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The Influence of Demographic Profiles on Emotional Intelligence: A Study on Polytechnic Lecturers in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

Emotional Intelligence (EI) is defined as an ability to identify, understand, experience and express human emotions in a healthy productive way. The benefits of demonstrating high frequency of emotional intelligence in the workplace is vast especially in service based professions like teaching. Therefore this study aimed to explore the level of EI among lectures from a polytechnic in Malaysia and in the same time explore the influence of demographic profiles towards those levels. Demographic profiles such as gender, age group, occupational grade, working experience in the current job and prior working experience in the industry are selected. The Genos Emotional Intelligence Inventory (Concise version) was distributed to all the academic departments and the total number of respondents were n=162. Findings show that the overall level of EI is average. The findings proved that the levels of emotional intelligence among the lecturers improved with age, teaching experience, grade and education where else gender and prior working were not contributing factors

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Introduction

Emotional intelligence (EI) is a skill that enables a person to monitor their emotions and those around them, distinguish between these emotions so that the right decision or action could be made (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Bradberry and Greeves (2005) defined emotional intelligence as a method to achieve positive outcomes by managing our behaviours and those around us. Noriah, Ramlee,Zuria and Siti Rahayah (2006) claimed that EI is as an important skill that makes it possible for a person to be sensitive towards emotions. However Nelson, Low, and Nelson (2006) simplified the definition by stating EI as an ability that could be developed to enable a person to identify, understand, experience, and express human emotions in the most positive method.

Goleman (1995) claims that people who portray high frequencies of emotional intelligence skills are more likely to have happier and effective lives. Goleman describe emotional intelligence as "an ability to motivate oneself and persist in the face of frustration, to control impulse and delay gratification; to regulate moods and keep distress from swamping the ability to think; to emphasize and to hope"(p.34). He added that people in the 'caring' professions such as teaching, sales and management have proved to be successful when they show high levels of intrapersonal intelligence that is the ability to understand motivating factors, working style and cooperation among co-workers. Thus the importance of emotional intelligence for an academician is undeniable.

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Academicians in the Ministry of Higher Education of Malaysia are required to show excellence in the context teaching, research, publication, writing, public service, consultancy, and management (Haryani, Sharifah & Rose, 2010). Polytechnics lecturers whom are governed by the Ministry of Higher Education, are held responsible for teaching and assessing in their respective disciplines, planning curriculum, developing and managing courses, assist in organizing events and activities, industrial liaison and much more. Lecturers from higher learning institutions are required to work long hours with insufficient resources and rewards (Azman, Yao, Yeo, Kong & Ju, 2010). The heavy responsibility held by polytechnic lecturers could lead to unhealthy work life in their teaching career.

According to the University Kebangsaan Malaysia's News Portal (UKM Leads Research on Emotional Intelligence, 2009) heavy workload besides teaching and stressful working environment are the main contributors of emotionally laden behaviour among the teaching profession. A study done on educators of higher learning institute in Malaysia revealed that academicians were unable to manage their emotions effectively and were lacking in emotion regulation behaviours when dealing with colleagues (Rohana, Kamaruzaman & Zanariah, 2009). As teaching profession is known as one of the most stressful profession (Noriah, Iskandar & Ridzauddin, 2010; Nelson, Low, & Nelson, 2006), emotional intelligence could prove to be important trait personality that can be beneficial to academicians (Iskandar, Rohaty & Zuria, 2009). Selva and Loh (2008) claimed that emotional intelligence is critical as it determines the success of a teacher in coping with changes in pedagogy. By implementing emotional intelligence skills, educators could develop themselves personally and professionally to handle pressures of the profession (Nelson, Low, & Nelson, 2006).

