

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING AND
ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS**

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FOR THE READER'S ATTENTION

The reader is reminded of the following:

- The references as well as the editorial style as prescribed by the *Publication Manual (5th edition)* of the American Psychological Association (APA) were followed in this dissertation. This practice is in line with the policy of the Programme in Industrial Psychology of the North-West University to use the APA-style in all scientific documents as from January 1999.
- The mini-dissertation is submitted in the form of a research article. The editorial style specified by the *South African Journal of Industrial Psychology* (which agrees largely with the APA-style) is used, but the APA guidelines were followed in the construction of tables.
- Each chapter of the mini-dissertation has its own reference list.

PREFACE

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SUMMARY

Title: The relationship between psychological well-being and academic performance of university students.

Key words: Psychological well-being; optimism; life satisfaction; self-efficacy; emotional intelligence; burnout; stress; future employees; new labour market entrants; academic performance; coping.

Emotional intelligence is a relatively new and growing area of behavioural research, which stimulated the imagination of the general public, the commercial world and the scientific community. Only a few studies have been done on the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic performance. The objective of this study was to determine the relationship of emotional intelligence, optimism, life satisfaction and self-efficacy, as well as the validity and reliability of these measures on a sample of university students. Further objectives included conceptualising emotional intelligence, optimism, life satisfaction, self-efficacy, well-being and academic performance and determining the validity and reliability of the 33-item measurement of emotional intelligence (SEIS) for a sample of potential future employees in economical sciences professions. The results obtained from this study will help organisations determine the level of emotional intelligence and well-being of their future workforce, in order to implement certain interventions to improve it.

A cross-sectional survey design was used for this study. A sample of 341 students was used for this study, but only 324 of the responses could be utilised. The participants ($N = 324$) were students within the field of economics. 117 Students were from the Vanderbijlpark Campus and 207 students were from the Potchefstroom Campus. The Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale, Life Orientation Test Revised, Satisfaction with Life Scale, and the General Perceived Self-Efficacy Scale were administered. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse the statistical data.

The results obtained from the SEIS proved this measuring instrument to be valid and reliable. By using the multiple linear regression analysis approach, a six dimensional factor structure for emotional intelligence among students emerged, which supported earlier conceptions in this regard.

The results showed that *Interpersonal* factors consisted of Positive Affect, Emotions-Others, Happy Emotions, Emotions-Own, Non-Verbal Emotions and Emotional Control. *Intrapersonal* factors consisted of Self-Efficacy, Life Satisfaction and Optimism.

Self-efficacy, Life satisfaction, Optimism, Pessimism, Positive Affect, Emotion-Others, Happy Emotions, Emotion-Own, Non-Verbal Emotions and Emotional Control, predict 16% of the variance in Academic Performance. Significant predictors of Academic Performance are Life Satisfaction, Optimism, Pessimism and Emotions-Others.

A second order factor analysis was done on the factors of the SEIS, LOT-R, GPSES, and the SWLS. Two factors were extracted explaining 50,95% of the variance. These factors were called *Interpersonal* Factors and *Intrapersonal* Factors. On the Intrapersonal Factor, the following factors loaded: Emotions-Others, Happy Emotions, Emotions-Own and Non-Verbal Emotions. Self-Efficacy, Life Satisfaction and Optimism, Positive Affect and Emotional Control loaded on the Interpersonal Factor. It is evident from the above that psychological well-being consisted out of two dimensions namely Interpersonal and Intrapersonal aspects.

Positive Affect is significantly positively related (large effect) to Optimism and Self-Efficacy and significantly positive related (medium effect) to Emotions-Others, Happy Emotions, Emotions-Own, Non-Verbal Emotions and Emotional Control. Emotions-Others is significantly positively related (medium effect) to Happy Emotions, Emotions-Own and Self-Efficacy. Happy Emotions is significantly positively related (medium effect) to Emotions-Own, Non-Verbal Emotions, Emotional Control, Optimism and Self-Efficacy. Emotions-Own is significantly positively related (medium effect) to Non-verbal Emotions, Emotional Control, Optimism and Self-Efficacy. Non-verbal Emotions significantly positively related (medium effect) to Emotional Control and Self-Efficacy.

