Emotional Intelligence and Job Satisfaction in the Veterinary Profession

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether a correlation between EI (Emotional Intelligence) and JS exists within the veterinary profession. It was hypothesized that there would be a correlation between EI scores (using Trait Meta Mood Scale (TMMS)) and JS. When comparing EI to JS using Pearson's Correlation, the relationship was found to be both positive and significant (p= 0.00089, significance $p < 0.05$ Correlation Coefficient = 0.32). Age significantly and positively correlated with both EI and JS (p = 0.0126 and 0.026 respectively).

Introduction

Reports of Job Satisfaction (JS) have declined in recent years, along with increasing intensity of professional demands (Volk, BS et al., 2018). Parameters, collectively referred to as Quality of Working Life (QoWL), include a twenty-three-item psychometric scale are used to gauge the perceived quality of life for employees (Easton and Van Laar, 2018). JS is a pillar of QoWL, defined as "the degree to which individuals feel positively or negatively about their jobs" (Sattar et al., 2010) (Easton and Van Laar, 2018). Poor JS has been linked to decreased employee retention and performance (Javed, Balouch and Hassan, 2014). Within the health-care professions particularly, three key elements affecting JS include: autonomy, interpersonal relationships and patient care (Castaneda and Scanlan, 2018).

Emotional Intelligence (EI) encompasses the perception, processing, regulation and management of emotions (Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 1999). EI has been found to be its own entity, as it is distinctly different within the same individual from other measurable intelligences such as Intelligence Quotient (IQ) (Salovey et al, 1997). EI encompasses: awareness of one's own emotions, other's emotions and how to approach interpersonal relationships with empathy and tact (Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 1999).

The Trait Meta Mood Scale (TMMS) is a well-established measure of EI which assesses an individual's self-reported ability to identify and show awareness of emotions (Attention), to discriminate among different emotions and how they are feeling (Clarity), and to regulate these emotional states (Repair) to optimize their mood states (Salovey et al., 1995). EI has been found to modulate Psychophysiological responses to stress, suggesting that EI could potentially benefit both emotional functioning and health particularly with respect to stressful situations (Augusto Landa et al., 2008).

This study investigated whether a correlation between EI and JS exits within the veterinary profession. Factors of age, hours contracted to work, and position within the profession (partner, associate, etc.) were considered as potentially confounding variables, and analyzed separately for significant correlations to JS and EI. It was hypothesized that there would be a positive correlation between EI and JS.

Materials & Methods

Overview & Participants: An online questionnaire was used to assess JS and EI within the veterinary (Appendix 1). Target participants were Members of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (MRCVS) working in the United Kingdom and within the veterinary profession. Project approval was received by the Social Sciences Research Ethical Review Board (SSRERB: SR2018-1623) at the Royal Veterinary College, University of London.

Questionnaire Development: The questionnaire was composed of demographic questions (age, gender, area of the profession etc.), the TMMS and a modified Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS) from the Wellbeing Council of America (Easton and Van Laar, 2018). Scores for both EI and JS were calculated separately for each individual. Questionnaires used five-point Likert Scales with exceptions for demographic data.

Data Collection: Questionnaires were distributed using a link to an online questionnaire using Survey Monkey to produce anonymous responses. Dissemination of the survey included: email through an elective participant mailing list for continuing education (CPD) members, distribution via Facebook groups to Veterinary Voices UK, and Vets Stay Go Diversify, and within the university network at the Royal Veterinary College. All participation and contact was voluntary on the part of participants. Data was collected over 3 months from August to October 2018. It was encrypted and transferred to Excel for formatting, coding, and analysis.

Analysis: R-studio was used for analysis of the data. The normality of the data set was determined using the Shapiro-Wilks Normality Test. Pearson's Correlation Test, with a significance level of $p<0.05$, was performed to identify presence of a correlation between EI and Job Satisfaction. Graphs were created in R-studio to show trends and correlations. Pearson's Correlation was used to assess correlations between EI and age, JS and age, and number of hours contracted to work and JS. A paired T-test was used to compare JS of individuals working 'part-time' and those working 'full-time'.

Results

Of 170 responses, 105 were complete and able to be utilized for the bulk of the study. Age of Individuals surveyed: 24.8% were between the ages of 21 and 30, 41% were between the ages of 31 and 40, 28.6% were between the ages of 41 and 50, 3.8% were between the ages of 51 and 60, and 2.8% were over the age of 61.

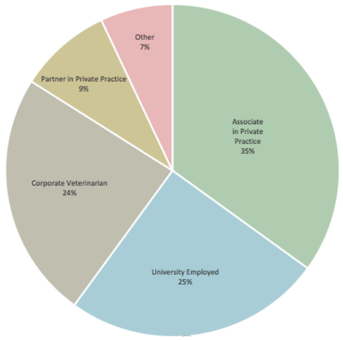

Figure 1: Roles within the veterinary profession which participants hold.

