Abstract

The aim of the present study is to identify the manner in which variables such as stress, emotional intelligence and locus of control can be analyzed as predictors of work satisfaction. To this end we have applied a battery of specialized instruments such as: the Stress Inventory (Melgosa, 1994), Emotional Intelligence Quotient Questionnaire (adapted from Bar-On Emotional Intelligence Inventory – EQ-I), the Locus of Control Questionnaire and the Work Satisfaction Questionnaire to a group of 110 subjects. The results were validated and encourage us to further explore and analyze specific dimensions of the topic under discussion.

Keywords: stress, emotional intelligence, locus of control.

1. INTRODUCTION

Stress is an aspect of life which, on the one hand, can generate temporary discomfort and can induce long-term consequences, but which, on the other hand, can be necessary for survival. Stress can result in diminished functionality and even in sickness or illness, but, from another point of view, can help a person function when in a state of danger by facilitating acquisitions. For a long time scholars looked upon work satisfaction as being exclusively the result of a person’s qualities, experience, ability, together with originality, energy and strength to carry out an assignment. In practice, however, work satisfaction is clearly optimized when an individual’s stress level is not elevated or when individuals possess what we call “emotional intelligence”. Being a good user of emotional intelligence entails understanding that emotional intelligence is not and should not be thought of as replacing or substituting for any abilities, knowledge and capacity acquired over time. Workplace frustration as a result of an individual’s incapacity to obtain what he/she wants to obtain, due to lack of opportunity or other factors, causes stress and leads to “experienced burnout” – a feeling of mental and physical exhaustion, uselessness, and ultimately to a lack of concern for others (Maslach and Jackson, 1981). Emotional intelligence could represent a new subfield of differential psychology, which describes some significant personal traits outside the conventional constructs of personality and capacity. Bar-On (1997, 2000, 2007) argues that emotional intelligence is an indicator of an individual’s general capacity to adapt to difficult situations. The possibility to accurately measure emotional intelligence and to use these measurements in personnel selection, placement and evaluation is a step forward for organizational psychologists and not only. Goleman (2004) maintains that “unlike GI, which remains constant throughout an individual’s life, or unlike personality traits that do not change, abilities that are based on emotional intelligence are acquired abilities.” The locus of control represents a personality trait and was put forth as a construct that moderates stress in a given psychological state. The locus of control shows dependence on external stimulation or on internal activism. Belief in external or in internal control can be regarded as a personality trait in the sense of individual differences. As J.B. Rotter (1975) explained, some differences among individuals can be ascribed to their perception of the locus of control.

2. METHODS AND PARTICIPANTS

This study aims to investigate the relation between stress, emotional intelligence and locus of control as predictors of work satisfaction. The experimental design was tailored to the academic environment. Stress, emotional intelligence and locus of control were taken to be the independent variables in this study, while work satisfaction was considered to be the dependent variable. Based on the objective principles of the experimental...
design, we hypothesized that stress, emotional intelligence and locus of control represent good predictors of work satisfaction. An additional hypothesis maintained that there were significant differences in terms of global work satisfaction depending on the gender of the participants.

2.1. Participants

This study included a group of students (N=110) in the Department of Psychology within Hyperion University in Bucharest, from December 2014 to April 2015. The method we used was based on self-report questionnaires. The participants included both genders (75 females and 35 males), aged 20 to 37, with an average age of 25 years old and a standard deviation of 8.223.

2.2. Instruments

To verify our hypotheses we applied a battery of specialized instruments, namely the Stress Inventory (Melgosa, 1994), Emotional Intelligence Quotient Questionnaire (adapted from Bar-On Emotional Intelligence Inventory – EQ-I), the Locus of Control Questionnaire and the Work Satisfaction Questionnaire to a number of 110 subjects.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Starting from the data we obtained by applying the afore-mentioned questionnaires and inventories, we proceeded to an interpretation of the results, leading to a primary exploratory analysis. Thus, for the stress variable, the participants (N=110) obtained an average score of 87.8 and a standard deviation of 39.82, which yields a variance coefficient of around 40%, suggesting dispersion around the central value and an average which is not significant for this experimental group, in which case the central tendency was taken to be the median value, namely 75. Stress-wise, 46.7% of the subjects did not report any stress symptoms; 33.4% of the participants reported an average stress level; 3.3% reported high stress, while 16.6% reported a highly elevated stress level.

The emotional intelligence scale yielded an average value of 118, which defines a medium-high level of emotional intelligence. The standard deviation was 36.23 and the variance was 29%, which enables us to maintain that the average score for emotional intelligence is sufficiently representative, while the scores have a relatively homogenous distribution around the central tendency. We noticed the following: 16.7% of the subjects have a below-average level of emotional intelligence; 70% have an average level of emotional intelligence; 3.3% have an above-average level, while 10% of the subjects possess an exceptional level of emotional intelligence.

