

# THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND HUMAN RESOURCES EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE: A CASE STUDY FOR ROMANIAN COMPANIES

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## Abstract

Emotional intelligence is an abstract concept, difficult to distinguish and measure, so there are many doubts about its construct. Emotional intelligence is the sum of individual behaviors and attitudes related to awareness, management and use of their own emotions and the emotions of others. The aim of this study is to analyse the influence of Emotional Intelligence on HR employee's performance in Romanian private organizations. Additionally to the main purpose of the research, the authors wanted to enrich the concept of emotional intelligence and provide evidence of a specific category of employee who cooperates and works with other employees within organizations, in this case the human resources (HR) field. Why is it important for HR employees to have a high level of emotional intelligence? One reason is that studies validate EI as a good predictor of performance in the workplace, positive work attitude, resistance to stress, career achievements, and the other reasons can be that people in HR field are constantly interacting with people, working with and for them, and Emotional Intelligence enables HR professionals not only to understand themselves and others better, but also to interact smoother with others, find new ways to motivate, develop potential, solve conflicts creatively and constructively. The authors of this research used a deductive-exploratory approach in order to test the hypotheses. For the data analysis, we used the statistical analysis package SPSS Statistics 22.0, through which we generated several parametric tests and descriptive analyses in order to accomplish the main propose of our research. The results in this study were obtained through the Pearson correlation coefficient ( $r = .547$ ) and the regression coefficient R squared ( $R \text{ squared} = .299$ ), which validates the hypothesis from which we started, and suggest that there indeed is a strong correlation between performance and EI. Moreover, other types of association come out among the primary concepts and several nominal variables, for which the results are presented and discussed in this research.

**Keywords:** emotional intelligence; employees' performance; social awareness; self-management; attention focusing.

## INTRODUCTION

Organizations are struggling with increasing employees' commitment to work and work performance in a time when technological transformation of the work environment and globalization increases day by day. At present many organizations endure because of poor employment morality and productivity. One of the aspects worth exploring is how poor emotional intelligence can diminish the performance of the employees. This can be seen both in the managers' way of handling and delivering tasks to their subordinates and also in the following employee who lack in work commitment and performance. Both employee and manager are able to enhance their emotional intelligence skills throughout their life and therefore affect in a good way the work environment

they work in. The ability to recognize, understand, express, manage and use emotions is called emotional intelligence (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). The systematization of literature studies will allow us to better understand the results of research on the relationships between emotional intelligence and employee performance, but also the relationships of some of their subcomponents (social awareness and performance legitimization; self-management and attention focusing), as we intend in the first part of the article to explore the main findings in the literature, while in the second part we will discuss the findings of the research, highlight its' limitations, and conclude by making some recommendations regarding the development of future interventions.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Recent studies have concentrated on emotional intelligence (EI) as a concept important for the employee to manage their own emotions when undertaking their job tasks. The influence emotional intelligence has on job performance is a widely studied aspect in the organizational strategies' development. Many studies discovered that EI is linked to the number of positive outcomes in the workplace with variables like leadership (Scott-Halsell et al., 2008; Popescu, 2013), resistance to stress (Bar-On et al., 2000; Mikolajczak et al., 2007), work attitude (Carmeli, 2003), job satisfaction and performance (Kafetsios & Zampetakis, 2008; Law et al., 2008; Wong & Law, 2002), employees' creativity (Zhou & George, 2003) and career achievements (Dulewicz & Higgs, 1999).

Mayer and Salovey (1997) and Goleman (1998) presented the concept of EI as being responsible for job performance and this cannot be explained by other constructs such as cognitive intelligence. Research conducted on a major products consumer company has showed a close relation between EI and leadership success (Gowinget al., 2006). Other researchers have connected stress, work performance and EI as strong connected aspects of the same problem. Therefore, work performance was found high in employees with good ability to handle other people's emotions.

According to Bar-On et al. (2006), there are two major studies that illustrate the significant relationship between Emotional Intelligence and job performance. Emotional Intelligence is a predictor of job performance and leadership potential (Sunindijo et al., 2007; Nel, 2001; Sala, 2006). Emotional intelligence is considered more crucial as one advances in the seniority ladder and guidance towards other is required. The study showed a 360° overview with insights on the differences on the way one rates himself and how is rated by others and how such is influencing the performance overall.

Researchers (Androniceanu, Ciobanu, 2015), practitioners, psychologists and managers have shown special attention towards the importance of EI in the human resource development (Burbach, Barbuto & Wheller, 2003; Nica et al., 2020).

