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How Demographic Factors Associate with Employees' Emotional Intelligence?

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Abstract

Based on the emphasis regarding the importance of emotional intelligence in literature, in current study it is aimed to investigate the possible associations of employees' demographic characteristics with their emotional intelligence levels. A quantitative study was designed and required data was obtained from employees working in different sectors. The sample of study is a total 335 employees. According to findings, emotional intelligence was found to be significantly related to gender ($r: -.21; p < .01$). As expected, females had higher levels of emotional intelligence than males. On the other hand, no significant relationships were found between the income status, age, marital status and education levels of the employees and their emotional intelligence level.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Demographic Characteristics, Employees

JEL Classification: M10, M12, J63

Demografik Faktörler Çalışanların Duygusal Zekâsı ile Nasıl İlişkilidir?

Öz

Duygusal zekânın önemine ilişkin yazındaki vurgulara dayalı olarak, bu çalışmada çalışanların demografik özelliklerinin duygusal zekâ düzeyleri ile olan muhtemel ilişkilerini incelemek amaçlanmıştır. Çalışmanın amacına yönelik olarak nicel bir araştırma tasarlanmıştır ve gerekli veriler farklı sektörlerdeki çalışanlardan elde edilmiştir. Çalışmanın örneklemini toplam 335 çalışan oluşturmaktadır. Bulgulara göre, duygusal zekâ cinsiyet ile anlamlı ilişkilidir ($r: -.21; p < .01$). Beklendiği üzere kadınlar erkeklerden daha yüksek düzeyde duygusal zekâyâ sahiptir. Diğer yandan çalışanların gelir durumu, yaş, medeni durumu ve eğitim düzeyleri ile duygusal zekâ düzeyleri arasında anlamlı ilişkilere rastlanmamıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Duygusal Zekâ, Demografik Özellikler, Çalışanlar

JEL Sınıflandırması: M10, M12, J63

Introduction

The concept of emotional intelligence, which emerged after the importance of the role of emotions in human life, has become a popular phenomenon. Emotional intelligence, which includes evaluating the emotions of oneself and others, regulating emotions and using emotions (Wong & Law, 2002), is characterized as a feature and ability that leads to significant positive results in many studies. In these studies, emphasis is placed on the contribution of emotional intelligence not only to social life but also to business life. Moreover, in literature it is stated that emotional intelligence is more important in human life and success than mental intelligence. For instance, Goleman (1995), who is well known with his studies on emotional intelligence, argues that emotional intelligence is more than mental intelligence (Feist & Barron, 1996). Compared to others, an individual with a high level of emotional intelligence is more successful (Rosenthal, 1977) and productive (Brooks & Nafukhoo, 2006) both in business and social life. In the business life, emotionally intelligent employees are more satisfied with their work, they are less affected by uncertainty, stress, chaos and conflict environment, they desire to stay in organization and show higher performance. In the studies examining the subject, it is seen that the relationships of emotional intelligence with many different variables are questioned. According to the findings, generally emotional intelligence is positively associated with the variables such as job satisfaction (Kafetsios & Zampetakis, 2008), organizational commitment (Mustafa, İsmail & Muntat, 2014), well-being (Por et al., 2011), job commitment (Carmeli, 2003), trust (Özen Kutanis et al., 2014), job attendance and organizational citizenship (Yung & Yoon, 2012) which are mostly desired by organizations. In addition, emotional intelligence is negatively associated with the variables such as stress (Por et al., 2011), intention to leave the job (Choerudin, 2016), conflict, and burnout (Erbil, Murat & Sezer, 2016) which are undesired variables by organizations. Based on all these

