

Emotional Intelligence, Self-efficacy and Diversity Receptiveness of University Students: A Correlation Study

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to examine the interrelationship of emotional intelligence and self-efficacy drives, and diversity receptiveness of overseas college students. Factors of emotional intelligence, self-efficacies and diversity receptiveness were examined with these overseas students. Survey data on demographics, the Emotions Scale (EIS), Self-efficacy scale (SES) and Diversity Receptive Scale (DRS) were collected from eighty nine students enrolled in post graduate business programs. In data collection this study used simple random sampling technique. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations between emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, and diversity receptiveness. The findings of the study indicate that there is a significant relationship between emotional intelligence, the competencies of self-efficacy, and diversity receptiveness of college students.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Self-Efficacy, Diversity Receptivity

1. Introduction to the study

The major aim of any academic institutions is to focus on education and academic excellence of its students. The reality of access to this goal depends precisely on how to recognize individual member's emotions and physiological cognition of acceptance of diversities. While various factors might affect the interrelations between diversity taking in international academic situation, emotional intelligence and ones efficacy cognition, among other issues, count as fundamental extenuating concept of effective coherency and interconnection of ones in the society. The students in a foreign location are saddled with enormous responsibilities and challenges (Imonikebe, 2009 cited in Salami, 2010) which may sometimes result in stress. Along with the increase in academic demand and establishment of social relationships, foreign students become usually uncertain about their efficacy to meet these demands (Dwyer and Cummings, 2001). Therefore, it is of paramount importance to investigate if there is any relationship between student's emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, and their diversity

receptiveness. As a matter of fact emotional intelligence, self-efficacy and diversity receptiveness pose challenges to students' learning success and quality in education.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Though there are thousands of articles related to Emotional Intelligence (EI), Self-Efficacy (SE) and Diversity Receptive (DR), with most authors implying a direct and positive link between EI and DR (e.g. Ashkanasay, 2002; Hopkins et al, 2007; Litvin & Betters-Reed, 2005; Robertson, 2007; Schyns & Meindl,2008), the implied connection between EI, and DR is not strongly supported by scholarly research (Conrad, 2007). On the other hand, we do not know if any research has been conducted on the relationship of EI, SE, and DR. of students studying at a university outside their own country. This study, therefore, has been to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, and diversity receptiveness of overseas students studying at an Malaysian university. The individuals who demonstrated high emotional intelligence had high self-efficacy (McCormick, 2001 and Chan, 2007) and diversity receptivity is the first step toward understanding individual difference (Lopez-Rocha, 2006). The current study examines the relationship between EI, SE and DR and their significance to overseas students.

1.1.1. Objectives of the Study:

The following objectives of this study are proposed:

To determine the level of emotional intelligence, self-efficacy and diversity receptiveness of international students studying at University Utara Malaysia.

To evaluate the level of emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, and diversity receptiveness of students in an effort to determine if a relationship exists among these three attributes.

1.1.1.1 Significance of the study:

The study contributes to literature on how emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, and diversity receptivity of students become important resources for enhancing students' learning, success and quality in education. The study has significance for universities that support students success and quality education. The universities may make changes in the approach to preparing and training students in the area of emotional intelligence, self-efficacy and diversity receptiveness. Soft skills related to emotional intelligence should be developed and grown (Stephens and Harmond 2009). Self-efficacy is related with increased individual and organizational performance (Bandura, 1997). The individuals with high emotions have high self-efficacy and positive diversity receptiveness. Thus practitioners can improve performance through increased self-efficacy and diversity receptiveness by investing in emotional intelligence and training (Gundlach et al , 2003). The information gathered in this study will, therefore, contribute to research on how emotional intelligence, self-efficacy and diversity receptiveness can be strengthened through awareness which can impact students' performance.

2. Literature review

The study is based on research about emotional intelligence (e.g., Barbuto & Burbach, 2006; Brown & Moshavi, 2005), diversity (Bohara, 2007; James, 2008; Konrad,2006; Weigand, 2007)

and self –efficacy on the social cognitive theory of Bandura. The present study assumes existences of relations between identified categories. The increasing acceptance of diversity is believed to be directly associated with individual recognition, possibly being influenced by individual emotional intelligence and self-efficacy. The theory is based on this assumption that different people have different emotional intelligence and individual adaptability of the diversity is different, most likely there is also a significant relationship between demographic characteristics and level of adaptability and acceptance of diversity.

