Emotional Intelligence Perspectives on Employees' Training Needs Assessment and Task Performance

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Abstract

Research on emotional intelligence indicates that it is composed of multiple competencies such as developing others, empathy and relationship building that foster employees training needs assessment and task performance. Training is a vicarious process different from basic academic process because it deals with people from different backgrounds and economic levels. This paper therefore, reviews the interrelationship between emotional intelligence and its influence on employees training needs assessment and task performance. Using the qualitative research design the result of the study indicates positive association between the variables of interest. The investigation offers suggestion on the need to improve performance through emotional intelligence, and recommends that e-learning requires adequate technical infrastructure.

Keywords

Social and Emotional Learning, Learning Theory, Emotional Perception, Job Satisfaction, Retraining, Technical Infrastructure, e-Learning, Effective Training

1. Introduction

Opinion is divided among people who believe that it is not possible to improve the emotional intelligence of individuals after the age of fifteen years and those who believe otherwise and that they can turn *emotional dunces* into *emotional stars*. As the debate goes on, Cherniss and Goleman [1] opine that there is a growing body of research on emotional learning and behavioural change which suggests that it is possible to help people of any age to become more emotionally intelligent and effective at work through applied training interventions based on social and emotional learning (SEL). This finding strongly suggests that emotional intelligence can have strong positive implications over employees' training needs assessment and task performance. Emotional intelligence relates to the ability to perceive and understand emotional perspectives in oneself, in others and in groups. Training on the other hand is a systematic process to foster the acquisition of skills, rules, concepts, or attitudes that result in an improved match between employee characteristics and employment requirements. Often, people are tempted to confuse the term *training* with the term *development*. Even though the terms can be used together as training and development or vice-versa, they are not exactly the same. Although this investigation is on *training;* but for academic purposes, it is important also to state that *development* is the long-term process of enhancing employees' capabilities and motivation to make them valuable future members of the organization. Development includes not only improving on *training* but also, careers and other experiences necessary for employees' task

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performance. Task performance is usually measured through employees' contribution and there is growing economic evidence that investments in training are associated with long-run organizational profitability. It is also known that greater productivity is related to worker education or training. There is also awareness that education and training are key strategic interventional investments for national prosperity. However, for training to have any effect at all, trainees must learn something from it. When training is effectively designed and trainees are motivated, proper learning can take place. Learning is much more than simply being able to declare the facts or new knowledge, because before training ever takes place, certain preconditions must exist for learning to become a reality. This is a necessary requisite because learning is a relatively permanent change in knowledge, skills, beliefs, attitudes, or behaviours that manifest through experience. Emotional intelligence and training are closely related because the former helps in identifying the needs for the latter. Training helps employees to do their current work better; it is related to present job skills and abilities. It has a current orientation and helps employees to master specific skills and abilities needed to be successful. A formal training intervention is an effort by the employer to provide opportunities for employees to acquire job-related skills, attitudes and knowledge for successful task performance. Effectiveness of training depends fundamentally on the extent to which trained employees utilize their skills in employment. Training opportunities enhance commitment to an employer, making it less likely for employees to leave voluntarily than they would if no training opportunities were available. It is also believed that training makes people more employable and thus more useful to themselves, employers and the society. Effective employees training raises job satisfaction and organizational commitment as predictors of organizational citizenship and in-role behaviours. Training can also serve as a work-place stress management intervention strategy for enhanced task performance [2-3].

1.1. Research Problem

Even though training is important in enhancing employees capacity for successful task performance, a major concern has often related to the inability to very accurately assess employees' training needs. Training needs are the gaps that must be bridged so that an employee in an organization can perform to the optimum and also derive job satisfaction. This is necessary because the absence of job satisfaction due to lack of ability or capacity on the part of the employee increases work stress, poor behaviour, and poor performance. Another major concern of training is bad training arrangements with regard to training designs, timing, placements and conduct, without the input of training experts. Also, training is perpetually constrained in many countries due to poor budget allocations in both the private and public sectors of the economy, including powerful training institutions like universities, polytechnics and collages. For many years, training has often been conducted in organizations by *emergency training contractors* who are only after their money without any regard to whether such training promotes learning or not. Without unique assessment of training needs such activities end up as mere *tea parties* in high profile hotels that often result to *undertraining, overtraining* and the need for *retraining*. Training as a person-focused action has obvious psychological implications which demands good planning and management support. But unfortunately, training budget is often the least in resource allocation, based on the minimalist theory of getting more with less. This is almost a disaster as it leads to poor training arrangements, poor motivation and poor outcomes [4-7].

