A conceptual framework of emotional intelligence, organizational commitment and project success

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ABSTRACT

This conceptual paper is an endeavor to propose a set of influencing paths associated with project success. As, previous studies have found that people with high Emotional Intelligence (EI) have greater job performance which positively affect organization’s performance. Taking clue from these relationships, we proposed a conceptual model. By hypothesizing that the association between EI and project success is considerable. Furthermore, the relationship between EI and project success is explained by organization commitment. Since, the ability to manage behavior and navigate social complexities inside an origination lead to organizational commitment which in turn affect project success. To sum up, we conclude that providing relevant understanding among employees regarding EI is a strategic attempt which positively influences project success even in dynamisms. These literature-based findings have considerable implications for academics as well as for HR practitioners.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence, project success, organizational commitment.

1. INTRODUCTION

The increase in the growth of the industry and the globalization, there has been seen increasing in the complexity of the projects in different sectors. The challenges attached to these projects are also significant in nature. Every complex project is believed to be one of its own kind (Sauser et al., 2009), it is therefore, the issues attached to projects could be irregular and uncertain in nature. Additionally, such large projects have attached strong public and political attentions because of their great impact on the society, environmental and the culture (Whitty & Maylor, 2009).
However, success of the projects is deteriorated due to late completions, deviation from the objectives and overrun of the cost (Change et al., 2013; Willian and Samet, 2010), let us take an example of FIFA World Cup 2014, where the estimated budget exceeded the limit from 1 billion to 11 billion. Also, Denver International Airport got delayed due to exceeding budget by 200%. (Willian & Samet, 2010) there have been researches conducted where the main problem in the projects has been caused due to the issues of managerial skills (Sauser et al., 2009)

Here comes the role of the project management skills along with leadership skills, which determine the success of the project (Muller et al., 2012). In building the argument, there can be seen the central role of the emotions in this regard as how different leaders and the managers manage their emotions during their daily routine. Jordon and Lindebaum (2015) “incorporate the factor of emotions in the research”, we draw the concept of emotional intelligence (EI) in the study. There have been extensive researches going on which has highlighted the role of the emotional intelligence (EI) in the success of the project (PS).

Mazur et al (2014) have argued that higher level of the emotional intelligence (EI) has been able to solve the problems. However, how much the emotional intelligence (EI) influences the project success (PS) remains unknown. Muller & Jugdev (2012) argued that in order to understand the successful relationship between the EI and PS, there is need to find out the variable(s) which explain this relationship. However, there has been evidences highlighted on the significant relationship between the emotional intelligence (EI) and the organizational commitment (OC) while the mediating role of the organizational commitment (OC) on the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and project success (PS) in the context of Pakistan is not that much know. People with higher emotional intelligence (EI) show commitment towards their organization. Such people show concern towards the feelings of the other and also help coworkers at workplace. The researchers also suggest that emotional intelligences (EI) grow with the education which make the person to strengthen their organizational commitment (OC) as well. (Hosseini & Zirak, 2016)

We are arguing that our study will contribute to the body of knowledge as it will propose a conceptual model which might be helped to find out the mechanism with the help of which emotionally
intelligent people may contribute toward the project success (PS).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Emotional intelligence (EI)

Salovey and Mayer (1990) were one of the first who work on the emotional intelligence (EI) and defined it as “ability to monitor the feelings and emotions of one self and other and be able to discriminate among them and use them to guide the thinking and actions” (p. 189), emotional intelligence (EI) has been identified as one of the necessary managerial skills ever since this work came out. Studies highlighted, how significant influence of manager’s iteration has on the other. This influence is particular seen in case of the complex projects (e.g., Joseph & Newman, 2010; Clarke, 2010; Caruso & Salovey; Muller & Turner, 2010). There has been evidence in the literature on the effectiveness of the emotional intelligence with the managerial effectiveness (O’Boyle et al., 2011).

The literature has highlighted that “effective project management is not only done by the hard skills but there is role of the emotions regulation as well” (Fisher, 2011). Mazur at al. (2014) and Muller and Turner (2007) highlighted the role of the emotional intelligence (EI) of managers in context of the project management and particularly these researches has highlighted that “project’s manager’s ability to understand and regulate their emotions in oneself and other helps them to achieve high quality results along with effective relationship with different stakeholders”.

2.1.1 Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Project Success (PS)

Liderbaum and Jordan (2014) highlighted that emotional experience of people changes with time depending on the work behaviors and work experiences. However, employee at the working environment face both type of emotions; negative and positive. Positive emotions have positive influence on the employee and helps them to perform better (Mayer et al, 2008; Sy et al, 2006), however negative emotions give rise to frustration and irritation along with anger which also reduce the ability to perform up to their capabilities and thus decrease in performance could be noticed (Fisher, 2003; Von Glinow et al, 2004), “emotionally intelligent project managers are more likely to express their emotions positively” (Peslak, 2005) this helps the project managers to effectively communicate with the employee and also to address the challenging tasks in creative way. Project managers with high emotional intelligence have positive
impact on the employee and also have positive role in the troubleshooting because they provide solutions to solve different problems faced by employee (Mount, 2006), different researchers have found out the relationship between the emotional intelligence (EI) and the project success [(PS) (Clarke, 2010, Mazur et al, 2014; Muller & Turner, 2010)].

