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THE EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE OF LECTURERS WORKING IN THREE-PROVINCES IN SOUTHERN THAILAND THAT ARE EXPERIENCING SOCIAL AND POLITICAL UNREST

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Abstract

The main objective of the current study was to gauge the emotional intelligence level of the lecturers working in three-provinces in southern Thailand that are experiencing social and political unrest. To gauge this level, a survey comprising 75 questions was distributed to lecturers in Prince of Songkhla University, Yala Rajabhat University and Princess of Narathiwat University. The three-part questionnaire included questions about demographic factors, emotional intelligence and social intelligence. The subjects were 546 lecturers who worked in the University in Patani, Yala and Narathiwat provinces. The results of this study indicate that their emotional intelligence was uniformly high; lecturers from Yala Province has the highest level of emotional intelligence (mean=3.92) followed by lecturers from Patani (mean=3.76) and Narathiwat (mean=3.73). Among the possible reasons for these results were that these lecturers function well in the educational environment at the university, which is largely insulated from the general political climate and that they have learned to adapt to the vicissitudes of their daily life.

Keywords

Emotional intelligence, Lecturers, Patani Province, Yala Province, Narathiwat Province

1. Introduction

A university lecturer plays a key role in developing well-educated and well-adjusted students so that they can become good citizens in the future, so that, in turn, these students can help develop the country (Harden & Crosby, 2000). A university lecturer's position is demanding, and lecturers comprise a critical element of the university experience. The job of a university lecturer includes various experiences such as social interaction, scholarly inquiry and, most critically, the opportunity to shape the future of students positively. An additional benefit of a university lecturer's job is the capability of combining normal teaching duties with research in a specific field of interest, adding specifically to the corpus of academic knowledge (Arreola, Theall, & Aleamoni, 2003).

Being a university lecturer has several benefits, including esteem, opportunities to climb the ladder career-wise, and, in instances cases, excellent leave benefits (INOMICS, 2017). Among the various responsibilities, a lecturer's duties might comprise the preparation and delivery of regular lectures for students, leading seminars, tutorial sessions, and laboratory classes, directing class discussions, while encouraging student debate and feedback, creating and grading student assignments, essays, examinations and providing one-on-one feedback on academic performance. Other duties might include the supervision of the postgraduate and honours students and tutorial staff, going to departmental and faculty meetings, contributing to course and degree-setting committees, academic curriculum revision and planning, conducting research into specific fields of interest and assembling bibliographies of relevant materials for class reading assignments.

There is much work for lecturers in present day Thailand. Unfortunately, the continued political and social unrest in southern Thailand has negatively affected everyone living there, including lecturers who work and live there. This has occurred even though the government has tried to help and support them and provided large-scale funding for the area.

One potentially negative impact of that unrest may be on the emotion intelligence of lecturers. As Goleman (1998) noted, emotional intelligence is a critical factor for achieving success in everyone's personal, social, and professional lives. To benchmark the situation in southern Thailand, this current study sought to gauge the emotional intelligence level of lecturers against this background of social unrest to determine how that intelligence might impact lecturers in their working lives and, in doing so, also seeks to determine what needs to be done to improve the situation so that lecturers can pursue their functions more successfully.

2. Theoretical Background

In 1983, Gardner introduced the notion that traditional measures of intelligences such as IQ failed to explain fully cognitive ability in his work *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*. He proposed the notion that interpersonal intelligence (the capacity to understand the desires, intentions, and motivations of others), and intrapersonal intelligence (the capacity to understand yourself, to appreciate your feelings motivations and fears) was important (Gilman, 2001).

Others also have examined the notion of multiple intelligences. Although used earlier by Beldoch in 1964, the term emotional intelligence gained popularity in Goleman's 1995 book. Though often criticized for methodological reasons and whether it has incremental validity over the more traditional IQ, studies have shown that people with great EI exhibit better mental health and have better job performance leadership skills. Goleman claimed that emotional intelligence was the better predictor of life success than merely IQ. He believed that life success could be fostered through emotional intelligence, a type of intelligence that could be developed through training and practice unlike IQ.

