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Article in *Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology* · April 2011

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An Exploration of the Relationship Between Emotional Intelligence and Job Performance in Police Organizations

Omar Ebrahim Al Ali · Iain Garner · Wissam Magadley

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Abstract The aim of the current study is to explore the relationship between emotional intelligence and job performance in a sample of 310 police officers. The results show significant correlations between EI levels and police job performance. After controlling for general mental abilities and personality traits, EI has been found to explain additional incremental variance in predicting police job performance. Applied implications of the findings for police organizations are discussed.

Keywords Emotional intelligence · Police · Job performance · UAE

Introduction

Over the last fifteen years, a great deal of interest has been generated around the topic of emotional intelligence (EI). This interest was largely stimulated by Goleman's (1995) book, and particularly by the claim that EI explains a higher amount of variance in individual success than IQ (Dulewicz et al. 2003). The first definition and empirical model of EI was formulated and revised by Salovey and Mayer (1990), who defined EI as "the ability to monitor one's own and others' emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use the information to guide one's thinking and actions" (1990: 189). According to Zeidner et al. (2004), this is perhaps the most widely accepted scientific definition of EI, since it

identifies emotional information processing as an essential precursor to emotional regulation. Although EI has generated widespread research concerning its benefits in the workplace, including job performance (Christiansen et al. 2010), job satisfaction (Sy et al. 2006), job stress (Nikolaou and Tsaousis 2002), and leadership effectiveness (Higgs and Aitken 2003), very limited work has examined the role of EI within police organizations (Aremu and Tejumola 2008). Therefore, one way to determine the relevance of EI to police work would be to identify commonalities between the specific skills that police agencies most value in their officers, and to consider the extent to which EI is related to these areas.

Emotional Intelligence and Job Performance

Although a growing number of studies have investigated the contributions of EI to job performance, the results have often been limited, and sometimes even contradictory (Zeidner et al. 2004). Several studies have shown that EI contributes positively to job performance (e.g., Dulewicz et al. 2003). For example, Law et al. (2004) found in a sample of 165 employees that peer ratings of EI were a significant predictor of job performance, and even after controlling for demographics, loyalty towards supervisors, trust in supervisors, and the Big Five personality dimensions, EI still accounted for more than 10% of the variance. Support for this finding was found by Sy et al. (2006) who investigated the associations between EI and job performance in a sample of 187 food-service workers. They found a significant correlation between EI and job performance, and confirmed that EI positively predicts job performance after controlling for the Big Five personality factors. In a sample of 215 employees, Carmeli and Josman (2006) also found a positive relationship between EI and supervisor ratings of job performance. Regarding research within

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police organizations, very few studies have examined the associations between EI and job performance. However, in his unpublished doctoral thesis, Lev (2005) found EI to be a valid predictor of several job performance criteria among police officers, including success at assessment centers, success during the training stage, and successful functioning in the police unit.

Although these findings appear to be promising, such studies remain limited for a number of reasons. First, they do not control both for personality traits and intelligence in the same analysis. It has been argued that if EI assessments are to be used in the workplace, they must first show incremental predictive validity (Landy 2005). That is, the measurement of EI is only cost-effective for organizations, particularly in terms of personnel selection, to the extent that it provides additional information to that supplied by established intelligence and personality construct tests (Zeidner et al. 2004). If EI does not explain a considerable amount of variance after controlling for personality traits and cognitive ability, then its significance and utility is questionable (Rossen and Kranzler 2009). Second, since limited studies have been conducted within police organizations in general and in Arabic-speaking contexts in particular, the generalize-ability of these results may be of concern, particularly with the substantial differences that exist between Arabic and Western cultures (Rees and Althakhri 2008), and between the work of police forces and that of other organizations (Rabee et al. 2004).

