

Job Stress, Happiness and Life Satisfaction: The Moderating Role of Emotional Intelligence Empirical Study in Telecommunication Sector Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to investigate the impact of job stress on employee's happiness and life satisfaction by moderating the relationship through emotional intelligence. 350 employees of telecommunication industry participated for this study, 63% male, Age range was from 23 to 37 and maximum respondents age was 27 Maximum with (Mean=29.21 and S. D=3.36) and Time lagged data through a self-reported questionnaire of emotional intelligence designed by [1], job stress [2], happiness [3] and life satisfaction [4] was collected. Employees of telecom filled the trait measure of emotional intelligence questionnaire and after three weeks' participants completed the perceived stress scale and life satisfaction and happiness scale. Hierarchical regression was applied to test the hypotheses. Three hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 significant level. The results indicates that stress was significant predictor of happiness but factor other than stress might be involved in life satisfaction. Findings of this study also suggest that employees with higher emotional intelligence will perceive less stress and higher level of happiness and life satisfaction. It was also found that married males were more efficient in controlling stress with emotional intelligence than females. Practical implications show that emotional intelligence test at recruitment time must be implemented.

KEY WORDS: Job stress, Emotional Intelligence, Happiness, Life satisfaction.

INTRODUCTION

Environmental uncertainty is an important contingency factor changing organization's structure and behavior from traditional to organic [5]. In this organic and speedily changing environment the main anxiety of the organizations is increased prospect of job stress. Organizations are powerless to assure job safety so in turn they cannot anticipate faithfulness and inspiration from employees. Competitive work places where employees are continuously under gravity to innovate leads job stress. Organizations have to spend millions on job stress. Professional stress related budgets were figured out at billions of dollars per year only in U.S [6]. So job stress is a significant factor of interest in organizational research. Researchers are constantly searching for factors which are helpful either in prompting stress or in reducing the damaging effects of stress [7]. This study tries to meet the gap.

Individuals are unable to understand work requirement and due to unseen and unwanted stress their attitude toward work might be negative [8], [9]. Job stress is defined as "inability of workforces to cope the job pressure due to hole of job demands and employees competencies to justify the job needs" [10].

One of these individual factors that have latent safeguarding effect on stress is emotional intelligence. Stress is entirely reliant on the extent of emotional intelligence that a person may entail. Optimistic properties that emotional intelligence can have on the operative managing of job stress and the improvement of nurse well-being [11]. When individuals practice positive emotions, their psychological and intellectual abilities expand feeling them satisfied with life, happiness and search and explore to come up with more innovative ideas [12].

Effect of job stress is consistent with employee perception whether they can or can't not manage their emotions and other people emotions in applying job [13]. For instance, the ability of workers in telecom sector to understand and manage their own emotions and other worker emotions will reduce their job stress; consequently it will lead to increase employee well-being. Although the nature of this relationship is obvious, stress reduces employee well-being like happiness or life satisfaction but slight is identified about the moderating effect of emotional intelligence due to inadequate empirical researches published in Pakistan.

In service industry, particularly in telecommunication sector, employees are under highly stress, as they need to tackle customers in abundance, so their happiness and life satisfaction level is effected by this job related stress. A dynamic change occurred in telecommunication industry due to technological advancement. Due to the nature of its operations in Pakistan, employees in the telecom industry have to constantly relate with customers. To gratify the massive customers, employees are under stress and to increase their betterment, they need to understand and engage their emotion and the customers' emotion [13]. Therefore, there is usually a great need for employees to display EI in carrying out their tasks at work.

If the employees of telecommunication industry are emotionally intelligent then they can cope with this stress and maintain their happiness and life satisfaction level. Less emotionally intelligent employees failing to cope with job expectations may likely to realize the job related stress and consequences of this stress may impacting on individual's personal life, feeling them less satisfied and low level of happiness from life [14]. Also, feelings of having deficit of abilities and accomplishment among employees are resultant of job stress which may further influence the goals of service industry [15].

The research objective of this study is to investigate the empirical relation between job stress and employee's life satisfaction and happiness. Furthermore, the moderating impact of emotional intelligence was checked on the association of job stress and employee's life satisfaction and happiness. This research will help employees, policy makers and other members of telecommunication industry in developing countries like Pakistan to understand the importance of job stress and employees level of satisfaction from life. Also, about the significance of emotional intelligence at the time of recruitment can play a vital role in avoiding such issues of job stress.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Carver and [17], explains that how people extract a particular situation and its subsequent outcome can have a remarkable impact on their well-being by using their model of self-regulation of behavior. Job stress is an adverse interface between individual and its work setting. It possibly occurs when any element of the work environment is perceived as threatening in itself; as an alarming to the well fare of employees [18]. The ability to use and manage emotions according to situation helps the individuals to reduce their stress [19].

