

The Impact of Emotional Intelligence on Food Service Employee Well-being

Chelsea Leffler

Department of Psychology, West Chester University of Pennsylvania

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Abstract

A large body of research on emotional intelligence (EQ or EI) suggests that it can predict positive work outcomes (see, e.g., Miao et al., 2016). Specifically, there is a stronger impact of emotional intelligence when employees are facing customer incivility, becoming susceptible to psychological resource loss, burnout, and decreased organizational commitment (Ackley, 2016; O'Connor et al., 2019). Therefore, employees execute emotional intelligence strategies to maintain positive well-being and affect according to the theoretical models of this research study such as Conservation of Resources, Affective Event Theory (see, e.g., Cheng et al., 2020; Han et al., 2016; Kim et al., 2019). Research suggests the restaurant and food service depicts employees with the highest levels of emotional intelligence, despite working in an industry leading in incivility, emotional labor, unfair wages, lack of benefits, and much more (Kim & Qu, 2018, Liu-Lastres et al., 2022, Popa et al., 2023). The present study aims to investigate the effect of emotional intelligence training (EIT) on restaurant and food service employees' well-being, service performance, and perceived organizational support.

Keywords: emotional intelligence, emotional intelligence training, restaurant industry, food service industry, employee well-being, service performance, customer incivility, perceived organizational support

The Impact of Emotional Intelligence on Food Service Employee Well-being

Literature Review

Emotional Intelligence: Overview

Emotional Intelligence has intrigued researchers globally since its conception. Goleman (1995) theorizes that “emotions are, in essence, impulses to act, the instant plans for handling life that evolution has instilled in us; suggesting that a tendency to act is implicit in every emotion (pg. 6).” Additionally, modern neuroscience has explored the pathways and effects of emotion in the brain. In *Emotional Intelligence 2.0* by Bradberry & Graves (2009) it is explained that everything we perceive, and sense enters our brain through the base near the spinal cord, passes through our limbic system (where emotions are produced) to then arrive at the frontal lobe, where logical and rational thinking happens. Historical evidence of human emotions has left researchers confused, changing meaning and importance throughout our history. In describing the historical context of emotion, Stein & Deonarine (2015) defined emotional intelligence in relation to Charles Darwin’s book in the 1870’s on the role of emotional expression in survival and adaptation- “the ability to successfully rise to the call is one’s way of successfully coping with one’s environment (pg. 382)”. Today, this innate ability is predicting positive work outcomes- employees possessing high emotional intelligence levels have higher job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and lower turnover intentions (Miao et al., 2016).

The term *emotional intelligence* first emerged during the 1970s in a thesis from Wayne Leon Payne (Kannaiah & Shanthi, 2015), theorizing that many of the problems in modern civilization stemmed from a suppression of emotion, so it is possible to learn to become

emotionally intelligent and including a framework to enable people to develop emotional intelligence. From this framework, other researchers began to increase their focus on emotional intelligence's operationalization, measurement, and improvement. In 1995 Goleman published the first book on emotional intelligence, educating readers on the neurological basics, definitions, examples, and advantages of this "new" concept. This publication ignited research and business to investigate and assess emotional intelligence by using the tools provided. Goleman (1995) argues that our view of intelligence is far too narrow, ignoring a crucial range of abilities that matter immensely in terms of how we do in life. He defines emotional intelligence as a meta-ability that can be handled with greater or lesser skill which requires unique competencies whereas how adept one is describes why one thrives and the other doesn't by determining utilization of raw intellect, despite equal "intelligence" (Goleman, 1995, pg. 36). In meaning, there is another separate domain of intelligence that is measurable and important to our environmental performance in life.

Many researchers of this time adopted the works of Gardner's "thinking about the multiplicity of intelligence" and the concept of *inter-* and *intra-* personal intelligence. *Interpersonal* intelligence is the ability to understand what motivates other people, how they work and how to work with them, and being able to effectively respond appropriately to the moods and temperaments of other people. *Intrapersonal* intelligence is the ability of self-knowledge of one's own feelings to guide behavior to form an accurate model of oneself in order to operate effectively in life. (Goleman, 1995, pg. 39)." These works of Gardner were monumental to modern researchers looking to assess these characteristics in workers, like Salovey & Mayer (1990) who suggested this term to be completely separate from the other existing areas of intelligence such as abstract, mechanical (visual/ spatial), and social intelligence

or other proposed distinctions. However, they heavily rely on the work of Gardner's (1983; as cited in Salovey & Mayer, 1990) concept of the personal intelligences which "relates to feelings and is quite close to what we call emotional intelligence"- but Gardner's definitions do not include the general sense of self and appraisal of others, and does not focus on the process of recognizing and using emotional states to regulate behavior or solve problems (pg. 189). Thus, Ackley (2016) provides Salovey & Mayer (1990) definition for emotional intelligence:

"Emotional intelligence is the ability to perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth (pg.271)".

Emotional Intelligence: Historical Background

These initial emotional intelligence researchers debunked the belief for hundreds of years that emotions are meaningless, signs of hysteria or illness, and maladaptive bad behaviors. Previous traditions in Western society have described emotions as "disorganized interruptions of mental activity, a complete loss of cerebral control and having no conscious purpose (Salovey & Mayer, 1990, pg. 185-186)." Salovey & Mayer (1990) refined the definition and importance of emotions in humankind, viewing emotions as organized adaptive responses from our physiological, cognitive, motivational, and experiential systems. These researchers suggest that problems arise from deficits in emotional intelligence- people who cannot learn to regulate or become aware of their own emotions become slaves to emotion and therefore live in a society of insufficient reward and alienation (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Emotional Intelligence was labeled the key to a life of health, self-actualization, and conscious resilience. Due to plasticity, the brain's ability to change, a single cell can grow 15,000 connections with its neighbors which "ensures the pathway of thought responsible for the behavior grows strong, making it easier to

kick this new resource into action in the future (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009, pg. 51-52)". This encouraged awareness and education of this concept to the public and for businesses to use as training techniques.

Thus, three main theories and measures dominate the field of research in emotional intelligence assessment. First, Salovey & Mayer 1990 as stated above, Dan Goleman's advancement to the field in 1995 with two New York Times best-selling books, and finally Bar-On's 1997 rigorous research model. Models of ability such as Salovey and Mayer evolved into trait models such as the works of Goleman (1995) and Bar-On (1997) which labeled emotional intelligence as a learnable set of skills. These three researchers developed corresponding measures of emotional intelligence: the *MSCEIT* (Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test). Goleman's *ECI* (Emotional Competency Inventory) and Bar-On's *EQ-i* (Emotional Quotient Inventory) at the beginning of this century. The information below provides a brief description of these measures:

MSCEIT (Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test): Published in 2002, this measure attempts to capture one's capacity for learning EQ skills. It asks respondents to solve eight kinds of problems, two for each of the four branches of EQ: perception and expression of emotion, emotional facilitation of thought, understanding and analyzing emotions, and reflective regulation of emotions. This measure may be best to determine if someone is capable of improving their emotional intelligence skills through coaching, for example (Ackley, 2016, O'Connor et al., 2019).

ECI (Emotional Competency Inventory): Based on Goleman's (1995) model, emotional competence is a learned capacity based on emotional intelligence that contributes to effective performance at work through self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and

relationship management. The technical manual of this measure by Wolff 2005, which was cited by Ackley (2016), states this 360-degree tool is used to assess the emotional competencies that differentiate performance in an organization.

EQ-I (Emotional Quotient Inventory): The original EQ-I by Bar-On (1997) is in book form and revised in 2005 and 2011 to be administered as a self-report instrument or a full 360 assessment. Bar-On (1997) spent 17 years developing his model based on strong scientific research, suggesting 15 emotional skills were associated with success beyond what IQ predicted. This measure focuses “abilities and the potential for performance rather than performance itself; it is process-oriented, rather than outcome oriented (Ackley, 2016, O’Connor et al., 2019).”

