

## REVIEW OF NOTABLE THEORIES OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

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### Abstract

**Aim:** This study is a review of three of the most notable theories of emotional intelligence [EI]: The Bar-On's model, the Mayer-Salovey's Model and Goleman's model. The core research questions are: Which of the three theories of EI is most focused on the construct of emotion and emotional intelligence? What are the gaps in the three EI models? **Method:** The documentary analysis design, as proposed by Bowen (2009), was adopted in this exercise. **Results:** Out of the three theories of EI reviewed, only the Mayer-Salovey model used the cognitive ability test format. The other two used the self-report format; Furthermore, only the Mayer-Salovey model tends to be more focused on emotion, though the measurement technique was cognitive mode. The other two models tend to further measure social and personality domains. **Conclusion:** In conclusion, the need for more standardized measures of EI with a focus on emotion was reiterated. There is also need for an adoption of battery of assessment tools [self-report, gaming technique, covert observation with anecdotal records] to measure EI. Finally, there is need to place more emphasis on measuring the degree and scope of emotional hijacks in people, as a more valid indicator of emotional intelligence. Ability to control emotional hijacks is far more important than recognition and control of emotions in self and in people around us, though these are also needful.

**Keywords:** Emotional Intelligence, Emotional Hijack, Bar-On, Goleman, Mayer-Salovey, Measurement, Assessment

### 1.0 Introduction

The genesis of theoretical formulations in social and natural sciences is in keen observation of events (Omonijo, Obiorah, Uche, Anyaegbunam, Shaibu and Ogunwa, 2017). Insightful observations, deep understanding of the precepts and constructs underlying the object of observation are the precursors of reasonable statement of hypothesis. When such hypotheses are empirically tested severally and found true, they metamorphose into theory. Repeated testings, and validation of such proven theories are what eventually birth laws that have been employing to govern human society (Omonijo, Olujobi, Anyaegbunam and Adeleke, 2018). Most of the inventions and technological solutions we enjoy today are products of concerted application of laws. In this review, an exploration of three notable theories of emotional intelligence is undertaken.

Though the concept of emotion and how it affects human behavior have been in vogue since the existence of mankind, it was only after Goleman (1995) published the classic on emotional intelligence [EI] that made it popular. Several definitions of EI have been submitted. By extension, several theories on EI have also been tendered. The proliferation of definitions and theories is almost engendering intellectual confusion, and this is clearly not healthy for academia. This review is targeted at partly solving this challenge.

In order to experience pragmatic inventions that relate to EI, it is imperative a robust theory of EI be established. In an attempt to achieve this feat, three of the most notable theories of EI are critically assessed in this paper: the EI ability-based model by Mayer & Salovey (1997); the Emotional-Social Intelligence Model by Bar-On's (1997); and Goleman's model of EI (Goleman, 1998, 2001). The justification for this decision could partly be found in the Encyclopedia of Applied Psychology (2019) which classified the three main models of EI as: the Mayer-Salovey model; the Goleman model; and the Bar-On model.

The following research questions are addressed in this study:

1. Which of the three theories of EI [Mayer et al., Bar-On & Goleman] concentrated mostly on the psychological construct of emotion and emotional intelligence?

2. What are the gaps in the EI ability-based model by the Emotional-Social Intelligence Model by Bar-On's (1997); Mayer & Salovey (1997); and Goleman's model of EI?

## 2.0 Method

Qualitative analyses, using content analysis and conceptual mapping designs, were adopted in in this study. According to Haynes, Richard, & Kubany (1995), content validity measures the extent to which elements of a scale are true representations of construct of interest. This review dwelled much on the content validity of the three models under review.

The inclusion criteria for the three EI theories selected study was the frequency of citations. These were the three most cited theories of emotional intelligence to date. The researchers converted the three notable emotional intelligence theories into conceptual models and, thereafter, attempted a conceptual mapping of their core elements to decipher differences and similarities. The researchers also critically examined the three EI models in the light of the maiden publication on EI by Goleman (1995), especially concerning the concept of *emotional hijack*.