Muller and Turner (2010) have highlighted that “emotional intelligence increase the chance of the project success especially in the larger and complex projects”. Thomas and Mengal (2008) highlighted that project managers who score high in the emotional intelligence (EI) have positive impact on the project execution and they can overcome negative feelings very fast. Clark (2010) also focuses on the importance of the emotional intelligence (EI) in determine the effectiveness of the manager’s effectiveness. Emotional intelligence (EI) according to him act as way to determine how to behave in any situation. Supporting this result, Thomas and Mengal (2008) also said that lack of emotional intelligence (EI) adds in to the frustration and the tension in the project setting.

2.1.2 Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Organizational Commitment (OC)

Shafiq & Rana (2016) in their study argued the “significant relationship between the emotional intelligence and organizational commitment”. The positive relationship between the variables proves that people with high emotional intelligence are more committed and also have good working relationship with their colleagues and are more tolerant to emotional pressure as well. They “can handle the odd feelings without losing their temper and can deal the conflict in better ways”. People with higher emotional intelligence (EI) have high level of affective and normative commitment to the organization where they are working. The commitment of the person toward organization becomes continuous until the person retires or leaves the organization. People also show normative commitment as they feel obliged and morally bound to the organization as well.

Naderi and Sodani (2010) conducted an experimental study which investigated “the effects of the interpersonal skills training on the organizational commitment (OC) and emotional intelligence (EI) in the context of Iran” while the result highlight that interpersonal skill helps in the enhancing the emotional intelligence (EI) and organizational commitment (OC) of the person as well.

Salami (2008) conducted a study to “highlight the relationship between the emotional intelligence (EI) and organizational commitment (OC) in the industrial sector of Nigeria”. Results
highlighted that emotional intelligence does predict the organizational commitment (OC) where it suggested that people must consider the factor of the EI while planning programs of the staff development and for aiming to enhance the organizational commitment of the workers.

Guleryuz et al. (2008) studied the “intervening impact of the job satisfaction in correlation to the emotional intelligence and organizational commitment”. The positive relationship was found out between the emotional intelligence (EI) and the organizational commitment (OC) as people having high emotional intelligence tend to be more committed to the organizations. However, this “significant relationship could be best demonstrated at introduction of another variable”.

2.2 Project Success (PS) or Project Performance
Project success (PS) in the complex project has always been an issue because of their timeframe of completion and their size (Toor & Ogrunlana, 2010: Wang & Huang, 2006). The scholars however defined the project success (PS) in context of the project management and has considered two important component necessary to define the project success which are success criteria and critical success factors (Muller & Jugdev, 2012; Turner & Zolin, 2012). success factors usually focus on the objectives measures such as cost, quality and the timeframe for completion (Pinto & Slevin, 1987) these objective measures have been criticized when used to define the project success (PS) of the complex projects. The reason behind their criticism is the use of overly simplistic constructs in defining the complex and bigger projects which has involved extensive experience during their execution (Toor & Ogrunlana, 2010), however Jugdev & Muller (2005) have argued that these objective measures fail to address the other broader factors such as strategic management in project and the behavioral skills. Critical success factor (CSF) being the second important factor in defining the project success (PS). These factors however represent more real and progressive approach in defining the project success [(PS) (Jugdev & Muller, 2005; Pinto, 1990)].

Turner and Zolin (2012) in their research argued that these success factors can be measured during the execution of the project which is prior to end of project unlike other success criteria such as time, cost and quality. These success factors help to assess the real progress of the project as well.

We proposed Pinto and Slevin’s (1987) approach, which used manager’s
rating of the critical success factors (CSFs). These factors have also been identified by Jugdev and Muller (2005) as one of the important factor to measure the success. Taking lead from Mazur et al. (2014), Procaccino et al. (2005) and Rezvani et al. (2016) we are focusing on four project success factors that are regarded as people related and are (a) effective communication with the internal and external stakeholders, (b) troubleshooting, (c) clear project mission and (d) the support from top management (Pinto, 1990).

There have been various researches which have highlighted the importance of these four factors in defining the project success. Couillard (1995) highlighted the role of the communication and troubleshooting in defining the project success of complex and high-risk projects. Additionally, Belout and Gauvereau (2004) also highlighted the role of the clear project mission and troubleshooting to be contributor of the project success (PS) during the execution. In the recent literature, Davis (2014) and Mazur et al. (2014) have also identified the role of these four factors as the indicator of the project success in context of the complex projects.

2.2.1 Project Success (PS) and Organizational Commitment (OC)

There has been evidence in the research on the direct relationship between organization commitment (OC) and project success (PS). Other researchers also found that organizational commitment (OC) does lead to project success (PS). The study revealed that if the organizational has the good climate it would emotionally attach the employee to the organization and this would make the environment to carry out work in favor of the organization and will lead to the project success. The employee in this scenario feel obligations towards the organization and make the situation better in the organization as well. (Abdel-Razek, 2011).

