

Current Trends in Public Personnel Administration

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Emotions in Management and the Management of Emotions: The Impact of Emotional Intelligence and Organizational Politics on Public Sector Employees

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Readers are invited to a rendezvous with the meaning of the heart and emotions in public administration. Despite the growing interest in recent years in emotional intelligence within the managerial literature, too little has been written about emotional intelligence within the public sector. This is surprising in light of New Public Management voices that stress flexibility, responsiveness, and a focus on the needs and demands of citizens. The functionality of the heart in a mind-oriented bureaucracy is analyzed, and a model is suggested for exploring the relationship between emotional intelligence, organizational politics, and employees' performance in public agencies. This model is empirically tested in two Israeli municipalities. The results support a moderating role of emotional intelligence in the relationship between organizational politics and emotional commitment, as well as between organizational politics and employees' absenteeism. Other direct mediating effects of political perceptions and skills are noted. Implications for theory development, future empirical studies, as well as practical recommendations are suggested.

The science, art, and profession of public administration (Lynn 1998) are based on systematic rational thinking. Such thinking draws substance from solid facts, reliable data, and proven pathways for improvements. In the third millennium, who would doubt this argument and mix feelings and emotions with clear-cut facts and proven evidence based on logic and rationality? To be fair, we would not doubt it ourselves. For public administration, as a science and as the art of running modern states and governments, we would hope and expect that strong logic, a high degree of rationality, and bright minds would guide policies and decisions. Whereas some may argue that in practice, many public administration decisions in the United States and in other parts of the world are far from being based

on science (Sharkansky and Zalmanovitch 2000), a thorough review of the origins of public administration and its relationship with organizational studies has recently emphasized the strong rational basis of our field and its solid roots in scientific thinking (Kelman 2007). In line with this assessment, emotions, feelings, and the impact of the heart are expected to remain in the background. Isn't this what bureaucracy is all about? Impersonality, formality, clear-cut borders of legitimacy, systematic order, rational thinking, and the rule of law. So what do feelings and emotions have to do with all this?

This is not a simple question. In this study, we will try to challenge the argument about the dominance of rationality in public administration and suggest

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that emotions in management and the management of emotions play a significant role in the outcomes of public administration personnel. We will begin by arguing that perhaps its strong bureaucratic nature has prevented public administration from being clear about its position toward emotions and feelings. We will then try to convince public agencies that feelings and emotions are a useful managerial tool and a key concept in

building vigorous relationships with citizens, social groups, public officials, and other stakeholders in the public sphere. Despite strong rationality and calls for planned change and systematic order in public administration, much of the activity in this domain remains random, experience based, intuitive, improvised, or spontaneous (Sharkansky and Zalmanovitch 2000). Moreover, whereas performance-oriented management is the *bon ton* in the current state of the discipline (Halachmi 2002; Hood and Peters 2004; Kelman 2007; Pollitt and Bouckaert 2000; Pollitt et al. 1999), we are still unclear as to the potential

impact of emotions on work outcomes and on performance in public organizations.

Should we rely, therefore, solely on rational thinking in making good public choices? Or do feelings and emotions have anything positive to offer beyond the conventional thinking of formality, order, and firm bureaucracy? We will base our argument on the idea that in spite of extensive calls for rational thinking in public administration, the public interest is strongly affected by the feelings and emotions of public administration personnel rather than by reliable data and facts, even when these latter assets are available and accessible (Berman and West 2008). Thus, we argue, nonrational, emotional factors are highly influential in the process of public activity and in producing outcomes and performance in public agencies.

The major goal of this study is to extend the knowledge on emotional intelligence (EI), which emerged with the seminal theoretical work of Salovey and Mayer (1990) and the popularization of the concept in both the research community and among ordinary citizens (Goleman 1995). We follow the manifold studies and fascinating discussions, both empirical and theoretical, about the role of feelings, emotions, intelligence, and their interplay (e.g., Locke 2005; Mayer, Roberts, and Barsade 2008; Mayer and Salovey 1997; Salovey and Mayer 1990). We will try to demonstrate how this field of study can and should be extended to the understanding of public administration issues such as the management of public administration personnel and the improvement of managerial capacities that have an important meaning for public service.

Moreover, the paper is especially concerned with the examination of the relationship between EI, organizational politics (perceptions of politics and political skills), and the work outcomes of personnel in this sector. In many respects, the emotions–politics interchange is interesting and has the potential to add to our knowledge about public employees’ performance based on both organizational studies and those of public administration that have largely gone their separate ways in recent decades (Kelman 2007). Hence, another goal of this study is to offer sensible suggestions for empirical research in this area, with an emphasis on the emotions–work outcomes–performance relationship. To that end, we suggest a New Public Management (NPM)–based rationality that calls for greater flexibility and sensitivity in working for the public interest. A specific model will be presented that relates EI and organizational politics (OP) with antecedents and outcomes at the public personnel level. The model is then examined in the Israeli public sector, and the findings are analyzed in light of potential advancement in this arena.

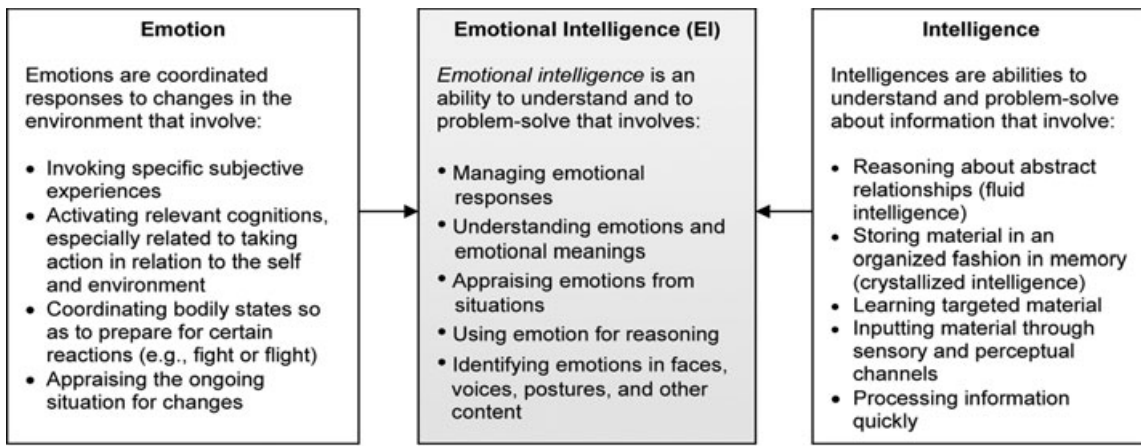
The Theory of Emotional Intelligence: Several Approaches

While there are many ways to define EI (see, i.e., Bar-On 1997; Goleman 1995, 1998; Matthews, Roberts, and Zeidner 2004; Zeidner, Matthews, and Roberts 2004), there is considerable agreement that the most acceptable scientific definition of the concept was suggested by Salovey and Mayer, who defined emotional intelligence 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 action” (1990, 189). A revised definition

by Mayer and Salovey suggests that “emotional intelligence involves the ability to perceive accurately, appraise, and express emotions; the ability to access and/or generate feelings when they facilitate thought; the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge; and the ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth” (1997, 10). According to Mayer, Roberts, and Barsade (2008), emotional intelligence can be defined as the ability to reason about emotion. It can be equated with a list of traits such as achievement motivation, flexibility, happiness, and self-regard. Other scholars found the addition of such traits to be troubling, and wondered whether a theoretically sound conceptualization of EI could be identified (Locke 2005). A consensus, however, exists that emotional intelligence concerns the ability to carry out accurate reasoning about emotions and the ability to use feelings, emotions, and emotional knowledge to enhance thought. EI represents abilities that combine intellectual intelligence and emotion to enhance thought. It encompasses specific skills, such as the ability to accurately identify one’s feelings and emotions, and indicates that these individual skills may also be viewed as forming an integrated, global EI.

