

The Moderating Effect of Neuroticism on the Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Job Performance

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Abstract: This paper attempts to investigate the role of Neuroticism in moderating the relationship between Emotional Intelligence and service providers' job performance. Based on 167 responses from service providers, their peers as well as their supervisors, a series of hierarchical regression analyses were conducted. The results indicate that Neuroticism significantly moderates the relationships between Regulation of Emotion (ROE) and peer's and supervisor's evaluations of job performance, and between Use of Emotion (UOE) and peer's and supervisor's evaluations of job performance among Malaysia's service providers. Implications for managers and future research are discussed.

Key words: Emotional Intelligence; Neuroticism; Job Performance; Service

INTRODUCTION

Customer demands have become more prevalent nowadays due to stiff competition in service industry. Service organizations have no other choices but to provide excellent service as demanded by the customers or risk losing them to their competitors. Since these organizations are dealing with intangible and perishable products, service excellence depends not only on the processes and procedures but also relies on service providers' capability to work effectively. Service providers have to possess certain skills and abilities to understand as well as to fulfill the varying needs and demands of the customers (Kim, 2010). Studies have accumulated the evidence proving that employees' ability to perceive accurately, appraise, and express emotion; the ability to access and/or generate feelings when they facilitate thought; the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge; and the ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth (Mayer and Salovey, 1997), which are known as emotional intelligence abilities, are related to job performance (Kamran, 2010; Rozell, Pettijohn, and Parker, 2006; Sy et al., 2006; Deeter-Schmelz and Sojka, 2003; Sojka and Deeter-Schmeiz, 2002; Wong and Law, 2002). However, employees' personality traits, which refer to individual dispositions, vary from one employee to another. These differences in personality traits are believed to affect employees' job performance in providing excellent services to the customers.

Literature Review:

Ei and Job Performance:

Job performance has been defined as doing things specifically related to one's job description (Welbourne, Johnson, and Erez, 1998). Job performance is the most salient aspect of the job performance model. Researchers have devoted a lot of efforts in trying to establish associations between EI and job performance especially with regard to the job being completed (Kamran, 2010; Sy et al., 2006; Lyons and Schneider, 2005; Abraham, 2004; Austin, 2004; Higgs, 2004; Law, Wong, and Song, 2004; Varca, 2004; Carmeli, 2003; Gabriel and Griffiths, 2002). Employees with the abilities to perceive, understand, and regulate emotion in self and others and ability to use emotion to facilitate thought and actions would be able to achieve high performance

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in their job. They are able to accept job challenges, overcome obstacles or work related problems, and easily bounce back from unexpected failure. Those with low EI abilities tend to remain at their status quo, refuse to accept extra job assignments and have difficulties to recover when experiencing job failure.

Service jobs require face-to-face contact with the customer. Employees are often required to explicitly display favorable or unfavorable emotions by the organizations. For example, bill collectors are expected to be hostile; funeral home directors, somber; and nurses, nurturing and caring. When organizationally mandated emotions conflict with personal feelings, emotional dissonance results (Rafaeli and Sutton, 1987). Consequently, job dissatisfaction, a decline in organizational commitment, and, in turn, withdrawal intentions entail (Abraham, 1998; Morris and Feldman, 1996). However, emotionally intelligent employees are able to empathize and understand the rationale for the required emotional displays so that they are able to reduce the personal-job conflicts (Abraham, 1999). Moreover, emotionally intelligent employees are adept at creating a favorable impression by suppressing negative emotions when facing with emotional dissonance (Abraham, 1999).

EI may reduce job-related stress and may lead to improved performance. Research has shown that managers who scored higher in EI suffered less subjective stress, experienced better health and well-being, and demonstrated better management performance (Slaski and Cartwright, 2002). Similarly, training in EI improved managers' health and well-being (Slaski and Cartwright, 2003). Nikolaou and Tsaousis (2002) exploring the relationship between EI and sources of occupational stress and outcomes found a negative correlation between EI and stress at work, indicating that high scorers in overall EI suffered less stress related to occupational environment. The studies indicate that employees with high EI are able to reduce work-related stress and consequently perform better on their job.

Besides the significant relationship between EI and performance, some studies have failed to establish the association between the two constructs and some found mixed results. Van Rooy and Viswesvaran (2004) conducted a meta-analytic investigation on 57 studies found that EI is weakly related to job performance. However, they suggested that the construct is definitely worthy of future research and indeed be considered a valuable predictor of performance. Besides, Jordan and Troth (2004), using a self-report measure based on the Mayer and Salovey's (1997) definition of the construct, found that EI was unrelated to individual performance. Instead, they found that EI predicted group performance and integrative conflict resolution styles. Gabriel and Griffiths (2002) in reviewing research works on EI suggested that some emotions may be contained or re-directed, but many arise from deeper unconscious sources and are impervious to learning. They added that managing organizational emotions takes more than mere EI. It requires a deeper understanding of the unconscious dimensions of organizations. However, based on the general premise, EI is expected to predict job performance.