Demographic profile which includes age, gender, job position, educational level, and work experience have positive relationship with emotional intelligence (Jorfi, Yaacob & Shah, 2011). Studies on Malaysian teachers' emotional intelligence revealed that they portray low to moderate emotional intelligence (Noriah et.al., 2010 ; Selva and Loh, 2008). Therefore the purpose of this study is to evaluate the levels of emotional intelligence of polytechnic lecturers based on their demographic profile. The study also tends to investigate the overall emotional intelligence based on the self perceived or rated emotional intelligence inventory. The demographic profile studied were gender, age group, and occupational grade, academic qualification, working experience as a lecturer and prior working experience in the industry. Previous working experience was chosen as one of the variables studied because industrial experiences are additional working experience that may or may not influence the competency as a lecturer in such trade based fields. Noriah et al. (2006) stated that an educator who is aware of their own feelings, capable of regulating it positively is capable of motivating others, displays empathy and care will demonstrate higher frequency of EI.

Literature Review

According to Goleman (1995), emotional intelligence could be divided into five domains as follows: self awareness, managing emotions, motivating others, recognizing emotions and handling relationships. These five domains description are outlined in Table 1. According to Bradberry and Greaves (2005), Golemans' 5 domains could be summarized into two main competencies as personal competencies and social competencies. Personal competencies are divided into self-awareness and self- management and social competencies is divided into social awareness and relationship management. Salovey and Mayer's Four Branch Model of Emotional Intelligence (EI) defined the overall emotional intelligence of a person as a joined ability between accurately perceiving emotions, using emotions to facilitate thoughts, understand emotions and managing emotions (Mayer, Roberts & Barsade, 2008).

Palmer (2003) in his study analyzed various models of emotional intelligence such as Mayer-Salovey-Caruso, Bar-On's , The Trait Meta-Mood Scale, Toronto Alexithymia Scale (TAS-20) and Self-Report Measure Of Emotional Intelligence (SEI) proposed a new taxonomic model of EI with five domains; Emotional Recognition and Expression, Understanding Emotions External, Emotions Direct Cognition, Intrapersonal Management and Interpersonal Management. Based on Palmers model, Schutte Self- Report Emotional Intelligence (SSREI) and the Swinbourne University Emotional Intelligence Test (SUEIT), the GENOS model of emotional intelligence was developed The Genos Model of Emotional Intelligence describes seven factors

or domains that are outlined in Table 2. The inventory developed based on Genos EI model was chosen as it designed for workplace settings (Palmer, Stough, Harmer and Gignac, 2009).

Table 1. *Five Domains Of Emotional Intelligence Of Goleman*

Domain	Description
Knowing one's emotion (Self Awareness)	The ability of a person to monitor their feelings and moods as it happens.
Managing Emotions	The ability of person to handle their feelings so that they are appropriate in that situation. It helps a person to control anger, sadness and anxiety.
Motivating Oneself (Motivation)	The ability of a person to use their emotions in the service of a goal. It is essential for paying attention, self – motivation and mastery and creativity.
Recognizing Emotions (Empathy)	The ability to understand how others feel. It is the fundamental "people" skill. People who are empathetic are more attuned to need of others making them great for the caring professions such as teaching, sales and management.
Handling Relationship	The ability to manage others emotion. It is sometimes referred as social skills as it deals with social competence. These skills that determines popularity, leadership and interpersonal effectiveness.

Note: Summary of emotional domains from Emotional Intelligence (Goleman, 1995).

Table 2. *Genos Model of Emotional Intelligence*

Factor name	Description
Emotional Self – Awareness	The skill to perceive and understand your own emotion
Emotional Expression	The skill to effectively express your own emotion
Emotional Awareness of Others	The skill of perceiving and understanding others' emotion.
Emotional Reasoning	The skill of using emotional information in decision making
Emotional Self – Management	The skill of managing your own emotion
Emotional Management of Others	The skill of positively influencing the emotions of others
Emotional Self-Control	The skill of positively controlling your strong emotions.

