

Role of Emotional Intelligence and Mental Health in Improving Performance

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Abstract

Emotional intelligence has been concerned due to its contribution in enhancing occupational mental health at workplace. Many studies had been conducted to examine its role in improving the overall performance of organizations. Till the recent years, new insight has been brought up in examining the effect of emotional intelligence on organizational justice. However, there is insufficient empirical evidence in proving the significant impact of emotional intelligence on organizational justice, especially in Asia context, particularly Malaysian manufacturing sector. Malaysia is known as collectivism country, where the matter of fairness is highly concerned. Hence, it is important to investigate how emotional intelligence improve the perception of fairness among the employees in Malaysia context. Therefore, this conceptual paper proposed to examine the impact of each emotional intelligence's dimensions on the organizational justice, which might contribute to the existing literature of the effect of emotional intelligence towards organizational justice in Malaysia.

Keywords: *Emotional Intelligence, mental health, Malaysia*

Introduction

Emotional intelligence (EI) has been receiving attention from the scholars in the field of occupational psychology due to its contributions in occupational mental health^{1, 2}. Many researchers had studied the contributions of EI to several work-related outcomes, such as job performance³, perceptions of stress⁴, as well as organizational commitment⁵ among their respondents. The role of EI has been discussed actively by the scholars because it is believed that the ability of EI could assist the employees in maintaining healthy working environment by being tolerance and patience⁶.

There are few EI models developed by the past scholars. Among those developed EI models, it was argued that Mayer and Salovey⁷ Ability-based EI Model

is the most recognized EI theory which viewed EI as mental ability⁸. Ability-based EI Model consists of four branches, where it is believed that the four branches of EI could provide a clear and logical comprehension in understanding the concept of EI⁹. In this conceptual paper, the four dimensions of EI are proposed in examining their impacts on organizational justice (OJ). The first dimension is Regulation of Emotion (ROE). A person with the ability of ROE is prone to have the ability to overcome emotional disturbance when he regulates his emotions effectively⁷. The second dimension is Self-Emotion Appraisal (SEA), where an individual tends to have the ability to appraise, alter, and observe their own emotions or moods when incidents happened at their workplace⁷. The third dimension is Others' Emotion Appraisal (OEA), where the individual is more likely to have the ability to understand and to assess others' emotion⁷. The fourth dimension is Use of Emotion (UOE). An individual with UOE ability tends to have the ability in creating emotions that can improve their cognitive functions, such as decision making and problem solving⁷.

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In recent years, the contributions of EI in enhancing employees' performance at workplace has attracted the attention of the scholars of human resource development¹⁰. Among the work-related variables, organizational justice (OJ) has recently arisen as one of the crucial components that could enhance overall performance of organizations¹¹. OJ is defined as the extent to which the employee perceived fairness in job related matters at their workplace¹². OJ can be divided into four dimensions, namely distributive, procedural, informational, and interpersonal justice¹³. It was argued that OJ plays a significant role in affecting the behaviour as well as the attitude of employees in organizations¹⁴. Due to the importance of OJ, the antecedent that could affect the perception of OJ among the employees should be examined thoroughly in order to improve the level of OJ. According to Fairness Theory, it is believed that employees' fairness judgement could be formed through the process of emotional or cognitive function¹⁵. Hence, this study attempts to propose the investigation of the impacts of EI's dimensions on OJ. This idea is further supported by another scholar that, an emotional intelligent worker is less likely to perceive OJ negatively¹⁶. This is because employees with higher EI tend to use their emotions effectively in motivating themselves to overcome with unfairness¹⁶.

Problem Statement

The role of EI has been proved in affecting peoples' perceptions¹⁷. Similarly, in the context of organizations, it is believed that EI is a potential antecedent that could affect the perception of employees in the aspect of OJ. However, it was claimed that, there is a lacking of discussion on EI' roles towards employees' attitude and behaviour at workplace, especially organizational justice¹⁶. This is further supported by another scholar, where it was mentioned that, EI was just newly introduced as the factor that could affect perceived OJ in the recent literature of workplace justice¹⁸. In other words, the knowledge of the relationship between EI and OJ is still lacking in the body of literature.

Although there are few studies that have examined the impact of EI on OJ, those studies are mainly conducted in the Western context^{16, 18}. It should be cautioned that Western countries have different culture or practices as compared to Malaysia context, hence generalization is very limited. For example, Malaysia is a collectivist country, while Western countries practice

individualism¹⁹. It is important to gain insight on the antecedents that could affect OJ among Malaysian because collectivists tend to highly concern the level of fairness at their workplace²⁰. As far as we know, there is no previous study conducted in Malaysian context to examine the impact of EI on OJ, specifically in manufacturing sector. In addition to that, although previous studies have examined the impact of EI on OJ, there is a lacking of empirical evidences that used Mayer and Salovey's Ability-based EI Model to measure the impact of EI to OJ¹⁶. Hence, there is a calling for further empirical study that examine the impact of EI's dimensions to OJ, using ability-based EI model in Malaysian manufacturing context.

