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Research Article

Measuring Emotional Intelligence of International Students: A Comparison on Gender Differences and Nationality

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Abstract: This study aimed at assessing emotional intelligence among international students at a selected public university in Thailand and compare mean differences between genders and groups of nationality. A total of twenty-two students agreed to participate in this study by completing a survey questionnaire through an online platform. Results demonstrated no significant difference between males and females in emotional intelligence and each dimension. To compare emotional intelligence among different groups of nationality, the Kruskal-Wallis test indicated a statistically significant difference in self-awareness between the different nationalities, $\chi2$ (2) = 7.691, p = .021. Mann Whitney U test was computed to determine the difference between each pair of nationality group. Findings indicated that self-awareness in group of Bhutanese students was statistically significantly higher than group of Thai students (U = 4.00, p = .024). Moreover, self-awareness in Chinese group was statistically significantly higher than the group of Thai students (U = .000, p = .018).
Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, International students, Gender differences, Nationality.

INTRODUCTION

Emotional intelligence has increasingly become an interesting topic in business and management fields in the past two decades since the term was coined by Mayer and Salovey in 1990 [1]. Emotional intelligence plays a vital role in determining the success of individuals in any endeavors [2]. Emotional intelligence is defined as an ability to understand oneself and others and manage oneself and relationships with others properly [3]. Many studies attempted to determine the importance and role of emotional intelligence on individual performance in different contexts [4]. Past research demonstrated that individuals with robust emotional intelligence tend to succeed than those who have only a high intelligence quotient [5].

Emotional intelligence is crucial for life success, but influenced by various factors. Among those factors, gender is considered as the influential factor that distinguishes emotional intelligence among people. Prior research showed differences between genders in the overall emotional intelligence [6-9]. Some studies reported a higher emotional intelligence score in female than males [10] while some researchers found that

males had a higher level of emotional intelligence than females [7]. The inconsistency of these findings leads to the interest of replicating study to compare the gender differences in emotional intelligence level in a different setting. Additionally, latest research indicated a lack of study in exploring association between emotional intelligence and nationality [11]. Even though past studies attempted to compare emotional intelligence in terms of nationality differences, they have been limited in some countries especially the western countries [2]. Therefore, this present study aimed at investigating the gender and nationality differences in emotional intelligence by focusing on people who were from eastern countries.

LITERATURE REVIEWS

Emotional intelligence is the ability to recognize and manage oneself emotions and to understand others' emotions [12]. To clearly understand emotional intelligence, Goleman [13] noted that individuals need to understand emotional competence, which refers to "a learned capability based on emotional intelligence that results in outstanding performance at work." Emotional competence can be distinguished to two types: personal competence and social competence.

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Each competence includes the essential dimensions of emotional intelligence that contain a set of relevant emotional intelligence skills. Personal competence consists of self-awareness and self-management. Social competence comprises of social awareness and relationship management. These four clusters were described as follows:

- Self-awareness – the beginning point for the other dimension, which a person has a solid understanding of own emotion. People with a high degree of self-awareness can correctly assess their strengths and weaknesses, emotional triggers and have a strong sense of self-confidence.
- Self-management – the ability to control disruptive feelings and balance one's emotions to prevent oneself from the effect of worry, anxiety, fear or anger on their thinking. This ability is crucial for realizing a long-term goal.
- Social awareness – the ability to understand others' emotions and feelings, and utilize one's empathy to recognize what others are feeling without being told. Empathy refers to the awareness of the feelings and emotions of others, and experiencing them through individual's imagination. Individuals who have a vigorous social awareness are more likely to understand distinctive viewpoints and cope with others successfully.
- Relationship management – the ability to work with other people, develop positive connections with them, react to others' feelings excellently, and motivate others to do something. People with this ability understand how to communicate with others, and treat others with respect.

Prior research attempted to apply these four dimensions to measure emotional intelligence in different groups of people and context. This study had extensively reviewed related literatures on emotional intelligence and gender and nationality differences.

Bindu and Thomas [6] collected data from a sample of 90 post graduate students in various majors of the university in India to examine the gender differences in emotional intelligence. A 50-item self-rating scale of Emotional Intelligence Inventory was used to measure the overall emotional intelligence among this group of students. Results indicated that males and females had a significant difference in emotional intelligence, which males had a higher score on emotional intelligence than females.

