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EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND LIFE-SATISFACTION: MEDIATING ROLE OF MORAL COURAGE IN GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES OF PAKISTAN

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Emotional Intelligence, Moral Courage, Life-Satisfaction, Government Employees

Abstract

The research aimed to find out the relationship between emotional intelligence, moral courage, and life-satisfaction of government employees in Pakistan. It was hypothesized that there is likely to be a relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Life-Satisfaction, Emotional Intelligence and Life-Satisfaction would likely to predict moral courage, and moral courage would likely to mediate the relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Life-Satisfaction of government employees in Pakistan. A Co-relational Research design was used in this study. . Purposive sampling was used to collect data from eight government departments. A total of 120 participants was recruited in the research. Results depicted a significant correlation between emotional intelligence, moral courage, and life-satisfaction. Regression Analysis revealed that moral courage significant predicts life-satisfaction in government employees. Moreover, mediation analysis using the macro PROCESS software reported moral courage as a significant mediator between emotional intelligence and life satisfaction.



1. Introduction

Government employees are responsible for creating a fair and just environment at their workplace. They may face responsibilities and orders from authorities that require adequate and ethical decision making (Malik, 2003). Therefore they have to identify all those challenges and attempt to deal with them. Emotional intelligence played an important role in the productivity of individuals at the workplace, thus it is needed to focus on strategies that would help to deal the workplace challenges (Sahdat, Sajjad, Farooq & Rehman, 2011).

Emotional intelligence is the awareness, regulation, and discrimination of different emotions and the use of emotional information to direct one's thinking and actions (Salovey & Mayer, 1997). Emotional intelligence is a learned capacity of an individual, which can lead to outstanding work performance (Goleman, 1996). It is the capability of an individual to identify, comprehend and use emotional information about self or others that results in effective and higher performance in daily life functions (Boyatzis & Sala, 2004)

Cherniss (2000) also explained that the ability of an individual to perceive, identify and manage emotions formulate the social and emotional intelligence, which lead to the professional success of an individual. Therefore, organizational psychologists tend to help their clients and employees to use and enhance their emotional

intelligence in order to achieve psychological well-being and productivity at workplace.

Dulewicz and Higgs (2001) focused on the application of emotional intelligence in organizational settings by developing and testing a model, it was claimed that emotional intelligence significantly leads to effective job performance. It was also described that emotional intelligence helps to predict healthy occupational behaviors like leadership, career progress, effectively working in group, dealing with occupational stress, and effective job performance, and it provides a foundation for the competencies required in any job (Cherniss & Goleman, 2001).

Saarni (1999) described that the eight skills of emotional intelligence that differ in their ways and grading can be broadened to moral values that instigate a moral action. The author described that emotional intelligence is the ability of an individual to manage his emotions. Therefore moral dispositions are surrounded by the concepts of emotional intelligence as sympathy, self-control, fairness and a sense of obligation, and personal integrity (Magnus, Viswesvaran, Joseph & Deshpande, 2008).

Life-Satisfaction is a global concept that describes the cognitive evaluation of an individual's overall satisfaction with life or regarding specific life domains like family, friends, work environment, or self (Fogle, Huebner & Laughlin, 2002).

Literature has demonstrated a significant link between emotional intelligence and attributes of humans i.e., life satisfaction, the quality of

interpersonal relationships, academic and occupational achievement and proposed it as an important predictor of real-life outcomes (Charbonneau & Nicol, 2002). Kumar (2014) identified that emotional intelligence helps individuals to manage moods and impulses at the workplace and predicts productive professional outcome. Similarly, Law, Wong, and Li (2007) mentioned that emotional intelligence is a positive construct that plays a significant role in effective job-performance and life-satisfaction.

