

Emotional Intelligence and Job Performance among School Teachers

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Abstract

The concept of emotional intelligence has observed a rapidly growing interest among the society. However, there has been a regrettable lack of attention on the emotional intelligence construct especially in an education setting. This paper was aimed to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and job performance among school teachers. This study used a quantitative research methodology involved survey questionnaire to collect data. A total of 384 school teachers from the academic primary and secondary schools involved in this study. Emotional intelligence was assessed by Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS). The findings of this empirical study found that all the four dimensions of emotional intelligence (self-emotional appraisal, others' emotional appraisal, use of emotion, and regulation of emotion) were positively significant associated with job performance. Overall, this research has makes several theoretical contributions to the emotional intelligence literatures, and provides some meaningful managerial implications to the school administrators. Several recommendations for future research were drawn from this research as well.

Keywords: emotional intelligence, job performance, school teacher, Wong and law emotional intelligence scale (WLEIS)

1. Introduction

The role of a teacher in today's world has become more complex and diverse (Williams & Burden, 2000). Teachers are directly responsible for educating future generation and shape the personality and life of a student. Schools have always focused on teacher's performance as Stronge et al. (2007) had identified an important relationship between competent teachers and student achievement. Hence, employ highly qualified teachers that obtain specified professional qualification from a university or college, appropriate credentialing, and have showed enthusiasm in their teaching assignments is a major focus among schools in the nation (Mosley, 2006). More recently, some literature authors are beginning to explore the role of emotions and emotional intelligence in education as a means to improve performance (Arnold, 2005; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Rohana, Kamaruzaman, & Zanariah, 2009; Sutton, 2004; Najmuddin, Noriah, & Mohamad, 2011). In fact, Mortiboys (2005) suggested emotional intelligence should be developed and employed to complement with both the theoretical content and teaching pedagogy in teacher education. Hence, emotional intelligence is seen as a great instrument which can evaluate a teacher performance, achievement and qualities (Birol et al., 2009).

2. Literature Review

The concept of emotional intelligence has become a popular topic in the psychological literature and attracts much of the public attention in recent years (Mayer, Roberts, & Barsade, 2008). Organisation requires interpersonal interactions to accomplish its goals, and most jobs require the ability to manage emotions. The education industry is a service industry that involves significant amount of person-to-person interactions and emotional exchange especially between teachers and students. Emotions are a complex state of feeling that will affect our thought and behaviour, physical and psychological changes (Bechara, 2004; Caruso & Salovey, 2004; Clore & Huntsinger, 2007). Many researchers typically perceive emotions as a negative influence and were disorganized interruption of mental functioning that hindrance logical thought (Fineman, 2000). In contrast, other researchers have argued that emotions are essential to rational thinking (Damasio, 1994). Caruso and Salovey (2004) similarly viewed emotions as positive and essential in making appropriate decision making. Emotions also have indirect effects on our decisions through implicitly shaping our attitudes and judgments (Zajonc, 2000). The successes of any schools are lying in its workforce. As such, the human factor needs to be

placed in the foreground because school systems can only progress based on the attitudes, judgment and behaviour of their workforce. Hence, it is important for a teacher to demonstrate emotional competence in teaching which could lead them for a better job performance (Hosotani & Imai-Matsumura, 2011).

Empirical studies from researchers have shown that teaching profession as one of the most stressful career (Kokkinos, 2007; Noriah, Iskandar, & Ridzauddin, 2010; Stoeber & Rennert, 2008) and need to perform a great deal of emotional labour (Isenbarger & Zembylas, 2006; Schutz et al., 2007; Hebson, Earnshaw, & Marchington, 2007). Develop emotional intelligence skills are vital to reduce the effect of negative work-related stress which can potentially lead to burnout (Jude, 2011; Saklofske et al., 2007). In addition, emotional intelligence teacher can facilitate positive atmosphere in the classroom (Durlak et al., 2011; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009), influences student with positive behaviour (Mayer et al., 2004) and foster student's favorable adjustment to the school (Hamre et al., 2008; Turner, Meyer, & Schweinle, 2003).

Job performance comprises any behaviours or actions that contributed to the achievement of task or organizational goal (Campbell, 1990). Employees with good performance can be related to specific business outcomes such as better financial performance, productive workforce, and better retention rates. Numerous studies on the relationship between emotional intelligence and individual work performance have been conducted (Carmeli, 2003; Jennings & Palmer, 2007; Sy, Tram, & O'Hara 2006). However, there is still a paucity of studies in examine the teachers' emotional intelligence.