Theoretical approaches to EI, in fact, can be divided according to whether they focus on specific *abilities* or on a more *global integration* of those capacities. The specific-ability approaches concern individual mental capacities that are important to EI. The integrative-model approaches regard EI as a cohesive, global ability. Specific-ability approaches to EI study issues such as how well a person identifies emotions in faces or how well a person understands emotional meanings. Integrative-model approaches to EI focus on the study of specific abilities combined together. In recent years, scholars have also introduced a third approach to EI, called a *mixed model* (Matthews, Roberts, and Zeidner 2004; Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso 2000; McCrae 2000; Neubauer and Freudenthaler 2005). This approach includes a variety of non-EI qualities and, consequently, appears to fall partly or largely outside the boundaries of the concept. The mixed model typically studies some relevant, emotion-specific abilities, but also includes motives, social styles, self-related qualities (skills and talents that individuals may have), and other traits that do not focus primarily on emotion or emotional reasoning. Thus, models of emotional intelligence begin with emotional intelligence–related qualities such as the ability to perceive emotions accurately, and add (1) motives such as the need for achievement, (2) social styles such as gregariousness and assertiveness, (3) self-related qualities such as self-esteem, and (4) control-related qualities such as flexibility and impulse control (Mayer, Roberts, and Barsade 2008). The integration of these additions creates the mixed models for EI. All the foregoing models for the study of EI are relevant and should be considered in a study of the public sector where a few approaches can be used to initiate a useful discourse on the topic. As far as we could find, most of the studies that adopted one of these approaches suggest that EI is correlated with more positive work outcomes, improved performance and success at work (i.e., Coté and Miners 2006; Elfenbein et al. 2007; Rubin, Munz, and Bommer 2005).

According to figure 1, EI is closely related to two other scientific concepts: intelligence and emotion. Intelligence and emotion have consensual meanings for most psychologists. For example, intelligence involves the ability to understand information, whereas



Source: Mayer, Roberts, and Barsade (2008, 537).

Figure 1 The Scope Model of Emotional Intelligence

emotion is a coordinated response to the environment. EI is the ability to reason about emotions, as well as the capacity to use feelings, emotions and emotional information to assist reasoning.

An Emotionally Intelligent Public Administration: Toward a Conceptual Framework

The science of public administration and the art of public policy draw their information from people’s behavior and decisions in order to integrate the mind and the heart. Whereas the mind and the heart may frequently conflict in aspirations, ambitions, analysis, and interpretations, both exist in the daily actions of government and governmental agencies at any level—federal, state, or local. Similarly, scholarly attention should focus on exploring new ways to integrate knowledge derived from the heart (e.g., feelings, emotions, affections), beyond the old and conservative reliance on the mind (e.g., logic, rationality, facts). The wisdom of the heart has the advantage of bringing a new type of knowledge and talent that, as we suggested earlier, has been conceptualized in recent writings about management as emotional intelligence.

However, with one exception (Berman and West 2008), its entire meaning for and impact on public administration, public policy, public sector organizations, and public personnel has been largely neglected by research.

This omission is especially surprising in view of NPM ideas that strongly affect the current discourse in public administration. According to NPM-rooted managerialism, public organizations are increasingly expected to “soften” the traditional bureaucratic approach to citizens and to be more sensitive to the feelings of the general public and of many other stakeholders at the local, regional, and national levels (Hood 1991; Lynn 1998; Pollitt 1988). Responsiveness to citizens as clients, an iconic terminology of NPM advocates, must carry with it sensitivity and sympathy to public needs and demands. In many ways, for public agencies and public servants to soften their approach implies being highly aware of

feelings and emotions in the environment. This notion is important whether perceived from the vantage point of the public officer or from that of citizens as customers or clients. Dealing with public sector organizations, public personnel, public officials, citizens (as customers/clients, partners, or voters; see Vigoda 2002), and even with politicians involves a complex set of feelings, emotions, intelligence, and other abilities that challenge the conservative “rational-type” mechanisms of governance.

Adopting the idea and model of EI, as proposed by Mayer, Roberts, and Barsade (2008), and improving it to meet the needs of the specific domain of modern public administration can foster a more constructive discussion about the role of feelings and emotions in the daily actions of serving people through a variety of government agencies. Thus, based on the original model of Mayer, Roberts, and Barsade (2008), we suggest a revised version of EI that is more applicable in this sector. This model is presented in figure 2.

According to figure 2, EI in public administration relies on a systematic understanding of emotions and feelings, on one hand, and rational intelligence or reasoning, on the other. It consists of the specific abilities of various stakeholders to understand feelings and emotions in their immediate work environment, but also integrates other abilities that can produce individuals with stronger emotional intelligence. When these individuals become active in the process of producing or consuming public goods, their emotional skills and resources become very valuable and influential and may affect the outcomes of public organizations.

Similarly, *emotional public administration* consists of the emotions of stakeholders in public administration that reflect responses to changes in the environment and involve specific experiences, cognitions, bodily states, and appraisals of the ongoing situation. *Intelligent public administration*, on the other hand, reflects the ability to understand and solve problems based on reasoning about

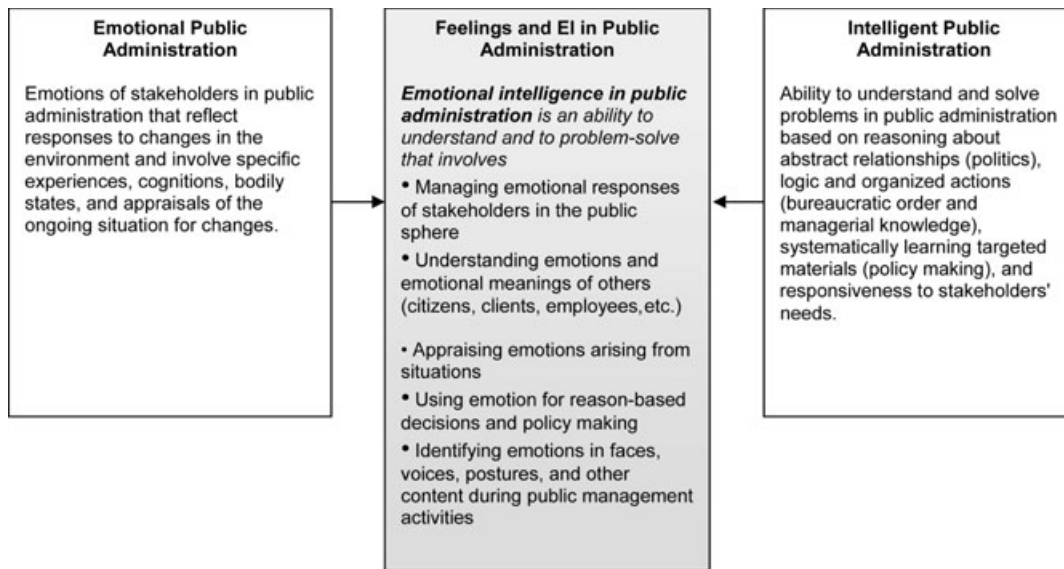


Figure 2 A Conceptual Framework for Emotional Intelligence in Public Administration

abstract relationships of power and influence in organizations (politics), logical and organized actions (bureaucratic order and managerial knowledge), the systematic learning of targeted materials (policy making), and responsiveness to stakeholders' needs (Rourke 1992).

