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Emotional intelligence and knowledge management: A necessary link?

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Abstract

This theoretical paper studies the effect of emotional intelligence (EI) on individuals' participation in knowledge management (KM) practices. Individuals are the sources of knowledge, and EI may advance individuals' self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship-management skills, which in turn positively impacts their knowledge processing behavior. The argument is made that knowledge creation is enabled through individuals' ability to recognize and correctly interpret emotional and environmental clues. Knowledge sharing is facilitated through individuals' interpersonal, communication, and team-working skills, enabled through self-awareness and social awareness. Knowledge is retained in organizations where EI enacts individuals' corporate citizenship behavior, adaptability, and job satisfaction. Where knowledge is power, knowledge management as a discipline may face difficulties, as the attempt to manage knowledge can result in individuals' resistance. Suggestions are provided on how organizations can adapt operations to meet the needs of the knowledge carriers, integrating EI into its strategic plan. Implications for the industry and further research suggestions are followed by conclusions.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence; Knowledge Creation; Knowledge Management; Knowledge Sharing; Knowledge Retention; Self-Awareness

Introduction

The knowledge-intensive economy demands the successful management of knowledge. Employees working in an organization are an organization's main generator of wealth (Dean and Kretschmer, 2007; Earl, 2001). Organizations draw on knowledge management (KM) practices as part of strategic human resource management to enhance employee performance to generate profit (De Geofroy and Evans, 2017; Hsu, 2008; Law and Ngai, 2008; Xiao and Cooke, 2019). Where “knowledge is power” the “becoming aware of” and proper management of knowledge enables innovation and global competitiveness (Mathis and Jackson, 2006; Noe et al., 2014; Rechberg, 2018). The effective processing of knowledge then “lowers costs involved in organizations, aids development of new products, enhances group dynamics, and raises competitive abilities of organizations” (Ansari and Talan, 2017: p. 16; see also Cummings, 2004).

Knowledge processes that organizational citizens are meant to engage in, are comprised of the acquiring, managing, and retaining of knowledge through the creation, share, and transfer of knowledge in the corporate setting. For this reason, organizations invest in KM, which may be defined as the “practices and processes, involving systems and individuals, to organize, develop, manage and share both explicit and tacit knowledge within and between organizations, groups and individuals.” (Rechberg and Syed, 2012: p. 35). Yet, KM practices in organizations are challenged,

as knowledge is private to the individual holding it (Polanyi, 1998; Rechberg and Syed, 2014). Individuals may feel a sense of loss for sharing knowledge, choosing to hide knowledge instead of sharing it, hampering KM success (Ansari and Talan, 2017; Connelly and Zweig, 2015; Demirkasimoglu, 2016; Rechberg, 2018; Rechberg and Syed, 2013).

As knowledge is private to the individuals carrying it and as interpersonal factors may be unaccounted for in the development of KM strategies, this paper examines the effect emotional intelligence (EI) may have on individuals' participation in KM practices. EI is an individual's "ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions" (Salovey and Mayer, 1990: p. 189). Because organizations exist through employee commitment and participating in the organizational space, so knowledge can be processed (Donaldson and Dunfee, 1994), it is argued that an individual's EI may have a notable effect on their knowledge sharing and knowledge-hoarding behavior. Miao et al. (2017) and Sony and Mekoth (2016), for example, find that high levels of EI positively affect individuals work behavior, their commitment to the job, and their team-working behavior, and individuals with high EI are found to perform better at work than individuals who have low EI (see also Ahmad et al., 2017; Boyatzis et al., 2015; De Geofroy and Evans, 2017; Fernández-Berrocal and Extremera, 2006; Joseph et al., 2015; O'Boyle et al., 2011; Zeidner et al., 2004). Moreover, Ansari and Talan (2017), explain that EI is a noteworthy mediator between employees' work engagement and their knowledge-sharing behavior. Where EI predicts organizational citizenship behavior, which according to Organ (1997) leads to employee cooperation and aiding of coworkers (Day and Carroll, 2004), EI may be a predictor to individuals' participation in KM practices.

