

Investigating the Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Employee Engagement in a Private Leading University in Cyprus

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Abstract

The present study aimed to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and employee engagement of the academic staff of a private leading University in Cyprus and hypotheses were tested. The research design of the research was conducted through the epistemological approach of positivist and quantitative research data were used. To fulfil the purpose of this study, the academic staff of the leading University under study were selected as the participants. The investigation was done through an analytical survey that included four demographic questions and two tools which measured the levels of emotional intelligence and the employee engagement of the participants. The tools used in the survey were the English version of Schutte Self Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT) developed by Schutte et al. (1998) and the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) developed by Schaufeli and Bakker. The data collected for this study were analysed through the use of inferential and descriptive statistics in order to test the hypotheses for the possible correlation between emotional intelligence and employee engagement. Spearman's rank correlation coefficient was used to test the hypotheses of this research. The key findings of this study support the hypothesis 1 of the research that (H1) there is a correlation between emotional intelligence and employee engagement of the academic staff of the University under study and rejects the null hypothesis. The findings revealed a low but positive correlation between Emotional intelligence and Employee engagement with the subscale of employee engagement namely 'Absorption' to be the one to seem to be affected more from this relationship and the one that revealed a medium positive correlation. Thus, the null hypothesis of this research that (Ho) there is no correlation between emotional intelligence and employee engagement of the academic staff of the University under study, was rejected

Keywords: emotional intelligence, employ engagement, Institutions of higher education, academics

1. Introduction

Globalization has exposed Higher education Institutions in new challenges which they must react and overcome with success in order to maintain their competitive advantage. In addition, Higher education Institutions have to deliver various complex range of services internally and externally. Thus, Higher education Institutions need to find ways in order to keep their employees engaged with their organization. Literature reveals that emotions that are correctly managed can drive to trust, commitment and faith (Drigas and Papoutsis, 2019). Emotional Intelligence (EI) has become a very popular concept especially since it has been highlighted from various researchers as one of major factor influencing individual and organizational success. Findings from various studies highlight the significance of Emotional intelligence to exist from both leaders and employees' side. Organizations today need qualified employees with not just technical skills but also emotional skills and also leaders with emotional intelligence as they directly impact the preservation of high-quality staff, overall productivity and effectiveness, the creation of a healthier working context and encouragement. Employees with emotional intelligence can express their emotions, face negative emotions, understand their selves and others, confront difficult situations and build a context that enhances cooperation and collaboration. Globalization has led organizations rethink their strategies and the way they perform and act. Global competitiveness between organizations has made the path for organizational success more difficult. Guenzi and Pelloni (2004) support that workforce is the main critical factor for increasing the efficiency of an organization and therefore the growth of the society. According to Janetius, Padmanabhan & Mini (2016) one field that has been widely explored in the corporate world but has been hardly studied in educational sector is employee engagement. Employees are the heard of every organization and constitute one of the most significant contributors for organizational success thus their engagement is critical. Scat and Zhaf (1999) strongly support that one organization will benefit from an incompetence with other organizations when is embedded with capable and committed employees (Guenzi & Pelloni, 2004). Faithful and engaged employees are an extremely significant factor for the effectiveness of the organization while employees with low levels of commitment and faith could delay goals and lead to organizational failure (Guenzi and Pelloni, 2004).

According Lakshmi and Sekhar (2018) in every dimension of an employee's personal and professional life Emotional intelligence plays a critical role because if emotions are managed correctly then it can lead to higher engagement, faith, trust, higher competence, innovation and success in individual team and in the organizational context. Consequently, well-managed emotions will play a vital role for effective and committed employees. If emotions are managed correctly emotional Intelligence has a prominent role and it should be practiced and cultivated by all the levels of employees in an organization to confront the challenges and overcome the obstacles for competitive advantage (Lakshmi and Sekhar ,2018).

Following this rationale this study concentrates in the educational sector of a higher education institution in the area of Cyprus aiming to offer valuable insides regarding the relationship of emotional intelligence and employee engagement. The current study will hopefully contribute to the literature to explain the impact of emotional intelligence on employee engagement and the significant role of emotional intelligence to exist in both management and employees for organisation success and competitive advantage.

The potential benefits of this study will include understanding that emotional intelligence in educational sector constitutes a great avenue for the engagement of employees with the organisation and can provide an important advantage to the organisation. Further this study will alert organisations to give the sufficient attention to emotional intelligence and hopefully use it as a critical ingredient in their 'recipe' for employee engagement. Moreover, institutions could take actions that might include the evaluation of emotional ability in their recruitment procedures in order to ensure employee engagement, to offer trainings with the target to increase the level of emotional intelligence of the management and employees while additionally offer the opportunity to those employees with low levels of emotional intelligence through training to become more engaged with their work. As higher education institutions and colleges transfer knowledge the concept of emotional intelligence as a mean for employee engagement may be considered to be included in curriculums of different programs and fields of study. Human resource managers can additionally play an important role in encouraging the use of Emotional Intelligence through the development of fair systems such as the creation of detail and careful management development programs, the creation of fair compensations systems and planning jobs for high employee engagement (Mwangi, 2014).

2. Literature Review

In contemporary educational context and most particularly in institutions of higher education, the obligation of lecturers it is not concentrated only to teaching and developing the knowledge of their students but instead it requires more than that (Shamsuddin *et al*, 2018). Joshith (2012) believes that academics need to use additionally social and emotional competencies. The academic staff constitutes an important contributor to organisations development and excellence (Shamsuddin *et al*, 2018), thus their engagement to their work is a matter that should concern the higher education institutions. According Hilmiana, Ode and Muizu, (2017) research outcomes reveal that emotional intelligence has been confirmed to critically influence employee engagement. Thus, rationale of the present research is to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and employee engagement. Studies examining this relationship in the context of Universities are limited and particularly in the country of Cyprus thus this study will attempt to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and employee engagement in a leading private university in Cyprus with the focus on its academic staff.

2.1 Emotional Intelligence

Literature reveals that emotions that are correctly managed can drive to trust, commitment and faith (Drigas and Papoutsis, 2019). Emotional Intelligence according McPheat (2010, p9) includes a combination of capabilities which enable an individual to be aware of, to comprehend, and to be in control of their own emotions, to understand and acknowledge the emotions of others and to use this cognizance to encourage their success and the success of others. Individuals with high emotional intelligence usually are able to experience a healthy balance of feelings such as fulfilment, motivation, freedom, autonomy, awareness, self-control, focus, friendship, contentment, desire, connection, appreciation, balance, peace of mind. Thus, based on McPheat (2010) in a workplace full of highly emotional intelligence employees you could have a work context where teams work with their highest effort, ideas are respected, integrity is precious, work relationships are rewarding, gossip and bad behaviours stop to exist, a context that everyone celebrates each other's success and achievements, potentials are continuously growing and decisions are based on values (McPheat, 2010). Many researchers sought to define emotional intelligent and there are various arguments regarding the definition of EI. It has been noted that as the field of emotional intelligence is constantly growing researchers are continually amending their own definitions. According Leite K, P *et al*. (2019) the theoretical construct of emotional intelligence was first introduced by the two researchers John Mayer and Peter Salovey in the 1980s. The researchers defined the ability to confront with emotions.

