

Measuring Emotional Intelligence in the Workplace: Comparative Analysis

This document has been designed to provide the reader with a comparative insight to the similarities and differences between various models and measures of emotional intelligence (EI). There are many different models and measures of EI available and the comparison presented below by no means covers all the various approaches, however, it covers some of the more leading measurement instruments available and can be used by the reader as a means for wider comparison. The comparison is made according to the four main properties against which measures should be compared, which are in order:

- (1) What variables does the measure assess (e.g., abilities, competencies, personality traits etc)?
 - (2) How representative is the normative data against which scores are benchmarked?
 - (3) What evidence of reliability and validity exists that indicates the extent to which scores on the test reflect actual differences in ability or behaviour?
 - (4) How long does the test take to complete and what is the utility of the associated feedback report?
- (1) EI has been described by many leading authors as something new and unique, something that underlies and contributes to contemporary workplace skills in ways that traditional constructs (such as personality and intelligence) do not. Indeed the title of Daniel Goleman's (1995) popular book on EI "Emotional Intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ" reflects this very point. As such measures of EI should be assessing individual differences in variables that are both conceptually and empirically distinct from other psychological constructs. If they do not it is questionable as to whether the measure used will provide additional insight and therefore add value over and above already established instruments.

A second point worth noting is how many variables are assessed by the EI measure. If a measure of EI assess a broader number of variables it is harder for individuals to understand their respective scores on the test and how their scores are related to outward displays and behaviours they present in the workplace (e.g., their leadership skills, ability to network and build interpersonal relationships at work, their ability to cope with stress, and their ability to work effectively in teams). If a measure assesses a small number of established variables it is generally easier for individuals to grasp their respective EI abilities and how they impact on these contemporary workplace skills.

- (2) Unlike personality and intelligence, it is the culture, subculture and the environment in which a person operates more heavily influences EI. For example, and most notably, cultures differ in their emotion display rules. Display rule refers to the norms as to how an expression of a certain emotion is modified to be appropriate within the social context. Data has shown that Japanese people express their anger to a greater extent to a person with the lower status than Americans do whereas the latter express their disgust and sadness more freely to intimate friends and family than do Japanese. These data suggest that the appropriateness of expressing a particular emotion differs across cultures, depending on the interactants' relationship.

As such, measures of EI require extensive normative data that account for cultural and sub-cultural differences in emotion (such as display rules). Workplace measures of EI, or measures intended to be utilised in the workplace should also comprise extensive

workplace norms. The workplace can be considered a subculture within a culture that also influences emotions and the processing of emotional information. For example, workplaces are often described as high and low emotion environments. If a workplace has a low emotional environment, individuals may be less inclined to express emotions (even if they have the capacity to do so) and the normative data for a test should account for such variance.

- (3) Like all good psychometric instruments measures of EI should show evidence of reliability and validity. Workplace measures of EI and those intended for use in organisational applications should also show evidence that they account for (or underlie) individual differences in some of the contemporary workplace variables they have been described to predict (e.g., leadership and teamwork effectiveness, the ability to cope with occupational stress, the quality of interpersonal relationships at work, effective listening skills etc).

Measures of EI should also show evidence of face validity, that is, does the measure appear (at face value) to be tapping the types of competencies and behaviours required for certain roles in the workplace.

- (4) How long the test takes to complete and the utility of the associated feedback reports are vital properties of workplace measures and those intended for workplace applications.

The longer a test takes to do the more frustrated test takers become with completing it, and the less inclined individuals become to respond openly and honestly on the test. This is particularly important with 360 degree measures where managers or peers may have to be providing multiple ratings of others on the instrument. For example, if a manager is having to providing ratings for five different direct reports on the measure, and the measure takes 45 minutes to complete, essentially 3 ¾ hours of the managers' time is required to provide the ratings. This type of burden typically lowers managers' enthusiasm for participating in the project and can be a contributing factor to the derailment of the training and development or selection initiative.

The feedback report generated on the basis of responses to the test is also a vital property of the instrument and associated process. The content of feedback reports should be detailed and written in a way that the participant can comprehend and relate to the way they think, feel and behave with others in the workplace. Feedback reports should also provide relevant development options that can be easily comprehended to enhance outward displays and behaviours at work.

The following table provides a comparative snapshot of these four essential properties for four of the leading instruments in the market place used in organisational applications.

Measure	(1) Model	(2) Normative data	(3) Evidence of reliability and validity	(4) Length and feedback report
Genos EI^a workplace specific measure	5 core dimensions of EI identified as the most common elements of EI	Australian Workplace norms Over 3000 general workplace norms Over 1000 senior executive norms	5 peer-reviewed published research papers all involving workplace samples	64 items takes between 15-20 minutes to complete 18 page colour feedback report easy to understand; 1 whole page of development options for each dimension
Bar-On EQ-I^b not workplace specific originally intended for clinical	15 variables that are a combination of abilities and personality traits and dispositions	Over 80000 American general norms (NOT workplace specific) Over 350 Australian norms NOT workplace specific	2 peer-reviewed published research papers however they are not related to the workplace and do not involve workplace samples Many unpublished research documents	133 items takes between 30-45 mins to complete Several different report types the main one is 7 pages in length and is easy to understand; single page of development options that are not detail or workplace relevant
MSCEIT^c Not workplace specific originally designed for clinical applications	4 core abilities to do with emotions	Over 3000 general American norms, Over 400 Australian norms that are NOT workplace specific	Over 10 peer-reviewed research papers, it is the most widely research measurement	141 items, takes between 45 mins to an hour to complete. 10 page feedback report is easy to understand but the detail is not workplace relevant with very few development options
ECI^d Workplace specific measure designed for organisational applications	20 variables that are a mixture of abilities and personality traits and dispositions	Haygroup state that there are extensive American and Australian workplace norms. However, specific information is not publicly available.	1 peer-reviewed doctoral thesis. Haygroup claim to have over 500 research documents however none of these are peer-reviewed or available to the public, you must be accredited to obtain them.	117 items takes approximately 30 mins to complete 20 page feedback report that is difficult to understand and interpret. No development options offered in the report.

Summary: The table above is designed for you to make your own judgement concerning the relative utility of the different models and measures, however, the strengths of the Genos EI tool are: (1) it measures a concise but new and unique number of variables; (2) it comprises extensive workplace norms and peer-reviewed **workplace** research evidence for its reliability and validity; (3) it takes a short time to complete and the feedback report offers the most easy to comprehend and relevant material and a high number of relevant workplace development options. For a peer-reviewed synopsis of the research contact Ben Palmer bpalmer@swin.edu.au