



A STUDY ON EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND STRESS LEVEL AMONG THE EMPLOYEES AT WORK PLACE

Dr. G. Agila* & Dr. V. Padmanabhan**

* Professor & Head, Department of B.Com.(A&F), Sri Ramakrishna College of Arts and Science College, Coimbatore, Tamilnadu

** Associate Professor & Head, Department of B.Com (BPS), Sri Ramakrishna College of Arts and Science College, Coimbatore, Tamilnadu

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Abstract:

This study was conducted to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and organizational stress among the employees in Prudential Assurance Malaysia Berhad. Job stress at work place is considered to be as independent variable. Independent variables are emotional intelligence, social awareness, self-awareness, self-management and relationship management. The sample size of 50 respondents were chosen, comprising of 30 female and 20 male from the age group of 25-55 years old with mean age of 35.8. The collected data was analysed by using the Schutte Self Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT) and Workplace Stress Survey. Result ($r = -.155, p < 0.05$) showed that there was a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and organizational stress. The research recommends organizations to pay attention to stressors at workplace and provide EI training to reduce stress among employees.

Key Words: Emotional Intelligence, Job Stress & Organizational Stress

Introduction

The working life has been changing rapidly on daily basis as there are many companies and people who work for them. The increase of performance demands go hand in hand with increasing technological change, competition, globalisation and the expansion of the service sector. To deliver outstanding performance employees today are required to be much more involved in their work, not only physically, but also emotionally and mentally. In an era of shifting paradigms, one should be able to develop its human resources as a source of competitive advantage (Schuler, Dowling & De Cieri, 2016). As such, in order to develop and enhance job responsibilities, organization has to embark on future oriented human resources strategies. The individual competencies of workforce in any organization would determine its overall success could a fact that to be argued. There has been an increase of interest in 'emotional intelligence' within the society especially among the working ones. Emotional intelligence plays a major role in the workplace. Research studies during 25 years ago found that emotional intelligence contribute success in workplace. The result identifies the factors that are related to workplace intelligence and these data are taken from several organizations and industries.

Need for the Study:

Emotional intelligence is important because it can contribute to the quality of the relationships in the workplace. This is because emotions serve communicative and social functions, provides information about the thoughts and intentions, and helped to coordinate social gatherings (Keltner & Haidt, 2015). Emotional intelligence is also important in influencing customer experience positive emotions. Employees who interact directly with the customer are required to recognize and manage their own emotions and understand the emotions of customers. This is because emotional intelligence is an ability that is necessary for this purpose.

Problem Statement:

The working environment in Prudential is very competitive. In Malaysia, the globalization trend, technology changes, development and new business practices has influenced the organization greatly. The company is facing intensive challenges in improving the employee performance as well as satisfaction to bring their organization to greater heights. This research is on emotional intelligence and stress level of employees in customer engagement department of Prudential Assurance Malaysia Berhad. This research was done on a sample size of 50 respondents who were engaged with customer engagement department. Prudential is known as Malaysia's biggest insurance company and has won many awards. It has even won the best employee awards in recent years. The job scope of customer engagement department is liaise with the customer related job such as enquiries, complains, conservation, retention and many more. All these aspects motivated the researchers to undertake this survey.

Research Questions:

This study attempts to investigate the correlation between emotional intelligence and job stress in a well-known insurance company Prudential Assurance Berhad Malaysia. The research questions are as follows:

- ✓ To determine the level of emotional intelligence of employees.
- ✓ To determine the level of job stress of employees.

Research Objectives:

The specific objectives of the research are as follows:

- ✓ To investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and stress level among the corporate executives in Prudential Assurance Malaysia Berhad.
- ✓ To examine the existing practices of Emotional Intelligence and the level of work stress.
- ✓ To study the influence of Emotional intelligence and job stress dimension on an employee's job performance in Prudential.

Research Design:

Sampling Size: 50

Sampling Category: (20 males and 30 females) aged between 22 and 50

Research Design: A quantitative correlation research design was used in this study. In this study, the researchers used Pearson correlation analysis to determine the relationship between emotional intelligence and stress. It is a relational design that was used to examine the relationship between the two variables.