Other measures and theories of Emotional Intelligence have emerged that are notable, such as the *SREIT* (Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test) by Schutte, Malouff, Hall, Haggerty, Cooper, Golden, & Dornheim, (1998) and MacCann & Roberts (2008) *STEM* (Situational Test of Emotion Management) and *STEU* (Situational Test of Emotional Understanding). The *SREIT* was developed in 1998 using Mayer & Salovey’s (1990) original model of emotional intelligence to provide a solid foundation of measuring individuals’ current levels of emotional intelligence (Schutte et al., 1998). The researchers reported that their 33-item scale showed internal consistency with a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.90 and was representative of the model- 13 items represented the appraisal and expression of emotion category, 10 items for the regulation of emotions, and 10 items representing the utilization of emotions (Schutte et al., 1998, pg. 171). The only other scales available at the time were Bar-On’s *EQI*, so the *SREIT* allowed for a valid, reliable, and shorter version of emotional intelligence (Schutte et al., 1998). The *SREIT* is advantageous because it is free and captures aspects of emotional intelligence not measured by the *STEM* and *STEU*- appraisal of emotions and utilization of emotions. It has been

cited in over 3,000 articles, however, the SREIT is the controversial self-report method (Ackley, 2016, O'Connor, et al., 2019).

The STEM and STEU are cheaper than the MSCEIT, take less time to complete, and are ability measures with good psychometric soundness despite not being researched as heavily (O'Connor et al., 2019). The STEM and STEU are unique measures because they are modeled after the Situational Judgement Test (SJT) paradigm, resulting in a strongly valid and reliable test (MacCann & Roberts, 2008). Ability measures were new to the field of emotional intelligence assessment, offering stronger empirical results and perspectives from others about a person's emotional intelligence skills. In desperate means to provide structure and psychometric soundness to measures of emotional intelligence, researchers have categorized emotional intelligence into three streams (Walter, Cole, & Humphrey, 2011) or three categories of ability, trait, and mixed emotional intelligence (O'Connor et al., 2019). Ability emotional intelligence requires that participants solve emotion-related problems that have answers that are deemed to be correct or incorrect (e.g., *what emotion might someone feel prior to a job interview? A. sadness b. excitement c. nervousness d. all of the above*), Trait emotional intelligence utilizes self-report items to measure overall emotional intelligence and its subdimensions measuring typical behavior rather than maximal performance to provide a good prediction of actual behaviors in a range of situations (O'Connor et al., 2019, pg. 3). O'Connor et al., 2019 states that "individuals high in various measures of trait emotional intelligence have been found to have high levels of self-efficacy regarding emotion related behaviors and tend to be competent at managing and regulating emotions in themselves and others (pg. 3)". "Mixed emotional intelligence" refers to questionnaires with a combination of competencies, traits, and social skills that may overlap with

other personality measures that can therefore be used to develop and enhance their maximum success (Goleman, 1995; O'Connor et al., 2019).

Walter, Cole, and Humphrey proposed to businesses how emotional intelligence assessment can expand the possibilities of leadership with a systematic review of the three streams of emotional intelligence research. Walter, Cole, and Humphrey's (2011) categorization of emotional intelligence research measurement approaches are (see, e.g., Table 1, pg. 46):

“Stream 1: Ability-based emotional intelligence tests that capture individuals' performance in solving emotional problems such as the MSCEIT (Mayer et al., 2004) or the Diagnostic Analysis of Nonverbal Accuracy (DANVA) (Nowicki & Duke, 2001; as cited in Walter et al., 2011, pg. 46).

Stream 2: Self-assessments or other reports of emotional abilities and emotionally intelligent behavior such as the Wong-Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS) (Wong & Law, 2002; as cited in Walter et al., 2011) or the Workgroup Emotional Intelligence Profile (WEIP) (Jordan et al., 2002; as cited in Walter et al., 2011, pg. 46).

Stream 3: Self assessments or other reports of emotional intelligence-related dispositions, competencies, behaviors, and perceptions (I.e., trait-emotional intelligence) such as the EQ-I (Bar-On, 2000; as cited in Walter et al., 2011) or the ECI (Wolff, 2005; as cited in Walter et al., 2011, pg. 46)”.

Issues with Emotional Intelligence

While there have been many profound findings with these measures, many researchers argue they may overlap with other personality and intelligence measures. Many researchers explain that many challenges emerge when developing emotional intelligence measures with quality psychometric properties. For example, constructing emotion-focused questions with

objective scoring criteria, discrimination between typical and maximal performance, classifying emotional intelligence measures, and requiring expert judgment to define correct answers (O'Connor et al., 2019). Daniel Goleman published the first books on EQ and created the market for it in businesses, despite his critiqued weak scientific methodology- Goleman's model is vulnerable to bias, due to "cherry-picking" existing research from various fields such as business and education. (Ackley, 2016, pg. 273). Most measures of emotional intelligence use self-report method where the participant is reporting their own behavior, which may be error-ridden with social desirability bias and faking.

This phenomenon is not the only issue when it comes to emotional intelligence measures. Lopes (2016) highlights the gap between research and practice of emotional intelligence, stating that addressing this gap requires a broader view of emotional intelligence, "encompassing individual, group, and organizational levels of analysis as well as abilities, personality, and motivational factors (pg.319)." Even though a vast amount of research exists on emotional intelligence, Lopes (2016) suggests there is still room for future research to accurately conceptualize and measure emotional intelligence within the workplace context- Their analysis suggests there are five investigative requirements research must meet:

"First, examining how emotional intelligence interacts with other individual differences and contextual factors (including group and organizational) to predict workplace outcomes. Second, mapping the strategies and skills underlying emotion regulation at the intraindividual, interpersonal, group, and organizational levels of analysis. Third, researchers should be investigating regulation of attention- depending on their state of emotional activation, cognitive load, and salient goals, people may fail to attend to important emotional information- even if they were fully capable of doing this under normal circumstances. Fourth, the impact and causal

effects of differential emotional skills training approaches should be investigated through experimental studies to improve emotional intelligence training programs. Finally, fifth- cultural differences in emotional intelligence deserve further attention to detail as our workforce grows more diverse and inclusive (pg. 318)”.

Another issue is that our emotional intelligence skills are highly dependent on the surrounding people and circumstances, and our unmanaged stress consumes the mental resources needed to use proper emotional intelligence abilities (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009). We have seen this in instances of population EQ rates dropping during the 2008 Recession and the COVID-19 pandemic (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009; Persich et al., 2021; Liu-Lastres et al., 2022; Robertson et al., 2023). Kannaiah & Shanthi (2015), state that “Emotional Intelligence calls for recognizing and understanding of the issues in the organizations on the basis of the results organization can choose a strategy and actions to improve the performance of their employees (pg.147-148).” Meaning, our leaders should have the highest emotional intelligence so society under them can learn and utilize the skills to reduce stress. People expect their leaders to set an eminent example in how they make decisions, connect with others, and improve, but studies on “half a million senior executives show that CEOs, on average, have the lowest EQ scores in the workplace (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009, pg. 244)”.

Modern Use of EQ Assessments

Despite its criticisms, emotional intelligence remains highly relevant in the practical and scholarly world of organizational development. In Lopes (2016) review of emotional intelligence literature, it was found that Stream 2 and Stream 3 of emotional intelligence research have “yielded stronger relationships with job performance, transformational leadership, and subjective well-being (pg. 318).” Other researchers suggest that “emotional intelligence has potential to

help scholars better understand leadership emergence, specific leadership behaviors, and leadership effectiveness (Walter et al., 2011, pg. 55).” Specifically, emotional intelligence has surged in the workplace sector. Miao et al., (2016) presents the first meta-analytic review of the relationship between employee emotional intelligence and employee job satisfaction and found “a positive and significant relationship between all three types of emotional intelligence and job satisfaction (pg.28)”.

Today, according to Stein & Deonarine (2015) there are three main methods of measuring emotional intelligence: through self-reports, 360-degree assessments, and performance or ability measures (pg. 387-388). Reviews of emotional intelligence literature identified that most measures have four facets- “(1) perceiving emotions in oneself and others, (2) regulating emotions in oneself, (3) regulating emotions in others, and (4) strategically utilizing emotions (O’Connor et al., 2019, pg.3)”. The foundational hypotheses and research concepts described within the history of emotional intelligence prove its readiness and worthiness for modern contextualization. Alongside this, fMRI and EEG technological advances have shed light on the cortical and subcortical structure of the brain being linked to a network where emotion drives how we think, feel, and act (Stein & Deonarine, 2015, pg. 395). The tools and evidence before us allow humankind to expand their emotional knowledge and rake in its benefits. Most importantly, a meta-analysis conducted by Miao et al., 2016 found that state affect and job performance mediate the relationship between job satisfaction and emotional intelligence, showing that employees reach goals in their organization by using emotional intelligence (pg.30)”. This is just one of several studies that proves our use of emotional intelligence in our careers can help us. Despite the capitalistic governance that has pushed us to oppress and label emotions negatively, we need them to survive. In fact, Persich et al., (2021) provided support for

the effectiveness and external validity of a web-based emotional intelligence training and positive mental health outcomes despite the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Emotional Intelligence is simply a necessity to a person's well-being. It builds healthy thought and coping processes which improves our relationships, routine, and performance in the challenging system of life and work. There have been several measures and assessments attempting to measure this abstract piece of our humanity, and countless reasonings as to how it forms and presents itself. An interesting commonality among all of this recent research and application is that emotional intelligence is especially useful and present in occupational settings where emotional labor is high, like customer-facing jobs such as the food service / restaurant industry, retail, or other hospitality fields (Ackley, 2016; O'Connor et al., 2019; Miao et al., 2016; Stein & Deonarine, 2014). Following the recent developments post-pandemic on emotional intelligence training, it is important for researchers to investigate which sectors of the industry the training is most effective and what positive outcomes present for employees.

