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Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Job Performance among Employees in Malaysia Service Sector

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Abstract
In this study, the researcher has intended to examine the level of emotional intelligence among respondents in Malaysian service sector. The differences of emotional intelligence level will be examined based on demographic factors such as gender, age, and marital status. This study also examines the relationship of emotional intelligence on employees' job performance. This study use quantitative method whereby a set of questionnaires are used to collect the data. There were 330 of data responses from employees in Malaysia service sector. The data analyses in this study were analyzed by using the IBM SPSS statistics software version 23. Descriptive statistics were used to measure the level of emotional intelligence. Meanwhile, testing of means analysis were used to examine the differences in the levels of emotional intelligence. Pearson Correlation Coefficient and regression analysis were performed to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and employees' job performance. Results indicate that there is a strong significant relationship between emotional intelligence and employees' job performance. The discussions of study implications and future research will be explained at the end of this article.
Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Job Performance, Service Sector, Malaysia.

Introduction

Malaysia is regarded as service economy since service industry contributes more than 54.2% of the country's GDP as in 2017. Service industry has become the major player in Malaysian economy which was previously dominated by manufacturing, agriculture, forestry and mining industries. Service firms and businesses have grown rapidly to cater to the needs of the people. Financial institutions, insurance companies, hotels, transportation companies, hospitals, restaurants and others turn up to be the main players in the economy. They provide a wide range of services to different categories of customers. There is a very high competition in service industry which forces the companies to differentiate themselves from others. The competition requires the companies to offer facilitating and supporting services along with the core services. Those who offer the most attractive services will survive and gain bigger market share. On the other hand, for those who failed to capture the needs of the market will suffer and be left behind.

To ensure quality, efficiency and innovation; service companies have employed various strategies and techniques to deal with the service issues such as Total Quality Management (TQM), Business Process Reengineering (BPR), Customer Relations Management (CRM), and Service Quality (SQ). There are also companies that have gone further by requiring their employees to display high level of Emotional Intelligence (EI) competencies in order to better deal with customers as well as to achieve a market niche. Emotional intelligence as asserted by its proponents, focuses on the employees' ability to identify and understand the emotions in order to regulate and use the proper emotional behavior (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). Emotional intelligence is increasingly relevant in service sector as it can enhance employees' understanding in assessing customers' behaviors and thus increasing the employees' job performance. In addition, the performance of service employees can stimulate growth in service industry through creating values to service businesses.

Research Objectives

There are four research objectives addressed in this study. First, to examine the level of emotional intelligence among employees in Malaysia service sector. Second, to examine the differences of emotional intelligence based on the demographic factors such as gender, age, and marital status. Third, to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and employees' job performance in Malaysia service sector. Fourth, to identify which dimension of emotional intelligence as a major contributor towards employees' job performance.

Research Hypotheses

Four research hypotheses formulated in this study are:

(1) The level of emotional intelligence among employees in Malaysia service sector are difference.

(2) H2a: The level of emotional intelligence are difference among gender.
H2b: The level of emotional intelligence are difference among age.
H2c: The level of emotional intelligence are difference among marital status.

(3) There is a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and employees' job performance among employees in Malaysia service sector.
(4) The four parameters of emotional intelligence namely; Self-Emotional Appraisal, Other Emotional Appraisal, Regulations of Emotion and Use of Emotion will explained employees' job performance.

Literature Review

The study used Wong and Law's Emotional Intelligence model (WLEIS) because; firstly, Wong and Law (2002) developed the emotional intelligence model based on Salovey and Mayer's (1990) original conceptualization of emotional intelligence. Therefore, the model has similar dimensions and meanings. Secondly, the model has been tested and verified by other researchers, thus, implying that the model has been empirically validated (Joseph & Newman, 2010; Shi & Wang, 2007; Wong, Foo, Wang, & Wong, 2007; Wong & Law, 2002). Last but not least, the model is the most parsimonious to measure emotional intelligence. The conceptual definitions of WLEIS are addressed as stipulated below:

