

# The Correlations between Emotional Intelligence and the Quality of Work Life

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## Abstract

Study on emotional intelligence has been widely researched on especially for the behavioural investigation and its influence on various individual's performance, social interactions and work life eminence. Recent research indicates that emotions play an integral part in leadership behaviours, work performance, managing workplace situations. This research aims to examine the correlations that emotional intelligence has towards the individual's quality of work life. Sixty-three support staffs from local university in Malaysia participated in this study. A quantitative method was adapted, and the descriptive, correlation, and reliability tests were used for data analysis. This study used 33-items emotional intelligence scales, and 11-items of quality of work life questionnaires were used to obtain data. Results indicated that there was a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and the quality of work life. The quality of work life dimension of social integration emerged as slightly significant with respect to the relationship with emotional intelligence especially strong with the utilizing emotion.

**Key Word:** Emotional intelligence, quality of work life, support staff, leadership, behavioural

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## Introduction

As an employee in any organization, one cannot escape from having to make sound and judge decision in everyday activities. Some decisions may be hard to make, while others may be tactical. These decisions at times may be liked or disliked by others depending on the situations. How can one be sure that the decisions made give favourable impact to themselves as well as to others? Managing emotional effectively is necessary to deliver favourable decision. In other words, one needs to acquire more than traditional cognitive intelligence to handle situations at work. Emotional intelligence is said to have various impact on personal and professional situations. Emotional intelligence helps to restrain negative feeling and centered on being empathy, confidence and amiability. According to Lenaghan *et al.* (2007) emotional intelligence has shown some impacts to individual well-being and work-family balance (2007).

Developing emotional intelligence in the workplace means that involving emotions are constant in decision making and dealing with quality of work life. While many of the currently employed employees are well educated and smart, but the way they handle people and critical situations may be different. Interpersonal conflicts at workplace such as the relationship between subordinates and employers, and between peers may cause stress and dysfunction the quality of work life. Other than that, the anxiety and pressure to complete tasks on time, work overload, stern supervisors, and the fear of getting fired or promotions being hold added up to the devastate of quality of work life. The use of emotional intelligence may help one to differentiate negative and positive emotions and making appropriate choices for thinking and actions. In respond to that, therefore the aim for this study is to find out the correlations of emotional intelligence has towards the support staff's quality of work life.

In a simple explanation, quality of work life refers to employee's personal needs that are being fulfilled by organization. Employees bring along their personal needs to the organization with the hope that organization can satisfy their need. It is a win-win situation when the organization achieved its objectives and the employees' quality of work life is satisfied.

## Literature Review

Emotional intelligence and quality of work life are both important element for the employees in order to ensure their happiness at the workplace. Emotional intelligence is related with life success, life satisfaction and wellbeing, interpersonal relationship, occupational stress, work success and performance (Alonazi, 2020; Bansal *et al.*, 2020; Bar-On, 2001; Palmer *et al.*, 2002; Fitness, 2001; Nikolaou & Tsaousis, 2002; Slaski & Cartwright, 2002; Vakola *et al.*, 2004; Palmer, Walls *et al.*, 2000). Whereas quality of work life is related with job satisfaction, organizational commitment, performance, career achievement, turn over and burnout (Abdullah *et al.*, 2021; Kumar & Seema, 2021; Mohammadi & Karuppiyah, 2020; Hermawati & Mas, 2017; Pandey & Tripathi 2018; Ganguly, 2010; Normala & Daud, 2010; Loh & Raduan; 2007; Huang, Lawler & Lei, 2007; Raduan *et al.*, 2006; Pardakhtchi *et al.*, 2009). It shows that both emotional intelligence and quality of work life contributes to employee's wellbeing. Previous studies show that emotional intelligence relates with quality of work life (Kumar & Seema, 2021; Farabakhsh, 2012; Rajini & Puspavathi, 2021; Malikka, 2010, Salaski & Cartwright, 2002). For example, one of Indian researcher, Malikka (2010) implemented research about "Emotional Intelligence Emerging as A Significant Tool for Female Information Technology Professionals in Managing Role Conflict and Enhancing Quality of Work Life and Happiness". Result of this research indicated that emotional intelligence was positively correlated with quality of work life and happiness. Research done by Kumar & Seema (2021) also found that strong association between emotional intelligence and quality of work life, thus indicating that higher level of emotional intelligence led to enhanced quality of work life. Another research done by Salaski and Cartwright (2002) about "Health, Performance and Emotional Intelligence: An Exploratory Study of Retail Manager" also found that emotional intelligence had a significant correlation with quality of work life. Other researcher, Dulewicz *et al.* (2003) also found that emotional intelligence correlated positively with quality of work life and morale. We can understand that, both emotional intelligence and quality of work life relates each other. Therefore, for this research we can assume that Emotional Intelligence (independent variable) correlates with Quality of Work Life (independent variable).