Literature Review

Food Service / Restaurant Industry: Overview

The restaurant and food service industry is a unique field that was heavily impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic (see, e.g., Liu-Lastres et al., 2022; Popa et al., 2023) and historically reports high instances of unfair labor, wages, discrimination, incivility and harassment, substance abuse, eating disorders, and much more (see, e.g., Baker & Kim, 2020; Bonn et al., 2016; Cho et al., 2016; Lynn et al., 2011; Robertson et al., 2023; Zhu et al., 2022). "The hospitality industry relies on a pipeline of talent with industry-specific education, competencies, and skills that are transferable across organizations in the industry, thereby requiring talent to remain within the industry, according to King et al., (2021) (as cited by Popa et al., 2023, pg. 120)." Interestingly,

this has intrigued researchers addressing marketing and management strategies, homing in on the focal customer's experience- the costs associated with customer failures and how to prevent them (Tax et al., 2006; as cited in Robertson et al., 2023). Foundational research for the food service industry has operationalized all relevant constructs and measures from the customer perspective. For example, as cited by Kim et al., (2019) in the year 1983 Hochschild defined emotional labor: "a company's requirement that employees exhibit some obligatory emotion(s) towards their patrons (pg. 146)" by using emotion regulation strategies to comply with an organization's expectation of emotional display. However, service employees who are commonly referred to and regarded as *emotional labor* frequently experience negative and rude customers because they must comply with emotion expression regulations established by service-oriented organizations even in unpleasant situations (Grandey et al., 2007., as cited by Cho et al., 2016, pg. 2889).

Customers in service settings evaluate all the various elements during the service experience and as a whole, states Baker (2019), thus resulting in "service quality" possessing intangible and tangible components with high variability for employees and service delivery. Consequently, this industry is left evaluating performance that is difficult to indicate as positive or negative, describe, observe, or measure. Especially due to the fact that communication between customers and employees is both verbal and non-verbal, often with expression of attitudes through facial expressions, body language, and tone of voice- which the employee adjusts constantly (depending on the customer) according to Baker (2019). Service oriented businesses train employees that the "customer is always right" and academic research has only focused on how to increase customer satisfaction in the context that these customers "behave rationally" (Han et al., 2017, pg.97). According to a study which investigated the antecedents and consequences of emotional labor in the restaurant industry, employees are evaluated on

service performance skill and competence subjectively by the public and average customer- and directly refers to the “degree of satisfaction felt by consumers when services are provided (Kim et al., 2019, pg. 153)”. On top of this, service employees are often pushed beyond their job role, providing PCSP (proactive customer service performance) or SUP (service under pressure).

Proactive Customer Service performance is a typical extra-role behavior that is discretionary and long-term going beyond basic requirements, improving the service processes, and solving potential problems in advance in the service encounters (Cheng et al., 2020). Service under pressure is when services are provided under strong pressure in terms of time constraints- high job demand during peak meal periods deplete employees emotional and psychological resources, resulting in mental and bodily fatigue, and psychological stress (Kim et al., 2019, pg. 152-153). Yet, little empirical work has been done to investigate the effects of food service customer interactions on the overall employee wellbeing of this industry.

Due to underrepresentation of this large body of workers in research, the negative effects of front-line service employment in this industry have been swept under the rug. Lynn et al., (2011) calls for action to organizational behavior and HR literature that has largely left this component of certain workplaces out of research, despite annual tips in the USA and Canada at over \$40 billion, and tips often exceeding 40% of employees total compensation (pg. 1887). Recently amongst research literature regarding the food service and hospitality industry, this call for action is voiced by many researchers. Han et al., (2016) reports that restaurant employees relate their high levels of stress to customers exhibiting rude or unpleasant behavior, often about situations in which the restaurant service provider has no control, resulting in high levels of employee distress, psychological and job-specific strain, emotional exhaustion, and high turnover rates. A shift from customer to employee focused research is crucial for this industry to

stay competitive and retain employees. Robertson et al., (2023) expanded on earlier attempts to describe the different customer misbehaviors which assumed that dealing with these customers is simply part of the service employee's role. These researchers defined the term *customer failure* as “any unintentional action by the customer that has a negative impact on that customer's experience, the experience of other customers, *service employees*, and/or the company's productivity (pg.2)”. Similarly, Baker & Kim (2020) define customer incivility referring to “rude, condescending, and ostracizing acts that violate the workplace norms of respect and found that the mindset of “just deal with it” and “this is expected in the service industry” do not mitigate the negative effects of employees' experience with customer incivility (pg.9). Cheng et al., (2020) describes customer incivility consisting of three principal features: (1) it is subtle and less intense than workplace aggression or undermining; it is impoliteness. (2) it is usually unintentional and not abuse- it is disrespectfulness, inattention, or insensitivity, and (3) it is a spiraling effect that cannot be neglected; accumulation makes it more intensive (pg. 2). Researchers in the hospitality industry began investigating customer incivility because it is very common and causes devastating outcomes in employees, customers, and businesses (Kim & Qu, 2019). Cho et al., (2016) investigated all dimensions of incivility (customer, supervisor, and coworker) and found that customer incivility has the “strongest power to increase employee's emotional exhaustion (pg.2902-2903)”. Unfortunately, at this time the COVID-19 pandemic began to produce mass shutdowns in organizations all over the world, and the effects of this were severe in the restaurant and food service industry.

COVID-19 INDUSTRY IMPACT

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic had a detrimental effect on employees and the industry itself, climaxing many of the longstanding issues in the restaurant and food service

industry. For example, a study investigating the role of anger and fear on industry turnover intention found being made unemployed (during COVID-19) resulted in more anger and fear than being unemployed, and industry turnover intentions was mediated by anger but not fear (Popa et al., 2023). Turnover rates for the restaurant and food service industry historically remain higher than the majority of other types of organizations- “In 2014, the annual turnover rate for US restaurants was 62.6% (Han et al., 2016, pg. 97)”. Following the pandemic, rates have only dropped further, creating a labor shortage as more and more employees leave the industry. “The Great Resignation, also known as the Big Quit or the Great Attrition, captures the higher-than-normal quit rate among workers since 2021” (Cook, 2021; as cited in Liu-Lastres et al., 2022), however this can push the hospitality industry to resolve the longstanding labor issues with implementation of innovative measures, reframing organizational career development, and reformation of the gig-economy and small local entrepreneurs (pg.245). After COVID-19, employers are struggling to attract talent back into the industry (after being laid off) despite offering bonuses and benefits. According to Popa et al., (2023), In 2020 the food and beverage sector had a detrimental loss of employees, with “two-thirds of employees losing their jobs during the first two months of the pandemic, amounting to over eight million jobs lost (pg. 119).” Even worse, “market reports have shown that between roughly 25% and 33% of former employees do not wish to re-enter the industry (Liu-Lastres et al., 2023, pg. 238)”.

The pandemic has intensified existing issues in the hospitality industry including “over-reliance on temporary, part time workers, limited workforce resources and support, poor working conditions, toxic workplace culture and increasing career mobility (Liu-Lastres et al., 2023, pg.238)”. This may be due to Event-system theory by Morgeson et al., (2015) (as cited in Popa et al., 2023), which states that mega-events are unexpected, external disasters requiring

organizational actions; These events can have a negative impact on employee's emotions, attitudes, and behaviors via the organizational actions such as layoffs. Those working in the industry today are a part of two groups- survivors whose job was not affected by the pandemic, and those who have since returned to work, whom both are covering shifts and responsibilities beyond their job description before COVID-19 (Liu-Lastres et al., 2023). The pandemic has brought renewed focus to industry changes such as "flexible work arrangements; growing awareness of mental health and wellness, and better approaches to DEI (Liu-Lastres, et al., 2023, pg. 240)", suggesting changes made at the micro, meso, and macro level to develop an economically and socially viable path to build and maintain a resilient workforce:

“Micro: employee-oriented approach- mobility, vulnerability & mental health, work-life balance & work-family balance, DEI, gender equality and generational differences

Meso: employee-centered organizational culture- workplace experience management, creation of “careers” not “jobs”, employee well-being programs, commitment to employee growth, and mentoring programs

Macro: operational model- hybrid or remote options, workplace flexibility, service intelligence, gig economy, small entrepreneurs, and government policies / legislation / regulatory efforts (pg.241-246)”.