advantages, it is emphasized that emotional intelligence should be developed and potential variables that may affect emotional intelligence should be examined in detail. These highlights raise the problematic of how emotional intelligence is influenced by the demographic characteristics of individuals. According to Shukla & Srivastava, (2016), emotional intelligence may be affected by demographic features. Similarly, individual abilities differ depending on the demographic features (McDermott, 1988). Pooja & Kumar (2016) states that emotional intelligence can be influenced by biological, psychological and social factors which mostly interacts with demographic characteristics. Thus, it can be considered that demographic characteristics have the potential to affect individuals' emotional intelligence levels. For instance, gender, age, educational level, marital status, race, income, working sector, or working time are some of them. Demographic characteristics such as race and gender are innate, while others are acquired later throughout of life. Similarly, there is a dispute in the literature whether emotional intelligence is innate or acquired later. There are three views on this issue. The first perspective considers emotional intelligence as an innate trait. According to the second view, emotional intelligence is not an innate trait, but a skill acquired later. From the last point of view, emotional intelligence is both an innate and a later acquired feature. Considering the approach that the emotional intelligence comes from birth, demographic characteristics such as gender and race are expected to affect emotional intelligence. Considering the view that the emotional intelligence is an innate trait, demographic characteristics such as gender and race are expected to affect emotional intelligence. On the other hand, when the other two views are taken into consideration, it is expected that some of the characteristics which are acquired later such as marital status, age, maturity and income will have potential effects on emotional intelligence. In the light of all this information, whether the demographic characteristics of individuals have any significant effect on the levels of emotional intelligence, or if so, how these effects are the main problematic of this research. Accordingly, in this study it is aimed to investigate the possible effects of demographic characteristics of employees such as age, gender, marital status, and educational level on their emotional intelligence levels. For this purpose, the research background, hypotheses and method of the study were presented respectively. Then the findings were discussed, and the study was terminated.

1. Research Background and Hypotheses

1.1. Emotional Intelligence

Different definitions of emotional intelligence exist in literature, because it has been studied by many disciplines such as psychology, social psychology and management. Emotional intelligence, which can be shortly summarized as the ability to use emotions wisely (Satija & Khan, 2013:82; Weisinger, 1998), is rooted on the 1920s. It is defined as being aware of the emotions of oneself and others and managing and using emotions. Salovey & Mayer (1990) defined emotional intelligence as the ability to monitor and distinguish between one's own and others' emotions and feelings, and to

use this knowledge in his/her thoughts and actions. Based on the definitions, emotional intelligence can be defined as the individual's ability to understand and interpret emotions of himself and others and reflect emotions to behaviors.

Various models of emotional intelligence have been developed. When these models are examined, it is seen that there are basically three different views. The first view is that emotional intelligence is innate and is known as ability model (Mayer, Salovey & Caruso, 2004). According to the ability model, emotional intelligence is a pure form of mental intelligence and is considered a sub-branch of social intelligence (Mayer, Caruso & Salovey, 2016; Mayer, Salovey & Caruso, 2004). According to the second view, emotional intelligence cannot be classified under the conception of human cognitive ability and known as trait emotional intelligence (Petrides, 2011; Petrides & Furnham, 2003). Hence, emotional intelligence is not something comes solely from birth, or intelligence, but it is something that depends on the individual's self-perception. To this view, emotional intelligence can be developed within the time with the development of personality (Petrides, 2011; Petrides & Furnham, 2003). Latest view is known as mixed intelligence, according to this view emotional intelligence consists of both mental intelligence and personality traits. In other words, emotional intelligence can both be developed and come from birth. In contrast to this clear differences, the emotional intelligence components presented in the models are similar. Above all, emotional intelligence is seen as a desirable feature and ability for individuals or employees. The common emphasis of the studies is that emotional intelligence is an important antecedent of success and performance in work and social life (Miao, Humphrey & Qian, 2016; Chan et al., 2015). According to research, emotional intelligence positively affects many variables such as trust, commitment, job satisfaction and citizenship behavior. Furthermore, it is seen that the leaders who direct the employees to the common direction should be emotionally intelligent (Prati et al., 2003). Emotional intelligence can be said to be needed more in especially environments where empathy and communication are required. Emotionally intelligent individuals are less affected by the negative situations they face, are more satisfied with their jobs, and they are more successful in their lives. According to experts, the place of academic intelligence in factors affecting life success is at most 20 % (Cooper & Sawaf, 1999; Goleman, 1995). According to Silvia (2002), emotional intelligence serves as a buffer and has a modifying effect. Therefore, both in organizations and life, emotional intelligence provides many advantages to individuals and organizations. In this respect, in literature it is suggested that employees with emotional intelligence should be preferred and that emotional intelligence should be developed. Another issue that is emphasized in these studies is that any variables should be examined which have the potential to affect emotional intelligence. In fact, emotional intelligence is associated with many variables. However, demographic factors also have the potential to affect the emotional intelligence levels of individuals.

