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The Effect of Emotional Intelligence Dimensions on Enhancing Employees' Eustress at work

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Abstract: This paper aims to investigate the effect of dimensions of emotional intelligence which include self-emotions appraisal, other-emotions appraisal, use of emotions, and regulation of emotions on enhancing employees' eustress at work. A quantitative survey was applied on 483 employees from ministry of education in Oman. PLS based SEM was utilized for analyzing data. The findings showed a significant positive association between others-emotions appraisal, use of emotions, regulation of emotions and employees' eustress. However, self-emotions appraisal does not influence employees' eustress significantly. Therefore, managers should foster employees' emotional intelligence (others-emotions appraisal, use of emotions, regulation of emotions) to enhance employees' eustress which is essential for work success. Some training sessions pertaining emotional intelligence should be held.

Keywords: *Emotional intelligence, Eustress, PLS based SEM*

1. Introduction

Job stress is a big challenge for organizations since it hinders employees' performance and results in turnover. Jehangir et al. (2011) argues that "job stress is increasingly becoming an epidemic in the work environment". Similarly, Hashim et al. (2012) argues that one of the biggest challenges organizations face is occupational stress. Hilton and Whiteford (2010) conclude that occupational stress affects workplace negatively. It makes employees depressed (Siegrist, 2008), and deteriorates mental and emotional functions (Von Onciul, 1996). Moreover, stress impacts organizations production negatively and enhances sickness payments (Cooper, 2001). However, having a reasonable amount of stress (eustress) enhances employees' performance. Le Fevre et al. (2003) believes that eustress facilitates work success. It inspires individuals to be determined, confident and persistent (Stewart, 2006). Eustress inspires employees to work harder to overcome challenges and accomplish the desired goals (Polson, 2009). Therefore, there is a great value to investigate factors that enhance employees' eustress. This study attempts to provide evidence by investigating the effect of employees' emotional intelligence on enhancing employees' eustress.

Eustress: There are two types of stress: distress and eustress. Distress occurs when there is an excessive demand that exceeds individual's abilities which mean "a negative response resulting from the evaluation of a particular event with a degree of disfavor (Simmons, 2000)". However, eustress stems from reacting to situation in moderate stress in which reasonable amount of stress, anxiety, and pressure are placed on the body and causes him to perform highly (Le Fevre et al., 2003). Eustress is defined as "the positive response to work demands" (Simmons & Nelson, 2001). Levinson (2004) stated that "Hans Selye in 1956 coined the term eustress (from the Greek root "eu" for good) which means the healthy, positive, constructive outcome of stressful events and the stress response". Dudgeon (1992) states that Dr. Keith Berndtson defines eustress as "positive stress which challenges us to achieve our life plans and projects and does not throw us out of equilibrium". Simmons (2000) argues that eustress is "a positive stress resulting from the evaluation of a particular event with a degree of favor". According to Simmons and Nelson (2001) there are three dimensions of eustress related to positive psychological states which are hope, positive effect, and meaningfulness. The positive psychological state grants employee's energy and confidence which results in employees' healthy life (Simmons, 2000). Eustress leads to employees' wellbeing (Hargrove, 2012) and job satisfaction (Sisley, 2010). Kozusznik et al. (2012) state that eustress promotes psychological health in the form of work engagement. Hence, top management is advised to urge individuals to perceive their jobs positively to enhance their employees' engagement. Eustress enhances efficiency and performance (Benson & Allen, 1980).