The theory of emotional intelligence has evolved from the basics developed by Thorndike (1920) to the comprehensive theories as developed by authors such as Salovey and Mayer (1990), Goleman (1995), Bar-On (1997) and Wolmarans and Martins (2001). Emotional intelligence can be linked to thinking on managerial competencies and as such Salovey and Mayer (1990) and Goleman (1995) argue that emotional intelligence provides the basis for the competencies that become the predictors of job performance. Also, in line with research by Salovey and Mayer (1990), Goleman (1995) and Wolmarans and Martins (2001) suggests that emotional intelligence can be seen to be an important indicator of a person's ability to succeed. Also, according to Mayer et al. (2000), outcomes which relate to the work such as job performance may be affected by emotional intelligence.

Goleman (1995, 1998) believes that the prediction of emotional intelligence for individuals is successful life and work, and he stated that because EI affects almost every aspect of work life, employees who are high in EI are "star performers". Publishers of EI tests advocate the use of EI tests for personnel selection, claiming that research has demonstrated a strong correlation between EI and job performance. Furthermore, his research also shows that managers with poor emotional intelligence have problems with creating good relations with the people they work, either it's the subordinates, superiors or clients. As a result, there is a positive correlation between emotional intelligence and job performance. Kotsou et al (2019) made a systematic assessment of 46 emotional intelligence studies in order to systemized their outcomes. They found only three representatives' studies that assessed EI and work performance (Gignac et al., 2012; Slaski & Cartwright, 2003; Turner & Lloyd-

Walker, 2008), but only Gignac et al. (2012) reported significant results. Hence, Kotsou et al. (2019) concluded that the link between EI and performance remains unclear and there is a clear need for further investigation.

Abraham (2000) found that despite the fact that EI was related to job satisfaction, this was moderated by the environmental characteristics like job control. In light of these outcomes, it is not sufficient to hire emotionally intelligent employees and organizations must offer them autonomy in decision making. Abraham (2000) argued that the social attribute component of Emotional Intelligence is related to constructive interpersonal relationship and it increases the feeling of job satisfaction and diminishes the work-related pressure stress, and further stated that these social skills foster networks of social relationships which in turn increase an employee commitment to the organization. Lee and Kusumah (2020) tested in their research study hypothesis like "EI influences positively and significantly the employee's performance" and "work motivation moderates the influence of EI on employee's performance", and both were accepted. Hence, EI is a major contributor in the achievement of organizations' success, employees' performance and is fundamental to employees' capacity to adapt in an effective manner during organizational change (Gondal and Husain, 2013).

According to Goleman (2001), EI at the broadest level, refers to the capacities to perceive and control emotions in ourselves and in others. The results of his study demonstrated that the salespeople of a national insurance company who have strong emotional skills sold more than the weak ones.

Wong and Law (2002) found the critical connection among EI and occupation fulfilment and employment execution. Patra (2004), indicates EI as an important determinant that can make work environment pleasant and impact representatives' activity fulfilment and effective administration and organizational progress. The motivation behind Rozell, Pettijohn and Parker's (2004) study was to decide the connections existing between client-oriented selling, emotional intelligence and organizational commitment. The outcomes of the study demonstrate that a salesman's client direction level is altogether influenced by emotional intelligence and commitment. Others researchers (Ahmed et al., 2016) claim that a significant component of human resource development, beside cognitive and emotional intelligence, is spiritual intelligence.

Lam and Kirby (2002) indicated that overall, EI explains individual intellectual based execution well beyond the level attributable to general knowledge. Seligman (1991) states that optimism is another emotional competence that helps accomplish increased productivity. New salesmen at Met Life who scored high on a test of "learned optimism" sold 37 percent more life insurance in their first two years than pessimists.

Carmeli (2003), showed that the high level of EI in managers creates positive work attitudes and altruistic behaviour, and that employees enjoy higher job satisfaction and performance (Wong & Law, 2002). Managers with high EI can enable the performance of their employees by managing employees' emotions that foster more creativity, resilience, and enables employees to act successfully (Zhou & George, 2003). Furthermore, managers with high EI should be more adept at nurturing more positive interactions between employees that could foster more cooperation (Barsade, 2002), coordination (Sy et al., 2005). An individual with high EI is less inclined to engage in troublesome behaviours, and is able to distance oneself from self-destructive, negative behaviours.