1.2. Emotional intelligence and demographic characteristics

The demographic characteristics of individuals can affect their feelings, emotions, attributions, perceptions and attitudes towards events. According to Pooja & Kumar (2016) demographic features of employees may be the basis of differences in terms of attitudes, perception and values. Some of these features, such as race and gender, are innate, while others, such as marital status, income and age, occur later. The fact that emotional intelligence is closely related to emotions suggests that demographic characteristics may also have a potential association with emotional intelligence. On the other hand, the views of emotional intelligence as “a result of innate mental intelligence” or “later developed” are like those of demographic characteristics. If emotional intelligence is innate, it is expected that some of the innate demographic characteristics will be related to emotional intelligence. Or, on the contrary, if emotional intelligence is something that can be developed later, it is a questionable problem to examine whether the demographic characteristics that have been acquired later related to emotional intelligence. The demographic characteristics examined in this study are gender, marital status, income, age, and education level.

Gender

Gender, which is an innate feature, affects emotions of males and females in terms of hormonal. General belief is that females are more emotional compared to males. Mixed results were acquired from previous studies which examined gender-emotional intelligence associations. No significant effect of gender on emotional intelligence was found in a very few studies (Gunkel, Schlagel, & Engle, 2013; Kumar & Muniandy, 2012). On the other hand, in majority of studies, gender found to be a significant predictor of emotional intelligence (Sergio Dungca & Ormita 2015; Jorfi, Yaccob, & Shah 2011; Joseph & Newman, 2010; Hopkins & Bilimoria, 2008). Accordingly, higher levels of emotional intelligence in females was found compared to males (Shukla & Srivastava, 2016; Pooja & Kumar, 2016; Day & Caroll, 2004; Schutte et al., 2001). In the light of these empirical basis, the following hypothesis has been proposed.

H1: Female employees have higher levels of emotional intelligence than male employees.

Age and educational level

Although it is not the same for all people, in general human matures as age progresses. As the age progresses, the individual meets other people, gains many positive and negative experiences, makes friendships, and socializes with other people with different characters. According to Frank, Baron-Cohen & Ganzel (2015) age is associated with social adaptability and awareness. In previous study mixed findings were found about age-emotional intelligence relation. But a positive relationship between age and emotional intelligence was obtained in majority of these studies (Shukla & Srivastava, 2016; Jorfi, Yaccob, & Shah, 2011; Bissessar, 2011). Similarly,

as the educational level increases, the individual learns new information, gains experiences and learns how to manage his/her emotions. With the advancement of the individual's educational level and age, it is expected that the set of skills forming the emotional intelligence such as understanding, interpreting and empathizing the emotions of other people is more likely to develop than the others who are younger and less educated. Previous research suggests that a positive relationship between educational level and emotional intelligence (Shukla & Srivastava, 2016). In the light of literature, the following hypotheses were developed.

H2: Older employees have higher level of emotional intelligence than younger employees.

H3: Emotional intelligence level of employees with higher education level is higher than those with low level of education.