As we move forward with research and development of measures for employees of the restaurant and food service industry, it is important to remember that COVID-19 amplified long-term issues of focusing on the customer and not the employee. For example, Robertson et al., (2023) found that even something as simple as a customer apology can make a difference- “Service employees experience considerably more damage to their well-being in the absence of a customer apology

(pg. 11)”. Reviewing the theoretical concepts related to existing research on the service industry allows us to reframe how the industry treats employees.

Theoretical Overview

Among these negative effects for employees of this industry, there can be negative effects for the business owners as well. The food service industry illustrates that tipping represents unnecessary business practice, because businesses could compensate employees in ways that do not include voluntary tipping- and is fraught with risks stated by Lynn et al., (2011): The practice of customers directly compensating employees removes the factor of helping attract, motivate, and control employees, leads to collusion between customers and employees against the interest of the firm, motivates employees to discriminate against perceived to be poor tipppers or be discriminated by customers, with variable and uncertain incomes carrying increased risks of noncompliance with employment tax obligations (pg. 1887-1888). There are several theories behind why this industry has thrived despite its risks, structure, and lack of change even with a pandemic. “Talent in the industry is ingrained in the industry, necessitating that the industry needs to retain talent that with the relevant skills and experiences to maintain a pipeline for management positions (Popa et al., 2023, pg. 120)”. Previous research discovered that control variables including types of restaurants, location, and types of cuisines were not significant on job satisfaction except for restaurant size (measured by number of seats)- The smaller the restaurant size, the higher the employee satisfaction because of the working relationships built within (Han et al., 2017). Meaning there is an underlying force that attracts, retains, and turns over the employees in the restaurant and food service industry.

Conservation of Resource (COR) Theory dominates the literature surrounding customer interactions and the restaurant industry. The conservation of resources theory originally by Sliter

et al., (2011) as cited in Kim et al., (2019) defines employees emotional intelligence and psychological contract as resources one endeavors to keep and manage themselves, and depending on one's availability of resources may adopt different emotional approaches to conserve their personal resources (such as DA or SA- Deep acting (DA) modifies behaviors through an internal change surfacing a genuine emotional display, surface acting (SA) involves faking behavior of expression or display of emotions one does not really feel (pg. 146)). Cheng et al., (2020) states when restaurant employees encounter customer incivility it triggers perceived loss of emotional resources and change of affective state, activating their psychological defense systems which in turn effects their service performance (pg.2). These differing emotional resources allow employees to handle incivility without damage to their well-being. Cho et al., (2016), states that employees defense mechanisms must become enacted to guard and protect their personal resources from customer incivility, which leaves them emotionally strained, resulting in burnout and leaving the job. Additionally, Kim & Qu (2018) found that experiences of customer incivility at the service encounter triggers burnout, and based on COR theory once they feel burnout, they will maintain their remaining resources by not exhibiting civil manners towards people- coworkers, customers, even supervisors and friends / family (pg.1425).

According to Baker (2019), The *SERVQUAL model* is one of the most frequently used in both theory and practice, all elements of the *SERVQUAL* model can be affected by an employee's level of emotional intelligence and emotional labor. According to this model, the five dimensions (listed below) make up the perceived service and expected service of the customer, resulting in their perceived service quality: (1) Tangibles refer to the appearance of all elements in the service-scape including the facility, decorations, lights, colors and employee appearance, (2) Reliability refers to the ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately,

(3) Responsiveness is employee's willingness to provide prompt and appropriately timed services and willingness to be responsive in helping customers, (4) Assurance refers to both the knowledge and courtesy of employees, ability to provide confidence and trust in the service, and (5) Empathy refers to the caring, individualized attention that the firm provides to its customers (pg.110-111). The resulting service quality, although difficult to achieve and standardize, is vital to the success of service firms and is a significant antecedent to customer satisfaction and customer loyalty (Baker, 2019).

Affective Event Theory (AET) by Weiss & Cropanzano (1996); as cited in Kim & Qu, (2018) explains that "an individual's experiences of impoliteness and disrespect from others could evoke negative emotions in the individual, consequently making the individual exhibit deviant behaviors at work (pg.1417)". Zhu et al., (2022) states that according to this theory, people have an average affective mood level; some are on the positive half (state positive affect), and others are on the negative half (state negative affect), leading to different attitudinal outcomes (pg. 330). Han et al., (2017) study adopts AET which states that affective experiences in the work environment shape workers job related attitudes- In their research model, the leader's emotional intelligence and support in broad perspective are a part of work events, which in turn influence affective states (I.e., job satisfaction) and the behavioral reactions of service employees (service performance). The *theory of work-related stress* introduced by Spector (1998) (as cited in Cho et al., 2016), proposes that individuals frequently facing job stressors feel more negative emotions (anger, anxiety, or exhaustion), which may lead to negative work behaviors such as avoidance, decreased work quality, and job resignation. This theory has been used for the basis of multiple workplace incivility outcome studies which have found employees are more likely to suffer from similar stress symptoms including decreased mental health, depression and anxiety,

emotional exhaustion, reduced organizational commitment, and increased turnover intention (Cortina et al., 2001; Grandey et al., 2007; Leiter et al., 2011; as cited in Cho et al., 2016).

Attribution Theory, specifically *Attribution of Blame Theory*, refers to the assignment of causality/causal locus for customer failure to employees themselves, meaning they feel they may be implicated and need to take responsibility for a failure that is not their fault (Robertson et al., 2023, pg. 4). This theory may also explain the moderating role of hostile attribution bias on front line service employees who are more likely to interpret customers' behaviors in a hostile way and blame them- "Employees with strong hostile attribution bias may magnify the negative impact of customer incivility and accelerate the consumption of resources, thus causing more negative affectivities (Cheng et al., 2020, pg. 4)".

Substantial research has shown that perceived organizational support (POS) or managerial / supervisor support is helpful in reducing negative effects caused by customers and give employees higher quantity and quality resources to use in their service performance. This could be because frontline restaurant service employers may identify supervisors as being their perceived organizational support since independent restaurants may not have typical corporate organizational structure (Cho et al., 2016). Han et al., (2016), found that organizational support and supervisory support provided to employees significantly weakens the relationship between customer incivility and burnout. (pg.102). Similarly, Baker & Kim (2020) found that procedural and emotional support is key to eliminating the negative effects to psychological well-being and work-quality of life. On top of this, Restaurant frontline service employees exhibiting low levels of POS feel more exhausted by incidents of incivility caused by supervisors (Cho et al., 2016, pg.2904).

Zhu et al., (2022) cites a new model of emotional intelligence by Cichy et al., (2007) of IN (the ability to perceive and control one's own feelings), OUT (the ability to understand other feelings) and relationships (the ability to apply one's emotions to guide thinking and acting while interacting with others). According to a pilot study by Cichy et al., (2007) evaluating this model in volunteer work contexts, there are group differences between high and low emotional intelligence levels and organizational commitment dimensions; specifically affective commitment and normative commitment (pg.45-46). Their model shows evidence of convergent and discriminate validity and holds the view that "emotional intelligence can be a contributing factor to influencing positive attitudes, behaviors and outcomes in workplace settings (Cichy et al., 2007, pg.40)."

