

Study of the Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Customer-orientation of Sales Employees

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ABSTRACT

Emotional intelligence is the new domain of intelligence that has extensive relationships with the different working environment. Emotional intelligence allows the individuals to diagnose how the others think and how they respond the behavioral models; consequently it reduces the emotional communication barriers and provides the manageability of cultural diversity to the individuals. The objective of applying this research is studying the relationship between emotional intelligence and customer-orientation of sales employees. The statistical sample of this study includes 141 employees of Iran Air agencies in Ahvaz County. The relationship between four main elements of emotional intelligence such as self-consciousness, self-management, social consciousness and relations management, and customer-orientation has been measured by means of a questionnaire. By modeling the structural equations and Lisrel software, the hypotheses have been tested. The result indicates that a significant relationship exists between the emotional intelligence and its elements, with customer-orientation.

KEYWORDS: Emotional Intelligence, Customer-orientation, Self-consciousness, Self-management, Social Consciousness, Relations Management

INTRODUCTION

Doubtless, the skilled and efficient human resources is one of the most important tools for achieving the organization's goals, because human resources have important role in increase and decrease of organization productivity, it means if the organization is provided by the maximum capital and the best technology and facilities, but excludes potential and motivated human resources, it will not achieve its goal (Jahanian, 2011). Various factors affect the efficiency of employees in the organization. One of the factors that affect the organizational behavior of everyone intensively is emotional intelligence (Jahanian, 2011). Emotional intelligence is the new domain of intelligence that is intensively in connection with diverse working environments. Emotional intelligence allows the individuals to diagnose how the others think and how they respond the behavioral models; consequently it reduces the emotional communication barriers and provides the manageability of cultural diversity to the individuals (Triandis, 2006). Hence, the emotional intelligence has been signified increasingly in the modern competitive world.

The successful employees of modern organizations will be the employees that in addition to having high individual and technical skills have the appropriate emotional intelligence. Researchers such as Boyatzis et al (2000), have declared explicitly that according to the performed interviews to the world class managers in extensive level, this group of managers have had technical skills less than the other skills particularly cognitive skills and among cognitive skills, emotional intelligence has obtained the highest score. McKee (2008) indicated that 79% of American managers' success is originated from their high emotional intelligence. On the other side, many of sensations, emotions, signs and verbal and non-verbal signs in the different cultures have considerable differences with each other. In better word, for achieving the capability of high effective emotional understanding having an appropriate emotional intelligence is necessary. Whereas the subject of emotional intelligence quality is considered as a relatively new topic (Ang et al, 2006), the empirical researches on emotional intelligence is increased recently. The previous studies focused majorly on the validity of emotional intelligence structures comparing the other intelligences or personality and general predictive validity of emotional judgment and decision-making, performance and emotional acceptance have been studied (Ang et al, 2006 & 2007, Templer et al, 2006) but few researchers have studied the relationship between elements of emotional intelligence and organizational market-oriented and customer-oriented approaches. The objective of applying this research is studying the relationship between emotional intelligence and customer-oriented behavior of sales employees of Iran Air Co.

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Emotional intelligence

Goleman (2001) defines the emotional intelligence as follows: “a skill that its holder can control his spirits through self-consciousness; improve it through self-management; understand its effect through sympathy and through relations management behaves in a style that upraises his and the others’ spirit” (Goleman, 2001).

Mayer & Salovey (1997) define the emotional intelligence as the capability of the evaluation, expression and adjustment of his and the others’ emotion and efficient use thereof (Chan, 2006). Mayer & Salovey (1997) believe that emotional intelligence provides the ability of thinking with more creativity and using sensations and emotions for solving the problems (Kierstead, 1999).

Bar-On(1997) has compiled a multi-factorial model of intelligence. He believes that emotional intelligence is a set of abilities, capabilities and skills that equips the individual for effective compatibility to the environment and achieving success in the life. The emotion characteristic in this kind of intelligence is the main principle that distinguishes it from cognitive intelligence. emotional intelligence is a set of non-cognitive skills, capabilities and capacities that make the individual’s capability resistant to the claims and external pressures. Weisinger (1998) defines the emotional intelligence as the intelligence of applying the emotion and sensation towards leading the behavior, thoughts, effective communication with colleagues, superintendents, customers and using them for quality of doing a jobin upgrading the results (Weisinger, 1998). The recent studies indicated that emotional intelligence includes four categories of capabilities (Ciarrochi et al, 2002; Mayer et al, 2000; Mayer et al, 2003):

- 1- Emotional perception has been defined as the capability of receiving the self and the others’ emotional stimulus;
- 2- Emotional facilitation that is referred to the processes during which the emotions facilitates the thoughts for solving problems, memory storage, change in temper and unclear processing the information (Mayer, et al 2000);
- 3- Emotional understanding including memory processes and labeling the emotions that indicate that how an individual understands the emotional and emotional situation meaning;
- 4- Emotional management is referred to the adjustability of emotions in self and others.