Emotional Intelligence and Personality Traits:

Although there are varying theories and measures of personality traits available, most psychologists have reached consensus on the five factors that form the structure of the Big Five (John and Srivastava, 1999; Costa and McCrae, 1995). They are extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness to experience. Extraversion implies an energetic approach toward the social and material world and includes traits such as sociability, activity, assertiveness, and positive emotionality. The trait is associated with optimism and cheerfulness. Agreeableness reflects traits such as altruism, tender-mindedness, trust, and modesty. Those with this trait are described as compliant, soft-hearted and good natured, avoiding tensions and disagreement in the workplace. Conscientiousness refers to socially prescribed impulse control that facilitates task- and goal-directed behavior, such as thinking before acting, delaying gratification, following norms and rules, and planning, organizing, and prioritizing tasks. Those with this trait are described as self-discipline, ambitious and competence. Neuroticism contrasts emotional stability and even-temperedness with negative emotionality, such as feeling anxious, nervous, sad, and tense. The opposite trait of neuroticism; emotional stability relates to the degree to which a person is well-adjusted, calm and secure. Finally, Openness to Experience describes the breadth, depth, originality, and complexity of an individual's mental and experiential life. Those with this trait are open to new ideas and suggestions and are tolerant and perceptive.

The following discussion emphasizes on the relationship between EI and Neuroticism. Research has presented sufficient evidence showing a significant correlation between EI and personality traits especially Neuroticism. Dawda and Hart (2000), in assessing the predictive validity of EQ-i, found that Intrapersonal, Interpersonal and General Mood EQ composite scales showed strong negative correlations with Neuroticism as well as strong positive correlation with Extraversion and Adaptation EQ composite scale showed strong correlations with Agreeableness. Gannon and Ranzijn (2005), in assessing EI and life satisfaction, found that Neuroticism was significantly and negatively related to Emotional Management as well as Emotional Control.

Newsome et al. (2000), using EQ-i to measure EI and 16PF for personality, found that there was high multicollinearity among factors of the EQ-i and the 16PF factors. They argued that scores on one EI test largely reflected Emotional Stability.

Similarly, trait-EI was found to be substantially related to Emotional Stability (Van der Zee and Wabeke, 2004; Van der Zee, Thijs, and Schakel, 2002). Saklofske et al. (2003) in assessing the factor structure and validity of Schutte's SREI, found that EI was negatively and significantly correlated with Neuroticism. Similarly, Schulte et al. (2004) found a robust relationship between EI and personality with Neuroticism was the most influential. Van Rooy and Viswesvaran (2004) conducted meta-analytic investigation on 57 studies on EI-performance link found that EI appeared to be highly correlated with three of the Big Five factors of personality (Neuroticism, Extraversion and Conscientiousness) with correlations in excess of 0.31. The lowest correlation was 0.23 with Agreeableness and Openness to Experience. All these works indicate that personality traits might interact with the EI abilities to influence service providers' job performance. Besides, some studies have discovered that personality traits do not pose a direct influence on job performance (Suliman, AbdelRahman, and Abdalla, 2010; Tews, Michel, and Lyons, 2010; Sawyer, Srinivas, and Wang, 2009; Sanders, 2008), thus, they are treated as moderators (instead of mediators) to influence the relationship between the EI abilities and service providers' job performance. To test such relations, the following hypotheses are developed;

- H1: Neuroticism moderates the relationship between Self Emotional Appraisal (SEA) and peer's evaluation of service providers' job performance.*
- H2: Neuroticism moderates the relationship between Others' Emotional Appraisal (OEA) and peer's evaluation of service providers' job performance.*
- H3: Neuroticism moderates the relationship between Regulation of Emotion (ROE) and peer's evaluation of service providers' job performance.*
- H4: Neuroticism moderates the relationship between Use of Emotion (UOE) and peer's evaluation of service providers' job performance.*
- H5: Neuroticism moderates the relationship between Self Emotional Appraisal (SEA) and supervisor's evaluation of service providers' job performance.*
- H6: Neuroticism moderates the relationship between Others' Emotional Appraisal (OEA) and supervisor's evaluation of service providers' job performance.*
- H7: Neuroticism moderate the relationship between Regulation of Emotion (ROE) and supervisor's evaluation of service providers' job performance.*
- H8: Neuroticism moderates the relationship between Use of Emotion (UOE) and supervisor's evaluation of service providers' job performance.*

Methodology:

Instrumentations:

Service providers' EI was measured by using a 16 items self-rated EI scale developed by Wong and Law (2002) (WLEIS). This scale is based on Mayer and Salovey's (1990) original conceptualization of EI. Besides, previous studies support the scale's factor structure, internal consistency, convergent, and discriminant validity (Law et al., 2004; Sy et al., 2006; Wong and Law, 2002). The conceptual definition of WLEIS is as follows:

Self Emotional Appraisal (SEA) – the ability to understand deep emotions and be able to express these emotions naturally. A sample item is “I have a good sense of why I have certain feelings most of the time”.