Emotional intelligence and its specific dimensions have been seen to contribute to the teaching role (Corcoran & Tormey, 2012). Teachers who are skilled at appraising their own emotions are better in communicate their needs and pay more concern on their own feelings in order to accomplish goals and improve performance achievement (George, 2000). Teachers with the ability to appraise others' emotions are more attentive to others' needs and more likely to provide emotional support to gain cooperation by others to achieve a common task and show good performance (Day & Carroll, 2004). Teaching involving a whirlpool of ever changing emotions (Erb, 2000) and these emotions can be effective for different reasoning tasks. Teachers that know how to use emotions to aid cognitive processing will have a better performance (O'Boyle et al., 2011). Finally, the ability to regulate emotions associated with emotional self-control. This ability may help teachers to display appropriate emotions during emotionally arousing situations and gain more support from principals and colleagues that positively influence their job outcomes (Brackett et al., 2010). Given this literature, it would seem logical to hypothesized that that teachers' emotional intelligence is associated with effective teacher performance.

3. Conceptual Framework

In the early 1990s, the term emotional intelligence was first introduced by Salovey and Mayer (1990) as "the ability to monitor one's own and other's emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use the information to guide one's thinking and actions" (Salovey & Mayer, 1990, p.189). Their concept on emotional intelligence is further divided into four branches: emotional perception, emotional assimilation, emotional understanding, and emotional management. However, the concept of emotional intelligence was popularised by Goleman (1995) in his best selling book *'Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More than IQ'*. Goleman defined emotional intelligence as "abilities such as being able to motivate him/her and persist in the face of frustrations; to control impulses and delay gratification; to regulate one's moods and keep distress from swamping the ability to think; to empathise and to hope" (Goleman, 1995, p. 36). Goleman's model of emotional intelligence was characterized into four main dimensions: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management (Goleman, 1998). Given that Goleman's model includes vast number of personality traits and behavioural characteristics, his model has been criticised and difficult to operationalise in empirical studies (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2008). At the most general level, the concept of emotional intelligence is distinguished into mental ability model and mixed model. The mental ability model regards emotional intelligence as a pure intelligence which focused on the individual's ability to interplay emotion with thought processes (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Mixed model conceptualise emotional intelligence as a diverse construct, including aspects of personality and traits (Goleman, 1995; Bar-On, 1997). Despite these multiple definition and models of emotional intelligence, researchers generally agreed that all these models are distinct from standard intelligence, or I.Q (Cherniss, 2010).

The conceptual framework underlying this study was based on the work of Davies, Stankov and Roberts (1998). Their model was not only developed based on the Mayer and Salovey's (1997) ability model but also based on a comprehensive study of emotional intelligence literature (Law et al., 2008). Davies et al. (1998) consists of four dimensions: (a) appraisal and expression of emotion in the self (b) appraisal and recognition of emotion in others (c) regulation of emotion in the self (d) use of emotion to facilitate performance. The appraisal and expression of

emotion in the self refers to one's abilities to understand and express his or her emotion while the appraisal and recognition of emotions in others demonstrates the abilities to perceive and recognize the emotions of other people. The regulation of emotion is the ability to control their emotions. Finally, the use of emotion to facilitate performance is the ability to use emotion to achieve better personal performance and behaviours (Davies et al., 1998; Law, Wong, & Song, 2004).

According to Bar-on (2002) and Chang (2007) emotional intelligence is a set of abilities and skills that can be learned and developed through training. There are several training programs in the developmental stages that facilitate the development of emotional intelligence among teachers (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Despite this, it is important to ascertain the emotional intelligence level among teachers as a first step and identify the relationship between emotional intelligence and job performance among school teacher.

