

# Humans: Are we rational or emotional first?

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The Success Triangle: Emotional Intelligence, Job Satisfaction and Job Performance in  
Hospitality Industry

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to find the correlation between the level of Emotional Intelligence, Job Performance and Job Satisfaction among hospitality professionals. This paper investigated the employee's stress management, ability to deal with pressure and how they behave in front of unpleasant guests. The sample of this study consisted of 21 participants divided into three groups: students, hotel employees and tourism professionals. The research method was questionnaire and focus groups. Results demonstrated that the connection between stress level, employee's satisfaction and employee's performance were partly confirmed and the relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Job Satisfaction were partly refuted. The study revealed that most of the participants use avoidance method as a solution to deal with stress. The awareness of accepting unpleasant emotions, and dealing with them as a normal thing is essential to each human being, especially for employees and employers in hospitality industry.

Key words: Emotional Intelligence, Job Satisfaction, Job Performance, Stress Management

## INTRODUCTION

In today's dynamic world where humans are becoming lonelier due to the developed technology usage and overworked generations who want to achieve both a successful career and fulfilled personal life it is harder and harder to stay tuned to one's emotions. The emotions are human's trigger into one's personal and professional life. Thus, the concept of Emotional Intelligence became very important. For example, people hide their emotions because of the fear of not being perceived as strong and successful person. All people's actions are inspired by different emotions such as: happiness, anger, frustration, sadness and depression. Being under stress is part of our everyday life (Anna Maravelas, 2005). Even waiting for a bus that is late is more than frustrated and stressful situation.

It is in human nature to wish to be part of a society or a team. We accept the fact that hiding our feelings and emotions is a good thing and we are not aware that this produces more issues and problems. Humans tend to blame other people and they do not see themselves as a guilty ones (Anna Maravelas, 2005). Time pressure is yet another stressor which can cause frustration and anger. It is becoming customary that nowadays a person stays longer at the job to find the solution for the current issue that happened with guest and comes late in the evening at home and transfers the negative emotions toward his children and goes to sleep for few hours to go again to the work where the frustration is increasing each day (Anna Maravelas, 2005).

According to Jung and Yoon (2016) it is possible to explain the causes of everyday stress by lack of knowledge about emotional intelligence. Emotional Intelligence (EI) is described as an ability to recognize and use your own emotions and figuring out others' emotions and feelings. Emotional Intelligence has 4 dimensions: Use Of Emotion (UOE), Others' Emotion Appraisal (OEA), Self-Emotion Appraisal (SEA) and Regulation Of Emotion (ROE). The OEA is reading emotions of other people. The UOE is taking the information from person's

emotions and use it for action. The ROE is controlling and deciding how to react in certain situation. The SEA is about figuring out your own feelings. In the field of EI, stress coping strategies are determined as different reactions and behaviors in various situations caused by society, culture, personality and environment. Each person has different opinions and reactions; everybody perceives stress in different levels (Cartwright and Pappas, 2008). Stress coping styles are divided into: cognitive-appraisal coping, problem-solving coping and emotion-focused coping.

Cognitive appraisal is a way how to ignore or avoid stress. Problem-solving represents how to find the solution to the problem. Emotion-focused is controlling emotions of an individual who is in the stressful situation. According to the research of Yung and Yoon (2016), the correlation between all four dimensions of Emotional Intelligence and three types of stress coping exists and it creates job satisfaction. Cognitive-Appraisal coping includes all four dimensions into a relationship. Problem-solving coping has an interconnection with Use Of Emotion and Self-Emotion Appraisal. Emotion-focused coping is connected with Self – Emotion Appraisal. Those relationships at the end make a job satisfaction which is explained as an employee's 'contentment with working environment and job duties in general. To summarize: if Emotionally Intelligent person can control and use emotions in right manner, he can get a positive outcome from stress (Jung and Yoon, 2016).

According to Cartwright and Pappas (2008), the elements of multiple intelligences are: "interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence". Interpersonal intelligence is the possibility of each individual to recognize others' emotions, and intrapersonal one is identifying your own emotions. Stress management is part of five categories of non-cognitive abilities and it is divided into stress tolerance and impulse control. Stress is caused by negative behaviors or attitudes in any possible situation on work or time pressure or many other issues that can create bad feelings; if that employee does not solve this issue in most efficient way, this stress

will increase very soon. Highly emotionally intelligent employee can reduce his stress simply by knowing how to control and behave in certain situations. EI can be learned and trained; learning points may be: control management, empathy and emotion recognition (Cartwright and Pappas, 2008).

There is a need to make a difference between the traditional Intelligence Quotient and the EI. The Intelligence Quotient of employees has the importance in the working place only for 27% and 73% of the success can be found in Emotional Intelligence. This valuable information from particular study shows how EI has a high factor also in the hospitality industry. The relationship between innovative managers and emotional intelligence is accepted by the Yuvaraj and Srivastava research paper. They concluded that innovative managers have to have high emotional intelligence to use his creativity in a productive way (Yuvaraj and Srivastava, 2007).

Caruso and Salovey (2004) described emotions as valuable information to the other employees. The emotions are caused by different factors such as the influence of society, family or atmosphere in the company. People can find out particular data about one individual with identifying certain emotion in particular situation. It is crucial to know the difference between emotions and moods because without differentiation we could take the mood as a data. The moods are fleeting and they are not stable and the emotions are durable.

