

The Dimensionality of Emotional Intelligence in Malaysian Manufacturing Companies: A Gender Analysis

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Emotional Intelligence (EI) is able to help an individual to perform better as well as to maintain good relationship with co-workers in organizations. Gender is known to be one of the possible factors that could contribute to EI among employees. However, limited effort was exerted in investigating gender difference in the dimensionality of EI, particularly in the context of Malaysian manufacturing sector. Therefore, the main purpose of this research is to investigate the gender difference in EI among 203 employees in selected Malaysian manufacturing companies through the method of simple random sampling. The result indicated that there was no gender difference in global EI as well as all EI dimension, except Regulation of Emotion.

Keywords: Gender Difference, Emotional Intelligence, Organizational Psychology, WLEIS.

In recent years, the attention to gender differences has been concerned in the field of cognition (Riley et al., 2016). It was believed that, by understanding the gender differences in cognition, it could help future organizations in ensuring that emotional information is conveyed effectively (Tyng et al., 2017). Among the topics of cognition, gender difference on Emotional Intelligence (EI) has been paid limited attention in the past decade (Atta, Ather, & Bano, 2013; Tsaousis & Kazi, 2013). In addition to that, although a number of studies had been conducted to test the gender difference in EI, most of the studies were conducted in Western context, hence resulting limited studies in developing countries like Malaysia (Al-Shahomee, Furnham, and Lynn, 2017). It should be cautioned that, cultural differences could affect an individual's EI in certain contexts, hence more studies should be conducted to validate the result (McNulty et al., 2016). Studies are suggested to be conducted in order to collect valid argument where research could help to prevent prejudiced ideas or stereotypes in community, where human always claimed that female understands language of emotion better than male (Chaplin, 2015).

In EI studies, it is crucial to include gender difference into the design of studies (Salguero,

Extremera, & Fernández-Berrocal, 2012). This is because gender is known as one of the influential factors that could predict and differ EI's ability (Bhatti, 2013; Cabello et al., 2016; Bacon, Lenton-Maughan, & May, 2018). Genders could affect EI from the social process of individuals, as well as affecting EI through the factor of biological (Meshkat & Nejati, 2017). Although there are few studies conducted in investigating gender difference on EI, the results from past studies are inconsistent and failed to provide a clear picture of the gender difference (Shehzad & Mahmood, 2013; Atta et al., 2013; Lopez-Zafra & Gartzia, 2014). Dhani and Sharma (2017) claimed that, the results of gender difference on EI are inconsistent due to different theory developers of EI, such as Goleman's EI theory versus Mayer's EI theory. Besides the issues of theory developers, Lopez-Zafra and Gartzia (2014) argued that the inconsistency of results in past studies is due to different instruments and different approaches of theoretical were adopted by different scholars. Consequently, there is a lacking of strong empirical proof about gender differences in EI.

Other than theoretical issues, several scholars mentioned about the issues of EI measures and approaches as well. For example, the fundamental explanation for gender difference

on EI remains to be unclear, particularly self-reported approach of EI measures (Lopez-Zafra & Gartzia, 2014). Besides, Hayat et al. (2016) mentioned that, it is unsafe to conclude gender difference on EI due to respondents' wrong perception on self-reported EI measures; hence more studies should be conducted to distinguish the gender. Furthermore, there is a lacking of studies that have not considered EI dimensions in self-reported measures, which could explain the gaps among EI instruments (Lopez-Zafra & Gartzia, 2014). In short, the complexity of the pattern of male-female in EI has been challenging without more investigations (Fernández-Berrocal et al., 2012).

Therefore, this study is intended to examine gender difference on EI among the employees in Malaysian manufacturing companies. Gender is chosen among other demographic variables because gender has greater contribution on EI as compared to other variables, such as age (Cabello et al., 2016). Besides, Kong (2017) mentioned that, there is a lacking of studies that have explored gender differences on EI using Wong and Law (2002) Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS) instrument. Especially in Malaysia context, in the past decade (2009-2019), only few studies were conducted to examine the gender difference in EI, where the studies were conducted only in educational context (Atta, Ather, and Bano, 2013; Bunyaan, Tan, and Loo, 2015; Yoke and Panatik, 2016), banking sector (Yunus et al., 2012), and service sector (Zainal, Zawawi, Aziz, and Ali, 2017; Othman, Abdullah, and Ahmad, 2009). Consequently, the research of gender difference on EI that adopted WLEIS among employees in Malaysian manufacturing sector is lacking in the past decade. More studies are needed because the context of educational is significantly different with the context of corporate (Saharan and Bougie, 2016). Hence, this study used WLEIS to obtain the responses of EI from the selected employees. These had led us to have specific objectives for this study.