The Role of Emotional Intelligence in the Police Force

Despite limited research on the role of EI in the police force, there are several theoretical explanations indicating EI could be significantly related to police work. First, previous studies show that EI is important for jobs requiring contact with other people, either within or outside of an organization. For example, in a recent meta-analysis of the relationship between EI and performance, Joseph and Newman (2010) found EI to positively predict job performance, particularly in occupations with high emotional labor (i.e., jobs with frequent customer/interpersonal interactions, and situations where showing positive emotion is a part of the job requirement). Additionally, several researchers (e.g., Daus and Ashkanasy 2005) have argued that EI is important for effective police performance, given that there is a high need for officers to manage their own and others' emotions as part of their job. For example, Daus et al. (2004, cited in Daus and Ashkanasy 2005) found by using quantitative data as well as qualitative data (i.e., intensive semi-structured interviews with patrol officers and their supervisors, dispatchers, investigators, and police chiefs) that certain aspects of EI are essential for police officers in order to effectively perform their functions.

There are multiple mechanisms through which EI can have a positive effect on policing. First, the police work is definitely one of these jobs that depend greatly on dealing with others. Aremu and Tejumola (2008), for instance, theoretically proposed that EI are essential for police since their job is basically and largely based on human contact, and for a satisfying contact, there must be an appropriate understanding by the person making the contact. In other words, the ability of communicating effectively is a major personal attributes that has been found to be critical for police officer position (Sanders 2003). Many police studies showed that for performing some police works such as establish local knowledge of a specific patrol area; establish good relationships with the community; dealing with aggressive people; and interviewing witnesses or victims of crimes officers require high level of communication skills, interpersonal relations skills, and empathy (Howitt 2002; Kaczmarek and Packer 1996).

There is growing evidence that EI predicts performance of work that involve regular interpersonal contact with people and where such contacts outline the basis for effectiveness (Caruso et al. 2006). Appraisal and expression of emotion, for example, is a facet of EI that has been described as the ability to recognize emotion in others' facial and postural expressions (Mayer and Salovey 1997). It also refers to the ability to discriminate between appropriate and inappropriate as well as honest and dishonest expressions of emotions. The ability to accurately interpret another's emotional state particularly from non-verbal cues is significant for consistent communication. Expressing emotions is also a critical part of interpersonal relationships since it motivates and increase emotional connection and promotes a deeper understanding of other people (Mayer et al. 2000; Whitman 2009).

Empathy is another main aspect of EI under the facet of appraisal and expression of emotion. This facet of EI refers to being aware of others' feelings, concerns, and needs. It also involves taking an active interest in other peoples' concerns and feelings, and being able to react to spoken and unspoken feelings (Gardner 2005). This ability appears to be important for police officers interviewing and dealing with victims or witness. Communicating empathy will help the witnesses or the victims to feel more comfortable and make them feel that their trouble is understood which will encourage them to cooperate with the officer (Ainsworth 2002). Thus, EI may contribute significantly for police effectiveness in communicating with the public in that officers who possess the ability to appraise and express emotion may be able to create environments that support the development of people trust and collaboration which will support their performance in fighting against crime. In addition, since some police organizations are constantly being examined and criticized regarding the manner in which their officers interact and deal with the people that they serve, it seem that the concept of EI

could provide several potential benefits to law enforcement organizations (Burnette 2008).

A second mechanism that may provide evidence for the significance of EI for police is that emotionally intelligent individuals may have high ability of monitoring the emotions of oneself and others and to control those emotions by temperate negative emotion and enhancing pleasant emotion. That is, emotion regulation is the mechanism through which people can produce and retain positive affective states, which have been suggested to benefit work behavior (Gardner 2005; Joseph and Newman 2010). As Aremu and Tejumola (2008) reported, this is important for police officers since they need to correctly value themselves by having high self-concept. More particularly, some police agencies are undervalued by the public particularly when the media demonstrate negative attitudes toward the police. This may produce lack of respect to police which may negatively affect officers' self-presentation (Aremu and Tejumola 2008). However, it has been suggested that EI capture individual differences in the extent to which they are able to successfully control moods and emotions of oneself and others. Thus, emotionally intelligent individuals will be able to manage ones own emotions includes controlling dampening distress, efficiently dealing with negative affect, and intentionally extracting unpleasant emotions and consequently, avoid being impaired cognitively or behaviorally by the negative results of these affects (Gardner 2005; Mayer et al. 2004).

