Emotional Intelligence, Burnout and Job Satisfaction among Academic Professionals

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Abstract

Although it has been presumed that emotional intelligence capabilities reduce the level of burnout experienced, seldom is the relationship between components of emotional intelligence and dimensions of burnout and their possible impact on job satisfaction explicitly studied. This study fills this gap and develops a model to describe the relationship between dimensions of emotional intelligence, components of burnout and job satisfaction. For testing the research model data was collected from randomly selected expatriate lecturers working in a college of technology in Oman. Results of structural equation modeling show that a modified version of the initially proposed model offers good fit to the data collected. Though the degree of association between components of emotional intelligence and the dimensions of burnout varies, the nature of relationship between them is uniformly negative. Reduced personal accomplishment reduces job satisfaction; our observation is different for other two dimensions of burnout.

Introduction

Teaching profession is recognized as the most stressful occupation with the lowest levels of job satisfaction [1]. In fact, teachers' job profile requires a lot of emotional labor that creates work related stress [2]. Burnout among service professionals develops in relation to professional socialization. It creates job dissatisfaction, lowered self-esteem, fatigue, anger, anxiety, guilt, restlessness and withdrawal [3]. However, those who are able to manage their emotions have reportedly high chance of success in stressful work situations [4]. Emotional intelligence (EI) helps employees to lower down the stress level [5]. Emotionally intelligent teachers have strong capability to cope with the psychological and physiological stress in performing jobs; consequently they are more satisfied at work [6].

Although there are many studies to describe the relationship between emotional intelligence, burnout and job satisfaction hardly there is any research focused on analyzing the relationships between the components of emotional intelligence and dimensions of burnout and their possible impact on job satisfaction [7]. This paper is a response to the calls for more research on the relationships between components of EI and dimensions of burnout among teachers [8, 9]. Also it follows the recommendations of examining the relationship between burnout and job satisfaction [10]. Present study fills the gap by developing a model that can explain the relationship between components of emotional intelligence, dimensions of burnout and job satisfaction.

Literature Review

Burnout

Burnout is defined as ‘a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment that can occur among individuals who work with people in some capacity’ [11]. *Emotional exhaustion* (EE) is the basic dimension of individual strain; it denotes the depletion of one's emotional and physical resources [12]. Emotionally exhausted employees feel used up; their energy level is low at work [13]. The second dimension, *depersonalization* (DP) or cynicism is described by treating the clients as impersonal objects rather than people [13]. It refers to the interpersonal context dimension of burnout; and it shows a negative, callous, or excessively detached response to various work related aspects. The third dimension, *Reduced Personal Accomplishment* (RPA) represents the self-evaluation. It shows the feeling of lack of personal accomplishment and productivity in work [12].

Transaction model of stress defines it as a consequence of the appraisal that particular environmental demands taxing individual's psychological resources, thus threatening well-being [14]. The core concept of the transactional model lies in the process of appraisal that ties the environment and the person, it is this ‘relational meaning’ that the individual understands from the transaction. Another approach of understanding stress is the *Person-Environment Fit* (P-E fit) perspective. An employee's cognitive, affective and behavioral responses can be described through his/her interaction with environment (P x E) [15]. P-E fit theory assumes that high strain is consequence of mismatch between the individual's needs and what they receive or confront at work.

According to *Conservation of Resources* theory, the main idea of his theory is that ‘individuals strive to obtain, retain, protect and foster those things that they value’ [16]. People try to both preserve resources and to gather resources in order to better navigate their methods through life's demands and challenge. *The Job Demands-Control-Support Model* of Work Design proposes that although excessive job demands or physical and psychological pressure may influence the stress level, by themselves these demands do not cause strain experiences.

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence can be roughly described as the ability to perceive, understand and manage one's emotions [17]. EI is the ability to appraise, express, regulate and utilize emotions (such as using emotions for solving problems) [17]. According to Goleman EI includes ‘self-control, zeal and persistence and the ability to motivate oneself’ [18, p. xii]; further he elaborates EI as being able to ‘control impulse and delay gratification,’ so as to ‘keep distress from swamping the ability to think; to empathize and to hope’ [18, p. 34]. In his later work Goleman defined EI as ‘the capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, and for managing emotions well in ourselves and our relationships’ [19, p. 317].

