EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AMONG THAI CUSTOMS OFFICERS

[1]PARIYABHAT ARIYAPONGKOSON, [2]USAPORN SUCAROMANA

[1]Business English for International Communication, Srinakharinwirot University, Bangkok, Thailand
[2]Department of Western Languages, Faculty of Humanities, Srinakharinwirot University, Bangkok, Thailand
Email: [1]pariyabhat@gmail.com, [2]usaporn@g.swu.ac.th

Abstract: This study investigated the levels of Emotional Intelligence (EI) and compared them based on gender and years in Customs Administration service among the Customs officers in the Customs Department headquarters in Bangkok, Thailand. A 45-item questionnaire adapted from the theoretical framework of Goleman (1995) was completed by 184 Customs officers. The results were calculated in percentages, mean scores, and standard deviations. In addition, the t-test was employed to determine the differences between levels of EI based on gender and years in Customs Administration service. The results revealed that the overall levels of EI among the Thai Customs officers who work in the headquarters of the Customs Department are high and each competence are also high. In addition, there was significant difference between the EI levels of these officers based on gender and years in Customs Administration service.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Customs Officer, Job Performance, Personal Competence, Social Competence.

I. INTRODUCTION

The term of Emotional Intelligence (EI) has been defined by Goleman (1995) as the ability to recognize which feelings are appropriate in which situations and communicate those feelings effectively. He also mentions that the learned ability which based on EI can result outstanding performance. In 1998, Goleman defines the EI as the ability of a person who is able to recognize their own and others' feelings, and able to manage them for the highest potential of motivation and relationship. Regarding the EI theoretical framework by Goleman, the two core components (Personal Competence and Social Competence) cover several areas for successful achievement of individual's lives including personal goals, education, and profession which much connected directly to influencing at workplace.

In addition, Salovey and Mayer (1997) describes the EI as the ability to be aware of emotions, feelings, and thoughts of one's own and other's; and regulate it in order to promote emotional and intellectual growth. Salovey and Mayer has also mentioned that the EI is the subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to identify, to monitor those feelings and emotions and to use this information to guide one's thinking, proper behaviors and good relationship with others in work and personal lives. In addition, the department of Mental Health, Ministry of Public Health, Thailand (2000) also states about the EI's ability of a person who are able to live a happy and creativity life with other people. Virtue, Competence, and Happiness are the three elements factors which provide a person's ability of controlling their own emotions and needs, knowing what type of personality they have, and being satisfied themselves and seeing their own value.

Several studies in term of Emotional Intelligence or EI in the workplace reveal that there are positive effects on an organization particularly in job performance, career assessment, recruitment, training, satisfaction, and individual's development. Goleman (1995) stated that EI was the most important factor in personal adjustment, success in relationships, and in job performance. Regarding EI at workplace, Goleman has explained that the EI has a more critical role than the IQ, which can develop both of the employees' technical skills and IQ. Also, in 1998, Goleman emphasized that EI may be four times more important than cognitive abilities to affect the job performance levels when job complexity is increased. According to Zeidner, Matthews, and Roberts (2004), the EI's role in workplace can affect work behaviors much more than the IQ such as employee commitment, teamwork, talent development, and innovation, quality of service, and customer or entrepreneur loyalty. In addition, having benefited for the recruitment process at workplace, the EI tests are using in and to evaluate work performance and promotion of personnel (Sarinnapakorn, 2012), so that the organization can find good candidates, review applicant documents, and screen potential employees (Heathfield, n.d.).

Customs officers are obliged to undertake duties under the time constraint and unavoidable stress in order to provide simplified, harmonized and seamless procedures to allow goods to move along the supply chain more easily and rapidly. Otherwise, unnecessary delays or slowing trade flows due to the complexities of Customs procedures and new trades models, officers' mistakes and their lack of knowledge and skills, can definitely cause additional unnecessary costs or deficit to business that are often passed on to customers. Therefore, that situation has real emotional impacts on the officers. EI at occupational environment for the individual Customs officers is important. Officers with EI may have the potential to manage and improve their capabilities and effectiveness in the "workplace" in order to

accomplish common goals (Goleman, 1998). To enhance the officers' competencies in both cognitive and emotional abilities at workplace is crucial for them to obtain favorable outcomes of achievement.