## 3.0 Review

### 3.1 Bar-On's Emotional-Social Intelligence Model

Bar-On's EI model is seen as a mixed model that combines emotional, social, cognitive, and personality dimensions. The charts in Figures 1 - 6 show the five dimensions and 15 sub-factors of the Bar-On's EI model:

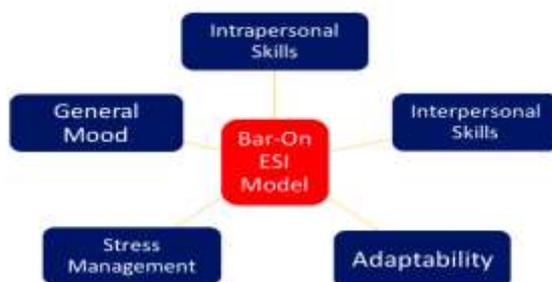


Fig 1: Bar-On Emotional-Social Intelligence Model [Design by: Odukoja (2019)]



Fig 2: Bar-On's ESI Model – Components of Intrapersonal Skills [Design by: Odukoja (2019)]



Fig 3: Bar-On's ESI Model – Components of Interpersonal Skills [Design by: Odukoja (2019)]



For deeper explanations of the factors and sub-factors displayed in Figures 1 - 6, refer to Bar-On (2006).

Bar-On's EI model posits that emotional-social intelligence involves a connection of interrelated emotional and social competencies, which tend to determine how we understand and express ourselves, how we understand others, how we relate with people around us, and how we cope with daily emotional challenges (Bar-On, 2006). To validate the factors proposed in his model, Bar-On developed the Emotional Quotient Inventory [EQ-i]. It became the first commercial instrument for measuring EI (Bar-On, 1997). He further developed a battery of EI psychological tests (i.e., interviews, external raters' questionnaires, and measures of self-report for different ages). Because the EQ-i measures emotion and social knowledge, it does not just give an estimation of the EI quotient; it also offers respondents' affective and social profiles. This partly gave credence to the submission that the Bar-On model is a mixed model.

### 3.2 Goleman's model of EI

The concept of EI was made popular when Daniel Goleman's book was published in 1995. He made many profound statements on the influence of EI on many aspects of human life, including general wellbeing. In his first EI book, Goleman (1995) posited that EI involves five essential components. Fig. 7 depicts these five components.

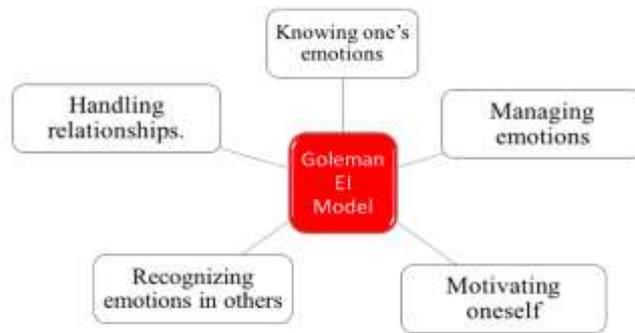


Fig. 7: Goleman's Original EI Model [Design by: Odukoja (2019)]

In 1998 when Goleman published his second EI book, he launched the theory of performance in the workplace that is contingent on EI (Goleman, 1998). The model was based on several performance indices identified by several researchers in hundreds of organizations. The competencies are deemed to be the trait of successful and brilliant workers in organizations (Goleman, 2001). This necessitated the review of the previous 5-dimensional model to four dimensions. The four dimensions are subdivided into 20 competencies (Boyatzis et al., 2000; Goleman, 2001). See Figures 8 - 12 below.

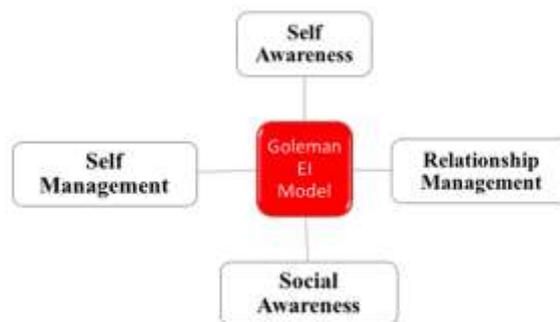


Fig. 8: Goleman's Reviewed EI Model [Design by: Odukoja (2019)]