An abundance of studies on EI exists (Barbuto & Burbach, 2006; Brown & Moshavi, 2005; Goleman, 1995, 1998; Goleman et al, 2002; Hartley, 2004; Pauchant, 2005) and even more studies on diversity (Bohara, 2007; James, 2008; Konrad,2006; Marques, et al, 2006; Weigand, 2007). About self-efficacy Albert Bandura developed a comprehensive theory centered on observational learning known as Social Cognitive theory. The basis of this theory states that cognitive skills, such as motor, social, and self regulatory, can be learned through observation (Schunk, 2008). A brief literature review on EI, SI and DR runs as follows;

Emotional intelligence

The term emotional intelligence refers to individual differences in the perceptions, processing, managing and utilization of emotional information. It is Thordike (1920) who introduced the concept of “social intelligence” and conceptualized it as ability to understand the relations between people. Goleman (1998) referred to EI as the ability of becoming self-aware of one’s emotions and managing those emotions in daily interactions with others, thereby establishing emotional liaisons. Goleman (1995) stated the best-known theory of EI and explained that an individual’s emotional intelligence can affect ones situation. Goleman et al (2002) maintained that the effective use of emotion is very important to successful leadership and they further proposed that leaders are emotional guides influencing not only follower’s emotion but also follower’s action through that emotional intelligence (Goleman et al.,2002).

Salovey & Mayer (1990) stated that the term emotional intelligence stands for "the subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one’s own and others feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use information to guide one’s thinking and action". Further Mayer et al (2004) postulated that EI involves the ability to perceive accurately, appraise and express emotion, the ability to access and/ or generate emotional knowledge, and the ability to regulate emotion to promote emotional and intellectual growth.

Bar-On (2004) proposed a new model of EI in which EI is considered a cross section of inter-related emotional and social competencies, skills and factors that determine how effectively we understand and express ourselves, understand others and relate with them and cope with daily demands. Bar-On (2004) clarified that at the interpersonal level, EI involves the ability to be aware of oneself and ones strengths and weaknesses and to express ones feeling while the interpersonal level refers to the ability to be aware of others emotions, feeling and needs and to establish and maintain cooperative, constructive and mutually satisfying relationships.

In addition, individuals rated with higher level of EI are more sensitive to interactions between themselves and other groups or individuals. Evans (2007) studied emotional intelligence in high

school students and revealed that high school students used certain self-regulation methods that led them to academic and social success. Students who have worked positively with others had self-regulating experiences that led to the students' high achievement, social adjustment, and empowerment (Evans, 2007). Another study by Rice (2007) indicated that students who lack empathy, dedication and other EI related skills are likely to be academically weak. He pointed out that educators provided programs for the improvement of academic skills in students but these educators have neglected programs that they could gear towards students' overall improvement. Rice focused on helping politicians and educators to create programs that include academics and EI skills to support personal and academic growth in students (Rice, 2007).

Self-efficacy:

Bandura (1977) defines self-efficacy as a person's beliefs in his or her ability to organize and execute a required course of action to achieve a desired result. Efficacy beliefs influence the amount of stress and anxiety individual experience as they engage in an activity. This means that a strong self-efficacy produces well-being in many ways. In other words, people with high assurance in their capabilities approach difficult tasks as challenges to be measured rather than as threats to be avoided. In contrast, people who doubt their capabilities shy away from difficult tasks which they view as personal threats. They have low aspirations and weak commitment to the goals they choose to pursue.

The theory of self-efficacy examined how people formulate their perceptions of self-efficacy derived from four sources: mastery experience, Vicarious experience, Social persuasion and emotional and physiological state (Bandura's, 1986).

