

Investigating the Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Occupational Stress of Teachers

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Abstract

The present study was carried out for investigating the relationship between emotional intelligence and occupational stress of teachers of elementary school in District No.1 of Tehran. The sample subjects were selected randomly from among teachers of elementary school in District No.1 of Tehran. Measurement tools were Occupational Stress Index and Cyber Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (Sharing). Step-by-step regression analysis showed that emotional intelligence predicts the occupational stress significantly as these two variables are responsible for 57% of researches on occupational stress. The results also indicated that from among the components of emotional intelligence, self-control, empathy and self-awareness play the role in predicting the occupational stress in order. From these components, self-control plays the most important role in explaining the occupational stress and is responsible for 57% of changes in occupational stress. Then, empathy and self-awareness are responsible for 13% and 3% of changes in occupational stress, respectively. T-test results showed that male teachers have significantly more occupational stress and on the other hand, female teachers obtain significantly more scores in both general emotional intelligence and all of its components.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Occupational Stress, Teachers.

Introduction

Each stimulus which creates tensions in human and makes him to react is known as stressful factor. The created tension and response to this tension altogether establish a process called stress. Stress factor can be internal or external or a combination of both. In literal point of view, stress stems from “strictus” which means hardship and severity which reminds the force. Nowadays, the word “stress” is used with two different roots; either an attack factor such as noise and crash which are the stressful factors or a metabolic or physiological reaction which is create by stress like sweating the hands or day throat both of which represent the stress. Although the word “stress” has been widely used in recent centuries, the nature of stress existed all over the human life. In other words, stress has come to existence in line with the human and he has faced it in different forms and ways. In historical point of view, in theories established by the old philosophers, especially Plato and Aristotle, who have scrutinized the relationship between body and mind and how they affect each other, there are roots from awareness about stress. Also, from among Iranian and Islamic scientists, especially Avicenna, nature and effect of stress have been observed (Attar, 1995). Hans Selye, a Canadian physician, was the first who extensively examined and discussed the stress as a new concept and stated that when a factor creates a tension in body and disturbs its balance and stability, the body reacts automatically so that the lost balance is restored and turned back to its previous and permanent state. Today's, stress perhaps is the most general issue in human's daily life. Generally speaking, it can be said that important factors in creating the stress in life include person's personality, his/her working environment and family. Stress resulting from the working environment or occupational stress is a fully-known issue. Occupational stress can be seen as aggregating all stressful factors and conditions related to the job of which most people have consensus. For example, one of the stressful conditions related to the job is that worker and employee is exposed to the high rate of needs or pressures in working environment in one hand and he/she has limited time in meeting these needs on the other hand. It is natural that since he/she cannot cope with them, supervisors will impose frequent objections on them. In other words, occupational stress is the stress which a specific person undergoes in a specific job. However, among these definitions, a point is significant: the reciprocal effect between person and environment (Heidari, 2009).

Work is a part of life which has attracted many researchers' attention. Regardless of income, work meets a number of human's basic needs such as mental and physical exercise, social link, self-esteem, self-confidence and self-sufficiency. However, work maybe is the source of stress Copper (1981) sees relationship with employer, relationship with coworkers and subordinates, amount of assign work and etc. as the stress factors in working environment (Savikas, 2002).

As already mentioned, stress exists in lives of all people who are working in various jobs of society and the pressure is imposed on them in various forms. Occupational developments such as organizational changes, change in salary and wage, occupational promotion, increase or decrease in manpower and social transformations are those subjects which impose pressure on the persons anyhow and make him confused, anxious and worried (Robins, 1991).

One of the most important and critical jobs in current society which affects greatly the current and future status of society is teaching. Almost like all other occupations, teaching has its own stressful factors. Variable of emotional intelligence is one those which seems is related to the occupational stress and is considered as a way to resist against the stress.

