

行政院國家科學委員會補助專題研究計畫 成果報告
 期中進度報告

導遊工作壓力、情緒智力和生活品質關聯性之探討

An Exploration of the Relationships between Occupational Stress, Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Quality of Life (QOL) Among Tour Guides

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中文摘要

壓力之相關議題近年來引起學者們所關注，其所造成個人負面的影響與衝擊，亦為研究者所重視。許多文獻相繼指出，工作壓力會影響到生活品質的降低，而「生活品質」(Quality of Life)的概念，為現今普遍用來衡量個體的身心健康以及幸福感的重要指標。研究亦發現高情緒智力(Emotional Intelligence: EI)者，其較能了解自我和他人情緒，並擁有良好情緒管理，也較能採取有效的因應方式來處理壓力，其感受的工作壓力較低，且情緒的穩定狀態更使人們導向身心健康及成功的生活。導遊一向被視為觀光業第一線的服務人員，成敗關鍵的員工，甚至影響到旅客對於旅遊地點的整體形象。然而其不穩定的帶團生活所造成的壓力及身心健康卻鮮少為學者們所探討，因此，本研究為探討導遊的情緒智力、工作壓力、與生活品質三者間之關係。研究發現高情緒智力的導遊其感受的工作壓力較低，且擁有較好的生活品質，而較高工作壓力的導遊，其所感受的生活品質較低。研究結果可提供觀光相關單位和旅遊業者在提供導遊訓練課程之參酌，以期提升導遊情緒管理和壓力處理之能力，並有助於導遊在面對工作職場中更適當地和更有效率地面對旅客，以及處理工作中所帶來的壓力，且同時更享有美好的生活品質。

關鍵字：導遊；觀光；壓力；訓練

English Abstract

The issue of stress has received growing attention in recent years, and it has been implicated in the development of negative outcomes for individuals. Considerable evidence supports the notion that higher job stress is associated with lower quality of life (QOL), which is an increasingly common indicator to assess an individual's general health status, mental health, and well-being. Those with higher emotional intelligence (EI) levels are more aware of their emotions, better able to regulate them, and have more effective coping strategies to deal with stress-related emotions, all of which lead to higher levels of well-being. Tour guides, the front-line service providers in the tourism industry, play a considerable role in the development of the travel industry. Their performance influences the success or failure of tour experiences and the perception of tourists about the host destination. Due to the unstable working environment that tour guides often work in, along with schedules that often require them to work long hours, it is especially important to give due consideration to health issues relevant to tour guides. The purpose of this study is therefore to explore the relationships between EI, job stress, and QOL in order to better understand the contribution of EI and job stress on QOL among tour guides. The obtained results indicated that EI was inversely correlated with occupational stress; tour guides with higher EI levels reported being less vulnerable to stress. In addition, a negative link was seen between job stress and QOL; tour guides with less job stress tended to have higher levels of QOL. On the other hand, there is a positive association between EI and QOL, as tour guides with high EI experienced better health and well-being. The results of this study can assist the tourism authorities and practitioners to gain a better understanding of the relationships of these three factors in the tour guide population. In practice, the results can provide information for developing interventions to enhance tour guides' competencies of EI and stress management, which result in higher levels of QOL.

Key words: tour guide; tourism; stress; training

INTROUDCTION

The issue of stress has received growing attention in recent years (Mikolajczak, Luminet, & Menil, 2006). Stress is the body's generalised spontaneous reaction to any demand placed on it (Byrne, Davenport, & Mazanov, 2007). Emotions and stress are interdependent; as noted by Lazarus (1999), emotions are an integral part of the experience of stress. Stress is the experience of negative emotions in response to danger, threat or challenge. In other words, stress arises from conflict or disharmony between aspects of the self and the environment (Slaski & Cartwright, 2003). Therefore, the ability to recognise, express, control and manage one's own emotions and those of others is a useful skill for all people. This ability is defined as emotional intelligence (EI), a term first coined by Peter Salovey and John Mayer in 1990. EI is described as "the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions" (p. 189).