II. OBJECTIVES

This study investigated the levels of EI among the Thai Customs officers who work in the headquarters of the Customs Department, and to compare the EI levels of these Customs officers based on gender and years in Customs administration service. In response to the objectives of the study, two research questions were proposed: 1) what are the levels of EI among Customs officers who work at the Customs Department Headquarters in Thailand? 2) Are there any significant differences in the EI of these Customs officers based on gender and years in the Customs Administration service?

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Participants

The participants of this study consisted of 184 Customs officers. The target group was chosen because their works were in charge of the core Customs technical fields. Of the total participants, 86 (46.74%) were male, while 98 (53.26%) were female. Approximately, 60.87% (112) of the participants had worked in the Customs Administration service for five years and more, while 39.13% (72) had worked in the Customs Administration service less than five years.

3.2. Research Instrument

This study used a questionnaire adapted from the study of Sarinnapakorn (2012). The questionnaire was developed in accordance with Goleman's (1998) theory focusing on two core competencies: Personal Competence, and Social competence. The questionnaire consisted of 45 items. A five-point Likert-scale format measuring levels ranged from (1) strongly disagrees to (5) strongly agree, was used for each item. The Questionnaire was divided into two parts. The first part included general information of the participants which consisted of the gender, and years in Customs Administration service. The second part included an EI assessment. Forty-five items were scored by thirty-seven positive statements, while the other eight negative were applied by the reversed score.

A Cronbach's Alpha was run on a sample size of thirty Customs officers to measure the reliability of the instrument. The Cronbach's Alpha for the Personal Competence items were .806, which were a high level of internal consistency. While The Cronbach's Alpha for the Social Competence items were .856, which were also in a high level of internal consistency. Regarding the Cronbach's Alpha for overall Emotional Intelligence, it was scored .871, which was also in a high level of internal consistency.

3.3. Data Collection and Analysis

The researcher distributed the 45-item questionnaires to targeted number of the Customs officers via the volunteer persons from each bureau in the headquarters. Through a written instruction in the questionnaire, the purposes of the study were informed to the participants. The questionnaires were distributed to 200 Customs officers. The total 184 questionnaire copies were returned. The raw data was entered into Statistical Package for the Social Sciences computer program, or SPSS. Checks for basic descriptive statistics were conducted to ensure the accuracy of data entry.

To analyze the general information of the respondents' background, descriptive statistics techniques including frequency and percentage were applied. For describing the EI level of Customs officers, mean (*M*), and standard deviation (*SD*) were used. The t-test was employed to determine the differences between EI factors based on gender and years in Customs administration service.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The overall EI level of this group of Customs officers resulted in the high level (M = 3.76, SD = .34). In addition, each competency was high too. In these two EI competencies, the Personal Competence was ranked as the highest level (M = 3.77, SD = .40), followed by the Social Competence (M = 3.74, SD = .41).

Table 1. Comparison of EI among the Customs officers in the Thai Customs Department headquarters by Gender

Emotional Intelligence	Gender	N	M	SD	t	p
Overall	Female	98	3.66	.32	-4.06	.000
	Male	86	3.86	.33		
Personal Competence	Female	98	3.64	.40	-4.81	.000
	Male	86	3.90	.35		
Social Competence	Female	98	3.69	.38	-1.93	.055
	Male	86	3.81	.45		

According to Table 1, based on gender, it is presented that there was a significant difference between EI levels. That means the average score of the EI levels between female and male participants were significantly different. The females' EI level were different from males significantly at .05 (t = -4.06, p = .000). The Personal Competence score of females was also different from males significantly at 0.05 level (t = -4.81, p = .000) but there were no significantly difference on Social Competence score (t=-1.93, p = .055).

