Emotional intelligence, a tool for customer satisfaction

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Abstract: Over the past two decades, a lot of interest has been given to the notion of emotional intelligence and its outcome in general, and more specifically, in the academic field. Many studies are linking it to customer satisfaction which is also becoming a prior concern of marketers. This paper highlights what is emotional intelligence, what are the different models of emotional intelligence, the link between emotional intelligence and education, and how having teachers with high emotional intelligence will lead to high emotional intelligence students and high customer satisfaction. This paper also discusses group work activities, and how it enhances the emotional intelligence of students and their satisfaction. The study is conducted using a well-known instrument, the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS) to measure emotional intelligence, and to identify changes in the emotional intelligence of students before group work and after group work.

Keywords: emotional intelligence; customer satisfaction; group activity.


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After a long executive career, Bassem E. Maamari joined the academic world as a full-time Faculty at the Lebanese American University’s School of Business. He brings a wealth of practical experience in the areas of sales management, finance, MIS and human resources management. He has a number of studies and his research interests include job satisfaction of employees, emotional intelligence, and the impact of technology on people.
1 Introduction

This research paper is about exploring the importance of emotional intelligence specifically in the academic field and how, having high emotional intelligence teachers might lead to higher students’ satisfaction.

Education is in our days a very important issue and the focus of many countries. Many universities are experiencing a decrease in their enrolment locally and internationally, and are facing high competition. Worldwide, there is a high increase in violence and aggression. In order to fight recession and improve our society, we should focus on improving our education level. The level of education could be increased by employing high emotional intelligence teachers who might lead to higher emotionally intelligent students and thus higher customer satisfaction. The job of the high emotional intelligence teachers will be accentuated by creating group activities in class. These will motivate, and stimulate more the students leading eventually to their satisfaction. Therefore, the goal of this study is to find out if there is a link between high emotional intelligence teachers and customer (student) satisfaction, and if using work groups in classes will reinforce the emotional intelligence of students, create a group emotional intelligence (GEI) and finally increase their satisfaction.

The significance of the study is to the survival of the universities and the improvement of their image, improving the behaviour of students in class and finally graduating a better quality of students who will be better future leaders, thereby so improving the personal, academic and work performance of our citizens.

The following literature review is organised into four parts. The first one explains what emotional intelligence is, with its historical roots and different models and measurements. The second part is about the effect of emotional intelligence on education. The third part is about group and its relation with emotional intelligence, and the last part is about customer satisfaction and its link to emotional intelligence.

2 Literature review

Emotional intelligence is about how people express, perceive, understand and manage their and other peoples’ emotions (Cherniss, 2004).

The historical roots go back to Binet and Charles Darwin who noted a second kind of intelligence and named it the ‘Social Intelligence’ or ‘Practical Intelligence’ (Sternberg, 1985). Gardner (1983) discussed the presence of multiple intelligence in which he talks about seven distinct forms of intelligence. In 1990, the first time the term ‘Emotional Intelligence’ was used was with Peter Salovey and Jack Mayer. For to them, emotional intelligence is a cognitive ability: the ability to understand, recognise and evaluate the meaning of emotions in order to reason and solve problems (Mayer et al., 1999). The popularity, however, of emotional intelligence goes to Daniel Goleman and his famous
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A book published in 1995 called: “EI: why it can matter more than IQ”. In his book, he talks about a performance-based model that implies: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills. Similarly to Goleman (1995), the Bar-On model (Bar-On, 1997) called the non-cognitive or emotional-social intelligence model is one of the most used models, covering five broad areas of skills or competencies namely the intrapersonal skills, the interpersonal skills, stress management, adaptability and general mood. Both Goleman (1995) and the Bar-On models (Bar-On, 1997) are called mixed models since they include a combination of mental abilities and personality and character skills. Another major approach to emotional intelligence is the trait approach by Petrides which is referred to as an emotion related disposition and self-knowledge method (Petrides et al., 2007). According to this model, people have a tendency to behave in a certain way at certain emotional situations. The focus here is on self-perception and self-efficacy.

Why do we need to study emotional intelligence? According to many scholars, there is a need for people to have high emotional intelligence so they will do better in life. High emotional intelligent people perform better in life than people with less emotional intelligence (Bar-On, 1997, 2003). They can better understand themselves and other people, communicate better and cope with any changing situation (Bar-on and Parker, 2000). High emotional intelligence leads to improvement in the physical and psychological health of people so their academic and work performance will be enhanced (Bar-on and Parker, 2000). Emotional intelligence can be taught and it is better to begin in teaching it at early age at home, then at schools, universities and finally in the workplace. Emotional intelligence is taught so people can think differently, lead differently and be more positive (Joyner and Mann, 2011).