Emotional intelligence is considered to be important in organizational factors such as the organizational citizenship behavior (Carson *et al.*, 2005; Dissanayake *et al.*, 2021), leadership (Gardner & Stough, 2002), work attitude and performance (Rajini & Puspavathi, 2021; Nair *et al.*, 2023; Ngah *et al.*, 2009), job satisfaction (Widodo, 2023, Farheen & Prabha, 2020) and perceiving stress in occupation and life satisfaction (Silva *et al.*, 2023; Palmer *et al.*, 2001).

According to Prithivi and Thilagaraja (2022) emotional intelligence is a set of qualities and competencies that captures a broad collection of individual skills and dispositions, usually referred to as soft skills or inter and intra-personal skills, that are outside the traditional areas of specific knowledge, general intelligence and technical or professional skills. Salovey and Mayer (1990) defined emotional intelligence as "the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and action". Emotional intelligence can be learned, developed and improved (Sternberg, 1996) and has been found to be different based on age, gender and the developmental level of subjects (Gardner, 1999). Rayback (1998) stated that rather than relying on logic and technical analysis only, one may use the emotions effectively to influence and prioritizing and acting in ways that take into consideration of legitimize emotions. Emotional intelligence is a kind of readiness, skill and capability which deeply affects an individual's abilities so that he/she may be motivated, control his/her emotions and manage his/her relationship with others (Goleman, 1998; Farabakhsh, 2012). On the other hand, people with emotional intelligence are able to control their feelings as well as others', distinguish between the positive and negative consequences, utilize their affective data in order to lead their own thoughts and activities and provide themselves with more opportunities to think and be more creative and to aim their emotions and feelings at solving their own problems (Sobhaninejad & Yoozbashi, 2008; Farabakhsh, 2012).

Salovey and Mayer (1990), Schutte *et al.* (1998), and Davies *et al.* (1998) defined emotional intelligence as a set of interrelated skills that can be classified into appraising, regulating, and utilizing emotions. Appraising emotions in self and others relates to an individual's ability to understand own emotions and emotions of other people, and such person will be able to express emotions naturally and aware of other people's emotions effectively. Regulating emotions relates to the ability of a person to regulate emotions and maintain oneself from psychological distress, and such person has the ability to control and stabilize negative emotions (Davies *et al.*, 1998; Prithivi & Thilagaraja, 2022). Utilizing emotions relate to the ability of a person to make use of the emotions by directing them towards productive and constructive activities. Such person would be able to encourage and boost own morale to achieve performance (Davies *et al.*, 1998).

Prithivi and Thilagaraja (2022) defined quality of work life as a relationship between the employees and the work environment in which they work. It focuses on creating a working environment where employees work co – operatively and achieve results collectively. Kumar and Jyoti (2018) defined quality of work life as a comprehensive program that focuses on

work conditions and environment in a given organization to improve job satisfaction among employees. It looks at employees as assets rather than a cost to the organizations. Thus, its main purpose is to —develop work environment that are excellent for employees as well as for organization. According to Rajini and Pushpavathi (2021), quality of work life is a meaningful achievement and enjoyment in every day work life. Sharma *et al.* (2013) defined quality of work life as the level of satisfaction, motivation, involvement and commitment individuals experience with respect to their lives at work. Quality of work life is the degree to which individuals are able to satisfy their important personal needs while employed by the firm. Igbaria *et al.* (1994) defined quality of work life as a state in which members in an organization can fulfil important personal needs through experiences in the work organization. Lau *et al.* (2006) defined quality of work life as the favourable working environment that supports and promotes satisfaction by providing employees with reward, job security, and career growth opportunities. Whereas, Serey (2006) proposed that quality of work life as satisfying and meaningful work in which it includes self enhancement, autonomy, courage and greatness.

Walton (1973) divided good quality of work life into eight dimensions; adequate and fair compensation, safe and healthy working conditions, immediate opportunity to use and develop human capacities, future opportunity for continued growth and security, social integration in the work organization, constitutionalism in the work organization, work and total life space, and the social relevance of work life. Walton (1973) defined adequate and fair compensation as the income received from work done meet the standard of the recipient; safety and healthy working conditions as reasonable work with pay, minimize physical risks and dangers, and match work with physical capabilities of employees. For immediate opportunity to use and develop human capacities, organization provides employees with autonomy, multiple skills, information, and challenge employees to take accountability; whereas for future opportunity for continued growth and security, Walton (1973) stated that it should include employee's development, prospective application, advancement opportunities, and security. Other quality of work life stated by Walton (1973), social integration in the work organization can be defined as the nature of personal relationship among peers and to employer; constitutionalism in the work organization defined as the employee's rights at workplace such as the elements of privacy, free speech, equity and due process (1973). Work and total life space refers to as the balanced role of employee's work life and non-work life, whereas the social relevance of work life refers to employee's perception towards the organization social responsibilities in its products, and socially responsible and accountable to its actions (Walton, 1973).