Others' Emotional Appraisal (OEA) – the ability to perceive and understand the emotions of those people around. A sample item is “I always know my friends' emotions from their behavior”.

Regulation of Emotion (ROE) – the ability to regulate their emotions, which will enable a more rapid recovery from psychological distress. A sample item is “I am able to control my temper so that I can handle difficulties rationally”.

Use of Emotion (UOE) – the ability to make use of their emotions by directing them towards constructive activities and personal performance. A sample item is “I always set my goals for my self and then try my best to achieve them”.

Each of the five items is rated on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (totally disagree) to 7 (totally agree). The original authors have reported that the reliability estimates (coefficient alphas) for the four dimensions of SEA, OEA, ROE, and UOE were .89, .85, .76, and .88, respectively. In this study, the reliability estimates for the four dimensions of EI were .90, .89, .92, and .89, respectively.

Job performance was measured by using Welbourne, Johnson and Erez’s (1998) Role Based Performance Scale (RBPS), which comprises four items. The assessment of service providers’ job performance was performed by their peers and their supervisors in order to avoid measurement bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003). A sample item for job performance is “quantity of work output”. Each items is rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (needs much improvement) to 5 (excellent). In this study, the reliability estimates for the factors were 0.89 for peer’s as well as supervisor’s evaluations.

Neuroticism was measured by using the 8-item scale derived from the Big Five Inventory (BFI), which has been developed by John, Donahue and Kentle (1991). The scale starts with the statement of “I see myself as someone who...” followed by traits descriptions. Each item was rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (disagree strongly) to 5 (agree strongly). In the present study, the reliability analysis revealed that all items measuring Neuroticism were highly reliable with Cronbach’s alpha of 0.71.

The demographic variables, which comprise respondent’s age, gender, marital status, job position, job experience and education, were controlled so that the observed associations were not spuriously caused by these variables (Lopes et al., 2006) and to avoid an alternative explanation of any results (Côté and Miners, 2006).

Participants:

A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed to service employees attached to 40 service companies located in Selangor and Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. These companies were selected based on characteristics (e.g. degree of customization, degree of discretion, etc) as discussed by Silvestro, Fitzgerald, Johnston, and Voss (1992). The companies had earlier expressed their willingness to participate in the study. Questionnaires were distributed through the human resources managers of each participating company. These managers were initially explained to randomly distribute the questionnaires to their respective employees (self-selected respondents) (Bhaskaran and Sukumaran, 2007). The whole data collection process took approximately six months.

Out of 400 questionnaires distributed, a total of 188 were returned, yielding a response rate of 47 percent. A study on the response rates for surveys used in organizational research found that the average response rate for studies that utilized data collected from individuals was 52.7 percent with a standard deviation of 20.4, while the average response rate for studies that utilized data collected from organizations was 35.7 percent with a standard deviation of 18.8 (Baruch and Holtom, 2008). From 188 returned questionnaire, 19 responses were found to be non-usable (incomplete or completed by inappropriate individuals) and were excluded from subsequent data analyses. Thus, only 167 questionnaires (41.75%) were coded and analyzed. Table 1 shows the response rate for each type of participating company in this study. The company names were not shown for the purpose of anonymity.

Table 1: Profile of Companies.

Types of participating companies	Frequency	%	Types of participating companies	Frequency	%
Accounting services	15	9	Hotel services	17	10.2
Banking and consultation	17	10	Insurance services	14	8.4
Banking services	21	13	Investment services	15	9
Call centre	16	9.6	Legal services	11	6.6
Consultation	6	3.6	Sales and services	10	6
Courier services	10	6	Telecommunication	15	9
Total usable questionnaires	167	100			

Table 2: Profile of Respondents.

Demographic Variables	Category	n	%	Demographic Variables	Category	n	%
Gender	Male	69	41.3	Job Experience	<2 years	48	28.7
	Female	84	50.3		2-6 years	48	28.7
	Total	153	91.6		6-10 years	27	16.2
			>10 years		29	17.4	
Marital Status	Single	71	42.5	Total	152	91.0	
	Married	82	49.1	Educational qualification	Certificate	40	24.0
	Total	153	91.6		Diploma	35	21.0
Job position	Non-managerial	109	65.3		Bachelor and others	76	45.5
	Managerial	43	25.7		Total	151	90.4
	Total	152	91.0				
Average Age						30.11	

Profile of Respondents:

Respondents were asked about their job position, age, gender, marital status, job experience and educational qualification. As shown in Table 2, the average respondents’ age was 30.11. Analyzing the gender distribution, it was slightly higher for females. With regard to marital status, married respondents were slightly

more than single respondents. Pertaining to job position, the majority of respondents were holding non-managerial positions. Examining the respondents' job experience, the number of respondents was quite equally distributed across the given categories. Concerning educational qualification, majority of the respondents have bachelor degree or higher level of education.