The discourse on EI includes following four dimensions [20]. *First*, 'appraisal and expression of emotions in the self (SEA)': this is individual's ability to understand his or her own deep emotions and ability to express those emotions naturally. *Second* dimension is 'appraisal and recognition of emotion in others (OEA)': the focus of this dimension is on individual's ability to perceive and understand the emotions of others around them. *Third*, 'regulation of emotion in

the self (ROE)' is related to the ability of person to regulate his/her emotions; it enables an individual in rapid recovery from emotional climax and distress. The last *fourth* dimension 'use of emotion to facilitate performance (UOE)' relates to the ability of an individual to make use of his/her emotions for constructive activities and personal accomplishments.

Emotional intelligence influences emotional labor process in many ways [7], *firstly* it affects the individual's thinking in ways that encourage positive emotional experiences or discourage negative emotional experience. *Secondly*, as emotional intelligence also includes empathy and abilities to manage other's emotions, it is possible that a person with high EI can induce others to the desired state easily than those who have low EI. High EI employees are expected to be less confronted with their client's negative emotions, thus they may experience lower level of emotional dissonance. *Thirdly*, high EI increases the ability to manage one's own emotions; consequently it promotes the behavioral response that reduces emotional dissonance [7].

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is a result of comparison between actual and desired or expected job attainments or job values which are congruent to or help to fulfill a worker's basic needs [21]. It is an evaluative feeling about a worker's job. Weiss has defined job satisfaction as 'a positive (or negative) evaluative judgment one makes about one's job or job situation.' [22, p. 175]. Researchers define job satisfaction as 'attitude' or 'affect' [23]. Weiss has criticized the idea of describing job satisfaction as both affect and attitude. His argument is that affect and attitude are not equivalent, according to him attitude is evaluative judgment not an affective reaction, he writes that 'evaluation is not affect and, therefore, neither is job satisfaction' [22, p. 175]. Conclusively job satisfaction is a 'positive (or negative) evaluative judgment one makes about a person's job or job situation' [22, p. 175].

Research Model and Hypotheses

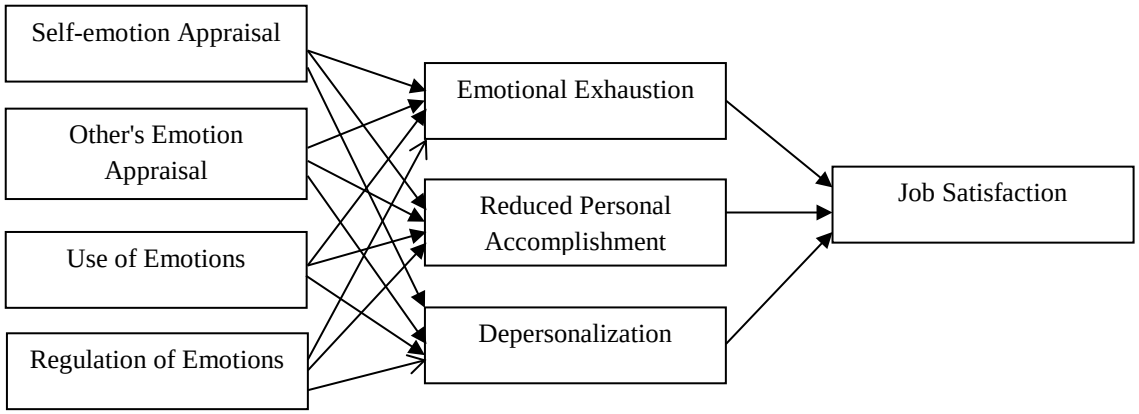
Emotional intelligence associates with low scores of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and high score of personal accomplishment [24]. In a study on Chinese secondary school teachers in Hong Kong, it was observed that emotional appraisal and positive regulation of emotions influence emotional exhaustion, whereas positive utilization of emotions influence personal accomplishment [25]. In a meta-analytic examination of the relationships between three dimensions of burnout and their correlates strong association is found between burnout dimensions and job satisfaction [26]. However, researchers have mixed opinion about the relationships between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction. Many research findings indicate weak to modest relationships between two variables EI and job satisfaction [27].