The Moderating role of Emotional Intelligence

Why EI is considered to be a significant feature in service industry? Some occupations, by their features and the background in which they are experienced, are more expected to be stressful? Telecommunication sector is one of them because employees need to solve technical issues and deal with customers on daily basis.

Research results indicate that emotionally intelligent people are more adaptive towards job environments as compare to the individuals who are not emotionally intelligent so their maladaptive behavior leads to negative life outcomes [20]. These findings can be better understood if emotions and cognitive aspects (beliefs, attitudes and values), the elementary columns of behavior are considered. The combination of these both factors plays a significant role in any anthropoid learning process, influential and behavior. Individuals who are under less stress may exercise enhanced level of well- being [25].

One of these individual factors that have an embryonic conservation effect on stress is emotional intelligence that the level and knowledge of stress is entirely contingent on the extent of emotional intelligence that a person may entail. Enthusiastic properties that emotional intelligence container have on the actual supervision of work stress and the augmentation of nurse well-being [11].

Emotional intelligence is a skill to understand, recognize, use, express and manage of emotions in ourself and others [21], [16]. Intrapersonal intelligence prioritizes an aptitude to be in harmony with one's own feelings. Interpersonal intelligence is the talent to get things completed with others. These two types of intelligence are skills that conveniently proposed that good managers have, in addition to analytical and design talent [23]. By contrasting effects of two approaches EI dignified as a trait is predominantly a superior predictor of employee well-being in term of life satisfaction and happiness.

Emotional intelligence provides individuals with realistic evidence to improve their work abilities in Nigerian telecommunication industry which alternatively have positive influence on work performance [15]. Literature has supported that emotional intelligence performances as a fractional moderator in the models of occupational stress [16]. Further studies supported the moderating role of emotional intelligence on the association of job stress and related outcomes [24].

Well-being Indicators

Well-being elements related to human intrinsic motivation are life satisfaction and happiness [25]; [26]. This study investigate these both indicators in service industry.

Life Satisfaction

Literature supported that persons with life satisfaction are those who have; high status at socio-economic level, sound health, high financial resources, employment, a good partner relationship and certain personality characteristic like low neuroticism, highly extrovert and good mental health [25]. Life satisfaction is a subjective

evaluation of individuals whether they are happy, contented and satisfied with their life or not. Individuals who are high in life satisfaction experience many positive consequences in their life like healthier communal, spouse relationship and superior health [28]. Life satisfaction is judgmental and cognitive process, which shows a subjective and worldwide evaluation of a person's life quality [29]. Stress is linked with number of mental disorders which leads to less life satisfaction [30]. Emotionally intelligent persons perceive circumstances as less stressful which outcomes in a greater satisfaction with life [26]. Path analyses in research indicated that the savour and dampening of positive emotions partially mediated the association between EI and both life satisfaction and subjective happiness [31].

Happiness

In social science literature, happiness is usually taken in a sense of subjective enjoyment of individual's life as an entire [29]. Job stress and happiness has been testified as positively and negatively associated. Few researchers have testified the negative affect of stress on well-being [32]. There exists an inverse relation between job stress and employee Happiness [33].

Within an appraisal theory framework [34], the stressed work environment is taken as threat to employee well-being in the form of happiness. When employees under stress deal with customers on daily basis, they can lose their temper, but if they are emotionally intelligent, they can cope with work stress and resulting effect on their level of happiness. While engaging in high degree of emotional intelligence, they may get a control on work stress [35], and get a sense of satisfaction on successfully completing their work tasks, and such feelings of satisfaction may increase happiness or wellbeing [36]. A research study perceived that the Emotional Intelligence Sub-dimensions explain the happiness at the average level [37]. The more the people are emotionally intelligent, the more they are happy with their life activities [31].

In contrast the employees will feel loss if they don't have emotional intelligence, and can't complete their work tasks while having a stressful condition. The lower the degree of emotional control, the greater will be its impact on stress-happiness relationship. At the base of literature: it is hypothesized that:

- H1: Job stress at workplace is significantly associated with Happiness.
- H2: Job stress at workplace has significant relationship with life satisfaction.
- H3: Emotional intelligence expressively moderates the association between job stress and employee happiness and life satisfaction.

