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Tanaka, Junko

Utsuki, Narisuke

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Emotional Intelligence of Japanese University Students and Employment Offers

Junko TANAKA
Narisuke UTSUKI

INTRODUCTION

Emotional intelligence (EI) is a construct comprising the ability " to perceive accurately, appraise, and express emotion, "" to access and/or generate feelings when they facilitate thought, "" to understand emotion and emotional knowledge, " and " to reflectively regulate emotions in ways that promote emotional and intellectual growth " (Mayer & Salovey, 1997, p. 23). EI has been researched extensively (e.g., Bar-On, 2000; Goleman, 1998), and even though there is some debate about the validity of EI measurement tools (e.g., O'Connor, & Little, 2003; Roberts, Schulze, O'Brien, MacCann, Reid, & Maul, 2006), it has been applied to various practical fields, such as personnel management in industries.

A variety of research questionnaires have been developed to assess the possible value of EI, especially regarding work-related behavior (Landy, 2005, p. 411). For example, an Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS) has been developed to specifically measure the EI of people in Japan (Uchiyama, Shimai, Utsuki, & Otake, 2001). The EIS is composed of 65 self-reporting questions and takes about 15 to 25 minutes to complete. This scale is conceptually based on three superordinate facets of EI: *intrapersonal, interpersonal,* and *situational.* Each has three factors: *perception, motivation,* and *control* (see Table 1 and also Appendix 1 for the structure of the EIS and an English translation of the scale; see also Fukunishi, Wise, Sheridan, Shimai, Otake, Utsuki, & Uchiyama, 2001, pp. 656-657 for their translation of the

EIS). The original version of the EIS has been employed in Japan to help people recognize their own state of EI and to help them improve any inadequate aspect of their EI. This study goes a step further, to investigate whether students with higher EIS scores, indicating better EI, obtained more desirable employment offers.

METHOD

Twenty-four undergraduate students (20 females and 4 males; mean age = 20.29 years (*SD* = 0.75 years), mostly sophomores, attending a national university in Japan were administered the EIS test. The scores of the scale were the independent variable in this study. Employment is usually sought and offered during undergraduate students' senior year. The EIS was measured in the sophomore year in order to help guide students. Since the scale has been proven to show good test-retest reliability (Uchiyama et al., 2001), the scores were considered to be a good predictor of students' future successful job searches. One dependent variable was the time it took for the student to receive the job offer that they accepted (hereafter referred to as "job offer timing"). The sooner a student was offered and accepted a job, the more successful he/she was considered (for the purposes of this study). Time was measured in yearly quarters. The second dependent variable was the popularity of the company from which a student received a job offer. This popularity was accessed by another group of 52 students (30 females and 22 males; mean age = 20.56 years (*SD* = 0.89 years)) from the same university using a three-point scale (3: very popular among students, 2: moderately popular, 1: not popular). Pearson's correlation coefficients were calculated between the EI score and its subcategory scores and the two dependent variables. Alpha was set at 0.05.

RESULTS

The three superordinate facets of the EI score showed significant and nearly significant correlations with a company's popularity ranking. The higher the student's *intrapersonal* facet score, the greater the popularity of the company at which that student obtained a job (r = .43, p < .05). *Interpersonal* and *situational* facet scores indicated close to significant correlations with job offer timing (respectively: r =—.33, p = .055; r =—.33, p = .057). Among the factors, *self-motivation* and *self-control* showed significant correlations with company popularity (respectively: r = .53, p < .01; r = .46, p < .05). *Self-motivation* and *situational awareness* had significant correlations with job offer timing (respectively: r =—.35, p < .05; r =—.36, p < .05). A more detailed look at the results reveals that six subscales showed significant correlations with popularity rankings: *perseverance* (r = .55, p < .01), *enthusiasm* (r = .42, p < .05), *impulse control* (r = .40, p < .05), *patience* (r = .50, p < .01), *voluntary support* (r = .42, p < .05), and *group consideration* (r = .37, p < .05). Four subscales showed significant correlations with job offer timing: *voluntary support* (r =—.37, p < .05), *personal management* (r =—.39, p < .05), *optimism* (r =—.36, p < .05), and *group consideration* (r =—.38, p < .05).

