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EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN ZAKAT INSTITUTIONS IN MALAYSIA: A FIELD STUDY

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This study explored the emotional intelligence dimensions (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and social skills) of employees employed in Zakat Centers. Data were collected from 113 randomly selected from three zakat centers: Melaka, Negeri Sembilan and Selangor using self-administered questionnaires of Emotional Competence Inventory (ECI) (108 items) that measured emotional intelligence. Overall, the study revealed that the employees' emotional intelligence and its dimensions level: self-awareness, social-awareness and social skills are proficient, except for self-management, which was slightly low proficient.

Keywords: Zakat personnel, emotional intelligence, self-awareness, self management, social awareness, social skills

Introduction

The study of emotions has played a major role in organization studies. Researchers have described the benefits of possessing a high emotional intelligence (EQ). Such individuals are found to be healthier and more successful than their less emotionally intelligent peers (Cooper, 1997). Emotionally intelligent individuals are found to have strong personal relationships (Cooper, 1997), monitor and evaluate others' feelings (Salovey & Mayer, 1990), empathize with others (Kelley, 1998), and excel in interpersonal skills (Goleman, 1998). Bass (1990) outlines many of these same qualities as characteristic of effective leaders. Emotionally intelligent individuals stand out. Their ability to empathize, persevere, control impulses, communicate clearly, make thoughtful decisions, solve problems, and work with others earns them with friends and success. They tend to lead happier lives, with more satisfying relationships.

As Goleman (1998) reiterated that emotional intelligence-based competencies are learned abilities, so, it is hoped that EQ being a new measurement of success could result in developing the potential of individuals in a holistic and integrated manner and producing individuals who are not only intellectually but emotionally balanced in accomplishing their tasks as an employee especially in the process of making decision and to provide a unique contribution to the organization. The nature of emotional intelligence as discussed above is such that it is possible to enhance the overall level by planning and sustaining personal development.



Much of this development will result from reflecting on the individual's behaviors which tend to be exhibited in differing situations, consciously practicing different behaviors and actively seeking feedback on the way in which others interpret and respond to these behaviors. The appropriate way in which to use the overall feedback is to examine each of the emotional intelligence scales and identify: 1) those where individuals have strengths which may be developed and generalized; 2) those where they are specific opportunities for improvement. Goleman (1995) described EQ as "other characteristics" of intelligence, which include the following abilities: 1) to motivate oneself and persist in the face of frustration, 2) to control impulse and delay gratification, 3) to regulate one's moods and keep distress from swamping the ability to think, 4) to empathize, and 5) to hope. He added that EQ encompasses traits such as self-awareness, empathy, optimism, impulse control, and the ability to manage anger and anxiety. People who lack these traits are more likely to be unpopular and have difficulty in learning. EQ also has an impact on how people function in the workplace, where "people skills" may be as important as or more important than "work skills." Goleman points to a study of the top performers at Bell Laboratories, a science and engineering think tank in Napperville, Illinois.

What set the real achievers apart, was not IQ or academic genius, but good relationships with co-workers. This may reflect a difference in the workplace. In the past, many jobs were highly competitive and often done alone. The new workplace is highly dependent upon teamwork. In the Napperville Labs, successful people could gather support and advice. They could get a group to reach consensus, seemed to be persuasive, and were able to see from different perspectives. As Goleman notes, an office tyrant may be high on expertise but low on trust. This is a view that might be endorsed by Ekman and Davidson (1994), who attributes different qualities to intelligence and social skills. An integrated concept of EQ offers a theoretical structure for the organization of personality and linking it to a theory of action and job performance (Goleman, 1995). Goleman (1998) defined an EQ as a "learned capability based on EQ that result in outstanding performance at work". By integrating the work of Goleman (1995, 1998) and Boyatzis (1982), EQ is observed when a person demonstrates the competencies that constitute self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and social skills at appropriate times and ways in sufficient frequency to be effective in the situation. Therefore, EQ should predict behavioral patterns in the form of life and work outcomes (Boyatzis and Sala, 2004). The reason for understanding which behaviors and which intent is relevant in a situation appears from predicting effectiveness. Specific competency is constructed based on the different behaviors that are considered alternate characteristics of the same underlying construct. But, they are organized by the similarity of the consequence of the use of these behaviors in social and work settings. For example, if someone is demonstrating empathy (competency), he or she would be undertaking these acts with the intent of trying to understand another person. The workplace, as a social setting is one location in which people may learn about their behavior and emotions because human relationships play a vital part in helping an organization to achieve competitive advantage. One way to model EQ and its impact would be to use Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee's (2002) list of EQ competencies and to organize them into a matrix that helps us understand how they can have impacts at work