In this paper, it is argued that high levels of EI may be an essential ingredient for knowledge to be processed in organizations. It is argued that EI facilitates knowledge creation, the most valuable knowledge process (Von Krogh, Ichijo and Nonaka, 2000); improves knowledge sharing (Ansari and Talan, 2017); and assists in knowledge retention, reducing knowledge hoarding and preventing knowledge loss (De Geofroy and Evans, 2017; Xiao and Cooke, 2019). This is a theoretical paper intending to provoke discussion on the importance of EI in KM. Drawing on the literature on EI and KM, the argument will be made that EI enables knowledge creation through self-awareness; positively impacts interpersonal relationships, such as teamwork and communication, facilitating knowledge sharing; and promotes employee citizenship behavior such as organizational commitment, adaptability, and job satisfaction, enabling knowledge retention. In the discussion, it is explained that KM, as a discipline, is facing difficulties; where knowledge is power, the attempt to manage it can be challenged by employee resistance. Implications are provided to guide management to cultivate individuals' EI, enabling knowledge processing, followed by suggestions for further research and conclusions.

Emotional Intelligence

Emmerling and Boyatzis (2012: p.13) explain that "the domain of social and emotional intelligence represents a useful and valid approach to the management of human capital in today's modern global workplace." Individuals with high EI recognize their own feelings and emotions and learn how to recognize and regulate emotions. EI enables individuals to become aware of the feelings and emotions of others. Also, through EI, individuals learn how to discriminate among emotions and to use that knowledge to grow both emotionally and intellectually. EI then guides a person's

behavior and better their decision-making ability (Salovey and Mayer, 1990; see also De Geofroy and Evans, 2017; Jordan et al. 2002; Sony and Mekoth 2016).

EI includes competencies such as self-awareness, emotional self-control, and adaptability. Alongside EI, there is social intelligence (SI) through which an individual enhances their social skills and interpersonal relationships, including but not limited to teamwork, corporate awareness, the ability to influence others, and managing conflict (Boyatzis et al. 2015). Goleman (2006: p. 5) explains that from EI to SI, “the picture enlarges beyond a one-person psychology [...] to a two person psychology.” Goleman (1995) developed four dimensions clustering EI and SI; these are an individual's ability of emotional self-awareness; emotional self-management; empathy and social awareness; and relationship management. For the purpose of this paper, EI and SI will be referred to as EI and will draw on Goleman's (1995) four dimensions (Zeidner et al., 2004).

EI Enables Knowledge Creation

Knowledge

Knowledge is the “innately human quality, residing in the living mind of a person” (Myers, 1996: p. 2). Knowledge can be explicit, in forms of data and information, or tacit and so embedded in individuals (Polanyi, 1998). Knowledge, no matter its form, is originally tacit in nature and rooted within individuals (e.g., Dowd and Courchaine, 1996; Leonard and Sensiper, 1998; Sveiby, 1999; Wright, 2005). Tacit knowledge is the more competitive form of knowledge, yet it is generated or shared with difficulty (Kaufmann and Runco, 2009). Organizations require individual knowledge carriers to participate in the corporate setting and process knowledge in order for services, products, and a competitive advantage to be realized (Rechberg and Syed, 2014).

The individual knowledge carrier

The knowledge carrier may assume various roles of employment, for example, the employee, employer, manager, team leader, CEO, or business partner. Knowledge gains form through the ideas, capabilities, values, and emotions of an individual (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995; Nonaka and Von Krogh, 2009). Through Weick (2001), we learn that each individual perceives and engages in knowledge processes in unique ways, based on individual sensemaking: the way we make sense of the world. Polanyi (1998) explains that past experience and how we make sense of our surroundings will impact the extent to which knowledge is interpreted and created. Defining its domain of sophistication, Polanyi (1998) illustrates that an individual reading a word will focus on the meaning of a word and not on the word itself. It is an individual's ability to discriminate against emotions that will allow for meaning to be created and therefore knowledge to be formed. Where a mind is preoccupied with anger, the word may have different meanings to the interpreter than if they are cheerful. Collins (1993) explains that tacit knowledge, is always embraced, embodied, and embedded in the individual who carried it. This “personal” element of knowledge needs consideration when intending to process knowledge for corporate use (Polanyi, 1998; Rechberg and Syed, 2014).

