



Emotional Intelligence as a Predictor of High School Teachers' Work Engagement*

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Abstract

This study aims to identify emotional intelligence levels of teachers as a predictor of their work engagement and the relationship between teachers' work engagement and emotional intelligence levels. The research was designed as a relational survey model. The research sample was composed of 353 teachers working at public high schools in Küçükçekmece district of İstanbul in the academic year of 2015-2016. The Work Engagement Scale (UWES-TR) and Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire-Short Form (TEIQue-SF) were used as data collection instruments. Correlation and linear regression analysis were utilized in the data analysis. A statistically significant and positive relationship was found between teachers' work engagement and emotional intelligence levels in the research. It was also concluded that emotional intelligence is a significant predictor of work engagement.

Keywords: Work engagement, Emotional intelligence, Teacher opinions.

Introduction

Working life play a both materially and spiritually crucial role in the lives of humans who are social beings. Management is also important in working life. Concept of management which started to develop in 1880s has been addressed with different theories. Continuing its development as classical (traditional) approach, neo-classical (behavioral) approach, modern approach, and postmodern approach, management theories would regard human as a machine by ignoring their social and psychological requirements to increase productivity in the organizations in the first place. Then, human was regarded as a part of organization, and the importance of meeting human's social and psychological requirements started to be apprehended. Thus, psychologists and management theoreticians have started to examine and enhance humans' impacts on working life (Titrek, 2013).

Having developed in the beginning of 21st century and aiming to improve humans' positive traits, increase and strengthen their resilience and prevent them from orientating towards negative behaviors, positive psychology reflected on the organizational field as the positive organizational behavior (POB) (Keser and Yılmaz, 2009). According to Luthans (2002), "positive organizational behavior is the body of studies and applications regarding the strengths and psychological capacity of measurable, improvable and effectively manageable positive human resources for the development of today's working life" (Luthans, 2002: p.59 in Çalışkan, 2014). While negative situations in working life are examined and investigated in traditional psychology, positive organizational behavior studies examine the contrasts of these negative situations (Keser and Yılmaz, 2009). Improving and strengthening the positive traits, preventing the negative behaviors and revealing and enhancing individuals' potentials in educational organization that raise the future of the society are inevitably of importance and necessity. In this sense, teachers have crucial responsibilities in educational organizations. Teachers' performance of these responsibilities depends on several factors (Özdemir, 2016). As work engagement and emotional intelligence are considered among these factors, this study investigated whether emotional intelligence is a predictor of work engagement.

According to the definition by Lodahl and Kejner (1965), work engagement is the level of individuals' association with working or the fact that working has a significant place in individual's life (*in* Karacaoğlu, 2005). Work engagement is basically a concept regarding individuals' positive attitude toward their job or the act of working. Individuals with such an attitude feel energetic, are proud of what they do and feel happy when working (Gül, 2015).

* This study is adapted from the Miray Kabar's master thesis.



Work engagement means that individuals feel vigorous, commit themselves to their jobs or become satisfied with their jobs and concentrate on their jobs when they are working. There is continuity in work engagement. It is not dependent on a single object, event or person. It refers to an emotional and cognitive state. It comprises of three important dimensions: vigor, dedication and absorption. Vigor refers to being highly energetic, ambitious about work and mentally resilient when working. Dedication means regarding work as serving a meaning and purpose, perceiving it as being enthralling and inspiring, being proud of the work and evaluating the work specifically when working. Absorption is about fully concentrating on the work, being unaware of the time, only thinking about the work and being very happy when working (Hakanen, Bakker and Schaufeli, 2006; Eryılmaz and Doğan, 2012).

It is possible to say that concept of work engagement is related to similar concepts such as organizational engagement and occupational engagement and influenced by several factors either directly or indirectly. Work engagement may vary by certain individual differences. Situational attributes such as individual's working conditions and manager-employee relationship may affect individual's career. Hence, it can be assumed that individual's work-related behaviors are affected by both individual and situational variables. There are other factors, too. Term of employment in the organization, field of occupation, characteristics of the job and the organization itself may have an impact on work engagement. As is seen, there are several factors that are effective in the attitude of work engagement (Kurt, 2013). Engagement refers to an emotional state. Therefore, it can be implied that emotions have a prominent place in work engagement.

