

How to improve workers' satisfaction: The promise of emotional intelligence and work engagement

There is an increased attention paid to which psychological factors help individuals to deal with their daily work-related demands so they feel healthier, happier, and more satisfied at their work. Job satisfaction is a multidimensional psychological response to one's job that is essential for any organization as it relates to a variety of outcomes such as commitment, prosocial behaviors, and performance. Moreover, it associates with lower turnover or absenteeism, which could be regarded as a practical way of reducing economic costs linked to workers suffering from dissatisfaction with their jobs.

Among several psychological resources, some scholars have examined the role of emotional intelligence as a construct which may help workers to deal with their demands at work. It is also regarded as a resource contributing to promotion of personal and professional growth among individuals. Although previous research has highlighted the association between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction, the underlying mechanisms remain relatively unexplored. To address this gap, the current study examined work engagement as a potential mediator of the association between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction.

The research was conducted with a multi-occupational sample of 405 Spanish professionals who filled in surveys containing sociodemographic factors (i.e. age, sex, and professional tenure) and measures of emotional intelligence, work engagement, and job satisfaction. In this study, emotional intelligence was considered as the overall score of a measure comprising self- and other-focused emotional appraisal, using of emotions, and self-focused emotion regulation. Work engagement was examined as a multidimensional construct manifested in three dimensions (i.e. vigor, dedication, and absorption).

In line with our expectations, those employees perceiving themselves as more skilled at dealing with theirs' and others' emotions scored higher in engagement dimensions as well as in overall job satisfaction. Moreover, results confirmed that higher emotional intelligence was associated with higher job satisfaction through levels of vigor and dedication at work. Nonetheless, absorption did not mediate the relationship between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction. A similar pattern of results was found for both overall EI and its dimensions, concluding that workers with greater emotional abilities typically experience more positive mood, higher energy and willingness to invest to work.

Results from this study suggested that there might be motivational processes underlying the relationship between use of emotional abilities and satisfaction with one's job. Moreover, findings may arise that the enactment of emotional abilities may lead to positive attitudes at work through levels of energy (i.e. dimension of vigor), and enthusiasm (i.e. dimension of dedication). Taken together, these findings may be informative for future research aiming at the development of

positive attitudes at work through the promotion of emotional intelligence. For instance, practitioners may design emotional intelligence interventions with a positive primary preventive focus on workers' positive feelings facilitation and, hence, on how more positive work attitudes and job satisfaction can be achieved.

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