

Intensifying Focus on Service Quality in Higher Education Institutions: Emotional and Spiritual Intelligence

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Abstract

The influence of Emotional and Spiritual Intelligence was investigated on the lecturers' Service Quality. Based on stratified sampling method, the results confirmed that both types of intelligence have a positive and significant influence on the lecturers' teaching progression. In conclusion, if the average level of each intelligence was good, then the level of Service Quality would also excel accordingly. The study highlights the need to have both EQ and SQ as it will encourage and motivate them into giving their best service to the university as well as their highest commitment towards giving students the best quality learning experience.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence; Higher Education Institutions; Service Quality; Spiritual Intelligence

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1.0 Introduction

Quality of life of academicians determines the service quality in higher education institutions (HEIs). The academicians are expected to have strong faith, fully integrated, holistic, and well balanced to be fully functioning in producing the best outputs. All universities in Malaysia are undergoing a transformation process outlined in the 2015-2025 Malaysian Education Blueprint. In one of the ten shifts is talent excellence that aims to develop and nurture academics. The blueprint also contains a New Academia Talent Framework (NATF) model that highlights the government's intention of creating holistic academics by setting up high-quality tertiary education. A high-quality education is only deemed possible when the quality of its academic community is also very high. To assess academic excellence, the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) has placed a university rating protocol and introduced the Malaysian Quality Evaluation System (MyQUEST) specifically for private colleges to raise its degree of competitiveness through continuous improvement capacity building. The other metric rating, known as SETARA, focuses on assessing items, as shown in Table 1. In 2017, International Medical University,

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Monash University Malaysia, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Universiti Malaya, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, and Universiti Teknologi Petronas obtained the outstanding 6-star SETARA.

Aimed to intensify focus on service quality in higher education institutions, this research is guided by a two-fold research question: (1) Do EQ and SQ matter for Service Quality and (2) If yes, which type of intelligence has a significant difference on Service Quality?

Table 1: Indicators and Weightage of SETARA-2017

Instrument	Category of Institution		
	Mature University	Emerging University	University College
General	40%	40%	40%
Teaching & Learning	30%	40%	50%
Research	20%	15%	5%
Services	10%	5%	5%

(Source: Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2017)

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Emotional Quotient and Service Quality

The ability to express and control individual emotions is essential and personal ability to understand, interpret, and respond to others' emotions. Psychologists refer to this ability as emotional quotient (or intelligence) (EQ), and some professionals even endorse that it can be greater essential than the intelligence quotient (IQ) in individual normal success in life. Mayer and Salovey (1993) define EQ as the ability to monitor one's feelings and emotions to discriminate among them and use this awareness of emotions to guide one's thinking and actions. EQ, therefore, talks about the relationship between thoughts, behaviours and feelings. It can be determined as the degree to which a person can perceive, understand, and regulate other people's emotions and amalgamate their thoughts and actions (Basharat, 2013).

EQ is one of the most important determinants of service quality. Thus, academics in any higher education institution must be receptive and adaptive towards the students' demands and behaviours. EQ is one of the factors that can help academics respond effectively to their students. Numerous studies show the importance of EQ for service quality. There is ample evidence to show that employees with high emotional competencies are better at managing themselves and understanding customer's attitude in the service interaction (Opuni & Adu-Gyamfi (2015). The study proved that EQ positively and significantly predicts service quality for customers and the overall image of the company will get stronger.

In HEIs cases, Yen (2013) measured service quality (SERVQUAL) the Vietnamese students were surveyed on the five elements: empathy, reliability, responsiveness, tangible, and assurance. Responsiveness and tangible elements associated with the university's campus, courtyard and library, and assurance. In Malaysia, Hassan et al. (2015) also found a positive and significant relationship between overall EQ skills and teaching effectiveness among 155 lecturers in the public university. Private HEIs in Malaysia also sought the same results, which lecturers with a high EQ are found highly confident and committed towards their job (Shah, Saad, Mohan, & Poniran, 2017). However, only self-regulation and social skills are statistically significant in their study. The study argued that these employees have successfully managed disputes, are excellent communicators and are masters at building and maintaining the relationships.

After carefully analyzing various research studies conducted thus far, these researchers realize that many research works have already been carried out in different service industries such as telecommunication, banking, and insurance. However, only a limited number of empirical studies have been conducted to assess service quality in education, especially in Malaysia. Aims to introduce the concept of using students to measure service quality in tertiary education institutions and set service quality standards from the student's perspective, this study set the following hypothesis: H1: EQ HAS A POSITIVE SIGNIFICANT INFLUENCE ON SERVICE QUALITY.

