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Emotional Intelligence and Psychological Well-Being

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Abstract

Emotional intelligence plays a crucial role in managing stress and maintaining mental health, especially in high-stress professions like law enforcement. The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological well-being among Police Officers in Johor Bahru. 197 officers are selected as sample for this study. Emotional intelligence is measured by using Goleman (2000) that consists of four dimensions which are emotional awareness, emotional management, social emotional awareness and relationship management. Instrument used was Quick Emotional Intelligence Self-Assessment (QEISA) by Mohapel (2013) with 40 items. Besides, psychological well-being is measured by using the 12-item version of the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12) (Goldberg, 1972). This variable has divided into two, Component 1 for positive self-esteem and Component 2 for negative self-esteem. This is a quantitative study, and the data collection process is done by distributing a questionnaire and will be analyzed by using Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) version 23.0. Based on the findings, there is a negative moderate relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological well-being among Police Officers, implying that higher emotional intelligence is associated with lower psychological well-being, which suggests the need for targeted interventions to support officers' mental health.

1. Introduction

In sustaining law and order in an ever-changing and diverse environment, Police Officers held a very important role for the country and dangers around. The success of police organizations depends for a large part on police personnel's personality characteristics and well-being (Motsomai & Kishore, 2022). According to a study by Rhea (2023), it is important for the Police Officers to monitor their work experiences and detected that the job satisfaction and well-being are affected by the emotional intelligence. Thus, these also has potential implications towards their engagement, organizational commitment and turnover intentions. It is highlighted in the current policing trend because the retention of valued, experienced and well-trained officers affects the policing outcomes and work performance.

There are plenty of research done on psychological well-being, but they did not focus on its relationship with emotional intelligence. Previously, the researchers conducted their studies which more related to the other variables such as psychosocial, job satisfaction and resilience among ages (Dhanabhakyam, 2023). Previous research findings amplify that emotional intelligence has a positive relationship with psychological well- being. However, there is lack of literature of these two phenomena in the policing context. This study is aimed to discuss the empirical findings of whether there is a positive relationship between the level of emotional intelligence and psychological well-being among the Police Officers (Anthony, 2022).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence (EI) encompasses the skills and abilities to navigate personal and social relationships judiciously and empathetically. This concept is integral to effective management, particularly in roles that involve intense public interaction under stressful conditions. Understanding and managing one's emotions and recognizing the emotions of others are crucial for maintaining job performance and satisfaction. Exposure to challenging situations, such as handling cases of child abuse, requires employees to manage their emotional reactions effectively to avoid negative impacts on their job satisfaction and performance (Anamika, 2022). The study of EI has led to various models, including Mayer and Salovey's emotional intelligence ability model, Bar-On's Emotional-Social Intelligence (ESI) model, and Goleman's workplace-focused emotional competencies model (Matthew, 2021). Chong (2023) identifies four core EI competencies that enhance workplace performance: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. Self-awareness involves recognizing one's emotions and their effects on performance and is crucial for identifying personal strengths and weaknesses. Individuals proficient in accurate self-assessment are conscious of their limitations, actively seek feedback, and learn from mistakes, enhancing their ability to manage emotional reactions in various situations, such as financial planning (Chong, 2023).

Self-management focuses on controlling internal states, impulses, and resources. This includes competencies like emotional self-control, which helps in maintaining stability in stressful situations; trustworthiness, which ensures consistent expression of one's values; conscientiousness, involving careful responsibility management; adaptability in applying innovative solutions; achievement orientation, which drives success; and initiative, which involves proactive problem prevention (Chong, 2023). Social emotional awareness and relationship management are about understanding and influencing others effectively. Social emotional awareness includes competencies such as empathy, which enhances understanding of others' needs and emotions; service orientation, which aligns customer needs with services; and organizational awareness, which aids in objectively reading situations without bias. Relationship management involves skills that evoke desirable responses from others, including influence, effective communication, conflict management, visionary leadership, acting as a change catalyst, building bonds, and fostering collaboration and teamwork (Oliveira, 2024). These competencies are vital for successful personal interactions and leadership within any organization.