They support that people with high levels of Emotional intelligence have particular tools for confronting with emotions, such as perceiving and expressing emotions, managing emotions, utilize emotions in thought and acknowledging and reasoning with emotional information. Based on these authors, four dimensions of emotional intelligence exist and those are perception, understanding, management and use of emotions. Goleman (1995) in his book 'Emotional intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ for character health and lifelong achievement' explicates that emotional intelligence is any subjective personal characteristic that is not represented by cognitive intelligence. Moreover Bar-On (1997) confronts emotional intelligence as non-cognitive abilities, competencies and skills that impact an individual's capability to confront environmental demands and pressures with success. Mayer and Salovey (1997) defined emotional intelligence as "the ability to accurately and effectively process emotional information related to the recognition regeneration and regulation of emotion in ourselves and in others" and "the ability to perception, expression and appreciation of emotion, recall of emotions, when they facilitate thinking, understanding and use of emotional knowledge and emotion management, in order to promote been emotional and spiritual development." Mayer and Salovey few years after and with collaboration with the author Caruso (2000) redefined emotional intelligence as 'the ability to perceive and express emotion, assimilate emotion in thought, understand and reason with emotion, and regulate emotion in the self and others' (Mayer, Salovey & Caruso, 2000). On the other hand, Petrides and Furnham (2001) determines EI as a trait and it is a formation of emotional self-perceptions found at the low levels of personality hierarchies. Several of annotators assume that emotional intelligence comes from the wider construct of social intelligence (BarOn, 2000). According Maheshwari and Tripathi (n. d) recent prospects on social intelligence comes from Thorndike's division of intelligence in three wider classes namely 'abstract-scholastic intelligence', 'mechanical-visuo-spatial intelligence' and 'social (practical) intelligence' with the first concentrating on the capability of an individual to understand and manage ideas, the second involving the capability to understand and handling specific objects and the third involving the capability to understand and manage people and also the ability to act carefully in social environments. Nevertheless, despite the significant interest and various efforts to define and measure social intelligence, these efforts turn out problematic (Kihlstrom & Cantor, 2000). Additionally, based on Maheshwari and Tripathi (n. d) the weakness to distinguish among general and social intelligence and additionally problems in choosing external criteria of which must ratify experimental scales, drove to a recession in research concentrating on social intelligence as a distinguishing intellectual entity, till the contemporary rise interest of emotional intelligence. A different opinion on the concept of emotional intelligence comes from Edwin (2005) who argues that the concept of emotional intelligence is invalid as it does not constitute a form of intelligence and because it has been defined very generally and inclusively that at the end has no intelligible meaning. Moreover Waterhouse (2006) affirms the existence of "many conflicting constructs of emotional intelligence" and additionally make many different claims. She reveals other opinions suggesting that "Emotional Intelligence has not been differentiated from personality plus IQ" and further supports that the claim that "Emotional Intelligence determines real world success has not been validated." The author at the end suggests that studies on brain function shows that "unitary emotional intelligence" cannot exist. Additionally Sivakumar, and Thirumoorthy (2018) support that criticisms focus on whether Emotional intelligence is a 'real intelligence and whether it has incremental validity over IQ and the Big Five personality'. However, according Cherniss et al (2006) today an enormous number of research literature exists that show the positive impact of emotional intelligence in education sector and argues that this evidence should be shown in future studies in order to inform future educational practice and additionally educational policy through the best evidence- based research.

2.2 Models of Emotional Intelligence

After decades of research and scientific investigations on the concept of Emotional Intelligence three main models have generated and those are Goleman's Emotional intelligence performance model, Bar-On's Emotional competencies model and Mayer, Salovey and Caruso's Emotional intelligence ability model. The models consecrate on the individuals cognitive and non-cognitive competencies, skills and capabilities aiming to offer understanding of what emotions lead human behavior (Faltas, 2017).

Goleman's Emotional intelligence performance model

Goleman's Emotional intelligence performance model based on Goleman (2004) highlights five core emotional intelligence constructs including self-awareness, Self-regulation, social skill, empathy and motivation. The model concentrates on emotional intelligence as a broad of competencies and skill that lead the leadership performance. Self-awareness based on Goleman (2004) is the capability of an individual to recognize and understand his/her emotions, moods and drives as well as their impact on other individuals. Self-regulation is the capability to control or redirect disruptive impulses and moods and think before acting. Motivation is the passion that an individual feel. Empathy constitutes the capability to recognize the emotional structure of others. Finally, social skill is the ability in controlling relationships and create networks.

Goleman's noted that Emotional intelligence are not immanent talents, rather abilities that can be learned and must be worked and developed in order to succeed outstanding performance (Dhani & Sharma, 2016). Based Bar-On EI is a set-up of interconnected behavior that is guided by emotional and social abilities that impact both performance and behavior.

Bar-On's Emotional competencies model

Bar-On's Emotional intelligence competencies model consecrates on five EI scales including self-perception, interpersonal, self-expression, stress management and decision-making. Additionally, Bar-On also supported the existence of 15 subscales including self-regard, self-actualization, emotional expression, certainness, independence, interpersonal relationship, emotional self-awareness, empathy, social responsibility, problem-solving, reality testing, impulse control, pliability, stress forbearance and optimism, leading human behavior and relationships (Faltas, 2017).

Mayer, Salovey and Caruso's Emotional intelligence ability model

Based on Kanesan and Fauzan (2019) the ability model is the most powerful model as it clearly uses cognitive ability in processing emotions and scientifically confirmed. Mayer and Salovey's (1997) ability model include four ability dimensions such as perception, appraisal and expression of emotion, emotional facilitation of thinking, comprehending and analyzing emotions and regulation of emotions. Mayer and Salovey (1997) explained that the ability of perception, appraisal and expression of emotion involves the ability to recognize and differentiate emotion in oneself and in others with the process of perception, appraisal and expression initiating with the capability to recognize one's own emotions through body arousal, internal feelings, and thinking. Following this, as a person which has achieved mastering in generalizing emotions according on their self-experience, the capability to distinguish other's emotion by detecting surrounding signs evolves. Based on that, a person could voice feelings coherently to surrounding signs. Ultimately, a person could differentiate among precise and inaccurate expressions of feelings, as well as acknowledge or discover the honest and dishonest expressions of feelings (Kanesan and Fauzan, 2019). Emotional Facilitation of thinking as the second dimension of emotional intelligence is explained at a basic level as the capability to utilize emotion in facilitating thinking procedures such as problem solving, reasoning and interpersonal communication. Thus, an individual will focus on significant information in their surrounding context by using emotions to prioritize thinking. On the other hand, the highest level in emotional facilitation of thinking will lead the individual to the ability to distinguish reasoning induced by the emotion (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). Furthermore, according Mayer & Salovey (1997) the third dimension which is understanding and analyzing emotions, describes an individual's ability to categorize emotions and comprehend meanings implied by those emotions. Finally, the last dimension, regulation of emotion is explicates as the ability to decrease, prevent, enhance or change our and others' emotion and this will engance cognitive and emotional development of an individual (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). O'Boyle et al (2011) support that the instruments concentrate on ability model are the best because of the capability they offer to differentiate emotional intelligence from associated variables like personality and other abilities. Thus, for the purposes of this study, the ability model and therefore instrument build based on the ability model was used in order to measure the level of emotional intelligence of the academic staff of a leading university in Cyprus and for the structure of theoretical framework of this study.