4. Methods

4.1 Design and Sample

The present study utilized a descriptive correlational design. A convenience sample of 384 academic primary and secondary school teachers was recruited in Peninsular Malaysia. The number of samples representing each primary and secondary schools consisted of 192 teachers. The exclusion criterion was that teachers with the teaching experience less than 2 years are not included in the study as teachers with less experience are not competent to provide sufficient information on their job characteristics (Sala, 2002)

4.2 Instruments

4.2.1 Emotional Intelligence

The Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS) devised by Wong and Law (2002) was employed in this study to measure the school teachers' emotional intelligence. The WLEIS consists of 16 items which divided into four dimensions: The Self Emotional Appraisal (SEA), The Others' Emotional Appraisal (OEA), The Use of Emotion (UOE), and The Regulation of Emotion (ROE). Sample items included "I really understand what I feel", "I am a good observer of others' emotions" and "I am a self-motivated person". All the items are scored on a five-point Likert scale, on which 1 represents *strongly disagree* and 5 represents *strongly agree*. Coefficient alphas for the four dimensions were SEA (0.82), OEA (0.81), UOE (0.76), ROE (0.89). The overall reliability for this scale was 0.85.

4.2.2 Job Performance

Williams and Anderson (1991) in-role job performance seven items self-rating scale was used to measure school teachers' job performance. This scale assessed how well teachers perform activities in the school. Teachers will respond to each item on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). High scores indicated high levels of job performance. A reliability of 0.75 was found for the job performance measure in the current study.

4.3 Procedure

An official letter was first mailed to the school principal to obtain approval for the data collection. After approval was granted, questionnaires were distributed to the participating schools. Teachers who agreed to take part in the study were assured that their responses would be treated confidentially.

Collected data was analyzed by using the SPSS software. Pearson correlation was used to assess the relationship between emotional intelligence and job performance.

5. Data/Results

5.1 Characteristics of the Sample

A total of 384 school teachers from academic primary and secondary schools participated in the current study. Of these, 158 teachers (41.1%) have 2-5 years teaching experiences at their present school while 100 teachers (26%) have worked for 5-10 years, and 126 teachers have worked at the present school for more than 10 years. There are 332 (86.5%) of the teachers were female, fifty two (13.5%) of the teachers were male. The age of the teacher was ranged from below 25 to above 50 years old with the mean of 38.48 years old with a standard deviation of 8.58. Most of the school teachers were between the ages of 30-39 (40.10%). Sixty seven (17.4%) were single, 315 (82%) were married, two (0.5%) were divorced. Majority of the school teachers were Malay (58.1%), followed by Chinese (22.7%) and Indian (19%). These results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Characteristics of the participants (N=384)

Characteristics	N (%)
Gender	
Male	52 (13.5)
Female	332 (86.5)
Marital Status	
Single	67 (17.4)
Married	315 (82%)
Divorced	2 (0.5%)
Race	
Malay	223 (58.1)
Chinese	87 (22.7)
Indian	73 (19.0)
Other	1 (0.3%)
Teaching Experience	
2-5 years	158 (41.1%)
5-10 years	100 (26%)
10 years above	126 (32.8%)

5.2 Emotional Intelligence and Job Performance

WLEIS was used to measure emotional intelligence in this study. The total score provides an overall index of the respondent's emotional intelligence. Higher scores indicate a potential higher degree of emotional intelligence. The results revealed that 52.3 percent of the sample group were in the low level category of emotional intelligence (EI) while 47.7 percent were in the high level category (mean = 4.08, SD = 0.37). The WLEIS has four dimensions. The first dimension, self-emotional appraisal (SEA) obtained the highest average (mean = 4.37, SD = 0.50) where 52.6 percent of the sample group was in the low level while 47.4 percent was in the high level. The second dimension, others' emotional appraisal (OEA) had a 45.6 percent of the sample group in low level while 54.5 percent was in the high level (mean = 3.89, SD = 0.57). The third dimension, use of emotion (UOE) with 44.5 percent in the low level while 55.5 percent in the high level (mean = 4.21, SD = 0.51). And, the fourth dimension which relates to regulation of emotion (ROE) had a 39.6 percent of the sample group in low level while 60.4 percent in high level (mean = 3.85, SD = 0.63). Results showed that more than half of the sample groups were low in overall emotional intelligence but high in OEA, UOE, and ROE. The results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Scores on the emotional intelligence and job performance

Dimensions	Mean	SD	Level of EI and JP			
			Low		High	
			n	%	n	%
EI	4.08	0.37	201	52.3	183	47.7
SEA	4.37	0.50	202	52.6	182	47.4
OEA	3.89	0.57	175	45.6	209	54.5
UOE	4.21	0.51	171	44.5	213	55.5
ROE	3.85	0.63	152	39.6	232	60.4
JP	4.25	0.36	195	50.8	189	49.3

Note: N=384. EI=Emotional Intelligence, SEA=Self Emotional Appraisal, OEA=Others' Emotional Appraisal, UOE=Use of Emotion, ROE=Regulation of Emotion, JP= Job Performance.