Mastery Experience: provides authentic evidence for a person as to whether or not one can achieve success in a task (Bandura, 1997). Mastery experience occurs after people successfully complete a task or achieves a goal. They have in essence, mastered the task. Achieving success builds a positive sense of self-efficacy; people think that because they have been successful in the behavior before, they will again be able to replicate that behavior and outcome. Experiencing failure has the opposite effect. People are more likely to have low self-efficacy if they previously have not been able to achieve success in a specific task (Bandura, 1997). This is true for academic self-efficacy as well (Usher, 2009; Usher & Pajares, 2006).

Vicarious Experience: Vicarious experience involves observing the actions of others (Bandura, 1997). When one sees another similar to themselves being successful at completing a task or engaging in a certain behavior, it raises their sense of self-efficacy that they also may be successful in the same task or behavior. People who see others successfully completing a task are likely to think they will be successful, as well. Modeling is an effective way to raise a person's sense of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). Purposefully demonstrating achievement in a specific area to others can positively affect self-efficacy for that task or behavior. Vicarious experience can be used in the classroom to affect academic self-efficacy. Students may alter their beliefs regarding a task if they see peers accomplishing the task or mastering academic content successfully (Usher & Pajares, 2006).

Social persuasion: self-efficacy occurs when individuals receive feedback and judgment regarding their ability or potential from others whom they trust. When people are given positive feedback regarding their ability to perform a task, they are more likely to think they will be successful in accomplishing that task. Likewise, if the feedback is negative, people will not be successful the next time they attempt the task or behavior (Bandura, 1997).

Physiological State: Bandura (1997) described a person's physiological state as their feelings of anxiety, stress, and tension. It may be inferred that when a person feels these physiological states, they are a precursor to a lack of ability to complete a task (Bandura, 1997). Students especially may think that the manifestation of physical symptoms of stress and anxiety may mean they are unprepared to achieve success on a test, project, or other activity, thereby decreasing their perception of academic self-efficacy (Usher & Pajares, 2006).

Diversity Receptivity

Diversity is often interpreted as the blending of people from a variety of differing backgrounds. The differences include gender, age, religious, ethnic, cultural, and physical abilities. Sanchez, & Medkik(2004) defined diversity receptiveness (DR) as "an extension of diversity awareness". The goal of diversity awareness is to change behavior which makes individuals become receptive toward diversity. Diversity is often interpreted as the blending of people from a variety of differing backgrounds. The differences include gender, age, religious, ethnic, cultural, and physical abilities.

Diversity Receptivity occurs when people learn to embrace the differences (e.g., religion, cultures, ethnicity, disability, race, and sexual orientation) that each individual can bring to the workplace. The diversity receptive person can inspire a sense of belonging to individual, groups, and the organization. Individual receptiveness of diversity can improve communication, create ethno-cultural sensitivity, and promote the cultural diversity for the overall social well being. Researchers believe that DR is the first step in achieving a more profound understanding of the individual difference (Lopez-Rocha, 2006).

Thus the foregoing literature review reveals that diversity can be defined as the blending of people with differences in gender, age, religious, ethnic, cultural, and physical abilities backgrounds (Marques, 2007; Swanson,2004). Diversity awareness encourages people to change stereotypical behavior, beliefs,emotions, and attitudes toward differences in others (Sanchez & Medkik, 2004). EI can be defined as how a leader self-manages, engages, empathizes, develops the ability to understand the emotions of others, and applies that knowledge in communicating, interacting, and managing relationships with others (Goleman, 1995, 1998; Landale, 2007; Sen, 2008). Increased levels of EI also help individuals manage lasting relationships; build solid networks; and share common ground with peers, other organizational members,clients, and customers (Mayer et al 2004; Sen, 2008). The EI student, who is receptive of diversity, can possess a sense of self-awareness that can assist in leading across cultural and emotional differences (Usovicz, 2008). Decreased levels of EI can bring about negative emotions and hostility toward others (Bagshaw, 2000; Goleman, 1995, 1998).

The current study examines the interrelationship between EI, SE and Dr of foreign students studying at a university. When students pay attention in understanding their peers' emotions and the differences that exist between and among them diversity can be assimilated and self-

efficacy increases. People with high assurance in their capabilities approach difficult tasks as challenges to be measured rather than as threats to be avoided.

