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Exploring levels of awareness and perceptions of Emotional Intelligence within a UK Law Firm

Abstract

This study explores levels of awareness and perception of EI within a UK law firm to establish if levels of awareness and perception differ amongst different roles within the organisation. The literature review focussed on the EI models proposed by Salovey and Mayer (1990) and Goleman (1995) which formed part of the conceptual framework in order to ascertain if awareness or perceptions linked to the existing models of EI. The research was qualitative in nature and semi-structured interviews were used as the method of data collection and participants were purposively selected to obtain data from employees in different positions within the organisation. The study findings indicated low awareness of EI overall and a limited understanding of what EI entails, but the study highlighted the use of EI skills within the client relationship. Due to the relationship the organisation has with clients and the link to profit, EI skills are implemented when communicating with clients to ensure that they remain loyal to the organisation and thus continuing to generate profit for the firm. However the use and importance of EI skills within the employment relationship and with colleagues were not recognised, the focus of EI skills was specifically concentrated within the client relationship ensuring it was protected. The implications of the study were raised in relation to the employment relationship and the damage that the lack of awareness and inaccurate perceptions of EI is having on the relationship with other colleagues. As a result, this is creating a high turnover of staff and teams that are not performing to their maximum potential and therefore not effectively contributing to the overall success of the organisation. The recommendations of the study are to implement a training programme for the organisation as a whole to raise awareness of the importance

of EI and to eradicate misconstrued perceptions of the concept in order to strive towards a workforce with high EI skills.

1. Introduction

Emotional intelligence (EI) is becoming an increasingly popular concept, particularly in work environments, due to the suggestion that EI skills are more significant and important than IQ skills and the impact EI skills can have on employment relationships. This has become more important due to the economy becoming more global and the requirement to be able to understand, negotiate and empathise with other people to ensure that individuals react accordingly and appropriately (Akers and Porter, 2015). When exploring EI within the legal profession, existing research indicates that lawyers have particularly low EI skills due to the profession adopting a stoic view where emotions and feelings are not displayed and are best eliminated from the workplace. However, it is argued that EI skills can contribute to as much as 80% of workplace success illustrating the importance of ensuring that employees are aware of EI and actively try to improve their EI skills (Muir, 2015).

The study reported in this paper explores levels of awareness and perceptions of emotional intelligence within a UK law firm. Particularly, this research explores levels of awareness and perceptions of emotional intelligence amongst different roles within the organisation to establish if awareness or perception differs within specific positions. The research was qualitative in nature and semi-structured interviews were used as the method of data collection and participants were purposively selected to obtain data from employees in different positions within the

organisation. The findings of the research indicated low levels of awareness of EI overall and a limited understanding of what EI entails, but the study highlighted the use of EI skills within the client relationship. Due to the relationship the organisation has with clients and the link to profit, EI skills are implemented when communicating with clients to ensure that they remain loyal to the organisation and thus continuing to generate profit for the firm. However, the use and importance of EI skills within the employment relationship and with colleagues were not recognised, the focus of EI skills was specifically concentrated within the client relationship ensuring it was protected. The implications of the study were raised in relation to the employment relationship and the damage that the lack of awareness and inaccurate perceptions of EI is having on the relationship with other colleagues. As a result, this is creating a high turnover of staff and teams that are not performing to their maximum potential and therefore not effectively contributing to the overall success of the organisation.

2. Literature Review

Emotional intelligence (EI) is becoming an increasingly popular concept, particularly in work environments, due to the suggestion that EI skills are more significant and important than IQ skills and the impact EI skills can have on employment relationships. This has become more important due to the economy becoming more global and the requirement to be able to understand, negotiate and empathise with other people to ensure that individuals react accordingly and appropriately (Akers and Porter, 2015). When exploring EI within the legal profession, existing research indicates that lawyers have particularly low EI skills due to the profession adopting a stoic view where emotions and feelings are not displayed and are best eliminated from the workplace. However it is argued that EI

skills can contribute to as much as 80% of workplace success illustrating the importance of ensuring that employees are aware of EI and actively try to improve their EI skills (Muir, 2015).