Lindebaum (2009) explains that knowledge is created through EI, where a person accesses their feelings and makes sense of them, and knowledge can be generated (Mayer et al., 2004). In order to illustrate how EI may impact tacit knowledge creation, one may draw on Polanyi's (1998) three examples of knowledge creation, namely the creation of emotional, situational, and practical knowledge. The author is aware that knowledge can be sourced from additional causes than

discussed here; these three examples are chosen to illustrate the impact EI may have on knowledge creation.

Emotional knowledge is gained through self-awareness. Individuals with high levels of EI are able to draw on their emotions and use clues arrived at through their self-awareness to engage in critical and creative thinking and decision making (Day and Carroll, 2004). Indeed, Damasio (2000) explains that the emotional center of a human brain significantly contributes to an individual's decision-making process, which can aid in the discrimination between clues that can lead to knowledge creation. Where EI is high, an individual is able to discriminate between emotions that impact the decision made. Experienced emotions are a valuable indicator for clues, translating into knowledge (Cairns, 2000; Fiol and Lyles, 1985). In contrast, lacking self-awareness may obstruct our decision-making abilities. Where an individual is unable to discriminate among emotions information received may be filtered, hindering the recipient from noticing valuable clues that can aid knowledge creation.

Situational knowledge is created in Nonaka and Konno's (1998) space of ba: a space of knowledge creation and sharing and requires both self-awareness and social awareness. In order to create knowledge, an individual has to "be there in the world" or Darsein (Heidegger, 1927). An individual's senses of seeing, feeling, and touching can form knowledge (Zhu, 2008). Moreover, an individual's "gut feeling" and their ability to discriminate among emotions, determines their willingness to engage in a situation (Andre et al., 2002), and therefore their ability to learn from received clues.

Day and Carroll (2004) explain that if participants in a learning environment do not take the task seriously, they will not draw on their EI and will not learn. Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) developed a spiral process to enable knowledge creation, beginning at the level of the individual, and only through individual interaction can the process move to the organizational level. That an individual participates is not self-evident, emotions may temper with the level of concentration, which may lead to knowledge obstruction or loss. Where an individual is not "fully" present in the "now," knowledge recreation, at a later point, is not possible no matter the related facts one has available (Garfinkel, 1976 in Hassell, 2007); for this reason, emotional self-management and self-awareness are critical ingredients.

Practical knowledge is attained through doing something and links to emotional self-awareness and self-control. Practice is not thought, but lived, where the learner relies on emotional clues. Polanyi (1998) explains that practical knowledge is highly tacit and embodied. Practical knowledge, such as learning how to ride a bicycle, is created through the body drawing on unconscious clues. In fact, Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) argue learning is generated from direct experience, with the body and not only the mind. To obtain practical knowledge, which Polanyi (1998) calls the ineffable domain, the individual has to be present, able, and willing to learn (Nonaka and Von Krogh, 2009). If an individual is overwhelmed by unrelated thoughts, and not concentrated on the task at that, this distraction will hinder practical knowledge from being created; being self-aware and practicing self-control is therefore critical for knowledge creation.

Felin and Hesterly (2007) explain that individuals have a "core self," which determines the knowledge outcome. Each individual is unique in their way of participating in knowledge processing and identifying clues, how an individual participates, feels, and is aware of the environment will determine the quality and the amount of knowledge gained, shared, and created (Murray et al., 2009). Being aware of one's emotions, being able to discriminate amongst them, and being able to interpret them can enable knowledge creation. Additionally it has to be noted that an individual's knowledge base and identity may alter over time, depending on their ability,

willingness, and interest to engage (Bertram, 2004). This said, knowledge creation may never be exhausted but will always be individually processed and created, which will allow individuals and organizations employing individuals with the opportunity to engage in unique knowledge creation if the state of mind and circumstances permit for it.