Objectives

The aims of conducting this study are as follows:

- a. To investigate gender differences in total EI among the employees in Malaysian manufacturing companies.
- b. To determine gender differences in Regulation of Emotion among the employees in Malaysian manufacturing companies.
- c. To examine gender differences in Self-Emotion Appraisal among the employees in Malaysian manufacturing companies.
- d. To study gender differences in Others' Emotion Appraisal among the employees in Malaysian manufacturing companies.
- e. To investigate gender differences in Using Emotion among the employees in Malaysian manufacturing companies.

Hypotheses

Previous studies have linked genders with EI. Bhatti (2013) has conducted a study on the employees of Hyderabad organizations to investigate the gender difference on EI. The finding of the study revealed that there was no significant difference between male and female on EI, where p value is more than 0.05. On the other hand, Alavinia and Alikhani (2014) had carried out a study among the learners of universities to determine whether genders differed in their EI. The finding of the study indicated that, there was a significant gender difference in learners' EI. This suggests that genders may affect learners' EI during their learning process. The scholars found that female has higher EI as compared to male.

Other than that, Jiang (2014) conducted a research among learners in Korean universities to examine gender differences in four branches of EI, namely Regulation of Emotion, Self-Emotion Appraisal, Others' Emotion Appraisal, and Use of Emotion. Contradictorily, the result revealed that there were no significant gender differences in the four branches of EI among the learners. However, although Cabello et al. (2016) examined four branches of EI as well, their study revealed different results as Jiang (2014). The scholars discovered that significant gender difference was found on four branches of EI.

On top of that, Bacon et al (2018) conducted another study to investigate the gender difference in EI. The scholars adopted two dimensions of EI for their study, namely Self-control and Emotionality. The finding of study revealed that

there was a significant gender difference in EI dimensions. Male was found to have higher self-control, while female was found to have higher emotionality. From the major findings as per discussed, it can be seen that the results of past studies failed to provide consistency of the gender difference in EI. Hence, hypotheses below were developed for this study:

- H1: There is no significant gender difference in global EI among the employees in Malaysia manufacturing companies.
- H1a: There is no significant gender difference in Regulation of Emotion among the employees in Malaysian manufacturing companies.
- H1b: There is no significant gender difference in Self-Emotion Appraisal among the employees in Malaysian manufacturing companies.
- H1c: There is no significant gender difference in Others' Emotion Appraisal among the employees in Malaysian manufacturing companies.
- H1d: There is no significant gender difference in Use of Emotion among the employees in Malaysian manufacturing companies.

Method

Sample and Procedures

The global EI and the dimensions of EI among different genders were investigated through the approach of survey. This study was conducted in Malaysian manufacturing sector. In order to maximize the level of generalization, all categories of employees in the selected manufacturing companies were targeted as the population of this study. Manufacturing sector is commonly known as the sector that constantly faces various types of stressors, which could affect the performance of employees (Altındağ and Köseadağı, 2015). Hence, their EI was concerned because employees with higher EI could cope with stressors better (Bao, Xue, and Kong, 2015). To collect their response on EI, about 250 questionnaires were distributed randomly to the selected respondents. Of 250 sets, 203 sets were completed and valid for further analysis. In order to prevent ethical

issue, ethical concern was conducted by acknowledging the respondents about their participation in this research, as well as keeping their data as private and confidential.

Measures

Multiple items were adopted for the purpose to measure the variable and dimensions. Five Likert scales were prepared for each item and the respondents were asked to provide their response based on the scales, where 1= Strongly Disagree, to 5 = Strongly Agree.

Emotional Intelligence: Operationally, EI is defined as the ability to distinguish feeling precisely, to create emotions to support one's thinking, to comprehend the knowledge about emotions, and to control emotions thoughtfully in order to stimulate intellectual and emotional growth (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). Regulation of Emotion (ROE) structure consists of 4-item measure, where it measures the extent to which the ability of an individual to regulate emotion to recover from emotional distress. Self-emotion Appraisal (SEA) structure consists of 4-item measure, where it measures the degree of an individual controls his or her own moods or emotions when positive or negative incidents happen in the environment, which depends on their capability to observe, assess, and alter to changing mood. Others' Emotion Appraisal (OEA) structure consists of 4-item measure as well, where it measures the ability of an individual to recognise and comprehend others' emotion accurately. Lastly, Use of Emotion (UOE) structure consists of 4-item measure, where it measures the ability of an individual to create emotions which can help in judging and facilitating the process of decision-making. All the items of EI structures were obtained from Wong and Law (2002) Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS). The composite reliability (CR) values of EI structures are 0.89 (ROE), 0.90 (SEA), 0.90 (OEA), and 0.88 (UAE). While, the Cronbach Alpha values of total EI is 0.89. As for gender, the respondents were asked to tick either Male or Female.