2.1. Research Questions

The study proposes that students with higher levels of emotional intelligence would exhibit higher level of self-efficacy and diversity receptivity. The following research questions are, therefore, proposed:

RQ 1: Is there any relationship between emotional intelligence, self-efficacy and diversity receptivity?

RQ2: Does higher level of emotional intelligence exhibit higher level of self-efficacy and diversity receptivity?

2.1.1. Research Hypotheses:

H1: There is a significant relation between emotional intelligence and self-efficacy

H2: There is significant relation between emotional intelligence and diversity receptiveness.

H3: There is a significant relation between self-efficacy and diversity receptiveness

3. Research Design

The study employed a survey research design to collect data from the participants to investigate the relationship among emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, and diversity receptivity. This research is quantitative in nature. Quantitative data allows the researcher to present data in descriptive form and to also determine possible relationships between two or more variables (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2003). Quantitative research involving correlations describes the degree to which two or more variables are related (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2003)

3.1 Survey Instruments

A survey questionnaire was developed to capture the information relating to the research objectives. The questionnaires were distributed to 120 students. Only 89 students filled up the questionnaire correctly and were used in this study. The resulting questionnaires were divided into four sections. The first section relates to measuring emotional intelligence scale comprised a set of 33 items tapped in four expression of perception for emotion, managing own and others emotion and utilization of emotion developed as EIS and is adopted from Schutte et al (2009). It adopted a five point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree =1 to strongly agree =5. The EIS has demonstrated high internal consistency with Cronbach's α ranging from 0.87 to 0.90 (Schutte et al, 1998).

The second part measures self-efficacy of participants. The General Perceived DSelf-efficacy Scale (GPSS) developed by Usher & Pajares, 2008 based on general personality disposition, ranged in four categories of mastery experience, social persuasion, vicarious experience and physiological experience, tapped in 24 self-reported questions has been used for this study. It is measured on a four point Likert scale ranging from 1 = not at all true to 5 = Exactly true. The GPSS has demonstrated high internal consistencies with Cronbach α ranging from .75 and .90 (Schwarzer and Jerusalem, 1995).

The third part measures diversity receptivity scale. For the purpose of this research the diversity receptivity scale developed by Gaze (2003), adjusted from the study of Soni (2000) was selected because of its conciseness and exceedingly administered and validated by other researchers (Soni 200 and Gaze 2003). It comprised of 10 items. The respondents were asked to indicate the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with each item and the response choices ranged from 'strongly disagree' (1) to 'strongly agree' (7). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .83 was reported by Soni (2000) for the overall scale.

3.1.1 Sample Population:

The population for this study is post graduate students studying at University Utara Malaysia. Simple random sampling was used to select 120 students out of 389 foreign students enrolled in graduate programs in business ranging from Maters Degree to D.B.A and Ph.D programs. 120 questionnaires were distributed. Only 89 students filled up the questionnaire correctly and were used for this study. Of these 89 students, 25 were females and 64 were males.

4. Data Analysis and Finding:

Data collected were analyzed using correlation in order to establish the relationship between emotional intelligence, self-efficacy and diversity receptivity. Hypotheses 1 to 3 were tested by the coefficient of correlation measure.

Finding is divided into two sections. The first section consists of descriptive statistics that were used to study the demographic characteristics and the mean and standard deviation of each variable. The second section consists of hypotheses testing

4.1 Demographic factors of students

Biographical information of students was obtained including their age group classification, marital status, experience, and highest academic qualifications (see Table 1).