Data Analysis:

Data for the study were first checked for missing values. Since the missing data occurred completely at random where the cases with missing data were indistinguishable from cases with complete data, any remedy can be applied without making allowances for the impact of any other variable or missing data process (Hair et al., 2006). In this case, mean substitution was chosen based on the assumption that a value derived from all other observations in the sample is the most representative replacement value (Hair et al., 2006).

Reliability Analysis:

It is suggested that the minimum acceptable reliability be set at .60 (Norzaidi et al., 2007; Norzaidi et al., 2008). The Cronbach's alphas for independent variables are in the range of .89 to .92, for the dependent variables are 0.89 for both peer's as well as supervisor's evaluation, and for Neuroticism is 0.71, indicating that the measures have high internal consistency exceeding Nunnally's (1978) threshold of .70.

Correlation Analysis:

Table 3 indicates that All EI variables correlate moderately with each other, suggesting a convergent validity. Similar trends are found with all the Big Five personality traits except for Conscientiousness. Besides, the EI variables are found significantly correlated with most of the Big Five except OEA and Neuroticism, OEA/ROE and Extraversion, and SEA/OEA and Conscientiousness, suggesting potential interaction effects. On the other hand, the EI factors also correlate significantly with peer's evaluation of job performance but not with supervisor's evaluation of job performance, suggesting non-significant associations between EI and supervisor's evaluation of job performance. However, the analyses were continued since it is believed that there is an interaction effect of the Big Five on EI variables that subsequently affects the relationships between EI variables and job performance.

Table 3: Correlation Analysis.

No		Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	SEA	5.5	1	-0.9						
2	OEA	4.9	1	.514(**)	-0.89					
3	ROE	5	1	.301(**)	.371(**)	-0.92				
4	UOE	5.6	1	.498(**)	.520(**)	.475(**)	-0.89			
5	Neuroticism	2.5	1	-.235(**)	-0.1	-.453(**)	-.267(**)	-0.71		
6	Job (P)	3.8	1	.207(**)	0.1	.240(**)	0.103	-.170(*)	-0.89	
7	Job (S)	4	1	0.1	0	0.1	0.04	-.190(*)	.506(**)	-1

Notes: (P) peer's evaluation; (S) supervisor's evaluation; ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients are along the diagonals in parentheses.

Non Response Bias Analysis:

Non-response bias was analyzed by comparing early and late respondents on the main variables (Armstrong and Overton, 1977). Early respondents are defined as those who responded within three months after the date of questionnaires distribution, whereas, late respondents are defined as those who responded after the lapse of three months. Performing a non-response bias analysis, the independent sample *t*-test was applied to examine whether the means for early and late responses differ significantly from one another. The results indicate that there is no significant difference in the variables scores between the late and early respondents; therefore, it is not necessary to analyze the data from the two groups separately.

Results:

The analysis deals with testing the moderating effects of Neuroticism on the relationship between EI variables, which consist of Self Emotional Appraisal (SEA), Others' Emotional Appraisal (OEA), Regulation of Emotion (ROE) and Use of Emotion (UOE) and employees' job performance. Prior to the analysis, Bedeian and Mossholder's (1994) argument is consulted signifying that a statistically significant (from zero) value of multiple regression R² is not required before one is allowed to test for the significance of a regression weight for an interaction term. Thus, testing of the hypotheses was performed by complying with the procedures explained by Baron and Kenny (1986). A series of four-step hierarchical regression analyses were conducted

to examine the moderating effect of Neuroticism. The analysis was performed by first entering control variables, which consist of respondent's age, gender, marital status, job position, job experience and education; in the regression equation. The independent variables, which comprise Self Emotional Appraisal (SEA), Others' Emotional Appraisal (OEA), Regulation of Emotion (ROE) and Use of Emotion (UOE), were entered in the second step.

Table 4: Summary of the Influence of Neuroticism on the Relationships between EI and Peer's as well as Supervisor's Evaluation of Job Performance.