EI Facilitates Knowledge Sharing

Knowledge sharing

In principle, “knowledge processes are social processes” (Timbrell et al., 2005: p. 248), where knowledge can only be shared through the social interaction of individuals in space. Knowledge sharing may be defined as “the behavior by which an individual voluntarily provides other members of the organization with access to his or her knowledge and experiences” (Cyr and Choo, 2010: p. 825). Indeed, Nonaka and Takeuchi's (1995) knowledge-creating spiral promotes that it is through the socialization, externalization, combination, and internalization of individuals' knowledge in space that tacit knowledge can be transformed into explicit knowledge and shared. It is through engaging with others in the community that knowledge can be accessed and learning can take place. When knowledge is successfully shared in an organization, value is created and knowledge loss prevented. In order for that to be possible, an individual has to first be aware of the knowledge they possess and second be socially aware to engage in knowledge sharing.

Interpersonal relationships

An individual is able to enrich the value of their knowledge, by developing strong interpersonal relationships (Miao et al., 2017; Woolley et al., 2010). The success of an organization, it may be argued, is not only enabled through individuals' job performance, but through their social participation in the corporate space. Buber (1995 [1923]), explains that individuals distinguish among others according to their own inner principles—their EI—independent of the “real” person; he called this the Ich und Du (I and Thou) principle. Individuals employed in the organization create the social reality of the organization through their interpretation of it. The way an individual perceives the organization and their coworkers will impact their knowledge processing behavior. Strong interpersonal relationships, namely individuals' willingness to share knowledge and assist their colleagues and their organization adds value (Day and Carroll, 2004). It is EI that enhances an individual's social skills, and in several studies Schutte et al. (2001) show that high EI enables positive interpersonal relationships.

Cerne et al. (2014, p. 173) warn of a possible “distrust loop,” where a climate of distrust dominates the interpersonal exchange, which leads to knowledge hoarding and knowledge loss. Where knowledge is power, a competition among coworkers may tint the interpersonal relationships (Rechberg, 2018). Harnessing emotional perceptions, and regulating feelings, will provide individuals with insights that allow to look beyond hostility, developing meaningful interpersonal relationships (Johnson and Spector, 2007; Tang et al., 2015). Because EI guides behavior, individuals are able to obtain more job resources as the individual is open to feedback, accepts and provides support for others, and it able to generate more job autonomy (Miao et al., 2017). And, where knowledge is shared, “exchange partners (e.g., coworkers and/or supervisors) may feel obligated to reciprocate all the benefits associated with their pleasurable social exchanges” promoting additional knowledge sharing (Miao et al., 2017: p. 282).

Interpersonal communication

EI betters an individual's knowledge-sharing ability. Lopes et al. (2004) find that an emotionally intelligent person is a more efficient communicator, both verbally, and nonverbally. Emotional self-awareness enables an individual to interpret and express their thoughts and feelings. A person with high EI is confident and will ask questions and will actively listen to others (Emmerling and Boyatzis, 2012; Goleman, 2006). In contrast, an individual with low EI is likely to interrupt others while they speak and lack empathy. Low EI leads to defensiveness and disconfirmation hampering effective communication, halting knowledge sharing.

Individuals with high levels of EI are able to interpret others' emotional stage by observing their tone of voice and body language, which will enable, circumstance fitting, effective communication (Ahmad et al., 2017). Mastering self-management and self-awareness will facilitate active listening skills allowing for knowledge not only to be shared but also to be internalized.