The average score of male participants was 3.86 (SD = .33), and that of female participants was 3.66 (SD = .32). With regards to two EI competencies scored by

male participants, the Personal Competence was rated at the higher level (M = 3.90, SD = .35), followed by the Social Competence (M = 3.81, SD = .45) respectively. For female participants, it seems that the mean score of Social Competence (M = 3.69, SD = .38), followed by the Personal Competence (M = 3.64, SD = .40)

In term of gender, it was inconsistent with the study of Bar-On (2000). He claimed that the EI between men and women does not differ. He studied the EI level of 77,000 administrations of the Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i) and found that the overall EI level between men and women are not different. However, this study's results were compatible to the study conducted by Katyal and Awasthi (2005) that they found a significant difference in EI level between males and females.

Table 2. Comparison of EI among the Customs officers in the Thai Customs Department headquarters by Years in Customs Administration Service

Emotional Intelligence	Years in the Customs Administration service	N	M	SD	t	p
Overall	Less than 5 years	72	3.87	.39	3.60	.000
	5 years and more	112	3.68	.29		
Personal Competence	Less than 5 years	72	3.89	.46	3.14	.002
	5 years and more	112	3.69	.33		
Social Competence	Less than 5 years	72	3.86	.39	3.06	.003
	5 years and more	112	3.67	.41		

As shown in above Table 2, it was presented that there was a significant difference between EI levels based on years in Customs Administration service. That means the average score of the EI levels between the Customs officers who work in Customs Administration service 5 years and more and those who work in Customs Administration service less than 5 years were significantly different. The Customs officers who work in Customs Administration service 5 years and more had emotional intelligence score different from the Customs officers who work in Customs Administration service less than 5 years significantly at .05 level (t = 3.60, p = .000). The Personal Competence score of the Customs officers who work in Customs Administration service 5 years and more were different from those who work in Customs Administration service less than 5 years significantly at .05 level (t = 3.17, p = .002) and there was significantly difference on Social Competence score also (t=3.06, p = .003).

The average score of the participants who work in Customs Administration less than 5 years was 3.87 (SD = .39), and that of participants who work 5 years and more was 3.68 (SD = .29). With regards to two EI competencies scored by participants who work less than 5 years in Customs Administration service, the Personal Competence was rated at the higher level (M = 3.89, SD = .46), followed by the Social Competence (M = 3.86, SD = .39) respectively. For those participants who had worked 5 years and more in Customs Administration service, it was also that the mean score of Personal Competence (M = 3.69, SD = .33), followed by the Social Competence (M = 3.67, SD = .41).

In term of years in Customs Administration service, the finding of this study was consistent with the research of Mishra and Mohapatra (2010). They investigated the relationship between EI and work performance among corporate executives in terms of different demographic variables such as gender, academic qualifications and years in the industry. They found that years in the industry was the only factor that gave positive results related to the EI scores.

CONCLUSION

The findings showed that the EI level of the Customs officers were at a high level. Males had higher EI level than females in overall and in both two competencies. Also, the Customs officers who had worked in the Customs Administration service less than 5 years had a higher EI level than those who worked at Customs 5 years and more in overall and in both two competencies. Regarding the overall results of two EI competencies, personal competence was ranked higher level than the social competence. In addition, the results revealed that there was significant difference between EI level based on gender and years in Customs Administration service.

Thus, if the Customs officers have high EI level, they are eventually productive at work and able to handle relationship for better communicative and collaborative work among colleagues and business partners. To promote the officers' efficiency is the recommendation that help them be active to put more efforts on developing their own proficiency for competitiveness. As a result, the officers' level of performance and achievement at work can be sustainable, which then impacts the setting to achieve their common goals with the organization in order to step forward in this current situation of high economic competitiveness, but shortage of critical knowledge and skilled experienced human resource due to the existing high rate of retirement.

However, this study has some limitations. Since it was conducted only with limited number of respondents who work at the Customs department headquarters in Bangkok, therefore, the findings did not investigate the EI levels of Customs officers in general. Future studies should select respondents

from different Customs houses in regional offices, ports and airports outside the headquarters, and increase the number of respondents. In addition, to gain more accuracy, not only the questionnaire uses to collect data, but also other type of methods such as interviews is recommended. Besides, future studies could investigate more other factors such as age, educational or family backgrounds, positions, and etc. in order to find out if other variables have any significant difference with EI level.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am grateful to the Graduate School of Srinakharinwirot University for financial support. Besides this, I am deeply grateful to my parents, beloved family, project advisor and committee, friends and colleagues in the Thai Customs Department and the WCO ROCB A/P for their love, unwavering support, and belief in me.