2.3 Significance of emotional intelligence in Higher Education

The role of the academics is vital in the society as they interact with the student in order to transfer them their knowledge. Based on Goleman (1995) teachers should portrait efficient skills both physically and mentally known as emotional intelligence. Soni and Turray (2016) highlight that the systematic review supports that emotional intelligence is significantly useful in many aspects of functioning of work context and in Higher Education. Mehmood, Qasim, and Azam (2013) state that efficient teaching does not mean to have just the subject knowledge but additionally effective skills are required. Based on the National Education Report well trained instructors are important for the educational system and the instructors who are trained well can be expected to acquire the highly knowledge of emotional intelligence. Asrar-ul-Haq *et al* (2017) conducted a research exploring the impact of emotional intelligent on academic staff from different universities in Pakistan and their research revealed that emotional intelligence has an important impact on academic's performance. Core findings of their research expose that emotional self-confidence, self-awareness, accomplishment, evolving others and managing conflicts have a very positive and critical relation with the academic's performance. Emotionally intelligent teachers show care and promote an emotional climate that helps in the learning process that results being more efficient in reaching their academic objectives (Cotezee and Jensen, 2007). According Dolev and Leshem (2016) the participants in their research strongly believe that training programs help them develop their Emotional intelligence and associated behaviors and moreover stated that it positively influenced their practices. Boiger & Mesquita (2012) support that lack of capacity in ideal communication of emotion can be proved to be catastrophic for the well-being of Higher education educators and at the same time could work as an obstacle to the positive relationship with students.

According Brackett & Caruso (2007) emotions and the skills in order to cope with them influence the processes of learning, the standard of social relations, mental and physical wellbeing and moreover academic and work functioning. Joshith (2012) highlight that academics and teachers are the most significant part of the education system. The use of social and emotional competencies are critical. Following this as the work of the teachers is to assist their learners to learn then an academic or teacher requires to have the ability to distinguish the emotional dimension of learning and work with it, thus they must use their emotional intelligence. Furthermore, the researcher states that emotional intelligence constitutes the “unrecognized third component of what a teacher possess and also delivers to his/her learners indirectly” (Joshith, 2012, p55).

2.4 Employee Engagement

The concept of Employee engagement has gained great attention from researchers and it became one of the major concepts that concerns all organizations who wish to succeed. Thayer (2008, p. 74) support this highlighting that employee engagements is a fast-growing field and has it has rapidly gained popularity, use, and significance in the context of workplace and through acknowledging and distinguishing the factors that are able to increase employee engagement, employers can successfully accomplish to develop strategic adjustments within their organizations in order to establish a positive psychological atmosphere for employees. Thayer (2008) additionally hypothesized that employees can become engaged and demonstrate organizational citizenship behaviors when they feel that their organization provides them a safe and meaningful psychological climate. According Sun and Bunchapattanasakda (2019) employee engagement initiates with the individuals personal work experience and it constitutes an individual choice that cannot be enforced. They support that employee engagement is an individual level concept as it concerns employees and not organizations. It is a concept that can be experience emotionally, cognitively and presented through behavior. Ingredients of employee engagement such as dedication, involvement and moreover other cognitive and emotional ingredients mirror position the attitude of the employees. On the other hand, ingredients such as vigor and absorption position the employee’s physical importation and are presented via employee behavior. Schaufeli et al (2002) determined engagement as “a state of mind positively characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorptions”. Moreover, based on Shaw (2005) several of times engagement it is defined in regards to organizational commitment and behavior such as emotional and intellectual engagement to the organization. Kahn (1990, p 694) determines employee engagement as “the harnessing of organization members’ selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances”. Therefore, based on Kahn (1990), engagement signifies to be both psychologically and physically present when holding and executing a role in the organization. On the other hand, Truss et al (2006) support that employee engagement can be defined simply as ‘passion for work’. Maslach (2011) makes the discrimination among “work engagement” and “employee engagement”. While Macey et al (2009) take a wider prospect viewing engagement as a general umbrella term consisting trait engagement, labor involvement and organizational citizenship. Robertson et al (2012) hypothesize that different practitioners employ a diversity items and scales in order to measure what they call as engagement.

Engagement is the situation of individual attendance in a psychological shape comprising two vital ingredient such as attention and absorption. Attention involve the availability of cognitive and quantity of time that an employee spends when proceeding his/her obligations while absorption involves the way that the employee feels regarding being engaged with obligation in order he/she has a comprehensive focus on the work (Hilmiana, Ode and Muizu, 2017). Schaufeli et al. (2002) support that the aspect of engagement includes vigor, dedication and absorption. The researcher explains vigor as the aspect reflecting to the readiness of an individual to concentrate his/her efforts in work, to stay energetic at all times and especially be able to face difficulties. Moreover, it reflects to an individual’s persistence in dealing with adversity and willingness to work earnestly. Dedication is described by emotions of inspiration, meaningfulness and pridefulness. Finally, absorption is described the individual who is fully immersed in the work, he/she is concentrated and feels that time pass fast with a difficulty to break away from his/her work. As Schaufeli & Bakker (2004) defined work engagement as monadic, fulfilling, work related state of mind that is described by vigor, dedication, and absorption, this research will attempt to measure the work engagement level of the academic staff of the leading University taking this view in consideration for the theoretical framework of this study.

2.5 Significance of employee engagement in Higher education

Kular *et al* (2008, p1) support that research in UK and other countries has shown that the number of employees that are disengaged is higher than the employees that are engaged in today’s organizations. A report by the Harvard business review analytic report (2013) found that even that leaders realize the significance of engagement only three-quarters of those that have been surveyed state that most of their employees are highly engaged in their organization. Sun and Bunchapattanasakda (2019) support that the focus of many researchers on the influencing factors of employ engagement such as organizational, individual and job show that employee engagement is a widely concerned matter

among the practitioners of the academia and business. Nevertheless, the confluence of employee engagement to the performance of an organization reveals the vital role of engaged employees to the overall success of an enterprise. Rumbles and Rees (2013) additionally state that even that various organizations realize that employee engagement is critical to their HR or individual strategy few of those organizations have an efficient strategy. According to *Employee Engagement in the Higher Education Sector: An Evidence Review*, (n, d), higher education sector employee engagement constitutes a complex issue. Higher education institutions today face the challenge to bring together the interests of varied group of stakeholders and interest groups and further are called to reach the expectations of employees, students and employers while in the meantime have to face the international competition. Globalization has exposed HEIs in new challenges which they must react and overcome with success in order to maintain their competitive advantage. In addition, HEIs have to deliver various complex range of services internally and externally. Thus, HEIs need to find ways in order to keep their employees engaged with their organization. According Levinson (2007) cited in *Employee Engagement in the Higher Education Sector: An Evidence Review*, (n, d), Engaged employees are more likely to stay with the organization and can have an important impact on the performance of the organization and increase the profits of the organization through higher productivity, increased sales and client loyalty. Nevertheless, Janetius, Padmanabhan and Mini (2016, p311) support that the concept of employee engagement in HEIs differs from the corporate domain. Despite the fact that in the corporate domain the research reveals that employee's commitment to the organization is a critical factor in determining employee engagement, in the educational sector, commitment to the job and student prosperity constitutes a priority.