Generally, the results showed that students scoring higher in their EI score results obtained job offers faster from companies with higher popularity rankings by student peers than did lower scoring students. In other words, if a student had a relatively high EI, he or she was more likely to have better job opportunities.

Table 1. Structure of the EI score.

Superordinate facets	Factors	Subscales
Intrapersonal	Self-awareness	Emotional awareness Self-efficacy
	Self-motivation	Perseverance Enthusiasm
	Self-control	Self-decision Impulse control Patience
Interpersonal	Empathy	Sharing positive emotion Sharing negative emotion
	Altruism	Personal consideration Voluntary support
	Interpersonal relationships	Personal management Sociability Cooperation
Situational	Situational awareness	Decision making Optimism Group consideration
	Leadership	Influence Risk management
	Flexibility	Tactfulness Adaptability

DISCUSSION

The results of this study correspond with those of a similar study of female students at a women's college (Shimai, Otake, & Utsuki, 2007). In that study, a significant difference in the EI scores was found between students who found a job by the end of the academic year and those who did not. Some correlations were also reported between a student's EI score and the number of companies from which she obtained job offers. Another study

of medical students during their preparatory course (19 females and 60 males) asked about their future careers, and showed that students who hoped to pursue research in laboratories had lower EI scores than those who wanted to be a general practitioner or to practice medicine in large hospitals. Laboratory researcher as a future career choice showed a significant but weak positive correlation with *perseverance*, and significant but weak negative correlations with the following factors or subscales: *self-awareness, empathy, sharing negative emotion, voluntary support,* and *optimism* (for each $r > .23$ or $r < -.23$, $p < .05$) (Utsuki, 2006). This could indicate that the EI scores distinguished would-be laboratory researchers from those who would in some way practice medicine with patients. In real-world situations, workers in jobs that call for good interpersonal skills tend to have high scale scores (Uchiyama et al, 2001). That the EIS is used to allocate personnel properly in some Japanese industries indicates its validity as a measure of El.

The authors are aware that there have been criticisms about the validity of subjective ratings as a measure of EI (e.g., Brackett, Rivers, Shiffman, Lerner, & Salovey, 2006). We agree with Brackett et al. (2006) in that EI can be measured objectively, but we do not believe that EI should solely be measured objectively. We, especially the second author of this paper, view EI as a component of a toolbox, and consider that EI can be measured subjectively. This toolbox should contain, along with some personality traits, a set of social skills, each of which will work as a tool to cope with a problem the person will encounter in real life. We consider that knowledge and tools can be acquired and skills are largely improvable, and that skills are mainly acquired but improvable in part though it may not be easy to do so. Emotionally intelligent human beings may be described to have something like a handbook for skill acquisition and social cooperation, as follows:

If I lack a certain ability, I can learn it and practice it.

If I am not yet skilled in something, I can ask someone for help who is more skillful in that area.

Accordingly, I have a " list " of friends and acquaintances that can help me.

If I do not have any good tools, skills, or friends to help me, I will focus on tasks that I can handle by myself.

When individuals with high EI encounter difficulties and find their knowledge is limited, they tend to look within themselves and observe their own behaviors, to better understand themselves. Thus, they would come to learn what they can and cannot do. In a similar manner, they would develop confidence through experience. All of this involves observing one's limitations and finding solutions, which are subjective and experience-dependent judgments. Therefore, we believe that EI can be assessed by allowing respondents to consider what they would do/feel in certain situations described in the EIS. In other words, the scale can be a structured format to help respondents to evaluate themselves on their own.