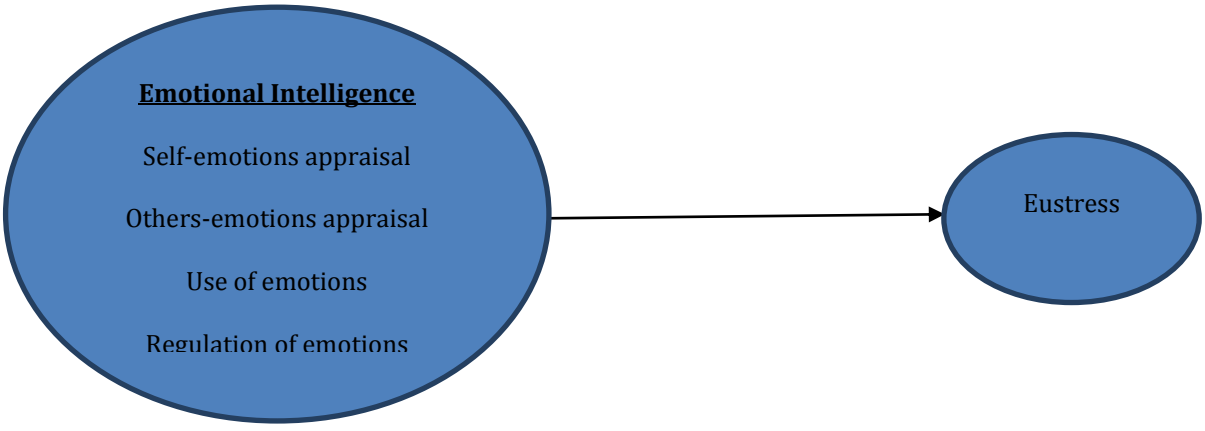
Emotional intelligence: In 1995 Daniel Goleman published a book about emotional intelligence that provides a new era to understand and assess individuals' attitudes, behaviors, emotions, and interpersonal skills. Ermer et al. (2012) state that many researches define emotional intelligence as "The ability to perceive

and express emotions, understand and reason with emotion, and regulate emotion in self and others". Emotional intelligence is important in any organization. Therefore, it should be considered in human resources planning, recruitment interviewing and selection, job profiling, management development, and customer relations and service (Iuscu et al., 2012). Different models and theories have been adopted for emotional intelligence. The first one who proposed a model for emotional intelligence is Goleman in 1995. He views emotional intelligence as a set of social and emotional competencies that encompass five dimensions: self-awareness; self-regulation; self-motivation; social-awareness; and social skills (Labbaf et al., 2011). Goleman (1998) defines emotional intelligence as the capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, and for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships (Livingston & Doerr, 2012). However, in 1997 Mayer and Salovey proposed another model for emotional intelligence in which they consider emotional intelligence as ability (Brackett & Salovey, 2006). They argue that emotional intelligence consists of four branches which are: ability to perceive emotions, ability to use emotions for thought, ability to understand emotions, and ability to manage emotions in self and others (Ma et al., 2010). In 1997 Bar-on proposed another model for emotional and social intelligence. It consists of five skills and abilities: intrapersonal skills, interpersonal skills, stress management, adaptability and mood (Mayer et al., 2000).

Emotional Intelligence and Eustress: There are also studies that link emotional intelligence with stress. Nikolaou and Tsaousis (2002) examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and sources and outcomes of occupational stress. The respondents consist of 212 individuals from mental health organizations. The results indicated that individuals with high scores in emotional intelligence suffer less stress in the occupational environment. Similarly, Satija and Khan (2013) examined the impact of emotional intelligence on occupational stress of 150 working professionals. The result indicates that professionals with high scores in emotional intelligence suffer less stress in their work environment. Singh and Jha (2012) study revealed that faculty from private medical and engineering colleges who are highly emotional intelligent feel less stressed which leads to better performance. Likewise, Singh and Sharma (2012) study proved the importance of emotional intelligence in reducing stress. From the above discussion, it is obvious that few empirical researches that have linked emotional intelligence with eustress. Therefore the study hypotheses would be as follows:

H1: Self-emotions appraisal enhances an employee's eustress
H2: Others-emotions appraisal enhances an employee's eustress
H3: Use of emotions enhances an employee's eustress
H4: Regulation of emotions enhances an employee's eustress

The framework of the study would be as follows:



2. Methodology

Sampling and Data Collection Procedures: The study sample includes employees from Batinah North Governorate from ministry of education in Sultanate of Oman. Convenience sampling technique is used for

collecting data to save time and effort. Representatives from targeted schools are assigned by the researcher to apply the study questionnaire on the samples and to attend to their questions.
The total number of questionnaires received was 504; however, 21 were not complete so they were excluded. Therefore, only 483 (Male: 232, Female: 251) questionnaires were analyzed.