2.2 Psychological Well-being

As extensively studied across various disciplines, well-being is categorized into three distinct dimensions: psychological, physical, and social well-being. Psychological well-being focuses on employees' satisfaction levels concerning workplace processes and practices, offering a subjective cognitive and emotional appraisal of life that encompasses emotional reactions and judgments of satisfaction across various domains (Dhanabhakyam, 2023). Physical well-being addresses health outcomes stemming from workplace stressors, such as stress and sleep issues. Social well-being examines both the extent and quality of workplace social networks, alongside employees' perceptions of fairness and equity (Babapour, 2020) elaborates on psychological well-being as not just how employees feel about their jobs but includes their broader attitudes towards all tangible and intangible aspects of the work environment, thereby distinguishing it from mere job satisfaction.

2.3 The Theory of Subjective Well-being

Subjective well-being (SWB), often colloquially called "happiness," encompasses individuals' evaluations of their lives, combining both affective and cognitive elements. These evaluations are based on the balance of pleasant versus unpleasant emotions, engagement in fulfilling activities, and overall life satisfaction. Diener (2000) emphasizes that SWB considers the frequency of positive and negative experiences and includes people's satisfaction with their lives, reflecting a comprehensive view of mental health and life value. This perspective is democratic, as it allows individuals to define what constitutes a good life for themselves, making it a highly personal measure of quality of life. Additionally, SWB includes immediate emotional responses to life events, highlighting its dynamic and subjective nature.

In exploring the dimensions of subjective psychological well-being, Basińska and Wiciak (2013) identify two primary components: emotional and cognitive. The emotional component concerns the balance of emotions, focusing on the proportion of favorable to adverse effects. In contrast, the cognitive component involves evaluating one's past, present, and future situations. To assess these dimensions of well-being in this study, the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12) by Goldberg (1972) was utilized, a tool widely recognized for its effectiveness in measuring psychological health. The GHQ-12 includes items directly relevant to the study's objectives, such as assessing sleep problems, stress levels, happiness, and emotional strain, ensuring that the instrument's focus aligns well with the theoretical framework of SWB (Sarkova, M, 2010).

2.4 Ryff's Six-factor Model of Psychological Well-being

The conceptualization of well-being has been enriched by contributions from various subfields of psychology, yet the absence of a unified theory remains notable. Noteworthy theories include Erikson's (1959) psychosocial stages, Buhler's (1935) life tendencies, and Neugarten's (1973) views on growth across the life cycle, all suggesting that wellness involves continuous development. Theoretical advancements also emerged from clinical psychology, with Maslow (1968) focusing on self-actualization, Allport (1961) on maturity, Rogers (1961) on the fully functioning individual, and Jung (1933) on the process of individuation, each adding depth to the understanding of well-being.

Carol Ryff's (1989) model synthesized these diverse perspectives into a six-dimensional framework of psychological well-being, which has been widely adopted and operationalized through her developed assessment tools. Ryff identified self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth as key facets of well-being. However, Springer and Hauser (2006) raised concerns about the distinctiveness of these dimensions, suggesting that some may overlap significantly. Despite these critiques, the model's internal consistency remains strong, supporting its utility in research despite debates over factorial validity (van Dierendonck et al., 2007).

Each dimension of Ryff's model encapsulates critical aspects of well-being: Self-acceptance involves a positive self-view and contentment with one's past; Positive relations with others emphasizes empathy, deep friendships, and meaningful interpersonal connections as indicators of mental health; Autonomy is seen in self-determination and resistance to societal pressures; Environmental mastery concerns the ability to create or choose environments that align with personal needs and effectively manage one's life circumstances; Purpose in life encompasses having goals and a sense of direction that lend meaning to one's existence; Finally, Personal growth highlights the continual development and openness to new experiences as central to a fulfilling life. These dimensions collectively frame a comprehensive view of psychological well-being, blending traditional psychological theories and modern interpretations of mental health and personal development.