Sy et al. (2005) examined the relationships among employees' emotional intelligence, their manager's emotional intelligence, employees' job satisfaction, and performance. They found that employees' emotional intelligence was positively associated with job satisfaction and performance. In addition, manager's emotional intelligence had a more positive correlation with job satisfaction for employees with low emotional intelligence than for those with high emotional intelligence. Also, Ahangar (2012) states that emotional intelligence is related to predicting employee performance, because organizations require human interaction in order to achieve goals, and most jobs require the ability to manage emotions. Emotional intelligence has the potential to be a strong predictor of performance. Linking EI with performance can provide organizations with a valid alternative for selecting and assessing employees. Enhancing EI skills enables managers to regulate their emotions and motivate themselves more effectively.

Kafetsios and Zampetakis (2008) tested the extent to which positive and negative affects at work mediate personality effect on job satisfaction by using the Wong Law emotional intelligence scale. The results confirm expectations deriving from Affective Events Theory regarding the role of work affectivity as an interface between personality and work attitudes and extend the literature on EI effects in organizational settings.

### 3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

#### 3.1. Emotional intelligence

The concept of emotional intelligence was introduced by Salovey and Mayer (1990) 30 years ago and popularized by Goleman (1995) 25 years ago. In the literature, there are numerous studies that address the concept of emotional intelligence. Over time, different authors have tried to explain and define this concept, most of which are associated with the non-cognitive dimension. Bar-On (1997) named emotional intelligence as a series of non-cognitive abilities, skills and competences that influence one's ability to cope with the demands, pressures and challenges of the internal and external environment. The Bar-On model (Spielberger, 2004) is composed of five factorial clusters, and each meta-factorial cluster compromise a certain number of related skills, behaviors and competences, more precise 15 factors in all, as it fallows: self-regard, emotional self-awareness, emotional self-expression, independence, empathy, social responsibility, interpersonal relationship, stress tolerance, impulse control, reality-testing, flexibility, problem-solving, self-actualization, optimism, well-being. Mayer and Salovey (1997) describe the term emotional intelligence as the ability to perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions, so as to help thinking, to understand emotions and their meanings, and to reflect emotions in ways that promote emotional and intellectual development. Goleman (1998) states that emotional intelligence is the capacity to recognize our own feelings and also the others' feelings, in order to motivate ourselves, and to manage much better emotions within us and in our relationships. Goleman (2001) demonstrated that EI has two competencies, the personal competence and the social competence. The social competence consists of social awareness and relationship management, and the personal competence consists of self-awareness and self-management. Staff (2011) said about emotional intelligence that it is a set of emotional and social skills that influence the way we perceive and express ourselves, develop and maintain social relationships, meet challenges and use emotional information effectively.

##### 3.1.1. Measurement of emotional intelligence

Throughout the literature there are several studies that debate the feasibility of measuring the instruments' construct (Steiner, 1997; Stuller, 1998; Dulewicz & Higgs, 1999). In our days emotional intelligence is measured by various complex tests (Burcea & Sabie, 2020). Although EI is difficult to quantify, some psychologists have discovered and designed several methods, such as the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT), which aims to test the emotional intelligence of people, to whom tests are applied through various creative means. We identified in the literature three main theoretical models designed to measure emotional intelligence. These models are: the skill model (Mayer and Salovey); the factorial model (Israeli psychologist Bar-On, 2000), and the mixt model (Goleman). In our research, in order to measure the employees' emotional intelligence, we combined items from Bar-On and Goleman models.

#### 3.2. Employees' performance

In present society, the economy develops rapidly and competition tends to increase. Organizational performance is one of the most important indicators of how to continuously grow in a fierce competition. Current companies want to recruit / train potential employees who are willing to go beyond their established responsibilities in order to improve their performance (Adams et al., 2002). This can be done only by increasing the workload and work pressure on employees (Gong et al., 2019). Campbell et al. (1993) define performance as the behaviors that an employee adopts and matches to the goals of the organization, in order to achieve the organization's desired results.

Performance measurement systems use various classifications of management and accounting information systems to define and operationalize its' applicability. From different classifications Henri (2006) investigated and decided to use four components of performance measurement systems, like: monitoring, attention focusing, legitimization and strategic decision making. Based on his research (Henri, 2006), we adopted and used in our study two of the components of the system for measuring the performance of employees in an organization.

### 3.3. Social awareness

Goleman (2001) explained that with social awareness, one can recognize the feelings of others. People with this ability can read non-verbal cues from the emotional stream of others. This is critical to job performance (Muhammad & Khadeejah, 2015) when focusing on interaction with people. Social awareness capabilities are empathy (understand the feelings and opinions of others, have a positive interest in their attention, and cultivate opportunities through them); service orientation (anticipate, identify and meet customer needs); includes organizational strategies and policies; employees are optimistic in every situation; and organizational awareness (reading group emotional trends and power relations). Also, social awareness can understand people's nature, perception, vision, thought and helps employees reaching high standards (Nica, 2015).

