Relationship Between Emotional Intelligence And Spiritual Intelligence In Nurturing Creativity And Innovation Among Successful Entrepreneurs: A Conceptual Framework

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Abstract

Researchers have shown much interest in unlocking the secrets of successful entrepreneurs. The current focus on entrepreneurs seems to be related to the role of affections – feelings and emotions. Some researchers have found that positive emotions may enhance entrepreneurial success. These entrepreneurial successes are in terms of the level of creativity and innovation. Entrepreneurs who are passionate in their work tended to be more successful than others. Success in business ventures does not lie solely in terms of the entrepreneur but also in terms of the people surrounding the entrepreneur – namely the employees and the customers. The ability to manage these people plays a critical role in the success of the business venture. Emotions affect the perceptions and attitudes of people in the workplace. The ability to assess verbal and non-verbal expressions helps in understanding the needs and wants of the employees and customers. The purpose of the study is to construct a conceptual framework to relate Emotional and Spiritual Intelligence in nurturing creativity and innovation among successful entrepreneurs.

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Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Spiritual Intelligence, Entrepreneur, Performance

1. Introduction

The interest shown on entrepreneurs has been growing over the past few years [1]; [2]; [3]; [4]; [5]; [6]; [7]; [8]. Yet despite it, many researchers are still researching on the topic especially when it comes to nurturing creativity and innovation. Many of these researchers still feel that there is some kind of mystery surrounding the entrepreneurs, their skills and their way of initiating creativity and innovation. One of the important facts in developing entrepreneurs would be the impact towards the growth of the country. This could be seen in terms of the level of unemployment and number of businesses established [9]; [10]. With more businesses established, the graduates would have a place to go and
grow their career. Entrepreneurship has been acknowledged to be a solution to the rising unemployment [11]; [12]. Their importance to any country could not be denied.

Recent research on entrepreneurship have also focused on their personality, hoping to show the intrinsic link between the two [13]. There is also a focus on the unique skills and experiences of the entrepreneurs that has interest many researchers [14]. Entrepreneurs are more than just ordinary people, they would be possessing certain uniqueness which makes them inclined to start a business operation, especially so, if their operations are successful. Not many entrepreneurs are able to ensure that their business venture can be a success. The perception of success itself has been seen from many angles. Success can be viewed in an objective and subjective manner. In objective manner, it would be in terms of profits and sales volume. While subjectively, it could also include customers level of satisfaction and even the entrepreneurs’ own perception.

The difference in the perceptions sows the root of affection of the entrepreneur. An emerging school of thought are focusing on the role of affection ie, feelings and emotions in relation to entrepreneurial success [15]. Emotions have been said to enhance the entrepreneurial skills such as creativity and opportunity recognition [16]. All those intense feelings and being passionate about it enhance the skills of the entrepreneurs. The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Spiritual Intelligence in nurturing creativity and innovation among successful entrepreneurs.

2.0 Entrepreneur and Employees

Entrepreneurial success not only lies on the characteristics of the entrepreneur but also on the entrepreneur’s ability to manage their employees [17]. Employees represent the backbone of the organisation. Without the employees, the organisation will not progress further. Managing the human side of the business organisation plays a critical role in the business venture success [18]; [19]; [20]. Recruiting and selecting employees plays an important function for those in the human resource department to do. This is crucial especially in the position the employee plays. Many thought that non-cognitive skills are important for those employees working in the front line, as these employees need to deal with customers. However, non-cognitive skills are also important within the organisation. Employees need to deal with each other in their daily work routine. It is important that their interpersonal relationship is strong as this is the basis of teamwork. While it cannot be denied that cognitive skills are important, non-cognitive skills cannot be overlooked as well. These skills are important in the current labour market situation [21].

As suggested by Boren [15], one of the important roles that employees need to play would be to skillfully manage their emotions. Studies have revealed that emotions relates to employees’ perception of their jobs and it will affect their working attitudes especially in terms of their job satisfaction [22];[23]. Employees’ level of commitment increases when entrepreneurs handle their emotions well [24]. With the level of commitment rising, performance of the employees would be much better [25] and as a result, the organisation benefits. This would be in terms of the level of productivity and profits. Emotions do play an important role in the organisation. Though these social skills seemed unimportant as compared to cognitive skills, social skills gives the extra competitive edge.

Some researchers have found that creativity is generated through emotions [15]. The conceptualisation of ideas of a product or service are inspired through emotions [15]. The capacity to be creative and innovative are the fundamentals to the survival of the organisation. The entrepreneur needs to be creative and innovative to ensure that they have the extra competitive edge over the others.

