

Research Article

Emotional Intelligence, background, Importance, A study of Colleges and Universities in in the Sultanate of Oman

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Abstract: Emotional intelligence (EI) is being recognised to be one of the important pillars of the skills and abilities needed today, whether in organizations or in life. Understanding the levels of EI at any organization helps to detect problems and create a harmonious working environment. In the education sector, this understanding helps generate a more effective learning and teaching environment which in turn improves productivity of the students and enhance their skills. This paper looks at the levels of emotional intelligence in private colleges and universities in Oman. Using the WEIS questionnaires, the findings revealed a moderate to high levels of EI among the students regardless of their age and gender. The sample covered 150 students from five colleges and two universities in the Sultanate of Oman, total of 7 higher education institutions.

Keywords: Emotions, feelings, Emotional Intelligence, WEIS Questionnaire, Oman.

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INTRODUCTION

As human being, we need people to connect, relate to, communicate, solve problems, and mostly to satisfy our needs and concerns. Emotions play a major role in our daily lives, in decision making, planning, networking, relationships (Goleman, 2015;2003;1999) as well as in creating a healthy working environment such as classrooms (Jordan, 2016; Heckman & Masteroy, 2004). According to Bradberry & Greaves (2009), we face daily challenges in dealing with our emotions effectively and this is very critical to us because our brains give emotions the upper hand. Emotional Intelligence is the ability to work well with people as well as people's emotion. Consequently, it would affect human relations at work and the entire working environment (Bar-On, Maree & Maurice, 2007; Lussier & Achua, 2007) as well as the impact in our daily life. Based on my readings and research, I came to understand that emotional intelligence is about using our emotions and feelings effectively, having a more understanding of who we are and how we connect and what we need to do especially if we want to success in work and life. It is also about how to fine tune such emotions and have an in-depth understanding of who we are, why we behave in certain ways and what happens to us in relationships. Having knowledge of emotional intelligence as well as training leads to a

more understanding of how to establish strong relationships and bonds, increase self-awareness, improve social skills, regulate and manage our emotions and feelings and simply be happy (Goleman, 2015; Kumar, 2014; Bar-On et al, 2007).

PROBLEM INVESTIGATED

The study aims at understanding the importance and levels of emotional intelligence among university and college students in Oman, to enable a more insight into what their levels are and what needs to be done and be able to also make comparisons with previous research conducted by the researcher and others.

METHODOLOGY

To satisfy the hypothesis and answer the research questions, Wong's Emotional Intelligence Scale (WEIS) questionnaire was adopted. Wong, Law and Wong (2004) developed a 40-item forced intelligence Scale with two parts: The first part contains 20 scenarios and respondents are asked to choose one option that best reflects their most likely reaction for each scenario. The second part contains 20 ability pairs and respondents are asked to choose one out of the two types of abilities that best represent their strengths.

Wong, Wong & Law (2007) explain that for each ability pair, one is considered as EI-related and the other is related to other intelligence dimensions (Look at Appendix A for details of the 40 items). Therefore, respondents have to evaluate their relative strength between handling emotional issues and other types of ability. Responses to these items according to Wong et al (2004) may be affected by social desirability that relates to the ability to handle emotional issues. The authors also demonstrated that WEIS has acceptable reliability, convergence and discriminant validity. In carrying out the survey, electronic surveys were distributed among the 5 different colleges and two universities in Oman: Higher College of Technology, Middle East College, Bayan College, Gulf College, Al Musanna College, Sultan Qaboos University and the German University.

Research Questions and Hypothesis

Hypothesis:

H1= The levels of EI among students in different colleges is moderate to high

H2= There is a relationship between age, gender and the levels of EI

The research identified the following main questions:

- 1) What are the levels of emotional intelligence of students in the private colleges?
- 2) Is there a relationship between age and gender of the students and their emotional intelligence?
- 3) What are the levels of emotional intelligence of the students at the college of Economic and Political Science and the college of Science?
- 4) What are the levels of emotional intelligence of the students at the college of Arts and the college of Engineering?
- 5) Are there any differences among students from the various colleges?

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Emotional intelligence is a vast topic; one can look at various perspectives of EI and variety of research conducted linking EI with different areas in business, education, military and other organizations. EI can also be explored in terms of the various perspectives and approaches. This research focuses on emotional intelligence in private colleges in Oman where very little research has been carried out. Looking at the level of EI among students and making comparisons.

