



Emotional Intelligence of Malaysian Academia towards Work Performance

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Abstract

This paper describes the research conducted in relating to emotional intelligence of university staff to work attitude. The Emotional Intelligence (EI) Scale devised by Schutte et al. (1998) is used in this study, which is more suitable compared to BarOn Emotional Quotient Inventory. Beside their experiences, knowledge and skills, emotion play an important role in pushing individual to produce and perform the best. Emotion is critical in motivating, persuading, communicating, leading and controlling individuals and groups. The role of EI in employees' work attitude has not been explored in-depth especially in higher institutions which rather focus EI on students and their academic performances. Quantitative method is adopted and questionnaires are distributed among academics and middle-management employees using simple random sampling. The questionnaire has been designed to assess how effectively individual deal with emotion. The findings of this empirical study would highlight the importance of EI in university and give details on EI factors that influence the work attitude among employees. The t-test, correlations and multiple regressions were used to analyze the data. The findings found that EI is positively related to work-attitude. Appraisal and expression of emotion are moderately correlated to job performance and job satisfaction.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence, Work attitude, Job satisfaction, University staff

1. Introduction

Most of literature review viewed emotional intelligence as a factor which has a potential to contribute to more positive attitude, behaviors and outcomes. Schutte et al (1998) cited "evidence exists that emotional intelligence can be conceptualized as either ability (Ciarochi et al, 2000; Mayer et al., 1999) or a personality trait (Schutte et al., 1998). Emotional intelligence is the ability to use emotions adaptively (Salovey & Mayer, 1990 and Mayer et al., 2000). Bar-On et al. (2000) viewed emotional intelligence as a non-cognitive intelligence which is defined as an array of emotional, personal and social abilities and skills that influence an individual's ability to cope effectively with environmental demands and pressures. The success of practical workplace application involving the emotional intelligence and the results of empirical research investigating the relationship between emotional intelligence and crucial work-related factors suggest that emotional intelligence of employees is an important aspect of organization (Goleman, 1995; Carmeli, 2003). Goleman (2001) found that emotional intelligence is positively related to job performance. A study conducted by George (2000) showed that aspects of emotional intelligence contribute to effective leadership. Job satisfaction is considered as a proxy for employee's well-being at work (Grandey as in Carmeli, 2003). Smith et al. (1969) suggested that job satisfaction is positively related to construct of emotional intelligence. Emotion regulation had unique predictive power for affect and job satisfaction for the younger age group (Kafetsios &

Loumakou, 2007) when survey was conducted on 475 educators in Greek. Carmeli et al (2003) and Schutte et al (1998) found a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and work attitude. Research suggests that people with high level of EI lead more effectively (Caruso et al. 2002; Barling et al. 2000; and Rosete & Ciarrochi, 2005 as in Dimitriades, 2007); are efficient job performers (Abraham, 2000; Carmeli, 2003); engage in organizational citizenship behaviors (Carmeli, 2003); feel satisfied with their job (Carmeli, 2003) and committed both to their career and to their employing organization (Carmeli, 2003). In short, EI is strongly linked to work-attitude especially job performance and job satisfaction.

This paper describes the research undertaken with a sample of Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) staff, comprising academics and non-academics. The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and work attitudes in the university setting. The university's environment today is very challenging and demanding due to changes of policies and the increasing standard and expectation of education in Malaysia. On top of that, the staffs especially lecturers, not only need to focus on teaching but also to embark on research and consultancy as well. Due to these pressures, it is important to explore their managerial skills – particularly the emotional intelligence of these staff in order to identify their capabilities as they are the main resource of the university in producing better and highly qualified graduates. Most of EI surveys were conducted among students and managers in private firms. Survey on university staff especially academics is rare. In all universities, human capital is an important intangible asset.