Since there are many models, many tests are used to measure emotional intelligence. First, the ability model is mostly measured by the MSCEIT (Mayer, Salovey and Caruso EI Test). This test is a task-based test that measures four subscales or areas: perceiving emotions in self and others, assimilating emotion to facilitate thoughts, understanding emotions and managing and regulating emotions (Daus and Ashkanasy, 2005). Secondly, the Goleman model uses two measures: the emotional competency inventory (ECI) and the emotional appraisal which is a self-report measure. Thirdly, the Bar-On model is measured by the EQi (Emotional Quotient Inventory) that is also a self-report instrument. Fourthly, the Trait EI model uses many tests one of the major ones is the TEIQue (Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire) that measures emotional intelligence depending on personality (Petrides and Furnham, 2003). Finally, other well-known tests are the WEIP (Work Group Emotional Intelligence Profile) that measures GEI; the WLEIS (Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence scale test) which is a very well-known self-report test. A lot of debates are raised about which instrument is the best. The answer is simple, it depends actually on what we want to measure.

What is the importance of emotional intelligence in education? Goleman (1995) talks about the importance of emotional intelligence in education. According to him, emotional intelligence can predict academic success much more than other traditional measurements of emotional intelligence. Many researchers also indicated that emotional intelligence predicts academic success (Abdullah et al., 2004) and that it leads to student achievement and retention. It is therefore important to integrate emotional intelligence in the curriculum of the universities. What is the most important, however, is to hire teachers with high emotional intelligence to increase the emotional intelligence of students. This is expected to increase students’ satisfaction. Teachers with
high emotional intelligence can motivate and engage more the students in class, interest them more, and what is the most important is decreasing their dysfunctional behaviour, so as to become less absent, more focused on their tasks and surf less on the internet during classes. A high emotionally intelligent teacher will have more empathy and understand more his students and attend more to their individual needs. Moreover, he will encourage group work and discussions (Moore and Mamiseishvili, 2012).

What is a group and how are they formed? Will group work increase the emotional intelligence of students and their customer satisfaction?

A group is a number of people that are interacting together, cooperating, compromising, communicating and collaborating (Katzenbach, 1997). They share information and make decisions. Whenever people interact in a group they create group dynamics where a synergy is developed, in which the group performance is more than the sum of the contribution of each member of the group (Elfenbein, 2006). If positive emotion is created, then this will lead to a positive group dynamics. When the teacher is aware about group dynamics, it helps him to improve the emotional and social climate of the class, motivating the students and getting rid of conflicts and stress. The more the group needs to interact, the more important is the presence of emotional intelligence. When a number of people interact, they create GEI (Elfenbein, 2006). GEI is about how a group recognises and manages its emotion to improve cooperation between members and task performance. It is about the ability of a group to be able to interact efficiently mostly from its social skills. For a group to succeed, it needs cooperation and collaboration, this is possible if members have high emotional intelligence. To be effective, teams must create emotional intelligent norms which act as a guide for the development of the groups. Therefore, having emotional intelligence affects successful teamwork and leads to group cohesion (Rapisarda, 2002). So if the teacher employs group work, this should increase the emotional intelligent of students which will lead to their satisfaction.

What is customer satisfaction and what increases the satisfaction of students?

Customer satisfaction is a very important issue and in our days the main concern for companies trying to survive. If customers are satisfied, it will lead to their loyalty and their retention, and to an increase in the profitability of the company (Helgesen, 2006). Therefore, the goal of the universities in general, and in our days more specifically, since they are facing a low enrolment and a lot of competition, is how to satisfy their students and retain them (Grace, 2004). If students are satisfied, then they will stay in their university, become loyal and have a good word of mouth about their university which will attract other students. As a result, the university will make more money and have a better reputation. What causes student satisfaction is the students’ experience which depends on three factors: the faculty, the advisory staff and classes (Hameed and Amjad, 2011). It is, however, the class experience, which is mostly the relation between teachers and students that affects mostly students’ satisfaction (Grace, 2004). According to Douglas et al. (2006), what the students want the most is a good quality of teaching which is linked to classroom. Banwet and Datta (2003) in their research found that teaching and classes’ interaction are the most important service delivered by universities.

In this study, we will stress mostly on the role of the teachers and their interaction in classes by using mostly group work in increasing student (customer) satisfaction. High emotionally intelligent teachers play a very important role in this case. It has been proved that high emotional intelligence improves retention rate and satisfaction of students (Qualter et al., 2009). Since high emotional intelligence teachers create a better class
climate, know better how to deliver the material, interest more and motivate more the students. This will increase students’ satisfaction (Talukder, 2012). People with high emotional intelligence deliver a win-win relationship for themselves and others have better social skills, more positive feelings (Kunnanatt, 2004) which will lead to an increase in students’ satisfaction.

Many scholars have criticised emotional intelligence and its use, and whether it is an intelligence or not, whether it affects performance of students and their satisfaction or not are being argued. Landy (2005) claimed that emotional intelligence does not add anything to other intelligences. Landau and Meirovich (2011) argued that emotional intelligence does not affect the performance and GPA of students. Murphy (2006) found a non-significant relation between emotional intelligence and student satisfaction. Despite all of these critics, emotional intelligence is an important form of intelligence and it has positive outcomes on the personal, academic and work performance of people.

3 Methodology

In this study, we will test the relationship between the emotional intelligence of teachers and student satisfaction and see if this relationship is mediated by the emotional intelligence of students. Moreover, we will test if group work moderates this relationship.