Emotional Intelligence: Wong and Law (2002) developed a questionnaire to measure emotional intelligence (WLEIS). It consists of four dimensions namely: Self-Emotions Appraisal (SEA), Others-Emotions Appraisal (OEA), Use of Emotion (UOE), Regulation of Emotion (ROE), and includes 16 items. Self-Emotions Appraisal (SEA) assesses the individual's self-perceived ability to understand his or her emotions. Others-Emotions Appraisal (OEA) measures the self-perceived ability to recognize and understand other people's emotions. Use of Emotion (UOE) measures the self-perceived tendency to motivate oneself to enhance performance. Regulation of Emotion (ROE) focuses on the self-perceived ability to regulate one's emotions. Respondents were asked to indicate on a five likert scale ranging from (1) never to (5) always. Details pertaining the questionnaire's dimensions are as the following:

Table 1: Items constituting emotional intelligence scale

Dimension	items	
Self-Emotions Appraisal	1.	I have a good sense of why I have certain feelings most of the time.
	2 .	
	3.	I have good understanding of my own emotions.
	4.	I really understand what I feel.
		I always know whether or not I am happy.
Others-Emotions Appraisal	5.	I always know my team members' emotion from their behaviour.
	6.	I am a good observer of other's emotions.
	7.	I am sensitive to the feelings and emotions of others.
	8.	I have good understanding of the emotions of people around me.
Use of Emotion	9.	I always set goals for myself and then try my best to achieve them.
	10.	
	11.	I always tell myself that I am a competent person.
	12.	I am motivated to do a task without needing pressure from others.
		I would always encourage myself to try my best.
Regulation of Emotion	13.	I am able to control my temper and handle difficulties wisely.
	14.	I am quite capable of controlling my own emotions.
	15.	I can always calm down quickly when I am angry.
	16.	I have good control of my own emotions.

Eustress: O'sullivan (2011) developed a scale to measure eustress at work. It consists of 15 items (5 of them are filler questions (irrelevant questions so it has been deleted). Therefore, the total number of items used in this study questionnaire is 10. The higher score indicates higher level of eustress. Since O'sullivan scale developed purposely for identifying the level of eustress of college students, the researcher adapted the scale to fit with the population of this research. For example; Items (3,5,6,8,9): the word "academic" is replaced by the word "occupational" to be consistent with the study purpose. Item (7) replacing the word "schoolwork" with "your job". Item (10) replacing "stress for an exam" with "stress to do a job". All the questionnaire items are positive except items 6 and 7. The respondents were asked to indicate on a Likert scale ranging from 1= "never" to 5="always". Details pertaining the questionnaire items are presented in the following table.

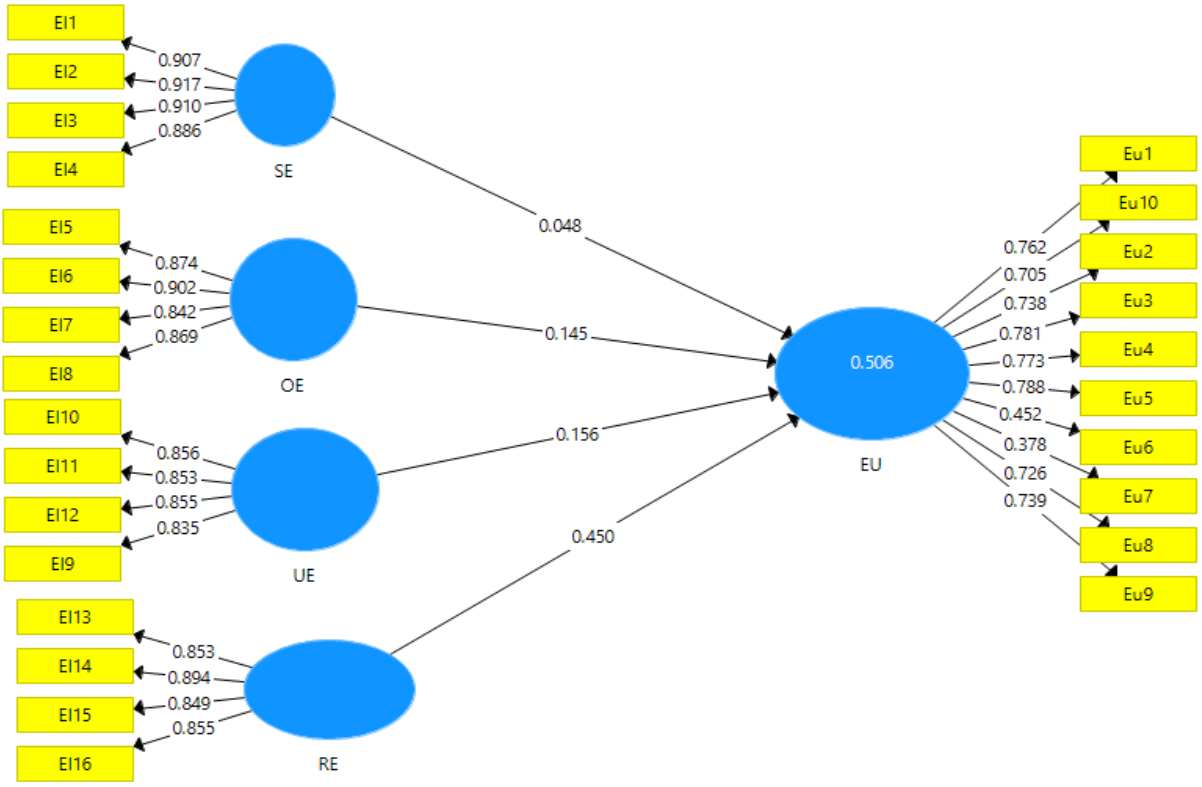
Table 2: Items constituting eustress scale