### 3.4. Performance legitimization

Weber (1978) introduced legitimacy into sociological theory, and presented it as the capacity of an organization to conform with formal and social laws, norms and values. Meyer and Scott (1983) describe organizational legitimacy as "the degree of cultural support for an organization – the extent to which the array of established cultural accounts provide explanations for its existence, functioning, and jurisdiction, and lack or deny alternatives ... In such a[n] instance, legitimacy mainly refers to the adequacy of an organization as theory. A completely legitimate organization would be one about which no question could be raised. [Every goal, mean, resource, and control system is necessary, specified, complete, and without alternative.] Perfect legitimation is perfect theory, complete (i.e., without uncertainty) and confronted by no alternatives" (p. 201). Basically, the concept of legitimation as a key component of the performance measurement systems refers to the justification and validation of decisions, actions (past, present and future), strategies, policies adopted (actions taken) by the top management of organizations (Henri, 2006; Feldman & March, 1981; Ansari & Euske, 1987). Legitimation, at the same time, refers to the HR policies adopted at company level, through which managers justify their performance indicators established for employees, etc. In fields like political science, business administration and sociology, research on legitimacy presents that it is possible for managers to increase organization's legitimacy through adequate strategies (Bitektine, 2011; Rogowski, 2015; Suddaby et al., 2017).

### 3.5. Self-management

According to Goleman (2001) self-management is that skill that allows a person to regulate distressing factors such as anxiety and anger and suppress emotional impulses. A person with this ability will be able to keep in mind the positive emotions that appear when he/she achieves goals or suppresses negative emotions, which will help boost motivation. The ability of self-management are emotional self-control (a person's ability to control destructive emotions when is under stress or in hostile conditions, and to maintain its effectiveness), positive outlook (the ability to persevere in pursuing goals when we encounter obstacles and setbacks, and to see only the good side of people); honesty and trustworthiness (maintain standards of integrity), conscientiousness (responsibility for personal performance), adaptability (flexibility to respond to changes, take into account multiple needs, and adapt to different ideas or methods), achievement orientation/ drivers (striving to improve or reaching standards of excellence; find better ways, set challenging goals and take planned risks) and initiative (innovation and be prepared for action when opportunities arise).

### 3.6. Attention focusing

The signal answering questions like "What problems should we investigate?" (Simon et al., 1954), is a reminder from top management throughout the entire organization regarding performance measurement. These signals convey their views on the organization, key success factors and key uncertainties. The signals sent indicate the primary and secondary goals that employees should focus on their attention (Atkinson et al., 1997; Vandenbosch, 1999). According to Simons (1990) attention-focusing refers to different signalling systems used by organizations to concentrate their attention in a certain direction and to encourage (force when necessary) dialogue throughout the organization. The focus of attention construction covers those phenomena of what employees are thinking about when they are at work. Specifically, Gardner and his colleagues defined the focus of employees' attention as "an employee's cognitive orientation towards each of many targets while he or she is at work" (Gardner et al., 1989, p. 62). It refers to the amount of mental effort (or cognitive ability) assigned to a goal (phenomenon). Attention focusing does not refer to a belief, value, or an attitude related to those aspects that occupies employees' minds while they are at work. It also differs from concepts like work engagement,

which according to Bakker et al. (2008) have strong emotional and motivational properties. In conclusion, we would say that attention focusing refers to employees' capacity to control and direct their attention in order to reduce distracters that could compromise performance.

## 4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 4.1. Aim and research objectives/hypotheses

The purpose of the study is to analyse the influence of Emotional Intelligence on HR employee's performance in Romanian private organizations.

Taking into consideration previous research and theory, we developed three hypotheses in order to analyse the relation between Emotional Intelligence and performance of HR employees.

The hypotheses are the following:

H1: There is a strong correlation between Emotional Intelligence and HR employees' performance

H2: There is a correlation between social awareness and performance legitimization

H3: There is a positive correlation between self-management and attention focusing

### 4.2. Research design and data collection

This research proposes a comprehensive analysis of the dimensions of emotional intelligence in relation to performance in organizations, starting from empirical data and previous research, in order to achieve the main objectives. The approach of the study is deductive – exploratory (GradesFixer, 2019), in order to test the hypotheses. In addition to the main purpose of the research, through this study we want to enrich the concept of emotional intelligence with evidence about a specific public that works with and for people, in this case the HR field.