Sampling Area: The participants were from Prudential Head Quarters from different departments. These participants vary from the senior management to junior executives. Participants will from Malay, Chinese, Indian and others.

Sampling Technique: The sample is chosen by using random sampling whereby the sample of subjects is selected randomly. The data is collected from employees of from customer engagement background.

Sampling Instrument: For the present study emotional intelligence is considered as independent variable and organizational stress is identified as dependent variable. Operationally defined, Emotional intelligence of the employees will be gauged through the scores of the Schutte Self Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT). The SSEIT is a 33-item self-report using a 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) scale for responses. Each subtest score is graded and then added together to give the total score for the participant. The higher the total accumulated scores yielded from the scales for emotional intelligence, the greater is the level of emotional intelligence. Organizational stress will be determined through Workplace- Stress Survey which is the first dimension of Occupational Stress Inventory. It is measured using 5 point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (rarely true or never true) to 5 (true most of the time) for each statement. The questionnaire consists of 10 items. The higher the total scores obtained, the higher the level of stress among the employees. Based on the past researches, the researchers identified the hypothesis for the research as, there is a significant relationship between organizational stress and emotional intelligence.

Data Collection: Primary method of data collection was used for the study. The questionnaires were distributed to the respondents.

Data Analysis: Pearson correlation coefficient statistical analysis was conducted to determine the correlation between the overall Emotional intelligence and job stress. Since the research focuses on the relationship between the variables, it is a correlational study. The correlation study was conducted to compare the emotional intelligence scores with job stress. By examining the whole sample, the relationship of emotional intelligence and job stress are analysed. The relationship between emotional intelligence and job stress are determined using the total EI score self-rating as well as other ratings. Other past correlation studies is compared with the result to support the study and for evaluation purposes.

Findings and Discussion:

Emotional intelligence was measured through Schutte Self Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT). The SSEIT also is referred to as the Assessing Emotions Scale or the Self-Report Emotional Intelligence test. The SSEIT focuses on average or usual emotional intelligence. SSEIT measures the four facets of emotional intelligence as defined by Salovey and Mayer (1995) which are 1) the appraisal of emotion in self and others, 2) the expression of emotion, 3) the regulation of emotion in self and others, and 4) the utilization of emotion in problem solving. Taking only 5 minutes to complete, the self report survey comprises of 33 items, using a 5-point Likert scale extending from 1 = "strongly disagree" to 5 = "strongly agree". Total scales scores are computed by the final summation of all items. Total scores typically range from 33-165. High scores on all items collectively indicate high levels of emotional intelligence (Schutte et al, 1998). The internal consistency was measured by Cronbach's alpha as .90 while a 2-week test-retest reliability for total scale scores was reported as .78 (Schutte et al., 1998). Workplace Stress Survey (WSS) was used to measure organizational stress. This survey is intended for use in industrial settings and to evaluate the cause of work-related stress. The implications of WSS are to improve the work environment, alleviate stress conditions, and ultimately enhance productivity. Participants are asked to respond to 10 items, selecting the severity and frequency of each stress item. A severity scale of 0 to 9 is used for the responses. This standardized questionnaire has a 10 point Likert scale, ranging from 1 to 4 (strongly disagree), 5-7 (Agree somewhat) and 8-10 (strongly agree) for each statement. The total scores will be added up to measure job stress. Scores from 10-30 indicates that participants handle stress on the job well; between 40-60 means moderately well; and 70 -100 shows that participants encounter problems that need to be solved.

Results:

50 participants from Prudential Assurance Malaysia Berhad took part in this study. They consist of 30 females and 20 males. The participants are from the age group of 25-50 years old with mean age of 37.5. The researchers conducted the reliability analysis for both the questionnaires used in this research. The reliability analysis revealed that SSEIT and WSS have as measured by Cronbach's alpha as 0.821 and 0.853 respectively (refer to Table 1).