Significance of the Research

Having an understanding of the level of emotional intelligence in various colleges would give a better understanding and insight into what is the current level and what steps need to be taken in terms of training, awareness and lectures on EI targeting students. The researcher has conducted various workshops and lectures with some universities and schools, therefore this research will provide more

knowledge in the private sector and make comparisons and use the outcome to conduct workshops and as a case study.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

It has been argued that understanding emotional intelligence helps understanding its contribution to success (Heckman, 2004; Goleman, 1999; 1998; Higgs & Dulewicz, 1999) at work and in life. Goleman (2015) further postulates that emotional intelligence is as important as IQ for success, including in academic, professional, social, and interpersonal aspects of one's life. Goleman indicates that emotional intelligence is a skill that can be taught and cultivated. This is further supported by a research within the Gulf Region by AlHashemi (2018), proving that given the training in EI, there would be evidence in improvement in the EI of trainees and in turn an improvement in the work environment. Over the years I have realized to what extent such claims are and have witnessed the applicability and truth in such statements and research. Ganu & Oladepo (2014) proved a relationship between emotional intelligence and employees' performance, which may bring about employees' self-development. Self-development of the executive is central to the development of the organization through increased workers' performance. The application of managers' emotional intelligence will increase employees' performance through an organized self-managed development scheme. Looking at emotional intelligence in schools, worldwide, counselors, and millions of parents are utilizing the new findings to help young people thrive (A case for emotional intelligence in our schools, 6seconds.org). This is also applicable to universities as the culture contains students and education.

Emotions can influence our thoughts and behaviors and developing emotional intelligence skills enables us to communicate our emotions and recognize them in others (Segal, 2008; Goleman, 2015;2003;1999). Such abilities have been proven to play a role in the success of individuals at home, work and in their general life. The perception, understanding, utilization and managing emotions effectively in one's self and others, makeup up the pillar of emotional intelligence according to Bar-On, Maree & Maurice (2007). Mansel & Einion (2019: 1402) concluded in their study on nurse leaders (senior nurses in Wales) that "cultivating the skills and values that people require to care compassionately and effectively" which emerged throughout all the interviews they conducted with nurse leaders as a core theme. It was clear that intrinsic aspects of role satisfaction were related to the emotional engagement in caring.

Using Emotional Intelligence for Students

According to Hagelskamp, Brackett, Rivers & Salovey (2013) Classroom interactions have a powerful

influence on youth development. They elaborate that in high quality classrooms interactions are respectful and the students are granted autonomy in the learning process. Also, teaching is organized and discipline is fair and instructions are appropriate. Teaching methods, strategies and quality has changed immensely over the years. The focus of teaching in classrooms has shifted to improve in the quality, standard and strategies of teaching (Biggs & Tang, 2007). Therefore, with such shifts, one of the elements of change would be introducing a more interactive classroom environment through understanding students' needs as well as being in line with the progress in education. Understanding and integrating such needs imposes a more in-depth knowledge on emotions and feelings of students, what satisfies them, what makes them happy, and have the motivation to learn and develop. Therefore, it has been emphasized that establishing a creative classroom environment, focusing on team work, critical thinking and problem solving helps to create a better learning environment (Biggs & Tang, 2007). Several studies have concluded the positive relationship between EI and academic performance (AlHashemi, 2018; Rode, Arthaud-Day, Near, Baldwin, Rubin & Bommer, 2007). According to Rode et al (2007), emotional intelligence was related to academic performance for two reasons: First, academic performance involves a great deal of ambiguity which has been shown to cause felt stress; Second, the majority of academic work is self-directed, requiring high levels of self-management.

Measuring Progress in the Classroom

To understand the students and promote a positive learning and progressing classroom environment, the lecturer needs to be aware of the emotional intelligence competencies, skills, and be able to encourage interaction that would lead to a positive learning environment (AlHashemi, 2018). Hammett (2007) point out to some Emotional Intelligence skills most often related to academic success such as assertion, drive, strength, commitment ethic, time management, and stress management. Another aspect of creating a health and positive classroom environment is where students learn to manage their stress, selecting ways to stay healthy and be able to complete their tasks without affecting their health and performance level. Using EI in classrooms means that students can start with planning and scheduling their activities, building up on their weaknesses and strengthening their skills. Add to is what the author found and observed in her classroom is creativity and harmony, applying EI leads

to a better classroom environment and students were able to think out of the box and be creative in the way they study and carry out their activities. Students also improved their skills and abilities in various ways as they were motivated in class by the variety of activities they were exposed to. This creates learning and fun environment where students remain open to change and motivates them to enhance and improve and achieve their targets. They are guided throughout by the instructor. Such an environment enables students to focus, become creative, and resolve some of their conflicts and improve in problem solving skills.