Furthermore, the study was designed using quantitative methodology, the purpose of the research being to investigate a large population. The sample was compiled through the convenience sampling method (Acharya et al., 2013; Alvi, 2016) according to the following criteria: to be employed in a private organization at the time of applying the questionnaire, to have at least one year of work experience, to work in the field of human resources, regardless of the position.

The questionnaire was designed so that it can be administered both online and face to face. Given that data collection overlapped with the lockdown pandemic Covid19, and physical contact was restricted, the questionnaires were applied entirely online. We distributed the digital questionnaire on professional platforms such as LinkedIn, groups dedicated to employees in the field of Human Resources, as well as directly to collaborators in this field. The questionnaire was administered during April-May 2020.

### 4.3. The main characteristics of the sample

As we mentioned before, the sample was compiled through the convenience sampling method, and that's why it's relevant to see the main characteristics of the employees who participated in the study, and the type and size of the organizations they belong to. The sample size was 268 respondents, which from a demographic perspective are distributed into 59% females and 31.7% male, ages ranging from 20 to 65 years, with age average of 31 years (S.D. = 10,29). Seventy-two percent had a college degree or higher and 28% had a high-school diploma only. They are employees in Romanian private organizations, 42.1% in small companies, 22,4% in average companies and 35,5% in companies with more than 250 employees. All the respondents are working in HR field or HR departments, in organizations with different fields of activity, the most relevant have emerged: retail, construction, banking, medical, logistic and sales. As we can see in TABLE 1, the average years of experience is 6 years, and at the employees with management position is even higher, a 7 years average, and for non-management position is 4 years. The sample included 63,3% non-management and 36,7% at management level employees (distributed in: Top management - 11%, Middle management - 12% and Team management - 13%). This distribution of respondents according to their position indicates a distribution close to a normal distribution in this sector of activity.

TABLE 1. MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE

Item	Categories	Percent	Mean	SD
Gender	Feminine	59.0%		
	Masculine	31.7%		
	Not reported	9.3%		
Age	<i>Minimum 20 years – Maximum 65 years</i>		31.33	10.29
Education (range 1-10)	High school and professional	28.5%	7.04	1.56
	Bachelor degree	40.1%		
	Master degree	28.1%		
	PhD and post-university	3.3%		
Organization size	Between 1-49 employees	42.1%		
	Between 50-250 employees	22.4%		
	More than 250 employees	35.5%		
Tenure in organization (years)	<i>Minimum 1 year – Maximum 28 years</i>		5.83	6.35
Position in organization	Management level	36.7%		
	Non-management level	63.3%		
Experience years in position of	Management level		7.19	6.01
	Non-management level		4.23	5.10

5. DATA ANALYSIS

For the data analysis, we used the statistical analysis package SPSS Statistics 22.0, through which we generated several parametric tests and descriptive analyses in order to accomplish the main propose of our research. For all three hypotheses we computed variables with the item that measures each concept assumed in this research: emotional intelligence (54 item), performance (18 item), social awareness (11 item), performance legitimization (9 item), self-management (8 item), attention focusing (7 item).

In order to test the first hypothesis that tested the relationship between emotional intelligence at the individual level and performance of human resources employees in the organization, we made an aggregation of items into two new variables, using variable computation. The other two hypotheses, are designed to analyze at a micro level specific correlation between components of the macro concepts. Self-management and social awareness are components of emotional intelligence and performance legitimization as well as attention focusing, derive from performance.

In terms of internal reliability coefficients, Cronbach's Alpha is above .70 for both scales EI with Cronbach's Alpha of .839, and for items to measure Performance in organization the Cronbach's Alpha is .901, as presented in Table 2. This shows a consistency of the compound measure and consistency in respondent's answers, validating the measuring instrument, and reassuring us of the scale used in correlations for the validation of hypotheses. The reliability coefficients score for the composite scale, according with Bar-On (1997), is a validation of EI measure and allows us to continue analysing the data in the form we have composed.

TABLE 2. INTERNAL RELIABILITY STATISTICS COEFFICIENTS

Emotional Intelligence scale			Performance scale		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.839	.867	54	0.901	0.903	18

In addition to the concepts analysed, we used a set of independent variables, such as gender, age, occupation, tenure, and organization size, to observe if this can predict and make a difference in capital of emotional intelligence and employee's performance.

In order to validate / invalidate the hypotheses, we used correlation analysis method to evaluate the strength of relationship among composite scales were used, and also for the validation of the first hypothesis we generated linear regression, with EI score as independent variable and performance score as dependent variable.

