

The Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Occupational Stress

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Abstract: Stress in the workplace reduces employees' productivity and affects their work performance. Emotional intelligence comes to rescue and guides employees to respond appropriately to different stressors. Emotional Intelligence helps to cope up with stressful situations and emotional control behaviour. Emotional intelligence enhances work performance by enabling people to regulate their emotions so as to cope effectively with stress and perform well under pressure. Employee's ability to manage and control their emotions (particularly negative emotions) in the workplace will influence the outcome of stress.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence; Occupational stress; behavior; performance; pressure.

Introduction:

Emotional intelligence was coined by Salovey and Mayer (1990) which emotional intelligence is a way of recognizing that emotions and emotional information were crucial for problem solving and adaptation in everyday life. Salovey and Mayer (1990) defined emotional intelligence as "the ability to monitor one's own and other's emotion, to discriminate among them, and to use the information to guide one's thinking and actions". Later this definition was refined and breaking down into four proposed abilities that involves the "abilities to perceive, appraise, and express emotion; to access and/or generate feelings when they facilitate thought; to understand emotion and emotional knowledge; and to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth" (Mayer and Salovey, 1997). Stress is the destructive physical, mental and emotional reaction that transpires when there is a poor match between job demands and competencies or employees' resources to manage with job pressure. It is a condition ushered by suffering physical, mental, psychological or social problem that comes from individual feeling that doesn't be able to respond due to unexpected situations (Saddam, 2010). Occupational stress is known as stress at work. It occurs because of the mismatch between the situation's demands and the individual's coping abilities (AbuAlRub, 2004). Occupational stress is an unpleasant emotional situation that employee experience when the requirement of work-related or not related cannot be counter balance with the ability to resolve them (Halkos and Bousinakis, 2010).Slaski and Cartwright (2003) explain the link between emotional intelligence and stress by stating that it is "the negative emotions and stress the result of some dysfunctional relationship between aspects of the self and the environment, and the ability (emotional intelligence) to 'read' and manage emotions in the self and others. Employees are anticipated to identify, handle and utilize their emotions to eliminate the hindrances in the way of choosing and advancing their career prospect in a better way (Carmeli, 2003). A person with high emotional intelligence has the ability to better regulate the emotions therefore his/her withdrawal intentions may also be low. Therefore, emotional intelligence enables an employee to exhibit the skills necessary to be aware of and regulate the emotions of themselves as well as the emotions of others. This ability allows an employee to adapt to environment demands and self-perceived emotionally. The use of emotional intelligence is predictors of affect within work environment at the workplace (Kafetsios and Zampatekis, 2008). The intention of this study is to review the past literature on the impact of emotional intelligence towards occupational stress.

THE IMPORTANT OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Emotional intelligence is important to everyday life because it predict behavior and important outcomes. Individual who are poor at dealing with emotions will have worse relationship, poor mental health, and less career success (Ciarrochi et al, 2001). Ciarrochi et al. (2001) claims that people who success is depend on how they deal effectively with emotions and use the emotions to enrich their life. According to Salovey and Mayer (1990), emotional intelligence is combination of individual's ability to adapt to life changes through the use of both rational and emotional coping skills with regards to stress. Therefore, emotional intelligence enables an employee to exhibit the skills necessary to be aware of and regulate the emotions of themselves as well as the emotions of others. This ability allows an employee to adapt to environment demands and self-perceived emotionally. The use of emotional intelligence is predictors of affect within work environment at the workplace (Kafetsios and Zampatekis, 2008). According to Salovey and Mayer (1990), emotional intelligence abilities can also positively influence problem solving skills. They argue that positive emotion and moods could change the way in which an individual approach a problem, organize thoughts, process information, apply creative thinking and fulfill other life task. Emotional intelligence also contributed significantly to attitudes to change in the organization, suggesting that the use of an emotional intelligence measure can add significant value within organizations (Vakola et al., 2004). The emotional intelligence employees able to the proper handle the negative feelings in a way to express it positively, allowing people to interact and work together without friction to meet their targets (Saddam, 2010). This ability facilitates the employee to notice timely and redirect their unconstructive stressful reactions, emotions and impulses. It is the ability to deter and to think about their reactions to events before starting work. An emotional intelligence employee is a consistent and dedicated employee, open to everything new, even in the most uncertain prospects and sudden changes such as employee tend to perceive as a new opportunity rather than as a threat to personal safety and suffer in stress (Saddam, 2010) Emotional intelligence play important role to create the abilities in an employee's to better control the stress in the workplace. The emotional intelligence generate the skill in employee to choose various courses of action to deal stress without collapsing, to be positive to solve a problem, and feel that one can control the situation (Slaski and Cartwright, 2002).

