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A study on the effects of emotional intelligence and workplace friendship on job satisfaction and performance of employees in micro-enterprises

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Abstract

When an enterprise focuses on promoting the customer value, customer service strategies are considered as the key success factor in the pursuit of customer loyalty and enterprise development. For this reason, inducing employees' passion and having customers perceive the enthusiasm, profession, and efficiency of an organizational team presents positive meanings on the enhancement of enterprise image and revenue. Organizational workers are decreasing with the development of capital, labor mobility, and information networking technology. Currently, more than 10 million people in the US are home workers, showing the germination and development of micro-enterprises. Aiming at the businesses and the employees in Tainan Micro Cultural and Creative Park, total 300 copies of questionnaire are distributed for this study, and 192 valid copies are retrieved, with the retrieval rate 64%. The research results reveal significant correlations between 1. emotional intelligence and workplace friendship, 2. workplace friendship and job satisfaction, 3. emotional intelligence and job satisfaction, and 4. job satisfaction and job performance. Based on above results, suggestions are proposed for assisting domestic micro-enterprises in the future development.

Keywords: *Promoting customer value, Customer service strategies, Enterprise development, Customer loyalty, Domestic micro-enterprises*

1. Introduction

The approach of meager profit age has the competition in industries become fierce and reach fever pitch. In order to enhance the brand value

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in the market, enterprises devote to promote the product quality, have the prices be more competitive, and take customer demands and well-worth sensible services into the consideration as the strategies to pursue customer loyalty. Customer Relationship Management, as the development objective, is therefore regarded as the key factor in constructing a comprehensive customer service center and enhancing the communication channels with customers to further reinforce the customer loyalty. In either countryside or cities and developed or developing countries, micro-enterprises present diverse work styles and the work contents from low-level labor distribution to high-level knowledge labor and focus on service industries to cover all daily life elements. Under the fierce social competition and the effect of global economic distress, enterprises and organizations with bad management, unfavorable performance, or low productivity would be soon eliminated and could no longer survive. As a result, it is a major subject for enterprises and organizations surviving in such environments. Regarding the contribution and achievement of micro-enterprises in the diverse industrial expansion, diverse employment plans popular in new economy, including outsourcing of manufacturing, research and development, marketing, planning, administrative, financial, and logistic businesses, are the essentially developed business model of enterprises in the late development of economies of scale. It is therefore affirmed that team workers and individual workers, covered in micro-enterprises, have become the labor trend in the knowledge-based economic era and organizational workers would decrease with the development of capital, labor mobility, and information networking technology. Currently having more than 10 million home workers in the US is the best example of the germination and development of micro-enterprises. Nonetheless, it is necessary to have satisfactory employees before having satisfactory customers. Job satisfaction is organizational members' subjective perception of work situations. Especially in service industry, service personnel's subjective evaluation of the job would directly affect the service concepts and work attitudes and behaviors. In this study, the reliable and concerning relationship among members is established through employees' emotional intelligence, because such factors could enhance job satisfaction and further have customer service personnel's attitudes move towards positive, active, and enthusiastic work attitudes. It is considered as the motivation of this study.

2. Literature Review

2.1 *Emotional Intelligence*

Di Fabio et al. (2013) explained emotional intelligence as the intelligence allowing people to have proper feelings and desires, including affectional intelligence, mood intelligence, and motivational intelligence. Hahn et al. (2010) regarded it as the ability to keep self-control, enthusiasm, insistence, and self-motivation and pointed out five abilities of emotional intelligence, namely perceiving personal emotion, managing emotion, self-motivation, perceiving other's emotion, and dealing with interpersonal relationship. Referring to Asad et al. (2014), emotional intelligence in this study is divided into the following dimensions.

- (1) *Personal emotion*: Understanding personal emotion and being able to express it naturally.
- (2) *Other's emotion*: Perceiving and understanding others' emotion.
- (3) *Applying emotion*: Applying personal emotion to enhance constructive activities and personal performance, including self-motivation.
- (4) *Regulating emotion*: Adjusting personal emotion to rapidly recover from psychological indisposition, containing emotion management, stress management, self-comfort, and getting rid of anxiety.