Therefore, *emotionally intelligent public administration* has the ability to understand and to problem-solve situations that are meaningful for vast populations of citizens and for policy issues under the control, management, or supervision of governments. These abilities involve several aspects, such as (1) managing the emotional responses of stakeholders in the public sphere; (2) understanding emotions and the emotional meanings of others (citizens, clients, employees, etc.); (3) appraising emotions in various situations; (4) using emotion in reason-based decisions and policy making, and; (5) identifying emotions in faces, voices, postures, and other human forms of expression during public management activities.

Emotional Intelligence, Politics, and Outcomes in Public Administration: Model and Hypotheses

The basic argument in this paper is that EI is a central topic that can be extremely useful for those who wish to promote knowledge about public organizational processes and policy formation in government agencies worldwide. A recent study by Berman and West (2008) demonstrates the usefulness of EI for theoretical models in public administration and offers practical strategies for public managers in U.S. cities. The study highlighted the effects of various human resource management tools, such as training, selection, promotion, feedback, and mentoring, on public officers' EI. Their study looks for antecedents to EI, whereas our study focuses more on the outcomes of EI. Our study and specific model aim at furthering knowledge about the independent role of EI as a possible explanation for employees' attitudes, behaviors, and performance in public sector organizations and within the political environment. Thus, our study may be considered both an extension and a further development of Berman and West's study.

In addition, testing the political environment in organizations was not part of Berman and West's study, and its inclusion here may be

considered another potential contribution of our study. Whereas OP is a fact of life in any organization (Mintzberg 1983), it plays an even greater role in public sector organizations (Vigoda-Gadot and Kapun 2005) because of the proximity to strong political institutions and policy makers. Hence, the public sector is undoubtedly rife with power struggles, influence tactics, and continuous clashes among a large number of stakeholders (political, administrative, citizenry, and others).

The classic observations of Wilson (1887), Waldo (1977), and many others that followed about the inherent conflict of politics and practical administrative management still stand today. This conflict has intensified in light of stronger pressures by both highly sophisticated and ambitious politicians and a highly professional and experienced cadre of public servants supported by the NPM ideas, ideology, and doctrine. Therefore, it may be argued that whereas OP represents the struggle of powerful interests to influence decision making for a variety of interests and reasons, the orderly bureaucratic process should be professional and not affected by such politics. Nonetheless, it is well accepted today that both OP and orderly management/bureaucracy play simultaneously in the public sector sphere.

With the emergence of the NPM doctrine, citizens became a third player in the market-governance interplay, a player with growing importance and weight. With customers' constantly increasing demands for better services and the new standards they set for accountability and transparency in public actions, the conflict between politics and administration in public organizations has intensified. It therefore comes as no surprise that this conflict has elicited strong emotions and a wide variety of feelings that a public officer must deal with. In our modern states and communities, the public sector environment becomes a place where the feelings and emotions of the various stakeholders play a major role in decision making, in policy formation and implementation, and in the daily life of public servants. Putting it another way, another piece of the puzzle of governance and public management (Van Ryzin 2007; Van Ryzin et al. 2004) is that of emotions and feelings. The public sector sphere becomes a place that must learn the art of managing

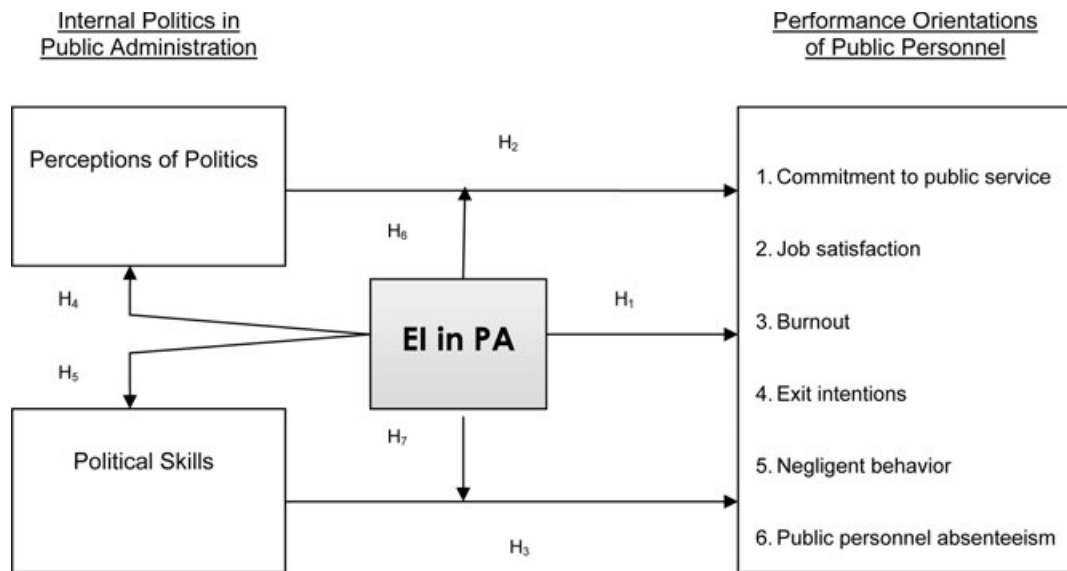


Figure 3 Emotional Intelligence, Internal Politics, and Performance in Public Administration

emotions because of the intensification of the clash between politics and administration.

One way to study the management of emotions in public domains is presented in figure 3. In general, this model is aimed at the micro level of public organizations, relating public sector personnel's abilities to manage feelings and emotions effectively (i.e., EI) and using them constructively in serving the citizens. The specific model constructs a relationship among EI, OP, and work outcomes/performance orientations of public personnel. At the heart of the model lies the assumption that the EI of public personnel has an immediate effect on attitudes, behavior intentions, and actual behaviors that reflect the outcomes and performance of public officers. However, these feelings and emotional skills/intelligence must be studied in direct relation to the intrapolitical environment (OP), which represents a somewhat opposite aspect of the emotional atmosphere—one with a greater emphasis on rational influence tactics, a sense of power, and the implementation of various political strategies. The model suggests that the political skills (Ferris, Treadway, Kolodinsky et al. 2005; Ferris, Treadway, Perrewé et al. 2007) and perceptions of OP by individuals (i.e., Kacmar and Carlson 1997; Kacmar and Ferris 1991) play an important role in any organization (Mintzberg 1983), and even more so in public organizations (Vigoda-Gadot and Kapun 2005).

Thus, EI is expected to have a direct effect on the outcome variables, together and along with OP as an interest-seeking behavior. This line of thinking is strongly supported by recent studies on OP and its evident effect on work outcomes (i.e., Cropanzano et al. 1997; Valle and Perrewé 2000; Vigoda-Gadot and Drory 2006). It is also supported by studies such as those of Bar-On (1997), Van Rooy and Viswesvaran (2004), Wong and Law (2002), and Sy, Tram, and O'Hara (2006), who found a direct relationship between EI and job satisfaction, organizational commitment, quality of service, extra-role behavior, and a series of other work outcomes/performance variables, mostly in private sector organizations.