We can see from this matrix that EQ competencies are of two types, awareness and skills, and that they are of two levels (personal and social). This way of organizing the competencies helps us to understand that EQ helps us to be more competent at our own work as well as in our relationships with others, especially in working more productively with others and influencing others to work more productively with us. For example, greater levels of self-confidence lead to higher productivity (Bandura, 1977). People who are self-managing (Bandura, 1977) and conscientious (Barrick and Mount, 1991) tend to be more productive. In terms of social competence, a greater service orientation is good for working with customers (in and out of the organization; and greater organizational awareness should clearly help people work more effectively in their organization. Better social skills and skills in leadership, influence, communication, conflict management, teamwork, and collaboration are all touted as desirable skills, especially for managers (Jones *et al.*, 2000). Thus, we can see that the traits of someone with high emotional intelligence are conducive to higher productivity and can give an understanding of the components and mechanisms of EQ that can lead to higher productivity or greater success at work. EQ allows individuals to control and manage their own emotions as well as to correctly perceive and process the emotions of others. This ability is beneficial in the business setting because it allows for more effective and efficient communications between both individuals and teams which can result in improved work outcomes and relationship (Lexie and Bennett, 2009). The main purpose of establishment for zakat centers is to improve the management of zakat to the new professional system as used by the corporate sector. The main function of zakat centers is to manage the collection of zakat payments in the states on behalf of Majlis Agama Islam Negeri and to fulfill the right and responsibility to all asnaf in the state as ordered by Allah. It is also to improve the quality of life of all the asnaf in the states socially, economically, spiritually and also their level of education. Zakat centers have recently witnessed several innovations. This is due to the demand on Zakat staff to extend their efforts in reminding Muslims to carry out their responsibility in paying zakat the tithes.

Unlike tangible products, quality is ephemeral in the services environment. It can disappear in a moment during a negative interaction between customer and service provider. For this reason, the customer-service employee has been the object of considerable theory and research. Investigators have examined customer-service employee communication (Price *et al.*, 1995; Solomon *et al.*, 1985), the stress associated with service delivery (Singh, 1993; Varca, 1999), and the behavioral events underlying service experiences (Bitner *et al.*, 1990, 1994). In spite of this emerging picture, some areas remain unclear – a key one being the characteristics of service providers that ensure effective service encounters (as cited in Malhotra and Mukherjee, 2004). One of the few things personality psychologists agree on is that human beings construct a personal theory of reality based on life experiences as a means of coping with life (Epstein as cited in Malhotra and Mukherjee (2004). Epstein suggests that people incorrectly assume their behavior is driven by reason. In contrast, he believes that much of human behavior is directed automatically by an experiential system, determined in part by emotional variables. Although constructive thinking ability encompasses both constructive and destructive patterns, the constructive components of behavioral and emotional coping have received the most attention.