1.2. Research Objective

The study was designed to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and employees' training needs assessment and task performance.

1.3. Research Questions

i. Can interpersonal intelligence lead to identifying employees training needs?

ii. Is emotional perception part of emotional intelligence and education?

iii. Does emotional integration influence cognition?

iv. Can emotional understanding enhance human relationships?

v. Do you think that emotional management encourages openness to feelings?

vi. Is it true that empathy does not harness positive emotions?

vii. Can positive behaviour lead to positive task performance>

viii. Can emotional intelligence promote training?

ix. Is training related to effective learning?

x. Can Emotional intelligence training enhance employees' task performance?

1.4. Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is the design of the study which shows the major variables in relation to the research problem. It is usually expressed as a schematic model. Models provide a way of directly accessing parts of the brain that play a crucial role in emotional learning and understanding. The
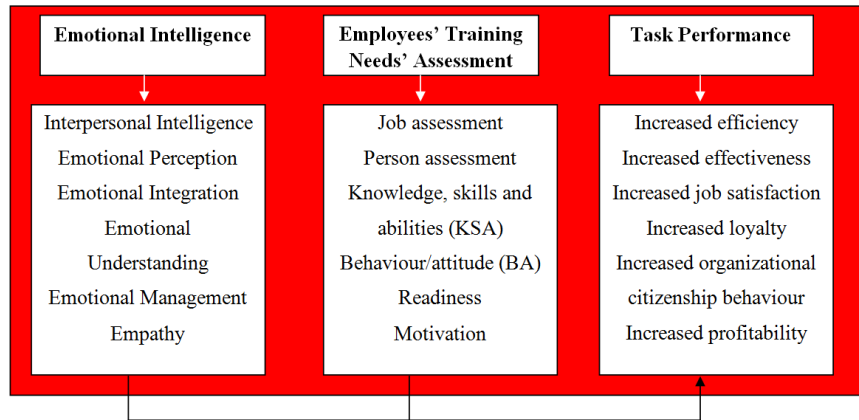
model for this study is shown in figure 1.

Emotional Intelligence	Employees' Training Needs' Assessment	Task Performance
Interpersonal Intelligence Emotional Perception Emotional Integration Emotional Understanding Emotional Management Empathy	Job assessment Person assessment Knowledge, skills and abilities (KSA) Behaviour/attitude (BA) Readiness Motivation	Increased efficiency Increased effectiveness Increased job satisfaction Increased loyalty Increased organizational citizenship behaviour Increased profitability

Figure 1. Emotional Intelligence and Employees' Training Needs Assessment and Task Performance Model.

Emotional intelligence promotes the ability to use emotions to enhance thought. According to Salovey and Mayer [8] it includes the abilities to accurately perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to reflectively regulate emotions and to promote emotional and intellectual growth. They clarify that emotional intelligence refers to an ability to recognize the meanings of emotions and their relationships, to reason, and to solve problems on this basis. This provides the basis for emotional literacy for emotionally intelligent organizations to make accurate assessments of employees' training needs'. Employees training needs' assessment can be objectively done using the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso-Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT) to assess the job, the person, knowledge, skills, abilities, behaviour, attitudes, readiness and motivation [9]. According to Goleman [10] training should focus on the competencies needed most for excellence in a given task, job or role. This is necessary because irrelevant competencies are useless, therefore, training design should be based on a unique and systematic needs assessment. Getting the right individual to handle the job is essential therefore, individual characteristics in terms of strengths and limitations most be assessed to identify what areas that need improvement to enhance performance. Training needs assessment must also recognize that there will be obviously no need to send employees for training in competencies they already possess or do not even need, in order to reduce the problems of retaining. It should also be realized that individual's moods and emotions subtly but systematically influence some of the elements and strategies involved in problem-solving. In this context, assessing readiness becomes imperative as a first starting point, necessary to gauge motivation. Often people learn to the degree that they are motivated. For example, by realizing that a skill is important to doing their job, they will then make learning the skill a personal goal for change. Supporting training and change for employees' task performance requires performance feedback, because it helps and encourages

behaviour change, in the circumstance, there should be ways to evaluate effects, and this can be done through regular performance appraisal [11-14]. Jacobs [15] emphasizes that emotional intelligence should be part of performance management systems that can operate as an integrated process incorporating elements such as performance objectives, coaching and counselling, performance review, and skills training. He further explains that when performance management integrates setting objectives, on-going coaching, and training and development, it can also provide the opportunity to assess emotional intelligence competencies that will lead to outstanding performance, provide feedback on them, and support development.