Note: Adapted from The Genos Emotional Intelligence Inventory: A Measure Designed Specifically for Workplace (Palmer et.al., 2009)

Objective of the Study

The objective of the study in general is to look at the level of emotional intelligence and its relation with demographic profiles of the respondent. The objectives of the study are as follow:

1. To identify the overall level of emotional intelligence of the lecturers
2. To study the influence demographic profiles groups such as gender, age group, academic qualification, occupational level, working experience as a lecturer and previous working experience in the industry on levels of emotional intelligence.

Research Questions

This study plans to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the level of emotional intelligence among the lecturers?
2. Is there a significance difference between the demographic groups of:

a. Gender
b. Age
c. Occupational level
d. Academic qualification
e. Working experience as a lecturer
f. Previous working experience in the industry

and the level of emotional intelligence of the lecturers.

Materials and Methods

The study is based on a survey using questionnaires that were distributed to six various departments in one of the polytechnics in the northern region of Malaysia. The questionnaire was distributed based on the number of teaching staffs in every academic department.

Research Instrument

The instrument used for this study is the Genos Emotional Intelligence (Concise version). The questionnaire was obtained, used and modified with the permission from Genos International. The concise version consists of 31-items and produces the total emotional intelligence score. Based on *Genos Emotional Intelligence Inventory: Technical Manual,* the inventory is applicable for adults above 18 years old and is specific for workplace setting as it has high workplace face validity. In addition, the English reading level of the items as associated with grade level based on Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level analysis is 7.4 (U.S) (Gignac, 2008). The overall emotional intelligence scales of this study had an acceptable internal consistency of Alpha Cronbach (α= 0.84).

The items are scored on a 5-point Likert scale ; "Almost Never" ," Seldom" ," Sometimes", "Usually" and "Almost Always". Some of the terms in the items had to be modified to suit the study. The items constructed are based on the seven Genos EI domains as in Table 2. The total score will represent the frequency how often an individual engages in an emotional intelligent behaviours in their work settings (Gignac, 2008). As the objective of the study is influence demographic profile groups on the level of emotional intelligence, the effect of the domains will not be analyze.

Participants

Out of the 280 questionnaires distributed, a total of 162 questionnaires were returned. Therefore the respond rate was 0.59%. According to Rohana et.al., (2009), the low response rate among Malaysian respondents in this context could be due to culture as people are not comfortable in discussing their emotions openly.

Demographic Profile

Table 3 shows the demographic profile of the respondents. Out of the 162 lecturers that participated in this study 29% are male and 71% are female. The mean age is 32.12 (SD 5.64) and the mean years of working experience as a lecturer are 6.25 (SD 4.00). Among the subjects 1.2 % are from the DH48 grade, 9.9% were from the DH44 grade, 73.5% were from the DH41/42 grade, 13.6% were from the DH44 grade and 1.9% were from the DH29 Grade. Of the lecturers only 8.6 % were diploma holders and the balance 91.4% were PhD, Masters Degree and Degree holders. Of all of the respondents only 37% had prior working experience in the industry.

Table 3. Demographic profile of the study (n=162)

Variables	Mean & Standard Deviation (SD)	n	%
Gender			
Male		47	29.0
Female		115	71.0
Age Group			
<=30	Mean = 32.12	61	37.7
31-40	SD = 5.64	96	59.3
41-50	Min = 25.5	4	2.5
>50	Max = 57.5	1	0.6
Grade			
DH48		2	1.2
DH44		16	9.9
DH42/41		119	73.5
DH32		22	13.6
DH29		3	1.9
Academic Qualification			
PhD		1	0.6
Masters Degree		65	40.1
Degree		82	50.6
Diploma		14	8.6
Certificate		0	0
Years working as a lecturer (years)			
<5	Mean = 6.25	53	32.7
5-10	SD = 4.00	90	55.6
11-15	Min = 2	16	9.9
16 – 20	Max = 25.5	1	0.6
>20		2	1.2
Industry Experience			
Yes		60	37.0
No		102	63.0

Data Analysis

Test of Normality

Test of normality on the independent variable, both the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk test recorded a significance value less than 0.05. It was concluded that the distribution were not normally distributed. Therefore non-parametric analysis was used such as Mann-Whitney U Test and Kruskal – Wallis Test to test the effect of demographic profiles towards emotional intelligence.