Since emerging the construct of emotional intelligence in psychology literature, this construct has been investigated in various areas such as job and working environment. In fact, researchers have tried to find out the relationship between this construct and important and effective factors in occupational success. For example, numerous researches have shown emotional intelligence has a direct and significant relation with job satisfaction and emotional intelligence improves the occupational performance due to increase in empathy and resistance against stress (Asadi, 2003). Based on this, the present study aims at investigating the relationship between emotional intelligence and occupational stress among the teachers of elementary school in District No.1 of Tehran.

Research Method

The present research method is descriptive and of correlation type. The statistical population includes 38 teachers of elementary schools of District No.1 in Tehran. The sample volume was calculated 38 persons by using the following formula:

$$n = ((z)^2 \cdot (s)^2) / d^2$$

Stratified random sampling method was used for selecting this sample. In this method, ratio of people in each class (gender) in sample is equal to the ratio of people in the population. 33 male and 5 female teachers were selected. For selecting this sample, at first, a list of all elementary schools in the City was prepared. Then, two schools were selected randomly from among them. After all, the questionnaires were distributed and implemented by referring to the selected schools.

Measurement Tools

Occupational Stress Index:

This questionnaire includes 50 items with 5-degree Likert scale. In this index, the subjects were asked to rate their personal experiences during the last year based on a 5-degree Likert scale ranging from never to almost always. The questions are scored in such a way that if the subject chose the options “never”, “accidentally”, “sometimes”, “most often” and “almost always”, he/she gets the scores of 0, 1, 2, 3 and 4, respectively. The minimum and maximum are also 0 and 200, respectively.

This questionnaire was standardized in a research on employees of an industrial Complex in Isfahan by Sotoudeh in 2002 and its reliability was calculated 0/86 by Cronbach Alpha and its criterion-related validity was 0.71. In the present study, reliability of this questionnaire was calculated 0.93 by Cronbach Alpha which is acceptable.

Cyber or Sharing Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire

This questionnaire consists of 33 items with 5-degree Likert scale. This inventory includes 5 subscales, namely, self-awareness, self-control, empathy, social skills and self-motivation. Through implementing this questionnaire, each subject receives 6 separate scores of which 5 scores are related to the subscales and the last one is the total score. Responses are in 5-degree form ranging from never to always. In some questions, scoring is done directly; i.e. the option “always” gets 1 and “never” scores 5. In some questions, scoring is done inversely.

This questionnaire was standardized by Mansouri (2001) on the students of Tehran Universities and its total reliability was calculated 0.84 by Cronbach Alpha. In the present study, reliability of this questionnaire was calculated 0.81 by Cronbach Alpha.

Findings

Table 1; Description of variables of respondents' age and background

Variable	SD	Mean	Maximum	Minimum	N
Age	79.6	97.31	50	21	36
Background	4.7	36.10	30	1	33

Table 2; Description of variables of respondents' gender

Gender	Cumulative Frequency	Percentage Frequency	Frequency
Female	2.31	2.13	5
Male	100	8.86	33

Table 3; Description of variables of respondents' marital status

Marital Status	Cumulative Frequency	Percentage Frequency	Frequency
Single	0	0	0
Marital	100	100	38

Table 4; Investigating the Relationship between Two Variables of Emotional Intelligence and Occupational Stress of Teachers

Variable	Teachers' Occupational Stress	
Emotional Intelligence	Pearson Correlation Coefficient	0.55
	P-value	0.00

Since the P-value obtained in the test is less than the significance level (0.05), therefore, the assumption of linear relationship is accepted and one can claim that there is a significant linear relationship between emotional intelligence and teachers' occupational stress.

Table 5; Investigating the Relationship between Two Variables of Self-Awareness and Occupational Stress of Teachers

Variable	Teachers' Occupational Stress	
Self-Awareness	Pearson Correlation Coefficient	0.53
	P-value	0.00

Since the P-value obtained in the test is less than the significance level (0.05), therefore, the assumption of linear relationship is accepted and one can claim that there is a significant linear relationship between self-awareness and teachers' occupational stress.

