8th International Strategic Management Conference

Effects Of Emotional Intelligence On Job Satisfaction: An Empirical Study On Call Center Employees

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Abstract

The aim of this research was to empirically investigate, the impact of emotional intelligence (EI) on job satisfaction. This study considers emotional intelligence as a multidimensional construct and compares the effects of these dimensions on job satisfaction and job performance. Data obtained from 147 call center employees in Istanbul we used to examine the hypothesized relationships among study variables. The results of the study show significant positive relationship emotional intelligence and internal job satisfaction. Specifically these findings indicate that employees with high emotional recognition are more likely to have higher levels of internal job satisfaction.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Job Satisfaction, Call Centers

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1. Introduction

In the context of the emerging ‘affective revolution’ in social and organizational psychology emotional intelligence (EI) is considered to be playing a significant role in the work environment (Kafetsios and Zampetakis, 2008). Emotional intelligence indicates an ability to monitor one’s own and others’ feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and actions (Huy, 1999). Following to the existing literature (Mayer and Salowey, 1995), emotional intelligence is considered to be composed of a one’s ability to recognize as emotional recognition and regulate emotions as emotional regulation (Reus and Liu, 2004: 255). Researchers specifically poropose that such an ability can predict work related outcomes, such as job satisfaction and job performance (Sy et al., 2006). Interpersonally, emotion awareness and regulatory processes associated with EI are expected to benefit peoples’ social relationships hence affecting the experience of emotion and stress at work. Intrapersonally, use of emotion and being aware of one’s own emotions can lead to regulating stress and negative

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Available online at www.sciencedirect.com

SciVerse ScienceDirect

Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences 58 (2012) 363 – 369

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doi:10.1016/j.sbspro.2012.09.1012
emotion so that one can perform better at work (Kafetsios and Zampetakis, 2008, 713). Thus theories of emotion in organizations (i.e., Affective Events Theory,) suggest that affective states at work are key vehicles of personality and organizational influences on job satisfaction. Indeed there is accumulating evidence that EI affects job satisfaction (e.g., Sy et al., 2006)

Emotional intelligence and job satisfaction are of particular importance to call center organisations considering their social nature based on direct communication to customers. However, the empirical evidence is scant in general and in call center organizations in particular (Gardner, 2003). As such, the goal of this study is to examine the impact of EI on job satisfaction of call center employees.

2. Literature Review And Hypotheses

2.1. Emotional Intelligence

From the resource based view, firm competencies entail not only knowledge, skills, beliefs, and routines, but also emotions (Akgun et al., 2007). The term emotion demonstrates both expressive communications and inner states related to feelings, as love, hate, courage, fear, joy, sadness, pleasure and disgust (Perlovsky, 2006). Emotions are also considered as signs of intelligence, as well as an ability to grasp and reason correctly with concepts (Côté and Miners, 2006) or as personal intelligence because of one’s access to one’s own feeling life (Mayer and Salovey, 1995). Accordingly there is a common tendency to combine emotion with intelligence (e.g., Mayer and Salovey, 1995; Huy, 1999). Emotional intelligence is basically identified as the ability to perceive emotion, integrate emotion to facilitate. Mayer and Salovey (1995) define emotional intelligence as “the ability to perceive emotion, integrate emotion to facilitate thought, understand emotions and to regulate emotions to promote personal growth.” At a theoretical level EI reflects the extent to which a person attends to, processes, and acts upon information of an emotional nature intra- and inter-personally (Kafetsios, Zampetakis, 2008: 713).

Emotional intelligence as a subset of social intelligence, involves the ability to monitor one’s own and others’ feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and actions” (Huy, 1999). This definition of emotional intelligence addresses the four-dimensional emotional intelligence construct (Kelly and Barsade, 2001; Caruso et al., 2002; Salovey and Pizarro, 2003; Rubin et al., 2005; Côté and Miners, 2006) consisting of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and social management. Along with this widely accepted four-dimensional construct, there are other typologies and categorizations of emotional intelligence. For example, Reus and Liu (2004) propose two main components of emotional intelligence: emotional recognition and emotional regulation. Emotional recognition refers to a person’s ability to perceive emotions and understand their potential causes and effects (Reus and Liu, 2004). On the other hand Emotional regulation is the ability of individuals to manage their own and others’ emotional expressions. These two classifications or sub-processes of emotional intelligence appear be narrowly defined versions of previous emotional intelligence constructs.