Findings

1. Level of Emotional Intelligence

The findings concluded a mean value for the level of emotional intelligence as 3.37 (SD = 0.35) which is categorized as average emotional intelligence. The interpretation of the inventory is based on the guidelines on corresponding percentile range and categories as provided by the Genos Emotional Intelligence Technical

Manual (Gignac, 2008). The frequency distributions and percentage of the 162 respondents are as in Table 4. The highest frequency group were those from the 'Average EI' followed by the 'Very Low EI' group.

Table 4. Level of emotional intelligence- polytechnic lecturers

Level of emotional intelligence	Frequency	Percentage
Very High	31	19.1
High	29	17.9
Average	37	22.8
Low	29	17.9
Very Low	36	22.8

2. Demographic Variables

a. Gender and emotional intelligence. A Mann-Whitney U test revealed no significant difference between male and female lecturers' emotional intelligence. The test scores for male (Md=3.29) and female (M=3.32) conditions are U=2493, Z=-.774, p=0.439. As the value sig. value is more than 0.05, therefore there is no significant difference between genders. These results suggest that emotional intelligence does not vary with the gender of the lecturers.

b. Age group and emotional intelligence. A Kruskal - Wallis test revealed a statistically significant difference in emotional intelligence levels across the four different age groups, Chi-square (3, n=162) =8.785, p=0.032. The age group 41-50 years recorded the highest score (Md =3.79) and the lowers was the age group less than 30 years (Md= 3.23). The other two groups, 31-40 years scored a median of 3.32 and more than 50 years scored a median of 3.42 respectively.

c. Occupational level and emotional intelligence. A Kruskal - Wallis test revealed statistically significant difference in emotional intelligence levels across the five different grade groups, Chi-square (4, n = 162) = 13.485, p = 0.009. The DH48 grade recorded the highest median (Md = 4.24) and the lowers was recorded by the DH29 grade (Md= 3.03). The other three groups' median value increases in accordance with the increment of occupational grade.

d. Academic qualification and emotional intelligence. A Kruskal - Wallis test on the effect of academic qualification towards the level of emotional intelligence revealed a statistically significant difference between the academic qualifications of the lecturers. Chi-square (3, n =162) = 11.098, p = 0.011. The lowest median score is recorded by those with Diploma qualification (Md = 3.23) followed by Degree (Md = 3.26), Masters (Md = 3.38) and Doctoral (Md = 4.00). Therefore the level of emotional intelligence in this study increases with the increment of academic qualification.

e. Working experience as a lecturer and emotional intelligence. The Kruskal-Wallis test on the effect of working experience as a lecturer towards emotional intelligence revealed a significant difference between the groups. The results are not in accordance with other demographic profiles that recorded an increment of emotional intelligence within the increment subgroups level. The highest median value was recorded on those who have served more than 20 years (Md = 4.24) followed by the age group 11 to 15 years of working experience (Md =3.55). The lowest level of emotional intelligence was recorded by those who have worked less than 5 years (Md=3.19).

f. Prior working experience (before lecturing) and emotional intelligence. A Mann-Whitney U test revealed no significant difference between those who had prior working experience and those who did not. The median scores were 3.36 and 3.29 respectively. The conditions are U=2676, Z= -1.333, p=0.183. As the value of $p > 0.05$, therefore there is no significant difference between prior working experiences and emotional intelligence.

Summary of Finding

There were no significant differences in scores between genders. Female lecturers' levels of EI were slightly higher than the male lecturers. The age group that showed the highest level of emotional intelligence were those that fall into the category >40 years old. Occupational levels are positively correlated with levels of emotional intelligence of the lecturers. There were statistically significant differences between the subgroups of age, grade and working experience with the level of EI. However working experience in the industry prior to lecturing did not influence the level of emotional intelligence.

