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Correlation Between Emotional Intelligence and Work Engagement of Special Need School Teachers

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Background: Optimal job performance of special need school teachers is marked by high work engagement, which showed perseverance, enthusiasm, and absorption at work. Work engagement is influenced by several factors, one of them is personal resources. Personal resource that considered important in people's success is emotional intelligence. The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and work engagement of teachers at *Sekolah Luar Biasa Negeri*, a public special need school in Semarang. **Method:** The study was conducted in a cross sectional design. Data were collected from 60 teachers, using Work Engagement Scale (33 item; $\alpha = .93$) and Emotional Intelligence Scale (32 item; $\alpha = .93$). **Results:** Simple linear regression analysis showed that there was a positive correlation between emotional intelligence and work engagement, $r = .87$; ($p < .001$). Higher emotional intelligence is likely to lead to higher work engagement. Emotional intelligence contributed to 74.8% of the variance in work engagement. **Conclusion:** Teachers are expected to manage emotion better in order to achieve high work engagement.

Keywords: Work Engagement, Emotional Intelligence, Teachers of Special Need School.

1. INTRODUCTION

Special need school teachers play an important role in developing the skills of students with special needs in order to be independent and interacting with people. Children with special needs have limitations in the development of intellectual, physical, social, and emotional that often makes difficulty in learning.¹ These job demands can be the stressor for special need school teachers. One of the causes of teacher's stress is student's lack of concentration and ability to recall information so teachers in special need school have to give a lot of energy and attention than public schools teachers.² In addition, teachers can also be overwhelmed and burnout by dealing with students who have behavioral problem.³ Furthermore, slow development of students while parents demanded quick results can make teachers feel frustrated.

Heavy workload can make teachers unenergetic and not enjoying their job, which indicates a low work engagement. High job demands can make work engagement lower.⁴ Work engagement is a condition where people uses their energy into work with enthusiasm and deeply involved during the work, which is indicated by the vigor, dedication and absorption.^{5,6} Engaged employees often experience positive emotions include happy and enthusiasm, able to create their own resources, and transmit their

work engagement to others.⁴ Thus, teaching children with special needs, where the process is more complicated than to normal child, will be able to success because the workload was considered as a challenge.

Besides work engagement, teachers need to have high emotional intelligence to interact with children who often experience emotional turmoil. Emotional intelligence is the ability to recognize, manage and cleverly use emotions, and understand the feelings of others so they can face the problem, getting the expected performance and achieve interpersonal relationship.^{7,8} By controlling and using emotions, teachers are able to take variety of coping strategies to relieve stress and resolve conflict.⁹ Emotional intelligence is one of the personal resources that can help teachers facing the environment.

Some studies demonstrated the influence of emotional intelligence on work engagement. Previous research found that emotional intelligence had positive relationship with all aspects of work engagement.¹⁰ Emotional intelligence was also able to lead to job satisfaction and well-being, which is positively correlated with work engagement and organizational commitment, and then influence turnover intention.¹¹

Based on the explanations that have been presented, it can be seen that emotional intelligence has some influence on work engagement and that is why researcher want to know their correlation on special need school teachers.

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2. METHOD

Subjects were 60 teachers of SLB Negeri Semarang from 99 teachers in the population. Subjects were obtained by using simple random sampling technique. Data collection instrument in this study was using two psychology scale, Emotional Intelligence Scale and Work Engagement Scale, in the form of Likert Scale and four possible answers. The Emotional Intelligence Scale had 32 valid items with reliability coefficient of .93 and reflect the underlying aspect of emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skill.⁸ The Work Engagement Scale had 33 valid items with reliability coefficient of .94 and reflect the underlying aspect of work engagement: vigor, dedication, and absorption.⁵ The data was analyzed by a simple regression method.

3. RESULTS

Normality test showed that Kolmogorov-Smirnov's score of work engagement was 1.21 ($p > .05$) which means that work engagement variable had normal distribution. Emotional intelligence also showed a normal distribution with Kolmogorov-Smirnov's score of 1.33 ($p > .05$).