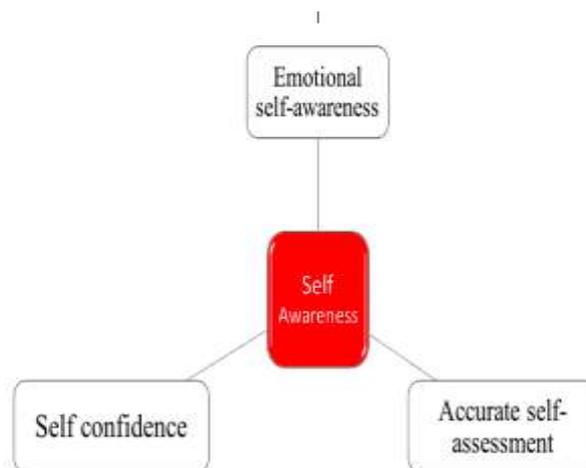
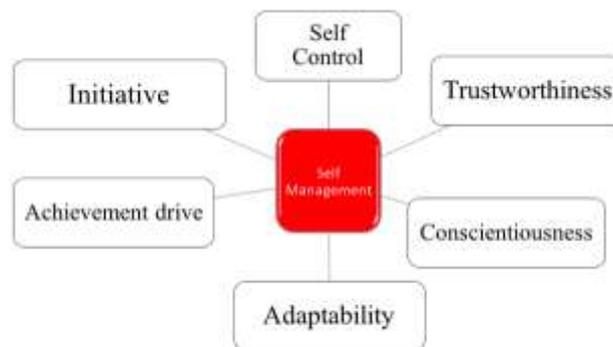
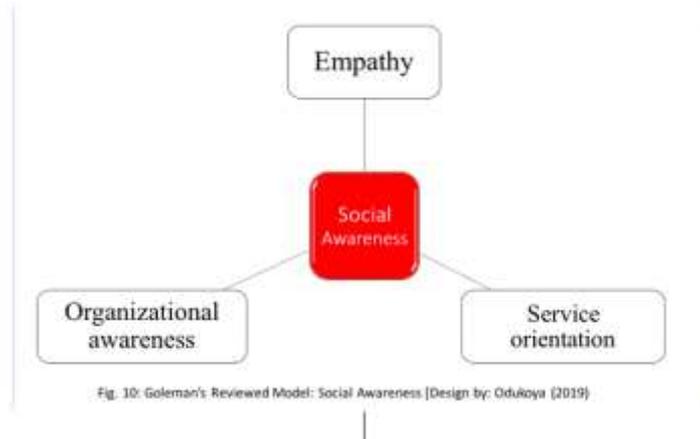


Fig. 9: Goleman's Reviewed Model: Self Awareness [Design by: Odukoja (2019)]



According to Goleman, the newly categorized four dimensions serve as the foundation of developing other competencies required in an organization. He reiterated that emotional competencies are skills that yield outstanding results in the workplace. The four dimensions that make for organizational success are Self Awareness, Self Management, Social Awareness, and Relationship Management. Social Awareness is comprised of empathy, organizational awareness, and service orientation. Self Management is comprised of self-control, trustworthiness, conscientiousness, adaptability, initiative, and achievement drive. Relationship Management is comprised of a change catalyst, building bonds, communications, collaboration, teamwork, leadership, influence, conflict management, and developing others.

### 3.3 The EI ability-based model

The EI ability model was proposed by Mayer & Salovey (1997). The model appeared to have spurred the highest number of citations in recent times (Matthews et al., 2002; Geher, 2004). The appeal of the ability-based model seems to be in the uniqueness of measuring the construct of EI and the systematic scoring method. In the ability-based model, EI is construed as a mental ability. The progenitors of the EI ability-based model felt EI should be measured the same way cognitive intelligence [i.e., Intelligence Quotient - IQ] is measured. Consequently, EI was defined as the ability to recognize emotions, perceive emotions accurately, appraise emotions, regulate and manage emotions within oneself and others (Mayer & Salovey, 1997, p. 10). The ability-based model is made up of four components - perception, assimilation, understanding, and regulation of emotions. See figure 13.

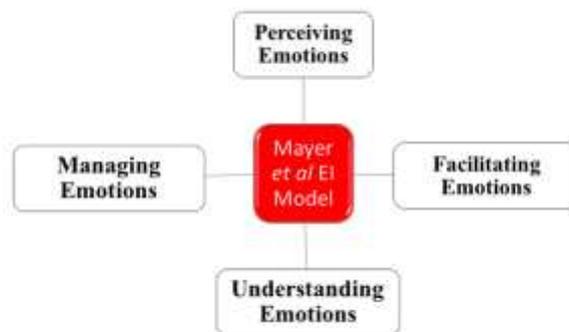


Fig. 13: Mayer & Salovey EI Model [Design by: Odokoya (2019)]

Each of the four components are further split in to sub-components as depicted in Figures 14 – 17 below:

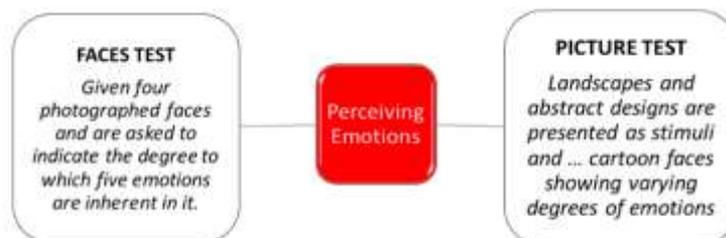


Fig. 14: Mayer & Salovey EI model -- Perceiving Emotions [Design by: Odokoya (2019)]