2.2 *Workplace Friendship*

Donna et al. (2011) pointed out workplace friendship as individuals simultaneously taking actions toward external objectives in order to keep workplace interaction. Hair et al. (2010) regarded workplace friendship as the interaction between two or more than two people for certain purposes at workplace. Bimrose et al. (2011) explained workplace friendship as the exchange process between two or more than two people who were correlated at workplace through perception, assessment, understanding, and responses (Hegney et al. 2010). Johnston et al. (2013) pointed out workplace friendship as the direct psychological relationship or psychological distance between people at workplace activities. Hegney et al. (2010) considered that workplace friendship was built upon trust, commitment, affection, and sharing information value between both parties. Referring to Min's (2014) theory about workplace friendship that everyone has the need for interpersonal relationship and the satisfaction of workplace friendship is the key factor in the formation of self-concept,

workplace friendship is classified into inclusion, control, and affection in this study.

- (1) *Inclusion*: It stresses on feeling the importance and value of oneself to be loved and concerned.
- (2) *Control*: It refers to the decision making process of an individual among power, interpersonal effects, and authorities.
- (3) *Affection*: It indicates the close feeling between two people, especially the feeling of love and hate in different degrees.

2.3 Job Satisfaction

The idea of job satisfaction was first proposed by Hoppock in 1935, who considered job satisfaction as the subjective responses of workers to work situations, including psychological and physiological satisfaction with environments, as well as the feeling or emotion responses to the job (Hamdia and Phadett 2011). De Guzman and Choi (2013) regarded job satisfaction as the comparison of perceived devotion to the job and rewards and feedback acquired between employees and other members in the same organization that satisfaction would be generated when the result was fair, otherwise, dissatisfaction would appear. Ferreira (2012) proposed hierarchy theory and agreed that people's needs should be satisfied, including psychological, safety, social, esteem, and self-actualization needs; a higher layer of needs would be developed when slower ones were satisfied. Brown et al. (2012) indicated that job satisfaction came from personal value, rather than needs, and depended on the gap between personally perceived actual acquisition and expected acquisition from the job; the higher satisfaction appeared on the smaller gap, or dissatisfaction would be shown. Ho et al. (2014) contained seven dimensions in job satisfaction, namely salary, welfare, supervisors, colleagues, security, customers, and development. Job satisfaction was a complex concept covering various levels, such as colleagues, senior officials, salary, organizational factors, and work environments (Littlejohn 2012; Šorgo and Špernjak, 2012).

2.4 Job Performance

Job performance refers to "the quality and quantity of tasks achieved by an individual or a group at work", i.e. an employee's performance at work (Dessler 2010). Employees' behaviors engaged in the job should contribute to the organizational objective, and the job performance is divided into

efficiency, productivity, and effectiveness (Harry 2014). Efficiency is used for evaluating an employee's job performance; productivity is normally applied to calculate the cost for achieving a certain degree of efficiency that the fewer costs represent the higher productivity; effectiveness stands for the value of efficiency and productivity (Cigdem and Oncu, 2015). Guan et al. (2013) proposed three factors in employees' job performance, including (1) work motivation, (2) skills & abilities, and (3) role perception.

Referring to Chang et al. (2010), job performance is classified into task performance and contextual performance in this study. They are defined as below.

- (1) *Task performance*: The proficiency of job performance within an employee's job. In other words, task performance is regarded as the outcome of personal work which is related to the completion of tasks assigned by the organization, including job descriptions, standard operating procedures, and tasks handed down by supervisors.
- (2) *Contextual performance*: The proficiency of an employee's job performance beyond the tasks contributed to the organization. Organizational effectiveness and organizational core technology are operated according to personal discretionary evidence to assist in teamwork and help others. Such non-organizationally formal system control (e.g. salary management system) could affect the reinforcement of organizational effectiveness (Hsu et al. 2010).

2.5 Hypothesis Deduction

- (1) Research on the correlation between emotional intelligence and workplace friendship

In the research on cognitive ability, multiple emotion comprehension ability, and workplace friendship, Min and Yang (2014) discovered that the higher cognitive ability and the ability to multiple emotion comprehension revealed the better workplace friendship. Bimrose et al. (2011) studied the effect of emotion education on elementary gifted students' emotion adjustment behaviors that the participants could perceive the positive change between themselves and interpersonal friendship at workplace, in regard to the practice of emotion education. In the research on the emotional quotient of information management personnel, Tonsing et al. (2012) discovered that information personnel with the higher emotional intelligence showed less negative emotion, lower sensitivity to workplace friendship, higher extrinsic satisfaction and intrinsic satisfaction, higher

career planning ability, and better team management skills and general management skills. From above research, it is found out that the higher cognitive ability and multiple emotion comprehension ability present the better workplace friendship, emotion education could enhance the positive change of friendship between oneself and the interpersonal relationship at workplace, and ones with higher emotional intelligence appear lower sensitivity to workplace friendship. According to above literature review, the following hypothesis is inferred in this study.