Results

Multivariate Tests

Multivariate tests were conducted by the authors to ensure that the constructs were not

violating the rules of multivariate research. Table 1 indicated the values of tolerance, variance inflation factor (VIF), and average variance extracted (AVE). Tolerance value of less than 0.10, or a VIF value of above 10 suggests the possibility of multicollinearity (Pallant, 2013). Hence, from Table 1, it could be seen that the constructs were not violating the rules of multicollinearity. Besides, convergent validity is acceptable when AVE value of the construct is at least 0.50. Hence, it could be claimed that the constructs of present research did not violate the rule thumb of convergent validity.

Table 1: Multivariate Tests

Constructs	Tolerance	VIF	AVE
Regulating Emotion	.478	2.090	0.85
Self-Emotion Appraisal	.445	2.249	0.82
Others' Emotion Appraisal	.708	1.412	0.81
Use of Emotions	.476	2.102	0.82

Characteristics of Respondents

Demographic information was tabulated in Table 2. As indicated, both genders shared almost the same ratio among respondents, where half of the respondents are female, while 49.75% of them are male. As for the age grouping, majority of the respondents are in the range of 31-35 years old, while minority of them are below 21 years old. This suggests that most of the respondents are categorized as young adults (31-35 years old). Among the respondents, around half (55%) of them are Malays, a quarter of them are Chinese, 15% of them are Indian, and minority of them are other races. In the selected manufacturing companies, most of the employees have been providing services for more than 10 years, while minority of them serve the companies for less than one year. As for the education level, one third of the respondents graduated from Bachelor's degree, followed by Upper Secondary School (28.57%), and Diploma (27.59%). Lastly, three quarters of the respondents are married, only 1.48% of them are divorced.

Gender Differences on EI and its Dimensions

The significance of gender differences on total EI, ROE, SEA, OEA, and UOE was examined. Table 3 illustrated the significance of gender difference on the dimensions. For the first hypothesis (H1), the finding revealed that hypothesis is supported because there is no significant gender difference on total EI in this study. Followed by Hypothesis 2 (H2), the result is not supporting the hypothesis because significant gender difference was found on ROE. Other than this, the remaining hypotheses (H3 to H5) were supported in this study, where significant difference on SEA, OEA, and UOE was found among the males and females. Besides the gender difference, the result of this study revealed that, male scored higher in the aspect of total EI, ROE, OEA, and UOE than female. While, females scored higher in the aspect of SEA, as compared to males.

Table 2: Demographic Information of Respondents

Characteristics	Items	Frequency (n=203)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	101	49.75
	Female	102	50.25
Age	Below 21 years old	1	0.49
	21-25	20	9.85
	26-30	29	14.29
	31-35	43	21.18
	36-40	29	14.29
	41-45	27	13.30
	45-50	33	16.26
Races	51 and above	21	10.34
	Malay	112	55.17
	Chinese	57	28.08
	Indian	31	15.27
Tenure	Others	3	1.48
	Less than 1 year	11	5.42
	1-2 years	29	14.29
	3-4 years	26	12.81

	5-6 years	26	12.81
	7-8 years	14	6.90
	9-10 years	19	9.36
	More than 10 years	78	38.42
Education Level	Upper Secondary	58	28.57
	Pre-University	4	1.97
	Diploma	56	27.59
	Bachelor	67	33.00
	Master	17	8.37
	Doctoral	1	0.49
Marital Status	Single	54	26.60
	Married	146	71.92
	Divorced	3	1.48

Discussion and Conclusion

In present study, each hypothesis was tested through statistical programme. Firstly, Hypothesis 1 was supported, where there is no significant gender difference in global EI among the employees of Malaysian manufacturing companies. This finding is contradicted with most of the previous studies. For example, several scholars mentioned that there is a gender difference in global EI among the respondents (Aram, 2013; Van Deursen et al., 2015; Ajmal, Javed, and Javed, 2017; Nadaf and Campus, 2018). However, there are also minority of studies revealed the similar finding. For instance, Rao and Komala (2017) as well as McKinley et al. (2014) revealed that there is no significant gender difference in EI among the respondents. Besides, Taliani et al. (2016) as well as Singh

and Kumar (2016) reported that male-female did not significantly differ in the total EI. This shows that gender is not the single factor that could cause variations in the total EI among the employees in the selected manufacturing companies.