Marital Status

The marriage of the individuals brings new changes in life. Sharing the same home and having children means entering a different social life and thus the responsibilities of married individuals increase. Except him/herself, this new way of life requires individuals to consider households, to understand their feelings, interpret and act as empathy when necessary. From this perspective, married individuals are expected to have higher levels of emotional intelligence than single individuals. On the other hand, studies reached mixed results. For example, Malik, (2010) found negative relationship between these two variables, while a positive relationship was found in other studies (Fitness 2001; Gottman 1992). Shukla & Srivastava (2016) in their study also supported that married participants had higher level of emotional intelligence than single participants. Accordingly, the following hypothesis has been postulated.

H4: Emotional intelligence level of married employees is higher than single employees.

Income

Previous study examined income-emotional intelligence relationship is very limited. But according to Shukla & Srivastava (2016) a high salary, good experiences in the organization and being more educated increase emotional intelligence. Also, they found a positive relationship between income and emotional intelligence. Based on that, the following hypothesis has been proposed.

H5: Higher income employees have higher level of emotional intelligence than lower income employees.

1.3. Method

A quantitative study was designed to answer the research question and to test hypotheses. The required data was obtained from employees with various occupations in different sectors. Participants consist of public employees such as academicians, teachers and civil servants, and private sector employees such as technicians, health workers, nurses and other workers in different fields of work. The sample of study is a total 335 employees. For data collection the survey method was used by using convenience sampling method. Emotional intelligence scale developed by Wong & Law (2002) was used to measure emotional intelligence. The scale consists of 4 sub-dimensions and 16 items, including self-emotional appraisal (4 items), others' emotional appraisal (4 items), regulation of emotions (4 items) and use of emotions (4 items). The scale was prepared in a 5-point Likert-type form ranging from (1) "Strongly Disagree"- to (5) "Strongly Agree". In order to measure the demographic characteristics of the employees, questions about gender, age, income, marital status, sector of employment and education level are included.

1.4. Findings

Table 1 shows the demographic features of participants. Most of participants are females (59.4 %), singles (52.5 %) and have bachelor level education (48.70 %). Average income level of participants is 4200 TL per month and average age is 29.71.

Table 1. Demographic features of participants

Variable	Frequency	Percent	Mean
Gender			
Female	199	59.4	
Male	136	40.6	
Marital Status			
Married	159	47.5	
Single	176	52.5	
Education Level			
Primary School	22	6.50	
High School	61	18.25	
Associate Degree	63	18.80	
Bachelor	163	48.70	
Graduate	26	7.75	
Income (TL per month)			4200
Age			29.71

Note: N= 335. TL= Turkish Lira.

In table 2 descriptive statistics and reliability coefficients of emotional intelligence are presented. Participants' emotional intelligence level seems to be moderate. The mean value of all sub-dimensions of emotional intelligence are very close to each other. Reliability coefficients are obtained as .96 for total emotional

intelligence, .95 for self-emotional appraisal, .94 for others' emotional appraisal, .90 for regulation of emotions and .88 for use of emotions. Thus, scales used in this study can be said to be quite reliable.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics and reliability coefficients of emotional intelligence

Variable	Mean	SD	α
Emotional intelligence (total)	2.89	1.02	.960
Self-emotional appraisal	2.87	1.27	.953
Others' emotional appraisal	2.89	1.24	.944
Regulation of emotions	2.91	1.18	.907
Use of emotions	2.91	0.98	.876

Note: N = 335.

In order to test hypotheses correlation analysis were conducted. Table 3 shows the correlations between emotional intelligence and demographic characteristics of participants. According to findings only gender found to have a significant relationship ($r: -.21$; $p < .01$) with emotional intelligence. It shows that female employees have higher emotional intelligence level than male employees. Self-emotional appraisal, others' emotional appraisal and regulation of emotions also have significant relationship with gender. But there is no significant relationship between gender and use of emotions. Thus, H1 has been accepted. Unexpectedly there are no significant relationships between emotional intelligence and age, income, marital status, and education level. So, all H2, H3, H4 and H5 have been rejected.