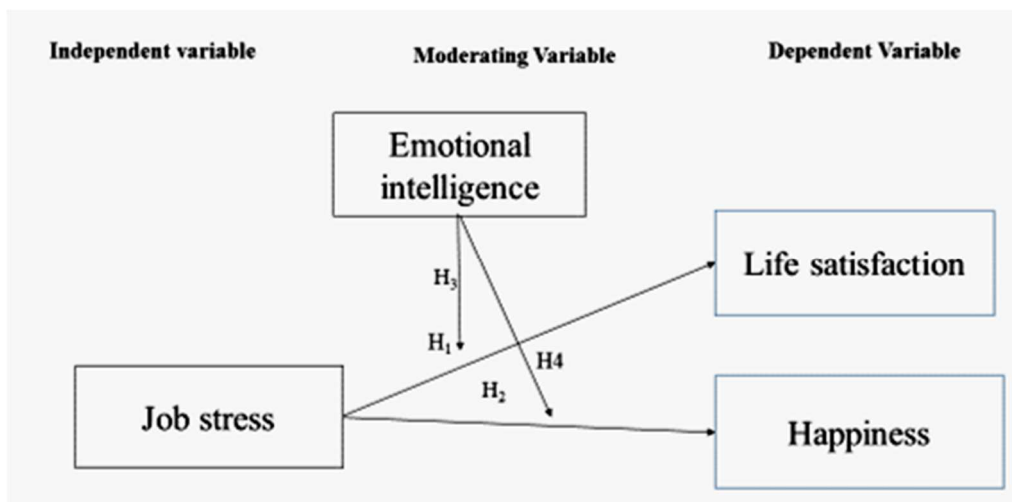


Figure 1: Emotional Intelligence Moderates the Association between job Stress and life satisfaction

METHODOLOGY

Participants

The participants of this study were selected from service industry; the telecommunication. Among telecommunication industry Lahore sector, 350 questionnaires were distributed and 305 participants completely filled the questionnaire. Majority of respondents were male, (63 percent), Age range was from 23 to 37. Maximum respondents age was 27 Maximum with (Mean=29.21 and S.D=3.36). Maximum no of

Procedure

Data were collected from telecommunication industry Lahore. Two departments of telecommunication industry were selected to collect data. Simple random sampling was used to collect data from employees of customer service department and technical solution providers department of telecommunication, Lahore center. Data were taken from the organization employee pay role. There were three shifts running in service and technical departments of telecommunication industry. Due to diversified staff and there varied numbers in different shifts stratified random sampling techniques were used to get data from employees in service centers. Managers of software firm and different service centers were contacted to get data from employees. 350 questionnaires were distributed and 340 were returned. 35 responses were excluded because of missing data. Only 305 responses were completely filled, so the response rate was 87%. Data was collected in two time lags. Initially employees were distributed with emotional intelligence and happiness questionnaire, and after three weeks' employees were given questionnaire comprised of item regarding stress and life satisfaction. The reason to get time lagged data was to avoid from variance due to self-reported questionnaires.

Measures

Perceived stress scale by [2], contaminated at 14 items were used for this study. The four items scale of happiness measurement given by [3] was used. Emotional intelligence was judged by using [1] WLEIS scale. Each dimension of emotional intelligence has four questions. The satisfaction with life were measured by using [4] scale. The scale comprises five questions. Response rate was measured at 5 point Likert scale.

Data Analysis

A Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 24 was used to predict the questionnaire data. Cronbach's alpha was used to measure the reliability of items of selected measures [34]. Secondly, investigation of variance, Pearson correlation analysis and descriptive statistics were used to evaluate the study variables and the effectiveness of the data set [35] Finally, a hierarchical regression analysis, as suggested by [36], was used to evaluate the moderating effect of emotional intelligence in the theorized model. Moderating effect is a collaboration that shows the extent of association between the predictor variables and criterion variables and that may change in the presence of other variables in this association [33], [36].

Respondents' Characteristics

Maximum respondents were male (63 percent), Age range was from 23 to 37 and maximum respondents age was 27 Maximum with (Mean=29.21 and S. D=3.36). About 67 percent respondents were married. employees was having qualification M.BA. About 68 percent respondents were married. Maximum job tenure was 12 and males were having maximum job tenure with (Mean=5.07and s. D=2.218).

Descriptive and Bivariate Correlation

Table 1 represents the outcome of Pearson correlation analysis and descriptive statistic. The means for the all variables range from 2.94 to 3.67. Range from soberly high to highest level of association.

