



Relation of employee and manager emotional intelligence to job satisfaction and performance

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Abstract

This study examined the relationships among employees' emotional intelligence, their manager's emotional intelligence, employees' job satisfaction, and performance for 187 food service employees from nine different locations of the same restaurant franchise. We predicted and found that employees' emotional intelligence was positively associated with job satisfaction and performance. In addition, manager's emotional intelligence had a more positive correlation with job satisfaction for employees with low emotional intelligence than for those with high emotional intelligence. These findings remain significant after controlling for personality factors. A similar pattern was found for job performance; however, the effect did not meet traditional standards of significance. Applied implications of the results are discussed.

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1. Introduction

Emotional intelligence (EI) can play a significant role in the work environment (George, 2000; Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002; Law, Wong, & Song, 2004; Sy & Cote, 2004; Wong & Law, 2002). Specifically, researchers assert that employees' EI can predict work

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related outcomes, such as job satisfaction and job performance (Bachman, Stein, Campbell, & Sitarenios, 2000; Prati, Douglas, Ferris, Ammeter, & Buckley, 2003; Wong & Law, 2002). Furthermore, theorists posit that managers' EI can significantly impact these work outcomes (e.g., George, 2000; Goleman et al., 2002). However, the empirical evidence is scant (Day & Carroll, 2004; Zeidner, Matthews, & Roberts, 2004) and no study has examined the interaction effect of managers' EI and employees' EI on job satisfaction and job performance. As such, the goals of this study are to examine the impact of employees' EI on job satisfaction and job performance, as well as the effect of the interaction between managers' EI and employees' EI on job satisfaction and job performance.

1.1. Job satisfaction

Employees with high EI are more likely to have higher levels of job satisfaction because they are more adept at appraising and regulating their own emotions than are employees with low EI. For example, employees with high EI may be better at identifying feelings of frustration and stress, and subsequently, regulating those emotions to reduce stress. Employees with high EI are more resilient because they are able to understand the causes of stress and develop strategies and perseverance to deal with the negative consequences of stress (Cooper & Sawaf, 1997). Conversely, employees with low EI are likely to be less aware of their emotions and possess fewer abilities to cope with their emotions when faced with difficult situations, thereby, exacerbating their level of stress and decreasing their level of job satisfaction.

Furthermore, employees with high EI are likely to experience high levels of job satisfaction because they can utilize their ability to appraise and manage emotions in others. This skill becomes significant in group settings where employees with high EI can use their skills to foster positive interactions that help boost their own morale, as well as the morale of the group, and contribute positively to the experience of job satisfaction for all (Shimazu, Shimazu, & Odahara, 2004). Based on the foregoing discussion, we propose:

Hypothesis 1. Employees' emotional intelligence associates positively with their job satisfaction.

1.2. Job performance

Some researchers (e.g., George & Brief, 1996) have theorized that job performance is influenced by employees' ability to *use emotions to facilitate performance*, one of the four defining dimensions of EI. Employees could use both positive and negative emotions to their advantage to improve performance. For example, positive emotions, such as excitement or enthusiasm, could stimulate employees to provide better customer service, complete their work assignments, or contribute to the organization. Conversely, negative emotions, such as anxiety, could facilitate employees' ability to focus on their work tasks. Employees with high emotional intelligence should be more adept at regulating their own emotions and managing others' emotions to foster more positive interactions, which could lead to more organizational citizenship behaviors that contribute to performance (Mossholder, Bedian, & Armenakis, 1981; Wong & Law, 2002). As such, we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 2. Employees' emotional intelligence associates positively with their job performance.

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