It has been argued that it is incredibly important to recognise the significance of emotions and emotion skills of organisational members within the workplace and the power that they have in affecting various interactions of working life (Briner, 1990; Ashforth & Humphrey 1995). Indeed, the workplace is filled with emotions and they are now important aspects of the organisational behaviour and the workplace culture, intriguing the researchers' interest to better understand the social psychology of the workplace (Fineman, 1993). The CIPD (2002) states that emotions can play a significant part in how employees behave and perform within the workplace as when situations are handled well or badly, this can produce both positive and negative-perceived emotions within employees and can have a fundamental effect on employee behaviour. It is, therefore, important for HR departments within organisations to consider implementing a strategic approach to managing emotions within the workplace and to how policies and practices will best encourage positive emotions at work (CIPD, 2002). In addition, Fineman (2003) argues that emotions play an important role in the workplace as it is suggested that organisations are driven by the unconscious desires, fantasies and hopes of the employees. Employees can often behave in accordance to their own hidden personal agendas which may be at odds with the aims and vision of the organisation (Fineman, 2003). This illustrates the importance of being able to manage emotions within the workplace and recognise the emotional undercurrents of colleagues and act appropriately, known as Emotional Intelligence (EI). EI can be defined as '... the capacity for recognising our own feelings and those in others,

for motivating ourselves, for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships' (Goleman, 1995: 95).

However even though it is argued that there are positive benefits of having an emotional intelligent workforce as demonstrated above, it is highly dependent on the awareness, the value and the importance that the organisation place on the concept. For instance, an organisation may actively measure EI during the recruitment process, such as using psychometric testing, to ensure that they recruit emotionally intelligent individuals with the right personality traits for that particular organisation. However if organisations do not see the value in spending time and resources into developing EI within the workforce, then they are likely to be reluctant to invest or direct their focus into the concept. Therefore, it can be suggested that for organisations to implement emotionally intelligent practices, the results must be measurable and complement the existing vision and strategic direction to be beneficial to the performance of the organisation as a whole.

When applying this within the context of the legal profession, research suggests that lawyers in particular have lower than average EI skills and demonstrate an inability and unwillingness to explore and apply their emotional data and skills, subsequently affecting their employment relationships and performance (Muir, 2015). When researching literature relating to lawyers and EI, there are a limited number of qualitative studies on EI within the legal profession. However, a number of scholars acknowledge the importance of EI within the legal profession and outline the need for lawyers to develop and apply their EI skills (Muir, 2015; Leonard, 2009; Wilson, 2015); nevertheless, little research explores this in practice. Therefore, this gap in literature indicates the need for further qualitative

research relating to EI in the legal profession and the awareness and perceptions that employees have of EI which this study will address.

Research aim and objectives

The overall aim of this research was to explore the concept of EI within a large UK North-West law firm.

The specific objectives of the research were:

- To explore levels of awareness and meaning of the EI concept across different levels of employees and senior management
- To ascertain the use of the EI concept in the law profession
- To ascertain factors that influence awareness and perceptions of the concept.

3. Methodology

The research took a subjectivist view that involves an interpretative phenomenological approach to research (Holden and Lynch, 2004). Weber, Hanson, Kuhn and Feyerabend argued subjectivists researchers, '... cannot distance themselves from what is being observed, the study's subject matter or the methods of study; in other words, the researcher is value-laden with inherent biasness reflected by their background, status, beliefs, skills and values' (cited in Holden and Lynch, 2004: 25). This approach is most suitable for this research project as it involves exploring a perception within a contextual setting of a working environment within a given situation. Furthermore, subjectivist research will not involve reductionism as it is concerned with investigating the topic in its entirety to gain a full understanding (Holden and Lynch, 2004).

An interpretivist approach to research is concerned with the individual perceptions and focusses not on facts and numbers, but rather on observations, meanings and words (Anderson, 2004). Cryer (2006) outlines that an interpretivist approach to research enables questions to be addressed such as why something is happening, how this is applied within the wider context and what might happen in the future. The methodology used for this research project takes a phenomenological approach. A phenomenological approach is most suited to this project as it allows the participants to describe a, '... lived experience of a phenomenon' (Waters, 2015: 98). This approach enabled the participants to discuss and explore their own personal perceptions of a phenomenon, emotional intelligence, using their experiences to support their view. It was important that during the data collection process, that the researcher did not direct or suggest the participants responses to indicate what the researcher was looking for, but rather encourage full detailed descriptions of their perceptions of emotional intelligence (Waters, 2015).