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND OCCUPATIONAL STRESS

Several studies reveal that the emotional intelligence individuals have strong emotions and attitude to deal stressful events in a positive way (Gardner, 2005; Ciarrochi et al., 2001). The construct of emotional intelligence is based on individual's understanding and managing of one's own personal emotions as a way to reduce tension and stress (Goleman, 1998). It has been suggested that emotional intelligence play an important role in helping individuals to control and manage the negative emotions appropriately and so moderate both the appraisal and experience of stress (Slaski and Cartwright, 2003). It would seem that individual differences in emotional intelligence relating to differences in an individual's ability to appraise his or her own emotions and others emotions whereas the individuals who highly emotional intelligence might be more open to internal experience and better able to label and communicate those experiences (Mayer and Salovey, 1993). Slaski and Cartwright (2003) found that individual who have highly emotional intelligence report significantly less stress and experience better physical and psychological health than less emotional intelligence individuals. It can be said that the link between emotional intelligence and stress is founded on the notion that negative emotion and stress are the result of some dysfunctional relationship between aspects of the self and the environment, and that the ability of emotional intelligence to recognize and manage emotions in the self and others is a moderators in this process (Slaski and Cartwright, 2003). Emotional intelligence can considered as individual differences in the capacity to process information of an emotional nature and to be able to relate these emotions to wider cognitions. In studies exploring the relationship between emotional intelligence and occupational stress, Bar-On et al. (2000) investigated the associations between the variables in different occupational groups. The results showed a significant negative relationship between emotional intelligence and occupational stress. Bar-On et al. (2000) investigated emotional intelligence in two occupational groups including police officers and paraprofessional personnel in mental health and child care professions. The results of this study indicated

that police officers had higher levels of emotional intelligence than the other group. Also, Bar-On et al. (2000) suggested that the police officers are more aware of their own feelings and understand themselves; consequently they can be more adaptable to stressful events, and choose better coping strategies. A study by Nikolaou and Tsaousis (2002) found a negative correlation between emotional intelligence and stress at work among the mental health professionals. Nikolaou and Tsaousis (2002) claims that employees with high emotional intelligence confront low occupational stress in their job environment, yet employees with low emotional intelligence have less self-awareness, and as a result, in the face of difficult conditions, they are not able to cope with their feelings and have too much stress which, in turn, has a negative influence on their job satisfaction. Oginska-Bulik (2005) explored the relationship between emotional intelligence and perceived stress in workplace and health related consequences in human service workers. The result confirm an essential but not very strong role of emotional intelligence in perceiving occupational stress and preventing employees of human services workers from negative health outcomes. He concluded that the ability to effectively deal with emotions and emotional information in the workplace assists employees in coping with occupational stress. In another study by Landa et al. (2008), factors associated with emotional intelligence, i.e. attention, clarity, repair, and occupational stress were investigated. The results of their study showed that the nurses with high emotional clarity and emotional repair had less levels of stress, yet those with high emotional attention had greater levels of stress. Ismail, Suh-Suh, Ajis and Dollah (2009) conducted a study to examine the effect of emotional intelligence in the relationship between occupational stress and job performance. The outcome of the study clearly stated that relationship between occupational stress and emotional intelligence significantly correlated with job performance. Statistically, the results confirmed that the inclusion of emotional intelligence in the analysis mediated the effect of occupational stress on job performance. The study done by Chhabra and Chhabra (2012) to understand the relationship between emotional intelligence and occupational stress found a negative correlation between those two variables among the Indian Border Security Force personnel. There is considerable evidence that the police personnel are suffering from high level of stress taking a heavy toll on the personnel, physically and psychologically. Individuals who can adapt to the stress situational and have better adaptation are more satisfied and less stressful. This adaptability depends on many factors, one of the most important being emotional intelligence which is an effective tool and can help in coping with stress.

Discussion and Conclusion

It seems obvious that the ability employees to effectively deal with emotions and emotional information in workplace assist them in managing their stress in the workplace. The relationship that existed between emotional intelligence and occupational stress could be understood from the perspective that employees with high emotional intelligence are able to monitor their own and others' emotion, discriminate among them and use the information to guide their thinking and actions. They also have the ability to facilitate emotion and cognitive activities such as thinking and problem solving.

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