2.2 Spiritual Quotient and Service Quality

While EQ deals with one's emotion, spiritual intelligence (SQ) inspires a person to find a connection to something meaningful that transcends regular day to day actions (Zohar & Marshall, 2000). SQ benefits the staff and leaders in whichever organization they work for (Saad, See, Adil, & EQ deals with one's emotion, the spiritual quotient (or intelligence) (SQ) inspires a person to find a connection to something meaningful that transcends regular day to day actions (Zohar & Marshall, 2000). SQ benefits the staff and leaders in whichever organization they work for (Saad, See, Adil, & Kassim, 2015; Saad, Hussain, Abdul Rani, & Abdul Ghani, 2019;) because SQ energizes workplace engagement by mediating work practices in business performance (Saad et al., 2017), employee work's engagement toward organization success (Saad et al., 2019) and increase employee work's contentment leads to better productivity, and commitment (Padigapati & Chandaraiah, 2020). Vasconcelos (2020) also mentioned that with SQ worker potentially able to make some important contributions to the people that live around and rely on them. SQ is also be defined as the mind's capacity to handle substantial spiritual aspects of personal and professional life that carries meaning for personal, social and academic life (Smith, 2016). Prominent SQ characteristics based on research are projected to be an approach for humankind to transcend all differences in race, culture, and ideology (Menon & Sadasivan, 2019).

SQ contributes to the capacity to care, tolerate and adapt; to develop a clear and stable sense of individual identity within shifting workplace relationships; to determine the meaning of work and events; to identify and align personal values with a sense of purpose; to live according to one's values; and to understand how ego can sabotage one's values and purposes (Christ-Lakin, 2010). In service quality among nurses and administrative workers also showed that SQ could also enhance a workers' effectiveness and increase their

work performance (Rani, Abidin & Hamid, 2013; Saad et al., 2019). The study revealed that only age and education seemed to have positively changed to the relationship. Ahmad, Sulan and Rani (2017) found that when SQ values are implemented at work, they tend to blend harmoniously and work in tandem with the university's growth. In their study, SQ values included a Strong bond with the Creator, Steadfast in upholding shared principles, Creative in making wise decisions, Resolute in facing challenges and Proactive in taking actions. All of these values have helped the selected organizations to perform.

In HEIs, the application of SQ values in the organization can improve organizational performance (Attri, 2012). Through the integrity, honesty, respect and connectedness among workers, it can create a good working environment. A recent study showed that in a local public HEIs, the students' psychological well-being generally enhances their emotions in a relationship while also showing more positive behaviour and attitude towards others in that relationship (Rani et al., 2017). Students change when their SQ increases as they become calmer and more patient, motivated and focused on academic affairs. Similarly, Pant and Srivastava (2019) also found that SQ relates significantly to mental health among arts and science students. From this, researchers encourage educators to emphasize SQ as a way of approaching students nowadays. All the research studies mentioned above highlight SQ's high impact on individuals in each aspect of performance. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed: H2: SQ HAS A POSITIVE AND SIGNIFICANT INFLUENCE ON SERVICE QUALITY.

3.0 Research Methodology

The population of interest comprises of all private university lecturers in Selangor, one of the crucial states that must be considered in any research related to private universities in Malaysia. The Ministry of Higher Education reported in May 2018 that Malaysia has 467 private universities in total with the highest number of registered private universities (29%) located in the state of Selangor (Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 2018). Therefore, the best population to generalize current research findings would be the lecturers working in Selangor, particularly those in private-owned universities. Using a systematic sampling method, twenty universities were carefully selected for the data collection. The question items for the SQ were adopted-and-adapted from Ayranci (2011). The EQ measurement items were from Goleman (2005), and the service quality performance was from Sureshchandar, Rajendran, and Anantharaman (2002). A 6-point Likert scale was chosen to measure the responses to omit the midpoint. To answer the research questions and hypotheses, this study employs SmartPLS version 3.0. The only limitation for this research is the reluctance of the several institutions to allow their academicians to give any feedback regarding their view on the institutions.

