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A Study on Emotional Intelligence and Occupational Stress of University Teachers in Myanmar

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the emotional intelligence and occupational stress of university teachers. The total number of participants were 475 (61 males, 414 females) from 5 universities from Myanmar. Descriptive research survey method was conducted for this study. The Swinburne University Emotional Intelligence Test (SUEIT) is a 35-item instrument designed to measure teachers' emotional intelligence. The Occupational Roles Questionnaire (ORQ) from the Occupational Stress Inventory – Revised was used to measure occupational stress. The result showed that there was a negative relationship between the emotional intelligence and occupational stress of teachers. It was

Key words: Emotional Intelligence; Occupational Stress

1. Introduction

Stress is a common feature in our lives, especially as the pace of development increases. Today, for more than half of Americans, money and work are considered to be two of the leading causes of stress (Bethune & Palener, 2007). Many adults spend half of their lives in work related activities. It is natural to experience work related stress on tension or strain in the body or the mind if there is no release or outlet for the negative feelings (Jeyaraj, 2013). Occupational stress, also known as job stress, has been defined as the experience of negative emotional states such as frustration, worry, anxiety and depression attributed to work related factors (Kyriacou, 2001). Occupational stress is also defined as the perception of a discrepancy between environmental demands (stressors) and individual capacities to fulfill these demands (Topper, 2007). Being increasing job complexities and economic pressure on the individuals, the occupational stress has also become an increasingly common in teaching profession. Teachers work in a constant socially isolated environments surrounded by hostile views and sometimes threat of physical abuse, and at the same time under a constant fear and threat of accountability for each and every action of both own self and that of the pupil. This alone can be a sufficient cause for stress for an individual (Jaseena, 2016).

A teaching job is a delicate job that requires specific behavior in the classroom. Teachers need psychological, physical and spiritual balance. Our society expects teachers to be well equipped educationally and emotionally. However, teachers experience a number of different pressures and stressors such as: taking work home, difficult students, difficult classes, lack of administrative support, pressure from parents, teachers' evaluation, ongoing learning, social isolation, job uncertainty, integration of intelligence and technology, students' and parents' bullying. In Myanmar, one of the developing countries in Asia, although teachers occupy a unique and influential role in society, the salary of a teacher is not high. Government teachers may have difficulties and stress for the cost of living and daily life events. Moreover, we face some stressors in schools such as excessive working hours, excessive work load, workplace bullying, and poor management. Generally, when a person is dealing with too much stress, the quality of his lifestyle may be disrupted. Sadly, stress can lead to illness, a disruption in a person's sleeping and eating habits, strained relationships, and can even impact a person's focus and work productivity. Teachers who reported greater stress were less satisfied with teaching, they reported greater frequency of absences and a greater number of total days absent, were more likely to leave teaching (career intention), and less likely to take up a teaching career again (career commitment) (Nain Sing & Anupama Katoch, 2017).

By observing factors related with organizational effectiveness, it is found that emotional intelligence plays a key role in relieving stress. Emotional intelligence plays a significant role in increasing employees' innovation, organizational effectiveness, customer loyalty and quality of services. On this basis, emotional intelligence skills are regarded as the most important factor in job and family success and improving them seems necessary for a healthier and qualitative life (Indoo & Ajeya, 2012).

2. Objectives of the Research

Based on the above literature, the objectives of the study are;

(1) To study the Emotional Intelligence (EI) levels of university teachers

(2) To investigate the teachers' emotional intelligence by gender, job status and marital status

(3) To study the occupational stress of university teachers

(4) To investigate the teachers' occupational stress by gender, job status, marital status and EI level

(5) To find out the relationship between emotional intelligence and occupational stress of university teachers

(6) To investigate the prediction of the dimensions of emotional intelligence on occupational stress of university teachers

Definitions of Key Terms

Emotional Intelligence; The ability to identify, use, understand and manage emotions and emotional information (Mayer & Salovey, 1993).

Occupational Stress**;** The accumulation of many tight situations associated with work in general or a specific work task (Hadjisymeou, 2010).

2. Review of Related Literature

Goleman (2001) stated that emotional intelligence develops a kind of enthusiasm, confidence, friendship, motivation, and energy in the person. People with high emotional intelligence can transfer these feelings to the others. Researchers stated that people with high emotional intelligence are more successful in reaching their goals (Cooper et al., 2001). According to the evidence presented by Slaski and Cartwright (2003), people with high emotional intelligence have considerably less stress and enjoy more healthy body and mind, and organizational commitment among 235 mental health professionals in the institutions of Greece and found that people with high emotional intelligence have less job stress and achieve high score in the organizational commitment scale. According to Nayyar (1994), teacher job performance is the degree to which an individual teacher executes a particular role or responsibility in line with specified standards or criteria. Teacher performance is the behaviour of a teacher which changes differently within the surrounding environment in which the teacher successfully carries out any assigned role or responsibility. Because of stress which the teacher experiences, he is unable to execute this assignment or role effectively. As Bakker, Demerouti and Verbeke (2004), and Tahir (2011) lamented when a teacher is under stress, there will be poor teaching quality, low students' satisfaction and turnover on the overall performance of the teacher (as cited in Manabete et al., 2016).