1. *Self-Emotional Appraisal (SEA).* This dimension is relate to individual ability in understanding their own emotions. Individual with Self-Emotional Appraisal are able to express their emotions naturally. Understanding own emotions requires individual to understand what causes them, what their consequences are and how the emotions work.
2. *Others' Emotional Appraisal (OEA)*. This dimension is relate to individual ability in identifying and understanding others' emotions. Individual who possessed higher Others' Emotional Appraisal will be more sensitive towards others' emotions and are able to read others' mind. Similarly, understanding others emotions also requires individual to understand what causes them, what their consequences are and how the emotions work.
3. *Regulation of Emotion (ROE)*. This dimension is relate to individual ability in regulating their emotions in order to prepare for the next dimension of emotions. Individual requires to have mind stability in order to produce better Regulation of Emotion. The benefits gain from successfully regulating emotions involves the ability to control arousals to maximize performance, controlling frustration and temptation, inhibit destructive responses to provocation and act correctly despite pressure to do otherwise.
4. *Use of Emotion (UOE)*. This dimension is relate to individual ability in properly using their emotions in order to promote proper behaviors.

According Motowidlo, Borman, and Schmit (1997), job performance is defined as the distinct behavioral of actions that an individual performs for a certain period of time. There are five dimensions of employees' job performance as suggested by Welbourne, Johnson and Erez (1998). Table 1 describes each dimensions of employees' job performance.

Table 1: Job Performance (JP) Dimensions (Welbourne et al., 1998)

Dimensions	Descriptions
Job Role (JR)	Performing tasks based on job description.

Career Role (CR)	Obtaining the essential skills and showing progress in organization.
Innovator Role (IR)	Produce creativity and innovation in doing job.
Team Role (TR)	Working as a team toward success of the firm.
Organization Role (OR)	Able to work beyond the stipulated job description for the firm benefits.

Although the relationships between job performance and emotional intelligence have been well established in other developing country (Abraham, 2004; Austin, 2004; Carmeli, 2003; Gabriel & Griffiths, 2002; Higgs, 2004; Lyons & Schneider, 2005; Varca, 2004), but up to date there is no empirical evidence on the correlation between emotional intelligence and employees' job performance in Malaysia service sector. Thus, the relationship between emotional intelligence and job performance needs further investigation.

Methodology

Population and Sample

In this study, the researcher use random sampling in order to collect data among employees in Malaysia service sector. There were 400 questionnaires distributed to employees working in Malaysia service sector. Of those, only 330 questionnaire were returned, and yield a response rate of 82%. Based on the responses, 53% of the respondents were female and 47% were male. The mean age of the respondents was 31 to 50 years old with 61.2%, followed by 21.2% of more than 50 years old and 17.6% of less than 30 years old. There were 78.5% of married respondents, followed by single with 17.9% and divorced with 3.6%.

Measure

The research instruments used in this study were adopted from various sources based on the suitability. Emotional intelligence measure was adopted from Wong and Law's (2002) Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS), which consists of 16 items measuring the four components of emotional intelligence. Responses were provided based on four-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). Job performance measure was adopted from Welbourne, Johnson and Erez's (1998), Role Based Performance Scale (RBPS), which consists of 20 items, measuring the five components of job performance. Responses were provided based on four-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (needs much improvement) to 4 (excellent).

Data Analyses

In order to analyze the data in this study, the IBM SPSS statistics software version 23 has been used. Descriptive statistics such as percentage, mean, and standard deviation were tested to measure the level of emotional intelligence. On the other hand, the independent sample t-test and one-way analysis of variance were used to analyze differences in the levels of emotional intelligence. Pearson Correlation Coefficient was performed in order to analyze the relationship between emotional intelligence and employees' job performance. Meanwhile, regression analysis was used to examine which factor of emotional intelligence contribute more to employees' job performance.

Result

Table 2 presents the level of emotional intelligence among employees in Malaysia service sector. Majority of the respondents possessed high level of emotional intelligence which about 70.3%. Meanwhile, only 29.7% of respondents possessed moderate level of emotional intelligence. Based from the findings, there is no respondent possess low level of emotional intelligence.