Teamwork

EI improves individuals' team-working behavior. Woolley et al. (2010) write that the amount and quality of knowledge shared within a team is dependent both on its members' cognitive ability and on the way team members interact with each other. Incompatibilities result in relationship conflict (Jehn and Mannix, 2001). Where knowledge is a source of power and individuals feel unrecognized for their knowledge contribution, distrust will dominate relations, restricting knowledge sharing (Connelly et al., 2012). EI improves a team member's self-awareness and the social skills needed for knowledge to be shared and teamwork to be successful (Zeidner, et al., 2004). Team members with high EI monitor their emotions and are able to express empathy towards other team members' experiences; EI enables active listening, enhancing team cohesion (Goleman et al., 2013). De Geofroy and Evans (2017: p. 88) confirm that “self-awareness is the foundation of effective relationship management within a team.” And Goleman (1995) finds that teams composed of individuals with high EI, will debate free of emotionality, and where empathy and self-awareness mediate communication, knowledge is shared, and better team decision making can be achieved.

EI Aids Knowledge Retention*Employee citizenship behavior*

EI advances corporate commitment, preventing knowledge loss. An individual with high EI is committed to their career and emotionally attached to the employer (Ahmad et al., 2017). Carmeli (2003) finds that individuals with high EI regulate their emotions and are for this reason less likely to leave their job. Goleman et al. (2013) explain that it is an individual's emotional self-management skills that enables them to remain emotionally committed to the organization, as negative thoughts and resentments to situations are filtered out. EI mediates between individuals' emotional stability and feeling towards job insecurity (Jordan et al., 2002). Low EI leads to suspicion, defensiveness, and a negative outlook on job security, which in turn “leads to negative coping (e.g. distancing, wishful thinking) and defensive decision-making behaviors.” (Zeidner et al., 2004: p. 387). In contrast, an individual with high EI is loyal to the employer and committed to their job (Ahmad et al., 2017).

Employee adaptability

EI supports adaptability (Lopes et al., 2004). Sony and Mekoth (2016: p. 30) find that “frontline employee adaptability completely mediates the relationship between emotional intelligence and job outcomes i.e. job performance and job satisfaction.” Indeed, EI positively impacts an individual's adaptability to their “career concern, career control, career confidence and career curiosity” (Coetzee and Harry, 2014: p. 90). Process conflict may hinder knowledge sharing, where the uncertainty about who carries the responsibility to initiate knowledge sharing and who may be in control to utilize and manage it. Uncertainty, Jehn (1997) explains, may lead to dissatisfaction, low team morale, and reduced productivity. The ability to adopt and deal with uncertainty, enabled through high EI allows for collaboration even when the future is unclear. Ahmad et al. (2017), for example, find that individuals with high EI are able to realize their goals, even in times of uncertainty, as high EI enhances the ability to choose among options, judging right from wrong, improving one's decision making ability.

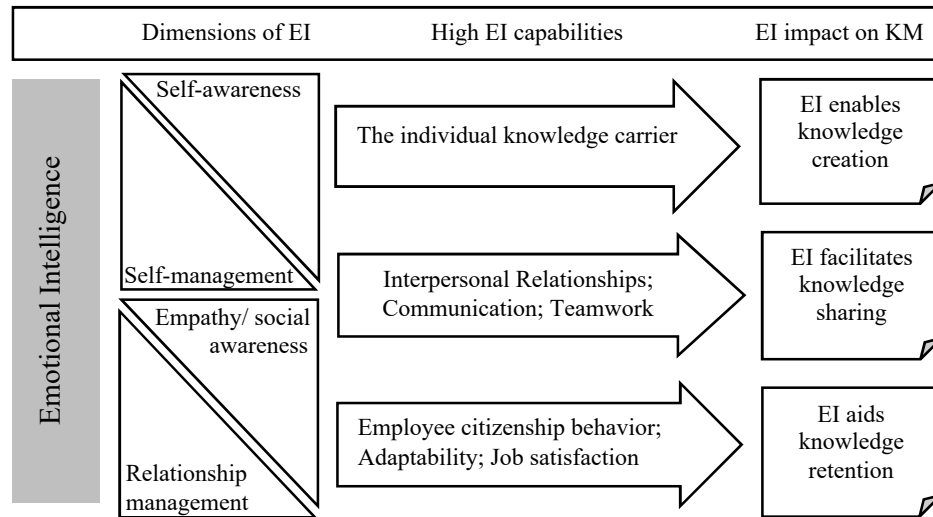
Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction results from an individual's positive feelings towards their employment. Where individuals are satisfied with their job, Sony and Mekoth (2016: p. 24) find the “levels of job dissatisfaction, absenteeism, grievance expression, tardiness, low morale” and turnover are reduced. High EI enables knowledge retention as EI aids job satisfaction (Kafetsios and Zampetakis, 2008; Lopes et al., 2004). Where an individual's EI is high, they actively engage in knowledge processing, seeking to obtain additional knowledge, broadening their job resources, which in turn activates job satisfaction (Miao et al., 2017).