The study utilised semi-structured interviews, as its data collection tool, within a UK law firm where the researcher is employed. The interviews were conducted on an individual basis involving nine members of staff with differing roles and positions within the firm in the attempt to establish data that can be further generalised to the wider organisation. Interviews were considered to be the most appropriate method to gather data relating to perceptions of emotional intelligence as it gives the researcher a chance to build rapport with the respondent and enables the respondent to have the opportunity to fully explore their own personal experiences which is more limited when using quantitative methods. Interviews are flexible and the questions may be shaped by the responses provided by the

respondent encouraging detailed, thorough and reliable responses guided by experiences rather than opinions and beliefs (King and Horrocks, 2010).

3.1. Sample

This research adopted a purposive approach to sampling whereby nine participants were involved in the interviewing process and were purposefully selected from the organisation (Babbie, 2007). This approach to sampling is considered a non-probability form of sampling whereby the researcher does not intend to obtain and seek participants for the research on a random basis. Incorporating this approach to sampling within a study is considered to be strategic as the researcher will purposefully select participants who are relevant to the research and to ensure that there is variety in the resulting sample (Bryman, 2012). Due to the objectives of the research involving ascertaining awareness and perceptions of EI within different roles within the organisation, a purposive approach to sampling was most appropriate for this study. As a result and to ensure that there was a represented sample of participants in different job roles, specific employees were targeted to partake in the research. The participants' details are summarised in Table 1.

The participants were contacted individually by email that included a participant information sheet which outlined all of the information regarding the interviews and the interviewing process. The aim of the research was clearly communicated and the email explained that after reviewing the participant information sheet that if they did not wish to participate in the research, they could refuse to be interviewed with no justification.

Table 1: Participant Profile Table

Participant Initials	Gender	Age Group	Length Employed	Title	Position
SS	Male	31-35	1 year 2 months	Administration Assistant	Support
LK	Female	26-30	3 years 1 month	Client Relationship Co-ordinator	Support
MC	Female	18-26	1 year 9 months	Legal Assistant	Support
CM	Female	41-45	1 year 3 months	Solicitor	Lawyer
CM	Female	26-30	6 months	Solicitor	Lawyer
DB	Male	31-35	1 year 1 month	Associate	Lawyer
KD	Female	46-50	2 months	Partner	Partner
AC	Female	46-50	3 years 9 months	Partner	Partner
DD	Male	41-45	20 years +	Partner	Partner

The data was analysed using a thematic approach whereby the data obtained was analysed to explore if themes arose from the evidence gathered (Pope et al, 2007). This involved analysing and evaluating the interview responses beyond counting and identifying certain words and phrases, but exploring both implicit and explicit ideas that were present in the responses (Guest and Macqueen, 2008). This is a very flexible technique used to analyse data which does not specifically narrow the data into precise groups which is most suited to this study. This approach allowed the researcher to ascertain common themes amongst the responses and subsequently

discuss and explore responses in more detail, which enabled the awareness and perception of EI to be established.

3.2. Ethical considerations

As with any study, it is fundamental that the ethical considerations were examined, explored and acknowledged. It was paramount that various elements regarding the ethics of the research were considered including informed consent, ensuring that no harm came to the participants during the research process, that the data obtained remained confidential and clearly communicating to the participants that they could withdraw at any point during the research.

3.3. Limitations

It is inevitable that social science research within the academic field will have a variety of limitations. Even though this study has attempted to implement and incorporate a robust and vigorous methodology, there are numerous limitations including the approach to sampling and the method of data analysis. Overall, the researcher has attempted to implement a carefully considered, robust and vigorous methodology but has recognised the various limitations that the study has. It can be argued that the methodology has been tailored for this research to suit the constraints of this study with time being a major influence. The researcher has recognised the need of reflexivity when conducting research and has actively tried to remain objective and impartial during the research to ensure that the conclusions of the research are as unbiased as possible (Etherington, 2004).

4. Findings

Once the data collection was completed, the responses were read through individually by the first author in the attempt to code the data and to establish common themes. For the case of this research, common themes and patterns amongst the answers were fairly clear early on from the beginning of the interview process and the overarching themes were apparent amongst the majority of the responses. As a result, the coding for this research was inductive whereby the categories and themes developed from the data itself rather than applying categories or themes from previous research (Ayers et al, 2007). After analysing the data, the three common themes that were deduced from the data were:

1. Levels of awareness of EI and Meaning of the Concept
2. The Use of the EI Concept in the Law Profession
3. Factors That Influence Awareness and Perceptions of the Concept