2. Literature Review

Emotional intelligence embraces two aspects of intelligence, understanding yourself, your goals, intentions, responses, behaviours and attitudes, and also understanding others, and their feelings. These aspects are essential in reducing stress, enhancing employees' training and task performance. The concepts of interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences within the context of multiple intelligences also relate to Bar-On's [16] model of emotional-social intelligence (ESI) which refers to a cross-section of interrelated emotional and social competencies, skills, and facilitators that determine how well people understand and express themselves, and understand others. According to Cherniss and Goleman [1] emotional intelligence training interventions have been used to train human relations supervisors over several social and emotional competencies including self-awareness, empathy, and leadership. The training consisted of ninety-minute sessions given once a week for twenty-eight weeks, and a total of forty-two hours. According to them, the first phase, which involved primarily cognitive learning was devoted to a discussion of managerial styles and lasted approximately

nine hours. The second phase was primarily experiential, offering numerous individual and group exercises including self-ratings, an in-basket exercise, and role-play. The third phase was devoted to discussion of the motivational theories. After rigorous evaluation of the training, it was found that managers became significantly more self-aware and more-sensitive to the needs of others. Also, their subordinates perceived them as having improved in rapport and two-way communication. Performance levels also improved for trained managers, whereas ratings of the untrained managers declined. Therefore, emotional intelligence based training on behaviour over such competencies as accurate self-assessment, adaptability, initiative and innovation, empathy and communication can result to improvement on issues like conflict management. Such training uses models based on the social learning theory which suggests that people learn in part by observing and by emulation. The result often shows that the trained employees significantly increase their use of the target behaviour within two months affair the training. The change in behaviour after the training leads to increased performance levels and productivity, as well as decreased turnover and absenteeism. Another training on self-management, showed that when people take charge of their own change programmes, they are more likely to feel efficacious and their change becomes more lasting than it would be when they feel someone else is in charge. Despite the merits of emotional intelligence training its ultimate success depends on creating and encouraging a conducive training environment, gauging readiness, setting meaningful and manageable goals, as well as encouraging practice and providing necessary feedback on employee performance. In SEL more attention needs to be devoted to monitoring learners motivation and to building in processes that generate the level of sustained motivation and effort necessary for successful training event. This is necessary because, SEL does not occur in a vacuum. The motivation of the learners is strongly influenced by the social environment of the organization. Everything else that training designers, trainers or coaches might do will be unconvincing if the environment does not support SEL. To succeed leadership sets the tone, and learners look up to the organization's leadership for direction [17]. Before the emergence of emotional intelligence training programmes, high network organizations beginning from the 1960s were using sensitivity training to horn the competencies of their executives. These people were usually sent to Harvard Business School or London Business School for such powerful training. Under such training, executives on the art of developing an awareness of and sensitivity to their behavioural patterns and those of others, increased tolerance for individual differences, less ethnic prejudice and enhanced listening skills. SEL helps managers in solving problems that could range from handling

discrimination complaints, delegating responsibility, improving attendance, disciplining effectively, overcoming resistance to change, setting performance goals, motivating average performance, handling emotional situations, reducing tardiness, and taking necessary corrective actions. This is usually accomplished through modeling of effective behaviour, effective role-playing, social reinforcement and transfer of training to the job [18-19].

