Emotional Intelligence and Personality Traits among University Teachers: Relationship and Gender Differences

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Abstract

The aim of the current study was to examine relationship pattern between personality traits and emotional intelligence (EI), besides exploring the gender differences. Sample of the study was comprised 163 university teachers. Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (2002) and NEO-Five Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI) developed by Costa & McCrae *(1992) were used to measure EI and personality traits accordingly. Correlational analysis showed that EI was positively correlated with extraversion, conscientiousness, openness to experience and agreeableness, and negatively with neuroticism. t-test analysis demonstrated that there were no gender differences in EI, openness to experience and agreeableness, whereas significant gender differences were demonstrated on extraversion, conscientiousness and neuroticism.*

Key Words: Emotional intelligence, Personality traits

Introduction

Nowadays, most of organizations are seriously facing the challenges to manage with the speedily changing environment. Many organizations included higher educational institutes are influenced by instability associated with globalization, rapid development, constant innovation and rapid changes in stakeholder's expectations etc. Many studied have shown significant differences of human behavior, when there are changes in the surroundings (Piderit, 2000). Most of these changes relate to the personality, emotional intelligence (EI) and many others. There is empirical evidence that personality and EI have been essential keys to achieve organizational goals and to succeed in changing environment (Beer & Nohria, 2000).

An appropriate and proper supervision of university teachers is fundamental to ensure the effectiveness of their services to the students. When intended to enhance quality of education, work performance and intellectual discourse, the university heads must place emphasize on the importance of a university teacher's EI and personality traits. There is limited research evidence available on this topic, so current study was a modest attempt in understanding the relationship between university teacher's EI and personality traits.

Personality Traits

A more recent and more widely accepted trait model is the "Big Five" Personality Factor Model. The Big Five Personality Factor Model, often called the "Big Five" or the "Five Factor Model", is an empirically derived model of personality based on the early work on traits by Allport, and Odbert (1936). It proposes that personality can be factored into five domains: neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness.

It has been proposed that each individual falls between the two extremes of each dimension. Neuroticism contrasts elements of emotional stability with those of negative emotionality. Extraversion implies an energetic approach to the world as opposed to a passive approach. They are often full of energy and actively seek out attention from others, while openness examines an individual's openness to experiences versus their level of close-mindedness. It also indicates individuals in this dimension are more creative and able to express and understand their emotions. Agreeableness seeks to measure whether one has a prosocial orientation towards others or if they act with antagonism. They are, in fact, altruistic, warm, generous, trusting and cooperative. In a very straight way, an agreeable person is concerned with the welfare and interest of other people.

Lastly, conscientiousness includes the control of impulses which facilitates tasks and other goal-directed behavior (Hergenhahn & Olson, 1999). These people are very responsible with work and very careful to make decisions.

Emotional Intelligence and its Relation with Personality Traits

Salovey and Mayer (1990) were the first to propose a theory of EI in academic literature. In their most recent model, they define EI as the ability to: (a) perceive and express emotions, (b) use emotions to facilitate thoughts, (c) understand and reason with emotion, and (d) regulate emotion in the self and others (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). Mayer and Salovey's model is distinct from other models, which define and measure EI as a set of self-perceived skills, competencies and personality traits, including optimism and self-esteem (Bar-On, 1997, 2005).

On the other hand, Daniel Goleman accelerated the importance of the term emotional intelligence and attracted attention of scholars around the globe. According to Goleman (1995 & 1998), EI is an important factor in determining personal success as a student, teacher, parent, and leader.

The relationship between EI and personality traits are interlinked because as EI is relevant to understanding and control of emotions which are very important in personality construction. Relationship between both variables has been widely investigated, but level of relationship between these two constructs depends on the measures used to assess e.g. Brackett and Mayer (2003) found that EI is highly significantly correlated with neuroticism, extraversion, agreeableness and conscientiousness, but moderately related to openness to experience.

Sala (2002) examined that EI measured by Goleman's Emotional Competence Inventory (1998) was significantly related to extraversion, openness to experience and conscientiousness. However, when the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT; 2002) was used, only openness to experience and agreeableness were found to relate to emotional intelligence (Brackett & Mayer, 2003).

The relationship between EI and personality traits has been heavily discussed in the literature. Several models of EI are closely attached with personality theory, specifically the mixed models (Bar-On, 2005; Goleman, 1995). Both models list components and sub-components of their theory of EI which are similar to areas which have been previously studied under personality theory.

Coincidentally, even the pure model of EI, proposed by Mayer and Salovey (1997), has shown empirically significant correlations with measures of personality. In comparing the pure measure of EI the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (2002) and the NEO-PI-R, significant correlations were found between the openness and agreeableness factors of personality and EI (Brackett & Mayer, 2003).