Second, Hypothesis 1a was not supported, where there is a significant gender difference in Regulation of Emotion (ROE) among the respondents. This finding is similar with previous studies. For instance, Rey et al. (2018) discovered that there is a gender difference in ROE among the respondents, where male scored higher in ROE than female. Similar to this study, male scored higher in ROE, which suggests that male is better in regulating their emotions in the selected manufacturing companies in Malaysia. Besides, Velotti et al. (2016) revealed the similar finding as well, where male significantly scored higher in ROE than female. Nonetheless, Khan-Woehle, Harris, and Forthun (2015) found contradict finding, where there was insignificant gender difference in ROE.

Next, Hypothesis 1b was supported in this study, where there is no significant gender difference in Self-Emotion Appraisal (SEA) among the employees in Malaysian manufacturing companies. Previous studies showed insignificant gender difference in SEA as well. For instance, Ali (2016) discovered the similar finding, where male and female insignificantly differ in SEA in China context. Besides, Lievens, Klehe, and Libbrecht (2011) also revealed that there is no significant gender difference was found in SEA. However, this result is contradicted with few prior studies. For example, Bryant and Malone (2015) found that there is significant gender difference in SEA

Table 3: Significance of Gender Differences on EI and Dimensions

	Constructs	Mean (Male)	Mean (Female)	t value	Significance (p value)	Hypotheses Decisions
H1	Global EI	3.83	3.73	1.300	0.20	Supported
H1a	ROE	3.89	3.66	2.366	0.02	Not supported
H1b	SEA	3.87	3.88	-0.177	0.91	Supported
H1c	OEA	3.56	3.51	0.537	0.59	Supported
H1d	UOE	4.01	3.86	1.413	0.16	Supported

Note: Significant if $p < 0.05$.

among the respondents, where female scored higher in SEA as compared to male.

Followed by Hypothesis 1c, this hypothesis was supported in this study, where there is no significant gender difference in Others' Emotion Appraisal (OEA) among the employees in Malaysian manufacturing companies. The result is similar to Tompkins, Galbraith, and Bas (2011), where the genders did not significantly differ in OEA. Besides, Parolini (2005) also revealed that male and female did not differ in OEA in both China and Korea context. Contradictorily, Chen, O'Rourke, and Xu (2014) reported that female significantly scored higher in OEA, which suggested that there is a significant gender difference in OEA. Similarly, Koveshnikov, Wechtler, and Dejoux (2014) also discovered that the genders significantly differ in OEA among their respondents.

Lastly, Hypothesis 1d was supported in this study as well, where there is no significant gender difference in Use of Emotion (UOE) among the employees in Malaysian manufacturing companies. This finding is contradicted with most of the previous studies. For example, Shukla and Srivastava (2016) revealed that the genders differed significantly in UOE among the respondents, where male scored higher in UOE than female. This suggests that male is better at using emotion to facilitate their thinking. Besides, Jimoh, Olayide, and Heed (2012) also found that female significantly scored higher in UOE than male in the study. Abdollahpour et al. (2016) revealed that there is a significant gender difference in UOE, where female scored higher in UOE. Although most of the previous studies agreed on significant gender difference, Pachenco and Sánchez-Álvarez (2019) supported this study by revealing that there is no significant gender difference in UOE among the respondents.

Overall, the objectives of this research have been attained. Due to the literature gap of gender difference in WLEIS EI dimensions in Malaysia context, this research has contributed to the new insight of gender difference of EI dimensionality by using the instrument of WLEIS. The insight is crucial for Malaysia manufacturing sector because EI training could be designed based on

the findings in order to improve the effectiveness of training in this stressful sector in Malaysia.

Conclusion

To summarize, this study proved that there is no gender difference of global EI and WLEIS dimensions among the employees in Malaysian manufacturing companies, except the construct of ROE. Although careful measure was taken by authors, this study has few limitations. Firstly, the EI was measured in self-reporting approach, where the respondents might exaggerate their response. It is recommended that future study should obtain EI findings from different sources, such as supervisors or co-workers. Secondly, the number of manufacturing companies that participated in this research is rather limited, hence limiting the generalization of findings. Future research is suggested to conduct further investigation on more organizations in the selected industry. Besides limitations, this study has implications as well. This study provided meaningful information through the findings. The information could be useful for human resource practitioners to gain further understanding on the gender difference on EI. Through analysing the dimensionality of EI, practitioners or management team members could gain deeper understanding on the gender difference in specific dimension of EI. This could help them in getting the right EI training courses for the particular gender.

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