2.1. The Learning Process

The effectiveness of training highly depends on trainee ability to learn. Individuals come to training with different perspectives, experiences, backgrounds, different familiarity with the training materials, and different, emotional, social, psychological, mental and physical abilities. It is therefore, important to ensure that training programmes are properly designed to match the demands and abilities of trainees. For example, training that is either too difficult or too easy will likely not serve a useful purpose. Even though it is believed that general intelligence (GI) or other abilities and capabilities can predict positive performance, the abilities, skills or competencies that contribute to task performance will certainly differ depending on where employees' find themselves in the learning process. However, academic research evidence suggests that broad cognitive abilities and personality variables may also affect employees' trainability and learning. Therefore, the notion or belief that so long as there is the basic mental ability, people never stops learning; they are continuously influenced by their environments in all situations. For example, according to Milkovich and Boudreau [20] self-efficacy, or peoples' judgments of their own capability to successfully execute a course of action is an important determinant of the individuals' ability to learn and this relates to the effects of training on new employees' adjustment and to their level of training capacity [21]. According to Armstrong [22] learning is complex, covering all kinds of things like *knowledge, skills, insights, beliefs values, attitudes* and *habits*. Individuals learn by themselves and learn from other people. They learn as members of teams and by interaction with others. He emphasizes that for effective learning to take place at the individual level, it is essential to foster an environment where individuals are encouraged to take risks and experiment, where mistakes are tolerated, but where means exist for those involved to learn from their experiences. Many theories, each of which focuses on different aspects of the learning process as applied to people in general include social learning theory. Learning theories describe in general terms how people learn, but individual learners have different styles. Social learning theory suggests that effective learning requires social interactions. This theory emphasizes that human beings learn by processing information and understanding links between

actions and consequences. This helps in building individuals' skills by allowing them to see models of good and poor performances, and giving trainees' confidence in their abilities to apply their skills, which become important aspects of training. Building individuals' skills through social interactions underscores the important need for SEL. According to Kram and Cherniss [23] there is a growing consensus among scholars and practitioners that in today's context – a world characterized by globalization, rapid technological change, workplace diversity and constant environmental turbulence – emotional intelligence is essential to effective individual and organizational performance. They opine that although technical and cognitive learning continue to be very important to strategic success in the market place, but these are not sufficient. They explain further that numerous studies and essays argue that qualities such as negotiation, listening, empathy, self-awareness, self-motivation, integrity, flexibility, conflict management, and collaboration are critical ingredients for a high performance workplace [24.25.26].

2.2. Training Evaluation

Training evaluation is necessary to check its effectiveness, or deficiencies. To make training efforts effective, there is need to identify the areas of deficiencies and to learn from these mistakes. Training deficiencies are various and include: (a) lack of definition of training objectives, as most training programmes are not goal-oriented (b) lack of proper determination of training needs from personal task and organizational perspectives, (c) faulty selection of instructional techniques that are adequate for communicating knowledge that may not be appropriate for inducing behavioural changes (d) non-involvement of training managers in the follow-up training necessary in putting the

new skill to use (e) often, individual trainees fail to have as much stake in their own development as necessary, and (f) inadequate definition and understanding of the body of knowledge of learning that can enhance learning substantially. Evaluation is an integral feature of training. It is the comparison of objectives, criterion behaviour, with outcomes, and terminal behaviour to answer the question how far the training has achieved its purpose. Distinct from training evaluation, the trainees need for feedback at the organizational level through the appraisal system is important. Assessing the result of training through comprehensive performance appraisal should include an interview by the supervisor or manager, and feedback from other sections or units associated with the employee's work. The appraisal should take into account the factors outlined in the job specification as well as personal attributes [27-28]. Within the area of performance appraisal and feedback, the use of regular personal interviews by the manager is often undertaken in large organizations. The two main approaches are to listen and give direct advice and assistance, or to listen and guide or encourage the employee to consider how any problem associated with his or her performance may be solved, and improving performance on the job. As shown in figure 2, Cherniss and Goleman [1] provide a template for enhancing emotional intelligence and SEL in work organizations. This template is critical for promoting emotional education and task performance. SEL makes schools safer, because with it, incidents of misbehavior can drop by an average of about 28 percent: suspensions by about 44 percent, and other disciplinary actions by about 27 percent. Also at the same time attendance rates rise, while about 63 percent of students will demonstrate significantly more positive behaviour [29].
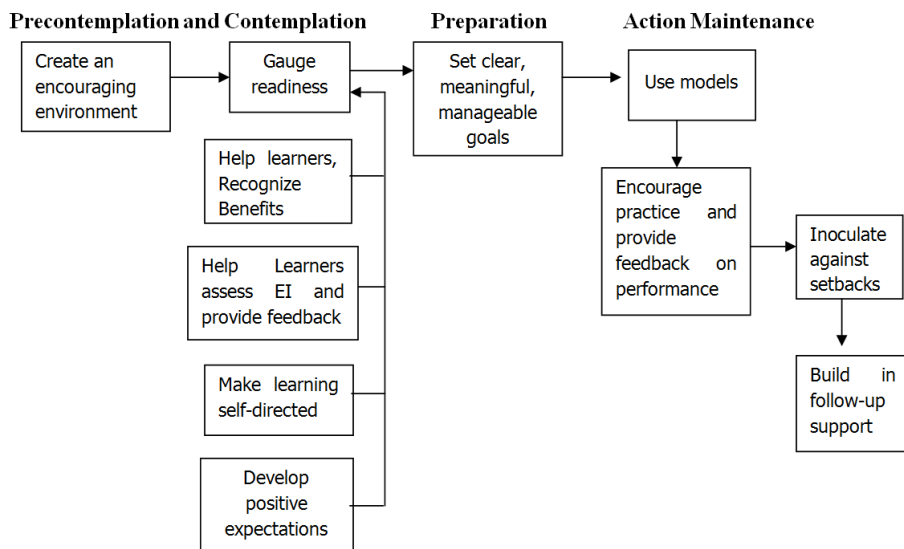