Considerable evidence supports the notion that individuals with high levels of EI are able to better cope with stress due to their ability to understand and regulate emotions (Cha, Cichy, & Kim, 2009; Matthews *et al.*, 2006). Attempts have also been made to examine the direct influence of stress on general health outcomes such as self-reported health-related quality of life (QOL), which is an increasingly common indicator to assess a person's general health status, mental health and well-being (Donohue, 2002; Wu & Wu, 2008). QOL represents a wide range of the life conditions that an individual experiences, including physical health, personal circumstances, social relationships, functional activities and pursuits, and wider societal and economic influences. People's responses to such conditions represent their personal satisfaction with life (Wu & Wu, 2008). Workers with a higher level of work stress tend to exhibit more health complaints and job dissatisfaction (Felce & Perry, 1995; Rusli, Edimansyah, & Naing, 2008). Zeidner and Olnick-Shemesh (2010) argued that individuals with higher EI levels are more aware of their emotions, better able to regulate them and have more effective coping strategies to deal with stress-related emotions, all of which lead to higher levels of well-being (see also Martins, Ramalho, & Morin, 2010).

Problem statement and purpose of the study

Despite proven hypotheses confirming the relationships between EI, stress and QOL, there is not yet enough interest in the topic among tourism scholars. In Taiwan, the tourism industry has recently been regarded as an important industry to promote, and attempts to promote this industry have been successful. Both the numbers of international arrivals and foreign currency receipts have seen a steady increase. For example, the total number of visitors in 2010 was 5.56 million; this was the first year that this number surpassed 5 million. Among the arrivals, 58.3% came for purposes of tourism; this was the highest ratio in the past 10 years, and it represented a peak growth of 2.7 fold over the number of people who came for tourism in 2000. Moreover, 2010's foreign currency receipts hit a new historic high of £10 billion (Tourism Bureau, 2012). These numbers are not easy to achieve, particularly in the intensely competitive South Asian tourism market, which includes such competitors as Hong Kong, Thailand and Malaysia. In 2011, seeing a lucrative business opportunity, over 38,800 people registered to take the annual tour guide license examination held by the Ministry of Examination, representing 42% growth in comparison with 2010. Those who passed the tests were required to undergo pre-employment training from the Tourism Bureau and obtain a certificate of course

completion before applying for professional certification.

In the tourism industry, tour guides are the front-line service providers who act as intermediaries between tourists and an unfamiliar environment. Tour guides greatly influence tourists' perceptions of the host destination, and they are thus instrumental in the success or failure of a tour experience (Zhang & Chow, 2004; Min, 2011). The tour guide profession is also considered to be quite stressful, as it involves combinations of different types of work, including transportation, accommodation and meal arrangement, interpretation, problem and emergency handling; and coordination of other activities (Min, 2012). They interact with inbound tourists directly and hourly during the entire itinerary and assist tourists in having safe and enjoyable experiences. Furthermore, due to an unstable working environment and schedules which may cause psychological health problems, depression, divorce and poor family relationships (Loudoun & Bohle, 1997; Strazdins *et al.*, 2006), quality of life thus represents an important issue from a practical perspective for tour guides.

METHODOLOGY

Three self-report instruments were adopted in the study to assess EI, occupational stress and QOL, including Wong and Law's Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS), Parker and DeCotiis' (1983) Job Stress scale, and WHOQOL-BREF Taiwan version. The demographic questions, including social demographics (e.g. gender, age, education and marital status) and work variables (e.g. primary languages used and work experience) are also included.

Regarding each item's applicability to tour guides, several experts were interviewed to collect their opinions concerning the adequacy and wording of each of the items; interviewees included two senior tour guides with over 20 years experience, five university professors in the field of travel management, and one senior government officer in charge of tourism affairs. Agreements were reached based on these experts' opinions, and nine revisions were made so as to make items applicable to the current study. In addition, 30 tour guides were asked to complete the scale in a pilot test and note and correct any unclear elements before it was finalised.