## Research Objectives

The objective of the research is to examine the correlations of Emotional Intelligence towards the Quality of Work Life. In the light of preceding literature review, the following hypothesis has been formulated:

H<sub>1</sub>: Employees' emotional intelligence has a significant relationship with Quality of Work Life

## Research Methodology and Data Analysis

Random sampling technique was used to collect data. The sample comprises of support staffs working with one of the public universities in Malaysia. 100 questionnaires were distributed and 63 questionnaires were returned (63%). The summary of the respondents is described in Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 1: Summary of Respondents

Demographic Items		Frequency
Gender	Male	29
	Female	34
Age	21-25	6
	More than 25	57
Status	Single	15
	Married	48
Year of Service	1-5	18
	6-10	9
	11-15	16
	More than 15	20
Number of Dependents	0-2	28
	3-4	21

Education	More than 4	14
	Middle Certificate	36
	Higher Certificate	6
	Others	21
Income Level (monthly)	500- 1500	26
	1500-2500	25
	More than 2500	12

Table 2: Summary of Respondents

Demographic Items		Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	46
	Female	54
Age	21-25	9.5
	More than 25	90.5
Status	Single	23.8
	Married	76.2
Year of Service	1-5	28.6
	6-10	14.3
	11-15	25.4
Number of Dependents	More than 15	31.7
	0-2	44.4
	3-4	33.3
Education	More than 4	22.3
	Middle Certificate	57.1
	Higher Certificate	9.5
	Others	33.3
Income Level (monthly)	500- 1500	41.4
	1500-2500	39.6
	More than 2500	19

#### *Analysis to identify the correlations of emotional intelligence towards Quality of Work Life*

The Pearson correlation test was conducted to find the correlations between variables. Table 3 showed the summary of the results.

Table 3: Pearson Correlations between variables

VARIABLES	Emotional Intelligence	Appraising Emotion	Regulating Emotion	Utilizing Emotion
Quality of Work life	.256*	.106	.286*	.259*
Social Integration	.043	.409	.023	.040
Future Growth	.260*	.018	.364**	.333**
Constitutionalism	.039	.891	.003	.008
	.234	.102	.238	.247
	.065	.427	.060	.051
	.098	.110	.083	.052
	.446	.392	.516	.687

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The correlations analysis was carried out to the demographic items with the emotional intelligence and quality of work life variables. Table 4 showed the summary of the demographic analysis.

Table 4: Correlations between Demographic, Emotional and Quality Work Life

VARIABLES	Gender	Education Level	Year of Service	Number of Dependent
Emotional Intelligence	.300*	.309*		
	.017	.014		
Quality of Work Life			.300*	.371**
			.017	.003

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

### Findings and Interpretation

Based on table 3 above, results showed that emotional intelligence has some significant relationship with employee's quality of work life ( $r=.256$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). When the quality of work life was tested to the emotional intelligence dimensions, the findings revealed that appraising emotion does not have any significant relationship with quality of work life. However, regulating emotions ( $r=.286$ ) and utilizing emotions ( $r=.259$ ) does showed significant relationship with quality of work life where p valued at  $<0.05$ . When the quality of work life dimensions was tested to emotional intelligence antecedents, the results revealed that only social integration has significant correlations towards regulating emotions and utilizing emotions ( $r=.364$ , and  $r=.333$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) respectively. Emotional intelligence however does not show significant relationship with future growth and constitutionalism.

Table 4 above showed the correlations between demographic, emotional and Quality Work Life. Gender and education level showed significant correlations with emotional intelligence which is contrasted with study by Ngah *et al.* (2009). However, quality of work life does not correlate with gender and education level. The result also showed that year of services and number of dependants has significant correlations with quality of work life but not emotional intelligence. This may due to longer that one being commit to the organization; the feeling of security is higher. The assumption that working in the government sector is more secure in terms of longevity of service, boost up the confidence level. The quality of work life also showed significant correlations with the number of dependants that one has. Culture could be a reason why having a large number of dependants represent happiness and quality values in self.

The blending results as above might be explained more with intensive research. The employees may not perceive that future growth and advance learning as part of the next level that they are looking for. Support staffs mostly concern with carrying out operative activities and completing daily tasks which usually involves technical work such as typing, filing, organizing schedules for lecturers and students, and other clerical works. The limitation of opportunity for promotion may also the reason for this insignificant result. Emotional intelligence also does not show any significant relationship with constitutionalism of the organization. The support staffs in academic department served mostly lecturers and might not get any constitutionalism assurance from the lecturers. The questionnaire might be misunderstood by the staff as the lecturers or head of departments who happen to be lecturers as well. Lecturers might not be able to assure the support staff with the security of the post, promotions, or their rights as staff.

In conclusion, while various literatures have reported how important emotional intelligence towards individual work life, and performances, it seems that this study supported some of it. The emotional intelligence's role is larger than what it seems. While technical training and development may be to guide the staff in their daily activities, emotional training is also compulsory to be implemented. Having friendly and warmth relationship among the staffs is important to develop the quality of work life. Organization may emphasize on building and creating rapport among staff and lecturers. Other than that, the organization may from time to time give information to the staff with the possibilities of promotions and opportunity to further study and knowledge. Encouragement from employers and disclose information clearly will help the staff to be more advanced. Some of the limitations are that it does not include the personality traits as part of the study, where it might also have significant relationship to quality of work life. Other than that, the dimension of quality of work life is limited to three dimensions only and might not represent the quality of work life as a whole. Further studies could be done to obtain solid conclusion.

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