This unyieldingly pessimistic view of other forms of intelligence may have pushed people to look towards emotional intelligence as something that might help. This means that understanding emotional intelligence in the context of Thailand may lead to understanding what types of support and training programs should be created and used. In turn, benchmarking the relationships between emotional intelligence and outcomes from training programs should lead to better academic performance.

Cherniss (2000) claimed that emotional and social interactions are essential characteristics of business leadership. This is why 80% of companies in America, not to mention elsewhere, allocate budget for emotional intelligence development, including "greater emotional self-awareness, self-management and empathy as well as social skills" (Cherniss, 2000, p. 449). Many believed that a person's ability to process emotional information and use this information helps that person to navigate the social environment. Navigating the social environment is critical in terms of fitting in and dealing with others, both necessary skills for life success.

3. Objective of the Study

To gauge the emotional intelligence level of lecturers working in three-provinces in southern Thailand that are experiencing social and political unrest.

4. Method

The sampling group of this study was 546 lecturers who work in Patani, Yala and Narathiwat provinces. The study used a survey instrument. Emotional Intelligence items included (self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills). The emotional intelligence questions used a 5-point Likert-type scale, which included 1 = Strongly disagree, 2= Disagree, 3 = Not sure, 4 = Agree and 5 = Strongly agree. The Index of Item Objective Congruence (IOC) was used for content validity. In the use of IOC, 1 professor and 2 associate professors scored the survey items. If at least two of the three agreed upon the applicability of an item, then that item was used. If two of the three felt that the item was inapplicable, then that item was deleted. As a result, 26 items of emotional intelligence were used, and 49 items of social intelligence were used after the IOC process. Cronbach's alpha value was .923 for reliability. The survey was found to be valid and reliable using these tests.

4.1 Emotional Intelligence for this study

Several have defined emotional intelligence. For example, Goleman (1998) defined emotional intelligence as involving an understanding how someone deals with conflicts with respect to their own emotions and having a good association with the people around them. Salovey and Mayer (1990) defined emotional intelligence as "the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions" (p. 189).

In this study, emotional intelligence refers to five factors: Empathy, Motivation, Self-awareness, Self-regulation, and Social Skills.

Table 1: *The Dimensions and Indicating Behaviour of the Emotional Intelligence Scale*

Dimension	Indicating behavior
Self-awareness	The ability to recognize your own feelings and emotions, know the cause of these emotions, express your own feelings, assess your situation, understand your strengths and weaknesses, have self-confidence in your own abilities and evaluate yourself.
Self-regulation	The ability to manage your own emotions, control inner your feelings, deal with your own state of mind, adapt to changes and have an open mind towards new happiness, knowledge and situations.
Motivation	The ability to drive forward and strive to achieve a goal. Emotional support from parents and peers assists in your ability to do better and achieve your goals and overcome barriers that you may encounter.
Empathy	The ability to recognize the needs and feelings of others, being interested in the feelings of others and responding to the needs of others.
Social skills	The ability to build associations with others to achieve change in a good way, to persuade people to agree to what is beneficial to the public, to agree to work with others and make people around you happy.

Sources: Adapted from G. Chakrabarti and Chatterjea (2018) and Mayer and Salovey (1997), p. 11. See also, M. Praditsang & Z. Hanafi (2015), p. 491.

5. Results

The results showed that most lecturers had a high level of emotional intelligence. Overall lecturers who worked in Yala province had the highest level of total emotional intelligence with a mean of 3.92 followed by Patani province with a mean of 3.76 and Narathiwat province with a mean of 3.73. With respect to the five dimensions of emotional intelligence, motivation had the highest level of emotional intelligence for most lecturers from three provinces and self-regulation had the lowest level. In Patani motivation scores had a mean of about 4.18, Yala had a mean of about 4.14 and Narthiwat had a mean of about 3.96. With respect to self-regulation, Patani had a mean of about 3.57, Yala had a mean of about 3.76, and Narathiwat had a mean of about 3.61.

