Emotional Intelligence and Clergy Work-Related Psychological Health among Anglican Clergy in England and Wales

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Abstract

The association between emotional intelligence and work-related psychological health is explored among a sample of 156 Anglican clergy in England and Wales who completed the Assessing Emotions Scale alongside the Francis Burnout Inventory. The data revealed that there was a negative correlation between emotional exhaustion and satisfaction in ministry; that higher levels of emotional intelligence were associated with higher levels of satisfaction in ministry; and that higher levels of emotional intelligence were associated with lower levels of emotional exhaustion.

Keywords

anglican – assessing Emotions Scale – clergy – emotional exhaustion – emotional intelligence – satisfaction in ministry

There has been a growing body of research into emotional intelligence (EI) since the term came into prominence with the work of Salovey and Mayer (1990). They described EI as a form of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use the information to guide one's thinking and action. Monitoring one's own and others' feelings and emotions involves recognizing emotional cues. Discriminating among emotions involves applying knowledge

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of the complexities and subtleties of emotional experience. Managing and harnessing emotions involves being able to regulate emotions effectively and appropriately.

The early years of research into EI were not helped by a range of conceptualizations of the content of EI which created ambiguity about the appropriateness of the concept. Nevertheless, because of awareness of the important role which emotions may play internally in thought-processes and externally in social relationships, scholars persevered. Salovey and Mayer (1990) in particular were keen to ground their concept of EI in the realm of intelligence. Based on Salovey and Mayer's conceptualization of emotional intelligence, Schutte et al. (1998) developed the Assessing Emotions Scale, a 33-item self-report measure of EI. In some literature this scale is called the Emotional Intelligence Scale, the Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test, or the Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale, but the authors prefer the name the Assessing Emotions Scale (Schutte, Malouff, & Bhullar, 2009). Using Salovey and Mayer's study they developed a list of 62 self-report items. Factor analysis of those 62 items resulted in the single-factor 33-item scale which they said measured “a homogeneous construct of emotional intelligence” (Schutte et al., 1998, p. 175).

Use of the Assessing Emotions Scale among Clergy

There have been three published studies reporting on the emotional intelligence of clergy in the United Kingdom and all three used the Assessing Emotions Scale. Francis, Ryland, and Robbins (2011) sampled 154 church leaders with the Newfrontiers network. Both male and female church leaders recorded significantly lower EI scores than the sample in Schutte et al.’s (1998) study. Randall (2014) sampled 156 Anglican clergy in England and Wales. Both male and female clergy recorded significantly lower EI scores than Schutte et al.’s (1998) sample, and also lower than Francis et al.’s (2011) Newfrontiers sample. Hendron, Irving, and Taylor (2014) sampled 226 Irish clergy serving within one of the four main denominations in Ireland. Both male and female clergy scores were low compared to Schutte et al.’s: “in fact clergy EI scores appear to be more on a par with those reported [by Schutte] by the participants in substance abuse programmes” (Hendron et al., 2014, p. 475).

In the UK and Ireland, then, it seems that Christian church leaders do not display particularly high levels of emotional intelligence, even though, by the nature of their roles as pastors, their ability to perceive and manage emotions in themselves and in others might be expected to be strong. If clergy have