Personality is the supreme realization of innate peculiar behavior of a human being, whereas personality traits have strong relationship with EI. Considering the five factor model of personality traits it has become empirically established fact that the EI measures have significant correlations with extraversion and neuroticism with positive and negative sign respectively, and have positive correlation with agreeableness, openness to experience and conscientiousness (Petrides & Furnham, 2001; Saklofske, Eustin & Minski, 2003).

Current research was an empirical endeavor, in indigenous settings, to study relationship of EI with each personality traits, and for present study it was hypothesized that emotional intelligence would be positively related with extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness to experience, whereas EI and neuroticism would be significantly and negatively correlated.

There is another question that whether gender relates to EI and personality traits among university teachers? There is sccarcity of attention paid to gender differences on EI and Personality traits. It has been established stereotype that women tend to be more expressive then their counterpart men. They are believed to understand and recognize other's emotions better and possess greater empathy as being more perceptve (Aquino, 2003; Tapia & Marsh II, 2006). Existing literature yields contradictory findings on EI e.g. females were found higher (Katyal & Awasthi 2005; Singh, 2002) and some others witnessed males as higher on EI (e.g. Chu, 2002).

Moreover there is evidence that big five personality traits exerted gender difference e.g. Costa, Terracciano and McCrae (2001) found that women scored higher on the Five Factor Model (FFM) traits of neuroticism, extraversion and agreeableness, whereas men scored higher on openness. They also found non-significant gender differences on consciousness. These findings are also consistent with Chapman, Duberstein, Sörensen, and Lyness, (2007) except the domain of extraversion where men were found higher.

It is safe to conclude that gender relates to EI and personality traits so furthermore, present study was also an emperical endeavor to find out the gender differences in EI and Big Five constructs.

More particularly presents study has been designed to achieve two objectives. First, to study the relationship between EI and personality traits, and secondly current study has been intended to gain an insight into the gender differences related to EI and personality traits. The uniqueness of this study lies in the fact that it will not only be helping hand in understanding the attitude of university teachers regarding EI and their personality traits, but will also entail an insight to enhance their academic performance by addressing these issues.

Method

Sample

The sample of study comprised 163 university teachers which was further categorized into male (*n* = 77) and females (*n* = 86). The age of sample was ranged between 25 to 40 years (*M* = 36.23, *SD* = 2.56). The baseline for qualification of sample was M.Sc. Purposive convenient sampling technique was used for data collection.

Instruments

Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS). Emotional intelligence scale developed by Wong and Law (2002) was used in present study to measure individual differences in the self and others. The items are anchored on six point Likert format, where 1 corresponded to strongly disagree and 6 corresponded to strongly agree. High score should correspond to high level of emotional intelligence. The internal consistency reliability of this scale as reported by Wong and law (2002), was quite good (*r* = .94).

NEO-Five Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI). NEO-Five Factors was developed by Costa & McCrae (1992), in order to measure five domains of personality i.e. Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to experience, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness. Alpha reliabilities of five domains in NEO-FFI were ranged from .79 to .83 and Conscientiousness possessed highest reliability among all. NEO-FFI is a five point scale: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree and consists of 60 items, divided in five domains of personality.

Procedure

For data collection purposive convenient sampling technique was used. Sample of study i.e. lecturers and assistant professors were selected from University of Sargodha, and GC University Lahore. Participants of the study were personally contacted in their departments. They were briefed about objective of study, and informed consent was taken. The required information were taken through demographic sheet which included age, gender, departments, and qualification, then scales of the study were provided them along with written as well as oral instructions. Participants were assured about the confidentiality of information provided by them.

Results

The data were subjected to analyses through SPSS. Alpha coefficients and descriptive analyses for each variable were computed. Finally, correlational and *t*-test analyses were applied to test the proposed hypotheses.

Table 1: Alpha Reliabilities, Mean, Standard Deviations and Correlation Matrix among all Variables (N = 163)

Scales	1	2	3	4	5	6	*M*	*SD*	*α*
1	--	.26**	.21*	.11	.38**	-.23**	73.15	11.02	.83
2	--	--	.09	.05	.39**	-.08	39.97	4.99	.51
3	--	--	--	-.09	.09	.11	35.56	4.51	.63
4	--	--	--	--	.02	-.21**	35.27	4.11	.64
5	--	--	--	--	--	-.09	42.31	5.29	.66
6	--	--	--	--	--	--	38.70	5.91	.47

Note. 1 = emotional intelligence; 2 = extraversion; 3 = openness to experience; 4 = agreeableness; 5 = conscientiousness; 6 = Neuroticism
**p < .01, *p < .05

Table 1 shows means, standard deviations and internal consistency index (alpha coefficients) for all the scales and sub-scales used in the study. For NEO-FFI reliabilities for subscales ranged from .47 to .66. The reliabilities of main scales were .59 and .83 for NEO-FFI and Emotional Intelligence Scale respectively.