	Peer's evaluation of Job Performance				Supervisor's evaluation of Job Performance			
	M1 Std β	M2 Std β	M3 Std β	M4 Std β	M1 Std β	M2 Std β	M3 Std β	M4 Std β
Control variables								
Age	0.1	0.07	0.1	0.01	0	0	0.05	0
Gender	0	-0.1	0	-0.1	-0.1	0	-0.1	-0.1
Marital status	0	0.05	0	0.06	0.15	0.16	0.142	0.147
Job position	0	-0.1	0	-0.1	-.163*	-.184*	-0.15	-.171*
Job exp.: <2 years	0	-0.11	0	-0.1	0	0	0	0.01
Job exp.: 2-6 years	0	-0.12	-0.1	-0.11	0	0	-0.1	-0.1
Job exp.: 6-10 years	0	0.05	0.1	0.05	0	0	0.02	0.01
Education: certificate	.177*	.169*	.201**	.171*	.168*	0.15	.219**	.186*
Education: diploma	0	0.07	0.1	0.03	0	0	0.01	0
Model Variables								
SEA		0.151	0.14	.167*		0.1	0.05	0.07
OEA		0	0	0		0	0	0
ROE		.229***	.183*	.212**		0.11	0.01	0.02
UOE		-0.1	0	-0.1		0	0	0.04
Moderating variable								
Neuroticism			0	-0.1			-.196**	-.194**
Interaction terms								
SEA x Neuroticism				0.153				0.11
OEA x Neuroticism				0.08				0.08
ROE x Neuroticism				.239***				.223**
UOE x Neuroticism				-.204*				-.256**
R ²	0.1	0.174	0.18	0.244	0.11	0.13	0.155	0.203
Adjusted R ²	0	0.104	0.1	0.152	0.1	0.1	0.08	0.106
R ² Change	0.1	0.07	0	0.06	0.11	0	0.03	0.05
F Change	2	3.311	1.12	3.128	2.23	0.71	4.589	2.21
Significance F Change	0	0.01	0.29	0.02	0	0.58	0.03	0.07
Durbin-Watson				2.07				1.566

Notes: *** significance at the .01 level; ** significance at the .05 level; * significance at the .1 level

Dummy coded variables: Gender: 0 male, 1 female; Marital status: 0 single, 1 married; Job position: 0 non-managerial, 1 managerial; Job experience: 100 <2 years, 010 2-6 years, 001 6-10 years, 000 >10 years; Education: 10 certificate, 01 diploma, 00 bachelor degree and others.

Neuroticism as the moderator variable was entered into the equation in the third step. Lastly, the interaction terms of the independent and moderator variables were entered. There is an interaction effect if the interaction term is significant, and the increment in total variance explained, or R², is also significant as indicated by the F statistics (Hair et al., 2006). Table 4 summarizes the results of the moderating effects of Neuroticism on the relationship between EI and job performance from both perspectives – peer's and supervisor's evaluations. Looking at the significance F change of the regression models, the EI-Neuroticism interactions and peer's evaluation job performance ($F(17, 148) = 3.128, p = 0.017$), and the EI-Neuroticism and supervisor's evaluation of job performance ($F(17, 148) = 2.210, p = 0.071$) were significant. However, the significant increments of 6.4 percent and 4.8 percent to the effect size are, by no means, small (Cohen, 1992). Small effects can, in fact, be important not only because they have practical consequences, nor because they accrue into larger effects, nor because they lead to theoretical revision, but also because they hold even under the most inauspicious circumstances (Prentice and Miller, 1992). With regard to peer's evaluation of job performance, Neuroticism has been established to significantly moderate the relationship between ROE and job performance ($\beta = .239, p < .01$) and UOE and job performance ($\beta = -.204, p < .1$). Concerning supervisor's evaluation of job performance, Neuroticism has been established to significantly moderate the relationships between ROE and job performance ($\beta = .223, p < .05$), and between UOE and job performance ($\beta = -.256, p < .05$). Therefore, hypotheses 3, 4, 7 and 8 are not rejected while others are rejected due to insufficient evidence for acceptance.

Discussion:

Based on the results of hierarchical regression analyses, four interaction terms (ROE*Neuroticism and UOE*Neuroticism for both peer’s as well as supervisor’s evaluation of job performance) were significant at 0.01, 0.05 and 0.1 levels. The graphical illustrations were drawn to portray the significant interactions more clearly. Drawing the graph, ROE and UOE were first recoded into three categories, respectively; Low, Moderate and High by dividing the respondents into three approximately equal groups using percentile (0-33 percent = Low, 33.1 – 66 percent = Moderate, and 66.1 – 100 percent = High). Median was used to recode the Neuroticism variable into two categories (below median = Low Neuroticism, and above median = High Neuroticism). The results of the significant interactions are presented in Figure 1 through 4.

Regulation of Emotion (ROE) was found to interact with Neuroticism and consequently affect peer’s evaluation of job performance. Previous studies (Gannon and Ranzijn, 2005; Schulte et al., 2004; Van Rooy and Viswesvaran, 2004; Saklofske et al., 2003; Dawda and Hart, 2000) have similarly established that a significant negative association exists between EI and Neuroticism.

With reference to Figure 1, employees with low Neuroticism received consistent pattern of peers’ ratings on their job performance in spite of the varying levels of ROE. However, high Neuroticism employees received lower job performance evaluation when the ROE was low. The ratings improved gradually with the increase in the level of ROE. At the moderate level of ROE, employees with high Neuroticism received relatively equal ratings to those with low Neuroticism. At the high level of ROE, employees with high Neuroticism obtained better job performance assessment from their peers compared to those with low Neuroticism. The results might be due to the suppression effect of which high ROE restrains the effect of high Neuroticism. Although the employees have high Neuroticism, they are still perceived by the peers as effective at their job provided that they have high ROE ability.

