birth to the concept of emotional intelligence in his book entitled : "Emotional Intelligence" who focused on the importance of emotions in the field of management by looking at the existing correlations emotional intelligence and the performance of organizations. In fact, he states that this concept of EI is composite since it integrates several skills including self-awareness, motivation, self-management, empathy and relationship management.

Another mixed model is developed by Bar-on (2004) by integrating five components. EI, according to him, focuses a set of emotional, social skills and the ability to cope and adapt and availability of support on the other. As for the work of Petrides (2000), they present the EI as a model referring to the self-perception by the individual of his emotional abilities, being qualified as a character of emotional self-efficacy. In general, theorists distinguish two main categories of models, namely mixed models and mental ability models. The former focus on the processing of affective information and the latter conceptualize EI as a construct integrating aspects of personality, motivation and the ability to perceive. However, despite this distinction, there are great theoretical and even statistical similarities between these models. The problem of definition still remains. This led us to ask the following question: On the basis of existing research, how can we analyze the interpretations of researchers and develop a more complete definition ? In this research work, we have adopted a lexical analysis through the Sphinx software while bringing a set of definitions from several research works extracted from databases such as direct science, web of science, cairn, etc. This article is structured as follows: the first part will aim to trace the interpretations of theoreticians and researchers of emotional intelligence, cross them and analyze them. The second will aim to clarify the research methodology adopted. As for the third part, it will explain the analysis of the results obtained.

2. Literature Review

To elucidate the concept of emotional intelligence, it proves useful to be interested to look first at the following two components : intelligence and emotion :

2.1. Intelligence

Piaget (1957) emphasizes "that intelligence is only a generic term designating the higher forms of organization or equilibrium of cognitive structures". He offers the following definition : "intelligence constitutes the state of equilibrium towards which all the successive d'ordre adaptations of a sensory-motor and cognitive nature tend, as well as all the assimilative and accommodative exchanges between the organism and the environment" (Piaget, 1957). He thinks that intelligence is a source of adaptation that offers the possibility for the person to adapt to his or her environment scalable. For this author, the individual can only act when case of need to reconstitute the balance between the environment and the person while adapting. Moreover, in spite of the distinction between the affective life and the cognitive life, they would remain indissociable. Another author, Howard-Gardner (1983), shows the presence of several forms of intelligence that include verbal intelligence, musical intelligence, body intelligence (kinesthetic) and personal intelligence. According to Gardner (1983) the so-called personal intelligence is similar to the concept of emotional intelligence. It proves now necessary to address the concepts of intelligence.

2.2. Intrapersonal intelligence

According to Gardner (1983), intrapersonal intelligence consists in understanding one's own emotions in order to identify one's desires and dreams, to noted one's limits and strengths and to understand one's reactions. In other words, being able to understand oneself in order to manage one's own behavior.

2.3. Interpersonal (or social) intelligence

Interpersonal or social intelligence allows one to solve problems with the outside world, i.e., to be able to act and react with others in a correct manner. This form of intelligence makes it possible to capture the differences in temperament, character and motives for action between different individuals (Gardner, 1983). In addition, social intelligence is developed from an early age since as the child become able at the age to detect emotions grace through facial expression by the age of 2 (Gardner, 1983).

2.4. The emotions

It proves difficult to give a precise and comprehensible definition to 'emotion', we try through this work to offer a rather clear and global definition. Moreover, Mayer et al., (1999) define emotions as follows : "emotions are organized responses crossing the boundaries of several psychological subsystems including physical and cognitive systems, motivation and experiences. Emotions arise in response to an internal or external event that has a positive or negative valence for the individual.

The concept of emotion allows to have motivations and an orientation of operations cognitive to guide activity (Mayer and Salovey, 1997). So, emotion is a process that depends on the nature of the emotion.

According to Artozoa Abaroa (2006), our emotions are the driving force behind our thoughts and decisions, that is contradictory to the classical view that the mind is fundamentally abstract. Emotions are thus at the origin of our intelligence. In other words, any form of intelligence would be emotional.