Moral courage, described by Lachman, Murray, Iseminger and Ganske (2012) as the willingness to stand up for and act according to one's ethical beliefs and standards when moral principles are threatened, regardless of the perceived or actual risks, such as stress, anxiety, isolation from colleagues, or threats to employment). Generally, it is considered that the usual task of government and government employees is to provide services and facilities to their Nation at the best level whereas government employees in Pakistan are facing different challenges at the personal as well as at institutional level. For instance, they face bribery, are forced to take un-ethical decisions, are compelled to involve in corruption, are threatened by loss of a job, etc. (Ahmed, n.d) thus all such factors may lead to the decline in the life-satisfaction of the government employee. Emotional Intelligence is an important workplace construct that widely predicts the success of employees as well as predicts institutional success. Moral Courage is important to deal with different

situations in every organization, as individuals in all organizations encounter pressures to improve their productivity. Such pressures may affect the decision-making process of managers, therefore taking decisions in haste would lead them to short-cut their judgment without focusing on the original objectives, which may compromise the ethical decision-making. Therefore it was concluded that if people were asked to be morally courageous in their professional dealings then effective moral decisions can be easily made (Sekerka, McCarthy & Bagozzi, 2011). If employees lack moral courage to take stand for their rights and for the rights of their colleagues then they would feel distress about their job, and it will lead to unemployment, because it requires a great deal of moral courage to negotiate with one's boss.

According to Bagozzi, Sekerka, Hill and Sguera (2013) moral values are the forces that motivate the person to act in a morally courageous way. The authors claimed that moral values are the emotive mechanisms that are necessary to establish a positive and ethical action in human organizational systems. It is necessary for the organizations to develop their institution based virtue or value system, that help to identify the employee-specific moral foundations and then enhance the awareness of such moral values to promote the formulation of organizational specific values

1.1 Hypotheses

H1: There is likely to be a relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Life-Satisfaction and moral courage

H2: Emotional Intelligence and Life-Satisfactions like to predict moral courage

H3: Moral courage is likely to mediate the relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Life-Satisfaction of government employees in Pakistan

1.2 Significance of the study

Government Service is considered as backbone for every country's development. The effective, efficient and ethically sound performance of government staff is essential for smooth working of administration. Therefore, it is necessary to understand and regulate situation specific emotions so that they are able to show appropriate responses in ethically charged situations. The ethical responsibilities and orders from authorities are sometimes in-compatible and require adequate and ethical decision making. It is important to practice courage at workplace and it is an important trait of organizational members, and a quality that would make the ethical behavior possible in organizational settings (Verschoor, 2004).

While moral courage helps the employees to stand the threats and risks at the workplace due to unethical situations. It is also important to assess the moral courage of employees to make them understand how to take moral decisions. Thus it is necessary to assess the emotional intelligence and moral courage of employees which gives them an understanding that how emotional intelligence will help the employees to be morally courageous in

ethically charged situations, which ultimately predict their life-satisfaction.

The causes of un-ethical decision making at workplace may include individual's personality, job-characteristics, work-group characteristics or organizational culture. However most significant factor is emotional intelligence that lead to ethical or un-ethical decision making at workplace was seriously ignored (Magnus, Viswesvaran, Joseph & Deshpande, 2008). Individuals face ethical, moral, threatening and disastrous situations while interacting with people. Therefore in order to be satisfied with their life people need to deal every situation efficiently so that they would not have to feel guilty later in life, as there is an inverse relationship between guilt and life-satisfaction (Miller, Chakravarthy & Rekha, 2008).

The concept of emotional intelligence concerning moral courage is not well researched in the Pakistani context. There were researches conducted to assess the emotional intelligence of employees in different departments but moral courage was not studied regarding workplace settings. In the past researches, the focus is primarily on the physical and environmental causes of corruption and poor work performance. However, no focus was given on the psychological factors of un-ethical decision-making. The current research explored the role of emotional intelligence in taking morally courageous decisions as a mediator at the workplace, in predicting life-satisfaction in government employees.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Research Design

The correlational research design was used in this research, to assess the relationship between emotional intelligence, moral courage and life satisfaction of government employees.

2.2 Sampling and Data

The data was collected from targeted population through purposive sampling. A total 120 participants of age-range 24-60 years ($M = 39.05$, $SD = 11.01$) were recruited for this research. The data was collected in 4 months from 8 different provincial government departments of Punjab, Lahore.

