The Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Self-Efficacy among Ordinary Chinese Employees

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Abstract. EI is being taken more and more seriously in all walks of life around the world. A person's EI can affect many of his psychological states and performance. Self-efficacy is a person's self-judgment of whether he or she has the confidence to complete a task and is a driving force at work. However, there are not many studies in China on EI's impact on employees' work performance. Therefore, this study wanted to explore whether EI affects Chinese employees' self-efficacy. A total of 185 Chinese ordinary employees (non-leaders) were invited to participate in this study. Wong's and Law's emotional intelligence scale and general self-efficacy scale which had high reliability and validity were used in this study. The result concluded that the EI of Chinese employees was positively related to their self-efficacy. So, providing Chinese employees with some EI training and cultivating their EI will help improve their self-efficacy and performance at work.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence, Self-efficacy, Employee.

1. Introduction

Emotional intelligence (EI) has continued to gain traction in the last three decades. It is not only schools that have begun to pay attention to the emotional health of students, but also many studies on leadership and work management have begun to note the impact of EI. A study of Wang's and Law's showed that the EI of employees can affect their job performance and satisfaction [1]. The concept of EI was first put forward by Salovery and Mayer (1990) and referred to a person's ability to handle their own emotions [2]. It was an individual's ability to detect their own and others' emotions and feelings and use this ability to regulate their own thinking and behavior. Over time, the EI theory of Goleman divided EI into four skills: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship skills [3]. These skills clusters focus on individuals' regulation and social competency. Through learning in these aspects, people's control of their own emotions, their perception of other people's emotions, and the establishment of relationships will all be improved. Many companies have begun to provide different kinds of EI training courses for employees. Self-awareness and management mean they can better withstand stress at work, social awareness means they can detect each other's needs, and relationship skills mean they can build good relationships with customers and workmates, all of these are beneficial to employees' work efficiency and quality.

Self-efficacy was first proposed by Bandura, which was self- perception or belief whether a person had the ability to complete the tasks [4]. A person who believes that he can handle various things will be more positive and proactive in life [5]. Employees will inevitably encounter many setbacks or unexpected situations at work, if they have high self-efficacy, they will have more confidence to face challenges and new things. At the perceptual level, employees' self-efficacy is related to their anxiety, tension, and helplessness at work. EI training is about the perception and control of one's own emotions. So, this study assumes that EI can affect Chinese employees' self-efficacy.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

Snowball sampling method is used in this study. The sample is comprised of 188 Chinese participants with work experience from different fields. After remove 3 invalid sample, a total of 185 valid samples are retained.

All the participants are ordinary employees (non-leaders) in the company. As it showed in Table 1., there are 89 male participants, which accounts for 48% and 96 female participants which accounts for 52%. Since jobs tend to be more stable after the age of 30, and people rarely change their careers in China. 121 participants are under 30 years old, 64 of them are above 30 years old, respectively accounts for 65% and 35%. 76 participants' working tenure are less than five years, and 109 participants' working tenure are more than 5 years.

Table 1. Sample statistic characteristics.

Variable	Category	Number	Percentage
Gender	Male	89	48%
	Female	96	52%
Age	21-30	121	65%
	Above 30	64	35%
Tenure	0-5 years	76	41%
	More than 5 years	109	59%

2.2. Tools

The questionnaire was distributed online and the data was collected through the Tencent questionnaire platform. A total of three parts were designed in the questionnaire to facilitate the participants to answer questions and to help collect and analyze data.

The first part is the informed consent which is used to tell the participants the goal of this study and ensure them know about their rights, responsibility, and confidentiality agreement in this study.

In the second part the participants need to complete three scales:

Wong's and Law's emotional intelligence scale (WLEIS). A 7-likerts scale created by Wong and Law (2002) and divided into 4 dimensions: self-emotional appraisal, regulation of emotion, use of emotion and others' emotional appraisal. Each dimension has 4 items, there are 16 items in total. It is used to measure the emotional intelligence in the work environment. The response options to the items range from 1 (totally disagree) to 7 (totally agree). Its Cronbach's α coefficient is 0.92.