2.5. Emotional intelligence

Emotional intelligence is a complex phenomenon and difficult to frame in a definition. However, many authors have been captivated by the subject and have tried to define emotional intelligence to mitigate the confusion around this new concept.

The first authors who have succeeded in the development of the concept of emotional intelligence define this last it as the ability to perceive, evaluate and express emotions correctly to obtain accurate perceptions of one's own emotions and those of others in order to promote emotional and intellectual growth of the person (Salovey and Mayer, 2016).

Many researches in emotional intelligence have considered this last it as a trait to deal with intrapersonal and interpersonal issues related to emotions what will allow us to improve our ability to read and adapt to different situations such as social conflicts, motivation, empathy, reasoning, communication and stress management (Juan-Zhang et al., 2021). Rainbow and Steege, (2017) reported that stress depends entirely on a person's level of emotional awareness. As for Rui-Yang et al., (2021) and Bonanno (2004) have specified that emotional intelligence can help you understand what you feel for negative emotions such as anger and develop the ability to identify the cause through reflective analysis, which will lead you to keep a stable balance and react sensibly. In this sense, Huidan-Huang et al., (2021), explained that emotional intelligence is the ability to go through and maintain the emotional state of individuals in order to help them better manage stressful emotional states (depression) and promote more positive feelings, with the aim of having a healthy and prosperous relationship to be able to overcome the different delicate situations. In other words, these authors Montes-Berges and al., (2007) and Alumran and Punamaki (2008) have shown that emotional intelligence has a positive impact on personal results.

Emotional intelligence at work is widely recognized as the personal and social skills that enhance the acquisition of a series of emotional skills which can be learned and ultimately lead to excellent performance in task development and completion Lam and O'Higgins, (2012) and Shakeel & Baskar, (2020). Thus, skills can be perfected by the bias through training and practice since emotional intelligence improves communication, leadership mindset, problem solving, and social relationships.

Based on these definitions, we can say that emotional intelligence is a set of abilities, skills and non-cognitive competences that allow to identify, express, understand the causes and consequences of different conflict situations and to manage one's emotions and those of others in order to use them in an efficient and precise way in order to reinforce self-control and flexibility while decreasing stress and increasing satisfaction in the workplace.

3. Data & analysis

In order to go further than a simple review of the definitions given by the researchers, we tried to do a textual and lexical analysis of a set of definitions using the "Sphinx" tool in order to try to develop a new interpretation of emotional intelligence. The result is presented in the form of a word cloud in the graph below.



Figure 1. Cloud of words representing the result of the crossing of the definitions of emotional intelligence

Source : Made by us using the sphinx tool

This word cloud graphically represents the recurrence of the use of words in the definitions used. By analyzing it, we can already say that emotion has the greatest recurrence, followed by capacity, competence, feelings and aptitude. Similarly, it appears that our authors give a lot of importance to the emotion and the capacity, considering their presence in the graph, under a rather important size.

At the end of this analysis, we can present the following definition :

Emotional intelligence is a complex and evolving construct, including aspects of personality, motivation, and the ability to perceive, regulate, and use emotional information of both an intrapersonal (managing one's own emotions) and interpersonal (managing the emotions of others) nature, to reason meaningfully while taking emotionally related information into consideration. These can be exploited to improve thinking, to foster emotional and intellectual development, to develop and maintain social relationships, and to manage emotional information in an effective and meaningful way. Emotional intelligence is therefore a mixture of personality traits and skills

4. Conclusion

To conclude, we can say that emotional intelligence has been a much coveted discipline for the last few decades, although it has not yet still sufficient theoretical development. Throughout this article, we have tried to reduce the ambiguity in which it beats, through three essential axes. First, we have presented a brief conceptualization of intelligence and emotions. Secondly, we conducted a literature review to identify the definitions of emotional intelligence cited by researchers. Finally, we analyzed these definitions using the Sphinx tool. Thus, our analysis allowed us to create a definition of emotional intelligence that encompasses the different components studied.

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