Demographics: Figure 1 demonstrates the percentage of respondents working as partners, associates, corporate veterinarians, university employed, and other. There were 10% male and 90% female respondents. On the basis of employment, 78.4% of respondents were employed on full-time basis, while 21.6% of respondent were employed on a part-time basis.

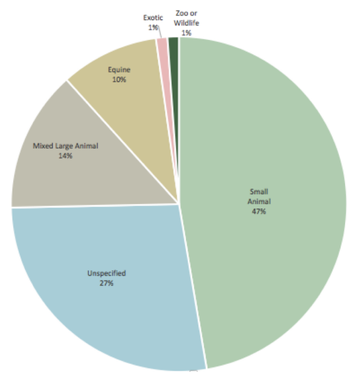

Figure 2: Type of animal participants work with within the veterinary profession.

Figure 2 demonstrates the proportion of participants working with the different types of animals within the profession.

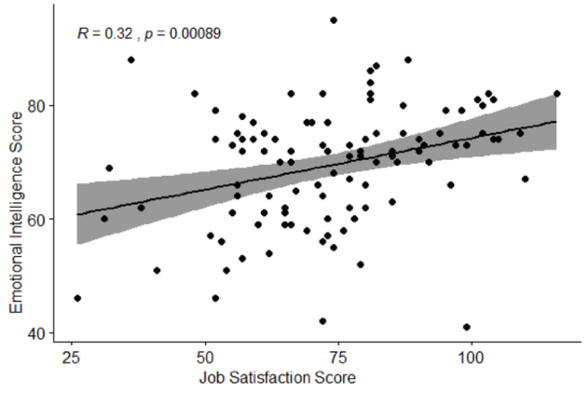

Figure 3: Showing the positive relationship between EI and JS

EI and JS: The scores for both JS and EI were found to be normally distributed. When comparing EI to JS using Pearson's Correlation, the hypothesis was accepted. It was found that veterinarians with higher EI scores on the Trait Meta Mood Scale (TMMS) experience a greater level of JS. There was a significant and positive correlation between EI and JS (p = 0.00089, correlation coefficient = 0.32) (Figure 3). Of these respondents, the correlation between JS and EI was strongest and most significant among Associates in Private Practice (p-value of 0.0075, correlation co-efficient = 0.44).

Age and EI: The correlation between Age and EI was both positive and significant. Increasing age correlated with higher levels of EI (p=0.0126, correlation co-efficient = 0.24).

Age and JS: Age was significantly correlated to JS (p-value of 0.026, correlation co-efficient = 0.22) (Figure 5).

Hours Contracted and JS: The null hypothesis was accepted. JS was not significantly correlated with the number of hours an individual was contracted to work (p = 0.30). A paired T-test, comparing JS of part-time verses full-time veterinarians, found no significant difference in JS between those employed part-time and those employed full-time (p = 0.9297).

Discussion

The results of this study demonstrated a significant positive correlation between JS and EI among associate veterinarians. These findings parallel that of other current research which suggests that EI positively contributes to many of the skills needed to be a good caring professional and employee (Castaneda, and Scanlan, 2018). In a recent literature review, higher EI-scores were found to positively contribute to doctor-patient relationships, increased empathy, teamwork and communication skills, stress management, organizational commitment and leadership skills (Arora et al, 2010). Stress management and teamwork have been found to be key elements of JS (Moore et al., 2014).

Individuals scoring higher on the Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT) are more likely to report positive relations and perceived support, and are less likely to report negative interactions with close relations (Augusto Landa et al., 2008). Studying the role of intelligence in adolescents, self-reported ability to regulate mood (Emotional Repair) was found to be positively correlated with self-esteem, while high levels of EI were negatively correlated to levels of depression and anxiety (Fernández-Berrocal et al., 2006). These results, in conjunction with the results of this study, suggest that high levels of EI are beneficial to the workplace and relationships in any area of life.

Elements which affect EI and the way we manage our emotions include our experiences and culture, among others (Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 1999); these must be considered as possible confounds. Further research needs to be done to better understand the relationship between EI and JS within the veterinary profession in different cultures.

Improving EI through regular educational workshops for students and employees, in addition to improving hygiene factors in the workplace could help to improve wellbeing and JS within the veterinary profession. These initial findings require more research to test their validity and better understand how to improve working life in the veterinary profession, however it provides a good starting point.

Conclusion

The results of this study demonstrate a significant positive correlation between JS and EI among associate veterinarians in private practice suggesting that high levels of EI could be beneficial to the workplace. Consideration should be given not only to measuring such parameters but also implementing teaching and coaching of EI in the workplace and universities. Further research needs to be done regarding the relationship of EI and JS, the use of EI as a measurement of aptitude and as a part of curriculum for managing stress within the veterinary profession to improve JS.

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