The “emotional display rules” is a cultural term for controlling the emotions in terms of knowing when to reveal or hide feelings in the society. For example, each morning people are saying hello to the other person and they have a ritual to ask: How are You? This is a learned behavior or a polite way of reacting and it is rooted in everyday lives (Caruso and Salovey, 2004).

Emotional Labor (EL) is a behavior in which employees are showing the culture and atmosphere of the company. It is considered as a friendly relationship with guests and it represents avoidance of any negative emotion. Two types of EL in terms of employees' performance are investigated: "Surface Acting" (SA) and Deep Emotions (DE). The SA is pretending about real emotions, employee shows happiness toward the guest, but actually this individual is frustrated. Deep Emotions are the honest way of showing real emotions, when a person is under stress, says honestly this to the guest; the customer is valuing much more the honesty than faking the emotions. Guests recognize when someone lies and this makes a negative perception (Kim et al., 2012).

The "Emotional Exhaustion" (EE) is a feeling of tiredness and distraction, an individual has low concentration. The cause of EE is stress because of the work and it is influencing the employees' performance. Service Recovery Performance is a term for a quick and efficient way of finding the solution for a problem (Kim et al., 2012).

The findings from the same article defined that the positive emotion leads to better SRP. If EI is increasing, Emotional labor is also in the increase. The higher Emotional Intelligence, the better and more efficient the SRP is. Surface Acting has to be reduced and Deep Emotions may be increased. The suggestion for further improvement in employees' performance is based on training the staff, giving the rewards and recognitions (Kim et al., 2012).

Yung and Yoon (2012) noted the connection of four aspects of EI with Counterproductive Work Behaviors (CWB) and Organizational Citizenship Behaviors (OCB). The CWB is the employee's misbehavior toward other colleagues and it produces the negative perspective of the company. The OCB is giving additional value and contribution to the organization and society. It can be positive and negative; five factors that are explanation of the OCB are: functional participation, social participation, obedience in organization, loyalty in

organization and inspiring the organization. The result of this study is that CWB negatively influences OEA, UOE and SEA. In contrast, OCB has a positive impact on SEA and UOE (Yung and Yoon, 2012).

Emotional regulation is planned strategy for emotional control; it is a way how a person reacts in different situations and what emotions could be used and it may be mindful or oblivious. Self-leadership is a mode for individual's motivation and persistence for future improvement. Everything depends on personal goals and desires which might be developed by Self-Leadership. This term has two types: behavior-focused and cognitive-focused strategies. The purpose of those two concepts is to show how EI in case of Emotional Regulation and Self-Leadership creates correlation with stress coping. Houghton et al (2012) reported that the relationship between ER, SL and stress coping exists. The suggestion from the phrase: "You can't control the wind, but you can certainly adjust the sails" is that people cannot influence the stress, but it is possible to regulate ER and SL in personal and professional life (Houghton et al., 2012).

Based on King and Gardner (2006) research occupational stress is determined as a type of stress that is influenced by society and particular working duties. The stress process can make positive impact and negative impact. The organization demands certain duties to be done by specific time period and it is possible to have two ways for solving this issue. Both ways involve Emotional Intelligence. Employee might accept the challenge and focus on performing the task and with the support from the working environment; this individual will have positive impact of stress. The second way is involving threat and avoidance as a key factors to the negative impact of stress (King and Gardner, 2006).

The level of Occupational Stress depends on individual's personality, pressure of society, cultural behaviors, various events. For one person some situation would be positive and

without any stress and for the other person that situation is more than stressful. The solution is in the training and education where employees can reduce stress or at least learn how to avoid overreaction (Motowidlo, et al., 1986).

Job satisfaction is an employee's contentment with work and atmosphere in the company. Those employees are having positive experience in the job and they accomplished all their needs and wants. The emotions of those people tend to be more positive than negative if the EI is high; on the other hand, Job Satisfaction is more a subjective point of view than objective (Lee and Ok, 2012).

Burnout is a consequence of suppressing the feelings on the work when a person is under stress for a longer time. This syndrome happens more often to hospitality employees because of the high customers' expectations and employer's high demands. This term has three parts: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment. Depersonalization means that people are acting like computers and faceless expressions toward others. Reduced personal accomplishment is helpless feeling for any kind of success or development (Lee and Ok, 2012).

Lee and Ok (2012) concluded that direct interconnection between EI and JS do not exist; the connection of EI and JS is possible, if between those two correlations goes employees' personal accomplishment. The relationship of burnout segments and job satisfaction exists; burnout creates negative impact on job satisfaction in all segments. The advice from the article is that human resources of each firm should take into the consideration the value of highly emotional intelligent potential employee. The example is L'Oreal's sales employees which had higher sale by \$90000 after they hired a person with high level of EI and they reduced turnover for 63% because people were satisfied with their work (Lee and Ok, 2012).

Choi et al., (2011) confirmed the positive connection between EI, situational judgment effectiveness, job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Emotionally intelligent employee has the ability to judge what the priority is or right decision in particular situation; if that person has the empowerment in making a decision, the job satisfaction is very high and the commitment will be much higher (Choi, et al., 2011).