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

To fulfill the objectives of this research and within the framework of the scope of this research, the following questions were addressed and investigated.

- What are the levels of emotional intelligence of students in the private colleges? Overall, a moderate to high level was found and details of the findings will follow.
- Is there a relationship between age and gender of the students and their emotional intelligence?

Therefore, the first hypothesis was satisfied and proved:

H1= The levels of EI among students in different colleges is moderate to high

As for the second hypothesis, the results revealed that those factors did not impact the level of EI among students.

H2= There is a relationship between age, gender and the levels of EI

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Results: Private Sector

The electronic survey was distributed among six different universities and colleges in Oman with a total of 150 students. The survey was distributed in: The Middle East College, Bayan College, Gulf College, Musanna College, Higher College of Technology, German University and Sultan Qaboos University (refer to Fig 1). For the analysis, the private sector (includes the above mentioned colleges as well as the German University), and the public sector (Sultan Qaboos University), had separate analysis and findings. In terms of age, the majority of the students in the private sector (74%) in the sample were within the age group of 18 to 22, and 26% were between 23 and 27 (Fig 2).

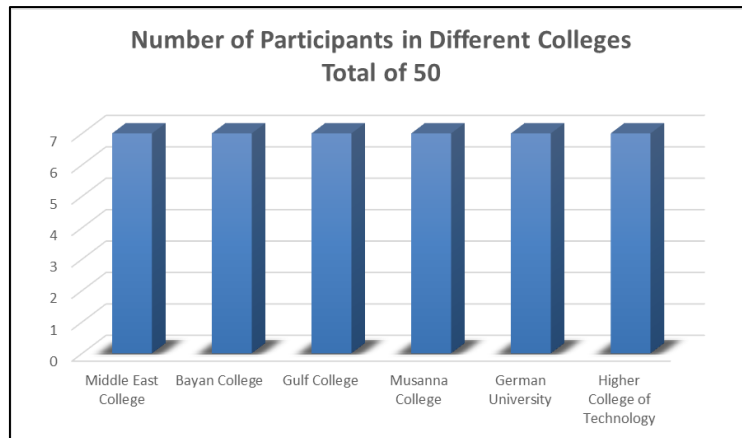


Fig.1 Number of Participants

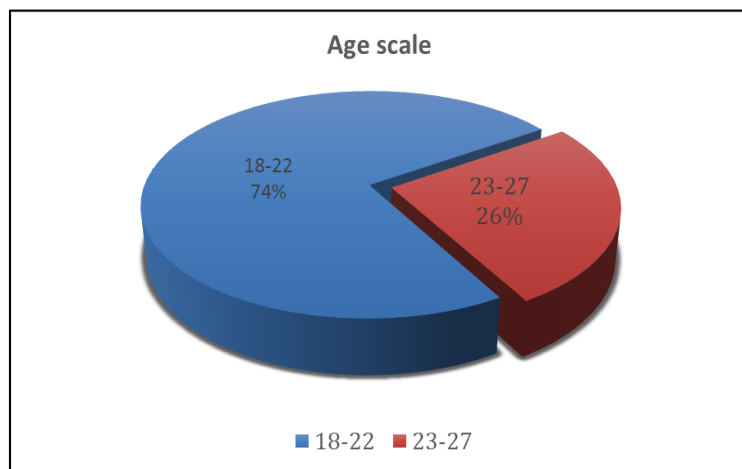


Fig2: Age scale

The analysis of the survey revealed a top score for the Higher College of Technology College for both parts of the survey (Part A and B) with total 162,

followed by Gulf College and Bayan College. This indicates that the level of emotional intelligence among students is between moderate to high.

Table 1. Total scoring in colleges.