The present research aims to test following hypotheses:

1. High scores for the components of emotional intelligence will reduce the scores for the dimensions of burnout.
2. High scores for the dimensions of burnout will reduce job satisfaction.
3. Components of emotional intelligence associate positively with job satisfaction.

The model used for evaluating the effect of burnout dimensions on job satisfaction with the possible impact of the components of emotional intelligence is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Proposed Research Model



Methods

Data and Sample

For testing the hypotheses and the research model data was collected from expatriate academic staff working in a college of technology in the Sultanate of Oman. The respondents were formally designated as lecturers; employed in a foreign location through work contract. Major chunk of the expatriate lecturers in Oman come from Philippines, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Egypt, Jordan and other gulf countries. At the time of survey total 138 expatriate lecturers were employed in the college selected for the present study. Total 76 expatriates were randomly selected from the list of academic staff available on the official website of the college. Random numbers were generated by using MS Excel.

Measures

Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) is the most commonly used measure of burnout syndrome. Based on MBI a scale was developed by altering some of the items to match the research context such as ‘I can easily create a relaxed atmosphere with my students’ or ‘I feel insensitive to people around me on the job.’ Emotional intelligence was measured by Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS) [28]. WLEIS is based on four dimensional definitions of emotional intelligence; it includes Self-Emotion Appraisal (SEA), Other's Emotion Appraisal (OEA), Use of Emotions (UOE) and Regulation of Emotions (ROE). Each dimension of EI is measured by 4 items; therefore the scale has total 16 items. For measuring job satisfaction we used 20 items original short form of Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ). It is a unitary scale and responses on five point Likert's scale are summed to calculate the total score, where higher score shows higher job satisfaction among employees. For the present study 20 items original short form MSQ was used. The values of Cronbach's alpha computed for testing the reliability of instruments used in the present study shows that the instruments used were fairly reliable (see Table1). As the respondents in the study belonged to

different nationalities, culture and language the questionnaire was written in English as a common language.

Table 1. Details of Instruments

S.N.	Instrument	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Type of Scale
1	Burnout	13	0.82	7 point Likert's type scale
	Emotional exhaustion	5	0.78	
	Reduced personal accomplishment	4	0.82	
	Depersonalization	4	0.71	
2	Emotional Intelligence	16	0.92	7 point Likert's type
	SEA	4	0.81	
	OEA	4	0.83	
	UOE	4	0.89	
	ROE	4	0.88	
3	Job Satisfaction	20	0.63	5 point Likert's scale

Data Analysis and Results

Questionnaires were distributed personally to the respondents and collected in subsequent days. After several follow-ups total 70 questionnaires were found completely filled and suitable for the data analysis. The response rate was 92.11%. Variables were computed by adding the responses recorded in the questionnaire.

Relationship between Variables

For analyzing the nature of association between variables we computed correlation coefficients with mean and standard deviations. Available data shows that teacher's age associates negatively with emotional exhaustion and depersonalization the value of r was - 0.24 (Sig. 0.05 level) and -0.30 (Sig. 0.05 level) respectively (see Table 2). Older employees by the virtue of their work experience might have developed means and methods of managing emotional demands. Results are similar to a study on 385 secondary level teachers in Southern United States, it observed that burnout relate with the length of work experience, participant's age and job satisfaction [29]. As shown in the Table 2 work experience reduces depersonalization (r = -.31, p<0.01), but it does not relate significantly to any other variable in the study. Employees working in foreign countries for long time might have learned the cultural values, norms and communication pattern in new setting so as to reduce the feeling of *depersonalization*.

Self-emotion appraisal associates negatively with emotional exhaustion (r = -0.33, p<0.01; see Table 2). Knowing self-emotions may help preventing from emotional exhaustion. Similarly the association between emotional exhaustion and ROE is significantly negative (r = -0.30, p< 0.05). The correlation coefficients for the association between reduced personal accomplishment and SEA, OEA, UOE and ROE were computed -0.57 (p <0.01), -0.30 (p <0.05), -0.59 (p <0.01) and -0.49 (p <0.01) respectively. Moreover SEA relates negatively with depersonalization (r = - 0.26, p < 0.05). As all the four components of emotional intelligence are

associated negatively with reduced personal accomplishment, we conclude that emotionally intelligent people experience higher personal accomplishment (see Table 2).