4.1. *Theme 1: Levels of Awareness and Meaning of the Concept*

The findings of the research indicated that levels of awareness of EI were fairly low with only a few of participants having heard of the concept prior to the interview. It was evident that the participants were not consciously aware of EI and did not fully understand the concept as a whole, but rather specific elements of it, and as a result did not actively try to develop their EI skills within the context of a working environment. When exploring existing literature regarding such low levels of awareness within the legal profession, Muir (2015b) outlines that EI skills amongst lawyers are much lower than that of the general public which may be due to a number of reasons. Muir (2015b) argues that this could be due to the legal

profession adopting a stoic view where emotions and feelings are not displayed, are best eliminated from the workplace and are often discouraged and undervalued. In addition, it can be suggested that lawyers have strong analytic skills which may contribute to their success within their role, further reinforcing the impression that EI skills are not important to success and therefore do not need to be developed.

Wilson (2015) states that this is a detrimental mind-set to have as it is not unusual for lawyers to have limited career opportunities because of an inability to deal with individuals in a constructive, reasonable and emotional manner. This is supported by Middleburgh and Butterworth (2015) who interviewed a lawyer who stated that they went to a well-respected university, achieved a law degree and got a job in a prestigious law firm. A few years into their career they stated that they hit a brick wall and couldn't understand why less academic lawyers were being promoted over them and soon realised it was due to the lack of EI and people skills (Middleburgh and Butterworth, 2015).

Muir (2007) argues that as lawyers are required to have a certain level of intellectual ability, law firms focus on intelligence when recruiting in an attempt to secure the firms future and uphold the reputation of the organisation. As a result, this encourages the stereotypical view that law firms and lawyers are renowned for having limited interpersonal skills. However Muir (2007) argues that EI undoubtedly contributes to as much as 80 % for workplace success, more than expertise and intelligence combined. Furthermore, research carried out by Harvard University illustrates that having high IQ levels does not directly correlate with EI and the ability to get on with people has been found to be more crucial than intelligence and

achieving targets, suggesting that lawyers with strong EI skills are likely to be top performers who are not easily replaceable as they are considered highly valuable assets (Muir 2007).

Middleburgh and Butterworth (2015) argue that as lawyers progress professionally; their client relationship management skills and the skills needed to be an effective manager become increasingly important. However research conducted by Satterfield et al (1997) argue that due to the training that lawyers receive whilst completing their law degree, this develops and encourages negative thinking skills such as identifying problems, identifying risks and the downside of situations to which they advise. The research indicated a correlation between high academic achievement and negative thinking skills and overall individuals are less likely to be a good team player or a good manager contributing to low EI awareness and understanding of the concept (Satterfield et al, 1997).

4.1.1. Implications

The implications of having a workforce that stereotypically have very little awareness of EI, that do not fully comprehend the concept and subsequently do not actively implement or develop their EI skills, can arguably be catastrophic. It is vital for any client-led organisation to have employees who are high academic achievers and who are experts in their chosen field in order to generate profit. However it is equally as important to ensure that the organisation has a well-rounded workforce that do not necessarily all have to have existing high EI skills, but a workforce who are aware of EI and the correlation it has with organisational success who consciously try to develop their skills.

The researcher has observed first-hand the significant effects that the lack of EI skills has had within the firm. A senior partner who was unable to be interviewed for this study but who the researcher perceives has having very little awareness of EI, is renowned across the organisation for having inadequate people and social skills. This partner has a secretary who is allocated to their team to provide support to ensure that the team operates efficiently. However within the space of 18 months, the firm are in the process of recruiting the fifth secretary for this particular partner as the previous four employees voluntarily made the decision to terminate their employment with the firm. The researcher observed the significant turnover of staff and spoke to the employees to ascertain why it was they were unhappy within their role and why it was they were leaving, with most of the individual's not having a secured a job prior to their decision.

From the informal discussions, the researcher had with these individuals, it become apparent that their dissatisfaction and lack of engagement did not stem from incompetence and misunderstanding of the job role, but purely due to the relationship they had with the partner. They reported a complete lack of awareness for them as individuals and their feelings and they gave some examples how the partner had treated and communicated with them. It was overwhelmingly clear to the researcher that this was evidence of no EI and the devastating effects this has had to the former employee's confidence and self-esteem. As a result the implication of low EI skills and understanding has resulted in a high staff turnover and a team that is not sufficiently supported, thus not effectively contributing to overall organisational success.