Table 6; Investigating the Relationship between Two Variables of Self-Control and Occupational Stress of Teachers

Variable	Teachers' Occupational Stress	
Self-Control	Pearson Correlation Coefficient	0.36
	P-value	0.02

Since the P-value obtained in the test is less than the significance level (0.05), therefore, the assumption of linear relationship is accepted and one can claim that there is a significant linear relationship between self-control and teachers' occupational stress.

Table 7; Investigating the Relationship between Two Variables of Empathy and Occupational Stress of Teachers

Variable	Teachers' Occupational Stress	
Empathy	Pearson Correlation Coefficient	0.45
	P-value	0.004

Since the P-value obtained in the test is less than the significance level (0.05), therefore, the assumption of linear relationship is accepted and one can claim that there is a significant linear relationship between empathy and teachers' occupational stress.

Table 8; Investigating the Relationship between Two Variables of Social Skills and Occupational Stress of Teachers

Variable	Teachers' Occupational Stress	
Social Skills	Pearson Correlation Coefficient	0.22
	P-value	0.17

Since the P-value obtained in the test is more than the significance level (0.05), therefore, the assumption of linear relationship is rejected and one can claim that there is no significant linear relationship between social skills and teachers' occupational stress.

There is a negative relationship between self-motivation and teachers' occupational stress.

Table 9; Investigating the Relationship between Two Variables of Self-Motivation and Occupational Stress of Teachers

Variable	Teachers' Occupational Stress	
Self-Motivation	Pearson Correlation Coefficient	0.45
	P-value	0.004

Since the P-value obtained in the test is less than the significance level (0.05), therefore, the assumption of linear relationship is accepted and one can claim that there is a significant linear relationship between self-motivation and teachers' occupational stress.

Table 10; Comparing the Variable of Teachers' Occupational Stress among Men and Women (Male and Female Teachers)

Gender	SD	Mean	N	P-value	t-statistic
male	05.29	80.56	5	0.45	-0.76
female	8.18	21.64	33		

Since the P-value obtained from t-student is more than the significance level (0.05), one can conclude that there is no difference in occupational stress between male and female teachers.

Table 11; Comparing the Variable of Emotional Intelligence among Men and Women (Male and Female Teachers)

Gender	SD	Mean	N	P-value	t-statistic
male	05.29	80.56	5	0.8	-0.3
female	8.18	21.64	33		

In regards to the P-value obtained from t-student which is more than the significance level (0.05), one can conclude that there is no difference in emotional intelligence between male and female teachers.

Discussion and Conclusion

First Hypothesis: There is a negative relationship between emotional intelligence and occupational stress.

As already seen in chapter Four, the results of examining this hypothesis revealed that there is a negative and significant relationship between emotional intelligence and teachers' occupational stress and this relationship was also significant in terms of correlation and regression analysis. The correlation between emotional intelligence and teachers' occupational stress was $r = - 0.53$ which was significant in level of ($P < 0.00$).

This finding is consistent with the findings of researches by Asadi (2003) & Malek-Jetavi (2013), Smith et al (2003) and Krid et al (2002). In his research, Asadi concluded that there is a

negative and significant relationship between emotional intelligence and occupational stress. In general, this research shows that those people with high emotional intelligence have more ability to resist against the stressful events and situations. In accordance with the idea of Bar-On (1999), tolerating the stress, which is a dimension of emotional intelligence, is based on the following abilities:

- a. Ability to select the ways for coping with stress;
- b. Optimistic willingness to new experiences and changes and ability to overcome the problems (i.e. believing in his/her abilities in coping with such situations)
- c. This feeling that one can have control over the stressful situation or affect it (i.e. keeping calmness and having control)

In other words, those people with higher emotional intelligence are more able to tolerate the high stress and overcome the problems and crises more successfully and are less disappointed and helpless.

Second Hypothesis: There is a negative relationship between self-awareness and teachers' occupational stress.

Since the P-value obtained in the test (0.53) is less than the significance level (0.05), therefore, the assumption of linear relationship is accepted and one can claim that there is a significant linear relationship between self-awareness and teachers' occupational stress.