Table 1 Demographics of students

Demographic factors	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Ethnic		
African	31	35
Eastern Asia	02	02
Sounth Central Asia	08	09
Mid-eastrn	48	54
Education (enrolled in)		
Master Degree	11	12
PhD	69	78
D.B.A	09	10

Age		
25 or less	16	18
26-30	36	40
31-35	26	29
36-40	03	04
41 and above	08	09
Gender		
Male	64	72
Female	25	28
Work experience		
Yes	55	62
No	34	38

Table 1 indicates that majority students are from the mid-eastern countries (54%) and 35% are from African countries. They are relatively educated, young and experienced. Most of them are well educated as 69% of them are Ph.D. students. One might argue that educated and experienced people are generally creative and innovative and look for something unique to fill a need or want. This leads us to conclusion that the educated and experienced students are more prone to diversity receptive, emotionally intelligent and capable of handling the situations. Most are in the age of 25 and 35, and support the contention that the people between the age of 25 and 35 are most likely to have self-efficacy, become emotionally intelligent and diversity receptive. Some are good in adapting with new situation and new customs while others are not.

4.2 Hypotheses testing

Table 2 depicts the correlations among all sub-scales of emotional intelligence, self-efficacy and diversity. The results indicate moderate to strong correlation among all sub-variables of EI and SI with DR.

	PE	MO	MOE	UE	DI	ME	VE	PH	SP
PE	1	.798**	.791**	.822**	.810**	.781**	.749**	.733**	.693**
MO	.798**	1	.855**	.854**	.777**	.724**	.761**	.711**	.649**
MOE	.791**	.855**	1	.875**	.811**	.743**	.830**	.722**	.741**
UE	.822**	.854**	.875**	1	.828**	.780**	.791**	.742**	.717**
DR	.810**	.777**	.811**	.828**	1	.819**	.795**	.835**	.701**
ME	.781**	.724**	.743**	.780**	.819**	1	.657**	.771**	.699**
VE	.749**	.761**	.830**	.791**	.795**	.657**	1	.670**	.657**
PH	.733**	.711**	.722**	.742**	.835**	.771**	.670**	1	.711**
SP	.693**	.649**	.741**	.717**	.701**	.699**	.657**	.711**	1

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

Notes: PE (perception for emotion), MO (managing one's own emotion), MOE (managing others emotion), UE (utilization of emotion), ME (mastery experience), SP (social persuasion), VE (vicarious experience) and PE (physiological experience).

Table3:

	EI	SE	DR	Mean	SD
EI	1	.904**	.863**	23.935	8.32
SE	.904**	1	.900**	10.8315	4.12
DR	.863**	.900**	1	7.6831	3.26

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

Research Questions 1 and 2 were formed based on the belief that individuals with higher levels of EI would also possess higher levels of DR. The alternate hypothesis assumed there would be a positive relationship between levels of EI, SE and DR in students. There was a moderately strong, direct, positive relationship between E, SEI and DR (see Table 3), supporting all three hypotheses.

5. Conclusion

As expected, the result justify that emotions helps make intelligent decision which, through this mindfully assessing, one may be able to connect better with others; better results come from these connections while one feels control over the situations. Overseas students are the same as anyone in a strange place having different views on interacting with the people in outstanding situation and with those who are different from themselves in race, sex, age, ability or anything else. Some are good in adapting with new situations and new customs while others not. It is believed that people can learn how to overcome positive or negative course of action even in different situations. Current research indicates that individual self- efficacy and emotional intelligence have direct impact on the choice people make in regard to deal with diverse situations and resolve problems. The missing link in diversity and ones behavior may be viewed as interacting with emotional intelligence and self-efficacy, but clearly there is much to learn about ourselves and our emotions that will equip us to interact with different people and strange situations.

5.1 Implications:

Academic curriculum providers may realize the importance of students' adaptability with diverse environment unless it can bring displeasure due to heterogeneity of non-compliance between students and their surroundings. Positive sense of self-efficacy and superior emotional intelligence convey more confidence in a difficult situations and consequently make constructive behavior, while inverse situation will happen if one has low density of emotional intelligence or negative perception of self-efficacy.

People with higher emotional intelligence are more likely to associate with people in diverse but similar goals and engage in activities that promote a positive lifestyle. When people

perceive that they can make difference, they are motivated to band together to achieve a common goal (Bandura , 2001)

5.2 Limitations and Future Research:

The limitations of this study is that it has not drawn any comparison and contrast among these international students coming from different parts of the world (e.g.Mid-East, African countries). Further research can be directed toward that direction. Further, a comparative study can also be done between the domestic (Malaysian) students and overseas students of the university

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