Table 3. Correlations between emotional intelligence and demographic variables

Variables	Gender (Female: 1 Male: 2)	Age	Income	Marital Status (Married: 1 Single: 2)	Education Level
Emotional Intelligence (total)	-.21**	-.04	-.04	-.09	.02
Self-emotional appraisal	-.21**	-.04	-.04	-.10	.01
Others' emotional appraisal	-.22**	-.04	-.04	-.11*	.06
Regulation of emotions	-.23**	-.01	-.04	-.11*	.05
Use of emotions	-.04	-.06	-.03	.01	-.04

Note: N = 335. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Discussion and Conclusion

The possible associations of employees' demographic characteristics such as gender, age, income, marital status and education level on emotional intelligence have been questioned in this study. According to the findings, emotional intelligence was found to be significantly related to gender. On the other hand, no significant relationships were found with the income status, age, marital status and education levels of the employees and their emotional intelligence level. As expected, females have higher levels of emotional intelligence than males. Females are emotional beings by their nature. It is natural that they interpret the events more emotionally and their viewpoints are more emotional than men, and they are one step ahead of men in understanding others' feelings and regulate their own emotions. Why females have higher emotional intelligence compared to males can be explained in this way. On the other hand, this finding is consistent with the findings of the studies in the literature. Many studies found that females have higher levels of emotional intelligence than males (Day & Carroll, 2004; Pooja & Kumar, 2016; Schutte et al., 2001; Shukla & Srivastava, 2016;). Unexpectedly, emotional intelligence was found to be unrelated to the income, age, education level and marital status of the employees. This is a proof that emotional intelligence is an independent variable from mentioned variables within the context of this study. It is natural that the level of experience and sociability increases with the increase in the age and educational status of the individual, but the emotional intelligence seems to be independent of these characteristics. Although the relationship between marital status and emotional intelligence was found to be insignificant, the relationships between marital status and others' emotional appraisal and regulation of emotions dimensions of emotional intelligence were obtained significantly. Accordingly, single employees can evaluate the emotions of others and regulate their own emotions at a higher level than married employees. This finding is not in the expected direction, too. Because, it is expected that married employees should be more capable of evaluating others' feelings and regulating their emotions, but not single employees. When the findings are examined in general, age, income and marital status have insignificant relationships with emotional intelligence, but at the same time the direction of these relationships have been obtained contrary to what is expected. On the other hand, although the educational level has insignificant relationship with emotional intelligence, the direction is obtained as expected. Findings related to income, age, marital status, and educational level are not consistent with the findings of Shukla and Srivastava (2016). On the other hand, studies showing that these variables are not related to emotional intelligence are not at a level to be underestimated (Abdellatif et al., 2017; Hemalatha, 2014; Ghanimat et al., 2013). As a result, in the context of this study, gender was obtained as a factor affecting emotional intelligence, whereas emotional intelligence was found to be independent of other features. Overall, the inconsistent findings reveal the fact that emotional intelligence is not something directly related to demographic features but may be related to other factors. For instance, depression or other psychological disorders people suffer may affect the emotional intelligence

development in negative way regardless of the demographic features of individuals such as age, educational level or marital status. It shows the complexity of factors affecting emotional intelligence. That is why in this study inconsistent findings might be observed. The most important limitation of this study is that demographic factors consist of only age, income, gender, educational status and marital status. But there are many other factors that may affect emotional intelligence, such as race, nationality, tenure, experience and maturity. The inclusion of all these variables in future research may be more useful in understanding the role of individual differences on emotional intelligence better. For practitioners, it can be encouraged to hire people with high emotional intelligence. Similarly, for the existing employees, emotional intelligence development programs and trainings can be organized. Especially, it may be beneficial for organizations to prefer females in jobs requiring emotional labor.

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