2.1 Emotional Intelligence and the Entrepreneur

Salovey & Mayer [26] have defined emotional intelligence as an individual’s ability to monitor their own emotions as well as others. The ability to recognise and regulate the individual’s emotions serves as a tool which aids in the perception of contextual clues easily and manage relationships of those in the working environment. According to the emotional intelligence construct by Palmer & Stough, [27], there are five main emotional competencies which are important at the workplace situation.
One of the key emotional competencies is Emotional Recognition and Expression. This competency refers to the ability to being able to identify the individual’s own feelings and emotional state [27]. Also, the individual is also able to express their feelings to others in the workplace. For the entrepreneur, if they are able to identify accurately their desires and ideals to other members in the organisation, they would be able to convince and influence them to accepting the idea or concept. Being able to have the inspiration to think of a new product or service is important but the more importantly, the concept must be understood by others. Entrepreneurs have been known to express their emotions majority of the time [28]. Entrepreneurs appears to prefer the direct approach, speaking their minds with the intent to resolve issues pertaining to the workplace.

The next key emotional competency would be Understanding Others Emotions. This emotional competency refers to the ability to being able to identify, recognise and understand the emotions of others in the workplace [27]. This competency is important especially in meetings where there will be exchanges of opinions of others. The ability to understand the emotions of others assist in establishing and strengthening the interpersonal relations among those in the workplace [15]. Being able to accurately comprehend the messages conveyed by others is important especially when dealing with clients or customers.

Emotions Direct Cognition, another key emotional competency, refers to the extent to which emotions and emotional knowledge are able to be incorporated in decision-making or problem resolving situations [27]. Studies have shown that the area of the brain associated with logic and reason is not separated from the area associated with feelings and emotions [29]. Boren [15] suggested that emotional intelligence promotes the integration rather than separation of the reasoning and logic area to the emotions and feelings. Emotions Direct Cognition explores and examines the individual’s ability to calibrate and adjust the thoughts [15]. It enables emotional information to improve cognitive ability. It has also been found that creativity is generated by emotions [15]. Creativity refers to the cognitive ability to construct an idea inspired by emotions. The more creative the entrepreneur is, the better the business performance.

The next emotional competency is Emotional Management. In terms of Emotional Management, it refers to the ability to manage positive and negative emotions not only within oneself but also with others [27]. The final emotional competency is Emotional Control. Emotional Control refers to the effectiveness of the individual to control strong emotional states experienced at the workplace [27]. Emotional regulation is an important ability that entrepreneurs need to have [28]. Entrepreneurs may face strong negative criticisms to their idea or they may face strong objection or rejection from other members in the workplace. It is during these periods that the entrepreneur needs to utilize the control and manage their emotions. Regulation of emotions helps to ease the tense situations happening at the workplace [15].

2.2 Spiritual Intelligence and the Entrepreneur

Spirituality at the working environment refers to the act of bringing together the people’s mind, body and spirit [30]. Mitroff & Denton [31] supports the argument and defended that spirituality and work as the basic desires to find the meaning and purpose of life. When work becomes a calling and vocation, the person would have a greater meaning and identity [32],[33]. For the entrepreneur, the calling is referred to as passion [34]. Spiritual intelligence focuses on the abilities that draws on spiritual themes that predicts functioning, adaptation and being able to produce valuable products and services [35]. Zohar & Marshall [36] have defined Spiritual Intelligence as the ability in addressing and solving problems of meaning and value. This ability also goes to the individual’s placements of their actions and their lives into a wider, richer and meaning-giving context. This intelligence also goes on to the individual’s ability to assess their course of actions and assessing its meaningfulness as life goes on.

Amram [37] has identified 7 major dimensions of Spiritual Intelligence. They are Consciousness, Grace, Meaning, Transcendence, Truth, Serenity and Inner-Directedness. Consciousness is divided into 3 areas which are Mindfulness, Trans-rational knowing and Practice. For the entrepreneur, Mindfulness enables them to know their self and live consciously with clear intentions embodied with awareness and presence. The entrepreneur needs to have clear intentions of their purpose and objective of being in
business. Mindfulness divides the ethical and non-ethical business people. If they are mindful, they would be aware of their actions and the outcomes to themselves and also the society. Trans-rational knowing refers to the transcending rationality through the synthesis of paradoxes and using many ways and means to access to more knowledge. Some of these means would be through dreams and intuition. As for Practice, this ability refers to the usage of a variety of ways to develop and refine consciousness and spiritual qualities.