2. Methodology

2.1 Questionnaire survey

The emotional intelligence (EI) scale devised by Schutte et al (1998) was administered to university staff – academic and non-academic. The scale consisted 33-items used a 5-point Likert scale to measure EI on three main categories. 5 items of job performance adopted from Pearce and Porter (1986) and 5 items of job satisfaction adopted from Tsui et al (1992) are used to measure employee's work attitude (Carmeli, 2003) using 5-point Likert scale. All items were ranged from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. After scale purification, 23 of the initial 33 responses were summed and averaged to obtain overall EI score. Appendix I show the questions asked in the questionnaire survey.

2.2 Development of hypothesis for emotional intelligence and work attitude

Goleman (2001) found that emotional intelligence is positively related to job performance. A study conducted by George (2000) showed that aspects of emotional intelligence contribute to effective leadership. Job satisfaction is considered as a proxy for employee's well-being at work (Grandey as in Carmeli, 2003). Smith et al., (1969) suggests that job satisfaction is positively related to construct of emotional intelligence. Emotion regulation had unique predictive power for affect and job satisfaction for the younger age group (Kafetsios and Loumakou, 2007) when survey was conducted on 475 educators in Greek. Carmeli et al (2003) and Schutte et al (1998) found a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and work attitude.

H1: Emotional intelligence is positively related to work attitude: Emotional intelligence and demographic (gender, age, tenure of experience). With both males and females generally have equivalent abilities to develop their emotional intelligence (Fatt, 2002 as in Dimitriades, 2007), men and women as groups tend to have a shared gender-specific profile of strong and weak points (BarOn, 1997). Specifically women are more aware of their emotions, show more empathy and are more adept interpersonally (Fatt, 2000 as in Dimitriades, 2007) whereas men are more self-confident and optimistic and can handle stress more effectively.

H2a: Female gender is estimated to be positively correlated with emotional intelligence and work attitude.

Employees who have been with their employing organizations for a long time are more likely to develop a rich understanding of customers' varying expectations and needs (Carmile et al, 2003).

H2b: A positive relationship is hypothesized between duration of service and EI and Work Attitude.

The age of participants is strongly related to higher Emotional Intelligence and work performance (Higgs, 2004).

H2c: Emotional intelligence and Work Attitude are positively associated with age

This study was conducted in Universiti Teknologi MARA Johor. 200 questionnaires were distributed but only 127 (60%) questionnaires were returned. The summary of the respondents is described in the Table 1 below:

<<Table 1. Summary of respondents surveyed in the study>>

3. Results and discussions

Table 2 showed the descriptive analysis of the respondent sampled during the survey.

<<Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of All Principal Constructs (N = 127)>>

The mean scores of all variables are high. There is no low level of mean scores. The high mean scores implicate that respondents agree that all variables influence the work attitude. Among the independent variables, utilization of emotion

and appraisal of emotion have more influence towards work attitude. Even though the rest of knowledge management activities are moderately high, their mean scores of more than 5.00 imply that these variables are important because they may influence work attitude and organizational effectiveness to certain degree.

Finally, the standard deviations for all variables seem to fall between the ranges of 0.667 to 1.079 which simply reflect the existence of considerably acceptable variability (0.648) within the data set. The variation value indicates that all answers on the study variables were substantially different from one respondent to another, thus signified the existence of tolerable variances in responses.

For the 33-item scales the reliability is 0.826. Previous studies reported 0.84 (Austin et al., 2004), 0.89 and 0.90 (Schutte et al., 1998) and 0.93 (Dimitriadis, 2007). The reliability test of each category is shown in Table 3.

<<Table 3. Reliability test>>

Briggs and Cheek (1986) recommend that optimal range for inter-item correlation of 0.2 to 0.4. Overall alpha values are more than 0.7 which is considered reliable with the sample (Pallant, 2001). In Schutte et al (1998), model EI is suggested as a “homogenous construct” based on two arguments; first, there are alternative operationalization of emotional intelligences to the ones provided by Salovey and Mayer (1999) model and secondly, the model was represented by a limited set of self-report items. Alternative items or an assessment technique other than self-report might show more specific factors. Therefore exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was undertaken to examine the dimensionality of EI with present sample. Principal Axis Factoring with oblique rotation was performed, in line with recent methodological arguments (Dimitriadis, 2007). Frequently used measures to assess the appropriateness of factor analysis are the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett’s test of sphericity which provides the statistical probability that the correlation matrix has significant correlations. KMI was .719 and Bartlett’s was significant at $p < 0.001$ (approx. Chi-Square = 1548.974, $df = 630$) indicating that the sample was suitable for factor analysis procedures. Due to the exploratory nature of the analysis, the latent root criterion (eigenvalue-greater-than-one rule) was employed for extraction of factors where only variables loading 0.5 or above were used for factor interpretation (Hair et al., 1998). The results are shown in Table 4.