Colleges	Number of Participants	Total Scoring (A+B)
Middle East College	7	137
Bayan College	7	149
Gulf College	7	158
German University	7	140
Al Musanna College	7	145
Higher College of Technology	7	162

The first part, (Part A) of the WEIS questionnaire, respondents are asked to choose one option that best reflects their most likely reaction for each of the 20 scenarios. The above table (Table 1) represents the total scores for both parts of the survey.

In order to have a more in-depth understanding, we will look at the analysis of each part. Referring to Fig 3, the highest score is 31 out of 40 which is very good, indicating a high level of EI and the lowest score is 21 out of 40 with the average being 28 out of 40.

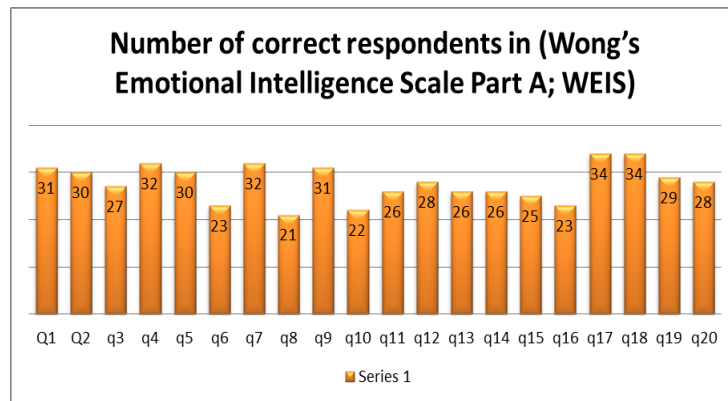


Fig. 3 Wong's Emotional Intelligence Scale Part A

The second part of WEIS (Part B) contains 20 ability pairs and respondents are asked to choose one out of the two types of abilities that best represent their strengths and reflects reactions of the respondents to

various situations, we find the scores are higher than in part A, with 35 out of 40 as the highest scores and the lowest is 19 out of 40 (refer to Fig 4).

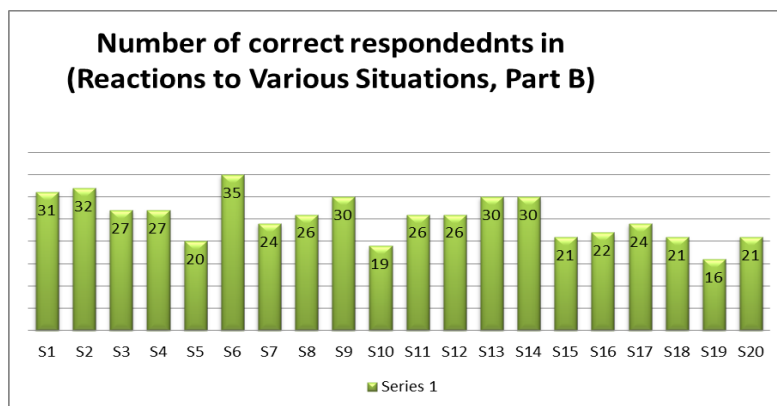


Fig.4 Wong's Emotional Intelligence Scale Part B

Results of the public sector: Sultan Qaboos University

100 students from the college of Science, and college of Economics & Political Science. These data were subjected to statistical analysis via the Excel program and will be discussed in sub-headings related

to the objectives of the study. These statistics are providing a comprehensive picture of the relationship between emotional intelligence and different academic disciplines between humanities and scientific colleges to search for the relationship between emotional intelligence and the type of academic specialization.

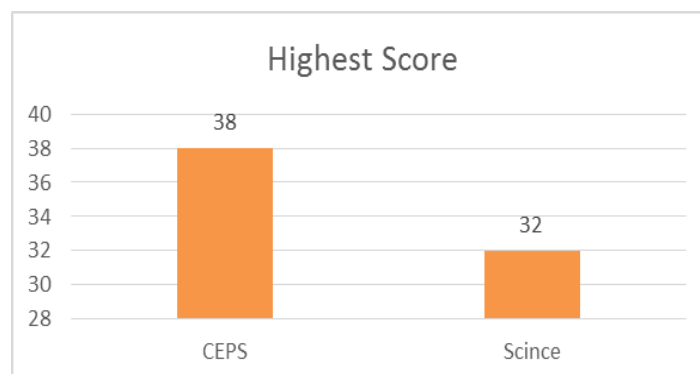


Fig.5

The table shows that the average emotional intelligence of the students of the College of Economics & Political Science was moderately moderate, it

reached to 26.48 out of 40, while the average scores in part A (Ability Pairs) was 15.48, and the part B (Scenario) was 13.18, and the highest score was 38

On contrast , the EQ of students in the College of Science was low compared with students of CEPS , it was 16.2 out of 40, where the average scores in part A (

Ability Pairs) was 8.06, part B (Scenario) was 8.54, and the highest scores was 32.