A third mechanism through which EI could have a positive effect on policing is its relationship with team performance. EI is one factor that has been found to be correlated with team performance since EI preceded and assisted the cognitive processes that accurately evaluate other team members' emotions and needs (Whitman 2009). More specifically, team performance depends on effectively working with others who have different traits, abilities, skills, attitudes, ideas, and opinions and thus EI may support the collaboration and harmony among team (Kulkarni et al. 2009). According to Jordan and Troth (2004), teams consist of members with higher levels of EI achieve better on tasks than teams whose members have lower levels of EI. They argued that EI may contributes to the problem-solving ability of teams through individual team members' ability to effectively resolve conflict which has been found to negatively impact on team performance. They also noted that: "...the ability to deal with one's own emotions may be more inclined to listen to alternative viewpoints and seek superior solutions without feeling threatened by the possibility of being wrong. This requires emotional self-control." (p. 211). Another possible explanation of the EI/teamwork positive relation may that high EI individuals are more effective in communicating their ideas, intentions, and goals in assertive, articulate, and

interesting ways which might closely associated with social skills required for teamwork (Zeidner et al. 2004).

Finally, some research has indicated the useful application of EI at police in that teaching police officers how to manage their emotions will help them better regulate their own reactions and those of others particularly in conflict, dangerous, and difficult situations (Cherniss 2000). According to Mayer and Salovey (1997), high EI individuals are proposed to be more successful in resolving conflicts through their ability to percept, understand, and analyze emotions and employ emotional knowledge to manage own and others' emotions which may aid to the negotiation of decision that better gratify the involved peoples' needs and therefore, lead to better results. This ability to manage and control emotions of oneself and others is important for the police particularly in conflict circumstances since: (a) officers are routinely the first line of response for situations dealing with emotionally stimulated citizens mostly in crisis (Bartol and Bartol 2004); (b) many police injuries occur while performing in conflicts circumstances (Burnette 2008); and (c) this will help to reduce the use of force and firearms which may result in a death of an officer or citizen (Howitt 2002). Police organizations thus may place value on emotionally intelligent officers since they are better able to control conflicts in a way that lead to creative conclusions with limited or no harm to an officer, citizen or the organization.

Notwithstanding that very few studies have studied the validity of EI in policing, police officers appear logically to require a high level of EI since their work is based on human contact, need effective teamwork, and need high ability to deal with negative affect. The main goal of the present study, therefore, is to examine the validity of EI in predicting job performance among a sample of police officers. The present study will also investigate the incremental validity of EI. That is, the contribution of EI in predicting these criteria beyond what can be predicted by other constructs, namely personality traits and general cognitive ability. In line with previous literature discussed two hypotheses can be stated:

- H1:** There is a positive correlation between EI and job performance.
- H2:** EI is expected to add incremental validity for predicting job performance beyond cognitive ability and personality traits.

Method

Participants

The initially targeted participants were a group of 400 full-time police officers working within the Abu Dhabi Police.