The researches have also witnessed that if the person is committed towards the organization no matter what the motive behind the commitment is, the project has the more chance of success than those who don’t feel connected to the organization and does not really care what happens in the organization. There are various factors which leads towards the organizational commitment (OC) in this manner and that include better communication, positive climate, collaboration, mutual trust and active engagement of the employee in the group task (Viswanathan, 2015).

2.3. Organizational Commitment (OC)
Three dimensions of organizational commitment were identified by Myer and Allen (1991) i.e., affective, normative and continuance. Affective commitment (AC) is related to the emotional attachment of the person to the organization. Normative commitment (NC) “refers to the values and norms of the society where doesn’t affect person’s commitment to organization” whereas continuance commitment (CC) “refers to the continuing the support of the organization due to perceived cost of opportunity is attached upon leaving the organization”.

2.3.1 Affective commitment (AC)

Affective commitment (AC) argues about “the emotional attachment of the person to the organization” (Allen & Mayer, 1990) in the context, Allen & Meyer (1990) argued that individual improve the emotional ties with the organization with time, especially those and at time when they want organization to achieve its objectives. The people with high affective commitment (AC) stay at the organization for a longer due to having positive feelings about the organization and also from the employment relationship they have at workplace. Along with this, it is expected that this positive feeling in the employment relationship is derived by the senior management who are emotionally intelligence and have worked to make person affectively commit to the organization.

2.3.2. Continuance commitment (CC)

Another component of the organizational commitment (OC) is the continuance commitment (CC), the idea of the continuance commitment is taken from the Becker’s (1960) theory of commitment. According to the theory, the employee who work for a longer time at an organization considered as investment of the organization and cost high when that person leaves organization. The investment is in the form of time, work effort and the skills. This type of commitment is concerned with the cost organization pay when people leave organization, the cost of leaving the organization is linked with the interest of the person and the employer at the organization. The mutual interest of the employer and the employ present the idea of the social exchange theory which argues that people enter into the relationship with the organization they are working for, and this is done in order to maximize their benefits (Blau, 1964).

2.3.3 Normative commitment (NC)

The third factor of the organizational commitment (OC) is normative commitment (NC) “which is more concerned with the feelings of moral
bonds with the organization”. Normative commitment (NC) refers to “the moral compulsion of the people toward their organization” because of the organization invested in them. (Randall & Cote, 1990) O’ Reilly and Chatman (1986) defined normative commitment (NC) “in the context of the values”, while Jaros et al. (1993) “considered normative commitment (NC) as moral obligation”.

Some of the researcher haven’t considered normative commitment (NC) as important factor of organizational commitment (OC) and has given multiple arguments to prove their point. According to Newman, Thanacoody & Hui (2011) “normative commitment depends on the prior attitudes and the values of the person even before joining the organization”.

3. Material and Method

The conceptual framework is going to be built for this paper where research evidence from the previous study will be taken to discuss and built the relationship between the variables.

Fig i: A conceptual framework of emotional intelligence, organizational commitment and project success

4. INTERPRETATION AND SIGNIFICANCE

The analysis of the theories and previous studies explore that there has been “significance relationship between the emotional intelligence (EI) and project success” (PS). Rezvani et al. (2016) argues that EI is linked to the PS in a positive way. However, the research also highlighted that “this relationship is complex in nature and cannot be fully explained in straight forward manner”. Emotional intelligent project managers develop trust with the team and hence contribute toward the project success (PS) and this association is reflected in the critical success factors (CSFs) such as mission clarity, communication and support from the top management.

Rezvani et al. (2016) further explains that “traditional view of direct effect of the emotional intelligence (EI) on the project success (PS) only tells one side of the story”. However, the projects with the difficult situations when handled
emotionally intelligently produce the positive outcome.

Adeyemu (2007) studied “the correlation of job satisfaction with organizational commitment (OC) with moderating role of the emotional intelligence”. The result found out that emotional intelligence (EI) had positive and significant amount of impact on the organizational commitment (OC) where the EI could work as moderator for the OC. whereas study highlighted that emotional intelligence (EI) skills and competencies are useful to understand the organizational commitment (OC) in the organization.

Petrides and Furnham (2006) highlighted “the relationship between the emotional intelligence (EI) and the organizational commitment” (OC) where other studies highlighted that higher the EI, higher will be OC with lowering degree of the stress.

The results of the different studies suggest that there has been great role of the EI in finding out the project success (PS). However, for further explain this relationship we hypothesized the mediating role of the organizational commitment (OC). Thus, we can play our parts as how to increase the chance of the project success (PS) through management of the emotions other than technical issues.

This would help to address and bring the mediating role of the organizational commitment (OC) into the limelight. However, there is need to introduce programs which would enhance the emotional intelligence (EI) and the organizational commitment (OC) and in return would add in to project success.

3. REFERENCES


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