Overall, research within the realm of the food service industry indicates that employees deserve more attention and care. Despite the impacts of COVID-19 causing a labor shortage, there are employees who have returned to the industry demanding improved working conditions. Due to the nature of this industry, emotional intelligence is the best key indicator of employees who perform well in all roles, commit to the organization, and provide the best quality service without damaging their well-being. Emotional intelligence is beyond the types of acting strategies of surface acting, deep acting, and genuine acting that employees engage in to display the proper facial expressions, body language and languages spoken in the customer interaction (Baker, 2019, pg.113). However, these obligatory emotion regulation strategies are much more complex and impactful in this industry. Characterized by "service with a smile", hospitality workers "must be aware of their own emotions, perceive customers emotions (e.g., better read customers facial expressions and body language), be empathic to customers feelings, and regulate their own emotions to effectively manage and facilitate their interactions with their

customers (Lee and Ok, 2012; as cited in Miao et al., 2021, pg.2)”. Similarly, Baker & Kim (2023), state that service employees combat the highest amounts of incivility in the workplace on a regular basis, yet there is minimal research beyond the consequences of emotional labor. These emotional regulations are stricter for employees in the service fields because restaurants gain a competitive edge primarily by establishing emotional connections with guests, and emotions of employees contribute to restaurants ability to function successfully due to un-separation of production and consumption (Kim et al., 2019). As discussed within this extensive literature review, restaurant and food service industry employees exhibit some of the highest levels of emotional intelligence while experiencing unrelentless resource depletion from interactions with their customers. In this study, we aim to investigate the effectiveness emotional intelligence training on service industry employees who were laid off and returned to the field post-covid 19 and their resulting attitudes, performance, stress, and well-being. The impact of emotional intelligence and hospitality industry employee work outcomes reports several emotional intelligent attitudinal (such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, well-being, work stress, burnout, etc.) and behavioral outcomes such as job performance, organizational citizenship behavior, transformational leadership, service recovery, and more (Zhu et al., 2022, pg. 337).

Preview of Study Proposal

Miao et al., (2021) “encourages future research to examine whether emotional intelligence focused education or training programs may increase hospitality workers to use their emotional intelligence to improve their job performance”, noting that the beneficial effects of emotional intelligence on job performance are considerably stronger in the hospitality industry than other fields (pg. 22). In the current study, we aim to investigate the effects of emotional

intelligence training on restaurant and food service employee's well-being and performance. Specifically, we wish to investigate whether these effects are stronger for employees who are "survivors" of the industry compared to those who were laid off and willingly returned to the industry following the COVID-19 Pandemic. According to Popa et al., (2023) the food and beverage sector had a detrimental loss of employees, with "two-thirds of employees losing their jobs during the first two months of the pandemic, amounting to over eight million jobs lost (pg. 119). Due to the increased prevalence of negative emotions such as fear and anger when being laid off from the restaurant industry due to COVID-19 regulations and shutdowns (Liu-Lastres et al., 2022), the researchers believe emotional intelligence training and education can restore employee intentions of great performance and well-being and provide new recruitment, retention, and promotion strategies to the field. Additionally, employees will feel renewed and satisfied in their role when learning and taking advantage of their emotional intelligence abilities to enhance their service skills and relationships with customers, coworkers, managers, family, and friends. We also wish to investigate the strengthening role of supervisor and organizational support as one variable, as that typically reflects the supervisor / subordinate structure of the restaurant and food service industry, on the relationship between EQ levels and service performance and well-being. Indicative of previous research, leaders who have high emotional intelligence and support level will understand employees' emotions and help them overcome related job stress and enhances their employees task satisfaction which increases their service performance and well-being (Han et al., 2017, pg.4).

Hypotheses

Restaurant employees who undergo emotional intelligence training after returning to the industry following COVID-19 layoffs will report higher levels of performance and well-being

compared to restaurant employees who did not get laid off. Subsequently, employees who undergo virtual emotional intelligence training will report higher levels of emotional intelligence following the intervention, regardless of COVID-19 employment status. We also hypothesize that the relationship between emotional intelligence and service performance and well-being will be moderated by perceived organizational support. Additionally, we hypothesize that there will be a positive relationship between leader emotional intelligence levels and employee service performance and well-being.

Hypothesis 1: There will be a statistically significant difference between emotional intelligence levels, employee wellbeing, and service performance for those who undergo emotional intelligence training compared to those who did not undergo emotional intelligence training.

Hypothesis 1a: The difference between emotional intelligence levels, employee well-being, and service performance will be strengthened (moderated) by perceived organizational support (POS) for those who undergo emotional intelligence training compared to those who did not undergo emotional intelligence training.

Methods

Participants

Researchers will collect data from servers and managers in the restaurant and food service industry in multiple cities in Southeastern Pennsylvania working in full-service restaurants. The sample frame will consist of all food service businesses within a 50-mile radius of the study, including corporate, locally owned, franchises, fast food, and private clubs in which there is a frontline customer facing employee listed in the Pennsylvania Restaurant & Lodging Association directory. The researchers will utilize a multistage sampling approach for this study,

through a purposive quota sampling approach 100 restaurants will be selected from a directory maintained by the Pennsylvania Restaurant & Lodging Association. Specifically, we wish to recruit supervisors or owners and their subordinates through respondent driven sampling. The accessible population consists of all the restaurants listed in the directory; however, the researchers wish to represent the theoretical population of restaurant and food service employees of all levels.

Full-service restaurant managers will agree to participate in this research project by sending surveys to their wait staff or administering them virtually during a paid work break. A total of eleven mail surveys will be sent to each manager to administer to ten employees and one to complete themselves. A total of 1100 responses will be possible (100 managers, 1000 employees), suggesting a response rate of about ##% (#####/1100). Within the delivered materials, the cover letter page will explain that answers will be kept anonymous, participation is voluntary and may end at any time, and the data collection will take place over a three-week period, with two waves of measurement occurring at Week 1 pre-intervention (EQ training) and Week 3 post-intervention.

Materials

Demographic Questionnaire

Demographic information will be collected by the researcher's development of a measure gathering general operations of the sample restaurants such as location, restaurant type, ownership type, total number of employees and managers, total numbers of seats, and average customer rate (if applicable). This measure will also contain items related to respondent demographics such as gender, level of education, age, years employed at the current restaurant,

total years of experience in the food service industry, and whether they were laid off or remained employed during COVID-19. Please refer to the Appendix to see all survey items.

Emotional Intelligence

To measure employee and managerial emotional intelligence, the researchers will use Wong and Law (2002) scale of emotional intelligence which contains four elements: self-emotion appraisal (SEA), others' emotion appraisal (OEA), use of emotion (UOE), and regulation of emotion (ROE). The measure consists of 16 items using a five-point Likert type scale from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree) that can be used for self or other's ratings. An example of the item format is, "I am sensitive to the feelings and emotions of others." Reliability estimates (coefficient alphas) for the four dimensions are .92, .91, .84, and .93, and shows evidence of factor structure, internal consistency, convergent, discriminant, and incremental validity. The researchers will also measure emotional intelligence using Zhu et al., 2022, citing the measure of emotional intelligence by Cichy et al., (2007) of IN OUT and RELATIONSHIPS which was validated using hospitality samples predicting contextual performance. "The initial emotional intelligence scale consisted of 37 items in total: IN (20 items), OUT (9 items) and relationships (8 items); measured via a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (very seldom or not true of me) to 5 (very often or true of me) with higher scores reflecting higher levels of emotional intelligence (Cichy et al., 2007, pg. 43-44)." However, in this research study, we will be using the top 3 rated items for each category of this model by volunteer leaders to capture the fact that service employees may volunteer their emotional intelligence abilities to improve their service quality and tips (Cichy et al., 2007; Baker, 2019). For a full list of the emotional intelligence scale items, please refer to Appendix B.

Service Performance & Employee Well-being

For a full description of the measure items used for service performance and employee well-being please refer to Appendix C. This study will measure service performance as a dependent variable, based on the measure of Kim et al., (2019) and Cheng et al., (2020) asks participants to rate themselves on dimensions of their service performance, perceived service performance, and PCSP. An example of the item states, "I am always available when my customers need service." This study will measure the PCSP of employees using Rank et al., 2007; as cited by Cheng et al., (2020) scale of proactive customer performance, reflecting enhanced levels of service performance that may not be captured wholly with the service performance measures. The three scales of service performance are measured using a seven-point Likert type scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 7 (all customer interactions). Employee well-being will be measured using the combined scales of Baker & Kim, (2020) psychological well-being and work-quality of life, with reliability estimates of .92 and .93, respectively. Employee well-being will also be measured by Bartels et al., 2019; as cited by Robertson et al., (2023) scales of inter and intrapersonal well-being consisting of six items using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), both with reliability estimates of 0.91.

Perceived Organizational Support

Perceived organizational support, the moderating variable, will be measured using Baker & Kim (2020) scale of procedural support and emotional support from the manager, and Eisenberger's (1997) POS scale cited by Kim et al., (2019). Baker & Kim (2020) had reliability estimates (coefficient alphas) of .80 for procedural support, and .94 for emotional support, appropriate for practice. The scales for perceived organizational support were measured on a

scale ranging from 1(never) to 5(always). For more details on the scales used for perceived organizational report, please refer to Appendix D.