Data presented in Table 2 shows that reduced personal accomplishment influences job satisfaction negatively (r = -0.43, p < 0.01), but other two dimensions of burnout such as emotional exhaustion and depersonalization do not associate significantly with job satisfaction. One possible explanation for such association can be that expatriates value the benefits at job more even if it is taxing upon emotional resources. In the case of depersonalization, the explanation is possible from a different angle, expatriate lecturers working with diverse groups of colleagues and students from different cultures may find it more comfortable to maintain distance.

Table 2. Correlation Matrix

S.N.	Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	Age	38.41	5.83										
2	Experience	13.63	5.27	.82**0									
3	Job Satisfaction	75.89	14.66	0.10	0.10								
4	Emotional Exhaustion	17.63	6.01	-0.24*	-0.22	-0.19							
5	Reduced Personal Accomplishment	9.14	3.51	-0.04	0.06	-0.43**	.24*0						
6	Depersonalization	13.81	4.93	-0.30*	-0.31**	-0.13	0.55**	0.17					
7	SEA	23.61	4.05	0.02	-0.08	0.36**	-0.33**	-0.57**	-0.26*				
8	OEA	21.74	4.03	-0.00	0.04	0.29*	-0.10	-0.30*	-0.16	0.53**			
9	UOE	23.90	3.92	-0.03	-0.10	0.42**	-0.23	-0.59**	-0.17	0.64**	0.46**		
10	ROE	22.14	3.99	0.11	0.10	0.40**	-0.30*	-0.49**	-0.14	0.56**	0.53**	0.57**	

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

All the four dimensions of emotional intelligence have significant positive association with job satisfaction. The value of correlation coefficient r is 0.36 (p < 0.01), 0.29 (p < 0.05), 0.42 (p < 0.01) and 0.40 (p < 0.01) for association between job satisfaction and SEA, OEA, UOE and ROE respectively (see Table 2). Our observation is similar to those who have concluded that emotional intelligence results in positive work outcomes [30]. Similar observations were recorded in a study on middle and high school teachers that employees who had high scores for EI also had high scores for job satisfaction [31].

Testing the Research Model

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) technique was applied for testing the proposed model. Results of SEM analysis shows that the model proposed initially in the Figure 1 needs modification to fit to the data collected (see Appendix 1), on the other hand a changed model offers good fit to the data (see Figure 2).

For testing the model fit in the present study we have used eight popular goodness of fit indexes such as Chi-square/degree of freedom, GFI, AGFI, NFI, NNFI (TLI), CFI, RMSEA,

and SRMR. The computed value for chi-square/degree of freedom in the modified model was 1.11, which is less than the recommended maximum value 3.00 (see Table 3); moreover for GFI, NFI, NNFI (TLI) and CFI the observed value is greater than the recommended minimum value 0.95; for AGFI the recommended value is greater than or equal to 0.80 and the data shows it is 0.88 for the modified model. Also the SRMR and RMSEA statistic is less than the recommend maximum value 0.08. Observed values for various indices are fairly acceptable for all eight selected indices, which show a good model fit for the data.

Table 3. Summary of Model Fit Statistics

S. N.	Fit Index	Recommended Values	Observed Values in the Initial Model	Observed Values in the Modified Model
1	Chi-square/degree of freedom	<=3.00	3.89	1.11
2	GFI	>=0.95	0.92	0.98
3	AGFI	>=0.80	0.59	0.88
4	SRMR	<=0.08	0.09	0.05
5	RMSEA	<=0.08	0.21	0.04
6	NFI	>=0.95	0.86	0.97
7	NNFI (TLI)	>=0.95	0.53	0.98
8	CFI	>=0.95	0.88	0.99

GFI=goodness-of-fit index; AGFI=adjusted goodness-of-fit; SRMR= standard root mean square residual; RMSEA= root mean square error of approximation; NFI=Normed-fit index; NNFI= non-normed fit index; TLI=Tucker-Lewis index; CFI = comparative fit index.