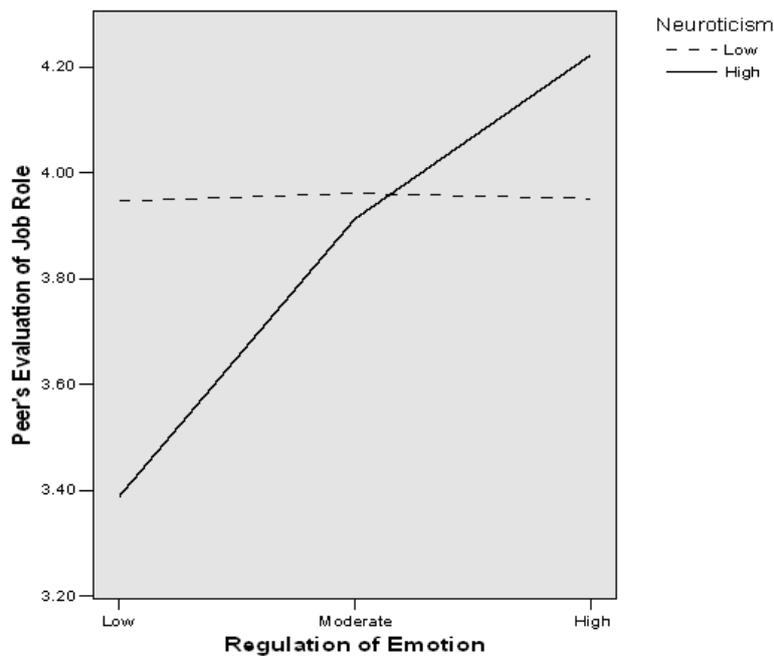


Fig. 1: The moderating effect of Neuroticism on the relationship between Regulation of Emotion and peer’s evaluation of Job Performance.

Neuroticism refers to the degree to which a person is worrying, nervous and anxious (John and Srivastava, 1999; Costa and McCrae, 1995). High Neuroticism employees are associated with low job performance. However, when high Neuroticism employees are equipped with the ability to regulate emotion and rapidly recover from psychological distress, the negative consequences of the trait can gradually be eliminated. High neuroticism employees can still perform effectively on their job performance provided that they possess high ROE.

Use of Emotion (UOE) refers to the ability of individuals to make use of their emotions by directing them towards constructive activities and personal performance (Wong & Law, 2002). High Neuroticism employees are those who are always worrying, nervous and anxious. Low Neuroticism employees are those who are well-

adjusted, calm and secure. With high UOE, high or low Neuroticism employees should be able to exploit their negative or positive emotions to obtain high job performance. However, Figure 2 shows that at the moderate level of UOE, the combination of UOE and high or low Neuroticism produces the highest positive effects on the employees' job performance. Nevertheless, at the high level, UOE reduces job performance not only for high Neuroticism but also for low Neuroticism employees. There are two possible reasons for the findings: First, it happens possibly due to the fact that employees with high UOE tend to be manipulative, doing something only for personal benefits, not for a common good. They might be seen as ineffective at their job by their peers. And second, high UOE alone might result in the employees to be inclined to follow their emotional states. Without other abilities, high UOE employees are seen as incapable of accomplishing effective work.

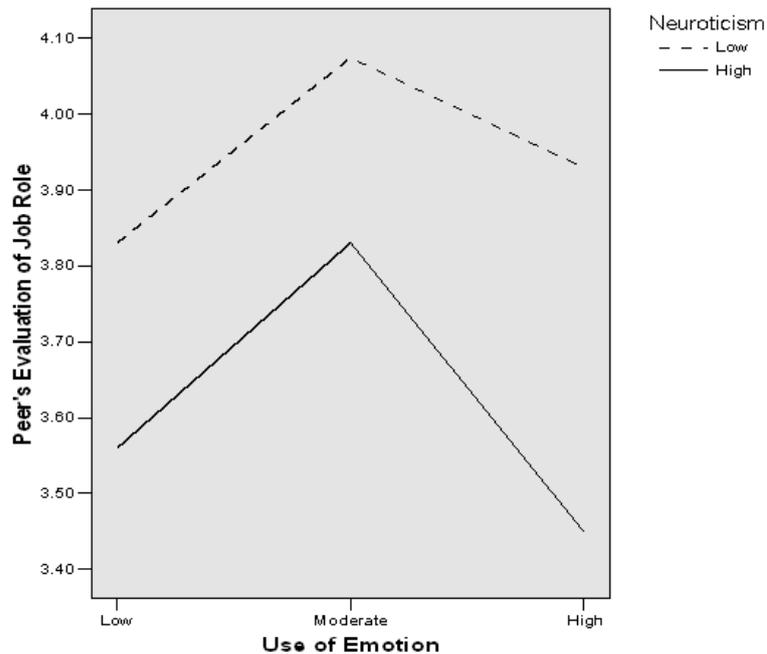


Fig. 2: The moderating effect of Neuroticism on the relationship between Use of Emotion and peer's evaluation of Job Performance.