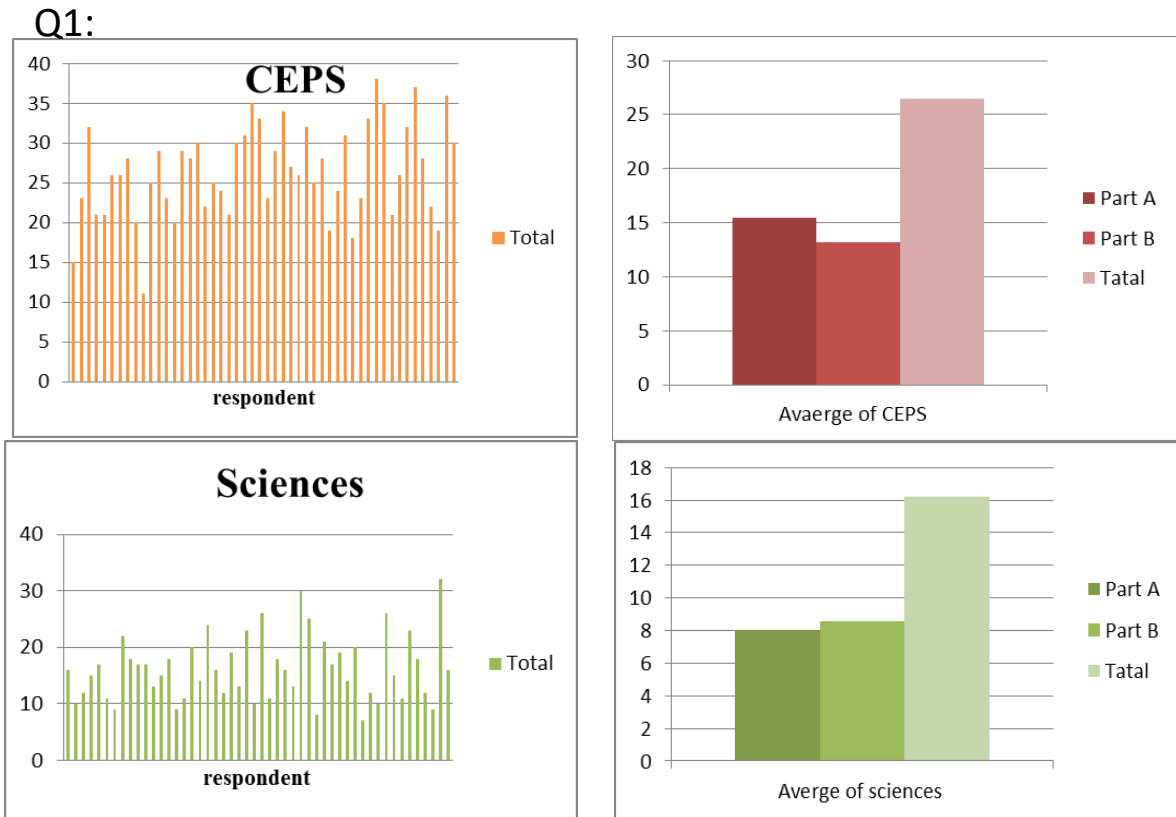


Fig.6

There are several challenges that may face college students such as study pressures, financial pressures and physiological stress such anxiety and depression. However, students with high emotional intelligence (EI) have the ability to face these challenges than students with low EI. In addition, students who have the ability to understand their emotions, control and manage their feelings have high EI. Through our analysis of the emotional intelligence for CEPS and the collage of science, we found that CEPS students have an average emotional intelligence of 26.48 out of 40, while students have an average emotional intelligence of 26.48 out of 40, while college of science students have about 16.2 of EI. As a result, CEPS have highest EI than college of science.

College of Arts and Engineering

Total sample size here was 54: 23 from the college of Arts and 31 respondents from the college of Engineering. 8 respondents age between 17-18 years,

25 of them are between 20-22 years and 21 are between 23-25 years.