2.3 Measures

Following tools were used in the current research;

2.3.1. Genos Emotional Intelligence-Concise (Palmer & Stough, 2001). It measures the frequency with which the individual shows the emotionally intelligent behaviors in workplace settings on seven dimensions, i.e., emotional self-awareness, emotional expression, emotional awareness of others, emotional reasoning, emotional self-management of others, and emotional self-control. The inventory measures the scores of participants on a five-point Likert Scale from "Rarely" to "Almost Always". The Genos Emotional Intelligence-Concise Version consisted of 31-items, was used to measure the emotional intelligence of employees. The Cronbach alpha ∞ reliability of Genos Emotional Intelligence for this research was found to be .78.

2.3.2. Professional Moral Courage Scale (Sekerka, Bagozzi & Charnigo, 2009). This tool measures the competency of the managers or employees at the workplace to face ethical challenges with a moral response. The professional moral courage scale measures the moral courage of employees during the decision-making process on five dimensions/themes; (i) Moral Agency (ii) Multiple Values (iii) Endures Threat (iv) Goes beyond Compliance (v) Moral Goal. The tool measures moral courage using a 7-point Likert Scale from 1 (Never) to 7 (Always). The Cronbach Alpha ∞ Reliability of Professional Moral Courage Scale was .81 for the current research.

2.3.3. Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener, Emmons, Larsen & Griffin, 1985). It is a tool that measures the global cognitive judgments of one's life satisfaction. The scale consists of total 5 statements on which the participant rate their satisfaction with life on a 7-point Likert Scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree). Satisfaction with Life Scale has strong internal reliability and moderate temporal stability. For the current research the Cronbach alpha ∞ coefficient was .81.

2.3.4. Demographic Information Sheet. A Demographic Information Sheet was devised by the researcher to record the basic and significant demographic characteristics of the participants, i.e., Duration of Job, Relationship with Boss and Co-Workers, factors affecting the decision-making of employees, and work environment.

2.4 Procedure

The researcher took permission from the authors of the tool to use and translate the tools for the current research. The tools were translated according to the MAPI guidelines. The head of different government departments was approached and permission for data collection was sought.

A Pilot Study was conducted to identify any difficulty faced by participants, to identify any error in the measuring tools, and to assess the response rate of the participants. The total time of administration was also assessed which was 20-25 minutes. The responses of participants were analyzed after the pilot study. After the pilot study, 120 employees were recruited in the research from 8 government departments, who fulfilled the inclusion criteria of the study. At first, the participants were informed about the nature, aims, and objectives of the research. The consent of participants was taken before the collection of data. After the collection of data, a preliminary analysis was run by the researcher using SPSS 20.

Descriptive Analysis was carried out for categorical variables (*frequency* and *percentages*) and continuous variables (*Mean* and *Standard Deviation*). Then Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Backward Regression Analysis were run to assess the relationship and prediction between the variables.

3. Results and Discussion

The demographic characteristics (Table 1) of the participants showed that most of the participants of the current study were men i.e., 101, and only

19 were women. For the current research, the basic pay scale of the majority of participants was 17, and a great number of government employees were satisfied with their job.

Moreover, Pearson Product Moment Correlation (Table 2) revealed that emotional intelligence significantly correlated with moral courage, $r = .45$, $p < .001$ and life-satisfaction, $r = .52$, $p < .001$. This showed that higher emotional integrity is linked with greater courage and enhanced satisfaction with life. Similarly, there is also a significant positive correlation between Moral Courage and Life-Satisfaction of government employees.

Regression Analysis (Table 3) was run to find out the predictors of life-satisfaction in government employees. The analysis revealed moral courage was the significant predictor of life-satisfaction in government employees. The model was significant $F(2, 117) = 90.77$, $p < .001$. The model was significant and accounted for 60% variance in life-satisfaction of government employees.

Furthermore, mediational analysis (Table 4) found moral courage as a fully mediator between government employees' emotional intelligence and their life satisfaction. An overall mediation model was significant emotional intelligence significantly predicted moral courage $F(2, 117) = 90.77$ and the model explained variance of 20%. Emotional Intelligence did not directly predict life satisfaction, ($\beta = 1.89$, $p = .06$). However when the mediator moral courage was added the indirect

path become significant ($\beta=.03$, $p=.000$) and the model explain 60% of the variance.