Additional support comes from a growing stream of studies on the meaning of public sector motivation (PSM) and its relationship to

commitment to public service. PSM is therefore affected by, among other factors, commitment to the public organization (Buchanan 1975; Perry 1996; Wright 2004) and by the sense of identity with and affective attachment to the work of government. Accordingly, hypothesis 1 suggests a direct relationship between EI and a series of outcome variables, whereas hypotheses 2 and 3 suggest a direct relationship between internal politics and those dependent variables.

H₁: EI in public administration is positively related to commitment to public service and job satisfaction, and negatively related to burnout, exit intentions, and negligent behavior.

H₂: Perceptions of organizational politics in public administration are positively related to burnout, exit intentions, and negligent intentions, and negatively related to commitment to public service and job satisfaction.

H₃: Political skills in public administration are negatively related to burnout, exit intentions, and negligent intentions, and positively related to commitment to public service and job satisfaction.

However, identifying only direct effects in the study of management and public administration is largely an oversimplification of the reality. In recent years, studies have placed greater emphasis on testing indirect effects that improve the resolution of the models and allow for a more accurate assessment of relationships. In this study, we also expect that the main effects will be accompanied by indirect effects, where EI and internal politics play moderating and mediating roles in explaining the work outcomes and performance of public personnel. An initial justification for suggesting this type of relationship relies on the complex role of internal politics, as revealed in other studies of organizational performance (i.e., Harris, Andrews, and Kacmar 2007; Poon 2003, 2004, 2006; Zivnuska et al. 2004). The second line of thinking is based on the observation by Van Rooy et al. that "like most predictors of performance, the influence of EI may best be understood by examining the influence of potential moderators" (2002, 75). This argument does not exclude the option

that EI itself may serve as a moderator in the relationship between other predictors and performance/work outcomes. Their meta-analysis of 59 studies ($N = 3,306$) found a notable (.23) relationship between EI and performance but could not attest to any moderating role of EI itself. Another study by Jordan et al. (2002) suggested a moderating role of EI in the relationship between job insecurity and various responses (emotional and behavioral) of employees. Therefore, our study follows Zeidner, Matthews, and Roberts (2004, 388), who mentioned a variety of future directions for the study of EI, including the examination of indirect mediating and moderating effects that can prove meaningful for the understanding of work outcomes/ performance in public organizations. Based on the two streams of research described earlier, we suggest the following hypotheses:

H₄: Perceptions of politics mediate the relationship between EI and the outcome variables.

H₅: Political skills mediate the relationship between EI and the outcome variables.

H₆: EI moderates the relationship between perceptions of politics and the outcome variables.

H₇: EI moderates the relationship between political skills and the outcome variables.

A Study of EI and Performance in Local Government

Sample and Procedure

A survey method was used to collect data from employees in two municipalities located in the center of Israel. These municipalities are of medium size, with populations of about 100,000 and 30,000, and 700 and 120 employees, respectively. Between May and August 2007, 500 questionnaires were distributed among all employees. A final turnaround ratio of 76 percent was achieved, resulting in 380 usable questionnaires (308 from the larger municipality and 72 from the smaller one). The profile of the employees who took part in the survey was very heterogeneous. They came from a variety of departments (tax collection, human resources, engineering, city development and maintenance, welfare services, culture and sports), from different jobs and occupations (clerks, accountants, engineers, social workers, technical occupations), and from different hierarchical levels in the organizations (employees, low- and mid-level managers). Of the respondents, 22 percent were men, the average age was 46.78 ($SD = 10.55$), the average years of education was 14.55 ($SD = 3$), average tenure in the organization was 169 months, and 98 percent of the respondents were Jews. Finally, the profile of the respondents was highly representative of the nonrespondents profile, which also attests to the solid structure of the sample.

To maximize the return rate and increase the trust of employees in the study, we applied a direct distribution/collection method and avoided any intermediation by the organizational managers of any level. However, letters from the management about the expected

study were distributed to the employees several weeks prior to the data-collection stage. The letters explained the reason behind and the method of the data collection. The contribution of the study to the organization and to the improvement of future service was emphasized. All employees were assured that the data would be used only for the purposes of the study, and that the management would receive a summary of the results at the organizational level (no identification at the personal level would be possible).

Moreover, we informed the employees that we intended to collect more data in the future, and therefore would need to identify the questionnaires in some way in order to allow for the collecting of this data. These data included archival information about the absenteeism of the employees. The identification process was based on a specific code for each employee that was provided on the questionnaire. This code matched a similar code on the list of the employees (and their absenteeism) that was provided by the organizations. Note that this list was based on codes only, with no names or identification. Therefore, no names were involved in the analysis process. In sum, we ensured that there was no effective way for the organization to know who among the employees took part in the survey and who did not. All materials remained with the researchers during the entire course of the study, and at no point in time could the organizations have access to the detailed data. Similarly, employees were assured of the full confidentiality of the data. Participation in the study was voluntary.

Measures

If not mentioned another way, the scale for all measures ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), and details about the major variables are included in the appendix.

Emotional intelligence (EI). We used the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (Law, Wong, and Song 2004; Wong and Law 2002). This 16-item self-report scale is consistent with Mayer and Salovey's (1997) definition of EI and has proven very reliable and valid in numerous studies in recent years (e.g., Law et al. 2008; Law, Wong, and Song 2004). Whereas the self-report approach is not the only way to measure EI (there are

other scales based on managers' and peers' evaluations), it is today one of the most accepted (Wong and Law 2002). Only a few studies have applied a measure that is not based on self-reports (e.g., the ability measure—Mayer, Salovey, Caruso EI Test). The self-report measure that was used here is based on the ability model but is very parsimonious and was tested and retested in several recent studies from different cultures (e.g., Christie et al. 2007; Law, Wong, and Song 2004; Shi and Wang 2007). Our study follows this approach, and the scale consists of four dimensions: Self—Emotions Appraisal (SEA), Others—Emotions Appraisal (OEA), Regulation of Emotion (ROE), and Use of Emotion (UOE). The reliability was 0.87.

Perceptions of organizational politics (POPs). We used Ferris, Russ, and Fandt (1989), who defined POPs as the degree to which respondents view their work environment as political, and therefore unjust and unfair. The 12-item scale proposed by Kacmar and

Carlson (1997) and by Ferris and Kacmar (1992) was used, and we adjusted it slightly to fit with the public organizations in this study. The reliability was 0.77.

Political skill inventory (PSI). We used a shortened eight-item version of the self-reported Political Skill Inventory (Ferris et al. 2005). The PSI consists of four dimensions: networking ability, social astuteness, interpersonal influence, and apparent sincerity. For each dimension, we chose two items that demonstrated the highest loading in previous factor analyses. The reliability was 0.74.

Job satisfaction. A measure developed by Schriesheim and Tsui (1980) was used. Respondents were asked to indicate how satisfied they were with different aspects of their job (i.e., current job, coworkers, current salary, opportunities for promotion, supervisor, work in general). The scale for these questions ranged from 1 (very unsatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied), and the reliability was 0.78.

Emotional commitment to public service. We used the Affective Commitment Scale, as suggested by Meyer and Allen (1984, 1991). The scale represents the emotional aspect of commitment to one's job environment and therefore was most relevant for our purposes in this study. One should note that commitment to public service is related to public sector motivation (Buchanan 1975; Perry 1996; Wright 2004), but it is considered a separate concept that can enhance PSM. The scale consists of eight items; a sample item is, "I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization." The reliability was 0.71.

Burnout. This variable was measured by a six-item scale taken from the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach and Jackson 1986). A sample item is, "I feel emotionally drained by my work." The reliability of the scale was 0.88.