Design

In the current study, we will aim to investigate the effectiveness of emotional intelligence training on service industry employees who were laid off and returned to the field post COVID-19 and their resulting emotional intelligence levels, performance, and well-being. In regard to our study design, it is a repeated measures design using two or fewer waves of measurement with a pre-test and post-test. Our independent variable is emotional intelligence training which is operationalized as the scores received on the emotional intelligence facet measures of the survey at Time 1 and Time 2 measured ordinally. The dependent variables of this study are service performance and well-being measured ordinally operationalized as higher scores meaning better service and improved well-being. Using Campbell and Stanley's (1966) (as cited in Burkholder et al., 2020) ideas of a shared language, Appendix D is based on their work and characterizes our design (pg. 56). Finally, this experiment is ordinal because our team defined our variables using self-reports on predefined scales (Burkholder et al., 2020, pg. 53).

Procedure

Prior to receiving consent and sending the survey measures to the participants, the researchers will program the survey into a virtual administration platform, such as Qualtrics. This will allow the researchers to easily code and export the raw data for analyses in SPSS. Within the consent forms and physical copies of the survey, a link will be provided to the survey platform for participants to complete the assessment. Participants are provided one laptop per restaurant for each participant to complete the assessments and emotional intelligence training via a unique anonymous code and link. The manager will complete a different version of the

survey from the employees, consisting of the restaurant level variables, demographics, and emotional intelligence scales. The employees will complete a survey containing demographics, emotional intelligence scales, perceived service performance, service performance, PCSP scale, well-being, and POS measures with procedural and emotional support from the manager measures. The Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS) developed by Wong & Law, (2002), shows that the level of emotional intelligence of supervisors has a significant effect on the job satisfaction of their subordinates and a significant effect on their extra-role behaviors (pg. 268). Upon all of the data being entered into the survey platform, the researchers will export the raw data to SPSS to clean, code, and analyze the data. The surveys will be distributed at two different time periods in the experiment. At time 1, the measurements are collected as a baseline indicator (week 1), and time 2 measurement implementation (week 3) is one week following the intervention of EQ training (week 2). The emotional intelligence training will be a replication of Persich et al., (2021) web based emotional intelligence training that lowered depression, suicidal ideation, and anxiety following the COVID-19 pandemic (pg. 1021). In order to track participants, progress, and restaurant affiliation each supervisor and reporting subordinate will use a unique 3-digit code to complete the assessment at time 1 and time 2 and complete the web-based emotional intelligence training on the researcher provided laptop. Following the 3-week experimental study completion and data analysis has commenced, participants will be debriefed twice. The first debriefing will be one week directly after the post-test measurements have been implemented. The researchers will gather participants opinions of the study, any obstacles they faced, their perceptions of the study results, and what they learned that will be most useful in their career right now. The participants will be given direct access to the web based emotional intelligence training for future use and to provide other emotional intelligence

education and resources. The second debriefing will occur after the data analysis has been completed and interpreted. Participants will learn of their results and what they mean, be given the true purpose and results of the study and evaluated for any risks or future concerns as a result of participating in the study.

Establishing Reliability and Validity

To determine the reliability and validity of these measures, a pilot study will be conducted to allow researchers to investigate internal reliability, face validity, convergent and discriminant validity, and inter-rater reliability. To help assess face validity and inter-rater reliability, a group of four co-owners of the restaurant used in the pilot study will be considered subject matter experts (SME's) due to their longtime experience within all roles of the restaurant and owners of this pilot study restaurant for 7 years. To assist replication opportunities with this study, a pilot study was conducted to determine the reliability and validity of the study measures. A small local business owned restaurant where a member of the research team works part time volunteered to use their staff as a part of the pilot study. In the pilot study, first the staff will be measured on their baseline levels of emotional intelligence (scores on the Wong & Law, 2002 scale of emotional labor, ROE, UOE, OEA, SEA and Cichy et al., (2007) emotional intelligence scale of in, out, and relationships), well-being (scores on Baker & Kim, 2019 psychological well-being scale and Bartels 2019 inter and intra personal well-being), and service performance (scores on Kim et al., 2019 scale of service performance and perceived service performance, Rank et al., scale of PCSP). One week following the baseline measure, the researchers will implement the emotional intelligence training. A week after receiving the emotional intelligence training, the staff will be measured again using the same measures as above.

Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha will be calculated to determine internal consistency reliability to establish how closely related all of the questions on the measures are (Burkholder et al., 2020). Researchers should expect to find a high range alpha level of .80 and above, although an alpha level of .65 and above is considered acceptable (pg. 64). For the purpose of evaluating validity of emotional intelligence measures, MacCann & Roberts (2008) suggest the following criteria. They state there are four logical relationships that demonstrate evidence for validity of an emotional intelligence measure- "emotional intelligence tests should relate positively to intelligence tests, emotional intelligence tests should relate more strongly to other emotional intelligence tests than to other tests of other intelligence, emotional intelligence tests should relate to variables or outcomes reasonably indicative of facility with emotions (e.g., coping with stress and lack of emotion-related disorders), and lastly, emotional intelligence test scores should correlate with personality only in the range that other tests of intelligence tend to (I.e., at .30 or less)(pg.541)".

Convergent validity will be proven by how closely the measures relate to other tests that measure the same or similar concept; service performance will be compared to customer service, well-being will be compared to self-efficacy, and emotional intelligence will be compared to emotional labor. To prove discriminant validity, the measures will not be closely related to measures of unrelated constructs, such as IQ compared to EQ or well-being compared to positive affect. Once the measures will be proven as psychometrically sound, the research study will commence on the targeted sample and population.

Hypothesis 1 & 1a

The following research question of Hypothesis 1 predicts that food service employees will obtain higher levels of emotional intelligence, well-being and service performance following

emotional intelligence training compared to those who did not. In order to analyze this relationship between emotional intelligence training levels and employee well-being, a hierarchical linear regression will be conducted. A Pearson's correlation coefficient will be run to assess the relationship between emotional intelligence training and the respective variables. One thousand participants were recruited. Preliminary analyses will show the relationship to be linear with both variables normally distributed, as will be assessed by Shapiro-Wilk's test ($p > .05$), and there will be no outliers. There will be a statistically significant, moderate positive correlation between emotional intelligence training and service employee well-being, with emotional intelligence training explaining xx% of the variation in service employee well-being. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 will be supported. The research question of Hypothesis 1a predicts that the perceived organizational support will strengthen the relationship between emotional intelligence, well-being, and service performance for those who undergo emotional intelligence training compared to those who do not undergo emotional intelligence training. Meaning; if an employee obtains high levels of perceived organizational support, that will moderate (strengthen) the relationship between their emotional intelligence, well-being and service performance. To assess Hypothesis 1a a moderation analysis will be conducted. The results will indicate a significant interaction meaning the moderation of the analysis will be supported, therefore Hypothesis 1a will be supported.

Predicted Limitations and Future Considerations

As with any, there are limitations to this research study. Primarily, this study investigated emotional intelligence levels within food service employees using self-report measures. As previous research has concluded, self-report measures can present substantial error (Ackley, 2016; Bradberry & Greaves, 2009; O'Connor et al., 2019; Schutte et al., 1998; Stein &

Deonarine, 2014). However, in this study, participants are (a) one of the leading fields of employees with high baseline emotional intelligence levels, (b) undergo emotional intelligence training to engage their knowledge, awareness and utilization of emotional intelligence, and (c) have lesser desire to fake or bias their true responses because the researchers will foster a safe learning environment and offer the incentive of improving their skills to improve tip income from customers. The researchers believe that the participants will be honest and true in their answers because it will only benefit them and there are no risks of serious harm. Another limitation within this study is the lack of individual differences investigation such as gender or culture. Post Covid-19 pandemic attitudes towards the industry have changed for workers and customers of the food service industry, and it is important to examine new and previous interactions between the two. For example, during the pandemic there was a horrifying increase of anti-Asian discrimination and hate crimes, which may have deeply affected the Asian community that consists of a large portion of the restaurant and food service industry. This indicates another limitation within our sampling strategy, and future research should replicate this study with the Asian population. Additionally, it is important to investigate why people returned to the food service industry after the pandemic and others did not. There is a desperate need for universal regulations, support, and fair treatment of food service employees across the globe. Future research and policy should aim to develop guidelines for service industry employers and employees to implement in hopes to improve the working environment.