General self- efficacy scale (GSES). A 4-likerts scale developed by Schwarzer (1995) and widely used in adults and adolescents [6] [7]. Schwarzer reduced the 20-items version to a 10-items version. The response options to the items range from 1 (totally disagree) to 4 (totally agree). Its Cronbach's α coefficient is 0.95.

The third part is to collect basic information of the participants, for example, gender, age, occupation and working tenure.

3. Result and Disscussion

A total of 185 valid data were collected for this study and these data were analyzed by SPSS 26.0 software. First, after analyzing the data, both EI scales and self-efficacy scale had certified reliability and validity in this study. Then analyze the degree of correlation between each variable.

3.1. Pearson Correlation

According to the correlation analysis, employees' age, gender and tenure are not significantly related to their emotional intelligence and self-efficacy. But employees' EI and self- efficacy are highly correlated. As shown in Table 2., the Pearson correlation coefficient of EI and burnout is 0.73

($p < .01$). It means that is consistent with the hypothesis of this study: employees' EI is positively related to their self-efficacy.

Table 2. Results of Means, SDs, and Correlations among variables (N=185)

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
Gender	1.48	0.50					
Age	29.60	8.43	.122				
Tenure	3.06	1.30	.17*	.92**			
EI	5.15	0.99	.05	.12	.08	(.92)	
GSES	3.13	0.71	.17*	.24**	.28**	.82**	(.95)

Note: Cronbach's alphas for each scale are listed in brackets on the diagonal. * $p <. 05$, ** $p <. 01$.

3.2. Linear Regression Analysis

According to the result in Table 3., EI can significantly affect self- efficacy ($\beta=0.590$, $p<0.05$). $R^2=0.674$, meaning that it can determine self-efficacy with 67.4% accuracy. Durbin-Watson = 1.50, indicating that the factors are independent of each other. VIF =1.00, indicating that there is no multicollinearity between the variables.

Table 3. Result of linear regression of EI on self- efficacy

Independent variables	Beta	t	Sig.	VIF
EI	.590	19.431	0.000	1.00
R^2		.674		
F		377.553		
P		0.000 < 0.05		
DW		1.50		
Dependent variable: self-efficacy				

It proves that the model is usable and yields the equation: self- efficacy =0.096 + 0.59*EI

Employee work performance is a relatively general and subjective concept, but most industrial and organizational psychologists believe that employee efficacy can positively affect employee's work performance. In a previous Sadri and Robertson's meta-analysis of the relationship between work efficacy and work performance, it was concluded that the correlation between self-efficacy and actual work performance is 0.4 and can even be as high as 0.85 in simulation studies [8].

On the other hand, Wood and Bandura believes that self-efficacy is an important factor in measuring employee self-regulation and has a positive impact on employees' work attitudes [9]. Madonald and Siegall's research results show that employees' self-efficacy has a significant positive correlation with job satisfaction and commitment levels, and a significant negative correlation with turnover intention and work laziness [10].

Because job performance is difficult to measure, it can be predicted through employee's efficacy. From the research results, employees' EI will positively affect their work effectiveness, improving employees' EI will also improve their work performance and work attitude.

4. Conclusion

This study shows that the EI of ordinary Chinese employees positively affects their self-efficacy. Improving employees' EI also increases their sense of self-efficacy. If the Chinese company can provide opportunities or courses for employees to enhance their EI, their self-efficacy can also be improved. This means employees will be more confident in completing their work tasks and have more motivation to take on difficult tasks. At the same time, if employee get more learning in EI, they can regulate their emotion independently, have less anxiety in working and build good relationships with workmates.

Chinese entrepreneurs should pay more attention to cultivating the EI of employees. Paying attention to employees' mental health is also part of the company's humanistic care and welfare development. Of course, the development of the company is not only due to the efforts of ordinary employees but also inseparable from the leadership of superiors. Future research could examine how EI affects supervisor leadership in China. In addition, the sample size can be expanded and measured again. Compared with the total population of China, such a sample size may not be very representative.

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