Individuals who exhibit good emotional coping ability have the capacity to cope with distressing events in a way that does not produce undue stress. These people do not take things personally and are not overly sensitive to disapproval or rejection. They avoid thinking in a manner that would produce negative emotions. Good emotional copers do not overreact to problems in the present, nor do they concern themselves with those of past or future misfortunes. They experience less stress in living than others (Epstein, as cited in Malhotra and Mukherjee (2004). The changes in zakat centers call for a new type of workers who are capable of dealing with new role expectations, interdependencies and interpersonal requirements of teamwork in order to meet the customers' satisfaction and organizational objectives. They have to be more dynamic in their workplaces by engaging in more tasks that are tailored to their organizations' mission. Hence, it can be argued that during the "moments of truth" of entertaining customer, it is the discretionary behavior of employees that will largely determine service quality perceptions and customer satisfaction on the external front (Boshoff and Tait, 1996). In addition, findings also indicate that emotionally intelligent employees tend to be more satisfied with their work. Retaining talented and knowledgeable employees becomes a major concern for many organizations. Selecting employees who have high emotional intelligence may have a positive impact on the extent to which an organization succeeds in retaining its most critical workforce.

There are many questions the business community will be facing with as more organization realized the potential opportunity to "cash in" on the emotion revolution. Indeed, choosing to ignore such an integral aspect of human behavior may prove costly in a number of ways. Goleman as cited in Rosete and Ciarrochi (2005) pointed out, "there is, inevitably, a cost to the bottom line from low level of emotional intelligence on the job. When it is rampant, company can crash and burn". Individuals who are unable to reason from their emotional experiences and translate this into effective behavioral responses may become a liability in terms of risky decision making, damaged working relationships, or poor performance. Public sector organizations such as Zakat Centers exist both to serve and to create changes in both society and individuals and, it has recently witnessed several innovations. This is due to the demand on zakat staff to extend their efforts in reminding the muslims to carry out their responsibility in paying the tithe. Zakat centers need employees who are really committed, innovative and can adapt themselves to a new situation. However, Zakat centers had received complaints from zakat payers and zakat recipients regarding the efficiency of the services provided by zakat staff. These include tactless in their interactions with customers, lack of understanding on their job responsibilities, lack of team support and lack of self-control. These are parts of EQ components and are important because it relates to the ability of a person to make use of his or her emotions by directing them toward constructive activities and personal performance (Goleman, 1998). A person who is highly capable in this dimension would be able to encourage him or herself to do better continuously. He or she would also be able to direct his or her emotions in positive and productive direction. There is a need for rigorous research to determine the level of EQ of zakat staff in Zakat Center. As Howard (2009) reiterated that EQ was found to make some unique contributions when used a prediction model for job satisfaction, organizational and occupational commitment among human service workers.



We need to know the extent to which employees with high EQ will be more valued assets than less emotionally intelligent employees to Zakat Center. It is important to note that although it is theoretically significant to show how each aspect of EQ affects job performance, it is more accurate to carry out this research to determine whether EQ leads to a high job performance of employees in Zakat Center. This study attempts to explore the emotional intelligence dimensions (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and social skills) of employees employed in Zakat Centers by examining the level of emotional intelligence of employees in zakat centers and determining the significant difference in emotional intelligence between each group of employees in zakat centers and demographic variables.

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to explore the emotional intelligence dimensions (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and social skills) among employees of Zakat Center in Selangor, Negeri Sembilan and Melaka. Questionnaires were used as a research instrument to collect data from the respondents identified for this study. The questionnaire consisted of 4 pages containing 2 main sections. Section A measured the demographic information of the respondents; section B consisted of a list of items to measure emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence referred to the capacity for recognizing zakat employee's feelings and those of others, motivating one-self, and for managing emotions well personal and social development of one's being. The indicator of emotional intelligence in this study was the Emotional Competence Inventory (ECI) developed by Boyatzis (1999). The assessment of EQ competencies began as a search for early identification of talent (McClelland, Baldwin, Bronfenbrenner, and Strodbeck cited in Boyatzis and Sala (2004). The ECI assessed how a person expressed his or her handling of emotions in life and work settings. The information of the emotional competencies were gathered using the ECI which was first developed by Boyatzis in 1991, and being revised again by Boyatzis (1994); Boyatzis, Cowen and Kolb (1995); Boyatzis et al. (1996); and Boyatzis, Stubbs and Taylor (2002) as cited in Boyatzis and Sala (2004).