Exit intention. This variable measured intention to leave and was originally suggested by Farrell and Rusbult (1992), who defined it as movement both within and across organizational boundaries. The variable also includes a variety of cognitive activities that precede leaving. A four-item scale based on Vigoda (2000) and Vigoda-Gadot and Kapun (2005) was used; a sample item is, "I often think about quitting." The reliability was 0.87.

Negligent behavior. This variable comprised reactions whereby the employee passively allowed job conditions to worsen. Such behavior is best described as reduced interest or effort at work, or increased error rate. In developing this measure, we used the study of Leck and Saunders (1992) and produced a four-item scale. A sample item is, "This organization doesn't care much about people like me, so I am not willing to put in extra effort for it." The reliability of this scale was 0.66.

Public personnel absenteeism. Objective archival data were used to calculate overall days of absenteeism during the year prior to the study. We excluded absenteeism attributable to maternity leave and reserve military service, or absenteeism for the purpose of job enrichment or courses. Usually this measure represents absenteeism attributable to sickness or any other personal reason that is not

a formal vacation (e.g., family issues), and it is the accepted way to measure absenteeism in any organization (e.g., Somers 1995). The information for this variable was extracted from general data that the organization provided. It was based on a code that was used instead of the actual names of the employees. In that way, we could match the questionnaires and the absenteeism data without actually requiring the employees' names.

Data Analysis

Bivariate correlations, simple multiple hierarchical regression analysis, and interaction effects within hierarchical regression analysis were used to test the relationships suggested in the model. We did consider using a structural equation modeling, technique but the intention to test moderating effects (hypotheses 4 and 5) led us to conclude that this was not the right technique in this case because it is limited in its power to examine moderating relationships, especially with so many variables (both observed and latent) in the model. Thus, we relied on the more conservative and acceptable technique of regression analysis with interactions, as suggested by Baron and Kenny (1986).

Results

Table 1 presents the distribution of answers for the four factors of the EI scale. In accordance with Berman and West's study (2008), a majority of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed with most of the statements. This is a rather common phenomenon in such EI scales. Together with the mean values and standard deviations, the answers provide a better understanding of what public sector employees think about themselves in terms of feelings and emotional intelligence. According to table 2, EI is positively related to political skills, job satisfaction, and emotional commitment to public service ($r = .55, p < .001$; $r = .24, p < .001$; $r = .10, p < .05$, respectively). In addition, EI is negatively related to burnout, exit intentions, and negligent behavior ($r = -.13, p < .05$; $r = -.14, p < .01$; $r = -.22, p < .001$, respectively). EI is also positively related to age ($r = .11, p < .05$) and negatively related to education ($r = -.15, p < .01$). However, no zero-order relationships were found between EI and POPs and between EI and the absenteeism of public personnel. These findings provide preliminary and partial support for hypothesis 1 for most of the variables. No relationship was found between EI and POPs as well as between EI and absenteeism. Also noteworthy is the fact that no multicollinearity was observed among the research variables (no intercorrelation exceeded the 0.60 level).

Table 3 presents our analysis of the main direct effects as well as the mediating effects of the model, according to hypotheses 1–6. In this analysis, we followed the recommendations of Baron and Kenny (1986), who suggested the most acceptable strategy for tests of mediation. This strategy includes four steps: (1) establishing a relationship between the independent and the dependent variable; (2) establishing a relationship between the independent and the mediating variable; (3) establishing a relationship between the mediating and the dependent variable; and (4) when adding the mediating variable to a regression where the dependent is regressed on the independent, the original relationship between the latter is significantly reduced or even diminished. In each stage of the regression, we first tested several demographic control variables (age, gender, education) and then added the main effect of EI. According to the

Table 1 Distribution of Responses for the Emotional Intelligence Scale (%)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Self—Emotions Appraisal (SEA)					
I have a good sense of why I have certain feelings most of the time.	2.7	2.1	15.9	50.1	29.2
I have good understanding of my own emotions.	.5	2.4	7.5	54.7	34.9
I really understand what I feel.	.8	.5	9.1	52.4	37.1
I always know whether or not I am happy.	–	.5	5.7	44.6	49.2
Others—Emotions Appraisal (OEA)					
I always know my friends' emotions from their behavior.	1.3	4.8	20.5	51.9	21.5
I am a good observer of others' emotions.	–	1.6	15.4	61.7	21.3
I am sensitive to the feelings and emotions of others.	.5	.8	10.6	51.3	36.7
I have good understanding of the emotions of people around me.	.3	.3	10.7	55.3	33.4
Use of Emotion (UOE)					
I always set goals for myself and then try my best to achieve them.	1.1	4.0	16.7	42.3	36
I always tell myself I am a competent person.	3.2	7.2	33.2	37.8	18.6
I am a self-motivating person.	.8	1.6	8.7	44.4	44.4
I would always encourage myself to try my best.	.5	1.3	5.3	44.0	48.8
Regulation of Emotion (ROE)					
I am able to control my temper so that I can handle difficulties rationally.	–	2.7	13.0	53.3	31.0
I am quite capable of controlling my own emotions.	.3	4.3	16.2	51.3	27.9
I can always calm down quickly when I am very angry.	1.9	9.5	27.3	38.7	22.5
I have good control of my own emotions.	.5	6.1	19.8	46.8	26.7

Cronbach's alpha scores of the index variables are 0.81 (SEA), 0.82 (OEA), 0.73 (UOE), and 0.85 (ROE).

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics, Intercorrelations, and Reliabilities (in parentheses)

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Emotional intelligence (EI)	4.09	.44	(.87)										
2. Perceptions of organizational politics (POPs)	2.97	.65	-.07	(.77)									
3. Political skills inventory (PSI)	3.96	.54	.55***	-.02	(.74)								
4. Job satisfaction	3.49	.65	.24***	-.55***	.24***	(.78)							
5. Emotional commitment to public service	3.42	.69	.10*	-.43***	.17***	.51***	(.71)						
6. Burnout	2.55	.95	-.13*	.26***	-.04	-.39***	-.30***	(.84)					
7. Exit intentions	1.96	1.01	-.14**	.27***	-.12*	-.51***	-.55***	.45***	(.87)				
8. Negligent behavior	1.70	.67	-.22***	.36***	-.15**	-.39***	-.51***	.41***	.57***	(.66)			
9. Public personnel absenteeism	26.38	17.37	.05	.09	.00	-.09	.02	.09	-.05	.05	—		
10. Age	46.78	10.55	.11*	-.04	.09	.08	.19***	-.08	-.30	-.13*	.09	—	
11. Gender (1 = female)	.78	.42	-.08	.13*	-.10*	-.20***	-.06	-.00	.06	.13	.13*	.01	—
12. Education	14.66	3.00	-.15**	-.05	-.18***	-.10	-.01	-.01	.19***	.06	-.06	-.03	.11*

N = 380

* $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$; *** $p \leq .001$.

second stage of the regressions, main direct effects were found for the relationship between EI and job satisfaction ($\beta = .22, p < .001$), burnout ($\beta = .12, p < .05$), and negligent behavior ($\beta = -.19, p < .001$).

In the third stage of the regression, POPs was found to have a negative relationship with job satisfaction ($\beta = -.52, p < .001$) and with emotional commitment to public service ($\beta = -.43, p < .001$).