The questionnaire consisted from two parts. The first part measure the level of Emotional Intelligence for students of college of Arts students and college of Engineering represented in 20 points of multiple-choice question. The second part is about students’ reactions to a scenario represented in 20 points of multiple-choice question. The total points of Emotional Intelligence are 40 points for each respondent.

A total of 54 respondents answered our online questionnaire from college of Arts and Engineering. The respondents consisted 23 of respondents from the college of Arts, 31 respondents from the college of Engineering. Moreover, 30 of respondents were females and 24 males from different specializations. This is fit with our goal of these reports.

Table1: Scores results in both part A and B for College of Art

College of Art respondents	Part A	Part B	Total
1	11	14	25
2	10	12	22
3	16	13	29
4	11	10	21
5	14	11	25
6	13	12	25
7	10	8	18
8	15	12	27
9	9	10	19
10	13	11	24
11	10	14	24
12	13	10	23
13	19	12	31
14	11	9	20
15	9	12	21
16	16	12	28
17	10	12	22
18	10	11	21
19	10	10	20
20	13	10	23
21	6	10	16
22	10	10	20
23	11	6	17

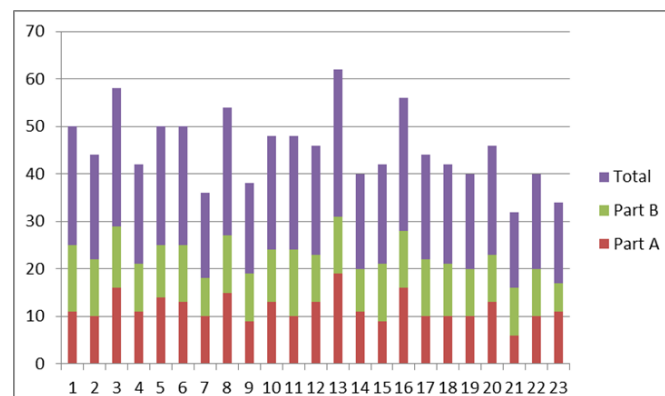


Figure7: Scores results in both part A and B for College of Art

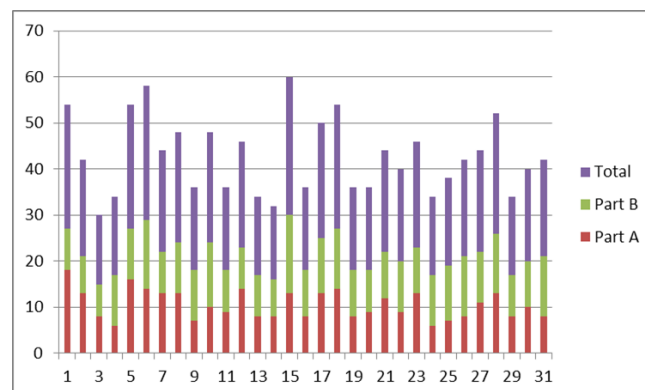


Figure8: Scores results in both part A and B for College of Engineering

Analysis of the above results

- College of Engineering has more scores in part A which is related to ability.

- College of Engineering has more scores in part B which is related to scenarios.
- As a result, College of Engineering has more emotional intelligence.

In this research the age differences does not effect on the emotional intelligence of students.

But the specialization it playing part in the EI

- College of Engineering (Civil and Architectural) students have high emotional intelligence. And the lowest score from (Electrical and Computer) major.
- College of Arts (Tourism) students have high emotional intelligence. On the other hand, (Information Studies, Arabic Language and Literature and Theater Art) students have low emotional intelligence.
- Tourism and Civil and Architectural students deal with people more. As a result, they are more emotional intelligent.

CONCLUDING REMARKS and RECOMMENDATIONS

The past decade, emotional intelligence (EI) has come to be known as one of the most critical skills one needs to have in their career, as well as life in general. Having a high (EI) can affect the way you manage yourself, your emotions, your interactions, and relationships with others within your organization, as well as outside. Understanding the levels of (EI) at the university helps to understand and detect problems and intervene by conducting training programs, workshops and raising awareness. That would in turn enable students to be better prepared for the work environment and for life. The results of the study conducted in private colleges and universities in Oman revealed a moderate to high level of emotional intelligence and abilities of students regardless of their age and gender.