REFERENCES

[1] Bar-On, R. (2000). *Emotional and social intelligence: Insights from the emotional quotient inventory (EQ-i)*. In R. Bar-On & J.D.A. Parker (Eds.), Handbook of emotional intelligence (pp. 363-388). Sanfrancisco: Jossey-Bass.pl., 124-131.

[2] Boyatzis, R.E., Goleman, D., & Rhee, K. (1999). *Clustering competence in emotional intelligence: insights from the Emotional Competence Inventory (ECI)*. In R. Bar-On & J. D. A. Parker (eds.): Handbook of emotional intelligence (pp. 343-362). Sanfrancisco: Jossey-Bass.

[3] Boyatzis, R.E. (2006). *Using tipping points of emotional intelligence and cognitive competencies to predict financial performance of leaders*. Psicothema, 18, supl., 124-131.

[4] Cavallo, K. & Brienza, D. (2002). *Emotional competence and leadership excellence at Johnson & Johnson: The emotional intelligence and leadership study*. New Brunswick, NJ: Consortium for Reserch on Emotional Intelligence in Organizations, Rutgers University.

[5] Cherniss, C. & Goleman, D. (2001). *Emotional intelligence and organizational effectiveness*. In C. Cherniss & D. Goleman (Eds.), The emotional intelligent workplace: How to select for measure, and improve emotional intelligence in individuals, groups, and organizations. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

[6] Cooper, R. K., & Sawaf, A. (1997). *Executive EQ: Emotional intelligence in leadership and organizations*. New York: The Berkley Publishing Group.

[7] Department of Mental Health. (2000). *Handbook of emotional intelligence*. Bangkok: Department of Mental Health.

[8] Goleman, D. (1995). *Emotional Intelligence – Why it can matter more than IQ*. Bantam Books, New York, New York USA.

[9] Goleman, D. (1998). *Working with Emotional Intelligence*. Bantam Books, New York, New York USA.

[10] Goleman, D. (2001). Emotional Intelligence: issues in paradigm building. In Cherniss, C. & Goleman, D (eds): *The emotional intelligence work place. How to select for, measure and improve emotional intelligence in individuals, groups and organizations* (pp. 13-26). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

[11] Goleman, D., Boyatzis, R., & McKee, A. (2002). *Primal Leadership: Realizing the power of emotional intelligence*. Harvard Business School Press: Boston.

[12] Healthfield. (n.d.) *Recruitment, Selection, and Hiring*. Retrieved from http://hr.nd.edu/nd-faculty-staff/forms-policies/applicant-screening/

[13] Katyal S., & Awasthi, E. (2005). *Gender differences in EI among adolescents of Chandigarh*. Journal of Human Ecology, 17(02), 153 – 155.

[14] Lopes, N. P., Grewal, D., Kadis, J., Gall, M., & Salovey, P. (2006). *Evidence that emotional intelligence is related to job performance and affect and attitudes at work*. Psicothema, 18, 132-138.

[15] Mishra, S. P., & Mohapatra, D. A. K. (Jan-Mar, 2010). Relevance of Emotional intelligence for effective job performance: An empirical study. *Vikalpa*, 35(1).

[16] Pannitamai, W. (2002). *Emotional quotient (EQ): A happiness and life successful indicator* (5th ed.). Bangkok: Expernet.

[17] Salovey, P., & Mayer, J. D. (1997). *What is Emotional intelligence? Implications for educators, in Salovey, P. and Sluyter, D. (Eds.), Emotional Development, emotional literacy, and emotional intelligence*, (pp. 3 - 31). New York: Basic Books.

[18] Sarinnapakorn, F. (2012). *Emotional intelligence among business consultants of a consulting firm in Bangkok*. Srinakharinwirot University.

[19] Zeidner, M., Matthews, G., & Roberts, R. (2004). *Emotional intelligence in the workplace: A critical review*. International Association for Applied Psychology, 53(3), 371 – 399.

★★★