OLC is a possibility of a company to learn and to develop their own norms and rules. The OLC is crucial to find out the purpose of EI in hospitality industry and it is claimed that EI is in the middle of people and environment. EI does not have a point, if it is related only to one individual. More valuable information about EI should be gained through OLCs in any hotel which leads to the increased job satisfaction; people learn how to behave with unpleasant guest and how to reduce negative feelings (Chiva and Alegre, 2006).

Job performance is a mode of operation; it describes how well the employee works and what level of diligence employee has. The major setback to the JP is job stress which causes confusion, distraction and lack of concentration. Employee cannot perform well, if the stress level is high. Job Performance is not going without Emotional Intelligence, they have positive relationship. If stress is increasing, the JP is decreasing. Improvement of job performance is possible by having the stimulated stress situations where EI managers have to involve their creativity in terms of solving the problem and training how to decrease the stress level (Yu-Chi Wu, 2011)

Shutika et al. (2010) emphasized the positive coherence between EI and JP. An employee with a higher EI will engage easier in the relation with the customer than will the employee with the lower EI. Emotionally intelligent employees may control their anger or any other negative feeling in time of a very important decision (Shutika et al. 2010). For example, a

manager is frustrated and angry on one client, but this does not affect his rational decision in negotiation process.

How to react and address the issues of stress and problematic situations in hotels? Why are stress coping strategies in Emotional Intelligence and Job Satisfaction important for better employees' performance? Can current and future employees learn how to behave and deal with everyday pressure? The purpose of these questions is to investigate and prove the correlation between Emotional Intelligence awareness (EI), Employees' Performance (EP) and Employees' Satisfaction (ES). It is possible to make higher service quality and more enjoyable experience for guests in hotels, if employers take into the consideration the importance of the relationship between EI, EP and ES. Various stress situations in any touristic season can be reduced with more informed and educated employees in terms of their Emotional Intelligence. The employees' happiness is equally important as customers' happiness. The organizations should take this seriously, if they want to have a successful business.

In the introductory part of this paper, the author focused on the correlation between the level of Emotional Intelligence, Job Satisfaction and Job Performance. The purpose of this relationship is to create the possible solution for many issues that happen in the stressful situations. The awareness of importance of EI in the hospitality industry gives benefits to the employers and employees because EI is a skill like any other and can be easily learned.

The author will try to apply the above mentioned concepts by referring to the Dubrovnik area. The participants for the research at hand will be: students on RIT, Croatia and employees in hotels (front office, Food and Beverage department and managers) as well as tourism professionals. The reason for investigating on three types of employees is to see the difference or similarities in their approach to the stressful situations.

H1: If Emotional Intelligence awareness is high, the Employees' Satisfaction will also be high.

H2: If Stress Level is increasing, the Employees' Performance is decreasing.

H3: If Stress Level is increasing, the Employees' Satisfaction is decreasing.

## METHOD

Focus group, as a research method, should have 5 to 10 participants who are answering on the open-ended questions which are asked by the moderator. The groups should be homogenous and participant is granted with confidentiality regarding their answers. The focus groups may be recorded and written by the assistant. Everybody has to have equal chance to participate and contribute to the research. This type of research is descriptive one. The duration of one focus group is between one and two hours. Three focus groups are considered as a minimal number to draw some valid and correct conclusions from. (Amanda Williams, Larry Katz, 2001).

Before focus groups the moderator sent the e-mail to the participants with the date, time, place and purpose of this focus group; additional to that, it was sent the required quick survey to measure the level of participants' EI. The pilot testing of methods used was done at the college with several students for the focus group and one individual for the questionnaire. In case of the questionnaire the feedback focused on the correct word order and solving the grammar mistakes. The focus group was practiced and several remarks were made for the introduction that was needed before answered questions.

To have the measurable data, before the focus group, the author asked participants to fill in the quick survey, five point Likert scale to determine their level of Emotional Intelligence, Job Performance and Job Satisfaction. After the quick survey that required five minutes to fill in, each focus group was held. Three different groups had the same questions and the same amount of time to answer on the open-ended questions. The important fact was that the participants were answering as anonymous person without any pressure. It was mentioned at the beginning of each focus group that the whole conversation was recorded with mobile phones and the assistant wrote the answers on the laptop for easier transcription of data.

Participants were asked to join the focus group by recruitment. The population of those focus groups was: senior college students, hotel employees and tourism professionals. The particular senior students were chosen for this focus group because of their regular participation in courses at college and they were the most experienced ones with co-ops at RIT Croatia, Dubrovnik. Dubrovnik hotel employees were in constant interaction with guests and colleagues at hotel and they were exposed at the most on the stressful situations. Tourism professionals were most experienced and trained in terms of stress and they learned how to behave in those situations. They had the experience with public and private businesses.

The first focus group with senior students was held on the round table at RIT Croatia, Dubrovnik campus, the total number of participants in this focus group was nine people (n=9). The second focus group had five hotel employees (n=5). The focus group was held in one of the hotels in Dubrovnik. The third focus group had seven participants (n=7). The location of third focus group was in one school of foreign languages in Dubrovnik. The duration of first two focus groups was half an hour. The third focus group lasted one hour.

## RESULTS

Of the study population, 21 participants in three different groups completed and returned the questionnaires; the same participants responded on open ended questions in three different focus groups: senior students (n=9), hotel employees (n=5) and tourism professionals (n=7).