The mean total score for the sample group in job performance was 4.25 (SD = 0.36). Results revealed that 50.8 percent of the sample group was in low performance while 49.3 percent was in the high level of job performance.

The relationship between emotional intelligence and job performance is moderate but statistically significant ($r = 0.40$). All the four emotional intelligence dimensions (SEA, OEA, UOE, ROE) were significantly correlated with

the job performance. The SEA ($r = 0.31$) and UOE ($r = 0.33$) has a moderate relationship with the job performance while OEA ($r = 0.23$) and ROE ($r = 0.23$) has a weak relationship with job performance. These results are included in Table 3.

Table 3. Correlation between emotional intelligence and job performance

	Job Performance
EI	0.40**
SEA	0.31**
OEA	0.23**
UOE	0.33**
ROE	0.23**

Note: N=384. **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed). EI=Emotional Intelligence, SEA=Self Emotional Appraisal, OEA=Others' Emotional Appraisal, UOE=Use of Emotion, ROE=Regulation of Emotion, JP= Job Performance.

6. Discussion

The significant relationship between emotional intelligence and job performance in this study supports the previous literature (Carmeli, 2003; Jennings & Palmer, 2007; Sy et al., 2006). Results of the findings indicated that study focus in business organisation may also be valid in the school setting.

Emotional intelligence people have the ability to adapt uncertain environment and work with products that involve feeling (Bar-On, 1997; Matthews, Zeidner, & Robert, 2002). School teacher is commonly known as working in the unhealthy and demanding work environment which will lead to stress and negative emotion activity. Student misbehaviour, heavy workload, pressure from parents and community are common stressors for teacher. However, teacher as a service provider are expected to display appropriate emotions at work in order to maintain their job performance. Hence, emotionally intelligence is potentially helpful in reducing stress and increasing teacher effectiveness (Bar-On, 1997; Gabel, Dolan, & Cerdin, 2005).

The results of this study not only examining the overall emotional intelligence, but also specific dimensions of emotional intelligence. Findings showed that all the four dimension of emotional intelligence (self-emotional appraisal, others' emotional appraisal, use of emotion, and regulation of emotion) were significantly correlated with job performance as well. The ability to appraise self-emotion and understand others' emotion assists teachers to monitor self-emotional states and others' feelings. Accordingly, teachers will take the appropriate actions to adjust factors that influence their emotions which enable them to perform better in their job. Whereas, sensitivity to others' feelings could help managing their relationship with others and thereby contribute to better work performance. Teachers that are more aware on the how emotions can influence their work outcomes are more adept at using their emotion to facilitate job performance. Teacher's capability in regulating emotion can sustain internal affective states which may help them to focus on their job.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, findings of this study suggest that teachers' with high emotional intelligence are more likely to perform well in their job. The results have some important implications in both academic and practical perspective.

Conceptually, emotional intelligence should be a universal construct across cultures. However, most of the studies on this topic were conducted in the western countries and little empirical research in Asian countries such as Malaysia. Findings of this study has validated that the role of emotional intelligence in enhancing work outcome can be generalized to other cultures where social norms and expectations are quite different from the western.

Practically, this study demonstrates that teaching professions requires certain level of emotional intelligence. In this regard, designing appropriate training programs to improve school teachers' emotional intelligence is worthwhile.

This study is not without limitations. First, emotional intelligence was measured by self-report. The potential effect of self-distortion on self-report measures has been criticised (Day & Carroll, 2008; Roberts, Zeidner, & Matthews, 2001). However, self-report emotional intelligence measure that demonstrated acceptable reliability

and validity (Brackett et al., 2006; Law et al., 2004; Petrides, Frederickson, & Furnham, 2004; Tett, Fox, & Wong, 2005) may still be important in emotional intelligence research. Second, the present study is cross-sectional. Future research to test the causal relationships by utilizing longitudinal methodology might be offered. In addition, other potential moderating or mediating variables may also consider to be examined in this study.

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