4.0 Results and Findings

4.1 Respondents' Profile

Descriptive statistics were employed to give an overview of the respondents' profile. A total of 127 responses were received on their profile. There are 38 (29.9%) and 89 (70.1%) men and women respondents. 93 (73.2%) are ethnic Malay participants, 14 (11%) are Chinese and 20 (15.7%) are Indians. The majority of the respondents are between the age of 26 and 35 years old. 86 respondents are married. Most of the respondents (43.3% out of 127 respondents) earn more than RM5,000 a month. Besides, 40.2% of the respondents have not started a family yet and have, therefore, not employed any house help. 74.8% of the respondents have a master's degree and work as lecturers with two to five years of teaching experience at the university.

4.2 Measurement Model Analysis

Convergent validity refers to the degree to which multiple items assessed have the same concept and are in agreement. The study uses factor loadings, composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) to assess convergent validity as recommended by Hair et al. (2017). The recommended values for the loadings are set at >0.5, the AVE should be > 0.5, and the CR should be >0.7. Table 2 shows that this study has conceptualized EQ and SQ as the second-order constructs. Hence, this study follows the repeated indicator approach suggested in the PLS literature to model the second-order factors in the PLS analysis. Table 2 shows that the results of the measurement model exceeded the recommended values, thus indicating sufficient convergence validity (Figure 1).

Table 2: Measurement Model

First-order constructs	Second-order construct	Item	Loadings	AVE	CR
Self-Awareness		SA2	0.806	0.656	0.851
		SA4	0.814		
		SA5	0.809		
Self-regulation		SR1	0.794	0.602	0.858
		SR2	0.806		
		SR5	0.675		
		SR6	0.821		
Self-motivation		SM2	0.867	0.655	0.883
		SM3	0.820		
		SM4	0.771		
		SM5	0.775		
		SM5	0.775		
Social Awareness		SOCA3	0.841	0.658	0.852
		SOCA4	0.898		

Social Skills	SS2	0.871	0.752	0.859	
	SS4	0.864			
Emotional Intelligence (EQ)	Self-Awareness	0.851	0.540	0.891	
	Self-regulation	0.704			
	Self-Motivation	0.831			
	Social Awareness	0.636			
	Social Skills	0.537			
Grace	G1	0.905	0.746	0.854	
	G5	0.821			
Transcendence	T3	0.882	0.752	0.858	
	T5	0.852			
Meaning	M2	0.805	0.645	0.844	
	M3	0.735			
	M4	0.864			
Consciousness	C2	0.813	0.707	0.879	
	C3	0.837			
	C5	0.872			
	Spiritual Intelligence (SQ)	Grace	0.860	0.538	0.874
		Transcendence	0.698		
Meaning		0.786			
Consciousness		0.786			

Notes: AVE = average variance extracted; CR = composite reliability

After confirming the convergent validity, this study proceeded to evaluate the discriminant validity using the Fornell and Larcker (1981) method. Discriminant validity refers to the degree in which items differentiate among constructs or measure distinct concepts. The criterion employed to evaluate this is by comparing the AVE with the squared correlations or the square root of the AVE with the correlations. This study has used the second method which is to compare the square root of the AVE with the correlations as shown in Table 3. If the square root of the AVE is greater than the values in the row (shown in diagonals) and columns of that particular construct, then it can be concluded that the measures are discriminant. The results in Table 3 indicate that the measures used in this study are distinct and demonstrate adequate discriminant validity.

Table 3: Discriminant Validity

Constructs		1	2	3
1.	Service Quality	0.816		
2.	EQ	0.589	0.735	
3.	SQ	0.535	0.546	0.734

Notes: Diagonals represent the square root of the AVE, while the off diagonals represent the correlations

The findings underline the important role of service quality at work in this relationship. This study found a positive relationship between EQ and service quality as well as SQ and Service Quality.

4.3 Structural Model Analysis

As shown in Figure 1, R2 is calculated to evaluate the structural models' predictive power in this study. R2 denotes the amount of variance explained by the exogenous variables (Barclay et al., 1995). All three variables together explained 41.3 per cent of the variance as illustrated in Figure 1. Using a bootstrapping technique with a re-sampling of 500, the path estimates and t-statistics were calculated for the hypothesized relationships.

Table 4 shows the structural model analysis. From the analysis, it was found that EQ ($\beta = 0.423, p < 0.05$) was positively related to Service Quality. SQ ($\beta = 0.304, p < 0.05$) was positively related to Service Quality.