<<Table 4. Factor analysis>>

Communalities below 0.50 are considered “too low for having sufficient explanation” (Hair et al, 1998). Therefore, 10 items were removed from subsequent analysis. As guideline, an alpha value of 0.70 and above is considered to be the criterion for demonstrating internal consistency (Nunnally, 1988). Cronbach’s alpha in this study was 0.747. After eliminating items which did not meet the selection criteria, only 26 items remained which were subjected to another factor analysis. The items loaded on three meaningful factors – factor 1: Utilization of emotions, factor 2: Regulating of emotion, factor 3: Expression of emotion. H1 correlation analysis was tested and found that emotional intelligence is moderately positively correlated with Work Attitude at 0.396 ($p < 0.01$). The overall model explained 48% of variance in dependent variable and this is a significant contribution of $p < 0.00$, $F = 12.375$. Therefore, H1 is supported.

The regulation of emotion does not have any inter-correlation with utilization of emotion and expression of emotion. But regulation of emotion is correlated negatively with job performance and job satisfaction as shown in Table 5. Gender is entered in ANOVA model and marginal means is presented in the Table 6 and 7. Male scored higher than female on both EI ($F = 0.216$, $p > 0.00$) and work attitude ($F = 0.057$, $p > 0.00$). However, there is no significant difference between male and female.

<<Table 5. Correlation Analysis of EI and Work Attitude (N = 127)>>

<<Table 6. Correlation of EI elements and Work-Attitude elements>>

<<Table 7a. Descriptive test of EI, Work Attitude and Gender>>

To test demographic influence on Emotional Intelligence and Work Attitude, an independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare Emotional Intelligence scores for males and females as shown in Table 7b.

<<Table 7b. ANOVA>>

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare Work Attitude scores for males and females (Table 8). There was no significant differences in scored for males ($M = 3.95$, $SD = 0.562$) and females ($M = 3.90$, $SD = 0.444$); $t = 0.083$, $p = 0.239$. The correlation between Emotional Intelligence and Work attitude is higher for males = 0.513 compared to females = 0.392 (Table 9)

<<Table 8. EI and Work Attitude towards Gender>>

<<Table 9: EI, Work Attitude and Duration of Work>>

We found no statistically significant gender differences in EI and Work Attitude but male scored higher on both EI and Work attitude. From this test, it showed that men had higher correlation value of 0.513 compared to women at 0.392 (Table 10).

<<Table 10: EI, Work Attitude and Age>>

Age and length of service are not correlated to EI as well as job performance and job satisfaction (Work Attitude) which is contrasted to the study conducted by Kafetsios and Loumakou (2007) and Higgs (2004). Therefore, all H2 are not supported.

Culture could be another reason of low response rate as people are not comfortable to discuss their emotions openly. This is especially among the non-academics. This study is only conducted in Johor branch. As majority of respondents' length of service was less than 3 years, this did not indicate a comprehensive view of the real emotional intelligence among staff. For future research, the study should be conducted for the whole organization to get a better finding.

4. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine the emotional intelligence – component of managerial skills- towards work attitudes in the university setting. Overall, EI was found to be positively related to work-attitude. Appraisal and expression of emotion is moderately high correlated to job performance and job satisfaction. This indicated that the staffs of UiTM Johor are good in leading and managing people whereby utilizing emotions is important for creative thinker, better planner and highly motivated people. This could be due to the fact that the majority of the respondents are serving less than 3 years and age range from 25- 40, a period which they are constantly striving for improvement in their career path. However, the regulation of emotion is negatively correlated to job performance and job satisfaction indicated that when people experiencing a negative affective states, they would feel unhappy therefore unable to produce better performance.