## 6. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Hypothesis 1

This study started from the premise of exploring the relationship between emotional intelligence and performance among employees. The Pearson correlation coefficient ( $r = .547$ ) between EI and Performance indicates a strong relationship on those two, with an error probability less than 0.001 (sig. = .000). This coefficient, but also the regression coefficient R squared = .299, (see TABLE 3) validates the hypothesis from which we started. The high correlation from the two scores confirms that there is definitely a relationship between the level of emotional intelligence of HR employees and the performance of the organizations in which they work. Summarizing, data analysis shows that the level of emotional intelligence held by the employee is a good predictor of performance in the organization, the linear regression indicating this. Looking at FIGURE 1, point cloud suggests that EI score can be categorized in three or four types of employees based of the individual EI score. This can be a future challenge in order to investigate on a deeper level the relationship strength between levels of emotional intelligence and performance.

TABLE 3. LINEAR REGRESSION WITH EI - INDEPENDENT AND PERFORMANCE AS DEPENDENT

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.547 <sup>a</sup>	.299	.296	7.46149

a. Predictors: (Constant), Total EI

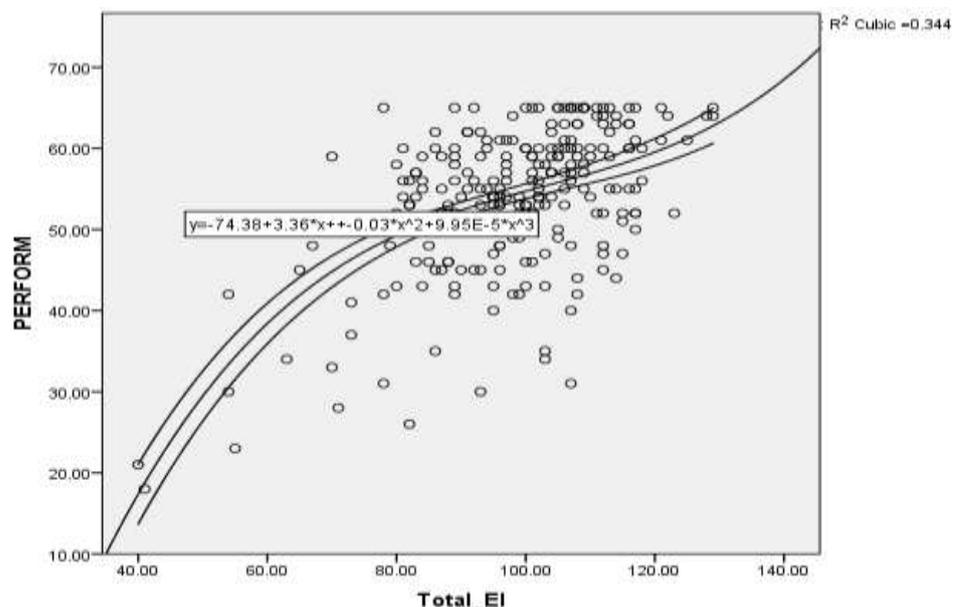


FIGURE 1. SCATTER PLOT FOR EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE SCORE AND PERFORMANCE

Next, we will interpret the results obtained for the other correlations to identify which other characteristics of the employees are correlating with the two main dimensions: EI and Performance. Several nominal variables which characterize the employee and the organization were selected as follows: gender, age, education, organization size, organization position, tenure, hours worked per week, marital status and parental status. As a result of the correlation analysis the last three were removed from the model because no significant scores were recorded. For the others, we will further analyse the significance and meaning of the correlation scores obtained, according to the TABLE 4. Gender is a discussed variable in relation to the score of emotional intelligence, but also to performance, we can see that for both association it's a negative correlation, but only for IE correlation is moderate ( $r = -.118$ ) and the relationship is significant ( $p < .01$ ). Negative correlation indicates that female employees had higher scores on IE than male employees. It's not a very strong correlation, but analysing the linear relationship, without controlling other variables, we can conclude that the female employees in HR have a better predictor for a high score of emotional intelligence. The size of the organization to which the employee belongs is a variable that correlates with EI ( $r = .232$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and performance ( $r = .194$ ,  $p < .01$ ), thus creating a new connection, namely large organizations attract employees with a higher level of EI than medium and small organizations. Additionally, size of organization is a better predictor for performance.

However, there are no direct link between age, level of education and years of experience to EI score or performance, the Person coefficients being small and statistically insignificant. This establishes that EI is not predicted of none of the variables mentioned, at least not in the population analysed in this study.

