

Assessment of Emotional Intelligence in Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Agents

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Introduction

- The use of emotional intelligence (EI) for employee selection and training has increased (Argabright et al., 2013; Livingstone & Day, 2005). Research indicates EI development in the workforce strengthens commerce and develops that human capital inherent to success (Goleman, 1995).
- The Cooperative Extension Service provides resources and education to families and agriculturalists since the Smith-Lever Act was enacted in 1914 providing for a national system focused on practical, research-based information about agriculture, home economics, and energy to the people (Andrews, 2014).
- EI is defined, as the “ability to monitor one’s own and others’ feelings and emotions, to guide one’s own thinking and actions” (Salovey & Mayer, 1990, p. 189), becoming a prominent and recognizable analysis of intelligence by educators, employers, and the informed public (Livingstone & Day, 2005).

Theoretical Framework

- The study was viewed through the theory of Human Capital (HC), which encompasses the investment that is made in a population, which in turn will give back to the local economy (Longley, 2019).
- In the workplace, employers invest in their employees for the benefit of the company. Feeding into employees’ HC with opportunities such as family assistance, professional development, and other types of training and education will have a lasting impact on the success of the company (Longley, 2019).
- This study aligns with the American Association of Agricultural Education’s (AAAE) National Research Agenda and addresses Research Priority 3, “Sufficient Scientific and Professional Workforce that Addresses the Challenges of the 21st Century” (Roberts et al., 2016).

Methodology

- The population for this study included all county extension agents in Texas during the fall of 2019 (N = 508).
- Data were collected from 200 (39.3%) participants, meeting the sample size requirement for survey research (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2009).
- This study utilized the Qualtrics survey platform and defined the sample through 14 demographic questions (i.e., Gender, ethnicity, age, etc.).
- The Genos™ Emotional Intelligence (EI) Inventory assessed participants in the following areas: self-awareness, awareness of others, authenticity, emotional reasoning, self-management, and positive influence.
- The Genos™ Emotional Intelligence (EI) model utilized a 5-point Likert-Scale for participant responses, with either a direct or inverse relationship (1 = Almost Never; 2 = Seldom; 3 = Sometimes; 4 = Usually; 5 = Almost Always).
- Descriptive statistics were analyzed ($p \leq .05$) utilizing SPSS 27.0.

Findings

Research Question 1		Research Question 2	
Average Agent		OEI Tendency Comparison	
Married	61.00%	GENOS Normative Value	M = 121.86, SD = 13.84
Caucasian	83.50%	AgriLife Extension Agent	M = 112.33, SD = 35.32
Female	57.00%	School-Based Ag Educator	M = 120.11, SD = 19.09
AG & Natural Resources Agent	42.00%		
22-30 Years of age	27.50%		
Masters Degree	71.50%		
< 10 years Experience	59.00%		



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Objectives

- To identify demographic information (i.e. Gender, age, years of experience, etc.) of county extension agents in Texas.
- To compare the Overall Emotional Intelligence (OEI) between County Extension Agents and School-Based Agricultural Educators in Texas.

Implications and Recommendations

- As EI is defined as social intelligence with self-awareness according to Salovey and Mayer (1990), the overall mean of emotional intelligence speaks to the emotional intelligence core skills of those surveyed as a level of human capital that can be developed (Olaniyan & Okemakinde, 2008).
- Professional development in Texas AgriLife county extension agents targeting the improvement of overall emotional intelligence in current agents and in the onboarding process should be considered.
- Implications exist in the development of extension agents through higher education, as a correlation exists in the results of this study with the level of education and emotional intelligence. As such, courses designed to target EOI levels and how they influence others should be considered.