2.2. Job Satisfaction

The second variable of this study is job satisfaction. Job satisfaction is most adequately conceptualized as a personalistic evaluation of conditions existing on the job (work, supervision) or outcomes that arise as a result of having a job (pay, security). It is the perception of internal responses (i.e., feelings); it consists of filtered and processed perceptions, perceptions filtered through the individual’s system of norms, values, expectations, and so forth. (Schneider and Snyder, 1975:31). Job satisfaction is a result of employees’ perception of how well their job provides those things which are viewed as important.

Waldersee and Luthans (1994) suggest that there are five job dimensions that represent the most important characteristics of a job about which people have affective responses.

1- The work itself- the extent to which the job provides the individual with interesting tasks, opportunities for learning, and the chance to accept responsibility.
2- Pay- the amount of financial remuneration That is received and the degree to which is viewed as equitable vis-a-vis others in the organization.
3- Promotion opportunities- the chances for advancement in the hierarchy.
4- Co-workers- the degree to which fellow workers are technically proficient and socially supportive.
5- Supervision- the abilities of the superior to provide technical assistance and behavioral support.
2.3. Internal & External Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is generally classified into two dimensions as internal and external. Internal job satisfaction is an internal desire to perform a particular task; people do certain activities because it gives them pleasure, it develops a particular skill, or it’s morally the right thing to do. Internal job satisfaction is related to internal motivation. Internal motivation refers to engaging in an activity for itself and for the pleasure and satisfaction derived from participation (Vallerand, 2004: 428).

External factors were defined as those external benefits provided to the professional by the facility or organization. External factors external to the individual and unrelated to the task they are performing. Examples include money, good grades, and other rewards. When externally motivated, individuals do not engage in the activity out of pleasure but rather do so to derive some kind of rewards that are external to the activity itself (Vallerand, 2004: 428). Several early studies show that positive performance feedback enhances internal motivation whereas negative performance feedback diminishes it (Ryan and Deci, 2000).

2.4. Development of Hypotheses

The relationship between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction has long been an issue of concern in general in the context of call centers in particular. According to Cooper & Sawaf, (1997), employees with high EI may be better at identifying feelings of frustration and stress, and subsequently, regulating those emotions to reduce stress. Furthermore, employees with high EI are more resilient because they are able to understand the causes of stress and develop strategies and perseverance to deal with the negative consequences of stress. Conversely, employees with low EI are likely to be less aware of their emotions and possess fewer abilities to cope with their emotions when faced with difficult situations, thereby, exacerbating their level of stress and decreasing their level of job satisfaction (Sy et al., 2006, 462). For example, Sy et al. (2006) found that a positive association between emotional intelligence (EI) and job satisfaction. Lopes, Grewal, Kadis, Gall, and Salovey (2006) supported empirical evidence for the links between EI abilities and job satisfaction in on a group of managers. However Abraham (2000) found that emotional intelligence showed a stronger relationship with organisational commitment than job satisfaction did. Similarly, Güleyüz et al. (2008) found that “self-emotional appraisal (SEA)” and “regulation of emotion” UOE” have direct effects on organisational commitment whereas job satisfaction is a mediator between “regulation of emotion” and organisational commitment. Based on the foregoing discussion, we propose:

**Hypothesis 1.** Employees’ emotional intelligence a-)emotional recognition associates positively with their internal job satisfaction.

**Hypothesis 2.** Employees’ emotional intelligence a-)emotional recognition associates positively with their external job satisfaction.