Table 1 also indicates correlation between the five sub-scales of NEO-FFI, and EI. The correlation matrix shows that emotional intelligence has weak correlation with openness to experience ($r = .21$), and agreeableness ($r = .11$). Results also indicates that EI achieved positive and significant correlation with extraversion ($r = .26$), conscientiousness ($r = .38$) and significant negative relation with neuroticism ($r = -.23$).

Table 2: Comparison of Males and Females on Personality Traits, and EI (N = 163)

Variables	Males (n = 77)		Females (n = 86)				95% CI	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t(161)*	*UL*	*LL*	Cohen's *d*
EI	75.54	9.92	73.74	11.98	.77	4.24	1.85	.11
Extraversion	39.28	5.11	40.62	4.79	1.93*	2.71	.30	.27
Openness	33.29	4.70	33.89	4.90	.94	1.54	.95	.12
Agreeableness	27.94	3.92	28.03	4.39	.13	1.36	.92	.02
Conscientiousness	38.00	5.25	39.85	5.29	2.50**	3.19	29	.17
Neuroticism	35.56	4.34	38.32	5.12	- 2.21*	2.27	1.01	.58

p < .05, *p** < .01

Results in Table 2 demonstrate the mean gender differences on EI, and personality traits. The mean differences were found to be significant on extraversion $\{t (161) = 1.93, p < .05\}$, conscientiousness $\{t (161) = 2.50, p < .01\}$ and neuroticism $\{t (161) = 2.27, p < .05\}$. It implies that females are higher on conscientiousness and extraversion as compared to males.

Results also depict non-significant mean gender differences on EI, agreeableness, and openness to experience.

Discussion

Emotional intelligence scholars (Goleman, 1995) suggest that EI is a crucial determinant of job and career success. EI may even be more important than general mental ability for determining personality traits. Therefore, this study sought to examine the relationship between the both constructs. According to Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso (2002) EI makes an individual proficient to identify his own emotions as well as others'. Using and understanding those emotions, and having the ability to manage those emotions are also required to develop a strong personality. Existing researches provided empirical evidence that individuals with high level of EI experience more career success, build stronger personal relationships and enjoy better health than those having low level of EI (Rahayu Imrani, 2004).

EI and personality traits are two important constructs of psychology and there is substantial evidence that how these two constructs are related to each other. There are few studies which have investigated the direction of two domains in relation to each other. The current research, more specifically, was conducted to investigate relationship between EI and personality traits. After review of existing literature it was hypothesized for the current study that EI would positively be related with extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness to experience and negatively with neuroticism dimension.

Results of current research found EI positively correlated with conscientiousness, openness to experience and extraversion. A positive, in desired direction, yet non significant relationship was also found between EI and agreeableness, whereas, neuroticism elucidated inverse relationship with EI (see Table 1).

Results of current research can be explained by logic that EI and personality traits are interrelated constructs and they influence each other. For example Mayer, Caruso, and Salovey (2000) assert that emotionally intelligent people are empathetic, and one of the NEO-PI-R feelings sub items states "I find it easy to empathize with others – to feel myself what others are feeling" (openness to experience). Likewise other personality traits are also associated with different aspects of EI.

Results of current research has theoretical evidence which indicated that EI was found to be strongest predictor of four of the Big Five personality dimensions extraversion, openness, neuroticism, agreeableness (Athota, Sagar, peter, & jakson, 2009). In another study Wolfradt, Felfe, and Koster (2001) examined the relationship between self-perceived EI measured by the Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS) and other personality measures including the five-factor-model. The EI construct has lately been re-defined as the ability to think intelligently about emotions and to use them to enhance intelligent thinking.

Different studies provide support that self-reported EI is mainly associated with personality traits (e.g., extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, self-perceived creativity), life satisfaction and thinking styles with only a low relation to verbal intelligence (e,g. Hudani, Redzuan & Hamsan, 2012; Taksic & Mohoric, 2006).

One more plausible explanation to our results might be that the ample of research on emotions in the workplace suggests that emotions may drive productivity gains, innovations, and accomplishment of individuals, teams and organizations (Cooper, 1997). University teachers with high EI are said to be more effective in lecturing and managing students in class rooms and nurturing positive personality traits of agreeableness, extraversion, conscientiousness and openness to experience. It has also been an established fact that individuals high on EI are also said to be good in using emotions to guide decision making and encourage open– minded in idea generation, boosting motivation and interest levels among students because they can consider multiple points of view especially for those being high in openness to experience domain. Our findings are in same fashion with Athota, O'connor and Jackson (2009) who examined that EI contributed as significant positive predictor of personality traits included extraversion, openness, agreeableness and inversely predicted neuroticism.