H1: Emotional intelligence presents significant correlations with workplace friendship.

(2) Research on the correlation between workplace friendship and job satisfaction

Trivellas et al. (2013) pointed out the effects of organization and job characteristics, career development, personal role in an organization, and interpersonal interaction on work stress to further negatively influence job satisfaction and organizational commitment, affect job performance, and even result in occupational burnout. People with high job satisfaction could perceive self-emotion, manage self-emotion, motivate oneself at any time, understand others' emotion responses, and know how to get along with others to further establish favorable workplace friendship that they could adjust well in the group life. Pai and Lee (2011) discovered that the increase of friendship quality, job satisfaction, and job involvement resulted in increasing organizational commitment and decreasing turnover rate. Accordingly, workplace friendship is considered related to the primary effects on individuals and organizations. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is inferred in this study.

H2: Workplace friendship shows remarkable correlation with job satisfaction.

(3) Research on the correlation between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction

Employees with high emotional intelligence present lower work stress and better physical and mental conditions, could better integrate into the job, and reveal higher job satisfaction (Slaski and Cartwright 2002). Park et al. (2011) indicated that those with higher emotional intelligence revealed better job performance and job satisfaction to directly affect job performance and productivity. Wu et al. (2012) mentioned that ones with

higher emotional intelligence perceived lower work stress. Emotional intelligence showed positive correlation with job satisfaction because of the effect of work stress. Coetzee and Harry (2014) proposed the positive correlation between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction. Nooryan et al. (2011) agreed with the importance of emotional intelligence on perceived job satisfaction that the higher emotional intelligence, the higher perceived job satisfaction. The following hypothesis is therefore inferred in this study.

H3: Emotional intelligence reveals notable correlation with job satisfaction.

(4) Research on the correlation between job satisfaction and job performance

Shih and Huang (2011) mentioned the positive correlation between job satisfaction and job performance that organizational employees with better satisfaction with the job would appear higher job performance and an enterprise motivating employees through employee recruitment and training, motivation, communication, and promotion could have them satisfy with the job and present higher job performance. Chang et al. (2010) studied catering service personnel and found out the positive correlation between job satisfaction and job performance. Kao (2011) also concluded the positive correlation between employees' job satisfaction and job performance. In the research on the correlation among incentive system, job satisfaction, and job performance in life insurance industry, Ho et al. (2014) found out the moderately positive correlation between job satisfaction and job performance, i.e. the higher employees' job satisfaction, the higher job performance. In this case, enterprises and organizations being able to apply such relationship could enhance the employees' job satisfaction to promote the job performance. Harry (2014) explored the correlation between leadership and job performance of high-level managers in international hotels and discovered that it was necessary to build up self-confidence and job satisfaction in order to cultivate quality talents and enhance employees' performance. Based on above literatures, the following hypothesis is proposed in this study.

H4: Job satisfaction appears significant correlation with job performance.

3. Methodology

3.1 Methodological Model

The test of goodness-of-fit of general LISREL model could be measured from overall model fit (i.e. extrinsic quality of model) and intrinsic quality of model. Regarding the test of overall model fit, goodness-of-fit evaluation indices are commonly used, containing (1) χ^2 ratio (Chi-Square ratio), which stands for the difference between the actual theoretical model and the expectation that it is better smaller than 3, (2) goodness-of-fit index (GFI) and adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI) which present better goodness of fit when close to 1, (3) root mean square residual (RMR), which reflects “fit residual variance/covariance mean” that it is better smaller than 0.05, and (4) incremental fit index (IFI) being higher than 0.9 shows the excellent model fit (Hair, Anderson, Tatham and Black, 1998).

The evaluation indices of model intrinsic quality are often used in LISREL, including (1) square multiple correlation (SMC) of individual manifest variable, regarded as R^2 between manifest variables and latent variables, which is better larger than 0.5, (2) component reliability (ρ) of latent variables, as the Cronbach's α coefficient of the observation index, which is better larger than 0.6, and (3) average variance extracted of latent variables, which is calculated by the R^2 sum of various manifest variables of a latent variable divided by the number of manifest variables, revealing the percentage of latent variable measured with manifest variables, and is better larger than 0.5 (Sharma 1996).