item	scale items
1	I cope effectively with stressful changes that occur in my occupational life.
2	I deal successfully with irritating professional hassles.
3	I feel that stress positively contributes to my ability to handle my occupational problems.
4	In general, I feel motivated by stress.
5	In general, I am able to successfully control the irritations in my occupational life.
6	In general, I fail at any occupational task when under pressure.
7	In general, I am unable to control the way I spend my time on my job.
8	When faced with occupational stress, I find that the pressure makes me more productive.
9	I feel that I perform better on an assignment when under occupational pressure.
10	I feel that stress to do a job has a positive effect on the results of my job.

3. Results

Individual item reliability: In order to ensure that the questionnaire items measure the study constructs and consequently ensuring the questionnaire reliability, Measurement Model (or outer model) is analysed by PLS. To indicate reliabilities of individual items, the researcher looked at their loadings to their respective constructs (Hulland, 1999). Hulland (1999) states that the loadings that are less than 0.50 should be dropped. All loadings of items exceeds 0.50 except two items related to eustress construct (Eu6, Eu7) is below 0.5 which is dropped.

Figure 1: Study Model convergent validity



Convergent validity: The examination of convergent validity, which means the degree to which multiple indicators measure the same construct are in agreement, is conducted. Hair et al. (2010) suggest that factor loadings, composite reliability and average variance extracted are used to assess convergence validity. The loadings for all items exceeded the recommended value of 0.50 (Hair et al., 2010). Composite reliability values exceeded 0.70 which ranges from 0.912 to 0.948. The average variance extracted (AVE) measures the

variance captured by the indicators relative to measurement error, and it should be greater than 0.50 to justify using a construct (Barclay et al., 1995). The average variance extracted, were in the range of 0.581 and 0.819.

Table 3: Measurement Model - Reflective Construct

Construct	Measurement Item	Loadings/ Weight	AVE	CR
SE	EI1	0.907	0.819	0.948
	EI2	0.916		
	EI3	0.911		
	EI4	0.886		
OE	EI5	0.875	0.760	0.927
	EI6	0.901		
	EI7	0.841		
	EI8	0.870		
UE	EI9	0.837	0.723	0.912
	EI10	0.856		
	EI11	0.854		
	EI12	0.854		
RE	EI13	0.854	0.745	0.921
	EI14	0.894		
	EI15	0.849		
	EI16	0.853		
Eustress	Eu1	0.765	0.581	0.917
	Eu10	0.726		
	Eu2	0.737		
	Eu3	0.793		
	Eu4	0.786		
	Eu5	0.791		
	Eu8	0.749		
	Eu9	0.748		

Note:
Composite reliability (CR) = (square of the summation of the factor loadings)/{(square of the summation of the factor loadings) / (square of the summation of the error variances)
Average variance extracted (AVE) = (summation of the square of the factor loadings)/{(summation of the square of the factor loadings) / (summation of the error variances)}

Construct validity: Cross-loadings were computed to determine if the items loaded on the other constructs equally as well as on their theorized construct. It is observed that all the items measuring a particular construct loaded highly on that construct and loaded lower on the other constructs thus confirming construct validity. For cross-validated items to be included in the finalized data set, the loading must be larger on the intended construct than any other construct. This was achieved.