It was also hypothesized that EI would negatively correlate with neuroticism. The logic behind that was conspicuous that an emotionally efficient and stable individual must be low on profile of neuroticism which describes the tendency to experience negative emotion and related processes in response to perceived threat and punishment; these include anxiety, depression, anger, and self-consciousness. Among the traits that classify this dimension are fearfulness, irritability, low self-esteem, social anxiety, poor inhibition of impulses, and helplessness (Costa & McCrae, 1988).

Current findings also endorsed the fact the EI and neuroticism were inversely correlated (see Table 1). Neuroticism has been coined as tendency to experience negative, distressing emotions and to possess associated behavioral and cognitive traits characterizes neuroticism. On the other hand Bar-On (2005) conceived EI as effectively managing personal, social and environmental change by realistically and flexibly coping with the immediate situation, solving problems, and making decisions. Both neuroticism and EI are contrary to each other so current findings are reasonably understandable. These findings are in line with existing literature where strong inverse relationship has been found between EI and neuroticism (e.g. Khosroshahi1, Abadi, & Abassi, 2013; Petrides, et al. 2010).

Second objective of study was to find out gender differences on EI, and personality traits. Our results indicated non-significant gender differences in EI, and among personality traits significant gender differences were found on conscientiousness, neuroticism and extraversion.

So for as previous literature is concerned there are evidences for contradictory gender differences in EI. For example Katyal & Awasthi (2005) and Singh (2002) found that females were higher in EI, on the other hand there are also results which indicates males as higher in EI (e.g. Chu, 2002). Dunn (2002) observed that girls score higher with regard to empathy, social responsibilities and interpersonal relationships than boys. Our findings can be discerned within the context that there are numerous personal, social and personality factors e.g. empathy, flexible thinking, self-awareness etc. seem to affect EI to a great extent which can cause these contradictory evidences. Our results are not surprising because many previous studies have also disclosed that there are non significant differences in EI (e.g. Brown & Schutte, 2006; Denis, 2009; Depape, Hakim-Larson, Voelker, Page, & Jackson, 2006). If we analyze current findings in indigenous context these are parallel with Nasir and Masrur (2010) who conducted a research to explore EI of the students of International Islamic University of Islamabad in relation to gender, age and academic achievement, findings of their research indicated that there were no differences in the mean EQi score of male and female students.

Gender differences on personality traits found to be significant on extraversion and conscientiousness, female scored high than male on these two personality traits.

Previous research findings supported the results of current research. Goodwin and Gotlib (2003) determined the association between gender and the Big Five personality factors, and to identify the role of personality factors in the association between gender and depression among adults in the United States. Levels of neuroticism, agreeableness, extraversion, and conscientiousness were significantly higher among females than among males; in contrast, level of openness to experience was significantly higher among males. Previous research has demonstrated that, by early adulthood, level of neuroticism tend to be higher among women than among men (e.g., Donnellan & Lucas, 2008; Soto, Jhon, Gosling, & Potter, 2011).

In current research openness to experience yielded non significant gender differences. The sample of recent research comprised university teacher which are highly qualified individual equipped with higher order skills and innovative knowledge and they work in competitive environment, therefore irrespective of gender they are recognized unconventional and independent thinkers. So keeping in view the perspective of university teachers, the non significant gender differences on openness to experience are more or less justifiable.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the findings elucidated that EI demonstrated significantly positive correlation with extraversion, conscientiousness, openness to experience, and significant inverse correlation with neuroticism. *t*-test analysis demonstrated that there were no gender differences on EI, openness to experience and agreeableness, whereas significant gender differences were demonstrated on extraversion, conscientiousness and neuroticism. Current findings may have cultural implications in it.

Our study have certain implications in, educational settings and university staff employment processes because the link between EI and personality traits has become empirically established fact to determine the effectiveness and rich performance in certain work settings (Di Fabio & Blustein, 2010; Weisberg, DeYoung, & Hirsh, 2011).

Limitations Suggestions for Future Research

There may be certain issues that contribute to the weaknesses of the study. For example, the data were collected exclusively through self-report method, without the inclusion of multiple sources. Consequently, the relationships between our variables of study may have been inflated due to response bias.

The most common and prevalent issue, like most other researches, is the issue of the sample size. It is somewhat difficult to generalize the findings as sample included only 86 females and 77 male teachers.
The demographic information related to income level and age level is also worth significant for studying the relationship between these variables.

The variables of EI contained further sub-components which are suggested to be examined on large sample.

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