Linearity test showed that the F_{lin} score = 172.37 ($p < .05$). These results showed the relationship between the two variables is a linear research.

A simple regression analysis showed that there was a positive and significant correlation between emotional intelligence and work engagement, $r = .87$ ($p < .001$). This showed that higher emotional intelligence is likely to lead to higher work engagement.

Effective contribution's amount of emotional intelligence to work engagement was good, $R^2 = .75$. The result demonstrated that emotional intelligence contributed to 75% of the variance of work engagement. The remaining portion of 25% was influenced by other factors which were not examined in this study.

Descriptive analysis about the categorization of teachers' work engagement and emotional intelligence can be seen in Table I.

Table I showed that 90% of the teachers demonstrated high and very high category of work engagement, and also 85% of the teachers demonstrated a high and very high category of emotional intelligence. It means teachers in SLB Negeri Semarang mostly have high work engagement and emotional intelligence.

4. DISCUSSION

Hypothesis test by simple regression analysis showed that there was positive and significant correlation between emotional intelligence and work engagement with $r = .87$ ($p < .001$). Relationship between the two variables was positive, meaning that higher emotional intelligence lead to higher work engagement. This result is consistent with other studies' results which showed

that emotional intelligence and work engagement have positive relationship. Emotional intelligence positively correlated with work engagement and other variables like job satisfaction, well-being, organizational commitment and turnover intention.¹¹ Studies on process improvement experts' emotional intelligence indicate that process improvement experts who can control their emotions are likely to find greater engagement in their work, and have the energy to mentally stay involved in their work even when challenges arise.¹²

Descriptive analysis about the categorization of work engagement showed about 90% of teachers demonstrated high and very high category of work engagement. High work engagement is shown by persistent efforts of teachers in finding teaching methods for students, a sense of pride in their work, and passion to help student. In addition, to teach students with basic instruction, students also need to be guided to develop their talents. For example, intellectually disabled students who like to draw are directed to be active in painting, and hearing impairment students who like to cook are directed to participate in cooking class. Many students earn achievements in their fields, and it cannot be separated from the tenacity and spirit of teachers who guided them.

Teachers' high spirit and work engagement is directed by their high emotional intelligence. People with emotional intelligence have motivation and experience positive emotion from cleverly managing their emotion. The experience of positive emotion with resilience are able to help people recover from daily stress and avoid emotional exhaustion.¹³

Descriptive analysis about the categorization of emotional intelligence showed that 85% of the teachers demonstrated high and very high category of emotional intelligence. High emotional intelligence was indicated by teachers' desire to help children with special needs so they can be independent and teachers' empathy to children, where they understand about students' difficult conditions. In addition, teachers can also face and deal with children's misbehavior that may be impolite, and avoid negative feelings.

High emotional intelligence helps teachers to interact with students and avoid negative emotions. Thus, teachers' energy is not wasted in vain and teachers can transmit it to work enthusiastically and bonded with their work.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on analysis results, it can be concluded that there is a positive and significant relationship between emotional intelligence and work engagement of teachers in *Sekolah Luar Biasa (SLB) Negeri*, a public special need school in Semarang. Higher emotional intelligence is more likely to increase work engagement. Emotional intelligence contributed to 75% of the variance of work engagement of teachers in *Sekolah Luar Biasa (SLB) Negeri Semarang*.

The implication is that if teachers develop and maintain high level of emotional intelligence, work engagement will be increased. In order to increase teachers' emotional intelligent and work engagement, school should provide them with adequate emotional intelligence training and create supportive environment and event like leisure activity together. Further research is expected to consider the characteristics of the subjects like age, years of service and the type of disability students to obtain more specific results.

Table I. Teachers' work engagement and emotional intelligence.

Variable	Very low	Low	Average (%)	High (%)	Very high (%)
Work engagement	–	–	10	58.3	31.7
Emotional intelligence	–	–	15	68.3	16.7

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