Figure 2. The Optimal Process For Promoting EIIn Work Organizations. Adapted from Cherniss and Goleman [1].

3. Research Methodology

The qualitative technique of the survey research design was used for the study. As a qualitative study only primary data supported with personal interviews were used for the study. Data were generated through a 5-point Likert-type questionnaire based on MSCEIT. The population composed of the employees in the Nigerian financial sector. The sample was selected through the judgmental sampling technique and the sample size determined through the sample ratio concept. Data were organized and coded before they were classified in readiness for analysis. Data analysis was done through descriptive statistical technique using frequencies, percentages, and mean. The decision mean for the acceptance or rejection of responses to the research questions was set at 3.00 points.

4. Presentation of Result

Table 1. Profile of Respondents (n=107).

S/N	Description	Category	Total	Percentage
i	Gender	a) Female	35	32.21
		b) Male	72	67.29
ii	Education	a) Diplomas	25	23.36
		b) Degrees	32	29.91
		c) Others	50	46.73
iii	Age	a) 18–30years	40	37.38
		b) 31–70years	67	62.62
iv	Experience	a) 5–10years	20	18.69
		b) 11–25years	47	43.93
		c) 26–35years	40	37.38
v	Status	a) Low	30	28.03
		b) Middle	32	29.91
		c) High	45	42.06

Table 2. Analysis of Frequencies, Mean, Decision Mean and Grand Mean of Responses to Research Questions.

S/N	Restatement of Research Questions	Scores					Row Scores	No of Resps.	Mean	Decision–mean@3points	Grand mean
		SA 5	A 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1					
i	Interpersonal intelligence can lead to identifying employee training needs	60	30	2	3	12	444	107	4.15	Accepted	
ii	Emotional perception is an element of emotional intelligence and education	55	42	1	2	7	457	107	4.27	Accepted	
iii	Emotional integration does not influence cognition	10	15	4	8	70	208	107	1.94	Rejected	
iv	Emotional understanding enhances human relationship	65	20	5	2	15	439	107	4.10	Accepted	
v	Emotional management enhances openness to feelings	50	45	1	3	8	447	107	4.18	Accepted	3.57
vi	Positive behaviour leads to positive task performance	70	20	2	5	10	456	107	4.26	Accepted	
vii	Empathy does not enhance positive emotions	15	2	2	9	79	195	107	1.82	Rejected	
viii	Emotional intelligence promotes training	75	20	1	3	8	472	107	4.41	Accepted	
ix	Training does not influence effective learning	12	14	2	4	75	205	107	1.92	Rejected	
x	Emotional intelligence enhances employees' task performance	85	13	4	1	4	495	107	4.63	Accepted	