3. Methodology

In this quantitative descriptive study, the relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological well-being among Police Officers in Johor Bahru was examined. The research methodology involved distributing surveys, including the Quick Emotional Intelligence Self-Assessment (QEISA) by Mohapel (2013) and the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12) by Goldberg (1972). The study surveyed a stratified random sample of 97 out of 130 officers, with the questionnaire structured in three parts: demographic information, emotional intelligence assessment, and psychological well-being questions. Data were analyzed using SPSS version 23.0, focusing on descriptive statistics and Pearson Correlation Coefficients to explore the potential connections between the variables.

The questionnaire's reliability was tested in a pilot study among officers from Johor Bharu, revealing a high reliability for emotional intelligence (.899) but moderate for psychological well-being (-.579). In the main study, the mean scores were calculated to determine the levels of emotional intelligence and psychological well-being, categorized into low, moderate, and high. The Pearson Correlation Coefficient analysis further helped assess the strength of the relationship between the officers' emotional intelligence and psychological states. This approach provided a detailed view of the current conditions and identified the degree of impact emotional intelligence has on psychological well-being.

4. Data Analysis and Finding

4.1 Demographic Data

This study's demographic analysis of 197 police officers in Johor Bharu covers a range of variables. Gender distribution shows a majority of male officers (64.9%) compared to females (35.1%). Racially, 66% are Malay, followed by Chinese (17.5%), and Indian (15.5%), with a small percentage (1%) from other races. Age-wise, the largest group is between 31-35 years (35.1%), followed by those aged 26-30 years (32%). Regarding job positions, Inspectors form the largest group (37.1%), with others in varied roles such as Detectives and Corporals, but no Commissioners. Salary data reveals most officers earn between RM 3,000 to RM 3,999 (44.3%), with lesser numbers distributed across other salary ranges. Service years vary widely, with 38.1% serving less than 5 years, and smaller percentages distributed across longer service durations, highlighting a mix of experience levels within the force.

4.2 Objective 1: Level of Emotional Intelligence and Psychological Well-being

This study sought to evaluate the emotional intelligence of police officers in Johor Bharu using the Quick Emotional Intelligence Self-Assessment (QEISA), devised by Mohapel (2013) from Goleman's (2000) model. Results show that officers demonstrated a moderate level of emotional intelligence across all assessed dimensions—emotional awareness, emotional management, social emotional awareness, and relationship management—with an overall mean score of 3.41. Notably, social emotional awareness scored the highest at 3.51, indicating robust interpersonal skills and adeptness in managing social interactions. These findings underscore the critical role of emotional intelligence in law enforcement, supporting Brunetto et al. (2012)'s assertion of its necessity for effective policing. Further emphasizing this point, Anamitra Basu and Martial Mermillod (2011) highlight the importance of interpersonal behaviors, such as appropriate communication and empathy, which are integral to emotional intelligence. Brackett, Rivers & Salovey (2011) also reinforce this, suggesting that emotional intelligence is crucial for enhancing social functioning by fostering better empathy, communication, and behavior regulation, all of which are essential for police officers to effectively handle both professional engagements and personal emotional challenges.

Simultaneously, the study examined the psychological well-being of these officers, revealing an overall moderate well-being with a composite mean score of 2.38. The depression/anxiety dimension scored a moderate 2.79, suggesting a relatively positive self-esteem, whereas the social dysfunction dimension scored a lower 1.98, reflecting negative self-esteem and poorer psychological functioning. This lower score is attributed to significant occupational stress, evidenced by symptoms such as sleep loss and feelings of worthlessness, indicative of the demanding nature of police work (Dhanabhakyam, 2023). This aligns with findings from Schlechter (2024), who link higher anxiety and depressive symptoms to lower psychological well-being and discuss how routine stressors associated with policing—such as uninterrupted duty periods, working on holidays, and managing public altercations—negatively impact officers' mental health, thus affecting their overall psychological well-being. These elements highlight the complex interplay between occupational demands and mental health in law enforcement settings.