Emotional Control significantly positively related (large effect) to Self-Efficacy and significantly positively related (medium effect) to Optimism and Life Satisfaction. Optimism significantly positively related (medium effect) to Life Satisfaction and Self-Efficacy.

Pessimism is significantly negatively related (medium effect) to Life Satisfaction and Self-Efficacy. Life satisfaction is significantly positively related (medium effect) to Self-Efficacy and Academic Performance.

Recommendations for future research were made.

OPSOMMING

Titel: Die verhouding tussen psigologiese welstand en akademiese prestasie van universiteit studente.

Sleutelwoorde: Psigologiese welstand; optimisme; lewenstevredenheid; self-effektiwiteit; emosionele intelligensie; uitbranding; stres; toekomstige werknemers; nuwe arbeidsmark-intreders; akademiese prestasie; coping.

Emosionele intelligensie is 'n relatiewe nuwe en groeiende area in die gedragswetenskappe, wat die verbeelding van die algemene publiek, die kommersiële wêreld en die wetenskaplike gemeenskap gestimuleer het. Slegs 'n beperkte aantal studies is al gedoen rakende die verwantskap tussen emosionele intelligensie en akademiese prestasie. Die doelwit van die studie was om die verwantskappe van emosionele intelligensie, optimisme, lewenstevredenheid en self-effektiwiteit, sowel as die geldigheid en betroubaarheid van hierdie meetinstrumente te bepaal, vir 'n populasie van universiteit studente. Verdere doelwitte sluit in die konseptualisering van emosionele intelligensie, optimisme, lewenstevredenheid, self-effektiwiteit, welstand en akademiese prestasie, sowel as die bepaling van die geldigheid en betroubaarheid van die 33-item meetinstrument van emosionele intelligensie (SEIS) op 'n populasie van potensiële toekomstige werknemers in ekonomiese wetenskap professies. Die resultate verkry vanuit die studie, kan organisasies help om te bepaal wat die emosionele intelligensie vlak, sowel as die welstand van hul toekomstige potensiële werksmag is, om sodoende dit te kan verbeter deur sekere intervensies te implementeer.

'n Dwarsdeursnee-opname ontwerp was gebruik gedurende hierdie studie. 'n Populasie van 341 studente was gebruik, maar slegs 324 van die response was bruikbaar. Die deelnemers ($N = 324$) was studente vanuit die ekonomiese wetenskap velde. 117 Studente was van die Vanderbijlpark Kampus en 207 studente was van die Potchefstroom Kampus. Die Schutte Emosionele Intelligensie Skaal, Hersiende Lewensoriëntasie Toets, die Lewenstevredenheid Skaal en die Algemene Observasieskaal van Self-Effektiwiteit was afgeneem. Beskrywende en inferensiële statistieke is gebruik om die statistiese data te ontleed.

Die resultate verkry van die SEIS het die meetinstrument geldig en betroubaar bewys. Met behulp van die meervoudige liniêre regressie-analise-benadering, is 'n ses dimensionele faktor struktuur van emosionele intelligensie verkry, wat ooreenstem met vorige konsepsies in dié verband.

Self-Effektiwiteit, Lewenstevredenheid, Optimisme, Pessimisme, Positiewe Affek, Emosies-Ander, Gelukkige Emosies, Emosies-Self, Nie-Verbale Emosies en Emosionele Beheer voorspel 16% van die variansie in Akademiese Prestasie. Lewenstevredenheid, Optimisme, Pessimisme en Emosies-Ander is betekenisvolle voorspellers van Akademiese Prestasie.

'n Tweede-orde faktor analise is gedoen op die faktore van die Schutte Emosionele Intelligensie Skaal, Hersiende Lewensoriëntasie Toets, die Lewenstevredenheid Skaal en die Algemene Observasieskaal van Self-Effektiwiteit. Twee faktore is onttrek en verduidelik 50,95% van die variansie. Die twee faktore is genoem *Interpersoonlike* faktore, wat bestaan uit Positiewe Affek, Emosies-Ander, Gelukkige Emosies, Emosies-Self, Nie-Verbale Emosies en Emosionele Beheer, en *Intrapersoonlike* faktore wat bestaan uit Self-Effektiwiteit, Lewenstevredenehid en Optimisme. Dit is duidelik uit bogenoemde dat psigologiese welstand uit twee dimensies, bestaan naamlik Interpersoonlike-en Intrapersoonlike aspekte.