Table 2: Means and Standard Deviations of Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence	Patani		Yala		Narathiwat	
	\bar{x}	S.D.	\bar{x}	S.D.	\bar{x}	S.D.
1. Self-awareness	3.6748	.49407	4.0625	.45051	3.7128	.52097
2. Self-regulation	3.5715	.41389	3.7681	.37091	3.6007	.49317
3. Motivation	4.1799	.48316	4.1368	.60115	3.9621	.56065
4. Empathy	3.6983	.42707	3.8558	.40745	3.7782	.49461
5. Social Skill	3.8219	.36807	3.9230	.41697	3.7962	.44164
Emotional intelligence total means	3.7689	.31312	3.9210	.30373	3.7607	.37346

Note: Standard cut off points, Low = 1.00 - 2.33, medium = 2.34 - 3.66, high = 3.67 - 5.00.

6. Discussion

Interestingly, the lecturers who worked in Narathiwat, Patani, and Yala had high levels of emotional intelligence. Although the unrest has occurred over an extended period in Southern Thailand, they seemingly have adapted themselves with this situation. So, they go about their lives, careers, and activities in their communities normally, continuing to live life in society and culture as usual (Boonsiri, 2016) Perhaps one reason is that the Thai government has supported government employees who work in these areas of unrest, and this support makes the employees who work there feel secure because they are receiving care from government while working in a place of unrest (Arya, 2016; McCargo, 2008).

Of the five dimensions of emotional intelligence, motivation had the highest level of the five dimensions for the lecturers who were surveyed. Motivation is the ability to drive forward and strive to realize a goal, and emotional support from parents and peers assists in a person's ability to do better, obtain professional and personal goals and overcome barriers that may be encountered. With respect to higher education, motivation seems to indicate a higher commitment to work and job satisfaction. Typically, this means that the lecturers are satisfied with their jobs and their organizations (Singh, 2014; Dodd-McCue & Wright, 1996; Mannheim, Baruch, & Tal, 1997). Thus, it can be inferred that the lecturers surveyed had good professional and personal support systems that aided them.

Self-regulation had the lowest levels of the five dimensions for the lecturers who were surveyed. Self-regulation is seen as the ability to adapt to changes, control your inner feelings, deal with your own state of mind, manage your own emotions, and have an open mind with respect to happiness, knowledge, and new situations, knowledge. With respect to those surveyed, several meanings might be inferred. First, the culture and religion in these three provinces of Thailand is different than that of the rest of Thailand. These regions are predominately Muslim and share a historical common heritage with Northern Malaysia. Changing these patterns has been and perhaps will continue to be difficult for the central government. Thus, while lecturers might find motivation in the support of family and friends who share their heritage, they seem to express attitudes that will lead to difficulty in changing their ways. Second, this means that they are perhaps more parochial in their ways and will resist changes in the teaching environment and educational structure. Third, they might be closed-minded about what makes them happy in their professional environment.

7. Conclusion

The overall emotional intelligence of lecturers working in the three-provinces in southern Thailand that are experiencing political and social unrest was high. This could be for many reasons. First, they are inured to the unrest because of a long-standing experience with it. Second, they function well in the educational environment at the university, which is largely insulated from the general political climate. Third, they have learned to adapt to the vicissitudes of their daily life. And, fourth, they are well adjusted to their lives in higher education and are dedicated to their work and bringing education to their students and helping the country and the region develop.

Nonetheless, the relatively low scores across the board in self-regulation suggest that the government has much work to do in making the educational process uniform across the country. No doubt, the government will experience difficulties in doing so. Thus, policy

makers and planners must take account of this factor in designing future policies and procedures to adapt to the nuances of regional differences either by creating a policy or gradualism or permitting differences to exist to ensure a suitable, but separate educational environment to exist.

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9. About The Author

I hold a Ph.D. in Educational Psychology and Guidance. I presently work in Thailand at Songkhla Rajabhat University as a lecturer. I am interested in psychology and educational performance especially emotional intelligence and social intelligence and in improving the educational system in southern Thailand. I presented my research in Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei Darussalam in 2013, in Tokyo, Japan in 2014, and the United States in 2016 and published three papers in SCOPUS-indexed journals in 2015.

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