3. Methodology

Design of the Study

Descriptive research survey method was conducted for this study.

Sample of the Study

By using random sampling technique, the participants of this study were universities teachers who were randomly selected as a sample from 5 universities from Myanmar. The total number of participants were

Research Instruments

1. The Swinburne University Emotional Intelligence Test (SUEIT) is a 35-item instrument designed to measure teachers' emotional intelligence. The survey question items were designed utilizing the teachers' emotional intelligence identified by Palmer & Stough (2001). The survey instrument consisted of five dimensions: (1) emotional recognition and expression, (2) understanding other emotions, (3) emotions direct cognition, (4) emotional management and (5) emotional control.
2. For occupational stress, the Occupational Roles Questionnaire (ORQ) from the Occupational Stress Inventory – Revised Edition is a 36-item instrument designed to measure teachers' occupational stress. The survey question items were designed utilizing the teachers' occupational stress identified by Osipow (1998).

4. Findings

Descriptive Statistics for the Emotional Intelligence of Teachers

To investigate the emotional intelligence of teachers from selected universities, descriptive statistics was carried out and the results were shown in Table 4.1. It revealed that the mean and standard deviation of teachers' emotional intelligence were 122.09 and 10.994 respectively.

Descriptive Statistics for Dimensions of Emotional Intelligence of Teachers

To investigate the dimensions of emotional intelligence for teachers from selected higher education institutions, descriptive statistics was carried out and the results were shown in Table 4.2 described the mean and standard deviation for dimensions of emotional intelligence of teachers. The result showed that teachers had the highest emotional management in emotional intelligence.

Frequencies and Percentages of Teachers' Emotional Intelligence Levels

In order to know whether the emotional intelligence of teachers was high or not, the teachers were classified into three groups (low, moderate, and high) according to their emotional intelligence scores. Based on the descriptive analyses, teachers with scores of the (+1) standard deviation from the sample mean were identified as high group and teachers with scores below the (-1) standard deviation were identified as the low group. And then teachers with scores between (+1) and (-1) standard deviation were identified as the middle group. Results revealed that 13.89% of the teachers had low level of EI and 12.21% of the teachers had high level of EI. The majority of respondents were scored as possessing moderate EI (73.89%).

Mean Comparison of Teachers' Emotional Intelligence by Gender

Descriptive analysis revealed the different mean and standard deviation of the teachers' emotional intelligence with respect to gender. Moreover, to be more specific, the independent sample *t* test was used to examine whether the difference for the emotional intelligence by gender is significant or not. Table 4.4 revealed that gender difference was found on emotional intelligence. According to the results, female teachers was higher than male teachers in emotional intelligence. So, it was interpreted that teachers' emotional intelligence was influenced by gender.

intelligence with respect to marital status. Moreover, to be more specific, the independent sample *t* test was used to examine whether the difference for the emotional intelligence by marital status is significant or not. According to Table 4.5, there was no significant difference for the emotional intelligence between single and married. So, it was interpreted that teachers' emotional intelligence was not influenced by marital status.

Mean Comparison of Teachers' Emotional Intelligence by Job Status

To be able to compare the teachers' emotional intelligence by job status, descriptive statistics was first used in this study. In order to know the mean comparison for emotional intelligence by job status, ANOVA test was applied. So the mean, standard deviation and ANOVA results for teachers' emotional intelligence by job status are described in Table 4.6.

According to the findings as shown in Table 4.6, there was significant difference in teachers' emotional intelligence by job status at 0.01 level. Results revealed that associate professors had the highest emotional intelligence among them.

To obtain more detailed information in which job statues had the differences, the Post Hoc Test was carried out by Tukey HSD Method. Significant differences by teachers' job status were displayed in the following Table 4.7. It can be interpreted that the mean score of associate professors was significantly different with both tutors and assistant lecturers in their emotional intelligence at 0.01 level and 0.05 level respectively. It can reasonably be said that the associate professors were higher than the tutors and assistant lecturers in their emotional intelligence by job status.

Descriptive Statistics for Occupational Stress of Teachers

To investigate the occupational stress of teachers, descriptive statistics was carried out and the results were shown in Table 4.8. The results described that the mean and standard deviation of teachers' occupational stress were 83.76 and 12.129 respectively. According to the result, it can be said that the teachers from selected higher education institutions were low in their occupational stress.

Mean Comparison of Teachers' Occupational Stress by Gender

Descriptive analysis revealed the different mean and standard deviation of the teachers' occupational stress with respect to gender. According to Table 4.9, there was a significant difference in the occupational stress between male and female. It was significant at 0.01 level. The results indicated that male teachers felt more stress than female teachers.

Mean Comparison of Teachers' Occupational Stress by Marital Status

Descriptive analysis revealed the different mean and standard deviation of the teachers' occupational stress with respect to marital status. Moreover, to be more specific, the independent sample *t* test was used. According to Table 4.10, there was no significant difference for the teachers' occupational stress between single and married. It can be said that occupational stress was not influenced by teachers' marital status.

used in this study. In order to know the mean comparisons for the teachers' occupational stress by job status, ANOVA test was applied. According to the findings as shown in Table 4.11, there was no significant difference in the teachers' occupational stress by job status. Thus, it can be interpreted that teachers' occupational stress cannot be influenced by their job status.