Discussion*EI enables KM*

Kessel et al. (2012) explain that individuals will feel safe, and will be able to build trust so knowledge can be shared between coworkers if self-management, empathy, and relationship-management skills are present (see also Goleman et al., 2013; Knight et al., 2015). For this reason, EI can have a profound indirect positive effect on individuals' knowledge-processing behavior. Where EI is high, an individual is more inclined to process knowledge. Self-awareness and the ability to discriminate among emotions will enable an individual to create knowledge. Self-management, developing social awareness and empathy towards others, and relationship management will allow an individual to communicate effectively, participate in effective teamwork, and build strong interpersonal bonds, facilitating knowledge sharing. EI allows an individual to develop self-management skills, which enables them to address dissatisfaction and move towards adaptability and commitment, allowing for knowledge to be retained in the organization. The process of the above discussion on the positive effect of EI on knowledge processes is illustrated in Figure 1. Whereas EI enables self-awareness, self-management, empathy and social awareness, and relationship management, these in turn will develop high EI capabilities, which enable for knowledge to be created, shared, and retained in an organization, positively impacting KM practices. The discussion now leads to KM and how the very essence of the discipline, namely managing individuals' knowledge, may restrict its success, hampering the process illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Emotional intelligence enabling knowledge processing



Knowledge management

KM as a discipline may motivate individuals to purposefully hide their knowledge. Weiss and Cropanzano (1996) explain that even emotionally intelligent individuals go through emotional ups and downs. Individuals with high EI are not immune to negative feelings towards their employer or feelings of job insecurity. Where an organization prioritizes corporate needs over the needs of the individual knowledge carrier, knowledge hoarding and knowledge loss may be the result (Rechberg, 2018; Rechberg and Syed, 2013). Knowledge is rooted in and enabled through individuals, and KM cannot be practiced without individuals participating in the organizational space (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995; Ployhart and Moliterno, 2011; Von Krogh et al., 2000). For example, even an IT approach to KM relies on individual employees to engage with and make sense of systems so knowledge can be transferred.

Rechberg (2018) explains that an individual's fairness perception is likely to impact their participation in corporate KM practices. Where "the benefits of KM are often preserved solely at the level of the organization or the decision-maker, rather than the level of the individuals in an organization" (Quintas et al., 1997: p. 30), knowledge is hoarded not shared. Processing knowledge for the purpose of the organization, without being rewarded for it, is demotivating, resulting in knowledge hoarding and knowledge loss (Cabrera and Cabrera, 2005; Wang, 2004). If employees feel that KM practices are used to appropriate their knowledge, they may choose to hold their knowledge close, refraining from sharing what they know with colleagues (Rechberg and Syed, 2014). Drawing on the conservation of resources theory, Hobfoll (2001) explains that individuals will protect their knowledge in order to maintain and accumulate resources especially when the knowledge in question is directly related to the individual's social identity at work (see also Webster et al. 2008). Webster et al. (2008) add that due to the ambiguous and intangible nature of knowledge, individuals may develop a feeling of ownership, protecting their knowledge, and because knowledge may be an individual's source for power and job security, knowledge hoarding may be seen as a source for job security, independent of an individual's level of EI (Rechberg and Syed, 2013; Wasko and Faraj, 2005).