Three broad themes emerged in the five point scale questionnaire: the level of Emotional Intelligence, awareness of their job performance and how satisfied they are in their work. The purpose of the small number of participants in the questionnaires was to compare and contrast the answers between different groups in terms of paper evaluation and real practices in jobs. Focus groups had seven open ended questions related with stress management and unpleasant guests.

The first section of the questionnaire required respondents to give information about the level of Emotional Intelligence. Most of the participants (90%) in three different groups often understand their current feelings (m=4). Just over half of participants in each group reported that the emotions are always important in their lives. The majority of participants responded that moods are sometimes affected by external situations (m=3.14). Most of the participants often define their own feelings without any difficulties (m=3.76). Comparing three different groups, only 20% of hotel employees, 14% of tourism professionals and none of the students declared themselves always emotionally balanced persons. Most of the participants in the same question said that they are often balanced persons. Over half of the students and hotel employees often accept the critical feedback of other people without getting angry. When comparing the results, only 29% of tourism professionals often accept others comments without negative feelings. Comparing the three results 71% of tourism professionals, the 44% of students and only 20% of hotel employees, often recognize others negative emotions. Most

of the participants ( $m=3$ ) agreed that sometimes is easy to share the deepest feelings to other people (See Table 1).

The second section of the questionnaire required the participants to give information about the awareness of their job performance. Only 22% of students, 14% of tourism professionals and 60% of hotel employees said that they always calm down others. Most of the students (78%), just half of hotel employees (40%) and tourism professionals (43%) categorized often the notice of personal potential at work. Overall, most of the participants often consider their work done as the best possible that they can ( $m=4.33$ ). When the participants were asked about the motivation at work, the majority commented that tourism professionals are always motivated at job; others responses to this question are that 44% of students and 40% of hotel employees are always motivated at work (See Table 2).

The third section of questionnaire required respondents to give information on the job satisfaction. Most of students (56%) and hotel employees (60%) and nobody from tourism professionals sometimes see the possibility to progress on a job. Most of the hotel employees (80%), 11% of students and 14% of tourism professionals said that they are rarely satisfied with the value of the earned money and the work that is done ( $m=3.4$ ). Most of the participants in all groups answered that they often recognize their personal success ( $m=4.05$ ). Most of the participants ( $m=4.19$ ) in all groups declared that they often feel secure for the job position (See Table 3).

Seven broad themes emerged from the focus groups analysis. When the students and hotel employees were asked about their dream work and perfect position, most of them agreed on having good relationship with colleagues. Other responses to this question for hotel employees and tourism professionals are pleasure and willingness to work. Specifically, most students emphasized the dynamic work with low number of hours spent in offices, traveling

and separating personal from professional life as a dream work. What most of the hotel employees mentioned as important factor in ideal job is love toward the job and have the passion for the work. Tourism professionals mostly agreed on possibility to be the supervisors in their own firms as their desired job (See Table 4).

Overall, all three groups prefer enabled progress and personal growth in terms of the motivation at work. Most of the students and tourism professionals agreed on praising and money as important factors for the motivation. The majority of hotel employees and tourism professionals consider working atmosphere and good, visible results very important motivational factor. Most of the students stated that having challenging project to do and a day off makes them more motivated. Other responses to the same question for hotel employees are the vicinity to their job, good relationship between boss and colleagues in the office, constant learning and loving the job that they do. Most of the tourism professionals are motivated by having the contact with people from all around the world and pleased, satisfied guests (See Table 5).

Third theme is about handling with challenges and how participants react on certain frustrations at work. All three groups agreed that misunderstandings with colleagues and lack of communication is the main reason for the frustrations at work and challenges that they have to deal with. Most of the students stated that complaining guest makes them frustrated; all hotel employees for the same question consider the lack of time to solve the problem, lack of time for good quality solution and lack of organization as the highest factors for frustrations. Tourism professionals have the most answers for the issues with different languages, misunderstandings with guests. Most of the students suggested how to handle with challenges: know the goal to achieve and fake it in front of the guest, later complain it to the colleagues. Most of the hotel employees answered that walking and relaxing is their way of

dealing with frustrations. Other responses to this question for tourism professionals are that they try to forget it and not think about it (See Table 6).

Dealing with stress and positive impacts from stressful situations is the fourth theme in focus groups. All three focus groups mentioned avoidance method for managing the stress. Mostly students and hotel employees identified faster job performance as positive impact of stress. Students and tourism professionals agreed that positive factor of stress is finding better solutions for issues. The students' suggestions how to deal with stress is: workout and let off steam, control the emotions and ask yourself why even get nervous. The majority of students think that positive outcomes from stress are: higher creativity, ingenuity and higher motivation to faster job completion. The most interest for hotel employees in terms of stressful situations and the way how they deal with it is the usage of previous experiences and events, reacting emotionally, having fun with colleagues and support from boss and colleagues. All hotel employees stated that laughter and humor is a positive outcome of stress. Most tourism professionals agreed that stress is caused by boss and colleagues. Small number of tourism professionals suggested controlling the emotions; most of them did not mentioned any other specific way of dealing with stress management (See Table 7).