4.1. Discussion

The conceptual framework in figure 1 was used to express that emotional intelligence perspectives such as interpersonal intelligence, emotional perception, emotional integration, emotional understanding, emotional management and empathy, have positive influence on employees needs assessment which leads to task performance. This supports literature evidence that emotional intelligence is powerful on career success. As in figure 2, showed that effective training should be preceded by creating and encouraging enabling environment, gauging readiness, as well as setting clear and manageable goals. Further, effective training should try to develop positive expectations, make learning self-directed provide feedback and help learners to recognize the benefits of training through such feedback. Table 1 showed the characteristics of the respondents who were qualified to provide useful information for the study. They were men and women ranging in age between 18 and 70 years (SD = -26). The respondents held academic qualifications such as

diplomas, degrees, and others, with industrial work experiences of between 5 and 35 years, and also falling within the low, middle and high economic levels. The analysis of their responses in table 2 showed that in table 2(i) they agreed at a mean score of 4.15 points that interpersonal intelligence can lead to identifying employees training needs. This supports Kram and Cherniss [25] that emotional competencies can be developed through relationships at work. They also agreed at a mean score of 4.27 in table 2(ii) that emotional perception is an element of emotional intelligence and education. In table 2(iii) and at a mean score of 1.94 the respondents rejected that emotional integration does not influence emotional cognition. In table 2(iv) the respondents accepted at a mean score of 4.10 that emotional understanding enhances human relationships. In table 2(v) the respondents at a mean score of 4.18 agreed that emotional management encourages openness to feelings. In table 2(vi) the respondents also at a mean score of 4.26 agreed that positive behaviour leads to positive employees' task performance. This supports Sony and Mekoth [30] that

emotional intelligence promotes employee adaptability, job satisfaction and job performance. In table 2(vii) the respondents at a mean score of 1.82 did not agree that empathy does not enhance positive emotions. This agrees with Bar-On [16] that empathy is the ability to be aware of and understand how others feel. According to him, empathetic people are sensitive to what, how and why people feel the way they do. They care about other people and show interest in and concern for them. He emphasizes that serious deficiencies in empathy are fundamental for diagnosing psychopathy [31-32]. In table 2(viii) it was agreed by the respondents at a mean score of 4.41 that emotional intelligence promotes training. This supports Schutte, et al, [33] that increasing emotional intelligence results to increasing training. The respondents in table 2(ix) and at a mean score of 1.92 disagreed that training does not influence effective learning. This agrees with Cherniss and Goleman [1] that effective learning can only occur in a situation where training is learner-oriented and not trainer-oriented. Effective learning does not occur in a situation where training amounts to a mere declaration of new knowledge to learners, and where the trainer is the solo champion. In table 2(x) the respondents at a mean score of 4.63 agreed that emotional intelligence enhances employees' task performance. This supports Radha and Shree [34] that emotional intelligence promotes employees task performance and organizational commitment. With a grand mean of 3.57 over the decision mean of 3.00, this original investigation found strong positive relationship between emotional intelligence perspectives and employees' training needs assessment and task performance. This result supports the finding of Munir and Azam [35] that emotional intelligence significantly and positively contributes towards employees' task and contextual performance. It also agrees with Sparr, et al [36] that training and feedback are critical measures in positive employees' behaviours. This is the interest of the study [37-39].

4.2. Scope for Further Study

Quality performance remains a global challenge; further study could therefore, examine emotional intelligence as regards integrity, among other factors, with a view to overcoming this challenge.

4.3. Recommendations

i. Organizational training should be conducted in situations of effective technical infrastructure so that learning may occur.

ii. Training programmes should try to promote the self-directed approach to enhance individual's involvement necessary to build self-efficacy.

iii. Training programmes require leadership support so as to enhance practice and feedback.

iv. Training is a vicarious and complex process that deals with people of divergent backgrounds, and should be handled by knowledgeable trainers, and not *training contractors* to promote effective learning.

v. E-learning or online training as a mode of instruction offers ways to increase learning through the Internet, but this must recognize the differing competencies of trainers and trainees, and allow reasonable time with adequate technical infrastructure for practice to promote proficiency.

5. Conclusion

Promoting emotional intelligence training in organizations helps employees to acquire the necessary competencies they require for excellent task performance. Creating and encouraging conducive training environment, developing positive expectations and making learning self-directed are critical ingredients towards effective SEL that results to high quality task performance. Employees feel great when they receive training feedback as they strive to overcome any lapses arising so as to improve on performance. 107 respondents participated in the study conducted through the survey research design and the result showed positive relationship between emotional intelligence and employees' training needs assessment and task performance.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

This author declares no potential conflicts of interest to this research, authorship, and/or publication of this paper.

Acknowledgements

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Biography

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