Ahmad, Bangash, and Khan [7] investigated gender differences in emotional intelligence. A sample of 160 participants was equally selected using snowball sampling approach. This study used Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i) to measure level of emotional intelligence among males and females. Findings of this study revealed the significant difference in emotional intelligence between males and females. Males were reported to have a higher level of emotional intelligence than females.

Fernandez-Berrocal, Cabello, Castillo, and Extremera [8] examined the relationship between gender and emotional intelligence through the use of MSCEIT instrument with the age controlling. A total of 559 participants was gathered for data collection. This study used MANOVA to compare the mean scores of males and females on the emotional intelligence scale measurement. To focus on the overall emotional intelligence, findings of analysis revealed that men and women had a statistically significant difference in emotional intelligence, which women scored higher than men.

Segio, Dungca, and Ormita [9] conducted a cross-cultural study to see the relationship between demographic variables, emotional intelligence, and work values. Data were gathered from 437 call center representatives from various nationalities including Middle East, Iran, Pakistan, Russia, India, and the Philippines. In this study, Emotional Competence Inventory based on Goleman's concept of emotional intelligence encompassing 18 competences of 4 dimensions namely self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management was employed to measure emotional intelligence. Findings showed that there was statistically significant in overall emotional intelligence between male and female workers in organizations but not in any of the four dimensions of emotional intelligence. In addition, this study also found that workers with different nationalities had a significant difference in social awareness dimension solely, which means that workers with different cultures were aware of others' emotions, feelings, and concerns differently.

Meshkat and Nejati [10] used the Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory to assess emotional intelligence among 455 undergraduate students who were majoring in English in three different Iranian universities. Findings revealed no significant difference between males and females in the total score of emotional intelligence, but differences in self-awareness, interpersonal relationship, self-regard, and empathy were found, which female scored higher than males.

In addition to the correlation between emotional intelligence and gender differences, Nikoui [11] examined the impact of nationality differences on emotional intelligence. The short-form version of emotional intelligence scale measurement was employed to assess emotional intelligence of 200 leaders in 5 countries including Canada, Mexico, Slovakia, Turkey, and the United States. Findings indicated no association between nationality and

emotional intelligence among these leaders. This finding did not support the previous research that investigated emotional intelligence levels among scouts who were from different countries [2]. Two Turkish researchers collected data from 215 scouts who attended an international scout camp in England using Emotional Intelligence Assessment Scale developed by Hall in 1999, which adjusted to Turkish version by Ergin in the same year. Results showed that Turkish scouts had a significantly higher level of emotional intelligence than scouts from other countries.

Based on the literature reviews, the research hypotheses were proposed as follows:

H_1: There was a significant different between males and females in emotional intelligence.

H_2: There was a significant different among groups of students with different nationalities in emotional intelligence.

METHODOLOGY

This descriptive study was conducted to determine the level of emotional intelligence among students with different genders and nationalities. A total of thirty-seven students who had taken 'principles of management' course with a researcher was asked to complete the survey questionnaire through the Google classroom platform. Twenty-two students agreed to participate in this study and returned a complete questionnaire via a researcher's email. To measure emotional intelligence among this group of students, an 8-item self-test of emotional intelligence proposed by Daft [14] based on the emotional competence concept of Daniel Goleman was employed. This instrument was a 5-point rating scale ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree. The alpha score of this scale was above 0.7, which was acceptable [15]. To answer this study's objectives and test research hypotheses, both parametric and non-parametric tests were conducted. Independent samples t-test analysis was computed to compare gender differences in emotional intelligence. The Kruskal-Wallis test was calculated instead of One-Way ANOVA to compare nationality differences in emotional intelligence as the sample size of this study was below 30. If a significant difference of the overall emotional intelligence or each dimension was found, the Mann-Whitney test was computed to compare each pair of nationality group.

RESULTS

To compare gender differences in emotional intelligence, independent samples t-test analysis was computed. Results indicated no significant differences between males and females in emotional intelligence and each dimension (Table-1). This could be concluded that males and females had no differences in emotional intelligence. Thus, research hypothesis #1 was rejected.