Table 1: Reliability Analysis

Reliability Statistics for SSEIT	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
821	33
Reliability Statistics for WSS	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
853	10

Table 2: Tests of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	Df	Sig.	Statistic	Df	Sig.
Total scores for emotional intelligence questionnaire	0.09	50	.200*	0.962	50	0.103
Total scores for workplace stress survey questionnaire	0.084	50	.200*	0.957	50	0.069
*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.						
a. Lilliefors Significance Correction						

In order to determine the appropriate statistical analysis to analyze the hypothesis in this present research, the test of normality was conducted by the researcher. The researcher referred to the significant value of the Shapiro-Wilk because the number of participants involved was 50. The data for the emotional intelligence questionnaire (SSEIT) revealed a significant value of 0.103 which is bigger than alpha (0.05). On the other hand, the data for occupational roles questionnaire showed a significant value of 0.069 which is bigger than alpha 0.05. Hence both the data are normally distributed. (Refer to Table 2).

Table: Tests of Normality:

For the present research, the research had identified the hypothesis as there is a significant relationship between organizational stress and emotional intelligence. According to Pearson's correlation analysis, the results show $r(48) = -.155, p < 0.05$, therefore there is a significant relationship between organizational stress and emotional intelligence among employees at .05 level of significance. Thus, the hypothesis is accepted (refer to Table 3).

Table 3: Pearson' Correlations Table

		Total Scores for Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire	Total Scores for Occupational Role Questionnaire
Total scores for Emotional Intelligence questionnaire	Pearson Correlation	1	-.155*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	50	50
Total scores for workplace stress survey	Pearson Correlation	-.155*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	50	50

*Correlation is significant at 0.05 level

The results revealed that there is a significant relationship between organizational stress and emotional intelligence. The results obtained are consistent with the research results conducted by Darvish and Nasrollahi (2011) whereby it indicated that there is a negative relationship between emotional intelligence and organizational stress. The results are similar although the past research was conducted among employees working in a university which is a different organizational setting as compared to the present research which was conducted in an insurance company. Likewise, another past research which yields the same results is conducted by Vembar & Nagarajan (2011) whereby there is a negative relationship between emotional intelligence and organizational stress among executives. There are several limitations that are identified in this research. The total number of participants were only 50, thus the results cannot be generalized to the whole population. A future study should be conducted with a larger sample to increase generalizability. This self-report study might also be facing social desirable responding bias. Participants may be creating a more favourable impression of themselves by over reporting admirable attitudes or behaviors. Hence, some participants would have given different or distorted impression of their real-self. Therefore, qualitative design which includes

interviews or observations or even longitudinal study is highly recommended in future to ensure more reliable and valid results. Besides that, the research was only restricted to one place which is Prudential Assurance Malaysia. In order to be generalized, the sample should include employees from other companies as well. Future research should also consider samples from highly stressful organizational firms like healthcare, law firms, and so on.

Another limitation that was observed in this study is from the data collection whereby there were more females than males. Future research should consider having the same number of participants for females and males to obtain a more diversified sample. Besides that, a research could also be expanded to study the differences between both the genders in how they manage their emotions to cope with the challenging demands at their workplace. Moreover, there is limited set of variables considered in this research. Future researchers should compare emotional intelligence and organizational stress with other factors such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, leadership, employees' turnover and so on. Demographic details like the number of the years in the firm, work experience, highest level of education could also be included in future research. In addition to that, in this research the instrument used to assess organizational stress was only one dimension of Occupational Stress Inventory which is the Occupational Role Questionnaire (ORQ) as the study did not include the dimensions of strain and coping methods. Future research should expand the scope of the study by including the other constructs mentioned as they may be closely linked with the role of emotions as well. The findings of the present study indicate that emotional intelligence could possibly be a tool to reduce stress among employees. Organizations should provide EI training to both management and employees so that everyone will be able to deal with emotions effectively at the workplace as well as to maintain their psychological well-being. Organizations should also pay close attention in lessening and removing the stressors by redesigning jobs and implementing policies which enable employees to have more control over their work activities.

Conclusion:

This study has successfully identified the relationship between emotional intelligence and job stress level among employees. After analysing the result, it can be said that hypotheses of the present study the higher the emotional intelligence the lower the job stress level. From the study we can conclude that Emotional intelligence is a key analyst for employees to supervise their own emotions as. These studies have shown that employees with high Emotional intelligence competencies encounter lower job stress as compared to those who have lower EI. Results showed that there was a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and organizational stress.

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