2.6 Relationship of Emotional Intelligence and Employee engagement

Hilmiana, Ode and Muizu, (2017) research outcomes reveal that emotional intelligence has been confirmed to critically influence employee engagement and therefore this indicates the existence of a recursive relationship among emotional intelligence variables and employee engagement. Recent studies reveal the strong relationship and impact of emotional intelligence on the engagement level of the employees. According Putter, (2014) Emotional Intelligence is a topic that has been researched extensively but a few researches involved academic staff in higher education. Mwangi (2014) research focused in four public universities in Kenya and the research revealed that particularly organisational awareness was the most important emotional intelligence competence that was associated to all the drivers of engagement. Mwangi (2014) supports that emotional intelligence helps in the way that leaders and subordinates meet the daily challenges as the emotions lead to either better or worst performance and further highlights that it is vital not just identify the value of Emotional Intelligence but additionally to promote the amelioration of these skills within the Universities. Shukla, Mohsin and Singh (2013) concentrated their research on the impact of emotional intelligence on employee engagement in a printing press company in National Capital Region in India. Their study revealed a significant and positive correlation between emotional intelligence and employ engagement and a positive but not important relationship between other dimensions of emotional intelligence and employee engagement with an exception of the wellbeing. Moreover Yuvaraj (2018), study was conducted in various business in India and revealed that there is a strong relationship between emotional intelligent and employee engagement and further reveled that factors of emotional intelligence such as self-awareness, social awareness and relationship management influences the employ engagement. Moreover Bennett (2011) investigates that emotionally intelligent managers have an important impact with the subordinates' organizational commitment. Qureshi, Ali, Raza, & Whitty (2015), conducted an Empirical Study in the Sports Industry of Sialkot, Pakistan with aim to find out the impact of leader's emotional intelligence on employee engagement. Their study revealed that leaders are practicing behaviors connected to emotionality more often than self-control or sociability.

Karamustafa and Kunday (2018) also researched the relationship between emotional intelligence and employee engagement and they support that management who concentrates on developing and retaining emotional intelligence competencies can better face the challenges of the workplace more effectively. Their research revealed a positive relationship between emotionally intelligent frontline management and the degree of employee commitment among their direct reports. The research was conducted in the health sector in a private, not-for-profit tertiary care hospital in New York. Karamustafa and Kunday (2018) support that further research is needed in order to comprehend better the relationship between emotional intelligence of frontline managers and supervisors and the degree of employ engagement. Moreover, they recommend expanding the research in other locations and across different geographic areas so as to offer better insights in the potential strengths of this relationship. Another study of Waldron (2017) examines the possible correlation between leader emotional intelligence and employee engagement in a digital media company and their findings revealed that employees do comprehend the impact of leader emotional intelligence in the workplace and they believe that it is crucial for their leaders to have emotional intelligence. Shafiq and Rana, (2016) conducted a research where they examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and organization commitment of college teachers in Pakistan and the outcomes revealed a significant relationship.

Moreover, the College academic staff who found to have high levels of emotional intelligence showed higher degrees of affective and normative commitment to their organization.

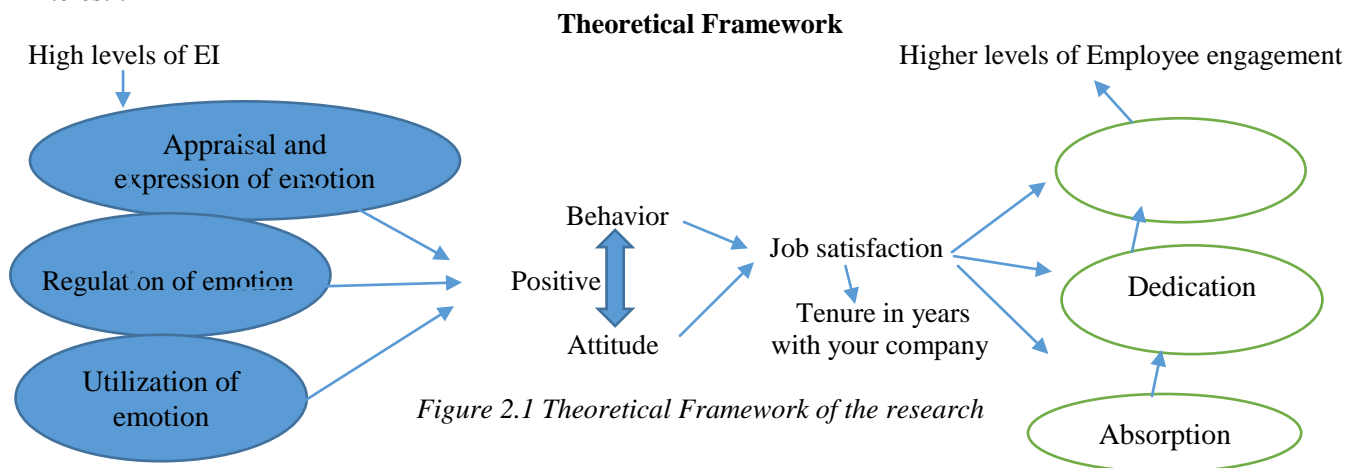
2.7 Theoretical framework of the study

The theoretical framework of this study is based on the emotional intelligence ability model. Mortiboys (2012) suggested that ‘emotional intelligence is the unrecognized third component of what a teacher should be able to offer to learners. ‘Academics that are able to identify, understand their emotions and others while additionally have emotional facilitation of thought and can manage their emotions could present care, develop an emotional climate that increases the learning context, could be more effective achieving their goals and offer to their learners great results (Cotezee & Jensen, 2007). Thus, academics with high emotional intelligence may prove to become more engaged to their work just because they will have more positive feelings and will be more satisfied with their job. Kafetsios and Zampetakis (2008) agrees that there are many reasons why employees with high levels of emotional intelligence may present also higher levels of job satisfaction. One reason is because a person who understand their own moods and is able to use them efficiently would also be expected to have the skills and means needed to fix negative moods, control emotions, endure the stress in the workplace and increase job satisfaction. Moreover, another reason that the author highlights is the fact that someone could expect that persons who successfully understand and regulate the emotions of other people would benefit from interpersonal relationships and sociable networks and to rise the predominance of positive mood in the work environment.

Thus, consistent with this thought an employee that is embedded with high levels of emotional intelligence will probably report more positive attitudes and additionally more positive behavior in the work context than an employee with low levels of emotional intelligence and therefore report higher levels of work engagement. Scaufelli et al (2000) defined work engagement as ‘a positive, fulfilling, work related state of mind characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption’. Thus, the framework of this research supports that individuals that report high levels of emotional intelligence (appraisal and expression of emotion, regulation of emotion and utilization of emotion) may present higher level of work engagement (vigor, dedication and absorption). In between the relationship of emotional intelligence and employee engagement there is a sequence of positive emotions that lead to positive work behavior and work attitude and then the feeling of job satisfaction. Natalio Extremera *et al.* (2018) highlights that recent meta-analysis concluded that positive and negative affect in the work environment mediate the link between Emotional intelligence and job satisfaction, reporting the positive affect as the stronger mediator. Moreover Vorina, Simonič & Vlasova (2017) reveal in their research that the relationship among employee engagement and job satisfaction is positive and statistically significant.

Thus, employees with high levels of emotional intelligence will evolve to ‘positive behavior and attitude, job satisfaction’ that will finally drive them to vigor, dedication and absorption and therefore employee engagement.

As it can be seen to the outline that follows below the independent variable of this research will be emotional intelligence and the depended variable will be employee engagement. Additionally, in between the two variables there are intervening variables such as positive work attitude and behavior and job satisfaction. Moreover, Job satisfaction has the intervening variable of the tenure in years with participants Company. Flannelly et al (2014) highlights that Tolman in 1983 has used the word intervening variable referring to ‘a variable or set of variables in a chain of causation in which the intervening variable is the causal link between the independent and dependent variable of interest’.