4.2. *Theme 2: The Use of the EI Concept in the Law Profession*

The findings of the research illustrated that even though there were generally low levels of awareness of EI across the participants, when asked to draw on examples of when they thought they had implemented EI skills, the examples given were heavily client based. The researcher therefore interpreted this, along with observations within the context of the organisation, as the employment relationship being significantly overlooked. Any current EI skills that employees within the organisation have are being utilised to maintain the client relationship to ensure that it remains profitable, arguably at the cost of the employment relationship. However it is important to note that the research indicated a lack of awareness of EI overall amongst the participants, however it was evident that participants implemented EI skills within the client relationship but without realising that they were doing so and without fully understanding the concept of EI.

It has to be recognised that the client relationship is fundamentally essential for the success of an organisation operating in the legal sector as clients are the main source of profit for the business. Therefore it is essential that these relationships are strategically managed to ensure that the organisation is able to continuously generate profit and remain successful. Cass (2014) argues that it is crucial to recognise when clients are upset and to direct energy into removing the client's pain or dissatisfaction. Cass (2014) states that these situations do not represent a disaster in the relationship but should rather be perceived as an opportunity to manage the clients emotions as well as your own, in order to create a stronger relationship ensuring that they receive excellent client service (Cass, 2014). This

correlates with the findings of the research in that employees try exceedingly hard to ensure that the client is happy and that they consistently receive exceptional client service.

Having employees that have the skills to maintain client relationships and recognise the client relationship is crucial to business success, and essential for organisational success. However in order for employees to deliver external client service, internal employment relationships must also be considered. Having an organisation that purely focusses on client relationships and over-sees the importance strong employment relationships, will inevitably cause preventable employment disputes. The EI skills are clearly evident within the employees, but the skills that are being implemented to protect client relationships needs to be transferred to employment relationships as well.

Marchant (2013) argues that one EI is essential for excellence and that, 'There is only one area which a business – or any organisation – needs to address if it wants to lift itself from averagely successful to excellent: how well the people in the business work together' (Marchant, 2013: online). In addition it suggested that a highly emotionally intelligent workforce enables colleagues to work together successfully to ensure maximum effectiveness (Marchant, 2013). This indicates that by raising levels of awareness of EI across the organisation and focusing on the employment relationship as well as the client relationship, the overall success of the organisation may improve. Surely an organisation that works cohesively with employees who are highly emotionally intelligent, will automatically offer exceptional client service as it will be built in with the organisational vision and ethos.

4.2.1. Implications

The implications of an organisation that does not focus or value the importance of EI within the employment relationship, will be similar to those outlined when discussing the implications caused by lack of awareness. This will include colleagues that may feel unmotivated, disengaged and underappreciated and as a result will negatively affect employee performance. This will potentially lead to a high turnover of staff throughout the organisation and the researcher has been informed that this is a current problem. Therefore it is clear that there is an underlying issue that needs to be addressed in terms of managing the relationship employees have with their colleagues. The example of the partner in the Manchester office as discussed in the lack of awareness implications section is also valid here. The partner is renowned across the firm for having excellent, often high profile, and loyal clients but is equally renowned for having poor relationships with other colleagues and team members. This has resulted in a high turnover of staff within the team with individuals leaving the firm having had a bad experience, thus potentially damaging the reputation and image of the firm by word of mouth.

A further implication of employees only demonstrating EI skills towards clients are that they may begin using EI in a negative manner for their professional advantage. As previously discussed, the relationship employees have with clients directly reflects on individual's performance and often is associated with monetary benefits. Grant (2014) states that there is a dark side of EI as when individuals become more aware of their emotions and hone in on their emotional skills, that they can be used to manipulate. It is suggested that those who master the use of EI, can deprive

others of their capacity to reason (Grant, 2014). Research conducted by Kilduff (2010) which explores the dark side of EI within organisational settings, suggests that EI can be used for personal gain by using the skills to benefit individual interests, potentially at the expense of other people. Furthermore the research indicates that those with high emotional awareness may also manipulate the emotional undercurrents of situations and shape them to their own advantage (Kilduff, 2010).

As a result, it is important to acknowledge that although there is an issue of lack of awareness of EI and the use of EI within the organisation, that employees need to be educated on how to use EI skills effectively. It would not be valuable to raise awareness of EI within the firm for employee to use emotions to manipulate; therefore it is crucial that employees are made aware of what EI looks like in practice.