Discussion

Based on the results, it can be concluded that the level of emotional intelligence based on self rating GENOS Emotional Intelligence inventory is found to be average. The results prove to be similar to the results on the level emotional intelligence on school teachers in Malaysia as reported by Noriah et.al., (2010). Table 5 is the interpretive guideline for the level of EI based on the technical manual provided by Genos EI.

Table 5. Interpretive guidelines of levels of emotional intelligence in the workplace

Categorisation of emotional intelligence	Interpretive Guideline
Very High	Very high level of frequency in exhibiting emotionally intelligent behaviours.
High	High level of frequency in exhibiting emotionally intelligent behaviours.
Average	Average level of frequency in exhibiting emotionally intelligent behaviours.
Low	Low level of frequency in exhibiting emotionally intelligent behaviours.
Very Low	Very low level of frequency in exhibiting emotionally intelligent behaviours.

Note: Adapted from *Genos Emotional Intelligence Inventory: Technical Manual* (Gignac, 2008)

Between the male and female genders, emotional intelligence of the female (Md=3.32) were slightly higher than the male (Md=3.29) lecturers. Some studies revealed that women tend to have higher emotional intelligence than male (Condren, Martin, & Hutchinson, 2006 ; Rohana et al., 2009). The result of this study does prove to be similar with Condren et. al. yet the researchers would have to agree with Beisecker and Barchard (2004) that claims that the difference between genders are usually not significant especially in self rated emotional inventories.

Based on research findings provided by the Reuven Bar-On.org, emotional intelligence of older groups usually scored significantly higher than the younger groups and respondents in their late 40s obtained the highest mean scores (Bar-On, 2007) .The results of this study supports Bar-On's study, as there were significant difference between the age groups of the lecturers, however as the test conducted was a non-parametric test, the median value was calculated. The median value for the respondents that were in the group more than 40 years scored the highest value. Based on a study done by Noriah et.al (2006), Malaysian respondents suggest spirituality and maturity as important aspects to develop stable emotion. Maturity due to age could also be a supporting factor to the high level of emotional intelligence among those above 40 years.

The DH48 grade that is usually held by head of departments recorded the highest level of emotional intelligence compared to other grades. Other demographic results such as working experience and age group proof to have the same results with groups of grade. As occupational grading system that was previously implemented by the polytechnic system was based upon the time base system, a head of department might have had almost 20 years of working experience as a lecturer and also experience holding the Head of Program position. The occupational grade in the polytechnic system also does depends on the academic qualification, the DH29 and DH32 positions are held by diploma holders, where else the DH41/42, DH44 and DH48 are held by either degree, masters or doctorate holders. The DH42 grade are lecturers that

completed their degrees during their service, therefore the hold longer working experience, however their position is equivalence to DH41. Lastly having prior working experience in the industry did not proof to have any significant effect on the level of emotional intelligence. This might be due to unknown years of working experience in the respective industry and also positions they held prior to working as a lecturer.

Empirical studies in this area such as by Penrose, Perry, and Ball (2007) claimed that the relationship between working experience and occupational grade with emotional intelligence still remains unclear. Rohana et al., (2009) reported that age group; length of service, position and experience did not have an impact on the level of emotional intelligence. However it is suggested that further research be conducted on educators' emotional intelligence in Malaysia as they feels that it has not been explored in-depth yet (Noriah et.al.,2006; Rohana et al., 2009). The researcher feels it is important to implement training in EI as most of the educators were not aware of the term "emotional intelligence'' itself and how it could be beneficial for them. Ting and Cheah (2010) claimed that higher education institution could gain much from implementing emotional intelligence in their institution. In addition, based on the research respond rate, the researcher feels that in the context of Malaysia polytechnics it is important to implement dual language questionnaires as some of the respondents were not comfortable with English based questionnaires.

Conclusion

As the findings of this research proved that emotional intelligence improves with age and experience, the researcher would agree with Daniel Goleman author of *Working with Emotional Intelligence* that claims the growth of emotional intelligence increases with maturity (Goleman, 1998).

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