TABLE 4. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS AND CORRELATION MATRIX H1

Variable	N	Mean	S.D.	1	2
1. Emotional intelligence	268	97.51	14.53	1	
2. Performance	268	53.04	9.15	.547***	1
3. Gender (1 female, 2 male)	268			-.181**	-.089
4. Age	268	31.33	10.29	.154*	.063
5. Level of education	268	7.04	1.56	.020	.051
6. Organization size (small to large)	268	3.15	1.49	.232***	.194**
7. Position in organization (from executive to management level)	268	1.72	1.07	.136*	.125
8. Years of experience	268	5.83	6.35	.071	.095

\*\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).  $p < .001$

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).  $p < .01$

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).  $p < .05$

### Hypothesis 2 and 3

For the second and third assumption, the statistical analysis was performed together, and this highlighted strength of the association between fundamental variables from H2 and H3, but also evidence that we did not take it in consideration from the theoretical and empirical framework. Shortly, the data collected validates the two hypotheses, the correlations being positive and statistically significant, demonstrating precise link between social awareness and performance legitimization ( $r = .286$ ,  $p < .001$ ), as well as self-management and attention focusing ( $r = .357$ ,  $p < .001$ ). These results suggest that moreover it is predictable that employees in HR with a high level of social awareness will identify that the organization legitimizes and supports their views, performance and overall development, and similarly, employees in HR who have high proficiency in self-management will have a higher awareness of the company's efforts toward focusing attention on common goals and finding common ground and a common vision among its employees and among all levels of the hierarchy.

Looking at the achieved results (TABLE 5), is clear that is a strong association between social awareness and attention focusing ( $r = .306$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and also between self-management and performance legitimization ( $r = .415$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The correlation coefficients are slightly higher than the initially proposed associations, but not radically different. The coefficients indicate that social awareness correlates well with attention focusing, and self-management is a good predictor for performance legitimization. We interpret all this in terms of the high correlation among EI and performance, considering that social awareness and self-management concepts are components of the dimensions of EI, in the same way that performance legitimization and the attention focusing

concept are sub dimensions of 'performance' construct. This is indicated by the high correlation between social awareness and self-management ( $r = .589, p < .001$ ), respectively among performance legitimization and attention focusing ( $r = .699, p < .001$ ).

TABLE 5 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS AND CORRELATION MATRIX FOR H2 AND H3

Variable	N	Mean	S.D.	1	2	3	4
1. Social awareness	268	8.08	2.39	1			
2. Performance legitimization	264	35.05	6.84	.286***	1		
3. Self-Management	263	7.67	2.08	.589***	.415***	1	
4. Attention focusing	260	28.09	5.62	.306***	.699***	.357***	1
5. Gender (1 female, 2 male)	268			-.212**	-.053	-.127	-.018
6. Age	268	31.33	10.29	.114	.035	.098	-.002
7. Level of education	268	7.04	1.56	.038	.047	.012	.064
8. Organization size (small to large)	268	3.15	1.49	.241***	.067	.143	.113
9. Position in organization (from executive to management level)	268	1.72	1.07	.068	.196**	.112	.166*
10. Years of experience	268	5.83	6.35	.098	.077	.064	.058

\*\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).  $p < .001$   
 \*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).  $p < .01$   
 \*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).  $p < .05$

Finally, we will discuss what other types of association come out among the primary concepts and the characteristics of employees. Like the model from H1, we associated the same characteristics for H2 and H3. As can be seen in the TABLE 1, the type and size of the organization, correlates with social awareness, and the employee's position in the company correlates with performance legitimization. The negative correlation between gender and social awareness ( $r = .212, p < .01$ ), notes a higher level of social awareness among female employees compared to male employees. From an organizational perspective, this evidence shows that women are more empathetic, they are better at understanding the non-verbal hints in the emotional flow, this being an essential aspect in interacting with people. Social awareness also correlates with the size of the organization ( $r = .241, p < .001$ ), suggesting a higher social awareness score in large organizations than in small and medium ones. Indeed, the correlation can also be explained by the indirect effect of other variables. The last significant correlation is between performance legitimization and employee's position in the company ( $r = .196, p < .01$ ). The result suggests that employees on the higher levels of the company feel stronger that the company puts effort into both legitimizing its own views norms, values, decisions, measures, strategies, adopted at the company level, as well as supporting their own individual views, convictions and actions. However, this result is to be taken with caution because the employees in the management positions are also the ones who have the responsibility to apply and manage this decisions, norms and organizational values, so they would rather tend to agree with the fact that the company (which they are in charge of) is doing a good job of legitimizing its actions, values and decisions. This could be a confirmation bias effect, stemming from the organizational position and responsibilities of the employees questioned.