Theoretical orientation and Hypothesis of the research

This research investigates the possible relationship between emotional intelligence and employee engagement of the academic staff of a private leading University in Cyprus. The theoretical orientation of this study takes in consideration the Mayer, Salovey and Caruso's Emotional intelligence ability model and its four dimensions which are perceiving emotions, utilizing emotions, understanding emotions and managing emotions. The framework of this research supports that individuals that report high levels of emotional intelligence (appraisal and expression of emotion, regulation of emotion and utilization of emotion) may present higher level of work engagement (vigor, dedication and absorption). Considering work engagement as stated by Scauffelli et al (2000) 'a positive, fulfilling, work related state of mind characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption', the independent variable of this research will be emotional intelligence and the depended variable will be employee engagement with additionally intervening variables as explained in the theoretical framework of the previous Chapter. Therefore, the hypothesis that this research investigates are:

H1 There is a correlation between emotional intelligence and employee engagement of the academic staff of the University under study.

H0 There is no correlation between emotional intelligence and employee engagement of the academic staff of the University under study.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The research design of the research was conducted through the epistemological approach of positivist and quantitative research data were used. A survey-based questionnaire was used in order to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and employee engagement of the Academic staff of the leading private University in Cyprus. The idea behind the selection of just one single educational institution for the research was to minimise the impact of other variables such as working conditions, culture etc. In designing the survey important tools were included which are analytically explained and discussed to the sections that follow.

3.2 Objectives of the Research

The research **objectives** are to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and employee engagement in higher education environment and shedding the light on the critical role of emotional intelligence in Higher education environment as a mean that contributes in increasing the levels of employee engagement and therefore a critical component for successful organisation effectiveness. Moreover, another objective of the research is to alert organisation to pay the sufficient attention on the concept of emotional intelligence in order to take measures that will include this vital concept. Academic staff with high levels of emotional intelligence will be more engaged to their work, perform better and offer their students better outcomes. According Karamustafa & Kunday (2018) individuals who understand their own and others emotions have an influence on the efficacy of the process of the organisation through building a team spirit, awareness of goals, collaborative work, participative work and values.

3.3 Quantitative Research

Research according Kothari (2004) is "a scientific and systematic search for pertinent information on a specific topic". Quantitative Research based on Bhawna and Gobind (2015) is the 'systematic empirical investigation of observable phenomena via statistical, mathematical or computational techniques. The main goal of quantitative research is to evolve and use mathematical models, hypotheses or theories relating to phenomena. Thus, this research was a quantitative research and the data collected for this study were analysed through the use of inferential and descriptive statistics in order to test the hypotheses for the possible correlation between emotional intelligence and employee engagement. Spearman's rank correlation coefficient was used to test the hypotheses of this research.

Sample selection

For the selection of the sample a non-probability sampling technique was used namely the purposive sampling method. Based on this method the participants were chosen according their experience, knowledge, relationships and professionalism in regards to the research study (freedman et al, 2007). In this study the participants were chosen as they had the sufficient and related work experience in the higher education domain. All the participants were part-time or full-time academic staff of the private University under study and the survey was distributed to all the academic staff of the University. Therefore, they were selected as they could highly contribute to investigate the hypothesis of this study.

The Questionnaire Design

The design of the questionnaire included three parts and it was designed in order to facilitate the investigation of the relationship between emotional intelligence and employee engagement of the academic staff of the private University in Cyprus. In the **first part** of the survey namely ‘part A’, the participants had to answer four demographic questions regarding their age, gender, their tenure in years within their company and to report if they are part-time or full-time employees. Moreover, the **second part** of the survey namely ‘part B’ comprised 33 questions aiming to measure the participants level of emotional intelligence and the questions were related to the three aspects of Emotional Intelligence such as appraisal and expression of emotion, regulation of emotion and utilization of emotion. The participants had to use a 5-point scale in order to answer and they had to circle ‘1’ if they strongly disagree, ‘2’ if they disagree, ‘3’ if they neither agree nor disagree, ‘4’ if they agree and finally ‘5’ if they strongly agree. The **third part** of the survey namely ‘part C’ included 17 statements regarding the way the participant felt at work using a scale from 0-6.

If the participant had never felt this way they had to cross ‘0’ zero in the space after the statement and if they had this feeling, the participants should cross the best number suitable for them (from 1 to 6) according how frequently they felt that way. In order to determine the level of work engagement, the scales included vigor, dedication and absorption.

Instruments Used

In order to measure the participant’s level of emotional intelligence, the English version of Schutte Self Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT) developed by Schutte et al. (1998) was used in the survey. Additionally, the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) developed by Schaufeli and Bakker (2003) was included in the questionnaire for measuring the work engagement of the participants.

Data Collection Methods

The rationale of choosing collecting data through a survey was generated as this study is a positivist study and surveys is a methodology that it is associated with positivism. According the purpose of the study, surveys can be divided in two categories such as descriptive survey and analytical survey. The analytical survey was conducted for this study as the purpose was to determine the relationship between two variables such as emotional intelligence and employ engagement (Collis and Hussey, 2013). According Collis and Hussey (2013) an analytical survey is more ideal when the purpose is to determine if there is a relationship among pairs of variables or multiple variables while descriptive survey is more preferable to be used when the goal is to offer an ‘accurate representation of phenomena at one point in time or at various times’ such as (consumer survey, attitude survey etc.). The survey was distributed to all the academic staff of the private University in Cyprus. The overall number of the academic staff of the University including both part-time and full- time employees was 303. Thus, the survey was distributed to all 303-academic staff, collecting ordinal data. Moreover, the questionnaires were distributed by hand to all the academic staff of the University. The employees received an email from the institution in order to notify them beforehand for the distribution of the survey. This was an initiative of the university and a part of the University policy procedure.

Data Analysis

The data collected for this study were analysed through the use of inferential statistics in order to test the hypotheses for the possible correlation between emotional intelligence and employee engagement. Spearman’s rank correlation coefficient was used to test the hypotheses of this research.

Hypotheses	Statistical Test(s)	Reason
H1: There is a correlation between emotional intelligence and employee engagement of the academic staff of the University under study.	Spearman’s rank correlation coefficient	Assesses the strengths of the linear association between two variables
H0: There is no correlation between emotional intelligence and employee engagement of the academic staff of the University under study.	Spearman’s rank correlation coefficient	Assesses the strengths of the linear association between two variables

Table 3.1 Hypotheses, Statistical Test(s), Reason

Pilot Study

Collis & Hussey (2013) highlights that piloting the questionnaire can be prove to be very beneficial as it can spot many mistakes such as inappropriate question, clear instruction etc. Thus, the questionnaires were given to 5 responders in order to make sure that it was easy to answer the questionnaire and that it was understandable. The feedback was significant as some additions were made particularly in the front page concerning the (PIS). Additionally, with the pilot study I had also feedback in regards the time needed for completing the questionnaire. The five responders agreed that the questionnaire was easy to answer and it had clear instructions of what they had to do.