Out of 400 questionnaires distributed by the researcher to the employee volunteers, 350 questionnaires (87.5%) were returned. However, out of 350 officers, 40 participants (11.4%) were excluded from the data analysis because of incomplete test submissions. The gender breakdown of the participants included a total of 258 males (83.2%) and 52 females (16.8%), with ages ranging between 19 and 45. The average age was 26.5 years with $SD=6.4$ years. Job experience of participants ranged between 1 and 21 years (mean=5.0 years, $SD=4.1$). More specifically, about 58% of the participants had served their organization in their current job for 1-4 years; 31% had served for 5-10 years; and about 11% had served for more than 10 years. Participants also represented a variety of educational backgrounds, with an average of 11.3 years of education. The majority of the sample (60%) had completed high school (12 years of education); 31% had not completed high school (i.e. their level of education ranged between 6 and 11 years); 6% had bachelors degrees, and about 3% (8) had college degrees (2 to 3 years of education after high school). With respect to the marital state of respondents, almost half ($n=154$) were married, 150 were single, and only 6 were divorced.

Measures

Independent Variable

EI was measured by a self-report emotional intelligent test that developed by Schutte et al. (The SREIT 1998). The measure consists of 33 items with three subscales: EI-Appraisal and expression of emotions (13 items such as "I know when to speak about my personal problems to others"); EI-Regulation of emotions (10 items such as "I have control over my emotions"); and EI-Utilization of emotions (10 items such as "when I feel a change in emotions, I tend to come up with new ideas"). All items ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) and thus scores may range from 33 and 165 with higher scores show higher level of EI. Internal reliability was reported by Schutte et al. (1998) to be satisfactory ($\alpha=.84$) and ($\alpha=.90$) in two different samples, and two-week test-retest reliability was found to be 0.78 acceptable.

Schutte, et al.'s scale was used for several reasons. First, from a theoretical perspective this measurement is based on the conceptual framework of EI (Salovey and Mayer 1990). According Schutte et al. (1998) Salovey and Mayer's model is the most comprehensive model of EI, since it conceptualizes a variety of dimensions of an individual's emotional development. In addition, this measure has been used frequently in EI studies, and it has been found to have good validity and reliability (e.g., Carmeli and Josman 2006). Second, from a practical

viewpoint, the SREIT: (a) does not take a long time to complete, which makes it easy to use in the workplace; and (b) there is an Arabic version of this test available. More specifically, the SREIT was translated into Arabic by Moosa (2005), who has reported an adequate internal consistency of the Arabic version ($\alpha=.90$). She also has provided evidence for the validity that supports the use of this test with Arabic samples.

Reliability of the test in the current study has been calculated using the internal consistency method. The Cronbach alpha coefficient for the one-factor EI in the current study was 0.93, which is comparable to that reported by Schutte et al. (1998) and Moosa (2005).

Dependent Variable

Job performance tests used to evaluate participants were implemented by the Abu Dhabi Police force. Supervisors in different departments rated their officers on ten dimensions of performance on a 7-point Likert scale format, with 1 being the worst and 7 being the best according to the following: seven shows that performance is absolutely superior in all respects; six means that performance is excellent in almost all respects; five shows that performance is above average and satisfactory in all respects; four means that performance is average and satisfactory in most but not all respects; three indicates that performance is below average and less than satisfactory in many respects; two means that performance is poor and less than satisfactory in almost all respects; and one means that performance is very poor and barely meets minimum job standards.

The ratings are provided annually by three officers, and include (a) the evaluation by the employees' immediate supervisor, who assesses the officers on the ten dimensions; (b) the review of the immediate supervisor's evaluation, which is done by another supervisor working in the same department; and (c) the final appraisal, which must be approved by the director of the department. The ten dimensions include: collaboration with co-workers, written and oral communication, enthusiasm, planning, organizing, discipline, customer service provided to the public, achievement of goals, decision making abilities, and adaptability. Moreover, according to the Abu Dhabi Police appraisal system, any evaluation of 1 (very poor) or 7 (superior) must be provided with appropriate evidence to support it.