Fig. 15: Mayer & Salovey EI model -- Facilitating Emotions [Design by: Odokoya (2019)]

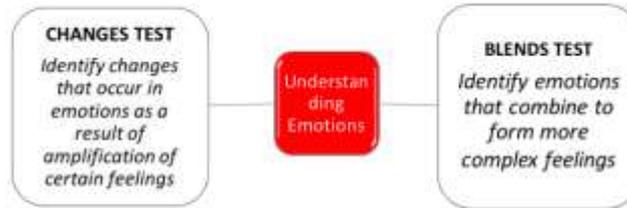


Fig. 16: Mayer & Salovey EI model – Understanding Emotions [Design by: Odukoya (2019)]



Fig. 17: Mayer & Salovey EI model – Managing Emotions [Design by: Odukoya (2019)]

In specific terms, emotional perception is the capacity to distinguish feelings in oneself correctly. This includes emotional reactions to stories, objects, art, music, and related stimuli. When you are able to generate and use emotions in communicating feelings, you are displaying ‘assimilation of emotions.’ Emotional understanding is the ability to comprehend the outcome of combination of emotions. The capacity to distinguish feelings in oneself correctly shifts across time. The ability to monitor and regulate emotion in oneself or others is termed emotional regulation.

According to the EI ability-based model, the four domains comprising it are arranged in hierarchical order. Consequently, perceiving emotions is the lowest level in the hierarchy, while emotional regulation is at the peak. The ability to regulate emotions, therefore, is a product of the proficiency attained at the three lower levels. The EI ability-based model thus provides a measure of people’s cognitive prowess in processing emotional information (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2002; Mayer, Salovey, Caruso, & Sitarenios, 2001; 2003). It is important to note that Salovey, Mayer, Goldman, Turvey & Palfai (1995) initially developed a self-report measure of EI, tagged *Trait Meta-Mood Scale* (TMMS) before they switched to the development of the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test [MSCEIT].

#### 4.0 Deductions and Discussion

*Which of the three theories of EI reviewed [Mayer et al., Bar-On & Goleman] is most focused on the construct of emotion and emotional intelligence?*

Though the Goleman’s theory appears to focus on EI, judging by its four major domains, there are no indications in the theoretical submission that it emphasized measurement of *emotional hijack* that he introduced in his book (Goleman, 1995). It is, however, not unlikely that the ‘Self Control’ component under the ‘Self Management’ domain may capture this vital indicator of emotional intelligence. Closer scrutiny of Goleman’s EI model, however, shows that the model, like the Bar-On’s model, also went beyond the measurement of emotion and emotional intelligence. It features such components as organizational awareness and service orientation [under Social Awareness]; Initiative, Conscientiousness, Trustworthiness, Adaptability, and Achievement drive [under Self Management]; Developing others, Change catalyst, Collaboration, Teamwork, Leadership, Influence and Conflict management [under Relationship Management]. These observations tend to put to

question the content validity of Goleman's measure of EI. Haynes, Richard, & Kubany (1995) reiterated this point when they posited that content validity influences clinical conclusion that can be deduced from the obtained data. For example, in attempting to measure the efficacy of a psychosocial treatment for panic attack with a self-report instrument, it is expected that scores from the instrument would reflect the panic attack construct. It should measure the 13 criteria for panic attacks (DSM-IV; APA, 1994, pp. 395). It should capture the correct estimated time frame for full answer (<10 min). It should capture solicited reports of panic attack frequency, the respondents' degree of concern about the panic attacks, and the outcome of the effects of panic attack. In the light of the aforementioned, the alternative to making the Goleman's model fit its content is to amend the scale title to cover the personality and cognitive domains expressed therein. Similar amendment is necessary for the Bar-On's model.

Mayers, Salovey, and Caruso (2002) posited that the EI ability-based model provides a measure of people's cognitive prowess in processing emotional information. While Mayers *et al.* indeed focused squarely on the concept of emotion, the challenge is with the treatment of EI as cognitive processes. It is common knowledge that we feel before we think, and for a number of emotional persons, the feelings often hijack or terminate the stimulus from getting to the cognitive processing center of the brain [the cerebral cortex]. This is what Goleman (1995) termed '*emotional hijack*'. The emotional hijack experience is what often causes many to momentarily misbehave (Farooqi, 2019). Strangely enough, the emotional hijack episode may not be momentary for some people. Some may still be under the influence of their emotions for days and years. It is clearly a phenomenon that is beyond rational thinking. In fact, such people are no longer tenable to logical reasoning for as long as they are under the influence of the overpowering emotion(s). The point is, respondents who score high on the MSCEIT may not necessarily be adept at controlling their emotions, particularly in the face of sudden provocation. We posit that, beyond the cognitive ability of correctly discerning the emotions and possible outcomes in self and in people around us, the concept of emotional intelligence should be focused more on ability to control emotions, be it positive emotion like love or negative emotion like anger, without allowing it to override rational thinking. It is this operational definition of EI that is used to judge the content validity of the three theories reviewed in this paper.