Because the majority of these tour guides (83%) work on a freelance basis, we requested assistance from the Taiwan Tourist Guide Association, which granted permission for the research because they would benefit from the findings. The questionnaire consists of a cover letter, the three measurement instruments and the demographic questions. The cover letter explains the reason for the research, how that data will be utilised and who will have access to the data. A total of 500 surveys were distributed to tour guides, and data collection was completed between February and July of 2011. With the generous support from the association, 396 surveys were returned. Among them, invalid questionnaires (n=18) were eliminated, and 378 individuals who completed all items were included for analysis, yielding an effective response rate of 75.6%.

The proposed hypothetical model

The hypothesised relationships summarised in Figure 1 provide clarity on the constructs and the relationships between constructs which are explored within this study. The relationships between the variables are also analysed with regard to effects. This information can support the development of an effective intervention to develop EI abilities and stress management, and thus improve quality of life for the tour guide

population.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

EI has been widely portrayed as critical to occupational stress and QOL, and job stress is also predictive of QOL, yet sparse evidence exists supporting such a claim among tour guides, who significantly influence tourists' impressions of a destination. The purpose of this study is therefore to explore the relationships between EI, job stress and QOL in order to better understand the contribution of EI and job stress on QOL in the tour guide population. In the present study, the measures of WLEIS, Parker and DeCotiis' Job Stress scale, and WHOQOL-BREF Taiwan version were used. These measures have been confirmed in terms of their psychometric properties and utility for a non-English speaking culture. The obtained results indicated that EI was inversely correlated with occupational stress ($r = -0.22, t = -4.486, p < 0.001$); tour guides with higher EI levels reported being less vulnerable to stress. In addition, a negative link was seen between job stress and QOL; tour guides with less job stress tended to have higher levels of QOL ($r = -0.443, t = -9.574, p < 0.001$). On the other hand, there is a positive association between EI and QOL ($r = 0.51, t = 11.569, p < 0.001$), as tour guides with high EI experienced better health and well-being. The results are consistent with previous research showing these relationships for other settings.

The findings from the SEM also suggested that the direct effect of EI on QOL is strong in comparison to both EI-job stress and job stress-QOL, indicating that tour guides' EI is more predictive of tour guides' well-being. In this study, an additional step was taken to estimate the mediating role of job stress between EI and the perceptions of QOL domains. The results indicated that job stress plays a partial mediating role in the relationship, and its indirect effect also exists. To our knowledge, the present study is the first to examine the effect of these relationships, and these findings contribute to existing tourism literature by indicating what levels of EI, job stress and QOL tour guides currently possess. This allows for a clearer understanding of the relationships between these factors among the tour guide population.

Theoretical and managerial implications

This study has demonstrated the associations between EI, job stress and QOL, with important implications for theory and management. From a theoretical point of view, it is not surprising that there is a negative relationship between tour guides' EI and job stress, as individuals with higher levels of EI are by definition more likely to have the capability to handle situations in their environment without becoming distressed. For instance, individuals with high EI tend to be more adept at identifying when they are beginning to feel overwhelmed by stress. This awareness allows them to search for the causes of their stress, thereby enabling them to develop coping strategies and ways to manage their emotional reactions to these stressors. Moreover, individuals who are better able to regulate and express their emotions and read the emotions of those with whom they interact are less likely to be overwhelmed by stress and are at a lower risk of developing negative health outcomes. Conversely, those with an inability to self-regulate emotional states experience more stress and anxiety and may have disadvantages in terms of their QOL (Cherniss & Adler, 2000). In addition, the current research extended the previous framework of formation by assessing the mediating role of job stress in this framework. No other study has examined this effect among tour guides.

The study results revealed that the strongest relationship was found between EI and QOL in a given framework.