In all three groups most of the respondents think that dealing with difficult people is mainly causing under pressure situations. Most of the students suggested the solution for under pressure situation: switch to the joke, do the job and it will pass and rather do it alone without determining for others what to do. All hotel employees found out that causes of pressure are: rushing employees-“hurry up”, lack of time management and yelling, raising tons. Tourism professionals mostly agreed on the suggestion that communication is the key to survive the pressure and for most of them the pressure is produced with multitasking and short deadlines. Hotel employees and tourism professionals agreed on lack of time management. The hotel

employee's example is when they had conference for 500 people and the projector broke, they had to find the quick back up (See Table 8).

The last theme in the focus groups is about unpleasant guest and provided lessons. All students declared that they did not have trainings in their jobs and co-ops. All hotel employees in this focus group said that they had the training, even the role plays that they have like an active practice for better performance and to be more prepared for real situations. Just half of the tourism professionals said that they had training and others said that they did not have the training lessons in their jobs. Majority of students in case of unpleasant guest declared that employees' mistakes have to be admitted and employees have to apologize or fake it. Students and tourism professionals suggested smiling and having the eye contact, being persistent and strong with rude guest. Students and hotel employees agreed that is crucial to be determined, stick with the decision; for most of the hotel employees and tourism professionals high level of EI is important. All hotel employees emphasized empathy, body language and not repeating the word problem as the key to success with unpleasant guest; most of them said that calming down and finding the right scenario for the solution is the best possible way to deal with rude guest. Most of the tourism professionals added in their discussion that patience and calmness are the crucial for solving the issues with negative guests. One example of unpleasant guest is when the guest complained how employee does not know where is the king's landing? The guest actually asked for manager of this hotel to complain on the employee that did not know the location of king's landing in Dubrovnik (See Table 9).

The other statements for each question in each focus group have the small number of agreements and because of that they are not included in the results. Rest of the questions in the questionnaire is not mentioned because those statements do not have significant difference in the answers between the three groups.

## DISCUSSION

Today's business world is running in different directions which makes it a subject of constant pressure. This is especially true in the hospitality industry which is not coping well with this added pressure. One of the reasons might be not having trained employees who would be able to deal with this pressure but at the same time deliver excellent service. That is a real challenge. Poor communication and lack of time to solve problems are two factors that all groups which were subjects of this study identified as a main reason for frustrations and stress. The purpose of hospitality industry is to satisfy guests and provide a memorable experience. The expectation from the company is that the employees should always be happy and in a good mood in order to not ruin the guests' experience and their happiness.

Ignoring or hiding the emotions is a cultural issue that is rooted in society. It starts from a young age when parents warn their children to not cry or show how angry or sad they are. In specific situations, crying or being angry is perceived as negative behavior that has to be eliminated from the everyday life. Society looks at crying as an embarrassment, not as a normal reaction. Usually children tease others when they show their emotions. The usual connotations are that people who show feelings are weak and not stable people. For example, when a person is happy at work and that person is smiling through the whole shift, the co-workers perceive him as crazy. The problem has to be changed by developing new mentality where emotions are accepted as a normal behavior. People cannot exclude their feelings and think only rationally because they are not robots.

The first hypothesis: If Emotional Intelligence awareness is high, the Employees' Satisfaction will also be high was partly refuted; because of the results that showed how high EI in all three groups does not always correlate with high job satisfaction which is visible in the questions to which groups responded differently. According to focus group answers, job

satisfaction depends on many different factors such as working atmosphere and the overall relationship between colleagues, love for the job and experiencing personal growth.

The second hypothesis was: If Stress Level is increasing, the Employees' performance is decreasing and it is partly confirmed because in the results of questionnaire most of the participants showed the high awareness of their potential at work. The main reason why this hypothesis is partly confirmed is because of the experience that all participants have. They are taught by the time spent in the companies how to deal with stress when they are working without affecting the guest in that sense. Focus groups conversations revealed that opportunities for promotion, advancement, visible results, working atmosphere and financial compensation create higher motivation for better employee performance.

The third hypothesis: If stress level is increasing, the employees' satisfaction is decreasing, was partly confirmed from the focus groups where participants in all three groups said that lack of communication, negative atmosphere and lack of time to find quality solution creates dissatisfaction at work when they are under pressure or in stressful situation. Job Satisfaction is determined as a subjective matter in the job position and each participant has different point of view on his work.

When comparing the results with definitions it is possible to determine that most of the participants have the "emotional display rules" that is confirmed by stating that they fake and control their emotions in front of guests, they already have experience with hiding their emotions. From the literature and focus groups, emotions are influenced by environment and atmosphere at work. The new term that is mentioned is avoidance method in the focus groups; in all three groups most of the participants agreed that the best method for dealing with stress is avoiding it and not thinking about it at all. It creates less negative feelings and they control their emotions by leaving it behind them which is learned through years of

experience at work. All three groups showed that they have different ways of dealing with stressful situations with “emotional regulation” where they are focused on aims that they want to achieve. They successfully control their feelings with unpleasant guest or any under pressure situations and frustrations; for example, most of them said that smiling, having the eye contact and being persistent in the decision makes their issue better solved. Since they have to regulate their emotions at work there seems to be a higher need to develop their own emotional intelligence so that they do not end up victims of work related stress.