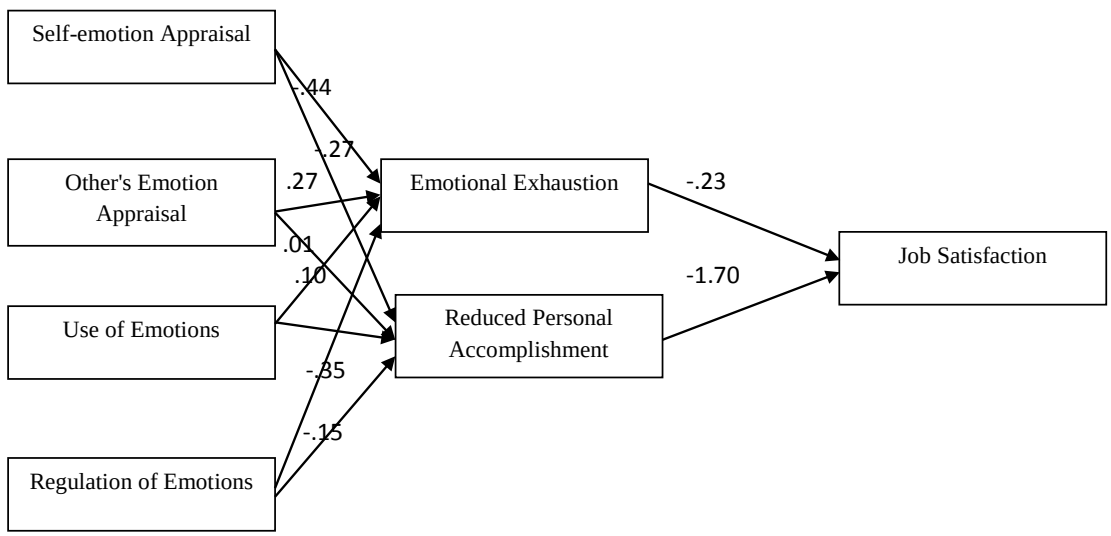
A graphical presentation of the modified model is presented in the Figure 2. The Figure shows the standardized path coefficients for relationships between variables under study. The direct path from SEA to reduced personal accomplishment shows negative but significant relationship between two variables, the value of regression coefficient is -0.27 with t = -2.35, p<0.05 (see Table 4). This supports our hypothesis that high score of self-emotion appraisal will reduce the feeling of reduced personal accomplishment. Similarly, the regression coefficient for the path direction from UOE to reduced personal accomplishment support the hypothesis that use of emotions will decrease the feeling of low personal accomplishment. The value of regression coefficient is -0.35 which is significant with t = -2.66, $p<0.01$ (see Table 4). For other combinations of variables such as the direct path coefficients for relationship between all the four dimensions of EI and emotional exhaustion are not significant. Moreover the direct relationship between OEA or ROE and reduced personal accomplishment is not proven by the data available.

To examine the direct relationship between emotional exhaustion and reduced personal accomplishment with job satisfaction regression coefficients were computed. The data shows that higher score of reduced personal accomplishment will reduce the level of job satisfaction; the value of regression coefficient is -1.7 which is significant with t = -3.6, p<0.01 (see Table 4). However the relationship between emotional exhaustion and job satisfaction could not be established negative.

Table 4. Direct Path Coefficients for Relationship between Variables

Predictor	Dependent Variable	Regression Coefficient	*t* Value	*p* Value
Self-Emotion Appraisal	Emotional Exhaustion	-0.44	-1.84	0.07
Other's Emotion Appraisal		0.27	1.26	0.21
Use of Emotion		0.008	0.03	0.97
Regulation of Emotion		-0.35	-1.5	0.14
Self-Emotion Appraisal	Reduced Personal Accomplishment	-0.27	-2.35	0.02
Other's Emotion Appraisal		0.1	0.99	0.32
Use of Emotion		-0.35	-2.66	0.01
Regulation of Emotion		-0.15	-1.33	0.19
Emotional Exhaustion	Job Satisfaction	-0.23	-0.84	0.4
Reduced Personal Accomplishment		-1.7	-3.6	0.01