That individuals are committed to their workplace implies that organizations do their part. Where a trust culture is missing and favoritism rules, individuals are likely to punish the unfair agent through either hoarding their knowledge or leaving the employment agreement (Rabin, 1993 see also Nygaard and Russon, 2008). Therefore, next to an employee's attitude towards an organization, the workplace needs to embed a culture of equal treatment, addressing the needs of the employee and the firm. The moral obligation an individual holds towards an organization is determined by the organization's use and misuse of power (Fehr and Schmidt, 1999). Burchell and Cook (2008) explain that trust is central for the participation in knowledge share and creation, whereas distrust for the organization and coworkers will lead to knowledge hoarding and knowledge loss (see Connelly et al., 2012; Cerne et al., 2014; De Long and Fahey, 2000; Inkpen and Tsang, 2005). Trust motivates individuals' commitment to knowledge processing, promoting innovation (Carmeli and Spreitzer, 2009; Zelaya-Zamora and Senoo, 2012). Individuals' knowledge hoarding may therefore be an indication of organizational maltreatment, not EI. In the discussion that follows, the author seeks to provide implications to guide management to cultivate individuals' EI, enabling knowledge processing.

Implications

Corporate culture

There is the need for EI to be included in the discussion on KM. EI, not IQ, allows for outstanding performance (Watkin, 2000). Organizations need to become skilled at recruiting, developing, and retaining emotionally intelligent individuals. Knowledge flow is controlled at the level of the individual; where organizational practices are set up to upset the individual, knowledge processing will be obstructed and made inaccessible for corporate use (Webster et al., 2008). Organizations may seek to relate to individuals, their emotions, and their knowledge-processing needs. In fact, KM is meant to start with the individual (Blackler, 1995), where the organization provides the place where knowledge can be created and shared, according to the needs of the individual knowledge carrier. Corporate awareness will allow to enable a positive, or at the very least, a neutral organizational climate, that allows individuals to feel committed, mobilizing knowledge processes; a toxic and hostile corporate environment leads to employee disengagement and knowledge loss (Frost, 2003).

Sen (1993: p. 52) explains that “firms that treat its workers well, are often very richly rewarded for it.” Knowledge processing may be satisfying for individuals to participate in when they feel they are compensated for it. Increased salary, recognition, and status, can motivate and improve knowledge sharing. Additionally, providing incentives as an exchange for individuals' knowledge contribution may ease tensions around claims to knowledge ownership increasing a sense of fairness (Peng, 2013; Wang and Noe, 2010). An individual's personality will impact incentive recognition and needs to be considered in reward design.

Trust

Tacit forms of knowledge are of great value but often difficult to share with others (Collins, 1993). Unspoken moral norms of reciprocity generally govern human interaction (Connelly et al., 2012; Cerne et al., 2014), and where trust is missing, knowledge is unlikely to be processed. Gergen (1994) suggests developing shared contextual knowledge, as a “shared vision, shared mood, and perceived organizational support (POS) have a direct, positive association with engagement”

(in Mahon et al., 2014: p. 1). Built on trust, an organization facilitates individual participation in knowledge processing without worrying about being exploited. In fact, Politis (2003: p. 64) explains “‘trustworthy’ intentions among co-workers is the chief ingredient for knowledge acquisition and knowledge sharing”. And where individuals can work in a trusting environment with other, knowledge may also be created.

Leadership

EI leadership may help to enable the space where individuals are motivated to participate in knowledge processing. An emotionally intelligent leader “demonstrates integrity, fairness, respect, credibility, competency, and expertise; an empathic leader is able to gain their followers' trust” mobilizing knowledge processing (De Geofroy and Evans, 2017: p. 87). For this reason, strategically selecting leaders that are respected, not only for their ability to generate wealth, but for their ability to mobilize the workforce for creative debate, is value adding.