The structural relationship analysis carried out in this study indicates that tour guides' EI directly and indirectly influences their QOL domains. In particular, EI levels were hypothesised to directly impact both tour guides' job stress and QOL. From a practical perspective, the current results suggest that improving guides' EI competencies is a critical way to help them cope with job difficulties when under stress and enhance the benefits of QOL. As noted previously, EI skills can be instilled, nurtured or taught through education and training (Goleman, 1995). For instance, tour guides' ability to control their emotions and channel their moods constructively can be improved and developed through a comprehensive training intervention; training techniques including instruction, counselling, positive thinking exercises, coaching sessions or practicing of new behaviours are effective methods for increasing the EI competences (Blank, 2008; Goleman, 1998). It is important for tour guides, tourism authorities and practitioners to understand the concept of EI and be aware of the research findings. Moreover, applying EI concepts in both pre-employment and on-the-job programmes may lead to new insights in terms of tour guide recruitment, retention and tour guide/tourist outcomes.

Tour guide is considered a stressful occupation, and a strategy for increasing tour guides' stress management is therefore needed. Based on the current evidence, by offering properly managed stress schemes it may be possible to enhance tour guides' QOL. Previous research has indicated that the implementation of these stress management interventions has favourable results for employees, such as increased exercise, smoking cessation and the acquisition of stress reduction techniques (Dugdill & Springett, 1994). The benefits of stress reduction can turn into increased levels of job satisfaction, productivity, health and well-being (Sparks, Faragher, & Cooper, 2001). Thus, providing stress tolerance interventions that result in the development of tour guides' stress-reduction abilities is essential, as the tour guides can benefit greatly from such training. The result is both higher levels of productivity and an overall happier and healthier workforce.

Limitations and avenues for future research

A number of issues require attention from future researchers. For instance, future study needs to examine the hazards or stressors that may be present in the workplace for tour guides and suggest preventive measures not only to help them resist stress but also increase their health and well-being. It has been shown that work demands perceived as challenging have a positive effect on employee well-being, while those perceived as a hindrance result in lower job satisfaction and increased turnover (Cavanaugh, Boswell, Roehling, & Boudreau, 2000). It is therefore important to distinguish between perceived positive and negative stressors in the workplace when conducting research and considering practical interventions. In addition, previous work by Min (2010) found that the individuals' EI varies in relation to the variables of gender and length of service for tour guides. This highlights the need to perform further assessment to see if such moderators may have different effects among these three variables. Such research would yield new insights. Lastly, further investigations can examine the effects of training programmes on these three factors. For example, future studies can evaluate the scores both before and after training programmes in order to accurately assess the impact of these programmes on EI, stress resistance and QOL domains.

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國科會補助專題研究計畫成果報告自評表

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說明：

The study is consistent with the NSC proposal. (99-2410-H-130-045-)

2. 研究成果在學術期刊發表或申請專利等情形：

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For Academic Research

The current study contributes to the field of knowledge about the current levels and associations of the three variables, occupational stress, EI, and QOL among the tour guides. The obtained results indicated that EI was inversely correlated with occupational stress; tour guides with higher EI levels reported being less vulnerable to stress. In addition, a negative link was seen between job stress and QOL; tour guides with less job stress tended to have higher levels of QOL. On the other hand, there is a positive association between EI and QOL, as tour guides with high EI experienced better health and well-being. The results are consistent with previous research showing these relationships for other settings. Furthermore, it may also be helpful if future work expands the framework of this study to include other tourism-related sectors, such as the restaurant, hotel, or airline industries which involve high intensity and frequency of interpersonal contact.

For the Tourism Industry

By improving our understanding of the influence of EI on occupational stress and QOL, tourism authorities can arrange new areas of training related to combating stress and developing QOL. Moreover, an improved understanding in this regard helps practitioners or tourism authorities identify the EI abilities, potential sources of stress and assess the current state of QOL among tour guides, which ultimately lead to actions that would alleviate stressors and improve QOL, and make them more resistant to stress in the circumstances they encounter in the future.

The results of this study can therefore lead to the planning of interventions and training initiatives for the purpose of further developing necessary skills and coping mechanisms to deal with stress and enhance QOL. In addition, the findings of this study can facilitate the planning and execution of more successful recruitment or on-the-job practices which should result in higher levels of productivity and a happier and healthier workforce.