Positiewe Affek het 'n betekenisvolle positiewe verband (groot effek) met Optimisme en Self-Effektiwiteit, en het 'n betekenisvolle positiewe verband (medium effek) met Emosies-Ander, Gelukkige Emosies, Emosies-Self, Nie-Verbale Emosies en Emosionele Beheer. Emosies-Ander het 'n betekenisvolle positiewe verband (medium effek) met Gelukkige Emosies, Emosies-Ander en Self-Effektiwiteit. Gelukkige Emosies hou 'n betekenisvolle positiewe verband (medium effek) met Emosies-Ander, Nie-Verbale Emosies, Emosionele Beheer, Optimisme en Self-Effektiwiteit. Emosies-Ander hou 'n betekenisvolle positiewe verband (medium effek) met Nie-Verbale Emosies, Emosionele Beheer, Optimisme en Self-Effektiwiteit.

Emosionele Beheer het 'n betekenisvolle positiewe verband (groot effek) met Self-Effektiwiteit en 'n betekenisvolle positiewe verband (medium effek) met Optimisme en Lewenstevredenheid. Optimisme het 'n betekenisvolle positiewe verband (medium effek) met Lewenstevredenheid en

Self-Effektiwiteit. Pesimisme het 'n betekenisvolle negatiewe verband (medium effek) met Lewenstevredenheid en Self-Effektiwiteit. Lewenstevredenheid het 'n betekenisvolle positiewe verband (medium effek) met Self-Effektiwiteit en Akademiese Prestasie.

Voorstelle vir toekomstige navorsing is gemaak.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This mini-dissertation deals with psychological well-being and academic performance of university students in the field of economic sciences. In Chapter 1, the motivation for the research is discussed in terms of the problem statement and aims of the research. Thereafter the research method and division of chapters are discussed.

1. PROBLEM STATEMENT

For many years, the relevance of moods, feelings and emotions to the world of work was denied. These constructs were regarded as transient disturbances to the linkage between abilities and performance (Muchinsky, Kriek, & Schreuder, 2003). However, it is becoming evident that moods, feelings and emotions play just as significant a role in organisations as they do in life in general.

Höpfl and Linstead (1997) summarise that organisational emphasis on rationality led to the neglect of emotional issues in organisations. The concept of emotional intelligence was developed due to the inability of traditional measures of rational thinking to predict future success in life (Höpfl & Linstead, 1997).

Salovey and Mayer (1990) initially proposed the concept of emotional intelligence and suggested that individuals differ in the way they deal with their emotions. Salovey and Mayer (1990) view emotional intelligence as knowing and managing one's own emotions, motivating oneself towards mastery and creativity, and recognising and handling emotions in others. This information can then be used to guide one's thinking and actions. Those who are able to manage their emotions effectively are said to be "emotionally intelligent" (Goleman, 1995).

Goleman (1995) proposed five dimensions to the construct of emotional intelligence: 1) knowing one's own emotions, 2) managing one's own emotions, 3) motivating oneself, 4) recognising

emotions in others, and 5) handling relationships. Those dimensions concerned with the self are classified as "*intrapersonal*". Those dimensions concerning others are classified as "*interpersonal*".

According to Klausner (1997), emotional intelligence is a dictator of interpersonal relationships. Emotional intelligence refers to an array of non-cognitive skills, capabilities and competencies, which can influence a person's ability to cope with environmental demands and pressures (Martinez, 1997; Bar-On, 2001).

Emotional intelligence is a cluster of traits and abilities relating to the emotional side of life – these include abilities such as awareness and management of one's own feelings and emotions, being able to motivate oneself and restrain one's impulses, recognition and management of others' emotions, and handling interpersonal relationships in an effective manner (Bar-On, 2001). Emotional intelligence is the ability to adaptively perceive, understand, regulate and harness emotions in the self and others (Schutte, Malouff, Simunek, McKenley, & Hollander, 2002).