Table 2: Level of Emotional Intelligence

Level of Emotional Intelligence	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Low	0	0
Moderate	98	29.7%
High	232	70.3%

Table 3 indicates the level of each variable involved in this study. The results indicated that the mean value for Regulation of Emotions (m=2.81) is higher compared to other emotional intelligence dimensions. Meanwhile, Team Role (m=2.68) is higher compared to other job performance dimensions. Based from the results, it support hypothesis H1.

Table 3: Level of Variable Involve in this Study

Variables	Mean	Std.
Emotional Intelligence (Overall)	2.73	0.87
Self-Emotional Appraisal	2.77	0.95
Others Emotional Appraisal	2.66	0.94
Regulation of Emotions	2.81	0.95
Use of Emotions	2.66	0.97
Job Performance (Overall)	2.55	0.87
Job Role	2.58	0.92
Career Role	2.57	0.96
Innovator Role	2.51	0.96
Team Role	2.68	0.98
Organizational Role	2.43	1.01

Table 4 shows the result of independent t-test according to gender. The result indicated that there is a significant difference in the level of emotional intelligence among gender (t value = 2.25, $p<0.05$). Therefore, the result supported the hypothesis H2a.

Table 4: Independent T-Test according to Gender

	Gender	N	Mean	t	df	Sig.
Emotional Intelligence	Male	155	2.84	2.25	327	.025
	Female	175	2.63			

Table 5 presents the result of ANOVA test based on age. Based on the result, the level of emotional intelligence is difference across age whereby F=3.22, p<0.05. Thus the result support hypothesis H2b.

Table 5: ANOVA Test for Age

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Between Groups	7.183	3	2.394	3.220	0.023
Within Groups	242.375	326	.743		
Total	249.558	329			

Table 6 indicates the result of ANOVA test based on marital status. The result showed that there is no difference in the level of emotional intelligence according to marital status whereby F=1.25, p>0.05. Thus, the result reject hypothesis H2c.

Table 6: ANOVA Test for Marital Status

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Between Groups	9.414	10	.941	1.251	0.258
Within Groups	240.144	319	.753		
Total	249.558	329			

Table 7 presents the interrelationship between variables. The findings indicate that there is a strong relationship between emotional intelligence and job performance (r=.607, p<0.01). Meanwhile, there are moderate relationship between all emotional intelligence dimensions and job performance dimensions. Overall, the results indicated that high level of emotional

intelligence will increase job performance of respondents. Thus the results support hypothesis H3.

Table 7: Interrelationship between Variables

	EI (overall)	SEA	OEA	ROE	UOE	JP (overall)	JR	CR	IR	TR	OR
EI (overall)	-	.912**	.909**	.910**	.915**	.607**	.620**	.567**	.484**	.542**	.526**
SEA	.912**	-	.779**	.778**	.768**	.517**	.538**	.498**	.416**	.457**	.424**
OEA	.909**	.779**	-	.756**	.781**	.553**	.559**	.501**	.434**	.491**	.506**
ROE	.910**	.778**	.756**	-	.782**	.578**	.601**	.536**	.483**	.522**	.469**
UOE	.915**	.768**	.781**	.782**	-	.566**	.563**	.532**	.431**	.504**	.520**
JP (overall)	.607**	.517**	.553**	.578**	.566**	-	.875**	.921**	.900**	.903**	.903**
JR	.620**	.538**	.559**	.601**	.563**	.875**	-	.811**	.714**	.718**	.709**
CR	.567**	.498**	.501**	.536**	.532**	.921**	.811**	-	.808**	.757**	.777**
IR	.484**	.416**	.434**	.483**	.431**	.900**	.714**	.808**	-	.775**	.756**
TR	.542**	.457**	.491**	.522**	.504**	.903**	.718**	.757**	.775**	-	.811**
OR	.526**	.424**	.506**	.469**	.520**	.903**	.709**	.777**	.756**	.811**	-

Table 8 presents the results of regression analysis. The results indicated that about 37% of the variance in employees' job performance are explained by emotional intelligence. Meanwhile, regulations of emotions make the largest unique contribution (beta=.283, p<.05) to employees' job performance. This followed by use of emotions (beta=.206, p<.05) and others emotional appraisal (beta=.178, p<.05). On the other hand, self-emotional appraisal does not contribute to the employees' job performance (beta=.000, p>.05).