The findings showed that age, length of service, position and experience did not have any impact on emotional intelligence. There isn't any difference between males and females when dealing with work attitude as proven by Langhorn(2004) when he conducted EI survey among general managers. However, when tested EI and Work Attitude together, males showed a higher EI and Work Attitude compared to female. Interestingly, males are better in capitalizing their EI for better work attitude compared to female which the former form the majority of workforce in the organization.

The study implies that organization should provide an adequate conducive environment and training of EI for lecturers. Those with lower EI would affect their work attitude. Females are the majority work force in the university but their EI is lower compared to males. Regulation of one's own emotion and moods can results in positive and negative affective states. These findings showed that staffs are lacking of regulation of emotion when dealing with others and unable to manage their emotion. The aim of this study was to examine the level of emotional intelligence among lecturers and management staff. Emphasizing more training in Emotional Intelligence would help staffs to be more open in expressing their emotions thus will help them to manage their emotions to enhance their performance. The academics are interacting directly with students; therefore being able to positively manage their emotions effectively might result in either positive or negative affective results.

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Table 1. Summary of respondents surveyed in the study

		Frequency	%
Gender	Male	38	29.9
	Female	89	70.1
Age	<25	4	3.1
	25-30	45	35.4
	31-40	49	38.6
	41-50	26	20.5
	>50	3	2.4
Ethnicity	Malay	117	92.1
	Chinese	3	2.4
	Indian	5	3.9
	Others	2	1.6
Position	Assoc Prof	3	2.4
	Senior Lecturer	10	7.9
	Lecturer	99	78.0
	Administrator	10	7.9
	Others	5	3.9
Length of service	< 3 yrs	56	44.1
	3 – 6 years	32	25.2
	7 – 10 years	19	9
	11 – 15 years	9	7.1
	> 15 years	11	8.7
Education level	Degree	15	11.8
	Masters	98	77.2
	PhD	1	0.8
	Prof Qualification	1	0.8
	Others	11	8.7
Work Experience	Only in univ	43	33.9
	Other govt agency	33	26.0
	Corporate	51	40.2

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of All Principal Constructs (N = 127)

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Regulation Emotion	5.81	.667
Appraisal Expression	6.33	.742
Utilization Emotion	6.35	.685
Job Performance	6.86	1.041
Job Satisfaction	6.88	1.079
EI	6.16	.557

Table 3. Reliability test

	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Emotional Intelligence	0.740	36
Work Attitude	0.848	10

Table 4. Factor analysis

Item	Communalities	Factor Loadings
EI1	.720	.773
EI2	.550	.502
EI5	.624	.683
EI6	.705	.747
EI8	.571	.669
EI11	.570	.576
EI12	.674	.782
EI13	.758	.552
EI15	.594	.558
EI16	.620	.529
EI17	.627	-.717
EI21	.666	.753
EI22	.626	.687
EI23	.586	.503
EI24	.621	.601
EI25	.651	.725
EI26	.679	.709
EI27	.450	.537
EI29	.689	-.600
EI30	.583	.529
EI31	.660	.774
EI32	.522	.536
EI33	.637	.730
EI34	.574	.523
EI35	.711	.781
EI36	.525	.671

[Scale means 96.375 Scale SD 7.848 Alpha 0.747]

Table 5. Correlation Analysis of EI and Work Attitude (N = 127)

		EI	Work Attitude
EI	Pearson Correlation	1	0.396**
Work Attitude	Pearson Correlation	0.396**	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 6. Correlation of EI elements and Work-Attitude elements

		Regulation Emotion	Utilization Emotion	Expression Emotion	Job Performance	Job Satisfaction
Regulation Emotion	Pearson Correlation		-.086	-.095	-.205(*)	-.199(*)
Utilization Emotion	Pearson Correlation	-.086		.496(**)	.427(**)	.418(**)
Expression Emotion	Pearson Correlation	-.095	.496(**)		.436(**)	.444(**)
Job Performance	Pearson Correlation	-.205(*)	.427(**)	.436(**)		.643(**)
Job Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	-.199(*)	.418(**)	.444(**)	.643(**)	