Emotional Intelligence can be gained through life and the best way to achieve a high level of EI is to practice through the role plays for dealing with unpleasant guests in work environment. This approach is used by hotel employee’s focus group; it will develop different mindsets where negative emotions will be accepted in the society. This solution could be implemented from primary schools to the college level. The best way to prepare children from early ages how to deal with stress and negative emotions is to play innovative games in which children will notice that emotions play a very important part in their lives. Constant learning and developing can create talented and innovative employees.

It is important to understand that negative feelings should be transformed into positive ones. Feeling anxiety or frustration is a normal thing in everyday life; this is not a behavior which characterizes only weak people. After all, we are humans and we have to start to act as humans; even though people are trying to be more rational, emotions prevail at the end. The change is possible to do by being open-minded, looking at the big picture, focusing on the purpose and goals and being patient and persistent, as most of the participants in focus groups confirmed that. The possibility to overcome stressful situations is to accept the negative emotions toward that situation and transform them into positive ones. It is crucial to develop a relationship with negative emotions and take the good sides of those feelings. Avoiding

problems will not benefit us at all. It might only cause different health problems in our life-something which could at the end create much more unpleasant feelings.

One way how employees and employers can improve their performance is to work on their Emotional Intelligence and being aware that is completely normal to have a bad day and not pretending that everything is perfect. Ultimately it should lead to better job satisfaction and they will be more motivated and passionate about their work. It is important to choose the job by the preference and what the heart suggests because pushing only the rational segment could cause dissatisfaction and low job performance. No matter how much people try to behave as a rational being, they cannot escape from emotions.

#### Limitations

The accuracy of the results in the questionnaire is limited by small sample size. The questionnaire should have equal number of statements for different three categories that were measured. In the provided questionnaire, twenty two statements are for the emotional intelligence, seven statements are for job performance and eight statements are for job satisfaction. One question in the questionnaire needed clarification because it has hotel management and that participant does not work in a hotel, the clarification was that they can apply this question to any other job or industry.

In order to have more accurate results, focus groups can be done with different hotel chains or restaurants in Dubrovnik.

#### Future research

In the future research it will be interesting to conduct an observation of the employees' performance and how they handle stressful situations. It is possible to make focus groups in

different locations, not only Dubrovnik area. The avoidance method should be investigated in the further research.

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## APPENDICES

Dear Focus Group Participants

My name is Josipa Buble and I am a senior student at RIT Croatia Dubrovnik, a global campus of Rochester Institute of Technology, based in Rochester, New York.

For my final research project in Hospitality and Service Management, I am examining the relationship between level of EI, employees' satisfaction and employees' performance in the stress management.

Because you are RIT students (most experienced with co-ops)/ RIT Croatia, Dubrovnik employees / hotel employees-front liners I am inviting you to participate in this research study by answering on open ended questions in the focus group. It will require approximately one hour covering all questions and answers.

Your participation is completely voluntary. The information you provide on this focus group will be kept completely anonymous and confidential. There is no risk to you. In order to ensure that all information will remain confidential, please do not include your name or the name of your company in your answers.

If you choose to participate, please answer all questions honestly.

Thank you for taking the time to assist me in my educational endeavors.

If you would like additional information about this focus group or my research project, please contact me at 095 520 2599 and e-mail: [buble.josipa@gmail.com](mailto:buble.josipa@gmail.com) or my mentor, professor Milena Kužnin, at e-mail: [milena.kuznin@croatia.rit.edu](mailto:milena.kuznin@croatia.rit.edu).

Sincerely,

Josipa Buble

**The Quick Emotional Intelligence Self-Assessment**

Adopted from the San Diego City College MESA Program from a model by Paul Mohapel.

Emotional Intelligence (EQ) is your ability to be aware of, understand and manage your emotions. Why is EQ important? While intelligence (IQ) is important, success in life depends more on EQ. Take the assessment below to learn your EQ strength!

**Rank each statement using the scale from 1 to 5 (where 1 is never and 5 is always). Thank you!**

1 (Never), 2 (Rarely), 3 (Sometimes), 4 (Often), 5 (Always)

My feelings are clear to me at any given moment.	1	2	3	4	5
Emotions play an important part in my life.	1	2	3	4	5
My moods impact the people around me	1	2	3	4	5
My moods are easily affected by external events.	1	2	3	4	5
I find it easy to describe my feelings.	1	2	3	4	5
I accept responsibility for my reactions.	1	2	3	4	5
I find it easy to make goals and stick with them.	1	2	3	4	5
I am an emotionally balanced person.	1	2	3	4	5
I am a very patient person.	1	2	3	4	5
I can accept critical comments from others without becoming angry.	1	2	3	4	5
I consider the impact of my decisions on other people.	1	2	3	4	5
I can easily tell if people around me are becoming annoyed.	1	2	3	4	5
I sense when a person's mood changes	1	2	3	4	5
I am able to be supportive when giving bad news to others.	1	2	3	4	5
I am generally able to understand the way other people feel.	1	2	3	4	5
I find it easy to share my deep feelings with others.	1	2	3	4	5
I am good at motivating others.	1	2	3	4	5
I am a fairly cheerful person.	1	2	3	4	5
It is easy for me to make friends.	1	2	3	4	5
People tell me I am sociable and fun.	1	2	3	4	5
I like helping people.	1	2	3	4	5
Others can depend on me.	1	2	3	4	5