As far as the locus of control is concern, 53.3% of the subjects reported an external locus of control (externalists), while 46.7% reported an internal locus of control (see chart 1).

In what regards the global score of work satisfaction, the participants had an average score of 131.55, which puts them in the confirmed work satisfaction category. The frequency chart for the global work satisfaction score shows that 41.7% of the subjects do not feel satisfied at work, whereas 58.3% have an average level of work satisfaction.

To test the main working hypothesis, we used the stepwise multiple regression, which analyzes the existing relation between variables in terms of their association. In other words, by using the stepwise multiple regression...
analysis, we can determine which independent variable represents the best predictor (in this case) of work satisfaction, once we know the scores for stress, emotional intelligence and locus of control. In the case of the stepwise multiple regression, every step is analyzed as a model. In the present study, two models stood out. In model 1 the dependent variable is work satisfaction and the independent variables are stress and emotional intelligence. For model 1, the multiple correlation coefficient was \( R = 0.662 \). For model 2, the dependent variable was work and the independent variables were stress, emotional intelligence and locus of control. In this second model, the value of \( R \) was \( R = 0.735 \). Although not very different, the value of the multiple correlation coefficient in model 2 \( R = 0.73 \) was higher than in the case of model 1 \( R = 0.66 \), therefore confirming that the model that includes stress, emotional intelligence and locus of control has a higher predictive value of work satisfaction as reported by the participants.

An analysis of the values of the multiple correlation coefficients \( R \) shows that in Model 1, work satisfaction was predicted in 62.2\% of the cases, while in Model 2 it was predicted in 68.7\% of the cases. This is a predictable result due to the existence of an additional predictor which further improves the predictive value. The beta coefficients in table 1 show that important predictors in this regression equation have a significant contribution. Both beta values are positive, which shows that there is a positive relationship between each predictor and the dependent variable. The Beta value is 0.658 for stress, 0.783 for emotional intelligence and 0.552 for locus of control.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Non standardized coefficients</th>
<th>Standard deviation</th>
<th>Standardized coefficients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 (Constant)</td>
<td>.100</td>
<td>.237</td>
<td>.630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress</td>
<td>.396</td>
<td>.087</td>
<td>.522</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EI</td>
<td>.522</td>
<td>.657</td>
<td>.549</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 (Constant)</td>
<td>-1.740</td>
<td>.257</td>
<td>-2.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress</td>
<td>5.22</td>
<td>.160</td>
<td>.658</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EI</td>
<td>.465</td>
<td>.071</td>
<td>.783</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locus of control</td>
<td>-1.022</td>
<td>.536</td>
<td>.552</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Next, we conducted an ANOVA variance analysis to identify the significance value of \( R \) and we found that for the second model, \( F = 18.039 \) and \( \text{Sig.} = 0.005 \). The results enable us to accept the fact that the three predictor-variables have a combined influence on the variance of the criterion variable (table 2), which may be regarded as validating our working hypothesis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>21.442</td>
<td>.005a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>18.309</td>
<td>.005b</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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In what regards the claim that there are significant gender-based differences in the levels of global work satisfaction, the average score for the male sub-group was 140.7 with a standard deviation of 33.12, while for the female sub-group the average score was 115.2, with a standard deviation of 29.84, \( t = -3.034 \); two-tailed \( \text{df} = 98 \); bilateral \( p < 0.05 \). This validates our working hypothesis that there are significant gender-based differences in what regards global work satisfaction, with men reporting a higher global score of work satisfaction.

### 4. CONCLUSION

The present study focused on identifying and analyzing the levels of stress, emotional intelligence, locus of control and work satisfaction among the subjects of our experimental approach. We also attempted to highlight the likelihood of identifying the best predictors of work satisfaction based on the variables of stress, emotional intelligence and locus of control in a group of students.

Our investigation of these dynamic nuances was based on a general hypothesis which was ultimately validated. The data we collected by evaluating an experimental group of 110 participants was subjected to rigorous scrutiny, which required using specific and appropriate data interpretation methods. While conducting our investigation we came to realize that a discussion about reporting work satisfaction, stress level, emotional intelligence and locus of control entails an analysis of formal structures. We argue that these formal structures are based on differential results, which means that an alteration made to a part of the structure, meaning the scores that the participants obtain in another research protocol, will certainly influence the possibility of validation of the initial research hypotheses. Furthermore, investigating the gender dimension of our claim (hypothesis #2) highlighted the existence of differences in reporting work satisfaction by men versus women.

Our study was based on information offered by the participants, who were carefully instructed to give honest answers to the items in the instruments that were presented to them. All answers were valid and no
protocol was rejected. This study, which boasts an applied dimension, represents the premise for a more in-depth approach to the phenomenology of this particular field.

Further inquiries are needed in adjacent areas, particularly in the field of organizational psychology, and should include much larger groups, thereby yielding results that could further confirm the data we have reached via scientific protocols.

5. REFERENCES