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 7a. Descriptive test of EI, Work Attitude and Gender

		Mean	SD
EI	Male	3.568	0.3315
	Female	3.540	0.2598
Work Attitude	Male	3.952	0.5626
	Female	3.930	0.4440

Table 7b. ANOVA

		F	Sig
EI	Between Groups	0.216	0.643
	Within Groups		
	Total		
Work Attitude	Between Groups	0.057	0.812
	Within Groups		
	Total		

Table 8. EI and Work Attitude towards Gender

Gender			EI	Work-Attitude
Male	EI	Pearson Correlation	1	.513*
		Sig. (1-tailed)		.000
		N	38	38
	Work Attitude	Pearson Correlation	.513*	1
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	
		N	38	38
Female	EI	Pearson Correlation	1	.392*
		Sig. (1-tailed)		.000
		N	89	89
	Work Attitude	Pearson Correlation	.392*	1
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	
		N	89	89

Table 9. EI, Work Attitude and Duration of Work

	EI	Work Attitude	Duration of Work
EI	1	.437(**)	.033
Work-Attitude	.437(**)	1	.051
Duration of work	.033	.051	1

Table 10. EI, Work Attitude and Age

	EI	Work Attitude	Age
EI	1	.437(**)	.043
Work-Attitude	.437(**)	1	.149
Age	.043	.149	1

Appendix 1. The instrument questions (The rate is ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree)

No	Emotional Intelligence
1a.	I use my feelings to help to find new ideas
1.	I know when to speak about my personal problems to others
2.	When I am face with obstacles, I remember the times when I was facing similar obstacles and overcoming them.
3	I generally expect to succeed when I am trying something new.
4.	Other people find it easy to confide in me.
5.	I am sensitive to others' emotions and moods
6.	Some of the major events of my life led me to re-evaluate what is important and not important
7.	When I am happy, I see new possibilities
8.	Emotion doesn't have much effect on my quality of life.
9.	I can quickly pull myself together after a setback
10.	I generally don't expect good things to happen.
11	I prefer to keep my emotion private.
12	When I experience a positive emotion, I know how to make it last.
13.	I can make my friends relax when they are stressful.
14	I seek out activities that make me happy
15	I can show people how I am feeling through my "body language"
16	I have little interest in the impression I make on others
17	When I am in a positive mood, solving problem is easy for me
18	I can tell when someone is upset with me
19	I don't usually know why my emotion changes.
20	I don't find that being in a positive mood helps me to come up with new ideas
21	I find it hard to control my emotion
22	I easily recognize my emotions when I experience them
23	I motivate myself by imagining a good outcome on the tasks I take on
24	I compliment others when they have done something well
25	I am aware of the "body-language" messages other people sent.
26	When others tell me about an important event in their lives, I almost feel as though I have I I I have experienced myself
27	When I feel happy, I tend to come up with new ideas.
28	When I am faced with a challenge, I give up because I believe I will fail
29	I know what others are feeling by looking at them
30	I help others feel better when they are down
31	I use good mood to helps myself to keep trying in the face of obstacles
32	I can tell how others feel by the tone of their voices
33	It is easy for me to understand why people feel the way they do
34	I find it hard to stay positive when I get stressed or worried
35	I trust my feeling when I make important decisions

No	Work-Attitude
1.	Overall, my work performance is good
2.	I can get along with anybody in the organizations
3.	I can complete my tasks on time
4.	I achieve the quality of performance as set by my organization
5.	I am able to achieve and fulfill the work performance goals
6.	I always achieve the targets as what I written for my SKT
7.	I am satisfied with the nature of the work I perform
8.	Overall, I am satisfied with my current job situation.
9.	I am satisfied with the quality of performance I delivered
10.	I am satisfied with the my colleagues
11	I am satisfied with promotional opportunities given by my organization