Table 1 also shows the consequences of testing the association between job stress and employee well-being. First, job stress significantly interrelated with employee well-being indicator, Happiness ($r = .238, p > 0.01$). Job stress was also significantly negative interrelated with employee well-being indicator, life satisfaction ($r = .389, p > 0.01$), job stress was also significantly correlated with moderating variable, Emotional intelligence ($r = .438, p > 0.01$). These statistical consequences showed that job stress is a significant analyst of reducing employees Happiness and life satisfaction, and job stress and emotional intelligence are significantly positively correlated.

Table 1 descriptive and bivariate correlation.

| Level | Study Variables | Mean | S.D | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|-------|------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|---|
| | Age | 29.21 | 3.362 | | | | |
| | Job Tenure | 4.94 | 2.083 | | | | |
| | Marital status | 1.67 | .474 | | | | |
| | Stress | 3.4218 | .21759 | 1 | | | |
| | Emotional Intelligence | 3.6619 | .30627 | .438** | 1 | | |
| | Happiness | 3.4667 | .41322 | .238* | .327** | 1 | |
| | Life Satisfaction | 2.9467 | .41163 | .194* | .389** | .329** | 1 |

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

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

Outcomes of Testing Research Hypotheses

Table 2 shows the outcomes of testing hypotheses by hierarchical regression analysis. Linear regression analysis was directed to observe the theoretical model of the study. Four assumptions, the linearity, normality, independence and homoscedasticity of the error distribution were first analyzed, with a extremely significant F values with, $p < 0.0005$, this study’s regression models were a good fit of the data variables; and, Durbin Watson value was: $d = 1.6$ to 1.90 (which exist in critical range $1.5 < d < 2.4$). Likewise, this research satisfies the assumption of linearity. It is assumed that there was no first order linear autocorrelation in our data. The range for tolerance values was 0.7 to 1.0 , which is greater than 0.2 , $T < 0.2$. So in our data, the problem of multicollinearity does not exist. Variance Inflation factor (VIF) for all the model variables range 1.0 to 1.8 and these values are below 10 so exist within prescribed limits. Similarly, the homoscedasticity and normality was evaluated using the P-P-Plot of z^*_{presid} and Z^*_{pred} , which showed no tendency in the error terms.

Demographic variables were added in Step 1 and then added the independent variable (job stress) in Step 2, and moderating variable (interaction between job stress and emotional intelligence) in Step 3. Happiness was the dependent variable. Table 2 shows the outcome of hierarchical regression analysis. Model 1 showed that age was found to be a significantly related with job stress as employees with more age were less effected by stress and hence their happiness level was not affected by stress ($\beta = -.103$, $p < 0.001$), accounting for 7 percent of the variance in dependent variable happiness. Model 2 showed that job stress ($\beta = .21$, $p < 0.05$) was significantly related to happiness, accounting for 16 percent of the variance in dependent variable happiness. Model 3 revealed that the interaction between job stress and emotional intelligence positively and significantly correlated with happiness ($\beta = .324$, $p < 0.01$), so H3 was supported, in terms of explanatory power, the inclusion of emotional intelligence in Model 3 had explained 21% of the variance in dependent variable happiness. Statistically, the outcome reveals that interaction between job stress and emotional intelligence has amplified employee happiness.

The same procedure was repeated for other dependent variable life satisfaction. Table 2 displays the outcome of hierarchical regression analysis. Model 1 displayed that age was a significantly related with job stress as employees with more age were less effected by stress and hence their life satisfaction level was not affected by stress ($\beta = -.183$, $p < 0.05$), accounting for 2% of the variance in dependent variable life satisfaction. Model 2 displayed that job stress ($\beta = .48$, $p < 0.05$) was not a significantly related to life satisfaction, but Model 2 also showed that emotional intelligence ($\beta = .52$, $p < 0.01$), accounting for 28 percent of the variance in dependent variable life satisfaction. Model 3 exposed that the interaction between job stress and emotional intelligence positively and significantly linked with life satisfaction ($\beta = .326$, $p < 0.01$), so H3 was supported, in terms of explanatory power, the inclusion of emotional intelligence in Model 3 had explained 30 percent of the variance in dependent variable life satisfaction. Statistically, the result reveals that interaction between job stress and emotional intelligence has enhanced employee life satisfaction. More, the research confirms that emotional intelligence acts as a moderating variable in the job stress models of telecommunication sector.