The researcher proposes the following:

- 1) Incorporate the design of SEL (Social Emotional Learning) programs as it has been proven that it helps to develop students' competencies as well as the overall social-emotional attributes of classrooms (Zins, Weissberg, Wang, & Wallberg, 2004). Such a program will enable students to develop their different abilities and competencies and improve their networking and social skills in class and that in turn will enable them to build up their personalities and improve their performance further.
- 2) If the above approaches and programs are too demanding and difficult to apply due to some restrictions such as language, culture and financial, then EI training workshops can be conducted to the teaching faculty as well as the students. Results can be measured and further training can be conducted with the help of trainers in EI and experts in the field.
- 3) Further, extended studies on EI using WEIS questionnaires could be carried out to include other colleges and expand in the sample size. Also studies can be conducted in other Gulf countries and comparisons made to look at other aspects such as background of the students, activities, experience and level of the student at the college or university.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

(Wong’s Emotional Intelligence Scale: WEIS)

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(A) The following are 20 pairs of abilities. In each pair, please judge which ability is stronger for you. Then circle the alphabet (i.e., either (a) or (b) that represents this ability. (note: you may be strong or weak on both abilities. However, what you need to judge is the relatively stronger one)

	Ability concerning:	Ability concerning:
1	Comprehend the reasons of being happy or unhappy	learn how to repair a new electric appliance
2	mental arithmetic	control one’s emotions
3	learn how to sing a new song	concentrate on achieving one’s goal
4	understand others’ true feelings by observing their behaviors	tolerate physical pain when compared to others
5	Comprehend one’s changes in emotions	earn how to dance some new steps
6	run faster than others	calm down faster than others from angry feeling
7	encourage oneself to work hard in unfavorable situations	learn how to draw or paint
8	observe details of things	observe others’ emotions
9	having a better ability in sport activities than other people	having a better ability in understanding one’s own feeling than other people
10	use mechanical instruments	control one’s temper
11	Comprehend the rhythm of a song	set objectives and work hard towards them
12	understand others’ emotions from their behaviors and language	having better physical endurance than other people
13	physically more energetic than others	understand one’s emotions better than others
14	memorize new phone numbers quickly	not losing temper when angry
15	motivate oneself to face failure positively	learn to create an artistic object (e.g., china, painting)
16	Comprehend the rationale of complicated problems	understand others’ emotions
17	evaluate one’s own bad emotions	evaluate others’ singing abilities

18	keep emotionally calm when facing people or situations that you dislike	memorize strangers' names
19	encourage oneself to do the best	learn a new sport activities (e.g., soccer)
20	Comprehend others' emotions quickly and accurately	appreciate the creativity of a movie or a drama

PART (B) Reactions to Various Situations

For each of the following 20 situations, there are two possible reactions. Please circle the alphabet of the action (i.e., either A or B) that you will have a stronger chance of taking.

1. *When you are very down, you will:*
 - A. Try to do something to make you feel better.
 - B. Just ignore it because you know your emotion will be back to normal naturally.
2. *When you are upset, you will:*
 - A. Talk to someone who is close to you about your feeling.
 - B. Concentrate on some matters (e.g., work, study, or hobby) so that you can get away from your bad feelings.
3. *Your supervisor assigns a task that is not included in your job responsibility and you do not have any interest in doing it. You will:*
 - A. Persuade yourself that the task is not that bad and perform the task.
 - B. Tell your boss that you don't like the task and ask him to find some other suitable person to do the task.
4. *Johnny was working in Hotline Department and his job was to handle complaint and answered customer enquiry. However, he did not like his job and so he found another job in a hotel, serving walk-in customers. He again found that he was sick and tired in handling unreasonable customers. If you were Johnny, you will:*
 - A. Talk to some experienced people in customer service and seek their advice.
 - B. Try to get more training and education in customer service skills.
5. *Two managers in your company were hostile and very competitive with each other. You were the head of a department. You were caught at the middle of these two managers because both of them wanted to gain control of your department. This made your department difficult to function normally because there was a lot of confusion in rules and regulations for your department. You will:*
 - A. Pretend that you do not know about the competition between the two managers because politics is always unavoidable. You will led them fight and follow the finalized rules and regulations.
 - B. Try your best to make the rules and regulations clearer so that your department can function

normally.