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Table 8: Regression of Job Performance on Emotional Intelligence Dimensions

Variables	Standardized Coefficient (beta)
	Job Performance
Self-emotional appraisal	.000
Others emotional appraisal	.178
Regulations of emotions	.283
Use of emotions	.206
R^2	.378
F	49.457

Discussion

The relationship between emotional intelligence and employees' job performance in Malaysia service sector has been examined empirically in this study. There are four objectives in this study as follow; first, to examine the level of emotional intelligence among employees in Malaysia service sector. Second, to examine the differences of emotional intelligence based on the demographic factors such as gender, age, and marital status. Third, to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and employees' job performance in Malaysia service sector. Fourth, to identify which dimension of emotional intelligence as a major contributor towards employees' job performance. Based on the results above, it indicated that the level of emotional intelligence among employees in Malaysian service sector are difference. Majority of the respondents possessed high level of emotional intelligence and none of respondents possess low level of emotional intelligence. The reasons behind this finding could be majority of respondents were from age 31 to 50 years old. As maturity increase, level of emotional intelligence will also increase. The findings further shows that demographic factor such as age is able to influence the level of emotional intelligence. The finding is parallel with Abraham (2004), indicted that as matures and experiences increase so does emotional intelligence. The probable explanation of this result could be due to the deepest understanding of customer. Employees will obtained people-oriented skills during interaction with customers from diverse background.

Meanwhile, the result indicated that gender also has capacity in predicting the level of emotional intelligence. However this finding is inconsistent with the study by Kumar and Muniandy (2012), indicated that there is no difference between male and female employees' emotional intelligence. On the other hand, the finding in this study is consistent with the study from Fernandez-Berrocal, Cabello, Castillo, and Extremera (2012), indicated that women possess higher emotional intelligence compared than men. This means emotional intelligence is difference across gender. There are several literatures that support the conclusion regarding

gender and emotional facets. According to previous researchers, women are able to interpret nonverbal emotions (Brody & Hall, 2000; Hall, 1978). Besides that, according to Ciarrochi, Hynes and Crittenden (2005), women are able to understand and regulate the emotional aspects better than men. In addition, women are more sensitive towards others emotions (Hall & Mast, 2008). This is also supported by the study from Candela, Barbera, Ramos and Sarrio (2001) indicated that traditionally, women use emotional aspects more frequent compared than men and women are more prepared to perceive emotions (Castro-Schilo & Kee, 2010; Jausovec & Jausovec, 2005). Meanwhile, the differences of emotional aspects between genders is because men tend to "systematize", while women tend to "empathize" (Baron-Cohen, 2002).

Based on the findings of this study, it can be conclude that there is a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and employees' job performance. This result is confirmed by the findings from previous researchers (Goleman, 1995). In his study, it indicated that emotional intelligence is a major contributor towards a person success in life. On the other hand, intelligence quotient is a minor contributor towards a person success. Emotional intelligence allows people to control and manage their moods efficiently. Out of four dimensions of emotional intelligence, Regulation of Emotions has been identified as the major contributor in explaining employees' job performance in this study. The reasonable explanation for this is because people with Regulation of Emotions are able to regulate their emotions and then portray the proper behavioral of actions during interactions with other people. This factor is essential for excellent job performance. However, up to date there is no study investigate about this finding and thus it is beneficial for other researchers to validate this finding.

Conclusion

The relationship between emotional intelligence and employees' job performance in Malaysia service sector has been empirically investigated in this study. One of the predictors of employees' job performance in Malaysia service sector is lies on employees' emotional intelligence. Therefore, it is extremely recommended to service organization in selecting and hiring potential employees who possessed high levels of emotional intelligence. In acquiring emotional intelligence skills, people need personally involve and experience the emotional context. Therefore, it is highly suggested to the service organization to conduct emotional intelligence training such as organizational socialization programs, role play, and group projects. In addition, the finding of this study shown that the level of emotional intelligence increases with age. People become more understanding in controlling and regulating their own emotions as they become more mature. Therefore, it is recommended for service organization to give consideration of age in recruitment and selection process.

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