1 (Never), 2 (Rarely), 3 (Sometimes), 4 (Often), 5 (Always)

I do working duties the best that I can.	1	2	3	4	5
I care about my job.	1	2	3	4	5
I am highly motivated in performance of duties.	1	2	3	4	5
I understand my job.	1	2	3	4	5
I contribute to the hotel management.	1	2	3	4	5
I am able to talk someone down if he/she is very upset.	1	2	3	4	5
I encounter my potential on a job position.	1	2	3	4	5
I feel personal success at work.	1	2	3	4	5
I have the opportunity to progress at work.	1	2	3	4	5
I am satisfied with the value of my salary compared to the amount of work done.	1	2	3	4	5
I have a good communication and collaboration between colleagues.	1	2	3	4	5
I can work without violating personal conscience.	1	2	3	4	5
I have a freedom to use personal judgment.	1	2	3	4	5
I feel secure with my position at work.	1	2	3	4	5
I have a possibility to work different working duties.	1	2	3	4	5

**Thank you!**  
**Josipa Buble**  
**RIT Croatia**  
**Senior Project 2017/18**

## Focus Group Protocol

First of all, I would like to thank you all for coming and devoting your time for my research project. I would like to explain to you what EI is. Emotional Intelligence is recognizing your own and others emotions. EI is not acquired intelligence, it should be developed. The purpose of this focus group is to analyze and conduct the information about the stress situations in the working environment and how the employees react in certain situations. How important the level of EI is in terms of job performance and job satisfaction.

All participants are voluntarily here, the answers are anonymous and we will not mention any company or name in our data collection.

The questions are open ended and they do not have right or wrong answers. The purpose of this focus group is to find out your opinion and experience with different situations.

Each participant will have equal time to speak and I kindly ask you to give an honest response to each question.

1. We all have a dream to work at one perfect position where everything is like you wish. Can you please, describe your ideal job?

2. Could you please explain to me what motivates you to do your best work? Is this for example the company environment, recognitions or different personal goals?

3. Every day at work we have challenges and many of them create frustration or other negative feelings. What are one or two things that make you angry or frustrated at work? What do you do when you get angry or frustrated at work?

4. I am sure that all of you during a day have at least one stressful situation at work. How do you deal with stress? A certain level of stress can be positive. Can you think of any cases

where stress can be useful or even necessary? Could you tell me what are the things you do to manage your stress. Please list 2-3 things you do as a way to manage your stress

5. Decisions are always hard in personal or professional life because you have to choose the best possible solution. Give me an example of a difficult decision you've had to make in your position. What made it difficult and what was the outcome?

6. Especially in the hospitality/service industry, employees are constantly under pressure. Give me an example of a high-pressure situation you faced in the last X months. How did you handle it? For example check in or check out.

7. In any job, one day you have to have the unpleasant client. Could you give me an example of a situation when you have had to deal with a very difficult client or boss? How did you go about dealing with the situation? Would you do anything different next time? Did you have any kind of training in your previous jobs and current ones?

*In results section of the paper:*

*Tables contain abbreviations as follows:*

*Students (S)*

*Hotel Employees (HE)*

*Tourism Professionals (TP)*

**Table 1. Emotional Intelligence questions section results**

Key notes	Average	Standard Deviation	Scale: 1-5 Never-always	Percentages S, HE, TP*
Understanding the current feelings	m= 4	SD=0.316	often	S = 88% HE= 100% TP= 86%
Importance of emotions	m= 4.19	SD= 0.928	always	S=44% HE=40% TP=57%
Affected moods by external factors	m= 3.14	SD=0.655	sometimes	S=77% HE=60% TP=71%
Easy to describe the feelings	m=3.76	SD=1.044	often	S= 55% HE= 66% TP= 43%
Emotionally balanced person	m= 3.8	SD=0.655	always	S= 0% HE= 20% TP= 14 %
Acceptance of critical comments	m=3.809	SD=0.814	often	S= 56% HE=60% TP=29%
Easily Reading that others are annoyed	m=4.14	SD=0.727	often	S= 44% HE=20% TP=71%
Easily sharing deep feelings	m=3	SD=1.095	sometimes	S=33% HE=40% TP=57%

**\* Students (S), Hotel Employees (HE), Tourism Professionals (TP)**

**Table 2. The awareness of job performance questions section results**

Key notes	Average	Standard Deviation	Scale: 1-5 Never-always	Percentages S, HE, TP*
Calming down others	m=4	SD=0.775	always	S=22% HE=60% TP=14%
Noticing personal potential	m= 4.047	SD=0.669	often	S=78% HE=40% TP=43%
Doing job the best that you can	m=4.33	SD=0.577	often	S=67% HE=40% TP=57%
Motivation at work	m=4.33	SD=0.856	always	S=44% HE=40% TP=71%

\* **Students (S), Hotel Employees (HE), Tourism Professionals (TP)**

**Table 3. Job satisfaction questions section results**

Key notes	Average	Standard Deviation	Scale: 1-5 Never-always	Percentages S, HE, TP*
Opportunity to progress at work	m=3.476	SD=0.928	sometimes	S=56% HE=60% TP=0%
Value of money = the amount of work done	m= 3.381	SD=1.117	rarely	S=11% HE=80% TP=14%
Feeling personal success at work	m=4.048	SD=0.805	often	S=44% HE=60% TP=57%
Feeling secure on a job position	m=4.19	SD=0.679	often	S=44% HE=80% TP=43%