Figure 2: Study model construct validity

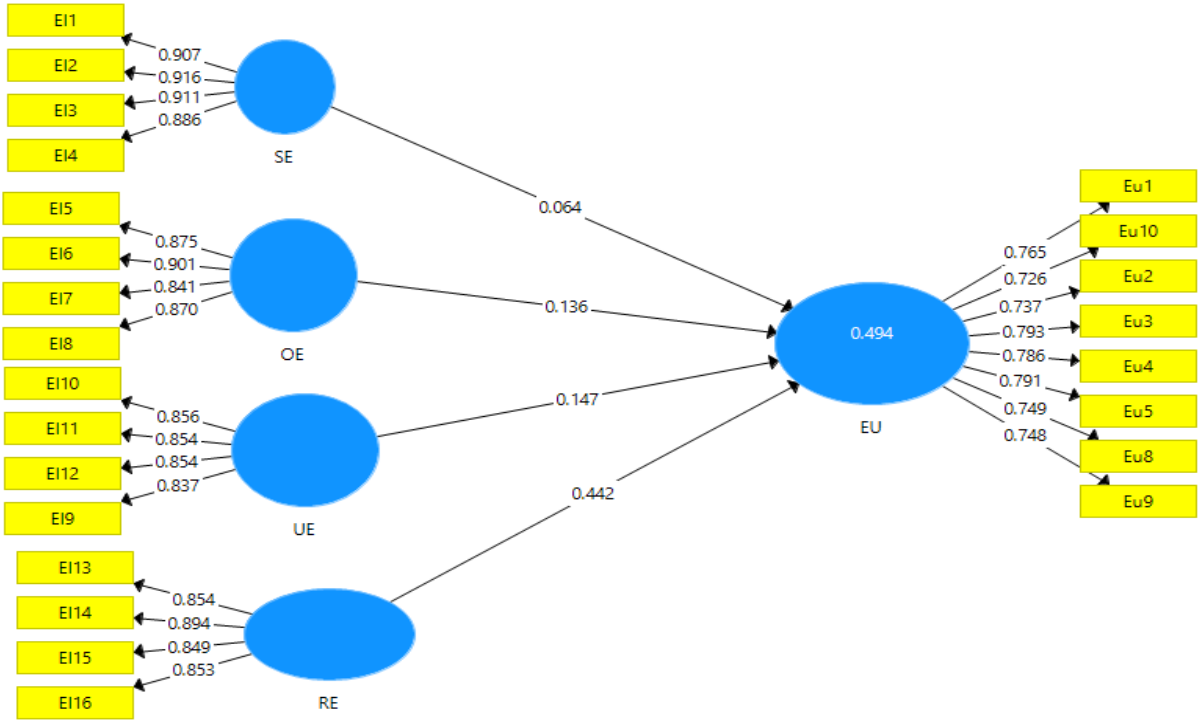


Table 4: factor loading

	EU	OE	RE	SE	UE
EI1	0.564	0.648	0.619	0.907	0.704
EI10	0.434	0.567	0.513	0.635	0.856
EI11	0.518	0.565	0.573	0.622	0.854
EI12	0.522	0.612	0.639	0.698	0.854
EI13	0.585	0.554	0.854	0.609	0.623
EI14	0.585	0.564	0.894	0.602	0.603
EI15	0.573	0.531	0.849	0.546	0.564
EI16	0.560	0.480	0.853	0.526	0.533
EI2	0.518	0.660	0.620	0.916	0.687
EI3	0.513	0.658	0.587	0.911	0.688
EI4	0.449	0.682	0.566	0.886	0.679
EI5	0.532	0.875	0.594	0.693	0.602
EI6	0.479	0.901	0.538	0.629	0.578
EI7	0.411	0.841	0.474	0.602	0.603
EI8	0.507	0.870	0.535	0.615	0.627
EI9	0.513	0.600	0.554	0.633	0.837
Eu1	0.765	0.551	0.645	0.646	0.607
Eu10	0.726	0.312	0.411	0.283	0.304
Eu2	0.737	0.474	0.548	0.494	0.523
Eu3	0.793	0.441	0.509	0.464	0.494
Eu4	0.786	0.337	0.441	0.280	0.345