Control Variables

To test the incremental validity of EI in predicting job performance over cognitive ability and personality traits, participants completed the Arabic version of the NEO-FFI (Alansari 2002) as a measure of the five-factor model of personality. Cognitive ability was measured by an Arabic

Table 1 Correlations between EI, personality traits, cognitive ability, and job performance (n=310)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Emotional Intelligence	-							
2. Cognitive Ability	.26**	-						
3. Neuroticism	-.17**	.03	-					
4. Extraversion	.098	.09	-.27**	-				
5. Openness	.04	.02	.06	.01	-			
6. Agreeableness	.03	.02	-.16**	.25**	-.00	-		
7. Conscientiousness	.11*	.09	-.27**	.28**	.04	.15**	-	
8. Job Performance	.43**	.54**	-.20**	.21**	-.01	.08	.46**	-

p<0.05, ** p<0.01

cognitive ability test that provides a result on general cognitive ability (Tureary 1999).

Procedure

Data were collected by the researcher from the participants in every department of the ADP. Testing was conducted during a period of one to two hours with different groups. Participating police officers were first informed about the general nature and objectives of the investigation, and they were asked to answer all questions truthfully. Officers first completed the time-limited test (the cognitive ability test) and then other tests. Job performance and disciplinary violation scores were collected by the researcher from the Human Resources Department at the ADP. This has been done by asking participants to write their police identification numbers on their tests. This was important in order to help the researcher collect their annual official job performance evaluations from the Human Resources Department at the Abu Dhabi Police (in order to match the results of the tests and criteria measurements).

Results

Table 1 reports the correlation coefficients of variables used in the analysis. Hypothesis One involves testing the relationship between EI and police performance. According to Table 3.1, a significant positive relationship between EI and job performance was found ($r=.43, p<.01$).

Table 2 Hierarchical regression of job performance, cognitive ability (step 1), FFM (step 2), and EI (step 3) (n=310)

Model		β	t	F	R2	Adj. R2	R2 change
1	Cognitive Ability	.42**	9.79	127.20**	.29	.290	
2	Neuroticism	-.07	-1.61	45.84**	.476	.465	.184
	Extraversion	.02	.66				
	Openness to Experience	-.00	-.22				
	Agreeableness	-.01	-.34				
	Conscientiousness	.36**	8.50				
3	Emotional Intelligence	.21**	4.92	45.77**	.515	.504	.039

** p<0.01

Hypothesis Two proposes that EI explains additional variance in the prediction of police job performance over cognitive ability and personality traits. This hypothesis was tested using hierarchical regression analysis, with cognitive ability entered at Step 1, personality traits at Step 2, and EI at Step 3. Results are shown in Table 2.

The hierarchical regression results demonstrate that after cognitive ability and personality traits were controlled for, EI accounted for a statistically significant portion of variance (R^2 Change=.039) in the prediction of police performance. The results from the above analyses indicate that Hypotheses One and Two were supported.

Discussion

The aim of the current study was to explore the relationship between EI and job performance in a sample of police officers. This study contributes to a growing body of literature related to the concept of EI and its importance to organizations. The research findings have confirmed the role of EI in enhancing work outcomes. More specifically, EI has been found to be significantly associated with police performance. The current results are therefore consistent with several recent findings on the relationship between EI and job performance (Law et al. 2004; Lev 2005; Carmeli and Josman 2006).

According to Sy et al. (2006), employees with high EI levels are more adept at regulating emotions that make them feel more confident and in control over the task

requirements of their job. Moreover, emotionally intelligent employees have many different skills (such as adaptive performance, conflict management strategies, organizational commitment, and achievement motivation) that are necessary for succeeding in the contemporary workplace, and that distinguish them from less emotionally intelligent workers with similar levels of experience and education (Armstrong 2007). Further possible reasons for the positive links between EI and job performance may be that individuals with high levels of EI are more successful than those with lower EI levels at creatively solving problems, completing their cognitive tasks, and interacting with others at work (Carmeli and Josman 2006; Rode et al. 2007).