## 7. MAIN FINDINGS

Our results suggest that there indeed is a strong correlation between performance and EI, as well as a moderate relation between EI and size of company, and also between EI and gender. Of note are also positive correlations between social awareness and performance legitimization, and between self-management and receptivity to attention focusing practices.

When it comes to the impact of the size of the company on various aspects relating to both emotional intelligence and performance, this study has found that in Romania, larger companies attract HR employees with a higher average level of EI than medium or small organizations. This comes as no surprise, as the demands of caring for the human resources of a large organization are higher than they are for smaller companies. This requires HR professionals to be on the top of their game in order to keep and further the competitive edge of the companies they work for. Emotional intelligence is what allows HR professionals the skills, abilities and psychological disposition required to do their work on a high level and bring their A game.

This is not the only correlation we found for large organizations. Data analysis shows that the size of the organization also leads to more complex, better working performance and performance evaluation systems. Again, this is no surprise, as when trying to stay competitive in the market of big companies, the margin for error and inefficiency gets much smaller, and so big companies need to keep a constant vigil on their performance and make sure their instruments and methods for measuring performance, but also their results are up to par. Their competition is unrelenting and tireless, so they must constantly push the envelope as well.

Size of the organization also correlates positively with social awareness. Bigger companies attract more socially aware HR employees. This too is a natural consequence, because there are just more people to manage, a higher diversity of personalities, temperaments, all of which need to be thoroughly understood if the HR department is to fulfill what is expected of it by a big company. High social awareness is not merely a should, it is a must in the HR department of big companies. Without a high enough level in this component of emotional intelligence, navigating the complex emotional nuances of a big multinational company could prove quite tricky.

The 2nd and 3rd hypotheses of our study were also confirmed. Statistical coefficients indicate that indeed, higher social awareness makes individuals more aware of the company's effort to focus employee attention around the same vision, values, and norms, and persons with a higher degree of self-management consider the companies they work in put in the work to justify their corporate decisions and actions, but also to affirm, encourage and support the convictions, views and perspectives of them as individuals.

This study confirms the fact we also know from the specialty literature: women are more empathetic than men and are better at understanding the non-verbal hints in the emotional flow, which is an essential aspect when interacting with people.

Lastly, there is a correlation that should be taken with a grain of salt, as it may be caused by a confirmation bias: Employees in management positions score higher on the legitimization scale than those without management position, which indicates that managers feel more than others that the company is doing a good job both of justifying their decisions, strategies and actions, but also support their individual convictions and points of view.

## 8. CONCLUSIONS

Emotional intelligence is an abstract concept, difficult to differentiate and measure, so there is a lot of skepticism about this construct. As we mentioned in the conceptual framework of IE, it is the sum of the behaviors and attitudes of individuals in relation to awareness, managing and using of their own emotions and of the emotions of others. Why is it important for HR employees to have a high level of emotional intelligence? Studies show that EI is a good predictor of positive work attitude (Carmeli, 2003), career achievements (Dulewitz & Higgs, 1999), performance in the workplace (Law et al., 2008; Wong & Law, 2002), resistance to stress (Bar-On et al., 2000; Mikolajczak et al., 2007), this is one of the reasons. Other reasons can be that people in HR field are constantly interacting with people, working with and for them, and Emotional Intelligence enables HR professionals not only to understand themselves and others better, which is already reason enough, but also to interact smoother with others, find non-invasive and nonabrasive ways to motivate, develop potential, solve conflicts creatively and constructively. But maybe even more importantly, there is a dimension of Emotional Intelligence that goes beyond individual interaction, a transpersonal dimension. Emotionally intelligent people don't just interact well one on one, come across clearer and make it easier for others to buy into their vision and get on the same page. These people understand not just individuals, but also groups and organizations. They are the ones who foster and transmit with as little interference and encountering the least resistance possible the values, vision and mission of the organization. They articulate it for all and act like a network of relays that generates and supports a positive organizational environment and the organizational culture which has an unseen, subtle yet undeniable effect on the wellbeing, motivation and performance of all who work in that environment.

Emotion is a key element for HR employees in any type of organization, and that is why this study highlights once more the importance of activities that can lead to the development and understanding of emotional intelligence among employees of organizations. Developing emotional competence requires special attention in human resource management. Dulewicz and Higgs (1998a; 1998b) mentioned that the concept plays an

important role in reinforcing individual “success” in an organization. Moreover, the statistical coefficients we arrived at indicate a high correlation between EI and performance.

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