3.4 Validity and Reliability of the Research

According Carmines and Zeller (1979) ‘Reliability concerns the extent to which a measurement of a phenomenon provides stable and consist result’ while validity based on Ghauri and Gronhaug (2010), ‘explains how well the collected data covers the actual area of investigation’. The survey included two instruments, the Schutee Self Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT) and Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES). The selection sample was taken from all the academic staff of the University under study. The Schutee Self Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT) relates to the three aspects of EI such as the appraisal and expression of emotion, regulation of emotion and utilization of emotion and comprise 33 items defined by Salovey and Mayer (1990). According Schutte, *et al.* (1998) an internal consistency analysis reveals a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.90 for the 33-item scale. Additionally, the Utrecht **Work Engagement Scale (UWES)** developed by Schaufeli and Bakker (2003) was included in the questionnaire for measuring the work engagement of the participants. According Schaufeli and Bakker (2003) Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) constitutes a valid and reliable indicator for work engagement and is a popular scale to measure employee engagement. The internal consistency of Utrecht work Engagement scale is .80 thus is a valid and reliable scale so it is ideal to be used for research purposes. UWES uses three different scales in order to determine the level of work engagement and those scales include vigor, dedication and absorption. Nevertheless, a reliability test was employed with the assistance of SPSS for both tools used in the survey in order to check the reliability. The first test below shows a Cronbach's Alpha for the 15 items of 0.921 and the second test reveals a Cronbach’s Alpha for the 33 items used of 0.861 thus it confirms the validity of the tests used as well as the reliability.

1)

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.921	15

2)

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.861	33

3.3.4 Ethics and Confidentiality

Based on Bell and Bryman (2007, p71) there is a list of principles that must be considered when conducting any research and it is significant that all researchers keep these principles in mind if pursuing to achieve a successful research. Thus, in this research the following ethical principles were carefully considered and followed. It was significant that the research would not harm in any way the participants during the research process while additionally it was important to respect the dignity of research participants, researcher or others. Moreover, it was extremely important that the participants were fully informed regarding the consent of the research while privacy and confidentiality were very critical. Deception, anonymity, affiliation, honesty and transparency accompanied this research in order to be a successful research. Furthermore, reciprocity and misrepresentation were issues that this research took very seriously in consideration. Several measures were taken in order to protect the participants and the institution under study including, an approval from National Bioethics Committee of Cyprus, a consent letter from the institution under study, an informative email sent by the institution informing the academic staff of the University for the distribution of the survey, a participant information sheet was included in the front page of the survey comprising important information regarding the research purpose and why they were chosen . While additionally the participants had to tick in a box if they agreed to take part in completing the questionnaire.

4. Analysis

4.1 Survey results

The survey was distributed to 303 full time and part time academic staff of the private University in Cyprus. Nevertheless, the questionnaires were completed and returned by 83 academic staff males and females and where both full time and part time academic staff between the ages of 20 years old to 66 and over.

4.2 Demographic results of the survey

The Part A of the survey consisted four demographic questions and the participants were asked to answer questions regarding their age, gender, their tenure in years within their company and to report if they are part-time or full-time employees. The following demographic information is illustrated in the tables that follow and additionally discussed. Table 4.1 illustrates the results of the different age groups categories of the participants taking part in the survey and the ten different age group categories that were included, initiating from the age of 20 to the age of 60+. The highest percentage of the participants 24 (28,92%) were in the age group of 41-45 while the age groups of the participants which collected the lower scores were the age group of 20-25 with 1 (1.2%) and the age group of 66+ with 1 (1.2%).

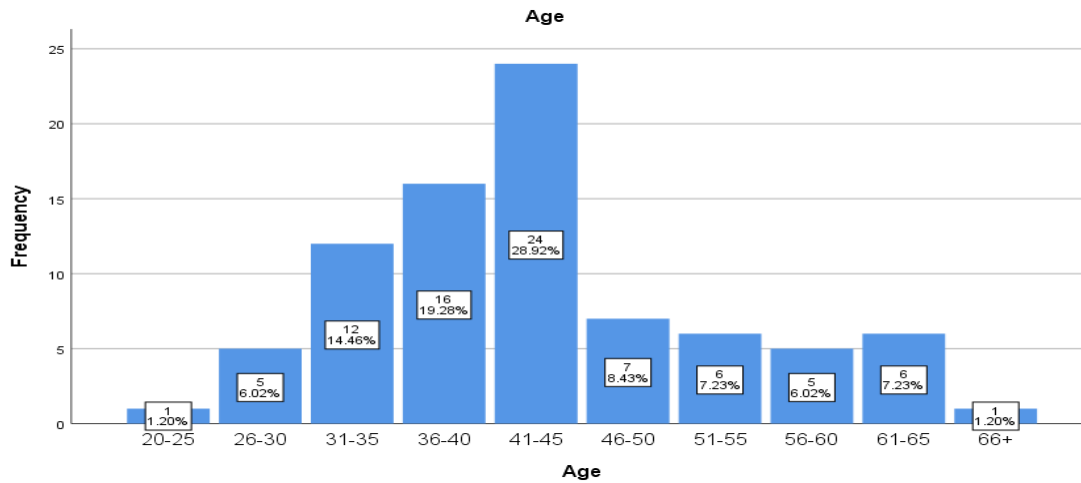


Table 4.1 Demographic information of participant’s age groups

The participants of the survey had to answer a second demographic question regarding their gender and the results are shown in the table 4.2 that follows. Fifty-four (65.06%) of the participants taking part in the survey were females and twenty-nine (34.94%) of the participants were males.

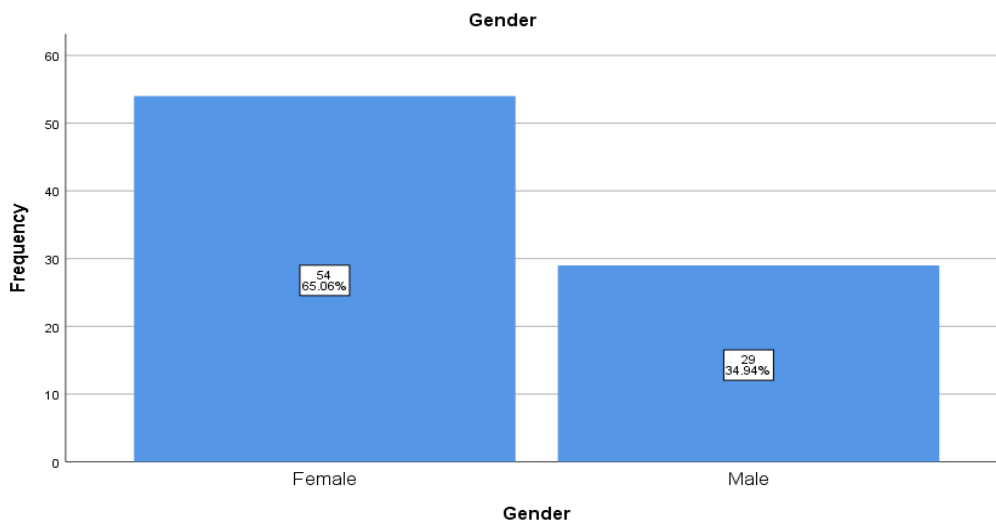


Table 4.2 Demographic information of participants gender

The third demographic question was asking the participants to state whether they are full time or part time academic staff in the private university under study. The results are illustrated in the table 4.3 that follows. Fifty-three (63.86%) of the participants stated that they are full time academic staff while the rest thirty (36.14) participants stated that they are part time academic staff.