6. *Suppose you get an important award, you will:*
 - A. Tell everyone and share your happiness with them.
 - B. Tell and celebrate only with your family and closest friends.
7. *When you have to do something you don't like, you will:*
 - A. Try to find some interesting stuff from it.
 - B. Try to finish it as soon as possible and forget about it.
8. *Your boy/girl friend is a fan of a particular pop music star. You spend two hours to buy two tickets for this star's concert. You asked him/her to meet you at 7:30p.m. After one hour s/he did not show up. You therefore went to the concert yourself. After the concert, you found your boy/girl friend. Before you said anything, s/he kept on scolding you seriously. You will:*
 - A. Let him/her continue. After s/he finished, tell him/her that you have already waited for him/her for one hour.
 - B. Stop him/her immediately. Tell him/her that s/he should consider his/her lateness before scolding others.
9. *Today you go to work as usual. After getting off the MTR (Subway), you found out that you lost your wallet. Soon after arriving the office, your boss complained about your work. When you started to work, your computer was broken. It is clear that today is very unlucky for you and you are not happy about it. You will:*
 - A. Never mind, try to find another computer to start your work.
 - B. Talk to a colleague or friend to release the bad feeling before starting your work.
10. *Your colleague, Peter, is a very smart person and seems to know a lot. He is able to respond effectively and sensitively towards the people who are in high positions. Your boss asked you to work with him in a project. Peter has many flashing ideas but he leaves you to handle all the dirty and donkey tasks. You will:*
 - A. Discuss with Peter and insist to share your tasks with him.
 - B. Tell your boss about the situation and see if s/he can offer any advice and/or help.

11. When you face problems regarding your career or study, you will:

- A. Talk to your friends to seek advice.
- B. Handle the problem yourself because everyone should deal with his/her own life.

12. You have very little chance to get the offer of a job which you like very much. You will:

- A. Still apply for this job and try to prepare well for it.
- B. Concentrate your efforts on jobs that you have better chances to get offer.

13. One day, you represent your company to welcome two important investors from Russia. According to Russian custom, people will kiss each other the first time they meet. However, you feel very uncomfortable to kiss unknown people, especially for those with the same gender as yours. You will:

- A. Take the initiative to shake hand with them immediately when they appear to avoid the kissing.
- B. Kiss them to show your respect.

14. One Sunday in summer, you and your boy/girl friend drove to the beach to enjoy the sunshine. On the way you had a minor accident. The door of your car was damaged and it would cost some money to repair it. You will:

- A. Drive the car to a familiar mechanic and take the bus to the beach.
- B. Go to the beach as planned and fix the car later.

15. You have an important examination tomorrow and you are studying hard in your room. Your family is watching a television program which you like very much as well. Since your house is small and so the noise of the television annoys you. You will:

- A. Ask your family to turn off the television but videotape the program so that you and your family can watch it together tomorrow after your examination.
- B. Although a little bit uncomfortable, you put a headphone on (to reduce the noise) so that you can concentrate on your study.

16. When a friend comes to you because s/he is not happy, you will:

- A. Share his/her feeling.
- B. Takes him/her to do something s/he likes.

17. When someone keeps on arguing with you on some unimportant topics, you will:

- A. Do not respond to him/her and wait for him/her to stop.
- B. Pretend to agree with his/her views and switch the discussion to other topics .

18. Your friend has a rough relationship with his/her boy/girl friend because your friend has a bad temper. When your friend talks to you about the rough relationship, you will:

- A. Pretend to agree with him/her that his/her boy/girl friend is not good enough.
- B. Point out that it is your friend's own fault and hope that s/he will improve.

19. Joyce is the only daughter of her parents. She is very close to her parents and is a very responsible person. Her job performance is excellent and colleagues like her. Recently her mother had a very serious traffic accident and is in coma. Although Joyce worries a lot, she does not take her leave and tries to do her best at work. If you were Joyce's supervisor, you will:

- A. Let her come to work as usual because she can have her work to distract her worries.
- B. Assign less work to her so that she can go to the hospital in a more flexible way.

20. One of your subordinates has just come back to work after giving birth to her first baby girl for one month. You know that her baby girl's health condition is not very good. Thus, you found out that in this month she had been making careless mistakes and took sick leave frequently. She had good performance before the baby was born. However, you are certainly not satisfied with her performance in this month. You will:

- A. Tell her directly that you did not satisfy with her work and discussed with her how she could improve the situation.
- B. Assign less work to her or transfer her to other position with lighter work load.