Comparison of Teachers' Occupational Stress by Emotional Intelligence Levels

To compare the teachers' occupational stress by emotional intelligence levels, ANOVA test was applied. The result showed that the significant mean difference was found among emotional intelligence levels on occupational stress. According to the results, there was a significant difference among emotional intelligence levels on occupational stress at 0.001 level. The ANOVA results indicated that the teachers in low emotional intelligence level had the highest stress and the teachers in high emotional intelligence level had the lowest stress.

To investigate more precisely, Post Hoc Test was executed by Tukey HSD Method. According to Table 4.13, there was a significant difference among three levels. It was found that the teachers from low emotional intelligence level felt more occupational stress more than teachers from other two levels.

Correlation between Dimensions of Emotional Intelligence and Occupational Stress of Teachers

In order to explore the relationship between the dimensions of emotional intelligence and occupational stress of teachers, the Pearson Product-moment Correlation Coefficient was computed. The result showed that there was a negative relationship between the emotional intelligence and occupational stress of teachers (r= -.697, p<0.01).

And then there were negative correlation between four dimensions except understanding other emotions and occupational stress in p<0.01 level as shown in Table 4.14. Among five dimensions, emotional management was best correlated with occupational stress. So, the more the teachers can manage their emotions, the less their occupational stress.

Prediction of Emotional Intelligence Dimensions on Occupational Stress

A multiple regression was carried out to investigate whether four emotional intelligence dimensions could significantly predict occupational stress. The result of the multiple regression indicated that the model explained 26.8% of the variance and that the model was a significant predictor of occupational stress. The final predictive model was:

OS = 141.314 – 0.072ERE – 0.160EDC – 1.517EM – 0.240EC

5. Discussion of Results

The main aim of this study is to investigate the relation between emotional intelligence and occupational stress of university teachers. The discussion of results for the study is as follows;

Research Objective 1: Result revealed that 13.89% of the teachers had low level of EI and 12.21% of the teachers had high level of EI. The majority of respondents were scored as possessing moderate EI (73.89%). It can be interpreted that most of the teachers in this study had moderate emotional

difference for the emotional intelligence between single and married. So, it was interpreted that teachers' emotional intelligence was not influenced by marital status. Then, there was significant difference in teachers' emotional intelligence by job status at 0.01 level. Results revealed that associate professors had the highest emotional intelligence among them.

Research Objective 3: The results described that the mean and standard deviation of teachers' occupational stress were 83.76 and 12.129 respectively. According to the result, it can be said that the teachers from selected higher education institutions were low in their occupational stress.

Research Objective 4: Result showed that there was a significant difference in the occupational stress between male and female. It was significant at 0.01 level. The results indicated that male teachers felt more stress than female teachers. But, there was no significant difference in the teachers' occupational stress by marital status and job status. Thus, it can be interpreted that teachers' occupational stress cannot be influenced by their marital status and job status. Then, there was a significant difference among emotional intelligence levels on occupational stress at 0.001 level. The ANOVA results indicated that the teachers in low emotional intelligence level had the highest stress and the teachers in high emotional intelligence level had the lowest stress.

Research Objective 5: The result showed that there was a negative relationship between the emotional intelligence and occupational stress of teachers (r= -.697, p<0.01). It can be interpreted that if the teachers had the high emotional intelligence, the teachers had the low occupational stress.

Research Objective 6: The result of the multiple regression indicated that the model explained 26.8% of the variance and that the model including four EI dimensions was a significant predictor of occupational stress.

6. Conclusion and Recommendation

According to International Labour Organization (ILO), occupational stress affects all countries, all professions and all categories of workers. Nearly 20 to 50 percent of workers in developed countries are subjected to hazardous exposures at work. This type of working environment contributes to disease burden and injuries. Teachers all over the world are facing the problem of occupational stress, though extent of the problem varies. Support of government can reduce stress to teachers as to conduct workshops to develop their personal and interpersonal level, the reduction of additional activities, provide opportunities for lifelong learning, to strengthen the capacity and resources caring for the psychological well-being of teachers (Yeung & Liu, 2007).

The main assumption of the research has been proved according to the relationship between emotional intelligence and occupational stress and showed that by increasing the emotional intelligence in their organization teachers can reduce their occupational stress and improve their work. As individuals, the teachers of different organizations have also experienced the effect of emotional intelligence and in this research, the results indicated that the effects of emotional intelligence can have a role in occupation of their organization and has a meaningful impact upon the teachers' occupational stress. Results of this study showed that persons having high level of emotional intelligence may less suffer from occupational stress. The results confirmed that there are significant relationships between emotional intelligence dimensions and occupational stress. Like the developed countries, our country is trying to change in

be started in universities for both teachers and students. Interventions like training about relaxation techniques and more social interactions with school events might be helpful. One of the limitations is that if the sample size would be larger, the generalization of results would be better. In addition, the present study followed the procedure of quantitative method.

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