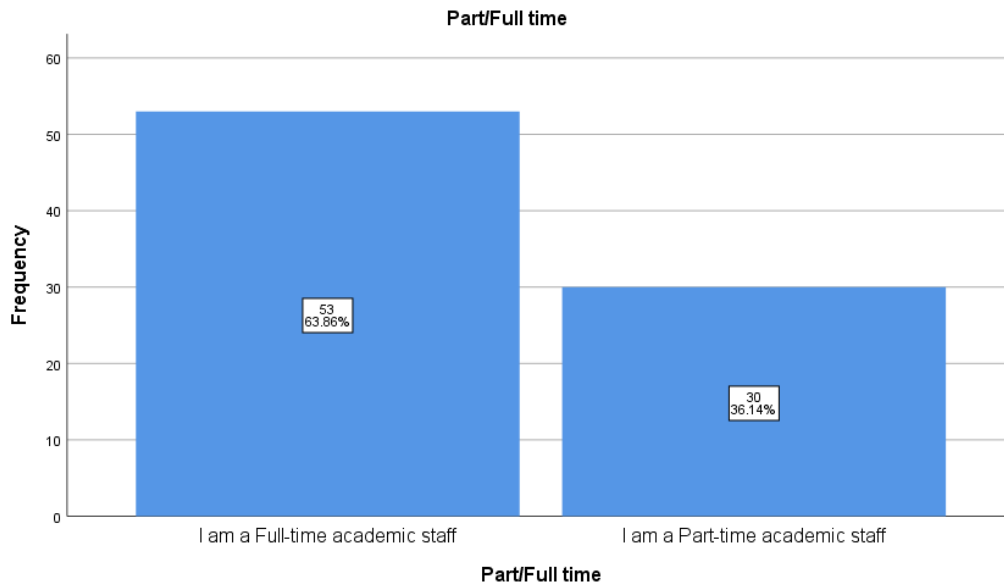


Table 4.3 Demographic information of participants being full-time or part-time academic staff.

The last demographic question of the survey included a statement from the participants regarding their tenure in years with the private leading University under study. Table 4.4 that follows illustrates the results of this demographic information of the participants that took part in the survey. The results show that 43 (51.81%) of the participants work within the private leading University from 0 to 5 years, 15 (18.07%) of the participants work from 11 to 15 years, 11 (13.25%) of the participants work from 6 to 10 years, 6 (7.23%) of the participants work from 16 to 20 years, 4 (4.82%) of the participants work from 31 years and over, 2 (2.41%) of the participants work from 21-25 and finally 2 (2.41%) of the participants work from 26-30.

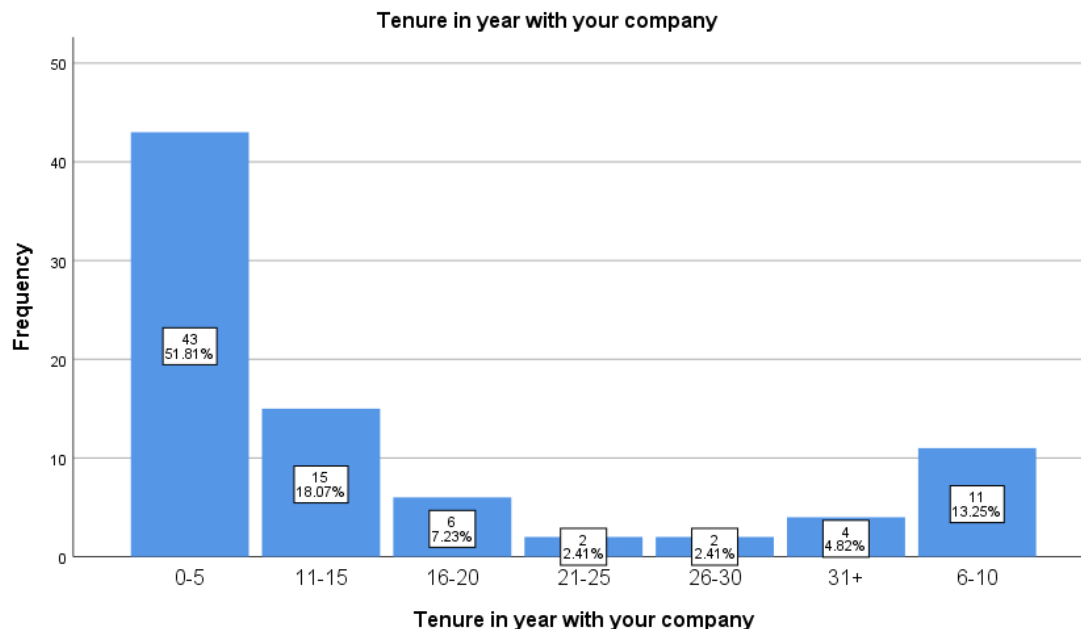


Table 4.4 Demographic information of participant's tenure in years with their company.

4.3 Summary results of the participants Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT)

The Part B of the questionnaire consisted 33 questions aiming to measure the participant's level of emotional intelligence and the questions were related to the three aspects of Emotional Intelligence such as appraisal and expression of emotion, regulation of emotion and utilization of emotion. The participants had to use a 5-point

Correlations

		Appraisal	Absorption	
Spearman's rho	Appraisal	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	
		N	83	
	Absorption	Correlation Coefficient	.290**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.008	.
		N	83	83

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

Table 4.13 Spearman's correlation coefficient value of 'Appraisal of emotion' and 'Absorption'

Correlations

		Utilization	Vigor	
Spearman's rho	Utilization	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	
		N	83	
	Vigor	Correlation Coefficient	.221*	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.045	.
		N	83	83

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

Table 4.14 Spearman's correlation coefficient value of 'Utilization of emotion' and 'Vigor'

4.9 Summary results of Spearman's correlation coefficient of total mean score of emotional intelligence in compare to the three subscales of employee engagement.

In the following tables 4.15, 4.16 and 4.17 the Spearman's correlation coefficient among total mean score of emotional intelligence and the subscales of employee engagement 'vigor', 'absorption' and 'dedication' was investigated. The results illustrate that in all three cases the relationship is positive. The table 4.12 shows a correlation coefficient value of 0.302 ($r = 0.302$) and the significance level is 0.001 ($p = 0.001$) that reveals a low but positive correlation between total mean score of emotional intelligence and the subscale of employee engagement 'Vigor'. Moreover the table 4.13 illustrates a correlation coefficient value of 0.326 ($r = 0.326$) and the significance level is 0.001 ($p = 0.001$) that reveals a low but positive correlation between total mean score of emotional intelligence and the subscale of employee engagement 'dedication', while in the next table 4.14 the correlation between total mean score of emotional intelligence and the subscale of employee engagement 'absorption' has a medium positive correlation as the coefficient value of 0.400 ($r = 0.400$) and the significance level is 0.001 ($p = 0.001$). Thus, among the three correlations show in tables 4.12, 4.13, 4.14 absorption is the one that concentrated the higher correlation.

Correlations

			mean score Emotional intelligence	Vigor
Spearman's rho	mean score Emotional intelligence	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.302**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.006
		N	83	83
	Vigor	Correlation Coefficient	.302**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.006	.
		N	83	83

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

Table 4.15 Spearman's correlation coefficient value of the total mean score of emotional intelligence and the subscale of employee engagement Vigor

Correlations

			mean score Emotional intelligence	Dedication
Spearman's rho	mean score Emotional intelligence	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.326**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.003
		N	83	83
	Dedication	Correlation Coefficient	.326**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	.
		N	83	83

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

Table 4.16 Spearman's correlation coefficient value of the total mean score of emotional intelligence and the subscale of employee engagement 'Dedication'

Correlations

			mean score Emotional intelligence	Absorption
Spearman's rho	mean score Emotional intelligence	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.400**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	83	83
	Absorption	Correlation Coefficient	.400**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	83	83

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

Table 4.17 Spearman's correlation coefficient value of the total mean score of emotional intelligence and the subscale of employee engagement 'Absorption'