The researchers aim with this study will be to provide a replicable, generalizable, psychometrically sound study that provides food service employees with education about the industry required skills and abilities that lead to success. Managers and employees of restaurants can use these measures and training to promote the use of and conversations about emotional

intelligence to improve performance, well-being, retention, promotion, and much more. The benefits of emotional intelligence extend far beyond the workplace and research should use this study to identify other areas in restaurant employees' life that emotional intelligence can help them improve.

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Appendices**Appendix A- Restaurant Variables & Demographics**

1. Restaurant Location
 - a. What is the address of the restaurant you work in?
 - i. (open-ended)
2. Restaurant Type
 - a. Which type of restaurant do you believe your establishment represents?
 - i. Local Small Business Full Service
 - ii. Local Small Business Quick Service
 - iii. Corporate Restaurant Chain Full Service
 - iv. Corporate Restaurant Chain Quick Service (Fast Food / Drive-up)
 - v. Franchise Restaurant Chain Full Service
 - vi. Franchise Restaurant Chain Quick Service (Fast Food / Drive-up)
 - vii. Catering
 - viii. Other (please specify):
3. Ownership Type
 - a. What is the title of the owner or highest up in your establishment?
 - i. (open-ended)
4. Total number of employees
 - a. How many total employees do you have currently?
 - i. 0-10
 - ii. 11-20
 - iii. 21-30
 - iv. 31-40
 - v. 41-50
 - vi. 51-99
 - vii. 100-200
 - viii. 201-300
 - ix. 301 +
 - x. Other (please specify):
5. Total number of managerial staff
 - a. How many people consist of the managerial staff? This can include general managers, assistant managers, floor managers, shift leaders, corporate regional or district managers, etc.
 - i. 1
 - ii. 2
 - iii. 3
 - iv. 4
 - v. 5

- vi. 6
 - vii. 7
 - viii. 8
 - ix. 9
 - x. 10
 - xi. 11-20
 - xii. 21+
6. Total number of FLE's (front line employees)
- a. What is the total number of servers or front-line employees that interact with the majority of the customers experience?
 - i. 0-5
 - ii. 6-10
 - iii. 11-15
 - iv. 16-20
 - v. 21-30
 - vi. 31-40
 - vii. 41-50
 - viii. 51-100
 - ix. 101-200
 - x. 201 +
 - xi. Other (please specify):
7. Total # of Seats
- a. What is the maximum occupancy of your restaurant? (i.e., how many seats?)
 - i. 1-25
 - ii. 26-50
 - iii. 51-75
 - iv. 76-100
 - v. 101-150
 - vi. 151-200
 - vii. 201-250
 - viii. 251-300
 - ix. 301-400
 - x. 401-500
 - xi. 501 +
 - xii. Other (please specify):
8. Average Customer Rate per Week
- a. What is the average influx of customers your restaurant serves per week?
9. Gender
- a. Which gender do you identify with?

- i. Non-binary, genderfluid or genderqueer
- ii. Trans or Transgender
- iii. Female
- iv. Male
- v. Other (please specify)

10. Age

- a. What is your age range?
 - i. 16-18
 - ii. 19-20
 - iii. 21-25
 - iv. 26-30
 - v. 31-39
 - vi. 40-49
 - vii. 50-59
 - viii. 60+

11. Educational Level

- a. What is your highest educational degree attained?
 - i. High School Diploma / GED
 - ii. Associate degree
 - iii. Bachelor's Degree
 - iv. Master's Degree
 - v. Ph.D.

12. Working Experience in Restaurant Industry

- a. How long have you been working within the restaurant industry?
 - i. Under 1 year
 - ii. 1-2 years
 - iii. 2-3 years
 - iv. 4-5 years
 - v. 6-7 years
 - vi. 8-9 years
 - vii. 10-11 years
 - viii. 12-15 years
 - ix. 16-20 years
 - x. 21-25 years
 - xi. 25 years+ (please specify)

13. Working Experience in Current Restaurant

- a. How many years have you been working in this restaurant you are at currently?
 - i. Under 1 year
 - ii. 1-2 years

- iii. 2-3 years
- iv. 4-5 years
- v. 6-7 years
- vi. 8-9 years
- vii. 10-11 years
- viii. 12-15 years
- ix. 16-20 years
- x. 21-25 years
- xi. 25 years+ (please specify)

14. Laid off during the pandemic or remained employed

- a. During the COVID-19 pandemic shutdowns, were you an employee who:
 - i. Remained employed in my service industry job.
 - ii. Laid off from my service industry job.
 - iii. Other (please specify)

Appendix B – Emotional Intelligence Scales**Wong & Law, 2002****Self-emotion appraisal (SEA)**

1. I have a good sense of why I have certain feelings most of the time.
 1. Strongly Disagree
 2. Disagree
 3. Neither
 4. Agree
 5. Strongly Agree
2. I have a good understanding of my own emotions.
 - a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neither
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly Agree
3. I really understand what I feel.
 - a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neither
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly Agree
4. I always know whether or not I am happy.
 - a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neither
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly Agree

Others' emotion appraisal (OEA)

5. I always know my friends' emotions from their behavior.
 - a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neither
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly Agree
6. I am a good observer of others' emotions.
 - a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neither
 - d. Agree

- e. Strongly Agree
- 7. I am sensitive to the feelings and emotions of others.
 - a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neither
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly Agree
- 8. I have a good understanding of the emotions of people around me.
 - a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neither
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly Agree

Use of Emotion (UOE)

- 9. I always set goals for myself and then try my best to achieve them.
 - a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neither
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly Agree
- 10. I always tells myself I am a competent person.
 - a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neither
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly Agree
- 11. I am self-motivated person.
 - a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neither
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly Agree
- 12. I would always encourage myself to try my best.
 - a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neither
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly Agree

Regulation of Emotion (ROE)

13. I am able to control my temper and handle difficulties rationally.

- a. Strongly Disagree
- b. Disagree
- c. Neither
- d. Agree
- e. Strongly Agree

14. I am quite capable of controlling my own emotions.

- a. Strongly Disagree
- b. Disagree
- c. Neither
- d. Agree
- e. Strongly Agree

15. I can always calm down quickly when I am very angry.

- a. Strongly Disagree
- b. Disagree
- c. Neither
- d. Agree
- e. Strongly Agree

16. I have good control of my own emotions.

- a. Strongly Disagree
- b. Disagree
- c. Neither
- d. Agree
- e. Strongly Agree

Emotional Labor

To perform my job well, it is necessary for me to:

1. Spend most of my work time interacting with people (e.g., customers, colleagues, and other workers in this organization).

- a. Strongly Disagree
- b. Disagree
- c. Neither
- d. Agree
- e. Strongly Agree

2. Spend a lot of time with every person whom I work with.

- a. Strongly Disagree
- b. Disagree
- c. Neither
- d. Agree
- e. Strongly Agree

3. Hide my actual feelings when acting and speaking with people.
 - a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neither
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly Agree
4. Be considerate and think from the point of view of others.
 - a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neither
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly Agree
5. Hide my negative feelings (e.g., anger, depression, frustration, sadness)
 - a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neither
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly Agree

Cichy et al., 2007

IN

1. I am able to sense my own feelings.
 1. Very seldom or not true of me
 2. Sometimes or slightly true of me
 3. Occasionally or about halfway true of me
 4. Often or mostly true of me
 5. Very often or true of me
2. I am able to keep in touch with my own feelings as they take place.
 - a. Very seldom or not true of me
 - b. Sometimes or slightly true of me
 - c. Occasionally or about halfway true of me
 - d. Often or mostly true of me
 - e. Very often or true of me
3. I am open to my feelings and am able to adjust them in myself to promote personal understanding and development.
 - a. Very seldom or not true of me
 - b. Sometimes or slightly true of me
 - c. Occasionally or about halfway true of me
 - d. Often or mostly true of me
 - e. Very often or true of me

OUT

1. I understand and appreciate emotions of others.
 - a. Very seldom or not true of me
 - b. Sometimes or slightly true of me
 - c. Occasionally or about halfway true of me
 - d. Often or mostly true of me
 - e. Very often or true of me
2. I am sensitive to other people's emotions.
 - a. Very seldom or not true of me
 - b. Sometimes or slightly true of me
 - c. Occasionally or about halfway true of me
 - d. Often or mostly true of me
 - e. Very often or true of me
3. I am able to be open to emotions in others to promote understanding and development.
 - a. Very seldom or not true of me
 - b. Sometimes or slightly true of me
 - c. Occasionally or about halfway true of me
 - d. Often or mostly true of me
 - e. Very often or true of me