It was also positively related with job burnout and exit intentions ($\beta = .26, p < .001$) and with negligent behavior ($\beta = .34, p < .001$). This finding supports hypothesis 2. PSI demonstrated a positive relationship with job satisfaction ($\beta = .15, p < .01$) and with emotional commitment to public service ($\beta = .17, p < .01$), but no relationship with the other dependent variables. This finding supports hypothesis 3. Following the inclusion of POPs and PSI in the regression, one should note that the relationship between EI

Table 3 Hierarchical Regression Analysis for the Relationship between Emotional Intelligence, Internal Politics, and the Outcome Variables (standardized coefficients)

Variable	Job Satisfaction			Emotional Commitment to Public Service			Burnout			Exit Intentions			Negligent Behavior			Public Personnel Absenteeism		
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Age	.07	.05	.03	.19***	.18***	.16***	-.08	-.07	-.06	-.29***	-.28***	-.27***	-.13*	-.11*	-.10*	.07	.07	.08
Gender	-.19***	-.18***	-.10	-.06	-.05	.01	.00	-.01	-.04	.04	.04	.00	.12*	.11*	.06	.12*	.12*	.11*
Education	-.08	-.05	-.07	-.00	.01	-.01	-.01	-.02	-.00	.17***	.16***	.18***	.04	.02	.04	-.06	-.05	-.05
EI	—	.22***	.10*	—	.08	-.04	—	-.12*	-.11	—	-.08	-.04	—	-.19***	-.15*	—	.04	.06
POPs	—	—	-.52***	—	—	-.43***	—	—	.26***	—	—	.26***	—	—	.34***	—	—	.07
PSI	—	—	.15**	—	—	.17**	—	—	.02	—	—	-.04	—	—	-.04	—	—	-.04
<i>R</i> ²	.05	.10	.37	.04	.05	.24	.01	.02	.09	.12	.13	.19	.03	.07	.18	.02	.02	.03
Adjusted <i>R</i> ²	.04	.09	.36	.03	.04	.22	.00	.01	.07	.11	.12	.18	.03	.06	.17	.01	.01	.01
ΔR^2	—	.05	.27	—	.01	.19	—	.01	.07	—	.01	.06	—	.04	.11	—	—	.01
F	6.64***	9.82***	36.84***	5.09**	4.43**	19.27***	.88	1.99	5.8***	16.93***	13.43***	14.79***	4.29**	6.97***	13.54***	2.78*	2.21	1.83
F for ΔR^2	—	18.45***	82.34***	—	2.38	46.79***	—	5.30*	13.15***	—	2.69	15.45***	—	14.55***	24.90***	—	.49	1.08

Decision:		POPs		POPs		EI, POPs	
Main effect?	EI, POPs, Political Skills	POPs, Political Skills	POPs	EI, POPs	No	No	No
Mediator?	Partial: Strong mediation with political skills	No	No	No	No	No	No

N = 380

* $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$; *** $p \leq .001$.

and burnout disappeared and the overall relationship between EI and job satisfaction and negligent behavior was significantly reduced ($\beta = .10, p < .05$; $\beta = .15, p < .05$, respectively).

This finding is very much in line with the fourth major criterion for mediation suggested by Baron and Kenny (1986), which requires a significant relationship between the potentially independent variables and the dependent variables, as well as between the potential mediator and the dependent variables. Then, when inserting the potential mediator into a regression analysis, the previously significant relationship between the independent and the dependent variables should be diminished (for full mediation) or at least reduced significantly (for partial mediation). According to our findings, PSI partially mediates the EI–job satisfaction relationship. These findings do not support hypothesis 4 but partially support hypothesis 5. Thus, we conclude that the political skills of public sector employees may be considered a mediator of the relationship between EI and work outcome.

Furthermore, the explained variance of the dependent variables should also be noted. The highest explained variance was achieved for job satisfaction (37 percent), with EI explaining 5 percent of the variance and the OP variables adding 27 percent. Next, the overall explained variance for emotional commitment to public service was also impressive (24 percent). Here, EI made no significant contribution, whereas OP added 19 percent. In addition, EI added 4 percent to the explanation of negligent behavior, whereas the two measures of OP added 11 percent to the explained variance in this variable. OP (especially POPs) also added 7 percent to the variance in burnout and 6 percent to the variance in exit intentions. These findings strongly support hypotheses 1, 2, 3, and 5 for most of the dependent variables, with the exception of the absenteeism of public personnel.

Table 4 Hierarchical Regression Analysis with Interaction Effects of Internal Politics and Emotional Intelligence on Commitment to Public Service and Public Personnel Absenteeism (standardized coefficients)

Variable	Emotional Commitment to Public Service		Public Personnel Absenteeism	
	Step1	Step2	Step1	Step2
POPs	-.42***	-.45***	—	—
PSI	—	—	-.03	-.02
EI	.07	-.08	.06	.06
POPs * EI	—	.13**	—	—
PSI * EI	—	—	—	-.11*
R ²	.19	.21	.01	.02
Adjusted R ²	.18	.20	.01	.01
ΔR ²	—	.02	—	.02
F	43.83***	32.17***	0.50	1.97*
F for ΔR ²	—	7.36**	—	4.77*
Decision:				
Main effect?	Yes		No	
Interaction/side effect? (in bold)	Yes: POPs * EI		Yes: Political Skills X EI	

N = 380
* $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$; *** $p \leq .001$.

Finally, the demographic variables had several interesting relations with the dependent variables. Age was positively related with emotional commitment to public service and was negatively related with exit intentions and negligent behavior. Men were more satisfied with their jobs than women; they also engaged in fewer negligent behaviors, and were absent from work less frequently than women. In addition, public personnel with a higher level of education were more inclined toward exit intentions than employees with lower educational levels.

Table 4 presents a moderated multiple hierarchical regression analysis, with the inclusion of interaction effects. This strategy was adopted to examine the side effects of EI on the relationship between OP and the dependent variables. Our analysis of all the dependent variables resulted in meaningful outcomes for only two variables: commitment to public service and absenteeism. That is, in all other examinations, no moderating effect can be assumed, and the direct or mediating effects are the ones more likely to dominate. Hence, according to this analysis, EI is a moderator in the relationship between POPs and commitment to public service. It is also a moderator in the relationship between PSI and the absenteeism of public personnel. Table 4 shows that the interaction effects of POPs and EI and of PSI and EI are significant at the $\beta = .13, p < .01$ and $\beta = -.11, p < .05$ levels, respectively. Figures 1 and 2 illustrate the direction of the moderation in greater detail.

According to figure 4, the negative relationship between POPs and commitment to public service is stronger among employees with low EI than among those with high EI. Thus, EI contributes to the minimization of the negative effect of POPs on emotional commitment to public service. According to figure 5, the negative relationship between PSI and the absenteeism of public personnel is stronger for employees with high EI than for those with low EI. In other words, the strong political skills (PSI) of employees with high EI result in lower absentee rates than those of employees with low EI. These findings support hypothesis 6 for the variable of commitment to public service, and also support hypothesis 7 for the variable of the absenteeism of public personnel.

Discussion and Summary

We opened this paper by arguing that seeking “solid facts” and “reliable data” in public administration and in any other scientific discipline does not necessarily contradict the need to explore the emotional side of human enterprise. Therefore, we can gain a better understanding of public administration processes and dynamics by comparing our discipline to a human body, in which the mind and heart are not separated. Nonetheless, and quite surprisingly, current writings place a great deal of value on the wisdom of the mind as representative of rational thinking and systematic order in public administration. It is the mind that seems to be the ultimate ruler in our evolving discipline. In essence, almost no attention is devoted to the role of the heart. It is the heart that goes beyond rationality, representing the feelings and emotions that play an essential part in administrative reality.