Eu5	0.791	0.512	0.590	0.562	0.527
Eu8	0.749	0.310	0.376	0.251	0.319
Eu9	0.748	0.299	0.392	0.221	0.255

Discriminant validity: Finally, as a means of evaluating discriminant validity, the average variance extracted for each construct should be greater than the squares of the correlations between the construct and all other

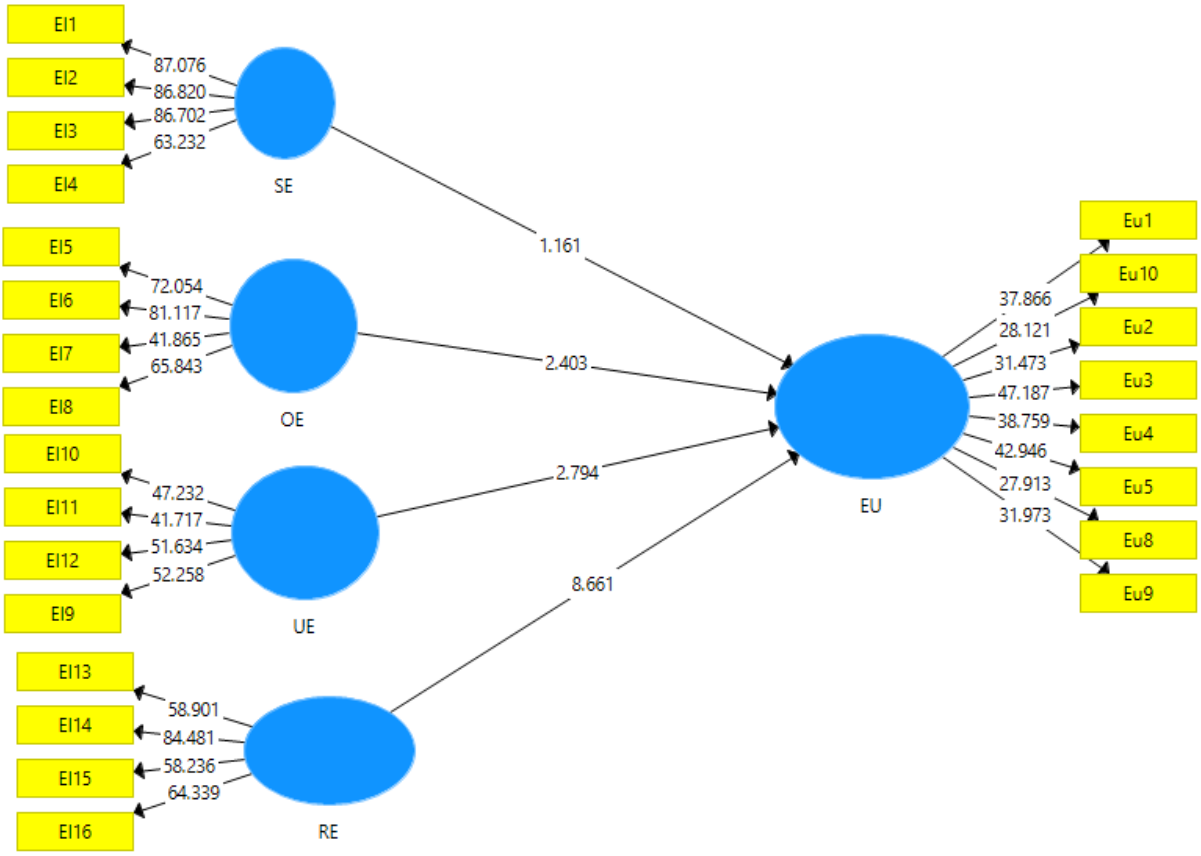
constructs (Barclay et al. (1995). Equally important, the correlations between the constructs should be lower than the square root of the average variance extracted (Gefen et al., 2000). As shown in the following table, all of the average variance extracted (AVE) are greater than the recommended 0.50 level. Likewise, the square root of the average variance extracted (as shown on the diagonal, in bold) is greater than the correlations between the constructs.