A comprehensive questionnaire was used to ensure that all of the competencies in this theory could be measured within one instrument and it was called Self-assessment Questionnaire. It consisted of 108 items that measured emotional intelligence for use in the workplace. Each item in the questionnaire described a work-related behavior. Respondents used a 5-point Likert scale on which they were to indicate whether they "strongly agree", "somewhat agree", "neither agree nor disagree", "somewhat disagree" or "strongly disagree" to items with characteristic of themselves. The higher the score, the greater the tendency an individual possess to exhibit emotionally intelligent behavior. The research instruments were pilot tested on a group of 10 subjects from the Malacca PPZ. The data analysis showed that the reliability index Cronbach's alpha for PeopleIndex was .97. The sample for this study consists of employees from three zakat centers: Melaka, Negeri Sembilan and Selangor. Based on Gay and Arisian's (2000) table for determining sample size, for a given population of 158, a sample size of 113 zakat employees from the population was drawn using simple random technique.



Firstly, a letter of permission and a complete list of names of employees were obtained from three Zakat centers: Melaka, Negeri Sembilan and Selangor. Then, a distinct identification number to each and every entry in the list frame was assigned and starting with one for the first name to 158. Finally, the respondents were selected using the systematic random sampling technique where the first individual and every *n*th were selected. The selection process was repeated in the same manner until the desired sample size of *n*=113 were obtained. The researcher got the list of the employees of the three zakat centers from their managers in Selangor, Negeri Sembilan and Melaka. The questionnaires were distributed to 113 respondents where they were briefed about the questionnaires. The questionnaires were administered for about half an hour and were repeated the next day for those who were absent earlier.

Findings

This section consists of respondent's profile and emotional intelligence level of zakat centers personnel. The analysis begins with description on the level of emotional intelligence and its dimensions and the significant difference in emotional intelligence dimensions between each group.

Profile of Respondents

This section discusses the profile of the respondents such as gender, age, academic qualification, working experience and in-service training. Female respondents make up a higher proportion (64.3 percent) than male respondents (35.7 percent). The majority of zakat personnel are young, aged 21 - 30 years. Almost 35.3 percent are aged 21 – 25 years and 33.8 percent are aged 26 – 30 years. Senior personnel aged 36 – 40 years make up only 7.3 percent. Of the 70 respondents, 31 percent have diplomas, while only 19.2 percent have degrees. Nearly half (49.3 percent) of zakat personnel have secondary school qualification. The main qualification to be zakat personnel should be diploma holders or first degree holders. Almost 80.8 percent of zakat personnel have working experience less the 6 years. Therefore, most of them are relatively less experienced workers. In-service training is provided for employees in order to improve their job performance. On average (43.7 percent) zakat personnel have attended 3 to 4 times of in-service training a year. Meanwhile, 33.8 percent of them had attended in-service training once or twice a year.

Emotional Intelligence Level

The total score for emotional intelligence was obtained from the summation of responses based on all the 108 item statements used to measure its four dimensions: self awareness of others, self management, social awareness and social skills. A higher score indicates a higher level of emotional intelligence, and inversely, a lower score indicates a lower level of emotional intelligence. The total mean score for emotional intelligence was categorized into four levels: caution (low) (mean 1.00 – 2.00), vulnerable (moderate) (mean 2.01 – 3.00), proficient (good) (mean 3.01 – 4.00), and optimal (excellent) (mean 4.01 – 5.00).

Self Awareness. For self-awareness (mean score 3.74), most zakat personnel are proficient in managing their own emotions, know their causes and recognize the difference between feelings and actions. The items with highest score in self-awareness are acknowledgment of one's own strength and weakness (mean 3.99),



self-confidence (mean 4.08) and awareness of self-image and organizational reputation (mean 4.10). However, awareness of other people need to accomplish important goal (mean 3.10) and confronts unethical practice in others (mean 3.53) exhibited a moderate level. Although these items have slightly low mean score, their emotional intelligence is still within proficient range.