RELATIONSHIPS

1. People would say I am cooperative, contributing, and a positive team member.
 - a. Very seldom or not true of me
 - b. Sometimes or slightly true of me
 - c. Occasionally or about halfway true of me
 - d. Often or mostly true of me
 - e. Very often or true of me
2. I can easily build and participate in mutually satisfying relationships characterized by openness and affection.
 - a. Very seldom or not true of me
 - b. Sometimes or slightly true of me
 - c. Occasionally or about halfway true of me
 - d. Often or mostly true of me
 - e. Very often or true of me
3. I am able to clearly communicate in relationships with others.
 - a. Very seldom or not true of me
 - b. Sometimes or slightly true of me
 - c. Occasionally or about halfway true of me
 - d. Often or mostly true of me
 - e. Very often or true of me

Appendix C – Performance & Well-being Scales**Winsted, 1997; as cited by Kim et al., 2019****Perceived Service Performance**

1. I am always available when my customers need service.
 1. Not at All
 2. Very Rarely
 3. Occasionally
 4. About Half the Time
 5. Usually
 6. Almost Always
 7. All Customer Interactions
2. I have my customers best interests at heart.
 - a. Not at All
 - b. Very Rarely
 - c. Occasionally
 - d. About Half the Time
 - e. Usually
 - f. Almost Always
 - g. All Customer Interactions
3. I understand my customers specific needs.
 - a. Not at All
 - b. Very Rarely
 - c. Occasionally
 - d. About Half the Time
 - e. Usually
 - f. Almost Always
 - g. All Customer Interactions
4. I give my customers individual attention.
 - a. Not at All
 - b. Very Rarely
 - c. Occasionally
 - d. About Half the Time
 - e. Usually
 - f. Almost Always
 - g. All Customer Interactions

Kim et al., 2019**Service Performance**

1. I have the knowledge to answer customers' questions.
 - a. Not at All
 - b. Very Rarely

- c. Occasionally
 - d. About Half the Time
 - e. Usually
 - f. Almost Always
 - g. All Customer Interactions
2. I am always available when my customers need service.
- a. Not at All
 - b. Very Rarely
 - c. Occasionally
 - d. About Half the Time
 - e. Usually
 - f. Almost Always
 - g. All Customer Interactions
3. I have customers' best interests at heart.
- a. Not at All
 - b. Very Rarely
 - c. Occasionally
 - d. About Half the Time
 - e. Usually
 - f. Almost Always
 - g. All Customer Interactions
4. I understand my customers specific needs.
- a. Not at All
 - b. Very Rarely
 - c. Occasionally
 - d. About Half the Time
 - e. Usually
 - f. Almost Always
 - g. All Customer Interactions
5. I give my customers individual attention.
- a. Not at All
 - b. Very Rarely
 - c. Occasionally
 - d. About Half the Time
 - e. Usually
 - f. Almost Always
 - g. All Customer Interactions

Rank et al., 2007, as cited by Cheng et al., 2020
Proactive Customer Service Performance (PCSP)

1. When I am serving, I proactively share information with customers to meet their financial needs.
 - a. Not at All
 - b. Very Rarely
 - c. Occasionally
 - d. About Half the Time
 - e. Usually
 - f. Almost Always
 - g. All Customer Interactions
2. When I am serving, I anticipate issues or needs customers might have and proactively develop solutions.
 - a. Not at All
 - b. Very Rarely
 - c. Occasionally
 - d. About Half the Time
 - e. Usually
 - f. Almost Always
 - g. All Customer Interactions
3. When I am serving, I use my own judgement and understanding of risk to determine when to make exceptions or improvise solutions.
 - a. Not at All
 - b. Very Rarely
 - c. Occasionally
 - d. About Half the Time
 - e. Usually
 - f. Almost Always
 - g. All Customer Interactions
4. When I am serving, I take ownership by following through with the customer interaction and ensure a smooth transition to other service representatives.
 - a. Not at All
 - b. Very Rarely
 - c. Occasionally
 - d. About Half the Time
 - e. Usually
 - f. Almost Always
 - g. All Customer Interactions
5. When I am serving, I actively create partnerships with other service representatives to better serve customers.
 - a. Not at All

- b. Very Rarely
 - c. Occasionally
 - d. About Half the Time
 - e. Usually
 - f. Almost Always
 - g. All Customer Interactions
6. When I am serving, I take the initiative to communicate client requirements to other service areas and collaborate in implementing solutions.
- a. Not at All
 - b. Very Rarely
 - c. Occasionally
 - d. About Half the Time
 - e. Usually
 - f. Almost Always
 - g. All Customer Interactions
7. When I am serving, I proactively check with customers to verify that customer expectations have been met or exceeded.
- a. Not at All
 - b. Very Rarely
 - c. Occasionally
 - d. About Half the Time
 - e. Usually
 - f. Almost Always
 - g. All Customer Interactions

Baker & Kim, 2019*Psychological Well-being*

1. When dealing with these situations, I am satisfied with achieving self-fulfillment.
- 1. Strongly Disagree
 - 2. Disagree
 - 3. Neither
 - 4. Agree
 - 5. Strongly Agree
2. When dealing with these situations, I am satisfied with achieving emotional health.
- a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neither
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly Agree

3. When dealing with these situations, I am satisfied with achieving personal goals and hopes.
 - a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neither
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly Agree
4. I feel appreciated at my work.
 - a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neither
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly Agree
5. People at my organization respect me as a professional and an expert in my field of work.
 - a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neither
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly Agree
6. I feel that my job allows me to realize my full potential.
 - a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neither
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly Agree
7. I feel that I'm realizing my potential as an expert in my line of work.
 - a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neither
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly Agree

Bartels et al., 2019; as cited by Robertson et al., 2023

Interpersonal Well-being

1. Among the people I work with, I feel there is a sense of greater connection and love.
 1. Strongly Disagree
 2. Disagree
 3. Neither
 4. Agree
 5. Strongly Agree

2. I feel close to the people in my work environment.
 - a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neither
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly Agree
3. I feel connected to others within the work environment.
 - a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neither
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly Agree
4. I consider the people I work with to be my friends.
 - a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neither
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly Agree

Intrapersonal Well-being

5. I am emotionally energized at work.
 - a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neither
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly Agree
6. I feel that I have a purpose at my work.
 - a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neither
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly Agree
7. My work is very important to me.
 - a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neither
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly Agree
8. I feel I am able to continually develop as a person in my job.
 - a. Strongly Disagree

- b. Disagree
- c. Neither
- d. Agree
- e. Strongly Agree

Appendix D – Perceived Organizational Support (POS) Scales**Eisenberger et al., 1997, Kim et al., 2019****Perceived Organizational Support**

My company...

1. Values my contributions to its well-being.
 1. Never
 2. Rarely
 3. Sometimes
 4. Very Often
 5. Always
2. Considers my goals and values.
 - a. Never
 - b. Rarely
 - c. Sometimes
 - d. Very Often
 - e. Always
3. Shows little concern for me.
 - a. Never
 - b. Rarely
 - c. Sometimes
 - d. Very Often
 - e. Always
4. Cares about my opinion.
 - a. Never
 - b. Rarely
 - c. Sometimes
 - d. Very Often
 - e. Always
5. Is helpful when I have a problem.
 - a. Never
 - b. Rarely
 - c. Sometimes
 - d. Very Often
 - e. Always

Baker & Kim, 2020**Procedural & Emotional Support from the Manager**

1. The restaurant and your manager encourage you to follow the policy.
 1. Never
 2. Rarely

3. Sometimes
 4. Very Often
 5. Always
2. Your manager shows you how to deal with uncivil customers and is actively involved in the process.
 - a. Never
 - b. Rarely
 - c. Sometimes
 - d. Very Often
 - e. Always
 3. Your manager shows support when you run into problems.
 - a. Never
 - b. Rarely
 - c. Sometimes
 - d. Very Often
 - e. Always
 4. Your manager provides emotional support to you.
 - a. Never
 - b. Rarely
 - c. Sometimes
 - d. Very Often
 - e. Always
 5. It is easy to talk with your manager.
 - a. Never
 - b. Rarely
 - c. Sometimes
 - d. Very Often
 - e. Always
 6. Your manager is willing to listen to your work life problems.
 - a. Never
 - b. Rarely
 - c. Sometimes
 - d. Very Often
 - e. Always
 7. Your manager can be relied on when things get tough at work.
 - a. Never
 - b. Rarely
 - c. Sometimes
 - d. Very Often

e. Always