4. Discussion

The results of Pearson Product Moment Correlation revealed that there is a significant positive correlation between emotional intelligence, moral courage, and life-satisfaction. It shows that a person who can deal the emotional situations, and able to regulate his strong emotions and manage them appropriately then he would be able to to decide with moral courage. Previous literature (Magnus, Viswesvaran, Deshpande & Joseph, 2008) also supported the results of the current research i.e. if government employees are emotionally intelligent then they would likely to take their decisions in a morally courageous way, as they are better able to recognize the emotions and intentions of others, and can deal the ethical situations. This is because emotionally intelligent individuals are aware of their emotions and of emotions of others thus they are capable to identify the intentions and responses of other people and are better able to interpret the ethical orientation of others' actions than those who reported low on emotional intelligence.

Similarly, the results of the analysis also depict that there is a strong positive correlation between emotional intelligence and the life-satisfaction of government employees, which was also explained by Ardahan (2012). This relationship can be explained by the fact that employees at the workplace have to encounter many situations and scenarios and have to deal with people of different

characteristics, therefore if they can effectively deal with their emotional responses and able to manage them then this ability would increase their life-satisfaction. The failure to deal with emotions and emotional responses would hinder the life-satisfaction of employees. Therefore when employees are not satisfied with their life then they are likely to involve in unethical decisions or actions. This would automatically lead to the continuous occurrence of corruption and unethical workplace behaviors in our society.

Furthermore, Regression analysis showed that moral courage is a significant predictor of life-satisfaction. This is evident by the research conducted by James (2011), who explored the relationship between ethical action and personal happiness. Result explicate that when an individual takes decisions with moral courage and stand by his moral values then he would likely be better satisfied with his life because he does not to have any regrets or guilt about any wrong or immoral decision. Thus the more just decisions one takes at his workplace the more satisfied he would be with his life.

Moreover, the meditational analysis found that moral courage fully mediates the relationship between emotional intelligence and life satisfaction. According to the literature moral emotions are usually activated in events that require value pairing and provide emotive feedback in decision-making. Moral concepts are the learned beliefs that lead to moral reasoning. The moral concepts are developed and formed as a

result of moral emotions. When the moral concepts are formed in the individual's predisposing system then they are automatically activated in circumstances that require moral judgments and decisions (Bagozzi, Sekerka, Hill & Sguera, 2013). Thus reflecting that employees who can express, control, and deal with their emotional signals at the workplace would be more courageous and just in their decision-making process and will be satisfied with their life.

Takase, Kershaw, and Burt (2001) described that for a stable workforce it is necessary to develop an ethical work-environment that promotes job-satisfaction and decreases the level of moral distress, and also enhances the satisfaction level of employees. When employees have tendency to control their emotions then they will also good at using the emotional information in the process of decision-making or problem solving at work, because they tend to consider one's own emotions and the emotions of others while making decisions at work. The use of emotional information in decision-making process and the ability to control and express one's emotions would help them to deny a wrong order. They would be more courageous and will have the ability to withstand the threats of an ethically charged situation and they could take the risk of going beyond the wrong compliance to achieve a moral goal. The use of emotional information in decision-making at workplace help the individuals to use one's internal moral standards for taking decisions at workplace as explained by Edmonson

(2015). Therefore they would be better able to refuse a wrong order to follow, which automatically leads to their life-satisfaction.

4.1 Implication Of The Study

The findings of the current research can be used to enhance the emotional intelligence and workplace performance of government employees, which would ultimately increase their life-satisfaction. The results can also be implied to enhance the moral courage of employees at workplace so that they would have better life satisfaction. Through the findings of this research un-ethical and illegal workplace practices can also be challenged. Moreover it can be implied in the workplace setting to train the employees on the lines of emotional intelligence and moral courage.