4.3 Objective 2: Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Psychological Well-being

Based on the finding, there is negative moderate relationship between these two variables (r = -0.624). Additionally, the significant level of these two variables is 0.000. It indicates that there is no significant relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological well-being (p ≤ 0.01)

The third objective of this study was about to explain the relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological well-being among police among Police Officers in Johor Bahru. Based on the findings, it shows that there is a negative moderate relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological well-being (r = -0.404). As a researcher, this could be an interesting finding. Previously, multiple research revealed that there is a positive and significant relationship between these two variables. A study done by Romualdus (2020) stated that there is a relationship between emotional intelligence on psychological well- being. The hypothesis made can be accepted since their results showed a significant positive correlation between emotional intelligence and psychological well-being. Further, research by Baker (2019) also found a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and the well-being among Police Officers in Australia, majority of respondents to the research was male.

A study from Dhanabhakyam (2023) explained about the psychological well-being which focusing on the dimensions of depression and self-esteem. The findings indicated the significant positive relationship between variables of emotional intelligence and self-esteem. Meanwhile, other result showed negative association between emotional intelligence and depression. Further, emotionally intelligent people express their emotions in a meaningful way. Therefore, they acquire affirmative response by the society and people around them, which developed and improve person's confidence and enhance their self-image. Besides, emotionally intelligent people have optimistic attitude toward self and society. They know about their needs, and how they can fulfil their needs intelligently without violation of rights of others. In addition, people with high emotional intelligence possesses their self- regard, they know that how people think about themselves, and how they manage their emotions in different disturbing and problematic situations effectively (Lippert-rasmussen, 2020).

5. Conclusion And Recommendation

The study conducted at Johor Bahru revealed nuanced insights into the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and psychological well-being among police officers. Contrary to prior research suggesting a positive correlation between these two variables, this study found a moderate negative correlation (r = -0.404). This unexpected result indicates that as EI increases, the levels of psychological well-being reported decrease, or vice versa, within this specific policing context. This finding diverges from previous studies such as those by

Rathanakara (2014) and Shaheen & Shaheen (2016), which showed positive associations between EI and well-being. Similarly, research by Brunetto et al. (2012) and Mehmood & Gulzar (2014) highlighted positive impacts of EI on aspects like self-esteem and reduced depression, suggesting that higher EI typically fosters better personal and social adjustments.

These variations could potentially be attributed to the unique stresses and expectations placed on officers in this particular setting, which may affect how emotional intelligence is utilized and its consequent impact on their well-being. The study's findings underscore the complexity of EI's role in occupational settings, particularly in high-stress jobs like policing, where EI might also relate to higher awareness of job stressors, thus impacting well-being assessments. To enhance the understanding and management of emotional intelligence (EI) and psychological well-being within law enforcement, the following recommendations are proposed based on the study conducted at Johor Bahru. First, it is advisable to conduct further research to explore these findings in various law enforcement contexts to determine whether the observed effects are particular in Johor Bahru or indicative of a broader trend in the policing sector. Comparative studies involving different branches or regions could yield more comprehensive insights into the interplay between EI and psychological well-being.

Secondly, in light of the significant benefits of emotional intelligence in managing job-related stress, there should be a development of tailored EI training programs. These programs should focus on effective emotional regulation strategies specifically designed to address the unique stressors encountered in police work. Thirdly, the establishment of robust well-being support systems is crucial. These should include mental health services, stress management workshops, and regular wellness assessments to ensure that law enforcement officers maintain optimal mental health. Furthermore, conducting longitudinal studies would be beneficial for understanding how EI and psychological well-being evolve over time. This could offer valuable insights into the causal relationships and long-term effects of EI on an individual's career in law enforcement. Lastly, based on the findings of this study, interventions should be customized to meet the specific needs of officers who exhibit high emotional intelligence but may be more vulnerable to negative psychological impacts due to their increased emotional awareness. These interventions should aim to balance emotional skills with techniques for emotional distancing and decompression to help mitigate the potential adverse effects on their well-being. By addressing these recommendations, law enforcement agencies can better support their personnel, potentially enhancing job satisfaction, reducing turnover intentions, and improving overall organizational effectiveness.

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Conflict of Interest

Authors declare that there is no conflict of interests regarding the publication of the paper.

Author Contribution

All authors confirm contribution to the paper. All authors reviewed the results and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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