Moreover, one may argue that dealing with feelings and emotions in bureaucracies might be perceived as contradicting some basic assumptions about the scientific nature of our field. Can we measure emotions and feelings, and in what way is such a measurement, if

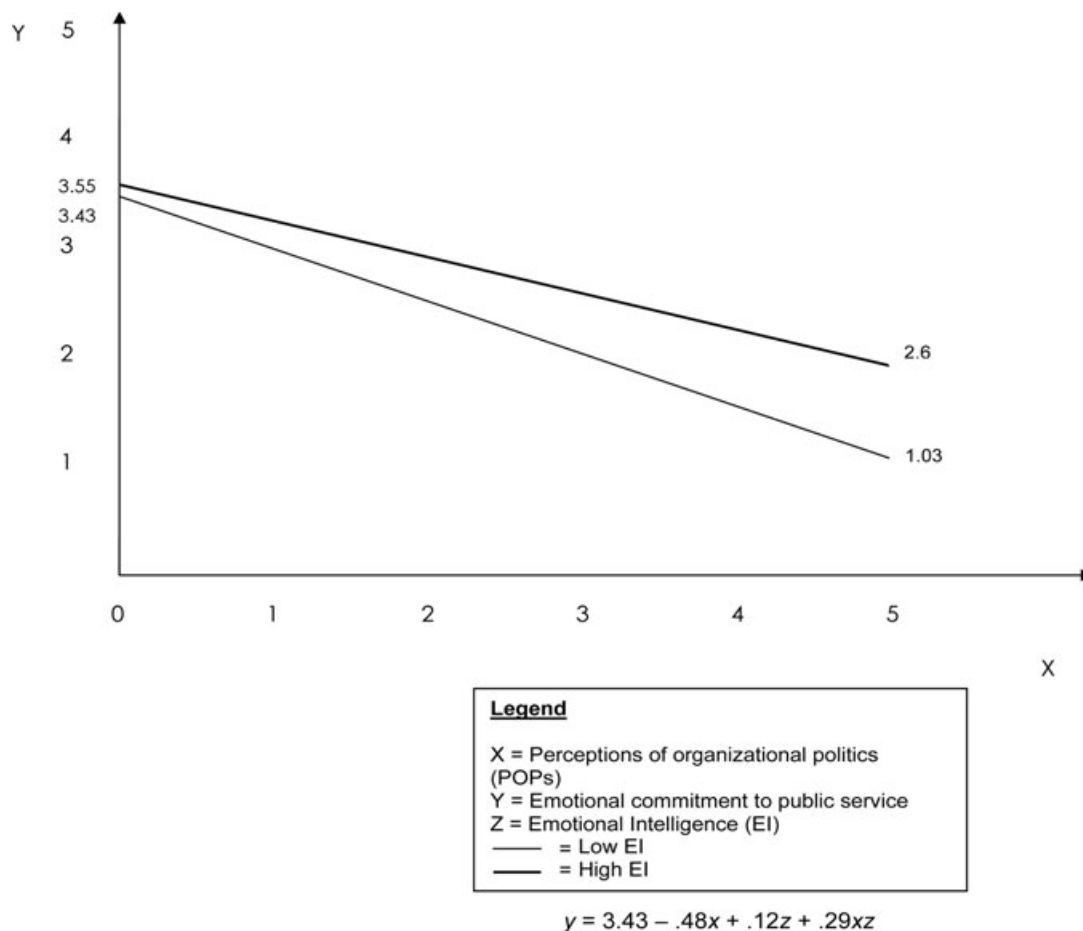


Figure 4. Interaction Effect of Emotional Intelligence and Perceptions of Organizational Politics on Emotional Commitment to Public Service

it exists, useful for our profession? Further, if this process is measurable, what can be said about the impact of the heart (feelings and emotions) on the mind (bureaucracy, rationality, and performance)? Others may argue that a wide gap between feeling and thinking can endanger the vision of building “truths” about how to run state agencies, government offices, municipalities, and public corporations. Whereas academics work very hard to convince us that there are iron-clad rules and strong principles about running the state and its bureaucracy, some field study data show that practitioners act differently. In our view, this disconnect may challenge our current thinking about practical public management and policy. Studies in public administration tend to lean on the *rational base* of science while at the same time practical decisions in this field, as well as in other nonpublic organizations, are intuitive, spontaneous, and based on improvisations (e.g., Cyert and March 1963).

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and emotional intelligence. Recent writings about required changes and reforms in the public sector (i.e., Hood and Peters 2004; Pollitt and Bouckaert 2000), or about NPM, managerialism and personnel management (i.e., Lynn 1998) have left this field almost untouched. This lack of knowledge and empirical studies is extremely noteworthy in light of the growing interest in feelings and in EI in the management literature generally (e.g., Goleman 1995, 1998; Mayer, Roberts, and Barsade 2008, Mayer and Salovey 1997; Salovey and Mayer 1990). A search in the major scientific publication search engines reveals that, with the exception of Berman and West (2008), since 1990, almost no study has dealt seriously with such topics in relation to public organization theory.¹ However, during those same years, 1,100 articles

were published on the topic in established, peer-reviewed journals in general management and organizational psychology.

Theoretically, EI demonstrates a good addition to existing knowledge about the various types of performance in public sector

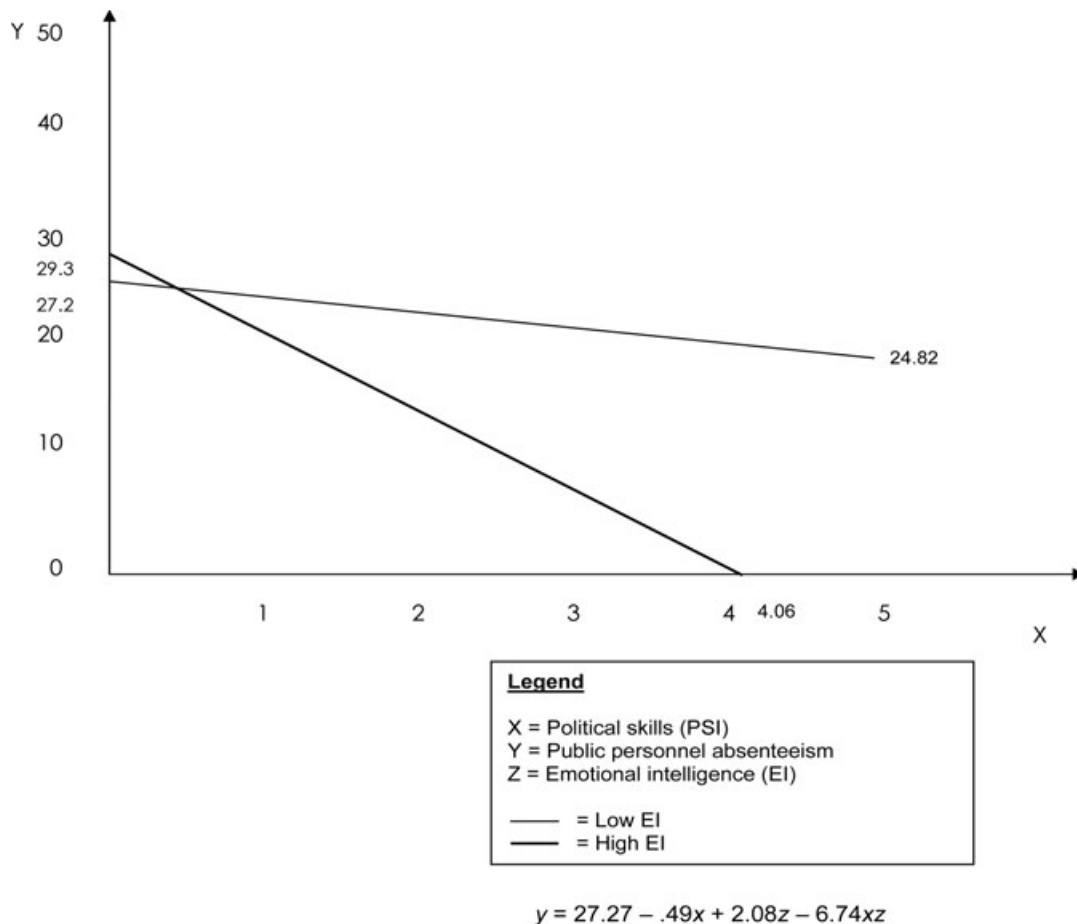


Figure 5 Interaction Effect of Emotional Intelligence and Political Skills on Public Personnel Absenteeism