4. Research Sample and Subject

The businesses and the employees in Tainan Micro Cultural and Creative Park, as the research subjects, are distributed 300 copies of questionnaire, and 192 copies are retrieved, with the retrieval rate 64%. The old judicial dormitories in Tainan City is taken over by Cultural Affairs Bureau for planning Micro Cultural & Creative Park (New Blueprint), endowing such old dormitories with new life and connecting the trends of cultural and creative industries and old house reuse to conserve the spatial memories and activate the urban space. By integrating the opinions of National Property Administration of the land owner and Tainan Prison of the property owner, all Japanese-style dormitories are restored and transformed. Cooperating with “Blueprint Installation Art” and integrating with original old trees, red bricks, green shade,

innovation, and art, the new and old integrated cultural tracks cover creative development and fostering management. After the stationing of businesses with quality cultural and creative brand and creative talents, Blueprint Cultural & Creative Park will become an important cultural and creative settlement in Tainan City.

5. Test of Reliability and Validity

Based on past theories and considering the real situations of research subjects, the questionnaire is designed to authentically express the essence and the complete representativeness and ensure the content validity. Besides, Factor Analysis is applied to estimate the final communality and test the construct validity of questions. The acquired validity appears in 0.747~0.896, presenting the favorable validity of the questionnaire. Generally, the reliability coefficient above 0.8, in basic research, shows the high reliability of the scale, while the reliability 0.7 is acceptable in exploratory research. The measured Cronbach's α reliability coefficient in this study appears in 0.821~0.907, corresponding to Wortzel's (1979) viewpoint of "Cronbach's α between 0.7 and 0.98 being high reliability".

RESULTS

6. Test of Goodness-Of-Fit of the Model

With Maximum Likelihood (ML), the acquired LISREL achieves the convergence. The overall model fit of the model extrinsic quality presents (1) χ^2 ratio= χ^2 =1.766, smaller than 3, (2)goodness-of-fit index GFI 0.94, larger than 0.9, and adjusted goodness-of-fit index AGFI 0.88, larger than 0.8, (3)root mean square residual RMR 0.026, smaller than 0.05, and (4) incremental fit index 0.95, larger than 0.9. Overall speaking, the actual samples 192 are larger than the request of basic samples 135.73, and the overall model fit passes the test, reflecting the favorable extrinsic quality of the LISREL model.

In terms of the test of model intrinsic quality, the squared multiple correlation SMC of manifest variables is larger than 0.5 (Table 1 and 2), revealing favorable measuring indices of latent variables. Furthermore, latent variables of emotional intelligence, workplace friendship, job satisfaction, and job performance present the component reliability larger than 0.6 and the average variance extracted of dimensions is also larger than 0.5 (Table 3). Apparently, it corresponds to the request for the test of model intrinsic quality.

Table 1
SMC between variables and dimensions

Emotional intelligence				Workplace friendship		
Personal emotion	Other's emotion	Applying emotion	Regulating emotion	Inclusion	Control	Affection
0.76	0.82	0.85	0.88	0.80	0.83	0.85

Table 2
SMC between variables and dimensions

Job satisfaction		Job performance	
Intrinsic satisfaction	Extrinsic satisfaction	Task performance	Contextual performance
0.89	0.90	0.84	0.87

Table 3
Component reliability and average variance extracted of variables

Item	Emotional intelligence	Workplace friendship	Job satisfaction	Job performance
Component reliability	0.823	0.835	0.891	0.854
Average variance extracted	0.80	0.81	0.85	0.83

7. Test of Path Relationship

When latent variables of personal emotion, inclusion, intrinsic satisfaction, and task performance are regarded as the reference indicators fixed at 1, the estimated value in the relationship between other dimensions and variables is significant. Regulating emotion=1.17 presents better explanation than personal emotion; affection=1.06 shows better explanation than inclusion; extrinsic satisfaction=1.04 reveals better explanation than intrinsic satisfaction; and, job performance appears contextual performance=1.06 higher than task performance. The test of hypotheses is organized in Table 4.

Table 4
Overall linear structure model analysis

Factor dimension/evaluation standard		Estimate
Emotional intelligence	Personal emotion	1.00
	Other's emotion	1.02
	Applying emotion	1.10
	Regulating emotion	1.17
Workplace friendship	Inclusion	1.00
	Control	1.02
	Affection	1.06
Job satisfaction	Intrinsic satisfaction	1.00
	Extrinsic satisfaction	1.04
Job performance	Task performance	1.00
	Contextual performance	1.06
Emotional intelligence→workplace friendship		0.825
Workplace friendship→job satisfaction		0.836
Emotional intelligence→job satisfaction		0.848
Job satisfaction→job performance		0.863
GFI		0.96
AGFI		0.83
RMR		0.017

Note: * stands for $p < 0.05$, ** for $p < 0.01$, *** for $p < 0.001$.