A quantitative study will be used in this research since it seems more appropriate for this type of research. A quantitative study is a social research that employs empirical statements and methods (Cohen and Manion, 1980). It uses a deductive reasoning method by starting with a general idea and then going more in details by formulating hypothesis that are to be tested (Hair et al., 2007). It uses and collects numerical data and employs mathematical-based methods (Creswell, 1994). It will be mostly a positivist quantitative research since a model is created and pretested and data is collected and then the final model will be constructed.

Our research question will be: Do high emotional intelligence teachers increase students’ satisfaction in the universities?

The model to be tested is the following figure (Figure 1):

![Model to test](image)

The hypotheses are the following:

**H0:** Emotional intelligence teachers will not increase the satisfaction of students.

Most of the literature review shows that emotional intelligence teachers increase the emotional intelligence of students. It leads to a decrease in their misconduct in class (Nizielski et al., 2012), and establishes a good relation between teachers and students.
H1: Emotional intelligence teachers increase the emotional intelligence of students.

To accentuate the emotional intelligence of students, group work will be done by teachers that will create GEI (Elfenbein, 2006).

H2: Group activity moderates the relationship between emotional intelligence of teachers and students’ emotional intelligence.

Emotional intelligence results in customer satisfaction (Talukder, 2012). Students become less anxious and depressed (Martinez-Pons, 1997), have better social relationships and positive feelings (Kunnanatt, 2004).

H3: Emotional intelligence of students mediates partially the relation between teacher EI and student satisfaction.

There is a positive correlation between teacher and students’ satisfaction (Hameed and Amjad, 2011).

H4: High emotional intelligence teachers lead to higher students’ satisfaction.

Our sample is made out of teachers and students from the business schools of four universities in Lebanon. The targeted population is undergraduate business students. A pilot study sample of four teachers and 15 students will be undertaken to test the data collection tool’s reliability, the wording of the questions and the process of data collection. The questionnaire used to collect data is made of three parts: the first part for demographic data used for teachers and students, the second to test emotional intelligence of teachers and students also, and a third one to test only students’ satisfaction. In a first step, the researcher will measure the emotional intelligence of teachers than the students and their initial customer satisfaction. In a second step, the teacher will conduct group activity in class to analyse if the group activity will increase the emotional intelligence of students or not. Another test will be done therefore to measure the emotional intelligence of students and their satisfaction to capture any changes that occur. Finally, the researcher will be able to conclude if high emotional intelligence teachers were able to increase customer satisfaction or not.

The tool used for this type of research is a self-administered questionnaire. The demographic variables are at the beginning and they cover the nationality, age, gender, education level, teaching and work experience. The test that will be used to test emotional intelligence is the WLEIS: the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale. This particular test is used since it is easily accessible, short, made of 16 scale items only, thus we will have a higher probability that a larger percentage of teachers and students will respond appropriately, compared for example with the MSCEIT test made of 141 questions. This test measures four important aspects of emotional intelligence and is considered complete. Moreover, this test was proved to be a reliable, valid and widely accepted measure of emotional intelligence (Libbrecht et al., 2010) and its scores are related to job satisfaction (Naseer et al., 2011). This test is measured by using a five point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree).

To measure customer satisfaction, the researcher will use the questionnaire created by Christine Gray Tinnesz in her dissertation written in 2001 named: “American and international students: Satisfaction within the University Classroom” University of New York at Buffalo (Tinnesz, 2001). It is made of 19 questions that are simple and clear. In this case also, the researcher did not want to use a long questionnaire and wanted
to use a measurement that test student’s satisfaction related precisely to teachers and classes interaction. Therefore, this questionnaire is used because it is short, simple, clear and measures specifically student’s satisfaction in class.

As for the results, we expect to have the following:

We expect first that the students who interact with high emotional intelligence teachers to have higher emotional intelligence compared with the group of students that interact with low emotional intelligence teachers. When teachers do active participation in class, communicate, put themselves in the place of the students, understand them more and become student centred, they will improve the behaviour of students, motivate then more, enhance their communication skills and therefore increase their emotional intelligence.

Moreover, we expect that high emotional intelligence students will be therefore more satisfied than low emotional intelligence students since they will become happier, more motivated, more sure about themselves, enjoy classes more, and have a better performance and grade in class.

Furthermore, we expect that after the teachers involve their students in group work, this will enhance their emotional intelligence and their satisfaction. Group work as we have seen in the literature review, can create emotions in a group, enhance them more, pushing team members to participate, collaborate and create norms that will lead to group emotional intelligence. Students’ emotional intelligence will increase, and so their satisfaction. Finally, we expect to prove that high emotional intelligence teachers will lead to higher customer satisfaction. This is a new model not tested or proved in previous studies.

We are hoping by making this type of research and by proving the model, to be able to recommend to universities in recruiting their teachers and companies in recruiting their managers and employees, to focus on Emotional Intelligence as a major factor of employability. By doing so, we will improve the education level of our nation and graduate students who will be more ready and qualified for the work environment.

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