\***Students (S), Hotel Employees (HE), Tourism Professionals (TP)**

**Table 4. Focus group results**

Focus Group 1	Participants Agreement	<b>Ideal job/ perfect position</b>
Total number 9	4	dynamic work
	3	traveling
	5	reduced time in office
	4	divide work from private life
	3	<b>good relationship with colleagues</b>
<b>Focus Group 2</b>		
total number 5	3	<b>pleasure and willingness to work</b>
	3	love the job
	3	have the passion to work
	3	<b>good relationship with colleagues</b>
<b>Focus Group 3</b>		
total number 7	4	supervisor in my firm
	5	<b>pleasure and willingness to work</b>

**Table 5. Focus group results**

Focus Group 1	Participants Agreement	<b>Motivation at work</b>
Total number 9	5	day off
	4	<b>enabled progress</b>
	3	<b>praising</b>
	6	<b>money</b>
	7	challenging project
<b>Focus Group 2</b>		
Total number 5	5	<b>working atmosphere</b>
	4	love the job that you do
	4	boss and colleagues in office
	4	<b>enabled progress/personal growth</b>
	4	constant learning
	4	<b>good/visible results</b>
	4	close to work/vicinity
<b>Focus Group 3</b>		
Total number 7	6	contact with people from all around the world
	5	pleased and satisfied guest
	2	<b>working atmosphere</b>
	1	<b>praising</b>
	3	<b>money</b>
	2	<b>good/visible results</b>
	2	<b>enabled progress/personal growth</b>

**Table 6. Focus group results**

Focus Group 1	Participants Agreement	<b>Challenges/Frustrations</b>
Total number 9	7	complaining guest
	6	<b>misunderstanding with colleagues/ lack of communication</b>
	5	knowing the goal to achieve
	4	fake it in front of the guest, complaining with colleagues
Focus Group 2		
Total number 5	3	walk and relax
	5	lack of time to solve the problem
	5	lack of time for good quality solution
	4	<b>misunderstanding with colleagues/ lack of communication</b>
	5	lack of organization
Focus Group 3		
Total number 7	4	issues with different languages-misunderstanding
	5	<b>misunderstanding with colleagues/ lack of communication</b>

**Table 7. Focus group results**

Focus Group 1	Participants Agreement	<b>Stress/Positive Impact/Stress Management</b>
Total number 9	4	control the emotions
	4	workout and let off steam
	4	ask yourself why even get nervous
	5	<b>avoidance method came by experience</b>
	7	<b>faster job performance</b>
	7	higher creativity and ingenuity
	7	<b>finding better solutions for issues</b>
	7	higher motivation to faster job completion
Focus Group 2		
Total number 5	4	<b>avoidance method came by experience</b>
	4	usage of previous experiences and events
	4	support from boss and colleagues
	5	react emotionally and have fun with colleagues
	5	songs, food's kind of release
	5	laughter and humor -positive
	5	<b>faster job performance</b>
Focus group 3		
Total number 7	1	control the emotions
	4	boss and colleagues are causing the stress
	3	<b>avoidance method came by experience</b>
	6	<b>finding better solutions for issues</b>

**Table 8. Focus group results**

Focus Group 1	Participants Agreement	<b>Under pressure situations</b>
Total 9	5	do your job and it will pass
	4	switch to the joke
	7	rather do it alone without determining for others what to do
	example 1	when employee pretends that he does not know what to do
	7	<b>deal with difficult people</b>
Focus group 2		
Total 5	5	yelling and raising tons
	4	surprising situations
	5	<b>deal with difficult people</b>
	5	Rushing employees- hurry up!
	5	lack of time management
	example 1	500 people conference, the projector broke, finding quick back up
	example 2	foreign companies complained on job performance based on cultural differences
Focus Group 3		
Total 7	6	communication is the key to survive the pressure
	4	<b>deal with difficult people/colleagues- gossips</b>
	3	multitasking and short deadline
	example 1	overbooked flight and solving the issue with not planned situation- guide, tourists
	6	not wishing to work in public firms

**Table 9. Focus group results**

Focus Group 1	Participants Agreement	<b>Unpleasant Client/training</b>
Total 9	9	<b>no training at all</b>
	9	<b>smiling, having the eye contact</b>
	9	<b>be determined and stick with the decision</b>
	7	if you made a mistake, admit it and apologize
	5	<b>be persistent and strong</b>
	5	fake it
	example 1	complain on trip advisor on waiter who wear the crocs shoes
	example 2	Where is the king's landing? Guest complained how employee does not know where it is.
Focus Group 2		
Total 5	5	<b>yes-training</b>
	3	<b>be determined and stick with the decision</b>
	4	calm down and find the right scenario for the solution
	5	active training, prepared role plays
	5	<b>high level of EI important</b>
	5	empathy, body language and not repeating the word problem
Focus Group 3		
Total 7	3	<b>yes-training</b>
	4	<b>no-training</b>
	2	<b>high level of EI important</b>
	2	<b>smiling, having the eye contact</b>
	3	patient and calm
	2	<b>be persistent and strong</b>
	example 1	client were three days for few hours in the shop and they were patient, at the end she bought many things