Concept of emotional intelligence of which foundations were laid by the concept of social intelligence introduced by the Psychologists Edward L. Thorndike in the literature has been addressed in several academic research studies due to countries' search for increasing the quality in various fields since 1980s. Today, there are three schools which have had individual contributions to the concept of emotional intelligence:

School of Emotional and Social Intelligence represented by Daniel Goleman et al., school pioneered by John D. Mayer and Peter Salovey, and the School of Reuven Bar-On. Goleman is the researcher who introduced the concept of emotional intelligence to world; Bar-On is the first person to produce the scientific emotional intelligence test and use it in the academic field; and

Mayer and Salovey are known as the specialists who brought emotional intelligence into the literature and ensured its study on the scientific platform (*in*: Delice, Günbeyi, 2013).

Defined for the first time by Peter Salovey of the Department of Psychology at University of Yale and John D. Mayer of University of New Hampshire in 1990, concept of emotional intelligence, according to them, is "a sub-form of social intelligence which is related to individuals' ability to monitor their own and others' feelings and emotions, distinguish between them and use and utilize this information in their own thoughts and actions (*in*: Kızıllı, 2014).

Having become popular with Goleman's book "Emotional Intelligence" published in 1995, emotional intelligence allows for recognizing, evaluating and learning our and others' emotions and reflecting the information about emotions and energy of emotions to the daily life and work efficiently and giving appropriate reactions to them (*in* Titrek, 2013).

Emotional intelligence is important for individuals to achieve success and happiness either in their social lives or working life. Research studies show that individuals with high emotional intelligence can establish positive relations in their family and social lives, gain success more easily; are productive and respected and loved by their superiors and inferiors in their working lives and ascend in their careers rapidly. Employees with high emotional and social capacity who are aware of their emotions, can control their feelings and understand others' feelings are required in today's working life. Organizations who employ individuals with high emotional intelligence will host more positive and efficient communications and relations. Hence, team spirit can be



created to enhance performance, and success can be achieved through a happy and peaceful work environment, which will in return affect employee engagement positively (Doğan, Demiral, 2007).

In accordance with these facts, it is possible to say that it is important for teachers to have work engagement and emotional intelligence at educational institutions. Due to the importance that teachers who will shape the future have work engagement and emotional intelligence in educational organizations, requirement of studying their levels of work engagement and emotional intelligence guided this research.

Methodology

Descriptive relational survey model, which is a general survey model, was used in this study aiming to identify the relationship between teachers' levels of work engagement and emotional intelligence. The research population was 1912 teachers working at public high schools in Küçükçekmece district of İstanbul in the academic year of 2015-2016. Sample size calculation table prepared by Yazıcıoğlu and Erdoğan (2004) was utilized when choosing the sample. Accordingly, with a sampling error of 0.05 ($p=0.05$ and $q=0.5$), 333 teachers were deemed to be sufficient for the sample. Simple random convenience sampling method was used in the study. The sample of the research was composed of 353 teachers working at public high schools in Küçükçekmece district of İstanbul in the academic year of 2015-2016. Majority (56.4%) of the teachers who participated in the study are female. 34.3% of them were at the age of 20-30, 44.5% were at the age of 31-40, and % were at the age of 41 and older. 67.7% were married, and 24.4% were working at an Anatolian High School whereas 75.6% were working at a vocational high school. 69.7% of the teachers have an associate or bachelor's degree while 30.3% have a master's degree.

In the research, the Work Engagement Scale (UWES-TR) and Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire-Short Form (TEIQue-SF) were used as data collection instruments. Information on the scales are given below.

The Work Engagement Scale

To measure teachers' work engagement levels, the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) developed by Schaufeli et al. (2002) to measure employees' work engagement was used in the study. The Turkish adaptation and reliability-validity study of the scale was performed by Eryılmaz and Doğan (2012). The 17-item scale is composed of three aspects: vigor, dedication, and absorption. Developed in 5-point Likert type, the scale is graded with "Never fits (1)", "Not fit (2)", "Somewhat fits (3)", "Fits (4)", and "Completely fits (5)". The reliability of UWES-TR was investigated with internal consistency and test-retest methods. Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient calculated for the whole scale is .94. The coefficients calculated for the subdimensions are .87 for vigor, .87 for dedication, and .84 for absorption. Test-retest reliability coefficients were found to be .85 for the whole scale, .89 for vigor, .80 for dedication, and .69 for absorption (Eryılmaz and Doğan, 2012). In this study, the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients were calculated to be .87 for vigor, .86 for dedication, .86 for absorption, and .95 for the whole scale.

Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire - Short Form (TEIQue-SF)

To measure teachers' emotional intelligence levels, the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire - Short Form (TEIQue-SF) developed by Petrides and Furnham (2000, 2001) for identifying individual's level of self-perception regarding his/her emotional efficacies was also used in the study. The Turkish adaptation and reliability-validity study of the scale was performed by Deniz, Özer and Işık (2013). The 20-item questionnaire is composed of four factors: well-being, self-control, emotionality, and sociability. It is a 7-point Likert-type (1: strongly disagree, 7: strongly agree) measurement tool. Internal consistency reliability of TEIQue-SF was calculated with Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The coefficients are .72 for well-being, .70 for self-control, .66 for emotionality, .70 for sociability, and .81 for the whole questionnaire. Its test-retest reliability coefficient was found to be .86 (Deniz, Özer and Işık, 2013). In this study, the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients were



found to be .72 for well-being, .69 for self-control, .64 for emotionality, .68 for sociability, and .85 for the whole questionnaire.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed in a software package for social sciences. Skewness and kurtosis values within the range of ± 3.29 according to Tabachnick and Fidell (2007) and ± 2 according to George and Mallery (2010) are acceptable for normality (Şentürk, Zahal, Yurga, Gürpınar and Altun, 2016). Based on this, it was accepted that the data exhibited normal distribution. Correlation and regression analyses were performed to identify the relationship between teachers' work engagement and emotional intelligence.

The scores obtained in the scales that were prepared in the 5-point Likert type were graded as "none" (1.00-1.80), "low" (1.81-2.60), "moderate" (2.61-3.40), "high" (3.41-4.20), and "very high" (4.21-5.00). For the correlation coefficients, as the absolute value, the relationships were interpreted as "low" 0.00- 0.29, "moderate" 0.30-0.69, and "high" 1.00-0.70 (Büyükoztürk, 2009). The teachers' work engagement levels were interpreted in accordance with their answers to the work engagement scale on the basis of this information. It was assumed that the ranges were equal in the 7-point Likert-type trait emotional intelligence questionnaire, and the score range was calculated to be 0.86 for the arithmetic means (Score range= (Highest Vale – Lowest Value)/7= (7 – 6)/7= 6/7 = 0,86) (Kaplanoğlu, 2014). According to this calculation, the evaluation range of the arithmetic means were accepted as "not available" (1.00- 1.86), "none" (1.87-2.71), "very little" (2.72-3.57), "moderate" (3.58-4.43), "somewhat high" (4.44-5.29), "high" (5.30-6.14), and "very high" (6.15-7.00).

Findings

The relationship between teachers' levels of work engagement and emotional intelligence was identified in a comparison through the correlation analysis. The analysis results are given in Table 1 and 2.

Table 1. Analysis Results Regarding the Relationship between Teachers' Levels of Work Engagement and Emotional Intelligence

		Work Engagement	Emotional Intelligence
Work Engagement	r	1	.475**
	p		.000
Emotional Intelligence	r	.475**	1
	p	.000	

Table 1 shows a statistically significant and positive relationship was found between the work engagement and emotional intelligence levels of the teachers working at high schools ($r=0.475^{**}$, $p<0.01$). Accordingly, it can be assumed that the emotional intelligence scores increased as the work engagement scores increased and the teachers with higher work engagement levels have higher levels of emotional intelligence.



Table 2. Analysis Results Regarding the Relationship between Teachers' Scores of Work Engagement Factors and Emotional Intelligence Factors

		Vigor	Dedication	Absorption	Well-being	Self-control	Emotionality	Sociability
Vigor	r	1	,794**	,853**	,407**	,181**	,133*	,300**
	p		,000	,000	,000	,001	,012	,000
Dedication	r	,794**	1	,767**	,458**	,168**	,162**	,275**
	p	,000		,000	,000	,002	,002	,000
Absorption	r	,853**	,767**	1	,396**	,145**	,103	,275**
	p	,000	,000		,000	,006	,053	,000
Well-being	r	,407**	,458**	,396**	1	,375**	,351**	,451**
	p	,000	,000	,000		,000	,000	,000
Self-control	r	,181**	,168**	,145**	,375**	1	,554**	,490**
	p	,001	,002	,006	,000		,000	,000
Emotionality	r	,133*	,162**	,103	,351**	,554**	1	,427**
	p	,012	,002	,053	,000	,000		,000
Sociability	r	,300**	,275**	,275**	,451**	,490**	,427**	1
	p	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	