![Figure 1. The theoretical model](image_url)
3. Methodology

3.1. Sample and Data Collection

The purpose of this paper is to describe and analyze the mutual relationships among emotional intelligence and job satisfaction within the context of call centers. In order to empirically investigate the hypothesis the employees of a bank call center located in Kocaeli were surveyed. This bank call center were chosen because of their availableness. Tools such as e-mail, letter and face to face interviews are used for gathering data. A total of 147 questionnaires among 250 has returned. All constructs were measured with existing scales. All items were measured on a seven point Likert-type scale where 1=strongly disagree and 7=strongly agree. Data is submitted to regression, correlation reliability and factor analyses using SPSS 13.0..

The mean age of the participants were 21.17(s.d.=3.58); the proportion of women, 75.5%, and married 37.5%. Of the participants, %59,2 had university educations and %6,1 had master education.

**Emotional recognition:** The two dimensions of emotional intelligence a-)emotional recognition and b-) emotional regulation are measured using the emotional intelligence scale adopted from Wong et al.’s (2002).

**Job satisfaction:** The two dimensions of as internal and external are measured using the emotional intelligence scale adopted from Minnesota Job Satisfaction Scale.

3.2. Analyses and Results

Since the scales were used with a new sample, 11 items of independent variables and 8 items of dependent variables were submitted to exploratory analysis. A principal component analyses and scree plot indicated that four factors should be retained (eigenvalues above1.0). The best fit of data was obtained with a principal factor analysis with varimax rotation.

**Table 1. Factor Analyses for independent variables**

| Emotional recognition | Factor1 | Factor2 |
|-----------------------|---------|---------|
| I have a good sense of why I have certain feelings most of the time. | .732 | |
| I have good understanding of my own emotions. | .869 | |
| I am sensitive to the feelings and emotions of others. | .809 | |
| I have good understanding of the emotions of people around me. | .778 | |
| Emotional regulation | Factor1 | |
| I always set goals for myself and then try my best to achieve them. | .796 | |
| I am a self-motivated person. | .787 | |
| I am able to control my temper and handle difficulties rationally | .809 | |
| I can always calm down quickly when I am very angry | .731 | |
| I have good control of my own emotions | .847 | |
| I am able to considerate and think from the point of view of others | .817 | |
| I am able to hide my actual feelings when acting and speaking with people | .749 | |
Table 2. Factor Analyses for dependent variable emotional intelligence

| Internal satisfaction | Factor 3 | Factor 4 |
|-----------------------|----------|----------|
| I am satisfied with the managing style of my superior/manager | .718 | |
| I am satisfied with the decision making ability of my superior/manager | .516 | |
| I am satisfied with the opportunity of working here | .629 | |

| External Satisfaction | | |
|-----------------------| | |
| I am satisfied with how the work related decisions come to practice | .630 | |
| I am satisfied with my salary that I earn as a result of working here | .527 | |
| I am satisfied with the promotion opportunities | .614 | |
| I am satisfied with having autonomy to carry out my decisions | .560 | |
| I am satisfied with the autonomy concerning my tasks | .650 | |

The results of factor analyses show that the independent variables are gathered in two factors and the dependent variables are gathered into two. Factor 1 consists of for emotional recognition items with an internal consistency reliability coefficient (Alpha) of 0.88. Factor 2 includes seven emotional regulation items with an internal consistency reliability coefficient (Alpha) of 0.94. Factor 3 includes three internal satisfaction items with an internal consistency reliability coefficient (Alpha) of 0.87. Factor 4 includes five external satisfaction items with an internal consistency reliability coefficient (Alpha) of 0.91. Table 1 shows the factor loadings of emotional recognition and regulation while table 2 indicates the factor loadings of internal and external satisfaction.

Table 3. Correlations, mean values and standard deviations

|                      | Mean Value | Standard Deviation | 1.          | 2.          | 3.          | 4.          |
|----------------------|------------|--------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Emotional recognition| 3.8248     | .89364             | (0.879)     |             |             |             |
| Emotional regulation | 4.1133     | .85016             | .702(**)    | (0.944)     |             |             |
| Internal satisfaction| 2.9397     | 1.16467            | .366(**)    | .168(**)    | (0.874)     |             |
| External satisfaction| 2.6291     | 1.17610            | .054        | .008        | .520(**)    | (0.913)     |

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).  
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Means, standard deviations and inter-correlations are summarized in Table 3. Cronbach’s Alpha values are shown using parentheses on the cross of the table. According to the correlation results all variables have direct relationship between each other on a bivariate level.