4.10 Discussion of the research findings

In this research 83 academic staff of the leading University under study took part in the survey. The participants were male and females, 29 and 54 respectively showing that the larger number of participants that took part in the survey were females. According Brackett, Warner, and Bosco (2005) women in previous research and according their research females tend to score higher in emotional intelligence tests. The ages of the participants were between the ages of 20 and 60+, and the highest percentage of the participants 24 (28,92%) were in the age group of 41-45 while the age groups of the participants which collected the lower scores were the age group of 20-25 with 1 (1.2%) and the age group of 66+ with 1 (1.2%). The participants in this research were 53 full time academic staff while 30 participants stated as part time academic staff. From the demographic results concerning the participants tenure in years within the

University under study, we can conclude that the larger number of participants 43, work as academic staff in the leading University between, 0 to 5 years something that may indicate a low bond with their company in compare to the participants that work within the University from more years. From the descriptive statistics of the summary results of the participants Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT)we can view that the statement which collected the higher mean score was the statement 'I compliment others when they have done something well' with the mean score '4.51' which relates to the 'Regulation of emotion' while additionally from the descriptive of the summary results of the participants Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT)we can view that the statement which collected the higher mean score was the statement 'I compliment others when they have done something well' with the mean score '4.51' which relates to the 'Regulation of emotion' while additionally from the descriptive statistics of the summary results of the participants for Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) the statement with the higher mean score was the statement 'I am proud of the work that I do' with the mean score '5.37' which is a statement according to the tool used that represents 'dedication'. Thus 'regulation of emotion' and 'dedication' was examined through the spearman's correlation coefficient and the results showed a positive correlation with a correlation coefficient value of 0.323 (see table 4.11).

4.11 Discussion on the research findings of the Hypothesis (Ho)

The null hypothesis of this research, (Ho) there is no correlation between emotional intelligence and employee engagement of the academic staff of the University under study was examined. From the summary of the scatterplot results (see table 4.7) of total mean score of each participant for both Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test and Utrecht Work Engagement Scale, the first indication showed a positive correlation between the two variables indicating that an increase of the emotional intelligence may be associated with an increase of employee engagement meaning that higher the emotional intelligence the higher the work engagement. As the results of the scatterplot showed a positive correlation then there was a first sign that the null hypothesis may be rejected. Moreover, in order to investigate more the null hypothesis and the relationship between the independent variable, emotional intelligence and the depended variable, employee engagement, the spearman's correlation coefficient of one of the subscale group of emotional intelligence namely 'Regulation of emotions' of emotional intelligence was tested with three subscales of employee engagement namely 'vigor', 'dedication' and 'absorption' (see table 4.9). As the results showed a positive correlation coefficient value in all three subscales of employee engagement then they were strong evidence to reject the null hypothesis (Ho) there is no correlation between emotional intelligence and employee engagement of the academic staff of the University under study.

4.12 Discussion on the research findings of Hypothesis 1 (H1)

As the null hypothesis of the research was rejected then there was a strong evidence that hypothesis 1 of this research, (H1) there is a correlation between emotional intelligence and employee engagement of the academic staff of the University under study was supported. The hypothesis 1 of this research was supported in all evidence of the analysis. Firstly, as discussed above the scatterplot showed the first sigh of a positive correlation indicating that an increase of the emotional intelligence may be associated with an increase of employee engagement thus it could be said that the higher levels of emotional intelligence of an academic staff indicates higher levels of work engagement. Moreover the summary results of Spearman's rank correlation coefficient analysis among the total mean score of self- report emotional intelligence test and total mean score of Utrecht Work Engagement Scale of the responders (see table 4.8) revealed a correlation coefficient value of 0.366, which is a low but positive correlation between the total mean scores of emotional intelligence and total mean score of employee engagement thus (H1) was supported and Thus, null hypothesis (H0) could be additionally rejected as this relationship appeared to be significant ($p < 0.01$). In addition from the Summary results of Spearman's correlation coefficient among the subscales of emotional intelligence and subscales of employee engagement the results show in all the cases (see Table 4.10 , 4.11, 4.12, 4.13, 4.14) that all the subscales examined such as (expression of emotion with dedication, regulation with dedication, regulation of emotion with absorption, appraisal of emotion with absorption, utilization of emotion with vigor) all showed a low but positive correlation except the subscales of 'regulation of emotion' with 'absorption' that revealed a higher correlation (0.442) which indicates a medium positive correlation. Furthermore, the Summary results of Spearman's correlation coefficient of total mean score of employee engagement in compare to the three subscales of emotional intelligence such as vigor, dedication and absorption was also employed and compared (see tables 4.15, 4.16, 4.17) The results illustrate that in all three cases the relationship is positive with the subscale 'absorption' to be again the one that concentrated the higher correlation with a correlation coefficient value at (0.400) which reflects to a medium positive correlation. Thus, the hypothesis (H1) of this research, that there is a correlation between emotional intelligence and employee engagement of the academic staff of the University under study is strongly supported.

5. Conclusions

The benefits of this study include understanding that emotional intelligence in educational sector constitutes a great avenue for the engagement of employees with the organisation and can provide an important advantage to the organisation. Further this study will alert organisations to give the sufficient attention to emotional intelligence and hopefully use it as a critical ingredient in their 'recipe' for employee engagement. Higher education Institutions could take actions that might include the evaluation of emotional ability in their recruitment procedures in order to ensure employee engagement, to offer trainings with the target to increase the level of emotional intelligence of the management and employees while additionally offer the opportunity to those employees with low levels of emotional intelligence through training to become more engaged with their work. As higher education institutions and colleges transfer knowledge the concept of emotional intelligence as a mean for employee engagement may be considered to be included in curriculums of different programs and fields of study. Human resource managers can additionally play an important role in encouraging the use of Emotional Intelligence through the development of fair systems such as the creation of detail and careful management development programs, the creation of fair compensations systems and planning jobs for high employee engagement (Mwangi, 2014).

Further research could be held from other researches that could extend the research in more than one higher education institutions in Cyprus and by taking sample from a larger number of academic staffs. Additionally, further research could conduct to investigate how absorption of the academic staff in higher education institutions may contribute to student's better performance. Educational sector is a sector that emotional intelligence has limited investigation in regards the relationship between emotional intelligence and employee engagement of academic staff thus in today's demanding educational industry, emotional intelligence urges to have the proper attention from all the higher educational institutions.

This research investigated the relationship between emotional intelligence and employee engagement of academic staff in a leading private University in Cyprus. The research highlights the vital role of emotional intelligence in Higher education context as a mean that contributes in employee engagement and therefore a critical component for organization success and effectiveness. The key findings of this study support the hypothesis 1 of the research that (H1) there is a correlation between emotional intelligence and employee engagement of the academic staff of the University under study and rejects the null hypothesis. The findings revealed a low but positive correlation between Emotional intelligence and Employee engagement with the subscale of employee engagement namely 'Absorption' to be the one to seem to be affected more from this relationship and the one that revealed a medium positive correlation. Thus, the null hypothesis of this research that (Ho) there is no correlation between emotional intelligence and employee engagement of the academic staff of the University under study, was rejected.

Shedding the light on the critical role of emotional intelligence in Higher education environment as a mean that contributes in employee engagement and therefore a critical component for successful organisation effectiveness was one of the objectives of this research. In today's demanding educational industry emotional intelligence needs to have the proper attention from higher educational institutions. Employees with high levels of emotional intelligence will be more engaged to their organisation and therefore perform better. According Karamustafa & Kunday (2018) individuals who understand their own and others emotions have an influence on the efficacy of the process of the organisation through building a team spirit, awareness of goals, collaborative work, participative work and values.

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