Table-1: Independent Samples T-Test of Gender in Emotional Intelligence (n=22)

Emotional Intelligence	Male (n=7)		Female (n=15)		t	P
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.		
Self-Awareness	3.78	.393	3.50	.845	.844	.408
Self-Management	3.28	.906	3.26	.562	.061	.952
Social Awareness	3.92	.534	3.70	1.146	.498	.624
Relationship Management	3.32	.377	3.20	.941	.422	.678
Emotional Intelligence	3.51	.133	3.55	.591	-.200	.844

Since the sample size of each group of students with different nationalities was below 30, the non-parametric test needed to be conducted. The Kruskal-Wallis test was used when the assumptions of one-way ANOVA were not met [16]. Analysis of Kruskal-Wallis test indicated that there was a statistically significant difference in self-awareness between the different nationalities, χ^2 (2) = 7.691, p = .021, with a mean rank of 11.80 for Bhutanese, 16.50 for Chinese, and 3.33 for Thai nationality (Table 2). Therefore, research hypothesis #2 was partially supported.

Table-2: Comparison of Emotional Intelligence among Nationalities using Kruskal-Wallis Test (n = 22)

Emotional Intelligence	Nationality	N	Mean Rank	χ^2	df	P
Self-Awareness	Bhutanese	15	11.80	7.691	2	.021*
	Chinese	4	16.50			
	Thai	3	3.33			
Self-Management	Bhutanese	15	12.53	1.331	2	.514
	Chinese	4	8.75			
	Thai	3	10.00			
Social Awareness	Bhutanese	15	11.23	.483	2	.786
	Chinese	4	13.38			
	Thai	3	10.33			
Relationship Management	Bhutanese	15	12.27	2.180	2	.336

	Nationality	N	Mean Rank	U		
	Chinese	4	12.38			
	Thai	3	6.50			
Emotional Intelligence	Bhutanese	15	13.23	4.64	2	.125
	Chinese	4	9.63			
	Thai	3	5.33			

*Significant level at 0.05

To compare differences between each pair of nationalities, Mann Whitney U test was conducted. From statistical analyses, it can be concluded that self-awareness in group of Bhutanese students was statistically significantly higher than group of Thai students (*U* = 4.00, *p* = .024). Furthermore, self-awareness in Chinese group was statistically significantly higher than the group of Thai students (*U* = .000, *p* = .018). No significant difference between Bhutanese group and Chinese group was found (Table-3).

Table-3: Mann-Whitney U Test for Self-Awareness between Each Pair of Nationality (n=22)

	Nationality	N	Mean Rank	U	P
Pair 1	**Bhutanese**	15	10.73	4.00	.024*
	Thai	3	3.33		
Pair 2	**Bhutanese**	15	9.07	16.00	.139
	Chinese	4	13.50		
Pair 3	**Chinese**	4	5.50	.000	.018*
	Thai	3	2.00		

*Significant level at 0.05

CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to compare gender and nationality differences in emotional intelligence. Findings of analysis revealed no statistically significant difference between male and female students in the overall emotional intelligence and each dimension. These findings did not support the results of previous studies, which the statistically significant difference between males and females was found [6-9]. However, this study's findings partly supported Meshkat and Nejati [10] who found no significant difference between genders in an overall emotional intelligence. In addition, results showed no significant difference among nationality groups in the overall emotional intelligence, but found statistically significant difference among nationality groups in self-awareness dimension. These results were not consistent with the findings of Nikoui [11] in which no relationships between nationality and emotional intelligence was found. The present study's findings in nationality differences were the new knowledge in the area of emotional intelligence. It could be concluded that individuals who were from different nationalities and cultures might perceive themselves in a different way depending on what they had been taught in their lives. According to this study's findings, Bhutanese and Chinese were more likely to recognize and understand their feeling and label these emotions correctly than Thai students. Although the number of Thai students participated in this study was undersized, this study provided some understandings of Thai students in the way to see themselves realistically.

For limitations, the sample size of this study was too small, which the findings could not be generalized to other studies. The further study should expand the sample size to different groups of students. Also, the instrument used to measure emotional intelligence in this study was a short version, which may not represent all competences of four dimensions in emotional intelligence. Thus, this study recommends using the reliable and valid scale measurement of emotional intelligence for the next study. Since this study limited the independent variables only to gender and nationality, the future study should include other demographic variables for the comparison. For research implication, the university can take advantage from this study by providing the knowledge of emotional intelligence to students through the training programs and activities, particularly Thai students who had a low level of self-awareness. Past research demonstrated the improvement of emotional intelligence after the reception of training [4]. As self-awareness is considered as a starting point to self-knowledge, self-possession, self-control, and self-expression [17], efforts to Thai students' self-awareness development are required.

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