Awareness of one's emotions – recognizing the feeling as it happens – from Goleman point of view (1995) is the main theme of emotional intelligence. Ability to having control feelings is critical for psychological attitude and self-perception. From among the most important characteristics of people with this capability is to have more skills in controlling and managing the life events. In accordance with a research by Kiaroochi & et al. (2000), ability to control and to set the feelings and emotions among these people has a reverse relationship with depression and disappointment. These people respond to the stress and unpleasant events more optimistically and hopefully and perhaps, this is a justification for the effect on the emotional intelligence on explaining the occupational stress.

Third Hypothesis: There is a negative relationship between self-control and teachers' occupational stress.

Results of regression analysis showed that component of emotional intelligence has the most role in explaining the occupational stress and by itself is responsible for 36% of changes in occupational stress. In this area, efficient people can avoid negative emotions such as disappointment, anxiety and excitability in a better way. This kind of people face less problems in their lives and in case of any problem, they can restore to the desired conditions from the problematic ones. People who are unable in this component become quickly restless and lose their control; they are angry and unnecessary tensions and discomforts make them annoyed. These people also have more verbal hostility and while using harsh words, their behaviors make the conditions worse and their restlessness is continued. All of these behaviors indicate high self-control among people with high emotional intelligence due to exposing the stressful conditions and returning him quickly to the ideal and desirable conditions can protect them from stress. This explanation is consistent with the researches by Cary Carson, Filip Carson, Birkin Meer (2000), Kiaroochi et al (2000) and Asadi (2003).

Fourth Hypothesis: There is a negative relationship between empathy and teachers' occupational stress.

Results of correlation coefficient as well as regression analysis showed that empathy plays significantly a role in predicting the occupational stress and after self-control, it has the most role in predicting the occupational stress (is responsible for about 45 percent of changes in occupational stress). Empathy or social consciousness means the one's ability to recognize the others' emotions and feelings. Empathetic people are familiar with the social subtle cues and those interactions, which indicate the others' needs and requests. This skill makes people mighty in management, professional and training areas. This ability helps people to have effective communication and interaction with others and offers another result indicating easier and better access to the social support sources that can play an important role in protecting the people against the problems including stress.

As mentioned in researches by Kiaroochi et al (2000), those people who are affected by this support are able to adapt with stress and resulting problems and protect themselves from the negative and damaging results. The person's ability to diagnose the emotions among others puts the person in a situation in which he takes initiative in creating the positive mood by using the emotion and feeling tools commensurate with the existing situation. This capability will be effective always in establishing the favorite and desired atmosphere that facilitates the creative and effective teamwork.

Fifth Hypothesis: There is a negative relationship between social skills and teachers' occupational stress.

Since the P-value obtained in the test is more than the significance level (0.05), therefore, the assumption of linear relationship is rejected and one can claim that there is no significant linear relationship between social skills and teachers' occupational stress.

This is due to the relative high correlation between social skills and other components of emotional intelligence; i.e. relationship between social skills and occupational stress is due to other components of emotional intelligence and when the contribution of other components of emotional intelligence in regression analysis is ignored, other social skills have no significant role in predicting the occupational stress.

Sixth Hypothesis: There is a negative relationship between self-motivation and teachers' occupational stress

Like the components of social skills, although self-motivation had a significant correlation with occupational stress, but the results of regression analysis showed that this component also does not play a significant role in predicting the occupational stress. The reason that self-motivation is not included in the occupational stress prediction formula, is the same as component of social skills.

Seventh Hypothesis: There is a difference between teachers' occupational stress among the men and women.

T-test results showed that occupational stress is not different between men and women. This finding is consistent with the research by Sanei-Sistani (2000).

Eighth Hypothesis: There is a difference between emotional intelligence and its components among the men and women.

T-test results showed there is no difference between men and women in terms of emotional intelligence. This finding is not consistent with the findings of researches by Dehshiri (2003) and Mansouri (2002). In their studies, these two researchers concluded that emotional intelligence among the women is higher than men. But this finding is consistent with the research by Bar-On (1999). In his research, Bar-On concluded that there is not difference between men and women in terms of general emotional intelligence scores.

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