Conflict of interest

Authors had no Conflict of interest to declare

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Table 1

Shows the Demographic Characteristics of Participants (N = 120)

Demographics	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Gender		
Men	101	84.5
Women	19	15.8
Education		
Higher Secondary	4	3.3
B.A/BSc/MSc.	87	72.5
MBA	15	12.5
M.Phil.	8	6.7
ACCA	2	1.7
LLB	2	1.7
PhD	2	1.7
Marital Status		

Married	96	80
Un-Married	24	20
Income		
25001-35000	5	4.2
35001-45000	13	10.8
45001-55000	34	28.3
55001-65000	15	12.5
65001-75000	25	20.8
75001-85000	22	18.3
85001-95000	2	1.7
95001-100000	4	3.3
Institution		
WAPDA	30	25
PEMRA	14	11.7
WASA	20	16.7
P & D Secretariat	10	8.3
Punjab Agriculture	24	20
LESCO	9	7.5
PTA	6	5
Excise & Taxation	7	5.8
BPS		
16	21	17.5
17	69	57.5
18	28	23.5
19	2	1.7

Note: f = frequency, % = percentages, BPS = Basic Pay Scale

Table 2

Correlation between Emotional Intelligence, Moral Courage and Life satisfaction

	EQT	MCT	LST
EQT	-	.45**	.45**
MCT		-	.77**
LST			-
<i>M</i>	116.17	5.97	27.53
<i>SD</i>	11.46	0.59	5.46

Note: EQT = Emotional Intelligence Total, MCT = Moral Courage Total, LST = Life-Satisfaction, M = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation, .*= p < .05, ** = p < .001

Table 3

Regression Analysis of Life-Satisfaction as an Outcome Variable

	Life satisfaction	
Variables	R ²	β
Model 1	.60	
Emotional Intelligence		.12
Moral Courage		.71***
N	120	

F	90.77***
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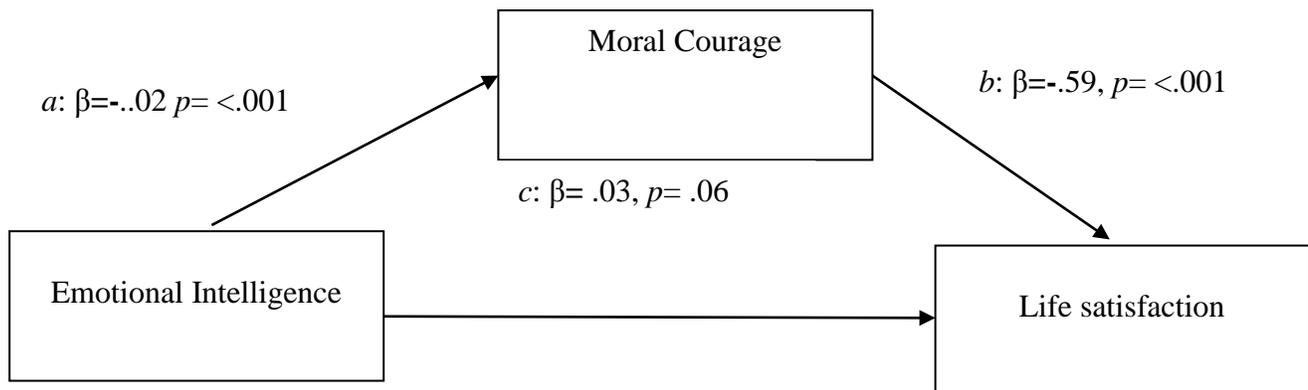
Note: * = p < .05, ** = p < .01, *** = p < .001

Table 4

Meditational analysis showing Moral Courage as mediator between Emotional Intelligence and Life satisfaction

		Consequent						
		M(MC)			Y(LT)			
Antecedent		B	SE	P		B	SE	P
EQ	a	.02	.00	.000	c	.03	1.89	.06
					c'	.05	.03	.000
MC		-	-	-	b	.59	.08	.13
Constant		3.25	.49	.000		-18.58	3.75	.000
		R ² =.20				R ² =.60		
		F(1, 119)=30.17, p=.000				F(2, 117) =90.77, p=.000		

Figure 1 Emerged mediation model showing moral courage as a mediator between emotional intelligence and life satisfaction



Indirect effect of Emotional Intelligence on Life Satisfaction, $\beta = .05$