

Chapter 10

Emotional Intelligence and Job Stress

Germaine D. Washington
Calvary University, USA

Libi Shen
University of Phoenix, USA

ABSTRACT

Substance abuse professionals work with chemically dependent addicts and disgruntled coworkers. They experience more occupational stress and employee turnover than social workers, community support workers, and youth care workers. Three of 37 substance abuse agencies in Kansas City, Missouri have reported extremely high employee turnover rates and occupational stress. How do substance abuse professionals perceive the relationship between emotional intelligence and job stress? What are substance abuse professionals' definitions of emotional intelligence and job stress? How does emotional intelligence affect job stress in the substance abuse profession? Why do higher levels of emotional intelligence reduce people's job stress and improve their job performance? The purposes of this chapter are to explore substance abuse professionals' definitions of emotional intelligence and job stress, and their viewpoints on the relationship between emotional intelligence and job stress.

INTRODUCTION

Occupational stress is common in the workplace. Based on a 2013 *Work Stress Survey*, a total of 83% of Americans were stressed by at least one issue at work, which was an increase of 10% compared to 73% in 2012 (Swartz, 2013). A small amount of stress may be healthy, but too much stress could be dangerous to people's mental and physical health. Levinson (2008) reported that too much stress could damage brain cells, which impair thinking and judgment. Ducharme, Knudsen, and Roman (2008) also indicated that stress and exhaustion have been associated with stress-related illness. Workplace stress is a significant contributor to both health problems and healthcare costs with US\$125-190 billion of healthcare cost a year (Blanding, 2015). Additionally, occupational stress creates unpleasant feelings that affect work performance and job satisfaction (Satija & Khan, 2013).

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In the past two decades, many researchers have studied emotional intelligence and job stress and most researchers have found significant relationships between emotional intelligence and occupational stress (e.g., Darvish & Nasrollahi, 2011; Dedovic et al., 2009; Gardner & Stough, 2002; Goswami & Talukdar, 2013; Iqbal & Abbasi, 2013; Reynolds & O'Dwyer, 2008; Schultz et al., 2007). Some researchers believed that emotional intelligence improves leadership and job satisfaction (Brackett, Rivers, & Salovey, 2011; Darvish & Nasrollahi, 2011; Ducharme et al., 2008; Vorkapic & Mustapic, 2012). For example, emotional intelligence enables leaders to attain interpersonal effectiveness and seek to obtain information regarding what happens within the workplace (Darvish & Nasrollahi, 2011).

Emotional intelligence could guide the way humans behave, such as obtaining an emotional common foundation (Ducharme et al., 2008; Vorkapic & Mustapic, 2012), and allowing leaders to empathize with employees within organizations to promote job satisfaction (Darvish & Nasrollahi, 2011). Emotional intelligence allows individuals to examine negative situations before making decisions for actions which can enhance leadership effectiveness (Brackett, Rivers, & Salovey, 2011).

In contrast, Charniss, Extein, Goleman, and Weissber (2006) stated that emotional intelligence fails to elaborate on the management of emotions concerning awareness along with a growing body of conflicting perceptions of cognitive abilities controlled by one's thinking and feeling. Charniss et al. (2006) indicated that emotional intelligence fails to provide evidence that lack of emotional intelligence prevents one from managing other people along with professional's performance capabilities. Law, Long, and Song (2004) offered evidence that emotional intelligence lacks clarification if it has any relations or separations from one's personality. Van Rooy, Viswesvaran, and Pluta (2005) provided further insights regarding how emotional intelligence fails to decipher if the processing of emotional information has the ability assist one in making sense of altered moods and cognition.

Substance abuse professions experience more occupational stress and employee burnout than any other human service professions, such as social workers, community support workers, and youth care workers (Ducharme et al., 2008). Three of 37 substance abuse agencies in Kansas City, Missouri, USA have reported extremely high turnover rates and occupational stress (Meeting report, 2013). How do substance abuse professionals perceive emotional intelligence and job stress? The purposes of this chapter are to explore substance abuse professionals' definitions of emotional intelligence and job stress, and their viewpoints on the relationship between emotional intelligence and job stress.

It is significant to explore substance abuse professionals' perceptions and viewpoints concerning emotional intelligence and job stress, because it might help these professionals to understand the importance of emotional intelligence and find ways to minimize stress in an intense working environment. It might raise awareness and contribute to substance abuse professionals' knowledge on what they should do to avoid overload and pressure. This study might help supervisors of substance abuse agencies rethink the problem of job stress and come up with some leadership strategies to cope with the problem. This study might help the world to realize the role emotional intelligence plays on job stress, not limited to the substance abuse professionals.

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