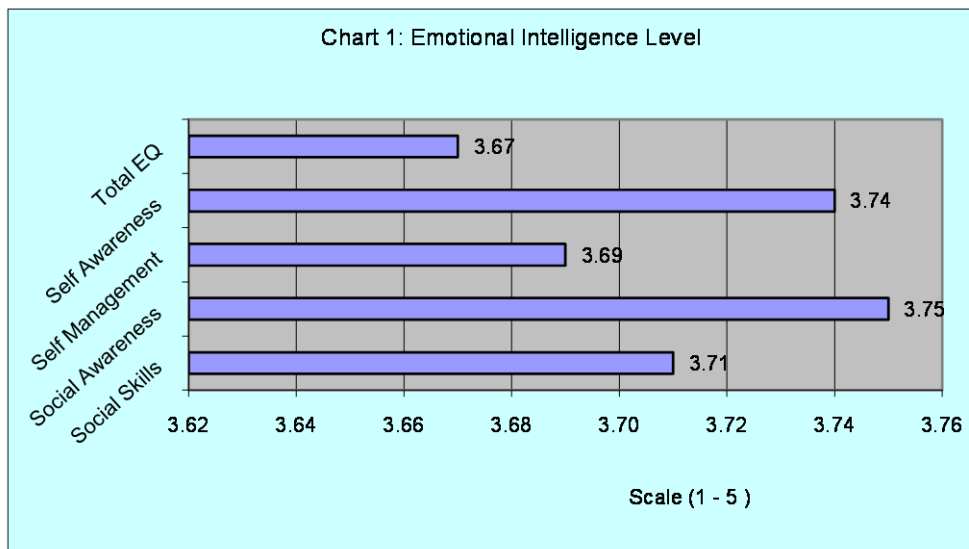
Self Management. The second dimension of emotional intelligence measurement is self-management. There are 29 items to this dimension. The mean of these items revealed that the overall respondents' level of EQ performance is proficient. Zakat personnel showed a high level of self-management in terms of positive expectations, or respect for others' work (mean 4.00), always keep promises (mean 4.04), good interpersonal networks (mean 4.14) and building trust (mean 4.15). Based on these items, it is indicated that zakat personnel have an excellent level of emotional intelligence. Although, the score is lower in negative items such expression of dissatisfaction (mean 2.29), unusual means of information retrieved (mean 3.28) and not defensive about one-self (mean 3.32), these items showed that zakat personnel have good self-management.

Social Awareness. Zakat personnel, have an excellent level of emotional intelligence in certain aspects of social awareness. Finds and acts upon present opportunities (mean 4.04), show attention to detail (mean 4.08), calm in stressful situation (mean 4.13), have initiative to learn and broaden their experience (mean 4.28) and seek opportunities to broaden their experience (mean 4.28) recorded the highest score out of 19 items measuring social awareness dimensions. However most zakat personnel are lack in complying to procedures and rules (mean 3.20), acts on their own values (mean 3.35) and take risks to reach goals (mean 3.37), but all these items are categorized within the proficient range.

Social Skills. The fourth dimension of emotional intelligence measurement is social-skills. There are 44 items to this dimension. A lower score was obtained in bringing disagreements and grievances into the open (mean 2.77), it showed that zakat personnel have moderate social-skills. However, respondents have proficient social-skills in flexibility of ideas or perception (mean 3.01), have relationship with influential persons and gain their help in convincing others (mean 3.28) and act as models for others (mean 3.37). In term of maintaining cooperation and relationship with colleagues and clients, most zakat personnel have higher mean compared to other items.

Overall Emotional Intelligence. Level of min score was taken from the sum of every dimension of the component of emotional intelligence. The overall emotional intelligence scale score obtained ranged from a low of 2.98 to a high of 4.46 on the possible 1 to 5 scale, with mean score of 3.67 and considered as proficient. For self-awareness, mean score 3.74, social awareness mean score 3.75 and social skills mean score 3.71, revealed that the zakat personnel achieved good or proficient level of performance. This is shown in Chart 1. All components in emotional intelligence are good or proficient, except self-management, which exhibited a slightly lower but still proficient.