Continuous education

Continuous learning can develop EI, and education in combination with EI strengthens employee commitment to the job (Venkatesh and Balaji, 2012). Research conducted in schools shows that educating children and teenagers in EI positively affects their academic performance and eliminated disruptive behavior (e.g., Durlak et al., 2011). Employers should not expect that individuals are fully aware of themselves, or their knowledge base, nor can it be guaranteed that they are able to communicate what it is they know (Gertler, 2003; Snowden, 2002). Awareness can be learned. To the extent possible, organizations are to listen to individual learning needs and fulfill them, contextually fitting to the corporate mission, as doing so may result in great benefit to both the individual and the organization (Langley, 2000). Awareness about one's interaction with others can, for example, be learned experimentally. Goleman (2006) finds that through filming employees, they can observe their own behavior; accompanied by interventions and coaching, individuals' can, for example, develop empathy.

Recruitment

Karkouljian et al. (2010) recommend training individuals' EI to improve their knowledge-sharing willingness or to recruiting individuals with high EI. Recruiting EI individuals allows organizations to have a satisfied and compatible workforce. The HR department is well equipped to run EI tests on applicants and select individuals with a fitting personality, sharing corporate values and attitude towards knowledge sharing and creation (Chow and Chan, 2008). EI is not genetically fixed, but can to a large extent be learned, which should be recognized in the recruitment process (Goleman, 1995). And, it should be remembered that no human is immune to poor treatment, so an organization needs to develop a corporate culture built on trust and fairness to attract, manage, and retain talent.

Future research

This study in a literature review and empirical research is needed to confirm the effect of EI on KM. Efforts have been made to explain the positive impact EI can have on individual behavior in the corporate setting and knowledge processing (e.g., Ansari and Talan, 2017; Day and Carroll, 2004; De Geofroy and Evans, 2017; Xiao and Cooke, 2019). Yet, more research on how to measure, enable, and process EI is needed (Webb et al., 2013). Research is needed on how to incorporate the learning and development of EI into the corporate setting. Research conducted in

schools shows us that EI training has a positive effect on student' learning and behavior (Durlak et al., 2011). How long does it take to develop EI? And how, through EI, can we enable employee engagement in knowledge processing? More research is needed on the impact of an organization's culture on emotionally intelligent individuals. What leads individuals with high levels of EI to withdraw from knowledge processing? How can EI aid in developing trust? Can EI aid in leadership development, and what impact does a person of high EI have on a colleague with low EI and their knowledge-processing behavior? How does EI impact team knowledge recognition and share? And, should EI be an integrated part of KM design? And will doing so lead to organizational success?

Limitations

The findings of this paper are that self-awareness, self-management, empathy, and social awareness, as well as relationship management lead to capabilities that enable knowledge processing, protecting knowledge from being lost. Although this conclusion is purely theoretical, it is reasonable to assume that there is a theoretical indirect relationship between EI and KM, where EI enables knowledge processing. Yet, that this is a theoretical paper, also makes it its biggest shortcoming. The author is only scratching the surface of a possibly vast area of research. Extensive empirical research is necessary to justify that an individual's EI in fact facilitates knowledge processing, having a profound positive effect on KM practices and the KM discipline as a whole.

Conclusion

Organizations need to identify ways to effectively manage knowledge, as the processing of knowledge leads to a competitive advantage. Knowledge processing requires the participation of individuals, as they hold the knowledge. KM as a discipline facing difficulties; where knowledge is power, the attempt to manage it can be challenged by resistance. Here, it was argued that EI enables knowledge creation through self-awareness; positively impacts interpersonal relationships, such as teamwork and communication, facilitating knowledge sharing; and promotes employee citizenship behavior such as organizational commitment, adaptability, and job satisfaction, aiding knowledge retention. EI may be a valuable component, mediating individuals' participation in knowledge processing, as knowledge creation, sharing, and retention can result from high EI. It is suggested that corporate KM strategies should consider and develop individuals' EI so knowledge can successfully be processed in organizations.

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