FIGURE 2
TEST OF THE MODIFIED MODEL



Discussion

Present study developed and tested a model empirically to examine the relationship between dimensions of emotional intelligence, components of burnout and job satisfaction. The study reveals that reduced personal accomplishment has negative impact on job satisfaction. Expatriate workers take up the foreign employment with the hope of positive gains such as increase in income, professional advancement, exposure and learning opportunity, or better association with outside world. If they find it difficult to fulfill their expectations feeling of dissatisfaction from job develops. High feeling of personal accomplishment results in high job

satisfaction. Unlike studies showing negative relationship between emotional exhaustion and job satisfaction [32], findings of the present study do not indicate significant positive or negative relationship between other two dimensions of burnout and job satisfaction. We don't have evidence to conclude that high work stress will essentially reduce the job satisfaction. The reasons behind such observation may be attributed to the benefits received from the job. Expatriates value benefits from the job, even if it comes with certain unfavorable work experiences.

In the beginning, we proposed that individual's emotional reactions and inability to manage environmental strain may lead to high occupational tensions [33]. Our findings hold the hypothesis valid for the impact of self-emotion appraisal and use of emotions on reduced personal accomplishment. Individuals who are able to understand and use their emotions experience low level of reduced personal accomplishment, or in other words their sense of accomplishment is high. Our findings align with those who have observed positive relationship between components of emotional intelligence and personal accomplishment [24]. For other two components of EI such as other's emotion appraisal (OEA) and regulation of emotions (ROE) our findings do not establish the relationship with the dimensions of burnout. Present study stands with others who have concluded that emotional intelligence does not influence emotional exhaustion significantly [34].

Why some of the variables did not associate to others as proposed in the initial model? The answer of this question can be explored in the background of the study. Most of the studies claiming negative association between EI and burnout dimensions or three dimensions of burnout and job satisfaction are conducted in the advanced countries with respondents having better rewards and benefits as compared to the respondents of the current study. We should recall that the impact of emotional intelligence is different in different cultures [35]. The study was conducted with lecturers working in Sultanate of Oman; they belonged originally to countries like India, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Egypt where employment conditions and personal gains must be significantly poor than their foreign employment. Compared to the advanced countries respondents of the present study might have different needs, priorities and expectations from the job. They value the gains more and consider the work related negative experiences an inescapable condition of the employment. They are satisfied with higher earnings than their previous employment; their focus is more on the monetary gains and job security.

Finally we conclude that emotional intelligence helps employees to overcome burnout experienced at workplace; which may further lead to high job satisfaction. Moreover individuals who are able to understand and manage their feelings tend to be more satisfied at work. On the other hand feeling of low personal accomplishment reduces job satisfaction.

Limitations and future research questions

This study has several limitations and leaves many questions unanswered that set the direction for future research. The questionnaire used in the present research was divided in three parts and all the parts were given to the respondents together in single set, a lengthy questionnaire might have made the respondents tired. Though the questionnaire was written in English as a common language, as a matter of fact most of the respondents belonged to countries

where English is foreign language such as India, Philippines, Pakistan, Egypt etc. We do not deny the possibility that some of the respondents might have faced problem in taking the meaning of questions written in a foreign language.

Present study included participants from developing countries who can be more tolerant to stressful situations for monetary gain and can be more satisfied with their job. Can such workers value peer relationship? How the organizational culture and climate influence such employees? As an important dimension of burnout *depersonalization* did not fit in the model, is such behavior universal among expatriate workers? These are some questions needed to be considered for future research.

Implications

Findings of this research can benefit the management of educational institutions. As emotional exhaustion influences job satisfaction negatively managers of academic institutes should attempt to reduce it by various interventions. Since emotional intelligence helps to overcome burnout which may further result in high job satisfaction, it becomes imperative to enhance EI abilities through training programs. EI should be given special attention in the employee selection criteria.

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APPENDIX 1
MODEL FIT STATISTICS FOR THE INITIAL MODEL