Note: EQ scale based on mean classification, 1.00 – 2.00 = caution (low), 2.01 – 3.00 = vulnerable (moderate), 3.01 – 4.00 = proficient (good), 4.01 – 5.00 = optimal (excellent).

T-Tests

The t-test was a significant difference in the self-awareness { $t(111) = 2.896, p > .05$ }, social-awareness { $t(111) = 1.942, p > .05$ } and social skills level { $t(111) = 2.627, p > .05$ } between male and female of zakat personnel in zakat institution. The mean score indicates that the self-awareness level of male zakat personnel ($M = 3.82, SD = .33$) and female zakat personnel ($M = 3.60, SD = .36$). The mean score indicates that the social-awareness level of male zakat personnel ($M = 3.82, SD = .42$) and female zakat personnel ($M = 3.63, SD = .39$). Meanwhile, the mean score indicates that the social skills level of male zakat personnel ($M = 3.79, SD = .32$) and female zakat personnel ($M = 3.58, SD = .43$). However, there was no significant difference in the self-management level between male and female zakat personnel in zakat institution. It showed that the self-awareness, social-awareness and social skills level among zakat personnel in zakat institution are more or less the same.

Anova

One-way ANOVA test shown in Table 1 revealed that there was a significant difference in social awareness level on workload among zakat personnel in zakat institution { $F(1, 109) = 4.441, p < .05$ } as it increases progressively for each level of workload. This indicates that there is an impact of work load on level of social awareness among zakat personnel. Thus, the workload appears to be related to their social awareness level. However, the ANOVA results that showed there were no significant differences in emotional intelligence dimensions between age group, qualification, work experience and in-service training. Posthoc Turkey test in Table 25 revealed that the two groups being compared, Low level of work load ($M = 4.58, SD = .00$) and Moderate level of work load ($M = 3.66, SD = .41$) are significantly different from one another at the $p < .05$ level. In the result presented above, only low and moderate level of workload differs significantly in terms of their social awareness scores. This indicates that Low level of work load and Moderate level of work load have an impact on levels of social awareness.



Table 1: Posthoc Turkey Test of Work Load and Social Awareness

	Work Load	Mean Difference	Sig at p<.05
Low	Moderate	.88217*	.014
	High	.74561	.057
	Very high	.60526	.230
Moderate	Low	-.88217*	.014
	High	-.13655	.356
	Very high	-.27690	.257
High	Low	-.74561	.057
	Moderate	.13655	.356
	Very high	-.14035	.807
Very	Low	-.60526	.230
High	Moderate	.27690	.257
	High	.14035	.807

Conclusion

In this study, it was found that the dimensions in emotional intelligence are proficient, except self-management, which was slightly low proficient. In reviewing the overall results of the study, it would appear to provide tentative evidence which suggests that zakat employees may achieve improved performance if the emotional intelligence elements of relationship-management and communication are included in their selection criteria. This is based on the growing recognition of the increasing importance of "managing people issues", such a development may prove beneficial. Researchers such as Cooper (1997), Salovey & Mayer (1990), Goleman, (1998), Cherniss (2000) and Alder (2000) recognized the importance of emotional intelligence for gaining success. It seems that researchers attribute to emotional intelligence as a significant power of explanation of variance in performance. Managers and human resource personnel in human service organization would be well served in creating programs that help to enhance worker's EQ ability and explore ways in which a commitment to one's occupations can integrate with organizational commitment. Training that emphasizes managing own and others' emotions, as well as using emotions in problem-solving would serve to reinforce work control, particularly in the issues of stress and burnout that affect job satisfaction and commitment. Therefore, the zakat counter personnel need to polish their emotional intelligence competencies mainly self-management to become more effective and efficient at the workplace. It was also found that Low level of work load and Moderate level of work load have an impact on levels of social awareness.

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