Table 4
Hypothesis test

Research hypothesis	Correlation	Empirical result	P	Result
H1	+	0.825	0.00	Supported
H2	+	0.836	0.00	Supported
H3	+	0.848	0.00	Supported
假説4	+	0.863	0.00	Supported

Cheraghi et al. (2012) considered emotional intelligence as the psychological process involving in dealing with emotional information to accurately and rapidly perceive personal or others' emotion, properly make responses, monitor and evaluate or make adjustment and changes aiming at emotional response, and eventually guide personal thinking and actions. Heather (2014) explained emotional intelligence as the ability to understand and manage personal and others' emotion, including five skills of 1.knowing personal emotion, 2.presenting empathy, 3.learning to manage personal emotion, 4.mending emotional hurt, and 5.developing emotional interaction.

Coetzee and Harry (2014) indicated that friendship should cover certain degree of accompanying, closeness, affection, and mutual aid. When friendship existed in the workplace, workers would expect to acquire resources and master resources through supervisor-subordinate or leader-follower interpersonal interaction; favorable and positive interaction could have workers form good work environment and perception to further enhance the devotion to the job. On the contrary, bad and unstable supervisor-subordinate or leader-follower interpersonal interaction would form negative work situations and result in negative thoughts of workers who then did not show passion on the job, slowly drifted away from the job, and reduced the devotion to the job.

In the short form of Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ), Kao (2011) divided job satisfaction into "intrinsic satisfaction" and "extrinsic satisfaction". The former referred to employees' perceived satisfaction with value, sense of responsibility, status, independence, self-esteem, and sense of achievement induced by the job; the latter indicated the perceived satisfaction with acquired salary and promotion from the job, favorable work environments, and interaction with colleagues. It was applied to academic field for a long period of time and presented favorable reliability and validity in relevant research on job satisfaction of employees. This study therefore uses the short form of Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire for measuring employees' job satisfaction.

8. Discussion

The research results prove that the Micro-enterprise managers are aware of the importance of emotional intelligence but seldom arrange relevant in-service education or counseling on emotional intelligence to reinforce employees' emotional intelligence abilities. Emotional intelligence could be cultivated and trained. Internal marketing

mechanisms in micro-enterprises could achieve the core objective of the organization by promoting employees' job satisfaction to enhance the job performance. Moreover, employees' organizational commitment could be reinforced to naturally reward the organization by enhancing the satisfaction. Nevertheless, the business and the management of micro-enterprises often fall in the narrow awareness of employees being hired so that the importance of employees in the organization is ignored. When a supervisor has new cognition that management is no long top-down, tasks can be promoted by the supervisor being willing to actively assist the employees in solving difficulties, concerning about the employees' welfare, fairly treating each employee, and cultivating friendship with employees. More communication time among colleagues to enhance the business opportunities and increase social interaction would enhance workplace friendship.

9. Conclusion

The research results prove that the abilities to get along with oneself, others, and the nature are the primary contents of emotional intelligence in the era when the relationship among "people" is the body at workplace. An employee being able to keep positive thinking, self-motivate, and rapidly re-organize the emotion could best adapt to the job and acquire job satisfaction from customer appreciation to positive affect the job satisfaction. An employee with better ability of adjusting personal emotion shows more strongly positive relationship with job satisfaction. On the contrary, one with low self-emotion adjustment ability would reveal relatively low job satisfaction. An employee often faces different people, affairs, and objects at work; having favorable emotional intelligence could better understand others or customers or the perception among colleagues. Good workplace friendship and team climate could have an employee acquire more resources or assistance at work so that the work becomes easier and job satisfaction and job performance are promoted.

Recommendations

From the research results and findings, practical suggestions are proposed as following.

1. Cultivation and training of emotional intelligence

It is suggested that micro-enterprises should stress on the training and cultivation of employees' emotional intelligence. Relevant

training could be included in the training of newly recruited personnel and regular educational training in order to promote employees' good emotion management and continuous working enthusiasm to further promote the ability of adjusting work stress and enhance the job satisfaction.

2. Perfect salary and welfare systems

The business and the management of micro-enterprises should practice the core concept of internal marketing and establish complete internal marketing mechanisms so as to greatly assist in the overall operation.

3. Concerning about newly recruited employees and paying attention to employees' job satisfaction

Micro-enterprises are suggested to concern more about the working conditions of employees, understanding the reason of low job satisfaction, exclude the factors in the decrease of job satisfaction, and enhance workplace friendship and job satisfaction so that the employees are willing to invest in the job and further enhance the job satisfaction and the overall job performance of micro-enterprises.

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