Table 5: Discriminant validity of constructs

	EU	OE	RE	SE	UE
EU	**0.762**				
OE	0.557	**0.872**			
RE	0.667	0.618	**0.863**		
SE	0.568	0.730	0.662	**0.905**	
UE	0.588	0.690	0.674	0.762	**0.850**

Diagonal (in bold) represent square root of average variance extracted (AVE), other values are correlations.

Figure 3: Structural Model



Emotional Intelligence dimensions and Eustress: By applying computed T-statistics, the path loadings between constructs are calculated to identify significance. All of the data were run using 500 bootstrapped samples. Path coefficients in the structural model may be significant, but their size may be so small that they do not warrant managerial attention. T value represents the estimated change in the endogenous construct for a unit change in a predictor construct. Looking at the relative importance of the exogenous driver constructs in predicting the dependent construct eustress, we see that regulation of emotions (RE) (t value= 8.661) is most important, followed by use of emotions (UE) (t value= 2.794), then others-emotions appraisal

(OE) (t value= 2.403) and finally self-emotions appraisal (SE) (t value= 1.161) which has little influence on eustress. Based in T values, H2, H3, H4 are accepted, but H1 is rejected.

Table 6: Path coefficients of exogenous constructs

hypotheses		T (value)	decision
H.1	SE -> EU	1.161	Not supported
H.2	OE -> EU	2.403**	supported
H.3	UE -> EU	2.794**	supported
H.4	RE -> EU	8.661**	supported

** p<0.01 (2.33), *p <.0.05 (1.645)

Discussion of findings: The results showed a positive significant association between emotional intelligence dimensions (Others-Emotions Appraisal (OEA), Use of Emotion (UOE), Regulation of Emotion (ROE)) and experiencing eustress at work. This result is in accordance with some previous studies like (Nikolaou & Tsaousis, 2002; Satija & Khan, 2013; Singh & Jha, 2012). Emotional intelligence helps employees overcome work-related difficulties and increase positive behaviors. This is because as Sigmar et al. (2012) found that emotional intelligence increases communication among individuals. Similarly, Jordan et al. (2002) showed that highly emotional intelligent individuals experience positive emotional reactions to difficulties and adapt positive coping strategies. Definitely, that assists them experience eustress. Thus, H2, H3 and H4 are supported.

Implications of the study: This study adds knowledge to literature by confirming the importance of emotional intelligence dimensions on enhancing employees' eustress at work. Emotional intelligence is a significant element which should be considered in organization policy as it facilitates employees' eustress. Managers should conduct or arrange workshops related to the strategies that increase emotional intelligence capabilities. Also, emotional intelligence should be considered in organizations during selection and recruitment processes and even in allocating duties to employees. That would lead to employees' ability to deal effectively with stressful situations and job demands and consequently positive organizational outcomes would be attained.

Limitations and future researches: The limitation of the study is related to samples of the study which is application of the questionnaire is only on teachers from one governorate. Therefore, future studies should include different jobs in ministry of education and more governorates should be targeted.

4. Conclusion

Eustress is one of the critical factors that affect organization performance greatly. Therefore identifying the factors that enhance employees' eustress is of a great benefit. Because there is a few empirical researches that relate employees' emotional intelligence to their eustress, This study focus on investigating the impact of emotional intelligence dimensions on enhancing eustress on a sample from ministry of education in the Sultanate of Oman. PLS based SEM is used to analyze the data. The results showed a significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence dimensions (Others-Emotions Appraisal (OEA), Use of Emotion (UOE), Regulation of Emotion (ROE) and experiencing eustress at work. Therefore, managers should consider individuals' emotional intelligence in recruitment and selection process and hold workshops to their employees in how to be intelligent emotionally which would be reflected on organizational strategic goals positively.

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