For Grace, it has been defined as living in alignment with the sacred, manifesting the love for and trust in life. Grace is further divided into 3 areas, Sacred, Love of Life and Trust. Sacred refers to living in alignment with the divine, a universal life force and nature. Love of life refers to the reverence and cherishing of life based on gratitude, beauty, vitality and joy. Trust refers to the hopefulness and optimistic outlook based on faith or trust. For the entrepreneur, Trust is very important as it refer to how they are being hopeful of their business ventures. Since the business environment is rather unpredictable, their sense of Trust is important to carry them forward.

The third dimension of Spiritual Intelligence by Amram [37] is Meaning. Meaning refers to the feelings of significance in the daily activities through the sense of purpose. For the entrepreneur, this feelings of significance in their dailty activities would give them a sense of purpose and objective in life. This sense of purpose is important especially when the entrepreneurs faces strong challenges and they might experience pain and suffering. The pain and suffering could be experience when the business venture fails. “Meaning” gives the entrepreneurs a sense of meaning in life. The fourth dimension of Spiritual Intelligence is Transcedence. In Transcedence, the individual goes beyond their egoic self and they are being connected with wholeness [37]. For the entrepreneur, Transcendence encourages them not to be egoistic especially when they have achieve success in their business.

In the fifth dimension, Truth refers to the act of living in open acceptance, curiosity and love for all creation [37]. Open acceptance refers to the ability of the individual to forgive, embrace and love what is which includes the negative side of the person. Not many people are able to do so. It takes someone with much higher spiritualness to be able to do so. For the entrepreneur, they need to forgive the mistakes of their staff incase the staff has made an unintentional mistake. Open acceptance relates to one of the dimensions of Emotional Intelligence which is Understanding Others Emotions. If the entrepreneur is able to forgive and forget, the employee or the staff member would be full of gratitude and he or she would work harder for the organisation. They would be even more loyal to the organisation than ever.

In the sixth dimension of the construct, Amram [37] mentioned about Serenity. Serenity connects Peacefulness and Egolessness. Peacefulness refers to the individual’s ability to be equanimous and self-compassionate. In Egolessness, it is refers to the individual’s ability to maintain their level of humbleness despite their success. In terms of the entrepreneur, Serenity encourages the individual to maintain their level of receptivity and humbleness. It is important for the entrepreneur to be receptive especially in terms of allowing what wants and needs to happen.

The last dimension of the Spiritual Intelligence construct, Amram [37] suggested Inner-Directedness. In terms of Inner-Directedness, it relates to Freedom, Discernment and Integrity. Amram [37] suggested that Freedom refers to the liberation from rules and regulations, attachments and fears. It manifests the individual to be courageous and creative. For the entrepreneur, Freedom is important. They would like to be free to do their desires and be motivated about it. When they have the freedom to do so, their level of creativity and ability to innovate increases. [38]

3.0 Theoretical Framework

From the review of literature both Emotional Intelligence and Spiritual Intelligence encourages and improves the level of perfomance of the entrepreneur. From the literature, the higher the level of Emotional and Spiritual Intelligence, the more successful will be the entrepreneur in their pursuit to be creative and innovative.

Both Emotional and Spiritual Intelligence supports each other. Both of them do encourage and improves the level of Creativity and Innovation among the entrepreneurs. In order for the entrepreneur
to be successful, they need to be Creative and Innovative. They need to ensure their level is better than the others. This is shown in Diagram 1.

The theoretical framework can be drawn as follows:

Diagram 1 : Theoretical Framework between EI, SI and Performance

Note : EI : Emotional Intelligence; SI : Spiritual Intelligence

To measure the level of Emotional Intelligence among the entrepreneurs, the construct developed by Palmer and Stough [27] will be used. While for Spiritual Intelligence, the questionnaire developed by Amram [37] will be used.

4.0 Contribution and Conclusion

This conceptual framework suggests that both Emotional and Spiritual Intelligence plays an important role in nurturing creativity and innovation among the entrepreneurs. In the dimensions of Emotional Intelligence developed by Palmer and Stough [27], Emotional Recognition and Expression, Understanding Others Emotions, Emotions Direct Cognition, Emotional Management and Emotional Control encourages the entrepreneur to be able to work with others, understand the expressions of the people around them especially the customers. Knowing the wants and needs of the customer is important to the survival of the business. The entrepreneur must be able to harness and channel their emotions to the right pathway. As for Spiritual Intelligence, developed by Amram [37], there are 7 dimensions. They include: Consciousness, Grace, Meaning, Transcendence, Truth, Serenity and Inner-Directedness. Spiritual Intelligence enables the entrepreneur to be down-to-earth despite their success, honest, trust and being mindful of those around them. Spiritual Intelligence brings out the finer points of the entrepreneur that makes them standout from the others.

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