Table 4. Regression results for emotional recognition, emotional regulation and internal satisfaction

| Independent variables  | β       | Sig  |
|------------------------|---------|------|
| Emotional recognition  | .539**  | .000 |
| Emotional regulation   | -.214   | .055 |

Dependent variable: Internal satisfaction, R² = 0.161, F = 14.210

**: p< 0.01, *: p< 0.05

In the first regression analyze we investigated the influences of emotional recognition, emotional regulation on internal satisfaction. The regression model is significant as a whole (F=14,210: p< 0.01); it explains %16 of the change of internal satisfaction. The findings shows that as we predicted in H1a emotional recognition has positive and significant effects on internal satisfaction (β: 0.539; p<0.01). However the results do not provide any empirical
evidence in support of the relationships between emotional regulation and internal satisfaction. So our hypothesis H1a is supported while H1b is not.

Table 5. Regression results for emotional recognition, emotional regulation and external satisfaction

| Independent variables | β     | Sig  |
|-----------------------|-------|------|
| Emotional recognition | .195  | .108 |
| Emotional regulation  | -.146 | .228 |

Dependent variable: External satisfaction, R²= 0.019, F= 1.313

*: p< 0.01, **: p< 0.05

In the second regression analyze we investigated the influences of emotional recognition, emotional regulation on external satisfaction. The regression model is not significant (F=1.313); So the results of this regression analyses not provide any empirical evidence in support of the relationships between emotional recognition, emotional regulation and internal satisfaction. So our hypothesis H2a and H2b are not supported.

4. Conclusion

In this study, we tried to offer a contribution to organizational behavior literature by presenting a model for researchers and managers to understand potential interrelationships among emotional and job satisfaction. The findings of the study demonstrated that scales which are developed in Western countries, are appropriate for an emerging economy and eastern country; Turkey. Measures demonstrated high validity and reliability, and model results were similar with the empirical studies completed in developed and western countries.

Specifically, this study empirically demonstrated the role of emotional recognition—the first dimension of emotional intelligence on internal satisfaction. Our findings showed that emotional recognition was positively and significantly related to internal satisfaction. We found no direct statistical association between emotional regulation, the second dimension of emotional intelligence, and internal satisfaction. However, this result does not suggest that emotional regulation has no relationship to internal satisfaction; rather, emotional regulation is likely to influence the internal satisfaction via emotional recognition considering the high correlation between them. The results of this study, which indicate that employees’ with higher EI have higher internal job satisfaction, are similar to the findings of Wong and Law (2002) and Sy et al. (2006). The findings imply that employees with high EI are more adept at identifying and regulating their emotions. The ability to understand their emotions could imply that employees with high EI are more aware of the factors that contribute to their experience of positive and negative emotions which ultimately results with higher internal satisfaction.

These results provide no empirical evidence in support of the relationship between emotional intelligence and external job satisfaction. This means that emotions and emotional intelligence don’t have role external dimension of job satisfaction which involves monetary rewards and promotions, salary and regulations.

The findings of this study cannot be taken as definite evidence because several limitations to the study results deserve commentary. First, these results reported here emerge from a local area; results may differ for employees located on different areas that are operating in different cultural, environmental and political conditions. Second, our sampling is based on a bank call center which means that these results reflect the attributes of call center employees. Results may differ for different industries. Despite these limitations, this study provides important implications from theoretical and practical perspectives. First this study shows that emotional intelligence plays an important role on internal job satisfaction. Moreover the results emphasizes that emotional recognition dimension of emotional intelligence is more important for internal satisfaction than emotional regulation.

From a managerial point of view, the results suggest that management should give importance to emotions and emotional intelligence of their employees in order to increase job satisfaction.

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