CONCLUSIONS

Although a limitation of the present study is the relatively small number of male participants, the results clearly indicate that the EIS is a plausible measure for forecasting a student's possibility of obtaining a good job after graduation. Even though the EIS is a self-reporting questionnaire, feedback can be given so that respondents would be able to find out how their score compares with average subscale scores. Knowing this could encourage honest responses through the intention to improve one's emotion-related abilities, and it could help individuals to determine appropriate jobs to target

when seeking employment.

NOTES

An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 117th Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association, in Toronto, Ontario, Canada on August 6, 2009.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Structure of the EIS (English version)

This is a unofficial English version of the explanatory section of the EIS. Please refer to page 4 of the body of this paper, as well as Appendix 2 below.

Superordinate facets **Factors** **Subscales**

Intrapersonal

This factor relates to a person's ability to be conscious of his/her own mental constructs, and the ability to choose effective actions. If the person's score on this part of the scale is low, he/she may experience difficulties maintaining good relationships with family members, friends, co-workers, etc.

Self-awareness

This factor indicates how well a person knows his/her emotional states and how good he/she is at expressing emotions. If the person's score on this part of the scale is low, he/she may lack self-confidence or have low self-esteem.

Emotional awareness
Self-efficacy

Self-motivation

This factor measures a person's motivation to complete a task. A low score on this part of the scale indicates that a person may have lower levels of enthusiasm than usual and may have a tendency to quit doing tasks before completing them.

Perseverance
Enthusiasm

Self-control

This factor represents the ability to control one's own behavior. A lower score on this part of the scale may mean that a person cannot make choices or cannot wait.

Self-decision
Impulse control
Patience

Interpersonal

This factor relates to one's ability to maintain positive relationships with others based on one's understanding of and empathy with other people's emotions.

Empathy

This factor has to do with one's ability to understand other people's feelings and ability to choose appropriate actions as a result. There are two types of empathy: empathy for positive emotions, and empathy for negative emotions.

Sharing positive emotions
Sharing negative emotions

Altruism

This factor has to do with being considerate of others. A low score on this part of the scale indicates that a person may not be skillful in making new friends or maintaining friendships.

Personal consideration
Voluntary support

Interpersonal relationships

This factor has to do with a person's ability to interact with others and relate to their behavior. It has three subscales: capitalizing on other people's abilities, maintaining a personal relationship with someone if he/she has a different personality type, and putting off one's own interests until a later time. A low score on this part of the scale indicates that a person may not give or receive full support to or from others.

Personal management
Sociability
Cooperation

Situational

This factor relates to a meta-cognitive ability (i.e., the ability to use one's observation skills to size up situations). It relates to leadership skills and tactfulness.

Situational awareness

This factor relates to one's ability to understand a situation without experiencing negative feelings. It relates to making appropriate decisions. A low score on this part of the scale indicates that a person may

not be able to make the best choice in a given situation.

Decision making
Optimism
Group consideration

Leadership

This relates to a person's ability to direct groups of people in new directions.

Influence
Risk management

Flexibility

A high score on this part of the scale indicates that one is resourceful and capable of adapting to ever-changing situations and circumstances.

Tactfulness
Adaptability

Appendix 2. Superordinate facets and statement examples.

Below are statement examples for the three superordinate facets.

Intrapersonal:
He/she knows/understands his/her own current emotional state (i.e. no alexithymia).
He/she knows his/her basic emotional trends or temperament (e.g., "I'm rather hot tempered").
He/she knows the extent to which he/she can tolerate a challenging situation, sustain interest, etc.
He/she can tell whether a task can be finished within given limitations.

Interpersonal:
He/she can understand another's emotional state using both situational and behavioral cues.
He/she is empathetic.
He/she can behave appropriately with people.
He/she can understand the temperament of another person well enough to decide whether a task should be given to that person to complete.

Situational:
He/she can understand a group of people's emotional attitude toward a specific issue, or a specific person is like.
He/she knows what should or should not be done at a specific moment.
He/she can use, neglect, or influence the emotional attitudes of people to complete a task.
He/she can dissociate him/herself from his/her own concerns.
He/she can look beyond his/her own feelings.