environments. The most salient finding in our study was the direct relationship between EI and job satisfaction, which coheres with previous studies in the for-profit sector (i.e., Sy, Tram, and O'Hara 2006; Wong and Law 2002). In addition, other work outcomes were also affected by EI, directly or indirectly (Van Rooy and Viswesvaran 2004). One of the contributions of our study is the reconfirmation of the idea that healthy emotional constructs and the emotional intelligence of public employees adds to job satisfaction and thus may be used as a performance indicator for the quality of public services. This finding is also in line with recent works in public administration that support the relationship between citizen satisfaction and performance measurement in government agencies (i.e., Swindell and Kelly 2000; Van Ryzin 2007; Van Ryzin et al. 2004).

Another meaningful finding is the negative relationship between EI and other work outcomes such as burnout, exit intentions, and negligent behavior that are so meaningful for the quality of services provided to citizens. Beyond the direct effects of EI on public personnel outcomes, our findings support a more indirect role of EI in explaining work outcomes and performance. Our model demonstrated both a mediating and moderating role for these variables. A mediating effect was found of the political sphere, and especially political skills, in the EI-outcomes relationship. Putting it another way, the political skills of the public employee may be improved by the EI one has and can increase one's satisfaction with the job.

EI is also simultaneously a moderator of the politics-work outcomes/performance relationship, especially as far as emotional commitment and absenteeism are concerned. This finding is both a worthwhile addition to the literature dealing with other potential moderating roles of EI (i.e., Wong and Law 2002) and specifically adds to our understanding of the role of internal politics in public administration (i.e., Vigoda-Gadot and Kapun 2005). The resulting effect on public sector efficiency and on the improvement of services to citizens is clear. Therefore, future studies should pay more attention to conflict games and to the problems of competency and influence struggles in public agencies in light of employees' EI and emotional state of mind. Moreover, in the context of public administration our study adds to that of Berman and West (2008) who explain the theoretical and practical advantages of EI for the work of public managers in U.S. cities.

Based on these findings, one benefit of this study is the marking of clearer borders between rational thinking and the understanding of emotions in public organizations. We distinguish between emotional and irrational thinking, arguing that many of the managerial considerations in public administration are both rational and emotional. However, the literature may diverge over this argument, putting rationality and irrationality/emotions at two separate ends of a continuum. The origins of decisions and actions of public officers and high-ranking officials in the bureaucratic hierarchy are expected to be rational, but at the same time sensitive and emotionally responsive to people's needs and demands (Rourke 1992). For

this to happen, there is a need to promote understanding of EI in public domains, beyond what is already known in the for-profit sector, and to select, recruit, and train a public sector cadre while being aware of the value of EI.

Finally, the paper argued that dealing with the wisdom of the heart (emotions and feelings) is by no means counterproductive to rationality or systematic order in bureaucratic agencies. On the contrary, emotions provide another tool for improving performance and may serve as a complementary arsenal in the search for better public services. Our discipline can benefit greatly from a better understanding of emotions in public domains and from integrating its added value with ideas for renewal of the field (i.e., NPM, reinventing government, performance measurement reforms, etc.). We argued that rationality is not necessarily opposed to emotional decision making and that EI can help in advancing performance at the employee level, the team/group level, and the organizational level. Our study may thus be seen as contributing to the common body of knowledge on EI as suggested by Berman and West (2008). It demonstrates, theoretically, empirically, and practically, how feelings and EI have a major effect on the work outcomes of public personnel.

We also suggest that future studies explore the effect of EI on other levels of public organizations such as the team level or the strategic level. For that purpose, they should also consider using other statistical methods such as structural equation modeling or hierarchical linear modeling. Another future path for research may be the extension of our model and ideas beyond EI by including other aspects of affectivity in public worksites (e.g., anger, fear, joy, happiness; see Brief and Weiss 2002). Exploring “feelings” and “thinking” (or any mixture of the two) may prove a useful tool for the future development of modern public administration in our times. The goal of this paper was therefore to discuss these questions and provide some avenues for prompting studies in this arena.

Appendix

Emotional Intelligence Scale (EI):

Self—Emotions Appraisal (SEA)

1. I have a good sense of why I have certain feelings most of the time.
2. I have good understanding of my own emotions.
3. I really understand what I feel.
4. I always know whether or not I am happy.

Others—Emotions Appraisal (OEA)

1. I always know my friends' emotions from their behavior.
2. I am a good observer of others' emotions.
3. I am sensitive to the feelings and emotions of others.
4. I have good understanding of the emotions of people around me.

Use of Emotion (UOE)

1. I always set goals for myself and then try my best to achieve them.
2. I always tell myself I am a competent person.

3. I am a self-motivating person.
4. I would always encourage myself to try my best.

Regulation of Emotion (ROE)

1. I am able to control my temper so that I can handle difficulties rationally.
2. I am quite capable of controlling my own emotions.
3. I can always calm down quickly when I am very angry.
4. I have good control of my own emotions.

Perceptions of Organizational Politics (POPs)

1. Favoritism rather than merit determines who gets ahead around here.
2. There is no place for yes-men around here: good ideas are desired even when it means disagreeing with superiors (Reversed Score).
3. Employees are encouraged to speak out frankly even when they are critical of well-established ideas (Reversed Score).
4. There has always been an influential group in this organization that no one ever crosses.
5. People here usually don't speak up for fear of retaliation by others.
6. Rewards come only to those who work hard in this organization (Reversed Score).
7. Promotions in this organization generally go to top performers (Reversed Score).
8. People in this organization attempt to build themselves up by tearing others down.
9. I have seen changes made in policies here that only serve the purposes of a few individuals, not the work unit or the organization.
10. There is a group of people in my organization who always get things their way because no one wants to challenge them.
11. I can't remember when a person received a pay increase or a promotion that was inconsistent with the published policies (Reversed Score).
12. Since I have worked in this organization, I have never seen the pay and promotion policies applied politically (Reversed Score).

Political Skill Inventory (PSI)

1. I spend a lot of time and effort at work networking with others.
2. At work, I know a lot of important people and I am well connected.
3. It is important that people believe I am sincere in what I say and do.
4. When communicating with others, I try to be genuine in what I say and do.
5. I always seem to instinctively know the right thing to say or do to influence others.
6. I have good intuition or savvy about how to present myself to others.
7. It is easy for me to develop good rapport with most people.
8. I am able to make most people feel comfortable and at ease around me.

Note

1. ABI inform, SSCI, Sociological Abstracts, Emerald Full Text, EconLit; the terms searched were “emotional intelligence,” “feelings,” and “emotions.”

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