Table 4: Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Beta	SE	t-value	Decision
H1				
EQ -> SerQual	0.423	0.110	3.841	Supported
H2				
SQ -> SerQual	0.304	0.111	2.734	Supported

Notes: $p < 0.05$

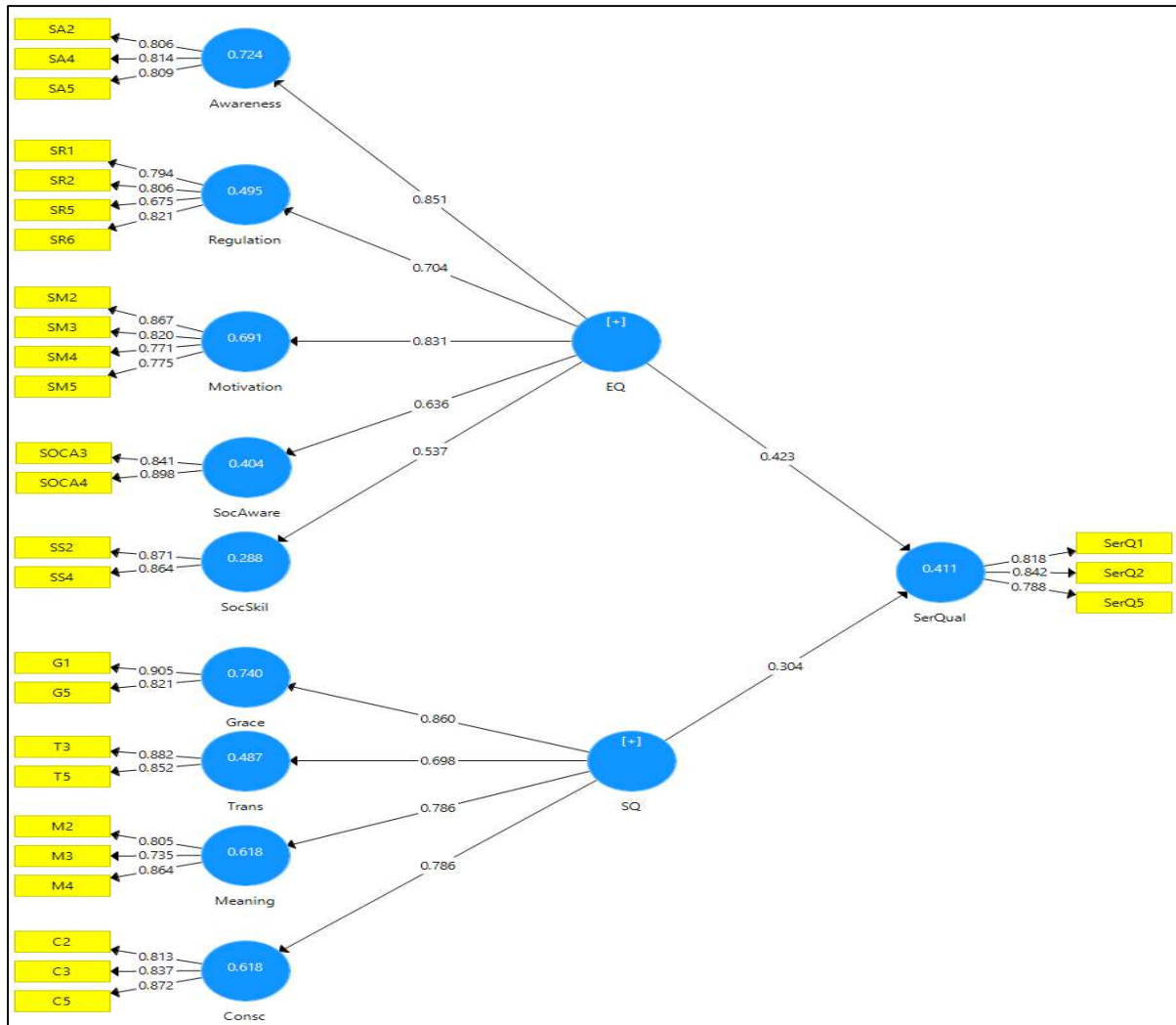


Figure 1: The PLS algorithm results

4.4 Emotional Quotient on Service Quality

This study empirically investigated the effects of a lecturer’s EQ on service quality in the education industry in the Klang Valley. The findings in the previous section disclose that all EQ dimensions ($\beta = 0.423$, $t = 2.841$, $p < 0.05$) positively affect Service Quality in this study. Our results are consistent with the results of some previous studies that found a positive relationship between EQ and service quality (Opuni & Adu-Gyamfi, 2015; Hassan et al., 2015; Suifan et al., 2015). According to Opuni and Adu-Gyamfi (2015), a good customer-organization relationship is demonstrated by the personnel’s EQ in service delivery. As emphasized by Martins, Ramalho, and Morin (2010), EQ can boost the effectiveness of service delivery. Likewise, perceptions of customers’ service quality are directly driven by the extent to which service providers demonstrate EQ, which is an outcome of service quality. These arguments are empirically supported by studies done by Opuni and Adu-Gyamfi (2015), Radha and Prasad (2013), Danquah and Weriko (2014), and Shah, Saad, Mohan and Poniran (2017). It indicates that as service providers show a higher EQ level in service delivery, the higher is the quality of services provided. In general, lecturers who have high EQ skills score high on service quality. Furthermore, EQ skills play an essential role in effective teaching and in increasing the teaching performance of the lecturers (Hassan et al., 2015). By obtaining EQ, lecturers will enhance service quality as well as academic achievements and personal professional excellence. Hence, lecturers who successfully foster emotional skills and form emotionally intelligent behaviour gain greater success and satisfaction in their professional career and life.

4.5 Spiritual Quotient on Service Quality

The correlation coefficient of SQ and its components with service quality ($\beta = 0.304$, $t = 2.734$, $p < 0.05$) indicates a significantly positive correlation between the two variables. This is consistent with the findings of studies by Opuni and Adu-Gyamfi (2015), Javaheri et al. (2013), Danguah (2015), Ramachandran et al. (2017), Shah, Saad, Mohan and Poniran (2017), Saad et al. (2019) and Vasconcelos (2020), which denotes the importance of considering the role of SQ in organizations. It is typical that when a person with a high SQ