A direct relationship between EI and OJ was found in few previous studies. It was claimed that EI has significant influence in affecting employees' perception on OJ through the personality of employees¹⁸. Besides, it was also revealed that EI is able to significantly influence employees' interpretation on organizations' fairness matters, then affecting their perception of OJ¹⁶. It is believed that employees with higher EI tend to perceive positive OJ due to their abilities in managing and regulating their emotions when they faced injustice at workplace²¹. The proposed conceptual framework is developed for this conceptual paper based on the findings in previous empirical studies, as shown in Figure 1. Based on the findings above, five hypothesis are stipulated as below.

Hypothesis 1: There is a significant impact of EI on OJ.

Hypothesis 2: There is a significant impact of Regulation of Emotion on OJ.

Hypothesis 3: There is a significant impact of Self-Emotion Appraisal on OJ.

Hypothesis 4: There is a significant impact of Others' Emotion Appraisal on OJ.

Hypothesis 5: There is a significant impact of Use of Emotion on OJ.

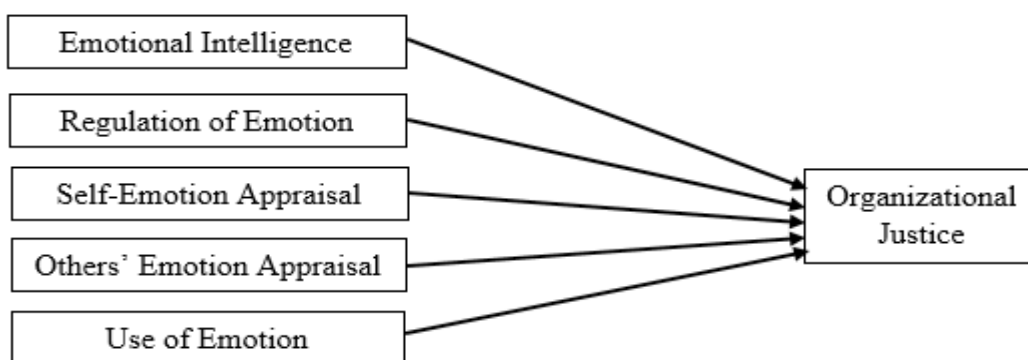


Figure 1: Proposed Conceptual Framework

Methodology

Research Design and Samples

In order to test all the proposed hypotheses, the authors intended to adopt quantitative approach. When researcher plans to test objective theory via examining the impacts among variables, he should use quantitative research method²². Besides, it is claimed that, quantitative research is well-known to be used to examine the impacts between variables²³. Hence, in order to examine the impacts between the dimensions of EI and OJ, the authors employed quantitative approach. This will be a cross-sectional study, where the authors will collect the data at one time only. The authors will employ survey method, where questionnaire will be distributed to collect the response of selected respondents. The respondents of present study will be the employees from Malaysian manufacturing companies. Multi-stage sampling method will be adopted in the stages of choosing samples.

Measures

Emotional Intelligence. This study adopted Wong and Law²⁴ Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS), where the concept of WLEIS is similar with the concept of Mayer and Salovey EI Ability Model. The instrument consists of 16 items that measure each dimension of EI, namely Regulation of Emotion (ROE), Self-Emotion Appraisal (SEA), Others' Emotion Appraisal (OEA), and Use of Emotion (UOE). The sample of the items is, "I am able to control my temper so that I can handle difficulties rationally". Each item is given five Likert scales, from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree. The construct of EI was tested with reliability, and it scored 0.89, indicating a high reliability value.

Organizational Justice. This study adopted Colquitt¹³ Organizational Justice Scale, where it consists of four dimensions, namely distributive, procedural, informational, and interpersonal justice. The instrument consists of 20 items that measure each dimension of OJ. The sample of the item is, "My outcome is justified, given my performance". Similarly, each item is given five Likert scales, from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree. The construct of OJ was tested with reliability, where it scored 0.86, indicating a high reliability value.

Data Analysis

Structural model will be used to analyse the data. This is because majority of the researchers agreed that structural model is suitable to be employed when the researchers need to explain the impacts of variables by using path diagrams²⁵. The structural model's validity is assessed through multicollinearity, coefficient of determination (R^2), effect size and path coefficients. In order to test the hypotheses, the author will make a decision on the acceptance or rejection of hypotheses, depending on the result of path coefficients, t -values, as well as p -values with a significance level of 0.05.

Conclusion

To summarize, the impact of EI on OJ has been less explored by the past studies. Hence, this conceptual paper proposed a framework to illustrate the influence of the dimensions of EI towards OJ. The authors attempts to discover the significance of EI dimensions' impact on the perceptions of OJ among the employees in Malaysian manufacturing companies. It is believed that interesting insight could be provided since there is a lacking of study that examined the impact of EI's dimensions on OJ, especially among the respondents in the context of

Malaysian manufacturing sector.

Conflict of Interest: The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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Ethical Clearance: Done by Research Committee

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