Table 2 presents the relationship between teachers' scores of emotional intelligence factors and work engagement factors. Accordingly, vigor factor of the work engagement is positively and statistically significantly correlated to the emotional intelligence factors of well-being ($r=0.407^{**}$, $p<0.01$), self-control ($r=0.181^{**}$, $p<0.01$), emotionality ($r=0.133^{*}$, $p<0.05$), and sociability ($r=0.300^{**}$, $p<0.01$). Dedication factor of the work engagement is positively and statistically significantly correlated to the emotional intelligence factors of well-being ($r=0.458^{**}$, $p<0.01$), self-control ($r=0.168^{**}$, $p<0.01$), emotionality ($r=0.162^{*}$, $p<0.01$), and sociability ($r=0.275^{**}$, $p<0.01$). Absorption factor of the work engagement is positively and statistically significantly correlated to the emotional intelligence factors of well-being ($r=0.396^{**}$, $p<0.01$), self-control ($r=0.145^{**}$, $p<0.01$), and sociability ($r=0.275^{**}$, $p<0.01$). Absorption factor of the work engagement was not found statistically significantly correlated to the emotionality factor of the emotional intelligence ($r=0.103$, $p>0.05$).



There is a positive significant relationship between teachers' scores of emotional intelligence and work engagement ($r=0.397^{**}$, $p<0.01$).

Table 3. Regression Analysis Showing Emotional Intelligence's Effect on Work Engagement

	B	Std. Hata	β	t	p	R ²	F
Emotional Intelligence	36,640	2,916		12,565	,000		
	1,366	,135	,475	10,120	,000	,226	102,412

In the regression analysis performed to identify the effect of emotional intelligence scores on work engagement (Table 3), it was found that teachers' emotional intelligence levels predicted their work engagement levels at 22% ($R^2=.226$). Accordingly, the linear relationship between teachers' work engagement and emotional intelligence levels is statistically significant ($p<0.05$).

Conclusion, Discussion and Recommendation

A statistically significant and positive relationship was found between the work engagement and emotional intelligence levels of the teachers working at public high schools. It was concluded that emotional intelligence scores get higher as work engagement score increases. A positive and statistically significant relationship was determined between teachers' scores of "absorption" and "dedication" factors of work engagement and "well-being", "self-control", and "sociability" factors of the emotional intelligence. "Absorption" factor of the work engagement was found positively and statistically significantly correlated to the emotional intelligence factors of "well-being", "self-control", and "sociability".

It was determined in the regression analysis performed to identify the effect of emotional intelligence scores on work engagement that teachers' emotional intelligence levels predicted their work engagement levels at 22%. Accordingly, the linear relationship between teachers' work engagement and emotional intelligence levels is statistically significant. In other research studies conducted with different wage earners, similarly, emotional intelligence was found to be a significant predictor of work engagement. For instance, Toyama and Mauno (2017) and Zhu, Liu, Guo, Zhao and Lou (2015) achieved similar research findings in health organizations; Bartlett (2015), Clercq, Bouckenoghe, Raja and Matsyborska (2014), Thor (2012) and Ravichandran, Arasu and Kumar (2011) in different organizations. Lestari and Sawitri (2017) and Garrido and Pacheco (2012) also concluded in their research in educational organizations that emotional intelligence significantly predicts work engagement.

The following recommendations can be made to increase teachers' levels of work engagement and emotional intelligence in accordance with the data obtained in the research: Improving teachers' emotional intelligence levels will enhance their work engagement levels. Teachers play a key role in raising individuals with high emotional intelligence for the society. Thus, faculties of education which train teachers should attach importance to emotional intelligence. Curricula of these faculties can be rearranged to raise teachers with high emotional intelligence. It can be ensured that teachers take part in projects that will contribute to their professional developments and domestic or foreign in-service trainings (courses, seminars, etc.) In-service trainings on emotional intelligence (management of emotions, activation of emotions, empathy, social skills...) can be organized.

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