Submissions on Bar-On's theory clearly stated: 'It is a mixed model that combines social, cognitive, emotional, and personality dimensions.' According to Bar-On (2000), the Emotional Quotient Inventory measures emotional and social competencies. It is quite apparent that Bar-On extended far beyond measuring emotion and emotional intelligence. Going by the principles of content validity, this raises some questions. Labeling the theory as an Emotional-Social Intelligence model cannot solve it either. What about the Personality and Cognitive domains therein?

From all indications, out of the three theories of EI reviewed in this study, the one that is most focused on EI is the Mayer-Salovey's model, though its measurement technique that focused solely on cognitive processing is questionable. This is followed by Goleman's model. The challenge with the content validity of the Goleman's theory is the inclusion of traits that are clearly beyond emotion, such as leadership, conscientiousness, initiative, organizational awareness, service orientation, trustworthiness [and the like]. The model that would best assess EI is the one that includes the assessment of emotional hijack. It is assumed that Goleman's model did this to some extent. There is a need for measures that could capture people's real-time responses to traumatic emotional stimulations. We posit that the mode of assessing this salient dimension of EI can't be the traditional IQ test format. The best technique would have been real-time capturing of people's reactions to emotional stimulations, say with CCTV camera. This, however, has attendant ethical restrictions. Taking consent for such video recordings is also apt to alter the respondents' responses. The most plausible option left is trusting respondents or observant third parties for sincere reports of previous experiences cum observations.

*What are the gaps in the EI ability-based model by Mayer & Salovey (1997); the Emotional-Social Intelligence Model by Bar-On's (1997); and Goleman's model of EI [if any]?*

As mentioned earlier, out of the three theories of EI reviewed, only the Mayer-Salovey model used the cognitive ability test format. Consequently, the model assumed right and wrong answers. The

underlying assumption here is that there are fixed emotional states and reactions that are common to all human beings. It is apparent that in real life, this is hardly so. Even a seemingly negative reaction like anger could be positive in certain situations. Emotional reactions are simply contextual. The Goleman's and Bar-On's theories recommended self-reports, and so have no absolutely correct answers. This should be the ideal.

Out of all the three theories of EI reviewed, the Mayer-Salovey and Goleman's tend to be more focused on emotion, though the measurement technique is cognitive. This is followed by Goleman's theory. Bar-On's theory is clearly a mixed model.

The major gaps observed are: There is need for more measures of EI that focus squarely on emotions and its influence on human behaviors; There is need for an adoption of battery of assessment tools [self-report, gaming technique, and covert observation with anecdotal records] to measure EI. Finally, there is need to place more emphasis on measuring degrees and scope of emotional hijacks as a more valid indicator of emotional intelligence, rather than recognition of emotions in self and in people around us, though these are equally needful.

On a general note, it should be noted that not every aspect of the native cognitive intelligence or IQ can be measured in absolute terms. There are many dimensions of the cognitive functions that may not be validly captured with quantitative measurement. This assertion is even more applicable to emotions like joy, sadness, anger, love, and hatred. The implication is that there are often no absolute right or wrong answers in assessing these emotional traits since such judgment is often subjective, being the outcome of a confluence of environmental and genetic factors. This explains such idiomatic expressions like, 'one man's food is another man's poison'; and 'beauty is the eye of the beholder'. These views tend to put to question the rationale or justification for the Mayer-Salovey ability-based EI model.

## 5.0 Conclusion & Recommendation

This Paper reviewed the three most relevant and cited theories of emotional intelligence to date – Bar-On's model, the Mayer-Salovey Model, and Goleman's model. A critical review of the theories showed that, but for the adoption of the cognitive ability measuring format, the Mayer-Salovey model focused more squarely on emotion than the two other theories. This tends to accentuate its content validity. This point nonetheless, findings from the review further suggest that the use of a battery of assessment tools, which emphasized emotional hijacks, is apt to offer a more valid measurement of emotional intelligence. It is therefore recommended that new measures of EI should consider these points when developing and standardizing EI scales.

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