The study also revealed that at all levels of the UOE ability; high Neuroticism employees received comparatively lower evaluation on job performance than their low Neuroticism counterparts. Consistent with prior expectation, low Neuroticism employees are better employees than those with those with high Neuroticism. Employees who have low Neuroticism or are emotionally stable are able to react positively to any change in their job content and context (Vakola et al., 2004) and cope better with stress as indicated by above-average health (Austin et al., 2005).

The study also established that the relationship between Regulation of Emotion (ROE) and supervisor's evaluation of job performance was significantly moderated by Neuroticism. The three levels of ROE clarified the effect. Figure 3 portrays that high Neuroticism employees received lower ratings compared to low Neuroticism employees across varying levels of ROE. The widest gap was observed when employees had low ROE where high Neuroticism received lower ratings than those with low Neuroticism. The difference was lessened when the employees had moderate level of ROE. The ratings improved when the ROE was high for both low and high Neuroticism. The findings signify that employees with high Neuroticism can still achieve effective job performance if they have high ROE or the ability to regulate their emotions that enables a more rapid recovery from psychological distress.

There are two important things that can be derived from the findings. First, low Neuroticism employees obtain better evaluation than those with high Neuroticism colleagues. And second, with ROE ability, the employees, regardless of their degree of Neuroticism, are effective at their job performance. Interestingly, at the moderate level of ROE, low Neuroticism employees received lower job performance assessment. This is because they need some time to regulate emotion and recover from psychological distress that subsequently affects their job performance.

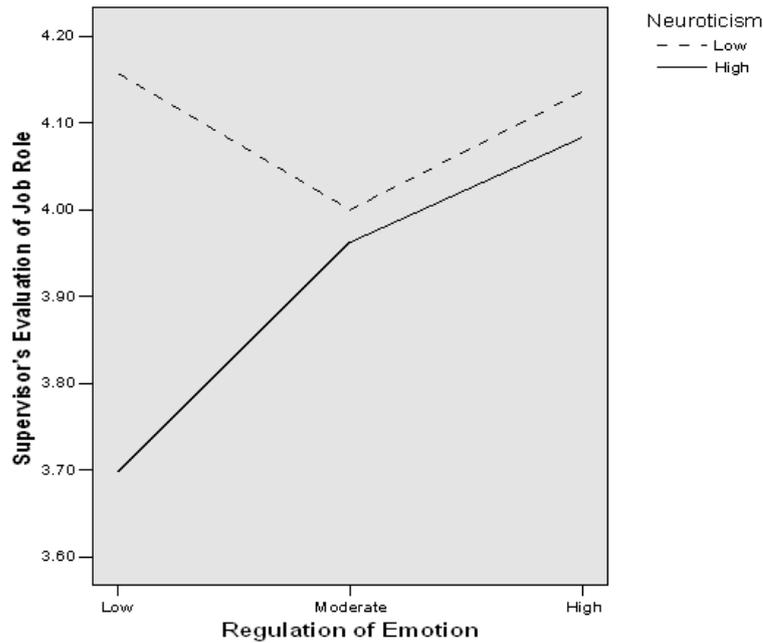


Fig. 3: The moderating effect of Neuroticism on the relationship between Regulation of Emotion and supervisor’s evaluation of Job Performance.

Neuroticism was also proven to significantly moderate the relationship between the Use of Emotion (UOE) and supervisor’s evaluation of job performance. When the UOE was low, high Neuroticism employees were rated lower than those low in Neuroticism as indicated in Figure 4. The ratings for both high and low Neuroticism lessened with similar pattern at the moderate level of UOE. At the high level of UOE, the ratings for those low in Neuroticism improved but the ratings for those high in Neuroticism continued to plunge.

Consistently, the findings indicate that the employees with low Neuroticism are perceived as more effective at their job performance than those with high Neuroticism. The results also demonstrate that the ability to exploit emotions by directing them towards constructive activities and personal performance (Wong & Law, 2002) does not work well for those with high Neuroticism. The ability is only beneficial for those with low Neuroticism since the present study has established that low Neuroticism employees or emotionally stable employees can work effectively on their job performance when they are equipped with high level of the Use of Emotion (UOE) ability. However, at the moderate level of UOE, the results are not desirable because it reduces job performance even though to low Neuroticism employees. The reasons for the occurrence are similar to the previous findings. First, employees with high UOE tend to be manipulative, doing something only for personal benefits, not for a common good. They might be seen as ineffective at their job by their peers. And second, high UOE alone might result in the employees to be inclined to follow their emotional states. Without other abilities, high UOE employees are seen as incapable of accomplishing an effective work.