Table 2: Hierarchical Regression Analysis

| Variable | Dependent variable Happiness | | | Dependent variable Life satisfaction | | |
|---|------------------------------|---------|---------|--------------------------------------|---------|---------|
| | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 |
| Control variables | | | | | | |
| Age | -.103* | -.087 | .007 | -.183* | -.163 | -.068 |
| Gender | .120 | .111 | .097 | .003 | -.082 | -.096 |
| Marital status | .176 | .184 | .101 | .045 | .047 | -.037 |
| Job tenure | .183 | .090 | .044 | .243 | .204 | .157 |
| Independent variable | | | | | | |
| Job Stress | | .205* | .135 | | | |
| Independent variable | | | | | | |
| Job Stress | | | | | | .045 |
| Emotional intelligence | | | .136 | | .512*** | .444 |
| Moderator (job stress*emotional intelligence) | | | .324** | | | .326** |
| R2 | .076 | .164 | .214 | .023 | .282 | .30 |
| Adjusted R Square | .034 | .106 | .150 | -.021 | .232 | .240 |

DISCUSSION

The current study investigated the linkage between job stress and life satisfaction and happiness in a sample of service industry, the telecommunication sector of Lahore, Pakistan. The results show that working in telecommunication sector is highly stressed job, and negatively affected the happiness but show no effect for life satisfaction. According to [37], females are more conscious about their emotional expression and interpersonal relationships and this study shows parallel results to this literature.

Results show that age was negatively related with stress, the more the ages were, the less was the job stress and more were the emotional intelligence. [38] instituted age was significantly positively linked with anxiety so our results are not in line with previous results.

Generally senior people are expected to be more emotionally intelligent, wise, more aware [39], It is perceived that life experiences make you more emotionally wise, [39] found emotional intelligence increases slightly but significantly with age, even the relationship between EI and age, there are many young people with high EI and many older people with lower EI. This study is in line with the results of [39], and [40] individuals becomes emotionally intelligent with aging.

H1 was supported, results are in line with appraisal theory framework that stressful situation at workplace have significant effect on employee happiness [30] results of this study also consistent with the studies by [32], [16], [27]. Hypothesis 2 was not supported. There is also negative association between stress and life satisfaction [40] but our results are not in-line with this research. Results indicate that there are factors other than stress which have impact on employee life satisfaction like these may be low salary package; good or bad partner relation etc. Ability of emotional evaluation may cause with deep understanding feeling, and people with this ability can handle life issues more wisely. Emotional intelligence procedures primarily starts with perceptual system, and EI allows for the precise appraisal and expression of feelings [41]. Accordingly, employees with high EI might understand their stress timely [40] and handle it wisely and don't let the stress to impact on life satisfaction and happiness. This study shows that Individuals in telecommunication sector with high appraisal of emotion, can moderate the relationship between stress and life satisfaction and happiness. Similarly, in an experimental study [42], under stress, the reaction of scientific problem solving was high among individual high in emotional intelligence, so Results are in consistent with the thoughts of [11], [16], [13],[42].

Emotional intelligence displayed a moderating role for employee happiness and life satisfaction. It indicates that the ability of telecommunication employees to appropriately manage their emotions and other employee emotions can enhance their capabilities to cope with job stress in executing job. Consequently, it may clue to higher level of happiness and life satisfaction. This study contributes in theoretical knowledge of job stress.

In respect of practical implications, the results of this research can be used as a guideline by the management to reduce job stress problems in organizations. Many practical implications are; firstly, for hiring purpose, managers in organizations should not only focus on knowledge, skills and technical abilities, they must also focus on hiring such persons who are emotionally intelligent. For this objective they must include few activities at interviewing time to judge the applicant's emotional intelligence level. Secondly, managers should update the content and training techniques, the contents based on technical skills improvement should be replaced by enhancing emotional skills so employees can understand well the concepts and theories of emotional intelligence and use them in their professional life to reduce stress level. Thirdly, management should encourage employees for team management because when employees are working in teams they can easily implement the strategies of emotional intelligence and also understand self and other person's emotions and how to use and manage emotions. Fourthly, appreciation and encouragement at workplace leads to enhance motivation which is helpful in reducing job stress. Encouragement can be done through counselling and guidance. Lastly, organizations should provide work-life balance initiatives, like time flexibility and five days in a week is good exercise in Pakistan because due to collectivistic culture employees must have enough time to manage family issues. In addition, to reduce job stress organizations should arrange company tour to make them relax mentally and inside the organizations they must have gym or sports place to make them mentally stress free. If management focus on these strategies, they can boost up level of happiness and life satisfaction.

Despite of theoretical and practical implications, this study has few limitations. This study uses self-reported questionnaire to collect the data, although data was collected in two times to reduced biasness. This study has generalizability issues as it was conducted only in telecommunication sector, further studies with different sampling techniques should be conducted in other service sectors like health, education to generalize its results.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that employees working with telecommunication industry can handle their job stress with the moderating role of emotional intelligence and reduce the effect of job stress on life satisfaction and happiness.

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