4.3. Theme 3: Factors That Influence Awareness and Perceptions of the Concept

The research indicated that it was perceived that certain factors influence awareness and understanding of EI, in particular age and gender. It was evident amongst the participants that this was a common perception which illustrated an interesting view on EI within the workplace. It can be argued that this perhaps is a narrow view of EI, indicating lack of full awareness and such perceptions will hinder the way in which EI regarded, received and implemented in the workplace.

When exploring whether these perceptions are accurate, Goleman (1995) suggests that it is not uncommon for people to have this perception as women are regarded as being more emotional in comparison to men as they are likely to feel, ‘... an entire range of emotions with greater intensity and more volatility than men’ (Goleman, 1995: 47). In comparison, research carried out by Bar-On (2000) suggests that men and women do not differ in their EI abilities overall but that data indicates that each gender differs slightly in specific domains which has been discussed previously. However the perception of women having a greater EI awareness and skills is further supported by research carried out by Feingold (1994). This research which obtained personality data, suggests that women score higher on personality traits that are linked with EI whereas men scored highly on emotional stability traits (Feingold, 1994, cited in Matthews et al, 2004). Therefore the research collected from this study which highlighted the perception of gender differences with EI, does correlate with existing research with the suggestion the women may have higher EI skills. However this is not a perception that should influence how EI is implemented or the expectations of EI in an organisational context as this may create implications which will be discussed in the next section.

The second factor that affected the awareness and perceptions of EI was age. When exploring existing research as to whether EI does improve with age, research conducted by Bar-On (2000) states that results show that EI does improve with age, up to the fifth decade (cited in Cassady and Eissa, 2008). Furthermore research carried out by Buckholdt Associates, state that EI improve significantly during an individual’s thirties and peaks in during the fifties (Training Zone, 2015). This correlates with the suggestion of Goleman (2009) that perhaps having to deal with

various life experiences and emotional maturity contributes to increased EI skills. However it can be argued whilst EI may improve with age and as CM (Lawyer) acknowledged, that individuals have to be open to the perception of EI in order for them to be able to improve it. It can be suggested that this may be where the difficulty might lie, in actively trying to encourage individuals to recognise EI and become more aware of the potential benefits that high EI can have. Therefore when applying EI skills within a workplace and in order for employees to develop their EI skills and incorporate them in their working relationships, HR practitioners will have to consider how to encourage employees to become more open to the concept of EI.

4.3.2. Implications

The implications of employees having a fixed perception of EI being a trait most attributed to women and the idea that women are better at EI than men, may have potential implications when attempting to implement EI within an organisation. If employees hold this perception, certain tasks or responsibilities may be allocated to women with the view that they would be able to handle the situation or circumstances better and be able to manage the emotional element more effectively. This may lead to some employees being involved in specific jobs that may be in addition to their current responsibilities and could potentially result in them feeling as if they have a larger workload than others. This may have a negative impact on motivation, engagement and performance, which will negatively influence their satisfaction within the role. In addition this may result in other employees passing over tasks that require emotional awareness, such as dealing with a difficult client or employee, this will not encourage others to develop their EI skills if they know such situations will be handled by others.

This is similar with the perception that EI improves with age. It may lead to the view for older employees that if they regard themselves as not having good emotional awareness and that it cannot improve with age; this will therefore create a fixed idea resulting in no attempt being made in order to improve it. It would also be unreasonable for employees who have the perception just to assume that other individuals will have higher EI levels just because they are older. Furthermore, this perception may allow certain negative workplace behaviours from younger employees to be disregarded if it is just assumed that they are due to lack of EI skills. This may result in other colleagues expecting certain EI behaviours and skills from individuals in accordance to their age when actually age should not have a significant impact on the level of awareness of EI. It will be important to eradicate such perceptions within an organisation to ensure that employees approach EI with an open mind in order for business to benefit from the effects a workforce with high EI skills.

5. Conclusions

This study has achieved its overall aim and objectives and successfully established levels of awareness and perceptions of EI within a UK law firm. The study has discussed various factors that influence levels of awareness, the perceptions of EI and the benefits of having a workforce with high EI skills. The recommendations made for the organisation would certainly help improve levels of awareness and eradicate detrimental perceptions of EI, but the initial challenge in creating a workforce with high EI skills may be obtaining the initial buy in from senior partners and the HR department. Once this has been achieved, it will inevitably be a long

process of achieving a workforce, which is highly emotionally intelligent; however this study highlights the benefits of EI when implemented effectively within an organisation and the detrimental effects it can have when not applied correctly.

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