Nevertheless, a further observation revealed that Neuroticism might act as predictors of supervisor’s evaluation of job performance indicated by a significance *F* change in model three of the four-step hierarchical regression analyses. The extended roles of the Big Five personality traits especially Neuroticism should be further studied since it is believed that as predictor, Neuroticism might contribute to better explaining the causal relationships between dependent and independent variables and a cohesive model of service providers’ job performance could be determined.

Conclusion:

In summary, the present study contributes to the current knowledge that Neuroticism is a significant moderator in the relationships between EI factors and peer’s as well as supervisor’s evaluations of job performance. Specifically, Neuroticism is established to significantly influence the relationship between Regulation of Emotion (ROE) and peer’s as well as supervisor’s evaluations of job performance, and between Use of Emotion (UOE) and peer’s as well as supervisor’s evaluations of job performance. The findings indicate

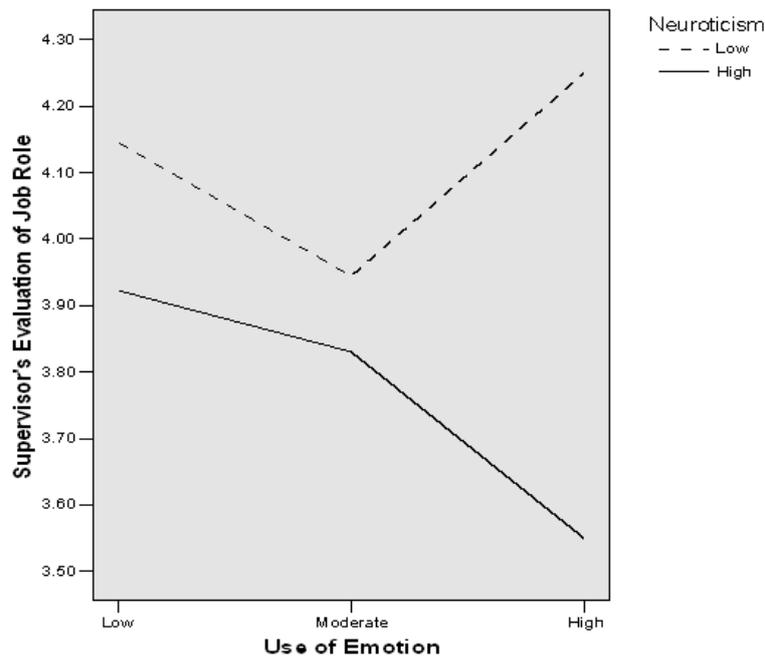


Fig. 4: The moderating effect of Neuroticism on the relationship between Use of Emotion and supervisor's evaluation of Job Performance.

that in most cases, low Neuroticism service providers outperform their high Neuroticism counterparts. However, service providers' job performance (regardless of their scores on Neuroticism) can be enhanced if they are injected with the right dose of the EI abilities. Employees with low Neuroticism should be provided with high ROE and UOE so that they can work effectively on their job. Employees with high Neuroticism, on the other hand, should be equipped with high ROE but low to moderate UOE because some emotions may be contained or re-directed, but many arise from deeper unconscious sources and are impervious to learning (Gabriel and Griffiths, 2002), which may affect service providers' job performance.

Limitation of the Study:

Since the sample size for this study was too small to produce convincing results some hypotheses were not empirically supported. Therefore, future study should consider this issue so that the results can be more convincing and can be generalized across population. Besides, the present study treats EI factors as predictors of job performance. It is suggested that future efforts should look into the possibility of positioning EI factors as mediators to affect the relationships between personal variables (such as personality traits) and job performance. The influence of EI may best be understood when it is treated accordingly. As evidenced in the present study, Neuroticism and supervisor's evaluation of job performance has shown a significant F change in model three of the four-step hierarchical regression analyses, which indicate that the variables should be treated as predictors of job performance rather than a moderator. On the other hand, the present study is limited in studying the moderating effect of Neuroticism on the relationship between EI and service providers' job performance. Given that there are other individual, organizational as well as work factors that might affect the relationship, researchers interested in this area should explore the role played by these factors in the future.

Managerial Implications:

There are a number of measures can be taken by the management to ensure that service employees are equipped with the right abilities. First, since it has been established that EI affects service providers' job performance, the management should consider selecting staff with high EI or developing the EI skills and abilities so that the employees are ready to pursue particular strategies of customer intimacy, care and nurturing. With regard to the selection of job candidates, a special assessment should be conducted by means of written tests as well as job simulation techniques. The technique ensures that successful candidates possess the right abilities and attitudes for the job. Another aspect to consider is the current selection process practiced by the organizations. Again, the selection process should reflect not only on the applicants' hard skills but also

their soft skills. New employees with high emotional awareness and regulation should be hired. Second, given that EI abilities can be developed, training in specific facets of EI; appraising, understanding emotions and managing in self and others as well as utilizing emotions to facilitate performance would guarantee that the service providers could deliver services as expected by the management. Specially crafted training programs such as on-the-job training and coaching are useful to enhance the EI abilities among the existing service employees.

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