These explanations may justify the current results of the positive correlation between EI and police officers' job performance. On one hand, integration and dealing with the public are core police responsibilities (Gaines and Falkenbe 1998) and they are key factors in police performance evaluation in the UAE. As a daily practice, officers deal with people from different backgrounds and for different reasons (i.e., some are victims, others are offenders or witnesses). On the other hand, community-oriented, problem-solving policing has become an accepted philosophy for many police organizations. The main principle of this philosophy promotes working with the public towards solving community problems (Lord and Schoeps 2000). Thus, community police officers are expected to have close relations with the public, to focus on and prevent a wide range of community problems and crimes; to restore trust in the police; to mediate conflicts and solve a broad range of crimes and disorders; to be approachable to citizens from different ethnic groups; to offer help and support to people with personal problems; and to collect relevant information about public safety problems (Terpstra 2009).

Based on this argument, it would appear that high levels of EI (officers' abilities to manage their own and others' emotions) may play a significant role in building constructive communication practices with other people and agencies within a community (such as in schools) to meet these demands, which in turn would aid in predicting other aspects of police officer performance. This supports similar arguments reported by other researchers on the effects of EI on police work (e.g., Daus and Ashkanasy 2005).

Moreover, hierarchical regression analysis has been conducted to test the predictive and incremental validity of EI in predicting job performance over and above cognitive ability and personality traits. EI has been found to add incremental validity over these variables in the predicting of job performance. The present results, therefore, are consistent with several recent findings (within different population groups) on the importance of EI in the workplace (e.g., Van Rooy and Viswesvaran 2004). They also demonstrate that in addition to cognitive ability and personality traits, EI is a

construct that is positively worthy to be considered a valuable predictor of job performance in the police force.

This research has some limitations that will need to be addressed in future studies. The first limitation concerns the use of self-reported measures of EI, which are susceptible to faking. Therefore, using other means to measure EI, particularly those based on maximum performance tests, may reveal different patterns of results, or they may support the present findings. Another limitation in the present study may be that its cross-sectional research design does not allow for affirmative causal explanations. An additional limitation concerns the measurement of job performance. Although this appraisal system was officially developed and used in the ADP to evaluate police officers' job performance levels, its levels of validity and reliability are not available.

Finally, another limitation relates to the difficulty of generalizing the results for organizations beyond police officers from the UAE. Other jobs and other police organizations with different organizational environments and special task structures might result in different patterns of findings. EI may be not effectively predictive for other jobs, such as engineering. That is, the current research shows that for police work in the UAE, which is likely to be similar worldwide, EI is more likely to predict job performance. A recent study by Sharma et al. (2009), for instance, was also consistent with this argument. The study aimed to empirically examine the construct of EI among a sample of 200 participants from two different cultures (Germany, high in individualism and low in power distance; and India, high in collectivism and high in power distance, Hofstede, 2003). The study concluded that the construct of EI is more likely to be culture-specific rather than culture-general. Accordingly, the value of EI may be seen as a product of the society where it is developed, and limited to the cultural context in which it is investigated. Therefore, a comparative investigation is recommended in order to compare different levels of EI and personality traits for personnel in different organizations and jobs. Such a study would probably provide evidence of the importance of EI in these other jobs and other police organizations outside the UAE as well.

Despite these limitations, the results of this study may contribute to existing literature by providing additional evidence regarding the validity of EI in predicting job performance within police organization in the UAE. Thus, since EI levels may be improved through training and development programs (Sy and Cote 2003), to include a training program for the development of EI at the police academy would likely be useful in increasing overall actual job performance levels. According to Saville (2006), EI represents a critical step for police training, leadership, and hiring practices. Improving EI may play a role in boosting a number of competencies, such as self-confidence, communication, conflict management, and stress management—a

set of competencies essential for successful police performance. Given that policing is a difficult and stressful job, employing officers with efficient or high levels of EI would be an enormous benefit to police organizations (Burnette 2008). In conclusion, EI shows much promise in the police force, and is worthy of further research.

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