works in an organization with a better service quality, he/she is likely going to be more satisfied with the job. Growing studies on the relationship between these variables indicate the important role of spiritual factors in managing today's organizations. Consequently, managers and top management people try to use their employees' SQ to approach organizational aims. A spiritual workplace environment will directly reduce employees' transfer of jobs, absenteeism, fatigue, and stress, thus influencing employee performance and organizations' overall success. Hence, this study reconfirms that intelligence can boost organizational performance (Attri, 2012; Malik & Tariq, 2016) and employee's performance (Motakallem, 2014; Saad et al., 2019; Vasconcelos, 2020; Padigapati et al., 2020). The results indicate that lecturers' SQ can directly heighten their service quality level, while a low-level SQ reduces the service quality level somewhat, causing job dissatisfaction and reluctance. This issue should be taken seriously by the top management people to improve the lecturers' perception of their job through job enrichment, empowerment of lecturers, and adding joy to work. Creating a friendly atmosphere based on cooperation instead of competition can increase job satisfaction and a sense of solidarity and unity among the staff which is an investment in any organization. Managers should also be aware of their lecturers' spiritual needs and try to create a dynamic organizational atmosphere. With such measures, it is hoped that lecturers are more satisfied and enjoy doing their daily tasks.

5.0 Conclusion & Recommendations

The integrity of life, intellect, future generations could be preserved through the healthy quality of academicians' life. Overall, this study has found support for the hypothesis that both SQ and EQ are crucial to sustaining academicians' efforts and struggles in delivery expected Service Quality of private university lecturers. The findings reflect on the emergence of the intangible element of intelligence that will help the lecturers cope with existing responsibilities and also achievements in their career. Emotionally and spiritually intelligent lecturers understand their basic roles and responsibilities and can use this intelligence effectively at the workplace which will finally help them become an essential part of the university. The knowledge obtained from this study may provide university policymakers additional insights into emphasizing the development of this intelligence for both the academics and students as they pursue a higher service quality output. The focus could be on professional initiatives like increasing knowledge level, skills, abilities, values, and social assets. Human capital with a strong will is nowadays a very valuable asset for any country and is an essential element in attracting more investments into making Malaysia a great education hub as aspired by the Ministry of Education. Future researchers of such a study must expand this study on a bigger population in reconfirming the findings.

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Paper Contribution to Related Field of Study

This study contributes to filling the gap in the existing literature, which EQ and SQ as factors to the enhancement of the quality of life of the academician in Malaysia.

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