According to Spector (2003), emotional intelligence is a characteristic which falls between a personality trait and a cognitive ability. The ability to control and recognise emotions in the self and others makes people more socially skilled, enabling them to be aware of, and control, their impact on others. In a work setting this means being able to work co-operatively with colleagues, and in supervisory positions it refers to practising effective leadership (Spector, 2003).

Emotional intelligence is concerned with self-awareness and empathy; the skills needed in building successful organisations. Goleman (1996) describes self-awareness as being aware of one's mood and one's thoughts regarding that particular mood, giving non-judgemental, non-reactive attention to one's inner state.

The balance of positive and negative emotions contributes to judgements of life satisfaction (Diener & Larsen, 1993). Satisfaction is a state of mind – a cognitive judgemental process by an

individual (Saris, Veenhoven, Scherpenzeel, & Bunting, 1996). Life satisfaction can be seen as the extent to which a person positively evaluates the overall quality of his or her own life as a whole.

Diener, Emmons, Larsen, and Griffen (1985) define life satisfaction as a global evaluation by the person with regard to his or her own life. In other words, it refers to the degree to which a person likes the life he or she leads.

Positive emotions trigger upward spirals toward psychological well-being, in the sense that the effects of positive emotions accumulate and compound (Fredrickson & Joiner, 2002). Previous experiences of positive emotions broaden attention and cognition, and facilitate coping with adversity (Aspinwall, 1998). Improved coping predicts, in turn, future experiences of positive emotions (Stein, Folkman, Trabasso, & Richards, 1997). People build psychological resilience as this cycle continues. In the end, this cycle leads to enhanced psychological well-being (Davis, Nolen-Hoeksema, & Larsen, 1998). People who possess the ability to understand and regulate their emotions tend to maintain a better outlook on life, and experience better psychological health (Schutte, et al., 2002).

Life satisfaction is considered an indicator of overall happiness and psychological well-being (Spector, 2003). Psychological well-being is related to emotional intelligence. Several authors have theorised that high emotional intelligence would lead to greater feelings of psychological well-being (Goleman, 1995; Saarni, 1999; Salovey & Mayer, 1990).

Some empirical evidence that emotional intelligence is associated with psychological well-being comes from research indicating that higher levels of emotional intelligence are associated with reduced cases of depression (Martinez, 1997), greater optimism (Schutte, Malouff, Hall, Haggerty, Cooper, Golden, & Dornheim, 1998) and greater life satisfaction (Ciarrochi, Chan, & Caputi, 2000).

One positive emotion can create psychological broadening and increases the possibility that an individual will find positive meaning in subsequent events, and experience additional positive emotions in the future (Fredrickson & Joiner, 2002).

Optimism refers to a conviction that the future holds desirable outcomes, irrespective of one's personal ability to control those outcomes (Marshall & Lang, 1990). Attribution style is significantly predictive of psychological well-being (Cheng & Furnham, 2003), and attributes for positive outcomes have a stronger effect on happiness than attributes for negative outcomes. Attributing positive outcomes to oneself and believing that positive outcomes will occur, will increase psychological well-being (Cheng & Furnham, 2003). Optimism has also been identified as an important factor in physical health (Cassidy, 2000).

Optimism has been found to have a positive effect on personal adjustment, life satisfaction, and overall well-being (Carver & Scheier, 2002). Elbert, Tucker, and Roth (2002) describe optimism as a person's positive outlook towards life events. It influences subjective experience when confronted with problems, and the actions one engage in when attempting to deal with these problems. The global confidence in one's coping ability is referred to as positive efficacy (Schwarzer, 1993).

In general, self-efficacy can be described as a general, stable cognition that individuals carry, which reflects the expectation that they possess the ability to perform successfully in a variety of situations (Eden & Zuk, 1995). According to Gardner and Pierce (1998), frequent situation-specific experiences of personal success bring about generalised self-efficacy.

According to Bandura (1989), self-efficacy makes a difference in people's feelings, thoughts and actions. Regarding feelings, low self-efficacy is associated with depression, anxiety and helplessness. Such individuals have low self-esteem, they harbour pessimistic thoughts regarding their accomplishments and personal development, and they tend to be more self-critical (Ganster & Schaubroeck, 1991).