Emotional intelligence models

As Goleman (1998), four emotional intelligence skills include self-consciousness, self-management, social consciousness and communication management. These four skills together with each other aware the individual’s capability in diagnosing and perceiving the emotion as well as show the individual’s capability in using this consciousness for management of behavior and relationships. This model that includes four skills is used as the standard for knowing that how people understand and perceive the emotional intelligence. These four skills altogether include an aspect of life that the common “intelligent” could never control it sole. Generally, the capabilities of emotional intelligence are explained as four types of general capabilities as follows (Goleman, 2003):

- 1- Self-consciousness: The capability of perceiving the sensations and weak and strength points of self;
- 2- Self-management: The capability of administrating the moods, stresses and internal capabilities;
- 3- Social consciousness: The capability of individuals and groups’ understanding correctly;
- 4- Relations management: The capability of creating appropriate reactions in others.

Customer-orientation

Customer-orientation means collecting the information related to the customer and using this information in the commercial units. Customer-orientation is an organizational culture that establishes the behaviors required for valuing the customers in the most effective and efficient forms. Customer-orientation is the approach of achieving the information about the customer and use thereof for compiling the strategy in order to meet these needs and execute this strategy through positive responding to the customers’ demands and needs. Customer-orientation as one of the behavioral elements of market-orientation means the sufficient recognition of customers with the objective of establishing the excellent and permanent values for them. In this study, customer-orientation means the tendency of employees to meet the needs and responding the customers’ demand under job conditions. Customer-orientation requires some strategies that emotions are based on correct perception of customers’ needs, controlling self moods and management of quality of establishing the effective communication with the target market. Hence, in this study, the relationship between capabilities of sales employees’ emotional intelligence and emotional intelligence is studied.

Hypotheses

Main hypothesis

H:A direct and significant relationship exists between emotional intelligence of employees and customer-orientation.

Secondary hypotheses

H₁:A direct and significant relationship exists between employees’ self-consciousness and customer-orientation.

H₂:A direct and significant relationship exists between employees’ self-management and customer-orientation.

H₃:A direct and significant relationship exists between employees’ social conscious and customer-orientation.

H₄:A direct and significant relationship exists between employees’ relations management and customer-orientation.

METHODOLOGY

The research data have been obtained through surveying 141 employees of Co. By means of random sampling. The questionnaire is researcher-made which has been designed according to the study on previous researches.

Data analysis:

In the statistical sample, 62 answerers are men (44%) and 79 answerers are women (56%). With respect to the age range of answerers, the maximum frequency (79 answerers) is related to the age within 26 to 35. With respect to the education, 55 answerers (39%) have a high school diploma or lower than a diploma. As well as, 59 (42%) answerers have a service record less than 5 years.

Hypothesis test:

Significance and determination of main indices show in the infrastructures of a conceptual model of a research by means of path analysis in the structural equations model. Path analysis indicates that a cause and effect relationship exists between the research variables. These tools determine and show the knowledge existing in correlation relationships between variables graphically. Therefore, by path analysis the research hypotheses may be tested similarly to the determination of causal relationships between the variables.

Table 1. Hypothesis test

Hypotheses	Beta coefficient	T values	Summary of test
1	0.35	7.03	Accepted
1-1	0.66	8.39	Accepted
1-2	0.54	6.39	Accepted
1-3	0.46	9.73	Accepted
1-4	0.63	9.17	Accepted

Model goodness of fit tests

Table 2. goodness of fit tests

Root Mean Square Residual (RMR)	0.046
Goodness of Fit Index (GFI)	0.95
Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI)	0.87
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)	0.035
Normed Fit Index (NFI)	0.98
Non-Normed Fit Index (NNFI)	0.97
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	0.99

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The summary indicates that employees’ self-consciousness has relationship with their customer-orientation. It is recommended that by considering the self-consciousness index as one of emotional intelligence elements at the beginning of service and training self-consciousness during the service to promote the level of customer-orientation. Self-management is dependent on the individual’s self-consciousness and the second main factor in individual capability. Self-management may not be achieved without self-consciousness. It is suggested in the training course during the service, for promoting the customer-orientation level to describe the mutual relationship between self-consciousness and self-management as the training intelligence elements and to train the operational course of actions for employees’ capability in self-management and the objective results to be assessed and analyzed. The results indicate that the individual’s social consciousness has a significant relationship with his customer-orientation. Certainly, in interactions between the customers, the organization employees particularly the employees who are

directly in connection and interaction with the customers and play the role of the organization's gallery should strengthen their capabilities on social consciousness in order to identify and understand the customer's emotions and show the appropriate reactions in terms of the conditions. Ultimately, the results indicate that relations management has a significant relationship with the customer-orientation. Relations management is the product of the first three emotional skills including self-consciousness, self-management and social consciousness. As it was propounded about other elements of emotional intelligence, it is necessary to provide the required trainings for promoting the management of individual's relations to the other employees and customer.

Limitations and Futures studies

One of the most important limitations of this study that is considered as the specific traits of social sciences researches is the effect of varying the control of which is out of the reach of the researcher and the possibility of their effectiveness on study results is not out of mind.

One of the other limitations of this study is limitation on collecting the research data by means of a questionnaire; limitations such as intrinsic limitations of written questionnaires, lack of a complete study of answerers' attention rate, lack of tendency of some answerers to the separation.

It is recommended to test the relationship between emotional intelligence and customer-orientation in other statistical societies in the consecutive researches. The summary of investigation in the public organizations and private corporations may lead in different results and helps to the better perception of the relationship between two variables. It is proposed that the effects of emotional intelligence on the behavioral and organizational performance to be assessed, for instance the relationship between emotional intelligence and social capital, organizational citizen's behavior, organizational learning etc. are proposed.

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